MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:

A MODERN MANIFESTATION OF COLONIZATION

by

ABI MONTGOMERY

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Abi Montgomery

has been approved for the

School of Public Affairs

by

Anna Kosloski, Chair

Bridget Diamond-Welch

Henriikka Weir

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Montgomery, Abi (Master of Criminal Justice)

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have long documented the various injuries brought on First Nations by European colonialism. While it is broadly recognized that Indigenous people are violently victimized at the highest rate in the nation per capita, they are grossly underrepresented in research (Deer, 2018). The purpose of this study is to explore the contemporary phenomenon of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) as a modern manifestation of European colonization. This qualitative study utilizes Grounded Theory to analyze data collected from semi-structured focus groups and web interviews with Indigenous and advocate participants. Three themes emerged from participant data: 1) Historical trauma, 2) Ways of missing, and 3) Connectivity. Applying an intersectional lens, the analysis of the three themes defines a broad spectrum of what it means to be "missing" and the relationship between the MMIP crisis and colonization.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Indigenous people and nations across North America who have been so devastated by a brutal and ugly history of violence and genocide at the hands of White, patriarchal, Christian colonizers. Specifically, to those who have shared their cultural heritage, tragic truths, and resilient spirits with me and the other researchers over the past year. I am truly grateful for that profound gift and the many ways it continues to move and impact my life. My deepest intention and hope is to honor your truth and to represent your stories with respect, admiration, and accuracy. This work belongs to you in every sense as the reciprocation of your gift and I hope it may serve you in some way; as an educational tool, a frame for future collaborative works, or even just as a reminder that your voices may be heard. Thanks solely to you, I've begun the process of decolonizing my own self and I'm humbled and grateful for the transformative work that I can pass to others. With deepest reverence, I submit this thesis project in your honor. May the Native spirit be ever strengthened, emboldened, and embraced.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Author Note:

In an unorthodox note amongst academic writings, it is imperative that the author humbly recognize the lack of Indigeneity within the research team. That's said not to discount the following work, but to acknowledge that any benefit of it, belongs solely to the Native women and men who made it possible. The intention of every step of this research journey, although flawed by white privilege, has been to actively listen and reverberate Native voices, with as little contamination of non-native interpretation as possible. The immersive intention of research style—in the consumption of literature and in the building of relationships—is centric to a reverent and genuine respect for the gift of story and practice that this research team has received. There can be no writing, nor representation of data without the deep honor of unwarranted trust from the Indigenous individuals who shared of themselves with no promise of reward. Open gratitude, humility, and reverence for their deep losses, along with bold confidence in their resilient strength must come before the formalities of academic work.

The following exploratory study questions the modern crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) as a continuation of European colonial genocide and the intentional displacement of North American First Nations' cultural identity. Through identification of thematic racist and genocidal practices, this work intends to establish a holistic conceptualization of continued Native suffering and abuse undercut by tremendous cultural resilience. This study utilizes qualitative data from focus groups and

interviews to actionably center Native voice in the analysis of the relationship between colonization and the MMIP crisis.

Most of the language surrounding this topic focuses on Missing and Murdered Indigenous *Women and Girls* (MMIW) specifically. While women and girls are indeed the primary victims of this crisis (and many other violent crimes), and much of this paper's discussion will surround gendered violence, it is important to recognize that *all* genders of Indigenous peoples are subject to extreme violence (Rosay, 2016). Recognizing also that there are multitudinous ways to refer to Indigenous peoples, the author adheres to language that is less associated with colonial verbiage, often used inappropriately to continue racial stigmas (Indian, Native-American) with the exception of quotations. The terms Indigenous, Native, Aboriginal, and First Nations are used respectfully and more less interchangeably, though connotation may vary. Additionally, as the MMIW crisis has received increasing attention, female-exclusive language serves to contribute to myths of gendered fragility and the further romanticizing of Native racial victimization. For these reasons, this study will refer to the whole struggle as *MMIP*, recognizing it as a modern manifestation of centuries-old violation against all North American Indigenous people.

It should also be noted that much of the formal literature considering MMIP has been cultivated in Canada. While subject to the same colonial travesties and similar governmental practices as the United States, Canada *is* a few years ahead in its understanding of the current situation. Though the governments of both countries continually make efforts to refute legal acknowledgment of cultural loss for First Nations (Thielen-Wilson, 2014), Canada has, in recent years, begun to formally review the broad

injuries of colonization. The largest class action suit, in Canadian History, commonly (though inaccurately) recognized as 'truth and reconciliation' sought to address trauma suffered in "Indian residential schools" (Feir, 2016). After which, a national inquiry was made into murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls in 2016 (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2016). For these reasons, much of the existing scholarship discussed in this paper is grounded in Canadian findings. Considering many tribal territories existed across the boarders that now divide North America, Canadian literature on the topic is largely relevant and even representative of disproportionally harmed aboriginal people in the United States. Statistics and previous study from both countries may serve to construct an understanding of the violence that produces MMIP.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, Indigenous and mixed-race-Indigenous people make up only 1.7 percent of the population at 5.2 million total. 2.9 million Natives (0.9% of the national population) don't claim an additional race. A recent NIJ sample report suggests that just under 3 million of that total (1.5 million women and 1.4 million men) have experienced some form of violence (Rosay, 2016). Given that this thesis project is occurring during a census year, it is likely that those percentages are not wholly accurate, but they provide a general sense of the prevalence of violent victimization in relation to the size of the population.

Remembering that self-inflicted harm is also a form of violence, it is understood that the suicide rates among colonized Indigenous peoples across the globe are "more than double than that for other groups in the same country(s)" and their frequency of completion is 1.5 to 4 times higher than other ethnic groups (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu 2010). This is true for countries in which European colonizers *stayed* in occupancy rather

than leaving post crusade; North America, Australia, New Zealand, specifically. Among the 370 million aboriginal people throughout the world, those who have experienced European colonization share remarkably similar trends of social disparity (Feir, 2016). For example, the poverty rates for North American Natives are exceptionally high; those on U.S. and Canadian reservations earning 39% to 45% less (Feir, 2016) and some reservations with unemployment rates as high as 90% (Smith, 2003).

Empirical studies across the past two decades almost universally recognize that Indigenous people are violently victimized at the highest rate in the nation per capita, especially women and girls (Deer, 2018). Sourcing data for those who are missing and/or murdered is even more difficult due to the absence of consistent databasing and because those victims simply aren't *there*. The numbers discussed above are meant to provide a starting point in illuminating the deep marginalization and violence experienced by Indigenous people.

It is paramount to define "missing" for the purposes of this study, as it applies not only to the obvious cases of physically absent or unaccounted-for individuals, but also the slow disappearance of entire nations, both in culture and mere existence. Remembering that Indigenous peoples are murdered and violently victimized at a higher rate than any other racial group (Deer, 2018), conceptualizing the true depth of those numbers is tremendously difficult given this population's lack of representation (Pacheco, 2009). To be "missing" then, deserves a framework of description that can create a picture of the breadth of the crisis even in the absence of empirical counts. The following discussion will establish 'missing' in three parts (physical, cultural, social/political) as a mindset for approaching the literature and a basis upon which the data will expand.

All three of measures of missing as discussed above, are deeply intertwined the concept of genocide and perhaps the root of the modern "missing" crisis. Genocide is typically perceived only in the historical context of colonialism with the intentional killing of Native people, and therefore not related to any current social struggles. Damien Short, however, argues that "cultural genocide" is absolutely the correct way to understand the present and continued loss of Indigenous people (2010). The nature of cultural genocides is to separate people from their traditional roots, kinships, and traditional spiritual practices (Short, 2010). This is *not* to assume, however, that modern Indigenous people have no connection to traditional cultures, their profound resiliency establishes the opposite.

Not only are aspects of cultural inheritance missing along with individuals, but the mere acknowledgement of widely experienced traumas is being left out of the historical narrative. For example, Leslie Theilen-Wilson asserts that the use of sexual violence as a tool for settler dominance and control is not currently being adequately viewed in the context of heritable trauma and its effect on cyclical violence. Instead it is framed as the long-ago actions of a few unconscionable individuals (2014). She describes Canada's refusal to sufficiently respond to settler perpetrated sexual abuse on the grounds that "memories fade, evidence disappears, witnesses are few, and 'many of the perpetrators are dead'. Declaring the connection between historic sexual abuse and cultural loss as 'strained at best'" (2014, p. 183). She writes that just as sexual assault is being discounted from recognized genocidal practices, past and present, so both are being separated out from other colonial offenses such as forced removals. Jaymelee Kim writes that even within the formal, governmental efforts of transitional justice, only certain

aspects of colonization are allowed to be addressed to the exclusion of many others (2018). Eventually the process of deconstructing the intentional genocidal acts of colonization, makes the present missing of language, of land, of bodies, perceived as modern factors unrelated to historic events (Theilen-Wilson, 2014).

The separations detailed above frame colonization as a past transgression to be more less forgotten and forgiven. If the delineation between 'past' and 'present' is wide enough, the current social problems that Indigenous communities face including MMIP, need not be included in broad social discussion of racial and civil rights. Andrea Smith articulates that while racism has typically been a tool used to keep the minority a controlled cog in the social machine, the power imbalance between non-Native and Native is so extreme, racism has been purposed to all-but completely ignore the Indigenous (2003). As a continued form of historical oppression then, the Native voice is "missing" from the general social picture. Building upon this absence from public discourse, it follows that Indigenous interest is also missing from access to allies, resulting in social isolation (Kim, 2018).

In summation, the definition of "missing" as established for this work is multi-tiered: 1) physically missing Indigenous people, be it from kidnapping, trafficking, suicide, murder, state-sanctioned displacement from home, never recovered, destroyed burial sites, etc. 2) Missing from culture—language, land, sacred practice, connection to kin and tribe— broken down by cultural genocide. 3) Missing from social and political recognition, public representation, discourse, civil rights, and allies.

To deepen the overarching framework, this project will utilize the theory of Intersectionality as an analytical tool to understand the dynamic of power and inequality

conceived out of colonialism. In its broadest sense, Intersectionality refers to social

factors such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and ability as "reciprocally

constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p.

2). Intersectionality allows, not only for the discussion of deeply rooted social disparities

but the specific inequalities unique to any group with multiple identities (Collins & Bilge,

2016). Collins notes that while the big picture of Intersectionality poses some definitional

dilemmas, it is very useful as a working frame for developing expanded knowledge of

power and multidimensional inequalities, particularly in fields of gender, race, and

ethnicity (2015). All of which are targeted, along with spirituality, in the literature. With

this foundation in mind, the following literature will amplify the proposed definition of

'missing' in consort with Intersectionality to establish a layered understanding of the

historical constructs that have shaped modern social disparities among First Nations.

Upon that basis, the Indigenous experiences analyzed in the data will be used to

illuminate Native perspective regarding MMIP and its relationship to colonization.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"If your story tells you that your advantage is due to your virtue and that the 'other's' disadvantage is due to their failures then what do you do if this story turns out to be untrue? Your ideological world collapses"
(Jewett & Garavan, 2018)

The purpose of this work is to understand MMIP in its relationship to the historical practices of European colonization. The literature to follow is structured to provide a basis of contextual knowledge to understand both colonization and its macro effects on First Nations. This section will provide a brief characterization of pre-colonial Indigenous life, the historical practices of colonization and cultural genocide, and their evolution into modern Native existence. That narrative will move into a deeper exploration of the research pertaining to MMIP and violence against Native peoples.

Traditional Cultural Identity

The interwovenness of spirit and body, name and land, family, individual, and tribe, is what distinguished the social and practical structures of North American Indigenous societies (Jewett & Garavan, 2019). In most circumstances, injury was repaired rather than repaid, and 'justice' existed in the form of healing (Pacheco, 2009). Traditional practice, both in day-to-day interactions and sacred ceremony was purposed with the intention of ever prospering the tribe in meaningful and actionable ways (Deer, 2015).

Conceptualizing the traditional social structure of Indigenous societies is important in recognizing the foundational deconstruction brought on by patriarchal, Christian colonialism. That is, in order to understand the current state of violence against the Indigenous, preconceived notions of experience and practice that are intrinsically

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rooted in European frames, must be broken down to acknowledge the nature of pre-colonial existence for First Nations societies. None of the following examples or descriptions claim to represent *all* Indigenous identities, they are meant to serve merely as a baseline in this exploration. While many of the traditional perspectives to be discussed are grounded in the centuries-old practices that were disrupted by colonization, recognizing the presence of "tradition" as it currently exists, is valid to establish the heart of the Native spirit that has not and cannot be disrupted. Larissa Petrillo suggests of such, "Indian identity" has never been rooted only in the past but the respect for and practice of religious tradition is purposed in moving "forward into the future" (2007). She says of her own peoples' practice…

> …tradition is something that is worked on and maintained. Lakota tradition is dynamic and changing because it operates within a system of interrelations. Individuals determine what constitutes tradition through interaction and debate. People make up tradition in both senses of the word; they comprise tradition and they construct tradition (2007, p.12).

The first European perspective in need of adjusting is the assumption that 'tradition' is at all related to formal religion; "It is not a question of *belief* but of their mode of being" (Jewett & Garavan, 2019). That "being" is partially rooted in group and familial connection. The health and prosperity of a tribe hinged upon strong relationships and the good behavior of all its members, so to, the survival and well-being of the individual was tied to the strength of the tribe (Pacheco, 2009). Along with group, 'land' is deeply ingrained in tradition and spirituality as it is the land that holds the cultural memory for a tribe (Schultz et al., 2016). The primordial and spiritual connection between human and Earth/Nature is essential in many Indigenous cultures as a defining element of an individual. For example, Petrillo notes the practice of marking a person's

birth through the seasonal indicators of the land: "'When the plums are ripe, I was born.'

So we figure about August" (2007, p. 27) From the moment a person was born, they were

recognized, not by a date or a time—which are both human constructs— but by their

connection to the physical space in which they united with the earth as "Mother"

(Stuckey & Murphey, 2001). This established a familial tie to land.

That relation extends to the resources that are given by the land through all of

Nature. Water, for example is wholly in kinship with women specifically as they are both

"life givers" (Jewett & Garavan, 2018). In Ojibwe tradition, women are the keepers and

protectors of water, even to this day, going on "Water Walks," a ceremony of healing for

both the water and the women who take care of it (Jewett & Garavan, 2019). When the

land suffers, so do its people. When the people suffer, so does their land. "We are related

to everything, including water. Being a relative means being responsible. It's that simple"

(Jewett & Garavan, 2019, p. 44).

This intrinsic connectivity to 'everything' is often reflected in the practice of

'Naming' *as* breath and the spoken word is "not only considered sacred, but the very act

of speaking has creative power; one shapes the world by naming the world" (Stucky &

Murphey, 2001, p. 75). As with the recognition of birth being linked to the land,

important places were named in terms of people's "belonging to" the space as opposed to

possession over it. Stuckey and Murphey refer to "Turtle Island," as an example: The

Native term describing the 'Earth' finds its derivation in Indigenous creation stories

rather than ownership of the land. So to, an individual is not known by one singular given

name, but is named for their relationship to kin, tribe, and place. "The Lakota way is that

you really respect your brothers and sisters. Not even to call them by names: 'Say

"brother" in Indian.' 'Say "sister" in Indian'" (Petrillo, 2007, p. 24). The practice of naming born through relationships is but one example of how an individual derived identity through interconnection. Jewett and Garavan describe the connectivity of a person's 'whole being' in seven directions: "East, West, North, South, Earth, Sky, and inside/within" as the spatial, spiritual and material worlds relate to one another (2019). It is the circular identity in relationship, not in individuality, that grounded societies and built them upon equality and respect.

Many North American Indigenous tribes were traditionally egalitarian, "women-centric societies" (Deer, 2015). Kinship was traced matrilineally, women owned (though 'ownership' was a much looser construct) much of the assets and matriarchs were largely responsible for the diffusion of spiritual and traditional values and practices (Weaver, 2009). Amanda Pacheco notes these empowered positions for women among the Iroquois, Lakota, Cheyenne, Hopi, Cherokee, and other tribes to illustrate the respect and protection of women as life givers (2009). 'Protection' not in the patriarchal sense of fragile female beings in need of defense, but in the fortification of female value and honor. These were not matriarchal societies, however, in which women held *more* power, rather genders were largely equal in worth. Gender roles, while focused on a balanced division of labor, also included space for fluidity or "two-spirited" individuals who traded roles in a social structure of "nonbinary complementary dualism" (Deer, 2015). In plain description of the gender balance, Deer says:

> Women and men often had separate duties, but the separation took the form of horizontal distinctions rather than a vertical hierarchy of authority. The gender lines, as part of a creation story or cosmology are set up to complement each other to provide 'equilibrium' (2015, p. 19).

In addition to holding economic and spiritual influence in their societies, Native women had physical and sexual ownership over their own bodies (Deer, 2015). There mere fact that women were seen as the masters of their own beings contributed to a very small rate of rape and sexual assault in traditional Indigenous nations (Deer, 2015). Andrea Smith recounts several writings of white colonizers speaking to the lack of sexual harm against women: "'Bad as these savages are, they never violate the chastity of any women…'" (2003, p. 77). Regardless of the social narrative that paints ugly pictures of scalpers and rapists, Deer asserts that there is actually very little historical documentation of Native-perpetrated rape on settlers. In fact, white women taken as captives by tribes noted that their captors were not abusive: "the puritans were 'amazed at the sexual restraint of Indian men who never raped their captives'" (Deer, 2015, p. 21). Smith also notes that nearly 40% of the white women taken by tribes in New England between 1675 and 1763 chose to stay with them, envying that the Native women held high positions and had social and political rights (2003).

The societal belief in a woman's right over her own body was not the singular reason sexual violence was so uncommon in traditional communities. Rape was recognized as a type of spiritual death, likening it to murder in gravity (Pacheco, 2009). The crime then, was not only against an individual person, but against the spirit-world as well, making the implications for an offender, that much more severe (Pacheco, 2009). There were often political/social sanctions that also acted as deterrents for sex crimes. In Iroquois society for example, a man could never hope to hold a position of leadership if he had ever raped a woman (Deer, 2015). Similarly, Dakota men who had dishonored

women were not allowed to "carry the sacred pipe, nor could they hold positions of status" (Deer, 2015). The shame from sexual abuse was rightly on the abuser.

The high status of Indigenous women meant that in the rare event a woman did report sexual abuse, her people believed her outright (Pacheco, 2009) making punishment for her abuser swift and exact. Invoking again, that connectivity between individual, tribe, and land, Native women were treated well *just because* they were a part of that circle and "her role contributed to the well-being of the entire tribe" (Pacheco, 2009, p. 16). Simply put: "If I am the relative of all other beings then I am responsible for their well-being. In blunt terms—I don't rape them" Jewett & Garavan, 2019, p. 50). For all these reasons, First Nations women went through life with the assumption that they would never be harmed or abused by a man. This in sharp contrast to European settler law that recognized women and children as nothing more than property (Deer, 2015) making rape or at least some form of paternal abuse an expectation in the lives of white women and their children.

Unlike the European ideals upon which the United States has structured its legal system, traditional Indigenous systems of justice were not based upon retaliatory punishment for wrongdoing. The focus was instead, upon rewards for honorable and communal-beneficial actions (Pacheco, 2009). The Lakota concept of self-sacrifice for example, "…centres [sic] on taking responsibility for others and acting selflessly on their behalf" (Jewett & Garavan, 2019, p. 44). Every person being accountable to every other, created a method of crime deterrence based in community-forwardness as opposed to a European frame of crime deterrence via retribution. Punishment for less severe crimes

wasn't grounded solely in reprisal for the misdeed, rather it "focused on the offender consciously engaging in acts meant to repair those relationships" (Pacheco, 2009, p. 12).

Violent crime such as murder, rape, and child abuse were, again, extremely rare, but when it did occur, tribal systems had very clear and victim-centered processes. Punitive measures were enacted with the focus of providing healing for the victim(s); reclaiming spiritual and social balance to a community required the victim's needs be met (Pacheco, 2009). Tribal philosophy hinged on holding offenders accountable in a way that provided emotional and spiritual restitution (Deer, 2004). A Mvskoke (Muskogee) tradition, for example: in the rare event that a woman was raped, she had the most important role in deciding the punishment of the offender. Be it whipping, financial restitution, exile, or death, victims were understood to be fair and equitable in choosing the consequence that would bring healing to the community (Deer, 2015).

Interconnectivity extends far past equally structured societies, familial relationships to Nature, and restorative practices, but the examples presented above create a basic image of pre-colonial Native societies. With this context in mind, the conflict that came with European patriarchal hierarchy and formalized Christian religions, can be more clearly defined in discussion. Colonization will now be explored in segments to frame the traumas to First Nations.

History of American Colonization

Historical Violence

Colonization is not unlike conquest-war and the tactics, while marketed as civilized intentions to "educate" and "assimilate" are often just as violent and destructive (Short, 2010). Quoting Raphael Lemkin's theory, Damien Short asserts that *physical*

genocide and *cultural* genocide are one entity designed for the long-term destruction of

the life-force and generational memory of a social group via many possible modes:

> …physical—massacre and mutilation, deprivation of livelihood (starvation, exposure, etc. often by deportation), slavery—exposure to death; biological—separation of families, sterilization, destruction of foetus [sic]; cultural—desecration and destruction of cultural symbols (books, objects of art, loot, religious relics, etc.), destruction of cultural leadership, destruction of cultural centres [sic] (cities, churches, monasteries, schools, libraries), prohibition of cultural activities or codes of behaviour [sic], forceful conversion, demoralization (2010, p. 837-838).

Many, if not all of these tactics were used by European settlers with the intention,

not merely of subjugating their (perceived) foes, but of internally destroying the very

nature of Native being. That intention comes through in the language of President

Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This policy produced the infamous

and forcible displacement of tens of thousands of Natives (Cherokee, Creek, Seminole,

Choctaw, and Chickasaw tribes) known as the Trail of Tears (Deer, 2010). The Choctaw

tribe for example was forced to walk roughly 500 miles away from their ancestral homes

through winter conditions that resulted in a death toll estimated up to 6000 out of 12,500

(Schultz et al., 2016). Tribesmen were 'benevolently' allowed small pieces of unfamiliar

land on which to resettle "Provided always that such lands shall return to the United

States if the Indians become extinct…" (Indian Removal Act, 1830). The very word

"removal" in the title of this law is significant as is the recognition of potential

'extinction'. It can be surmised that the survival of the First Nations was neither an

intention nor even an assumption of settler government.

To further illustrate this point, President Jackson addressed Congress regarding

this act and noted the current "annihilation" of the Eastern tribes. He discounted the loss

of leaving "the graves of their fathers" by comparing it to the settlers' *willful* journey to

the new world and suggested that the "12,000,000" happy and civilized people to come to the land far outweighed "a few thousand savages" roaming the forests (President Jackson's Message to Congress, 1830). In the clearest statement of cultural genocide, Jackson said of the removal act:

> It will separate the Indians for immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community (President Jackson's Message to Congress, 1830).

In this language, Jackson made plain that the overall intention of Native removal was for them to either be completely separated or completely assimilated. This was and still is justified by maintaining that Indigenous land could not actually be stolen "on the grounds that Native peoples did not properly control or subdue nature" (Smith, 2003, p. 80). These are examples of the violent language that informed violent law that manifested in the genocidal acts to follow.

Violent conflict was of course a method of imposing removal policy, even though it was proposed as a solution to address conflicts between settlers and tribes (Deer, 2010). Smith recounts that Andrew Jackson himself, oversaw the mass killings of hundreds of Indigenous people. In one instance he directed the mutilation of 800 dead Creek, flaying strips of skin from their backs to be turned into saddle bridles (2003). Hand in hand with overt murder was forced displacement: a key component in the achievement of 'removal.' The Trail of Tears and The Long Walk are but two of several forcible migrations or "death marches" that not only brought on fatality due to fatigue and exposure but increased the vulnerability of Indigenous people to military violence (Deer,

2010). Deer notes that physical and sexual violence were so common during these relocations, that they were "likely not considered noteworthy in the eyes of contemporary record keepers" inferring that the extent of it cannot now presently be conceived (2010, p. 661).

Violence Against Women

Extreme violence is assumed with the consideration of the word 'genocide,' but the hinge upon which *this* genocide, past and present, is both carried out and resisted, is in the subjugation and abuse of Native women specifically. Pacheco quotes a Cheyenne saying: "'[a] nation is not conquered until the hearts of the women are on the ground'" (2009). Rape has been a weapon of war throughout the ages, and it is a defining method of the physical element of genocide (Short, 2010). Deer suggests that rape can itself, be an illustration of the whole concept of colonialism connecting that "colonial forces found it easy to shift from the raping of a woman to the raping of a country to the raping of the world" (2010). Similarly, Jewett and Garavan describe "The Conquest of America—the resource that enriched the West—was a conquest of the native body, of native cultures, of the Earth itself. The Conquest was an act of Rape on bodies, peoples, land" (2018, p. 47). The settler's intrinsically misogynistic social structure found itself, in whole, threatened by the status of Native women and thusly targeted them for carnal and internal destruction (Smith, 2003).

Threatened by the high statuses and bodily autonomy of Indigenous women, settlers would only acknowledge or negotiate with tribal men, asserting the subtle but deliberate beginnings of a forced patriarchal shift (Weaver, 2009). More so, the women were punished for practicing ownership over their bodies. Deer (2015) writes:

"Missionary records from throughout the continent indicate that many religious groups formally imposed severe consequences on Native women who dared exercise independence and sexual autonomy" (p. 20). Not only did the empowered position of Indigenous women threaten settler men, but Smith argues that it threatened existing white, male ownership over white women (2003). Moreover, the strength of Indigenous women and their roles in the keeping and passing of culture, made them the biggest long-term threat in resistance; a threat that exists to this day.

Combatting this fear, it wasn't enough to simply sanction the sexuality of women. Settler practices were designed to destroy females *as* life-givers, and by extension, their children. Andrea Smith (2003) documents numerous accounts of the desecration of Indigenous women both alive and post death, noting the cutting out of genitals to display on hats, beaten and ravished bodies laid out for viewers' consumption, and the lancing of pregnant women, to name but a few. She quotes the sorrow of American Horse after the massacre at Wounded Knee, lamenting the killing of the women and children "'who are to go to make up the future strength of the Indian people…'" (Smith, 2003, p. 75). As women are the bearers of future generations of Native nations, and the primary threat to the settler, so the violation and destruction of them is the most important tool of conquest (Weaver, 2009). Andrew Jackson again, is documented to have directed the disproportionate killing and mutilation of women and children specifically to "complete extermination" (Smith, 2003). The sacredness and honor of First Nations women, so devalued and hypersexualized by colonial brutality, was effectively reversed into a lack of personhood. Again, Smith explains it best:

> Because Indian bodies are "dirty", they are considered sexually violable and "rapable." That is, in patriarchal thinking, only a body that is "pure" can be

violated. The rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count (2009, p. 73).

The war against First Nations women and future generations continued, not just in the disproportionate killings of such, but in the prevention of life. The intentional control over Native fertility has been reported in the mass sterilization of women and girls through the 1970s (Carpio, 2004). Realizing that many Native women were being questionably diagnosed or even lied to about conditions 'requiring' sterilization, an investigation of 4 out of 12 areas using Indian Health Services (IHS) found that 3,406 Indigenous women were sterilized in just a three-year period in just those areas (Carpio, 2004). It is estimated that by 1976 "25% of all Native women of childbearing age had been sterilized without their informed consent, with sterilization rates as high as 80% on some reservations" (Smith, 2003). Carpio asserts that this is purely an outcome of colonial genocide in the form of government sanctioned systems that are assuming control over the physical bodies of Native women (2004). Using federally funded Indian Health Services (IHS) to sterilize women without consent or even their knowledge, physically cuts away the ability to produce the next generation and creates a vacuum of shame and silence (Carpio, 2004). Similarly, throughout the 1980s, dangerous contraceptives, known to be carcinogens, were pushed through tribal lands and resulted in infertility for many (Smith, 2003).

Assimilation

Yet another of Lemkin's modes of cultural genocide is the practice of ethnic cleansing through forced or coerced transformation to European society and religion. "As American policy shifted to embrace the idea that if Native Americans could not be destroyed by force, they would need to be erased by assimilation" (Pacheco, 2009, p. 17).

From European clothing to learning English, to aggressive religious evangelism and the schooling of children, assimilation advanced the vulnerability to violence.

The use of residential schools has been cited as one of the most effective strategies employed by the settler to achieve assimilation. As with the displacement of whole tribes off their ancestral lands, families were then separated, removing children and placing them in church-affiliated boarding schools meant to strip them of their culture by prohibiting sacred practice and their indigenous languages (Kim, 2018). The use of residential schools is not unique to the Native nations of North America but were enforced upon Aboriginal people groups across the globe. Those with the deepest similarities lie in Australia and New Zealand with rates of violence, poverty, and cultural detachment most similar across Indigenous groups whose children were forcibly taken from their families and placed in such schools (Feir, 2016).

It was in the 1880s that Canada began mandating the attendance of Indian Residential Schools (IRS), the last one finally closing its doors in 1996 (Feir, 2016). Though parental resistance is documented, governments cited that the children were 'neglected' and in need of full-time care and education via the interventions of churches and state (Feir, 2016). These schools were designed to strip the indigeneity of the children, prohibiting them from practicing traditional spirituality, denying them the psychosocial elements of family necessary for healthy development, and exposing them to violence in the forms of sexual and physical abuse as well as medical experimentation in some cases (Kim, 2018). Feir documents that regardless of the distance between the school and the location of the families, children were kept from their parents for months or years at a time and endured brutal punishments for expressing indigeneity (2016). For

example, if a child spoke in their Native language, they could have their tongues pierced with needles or be beaten bloody (Feir, 2016). Gender roles consistent with patriarchal and Christian philosophies were also enforced as forms of policy violence against ethnic identity (Kim, 2018). Carrying that European mindset into action then, children were considered the property and 'dirty' burden of the men who subjected them to extraordinary amounts of sexual violence and social sanctioning meant to shame them for their race.

Slavery and indentured servitude were practiced in mass, also as a means of controlling and assimilating the Native population. The California State Legislature passed an Act for the Government and Protection of Indians in 1850 which allowed White settlers 'debt bondage' if they paid the bonds of convicted Natives who would then 'work off' the debt with forced labor (Greer, 2013). It also allowed that officials could pick up Native "vagrants" and send them to ranchers as laborers. Many children were also stolen away from their parents, or their parents were even murdered so that the children could be sold to white families for labor (Greer, 2013). Today, these abuses are recognized broadly as human trafficking.

Cyclical and Modern Violence

It wasn't until the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, that the practicing of Indigenous traditions and the speaking of Native languages, was formally decriminalized. There are several modern displays of continued discriminatory statutes, however. Jaymelee Kim acknowledges the evolution of physical genocide into the bureaucratic policies that continue violence in terms of unequal racial power and oppression (2018). Modifications of Indian law, the control of resources and health

services, the usurpation and destruction of sacred land, and civil disenfranchisement are included in that list (Kim, 2018).

There remains a deep seeded disrespect and disconnection from the environmental concerns facing Indigenous communities. Remembering that the land and all of Nature is in kinship with First Nations, the destruction of resources and the demolition of sacred spaces and burial grounds in the name of infrastructure, are especially egregious offenses (Kim, 2018). Demolished burial grounds, for example, are not merely ancient relics detached from present life, they are the grandparents and great-grandparents of people alive today; they are the resting places, the generational memories of beloved family. It is truly violence against the living via violence against the dead. Kim documents the 100+ day protest of the construction of a parking garage over Musqueam burial grounds in Canada

> For Indigenous peoples who practiced traditional Aboriginal spirituality, informants shared that some of the dead were visibly anguished by the physical and figurative violence they were experiencing. For those who did not engage with the spirit world in this traditional sense, the policy, bureaucracy, and absence of Euro-Canadian support that enabled the disrespect and desecration of remains evidenced a persisting colonial structure that impacted all Indigenous nations (2018, p. 7).

Analogously are the Oglala Sioux's battles against the Trans-Canada pipeline, which spilled 12 times in its first year of operation, and the 2016 Standing Rock protest of the Dakota Access pipeline (Kim, 2018). These environmental offenses threaten water and fishing, land and hunting, on which, reservation-dwelling Indigenous people rely for life and custom (Kim, 2018). "The Indian Reservation today is in reality a 'prisoner of war camp'… 'We are not free', there is a pretense of consent" (Jewett & Garavan, 2019, p. 47). Skewes and Blume argue that these environmental actions can often be

retraumatizing (2019). The Dakota Access pipeline for example, was originally supposed to cross the Missouri River near Bismarck, North Dakota but was rerouted toward the Standing Rock reservation after concerns over environmental damages that might affect the predominantly White community (Skewes & Blume, 2019). This preferential treatment for White districts at the expense of Natives, is continuing to perpetuate a sense of 'less-than' in the cultural narrative.

It shouldn't be disregarded that environmental harm extends to bodily violence, for the limitation of resources is a causational factor in the desperation that produces high rates of crime in Native territories (Deer, 2010). Additionally, anecdotal notes suggest pipeline man camps bring with them the demand for drug and sex trafficking. Even the opposition to these constructions can become inundated with "outside activists" who perpetuate the romanticizing of violence against Natives. The Standing Rock protest began with the peaceful intentions of Indigenous Water Protectors and gradually grew into a social media frenzy for largely white 'supporters' to continue the colonial tradition of 'taking over' (Jewett & Garavan, 2019). What was an atmosphere that was uniting and even healing to many Native voices, became the ground for appropriation and white supremacy.

> The problem is everyone wants our culture but they don't want our reality. Our reality is miserable. The reality is something that needs to be honoured [sic] first. Standing Rock also cemented the hate from both sides. Those guys put us in cages. They let folks do some pretty brutal things. It's hard to work with people when you know they are ready to bring down this incredible State violence on us. They are ready to put us in cages. And they will in a heartbeat (Jewett & Garavan, 2019, p. 48-49).

Not only does violence against the land allow for appropriation and the perpetuation of a White savior complex, it is a direct form of discrimination against

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Indigenous culture. Intentional dehumanization perpetrated by colonists has been deeply

rooted in the social narrative. In a study of microaggressions against Indigenous youth,

98% of the sample admitted to experiencing racial discrimination every day (Skewes &

Blume, 2019). The broad image of Native people is seeded in historical misinformation

and media interpretations of 'cowboys and Indians' or the 'Indian princess or the squaw",

both of which are only represented in their relationship to White men (Smiley, 2016).

This feeds into ever increasing stigmatization of social problems among Native

communities (Burnette, 2015). Moreover, when Indigenous groups do ally and come

together either in protest, or for representation, they "are portrayed as perpetual children

or as angry, vengeful, and irrational adults…incapable of controlling their addictions and

sexual urges…" (Thielen-Wilson, 2014, p. 186).

     All of this can be explained by the occupants' frame of privilege, as explained by

Jewett and Garavan: "If your story tells you that your advantage is due to your virtue, and

that 'other's' disadvantage is due to their failures then what do you do if the story turns

out to be untrue? Your ideological world collapses" (2019, p. 49). That is to say nothing

of internalization on the part of the Native; generation after generation being subverted

and marginalized and abused, can seed in one, a lack of self-worth. Pacheco writes that

many Indigenous women who have been raped believe they are targeted for violence

specifically because they are Indigenous and "that the only solution to the rape crisis

currently sweeping Indian country is to lose their Indigeneity" (2009, p. 1).

     By way of policy, racism is extended into discrepancies in prison populations and

voter disenfranchisement, both recognized forms of social control. The state of Montana

for example recognizes 33.4% of its federal offenders to be 'American Indians' even

though they make up only 6.6% of the state population (Skewes & Blume, 2019). While similar disproportions negatively affect members of other races, Indigenous people, particularly those who reside on reservations are exponentially disenfranchised (Stambaugh, 2019). This brings to bear the intersectional concept of unequal inequality; remembering that while many groups are marginalized or subjected to systems of inequity by the same power, some experience them to greater extents (Collins & Bilge, 2016). To illustrate, North Dakota, home to a large portion of the country's Natives on 5 separate reservations, has a voter ID law that requires a voter to have a residential street address (Stambaugh, 2019). The rurality of the territories precludes them from postal services or formal U.S. addresses so most of the residents use P.O. boxes which are not acceptable voting addresses, preventing thousands from participating in democracy (Stambaugh, 2019). This, of course, is the current edition of two centuries worth of citizenship refusal and voter exclusions based on reservation tax law (Stambaugh, 2019).

Recalling Intersectionality as an analytical tool, disenfranchisement and citizenship can be taken in with race, class, gender, in a frame of 'nation' (Collins, 2015). "Specifically, a sustained attention to the themes of nation, nationalism, nation-state, and national identity as aimed to align the power relations of nation with structural analyses of racism, capitalism, and patriarchy" (Collins, 2015, p. 13). The concept of 'nation' in the context of the power group identifies civil disenfranchisement and other bureaucratic violence as a method of maintaining control over national identity (Collins, 2015). This is exemplified with disenfranchisement in consort with other policies that continually violate treaties, move to suspend tribal sovereignty, and maintain jurisdictional control over land and law; all of which compromise the ability to construct Native national

identity. For example, in a study of 'visible minority' and Aboriginal (invisible minority) girls' navigation of a White controlled Canadian city, 'whiteness' is considered monolithic and assumed: "Their white peers, who are often described as seemingly uniform *they*, get to, in Lisa's (participant's) words, 'just be white'. Their belonging to the nation is natural and unquestioned" (Finney, 2010, p. 477). Finney (2010) directly connects the assimilative practices of British colonialism to the limiting of "Aboriginal nationalisms", supporting 'nation' as a construct of the dominating racial group, maintained to oppress the invisible minority. She also asserts that the intersecting elements of sexualization and gendering specifically attack Aboriginal women and children "resulting in their disenfranchisement from their home communities…" (Finney, 2010, p. 473).

Carrying national control into self-regulation, tribal governments are considered "pre-constitutional" and it follows that they should then be considered sovereign nations immune to settler law (Deer, 2018). Initially, following the destructive procedures of war, U.S. policy shifted to support the idea of self-determination, only to then enact intentions to dissolve tribal governments, removing pre-constitutional sovereignty (Deer, 2018). After acknowledging that colonial federal government had no legal ground to police or punish crime in sovereign territories, the Major Crimes Act of 1885 was designed to give the Supreme Court jurisdictional supremacy over violent crimes in Native country (French, 2005). It is still used today in professed effort to protect Native communities; however, federal prosecutors often decline their cases, leaving violent offenders unpunished (Deer, 2018). The jurisdictional orders that followed have acted without

recognition of tribal sovereignty in the management of crime, resulting in vastly less power compared to federal and state agencies (Deer, 2018).

Tribal jurisdiction is defined by the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 (ICRA) which severely limited the ability of tribes to prosecute crimes (Deer, 2018). Following the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 (TLOA) and the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013 (VAWA), tribal courts are just now allowed to incarcerate up to three years or fine up to $15,000 *if* the offender meets certain criteria (Deer, 2018). Non-Native offenders can *only* be prosecuted in cases of domestic violence (Deer, 2018). More than that, tribal police forces are limited. Though the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)—originally formed as a subset of the U.S. Department of War—does have an Indian Police Academy (IPA) the types of trainings aren't specific to the offenses that are common to MMIP and there aren't enough officers to maintain safety and order (French, 2005). Further complicating jurisdiction and police abilities, many reservations are split into tenure status "checkerboard" parcels owned by Natives and non-Natives (Shoemaker, 2017). Land, parcels held in "trust" are federally owned but include some tribal input, and parcels held in "fee" are partially owned by state and tribe to varying degrees (Shoemaker, 2017). Each individual plot of land on a reservation might be subject to different authorities, have different police, and abide different laws (Shoemaker, 2017).

Why would a national government continue with written and enacted practice meant for the removal of First Nations? Simply put, the existence of Indigenous people threatens the legitimacy of settler government (Thielen-Wilson, 2014). The "mere assertion of dominance over many Indigenous nations that have occupied land since

before European arrival/invasion" is in itself, violence meant to keep the image of

legitimacy (Thielen-Wilson, 2014, p. 184) Even after hundreds of years of exploitation

and oppression, to acknowledge Native presence, is to acknowledge the settlers' lack of

claim. Smith argues given that the majority of natural energy resources are found on

Native lands, "the continued existence of Indian people is a threat to capitalist

operations" (2003, p. 81). The power dynamic described by Intersectionality plays a role

here in the construct of social capital (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Those in power profit

disproportionately, ever increasing their status and influence from the very systems that

create inequalities (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It follows that the colonist must then keep

systems of oppression in place to secure their legitimacy and to prevent resistance. For

example, Savarese ties the particularly violent victimization of Indigenous women to

their cultural strength and resistance to the settlers' state, challenging its "precarious hold

on Indigenous lives" (2017). This is countered with unflattering racial representation.

Leslie Thielen-Wilson describes it:

> Portrayed as incapable of sovereignty, self-determination, and economic self-sufficiency, this dehumanization is likely experienced by Indigenous survivors as a familiar, yet new, assault on their individual and collective being. In turn, it likely enables settlers to experience themselves as rational and in control, and thereby as racially superior and morally entitled to *stay* (2014, p. 186).

This defaming racial representation is intentional and essential according to

W.E.B. Dubois, as a mechanism of racial dominance (Allan, 2013). The oppressor

represents the disenfranchised in ways that are negatively stigmatizing and because they

are in the empowered position, those oppressed can internalize that messaging, buying in

to the dynamic set up for them (Allan, 2013). This also allows settler-controlled media to

steer the broad social conversation away from the realities of colonization perpetuating

stereotypes like that of the "drunken Indian" myth (Skewes & Blume, 2019). By controlling the narrative in this way, the colonist state can continue to legitimize its presence, supremacy, and forward the systems that cycle in oppression.

Jewett and Garavan provide a perspective of this present broad societal ethos *as* "rape culture," acknowledging the expansive violation of land and life. "Rape occurs when you do not give consent and you have no power to stop the aggressor" (2018, p. 46). The overarching commonality among marginalized Indigenous groups across the globe, is the history of European colonialism and the traumatic loss of culture. With that loss, in the forms of assimilation and genocide, the interconnectedness of kinship that is the foundation of healing, is broken, creating a gap in the communal support that sustains life (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010). That loss is also translated into the historical and heritable traumas that can cross generations. The following section will provide a basic knowledge of historical trauma as a condition, and its impact on the Native collective.

Historical Trauma

With a context for cultural genocide and the many harms committed against First Nations, developing an awareness of generational trauma illuminates modern vulnerabilities to violence. Many scholars have linked historical traumas to substance use disorders, PTSD, high rates of disease, and many social and psychological disproportions, but defining it has been a challenge (Weichelt et al., 2012). In a broad sense, historical trauma can be viewed as an event or set of events that targets a group with a shared identity, via genocidal or ethnocidal destruction (Walters et al., 2011). However, historical trauma encompasses so many injuries and dynamics, especially for

First Nations, that it is hard to decipher what symptoms are 'historical' and which are products of contemporary traumatic experiences (Whitbeck et al., 2004).

To provide some background, persistent intergenerational trauma and grief was only first clinically recognized in holocaust survivors and their children (Whitbeck et al., 2004). "Survivor syndrome" manifested in symptoms of "denial, depersonalization, isolation, somatization, memory loss, agitation, anxiety, guilt, depression, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, psychic numbing, and survivor guilt" (Whitbeck et al, 2004, p. 120). These symptoms resulted in ineffective parenting, which then produced a generation of symptomatic children, characterized widely as overdependent, emotionally stunted, depressed, and feeling damaged by their parents' traumatic experiences (Whitbeck et al., 2004). While similar cycles in parenting may have occurred, Indigenous experience of historical trauma and even genocide, must be considered on its own. Whitbeck et al., (2004) suggests that the largest difference between survivors of the holocaust and colonization is that the former was relegated to a singular period of genocide, whereas the latter's is ongoing. It is "the accumulation of genocidal acts, recycling epidemics, of disease, war, and cultural destruction through forced relocation and assimilation over several hundred years…" that defines historical trauma among the Indigenous (Wiechelt et al., 2012, p. 320).

Linking historical trauma to specific health symptoms and behaviors is challenging, again because disparities, discrimination, and victimization persist (Whitbeck et al., 2004). While the link is inextricable, piecing out direct cause and effect relationships between past injury and present indicators is widely debated (Walters et al., 2011). The newness of this field also infers that empirical research is limited and there is

yet to be consensus on how best to approach study (Walters et al., 2011). Whitbeck et al. (2004), coming from a quantitative approach, established first, that historic loss was a part of the cognitive reality for Indigenous people. Secondly, they measured trauma by developing the Historical Loss Scale (HLS) and the Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale (HLAS)(Whitbeck et al., 2004). These instruments have linked perceived historical losses such as land, spiritual ways, and self-respect, with present depression, anxiety, avoidance, isolation, and many other symptoms (Whitbeck, et al., 2004). Weichelt et al. utilized these scales in a study of substance use disorders (SUD) as a factor of historic trauma (2012). Looking specifically at urban dwelling Natives, this study found a rather strong significance between the perception of historic loss and the abuse of alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit drugs (Weichelt et al., 2012). Furthermore, the correlation was even stronger than the results for reservation communities, suggesting that urban Natives are more affected by loss due to acculturation, resulting in SUDs (Weichelt et al., 2012).

Establishing these direct correlations is very important on an empirical level, it is suggested that classical methodologies don't go far enough to explain the poor health and mental health experienced by Indigenous people (Walters et al., 2011). Utilizing ecosocial (how organisms react to their environment) or epigenetic (how exterior forces may effect gene expression) frameworks instead, allows for a very important discussion of "embodiment", which is more consistent with the spiritual and interconnective modality of Native worldview (Walters et al., 2011). "Our bodies hold on to trauma. Our bodies are the repository of all that we haven't let go" (Jewett & Garavan, 2018, p. 44). In this way, a biological connection can be drawn between historical trauma, stress, and

the ways in which the body is physically altered genetically, chemically, and neurologically (Walters et al., 2011). Historical trauma (HT) is deeply linked with current trauma, particularly in environmental damages, which affects the health of the Native collective.

> Biological expressions of HT may, in part, produce health disparities in a wide spectrum of outcomes—from chronic and persistent illnesses (e.g., diabetes) to poor mental health (e.g. PTSD, depression). From an ecosocial perspective, certain pathways to embodiment of HT are clearer given that some HT events are tied to exposures to noxious physical, chemical, biological, and psychosocial insults—all of which can affect biological integrity at numerous interacting levels (Walters et al., 2011, p. 8).

Taking into account the presence of trauma in the body itself, as opposed to just the perception of loss and resulting emotional/mental status, allows for historical trauma to be viewed as causal in many present vulnerabilities. The high rates of suicide among First Nations around the world, for example, cannot be viewed only in terms of individual or proximal stressors, but as a symptom of communal cultural identity loss via colonization (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010). That collective historic loss is also present on a spiritual level, referred to as "cumulative psychic wounding" or "soul wounding" (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010). This spiritual injury also produces "…a loss of hope and leads to depression, post-traumatic stress or a specific type of multigenerational trauma, and suicide among other outcomes. These are all indicators of a people in profound pain" (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010, p. 129).

Historical trauma may be a newer field of study that is in need of exploration, but its defining feature is that overarching concept of "people in profound pain". That pain is of course layered with past, present, and enduring colonial injuries, but it clearly takes a toll on the collective wellbeing in many ways (Walters et al., 2011). Healing from

historical trauma is equally in need of research, though decolonization, tribal sovereignty, and even confronting specific traumatic events, are suggested (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010). For example, in a study of reconnecting to the body, six Choctaw women re-walked their tribe's route along the Trail of Tears (Schultz et al., 2016). This very direct and purposeful encountering of a specific historical trauma was a form of experiential learning thought to reverse "… a traditional sequence of information assimilation" (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 25). The results indicated that the physical experience of engaging with the traumatic event produced introspection and culturally meaningful pathway to reconnect to the body and spirit, inspiring new understanding of health (Schultz et al., 2016). Lawson-Te Aho & Liu state that though "It is impossible to turn back the pages of time to recreate a pure uncontaminated set of pre-colonial kinship-based traditions and social structures" breaking out of Western methods of healing is essential with collective and generational trauma (2010).

The modern conditions of historical trauma, in health disparities, mental/emotional struggles, self-destructive behaviors, biological elements, and spiritual functioning, all contribute to vulnerabilities. Colonial harms both in historic and contemporary forms are cited by Skews and Blume as the root cause of high rates of SUD and susceptibility to racial violence (2019). The overall lack of Native wellbeing, sustained by intersectional inequality and power dynamics (Collins & Bilge, 2016) and the cross generational passing of trauma, informs a general state of vulnerability to violence and victimization. From that, the present crisis of MMIP can be discussed in consideration of the context.

MMIP and Violence

With a foundation for understanding the colonial history that has rendered Indigenous people so vulnerable to violence in terms of historical trauma, the varied and uncertain empirical numbers become easier to transfer into realistic scope. Violence is also important to view through the lens of Intersectionality (Collins, 2015). The theory allows for violence to be understood separately from "mono-categorical" social problems, an instead, in terms of the complex social inequalities that maintain forms of violence (Collins, 2015). Violence against women for example, cannot just be viewed through gendered frames of male perpetrators and female victims, neither should these abuses be ranked with less importance than other types of violence (Collins, 2015). Instead, discussions of violence must allow for the inclusion of a broad spectrum of possibilities such as nation-state violence, ethnicity, historical militarization, and others (Collins, 2015). In this way, an intersectional frame of 'violence' provides an opportunity to think through the following statistics in terms of connection to the colonial offenses discussed throughout the chapter.

What *is* known of the violence experienced by the Indigenous helps to structure a picture of profuse brutality, particularly against Native women and girls. A 2016 NIJ sample study suggests that 84.3% of Native women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime; 56.1% have experienced sexual violence and 55.5% have been physically abused/assaulted by an intimate partner in the United States (Rosay, 2016). Little is known about the rates of murder among this population in the U.S., but again, it is likely that they are similar to those in Canada, which are marginally better understood. Smiley cites Canadian homicide statistics documenting that Indigenous women were murdered at 6 times the rate of non-natives in 2014 and the rates of child sexual abuse for

Indigenous girls under the age of 8 at 75-80% (2016). She also notes that Royal Canadian Mounted Police have *documented* 1,181 cases of disappeared or murdered Indigenous women and girls over the past 30 years. More than this, sexual assaults against Indigenous women are exceptionally brutal: 50% involving additional physical injury as opposed to 30% of non-native assaults (Weaver, 2009).

There are fewer studies regarding violence against First Nations men, but the NIJ report suggests that they are also victims to violence at exceptionally high rates, with 81.6% having experienced it in some form throughout their lifetimes, 27.5% have been sexually abused and 73% have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner (Rosay, 2016). While interpersonal forms of violence tend to characterize the experiences of Indigenous women, studies involving the men infer more state violence. By March of 1976 the homicide rate on just the Pine Ridge Reservation (crossing South Dakota and Nebraska lines) was 170 per 100,000 people, roughly 8.5 times that of Detroit ('the murder capital of the U.S.') during the same period (Akhtar, 2011). The militarization of law enforcement against the American Indian Movement (AIM) during the 1970's is relayed in similarity to colonial era military violence, noting that most of the deaths by gunshot were "designated as being from 'exposure'" (Akhtar, 2011, p. 58). It has been suspected that the FBI was involved in the killings to suppress the AIM which sought the removal of government interference in Tribal matters (Akhtar, 2011). Even now, First Nations people are victims of police brutality more than any other racial group "with rates of law enforcement killings of 6.6 people per million men ages 25-34; 5.9 per those ages 35-44; and 4.6 per those ages 20-24, compared with 1.2 per million people in the United States as a whole" (Skewes & Blume, 2019).

Drawing attention to the disproportionate violence exacted on Indigenous women throughout history, there's no question they are overrepresented in human trafficking for the purposes of sex and pornography (Deer, 2010). The underfunded and under trained law-enforcement realities of Native residential existence has made them "a de facto haven for traffickers, allowing the traffickers to operate with little concern of detection or prosecution" (Greer, 2013, p. 454). Deer connects the 'normalcy' of eroticized Native image to aboriginal overrepresentation in prostitution and the sex trade across the globe (2010). Morton details the rampant kidnapping and murder that takes place on the Canadian "Highway of Tears" where many Indigenous women hitchhike for access (2016). Since hitchhiking is considered high-risk behavior, "Indigenous women are construed as 'willing victims' who deserve the violence they face because of their 'lifestyle choices'" (Morton, 2016, p. 304). In a study interviewing health practitioners in Minnesota regarding victims they had served, it was reported that at least 345 Indigenous women and girls had been trafficked for sex in Minnesota from 2004 to 2007 alone (Pierce, 2012). The high rates of trafficking Indigenous women and girls also results in disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system for illegal prostitution (Pierce, 2012). In Alaska, for example, it has been recorded that Native girls visiting Anchorage have been specifically targeted by sex traffickers (Pierce, 2012). Though these women and girls are victims of trafficking, "In 2009 and 2010, about one-third of women arrested for prostitution in Anchorage were AN (Alaskan Natives), while AN's represented only 16% of the entire state population" (Pierce, 2012, p. 38).

Along a similar line, is the reality that many Indigenous women may, in fact, view prostitution as their only option to achieve economic or social stability (Greer,

2013); a conclusion that stems from a history of being forced to sell sex for survival. Deer cites a Canadian study from 2000 that reported 70% of the prostitutes working the most dangerous streets in Vancouver were Indigenous women under 26 years old (2010). In Winnipeg, hundreds of girls, some as young as 8, worked the streets, again at a 70% makeup of aboriginal girls (Deer, 2010). It is anecdotally understood that many of these women and girls are missing from their homes, having been moved by traffickers to at least thirty-two different states, and as many are never recovered (Greer, 2013). The internalized hypersexual 'princess' or her prostituting counterpart, the 'squaw' (Smiley, 2016) are undeniable contributions to demand for an 'exotic' experience from consumers. Greer quotes the experience of a survivor who remembered that '"In some cases, johns wanted to role-play colonist and colonized as part of prostitution"' (2013). In direct lineage of colonial practice that not only protected those who violated Native women, but rewarded them, Sarah Deer argues that "the normalization of violence against Native women often renders the problem unremarkable, if not invisible" (2010, p. 627).

It stands to reason that traffickers are aware of the market and the vulnerability among Indigenous communities, and Deer asserts that there is plenty of evidence that organized crime and street gangs are also a regular occurrence (2010). At least two serial killers have been identified in Canada for targeting Indigenous prostitutes and the FBI announced its suspect of another working in the trucking industry, responsible for hundreds of murders of 'transient' women "sexually assaulted, murdered, and dumped along a highway" (Deer, 2010, p. 682). She notes however, that there is reluctance to formally publish the percentage of Native women in these instances, which only contributes to the questions that are in desperate need of answers.

Part of the challenge is deciphering *who* is perpetrating this violence. Statistics from the DOJ in 2004 reported that nearly 4 in 5 Indigenous victims of sexual assault claimed that the perpetrator was white (Pacheco, 2009). Similarly, the 2016 NIJ report conveys that more than 90% of Indigenous men and 95% of women who experienced violence, reported that the perpetrators were non-Native. Of women who had experienced sexual violence in the sample, 96% reported a non-Native perpetrator, whereas only 21% said they were victimized by another Native (Rosay, 2016). If this is the case, Indigenous experience is singled out from all other races who are primarily victimized by their own members (Deer, 2018). One suggested explanation for this is the high rate of Indigenous women who are married to non-Native men (Deer, 2018).

Of the interpersonal and sexual violence that *is* perpetrated by Native men, Jewett and Garavan make plain that the compulsory conversion to patriarchy has also taken its toll on Native men, who were more less forced to internalize 'rape culture' (2019). That internalization of problematic patriarchy could easily lend to the anecdotal information that asserts violent offenses are, in-fact, often laterally perpetrated (Native against Native). However, no formal evidence has been found to support that it happens more often than interracial offenses. It is clear that violence appears in both forms, but these conflicting reports suggest that either there is a gross underestimate/underreporting of lateral violence or there is *truly* a deeply rooted racial component to violence against Native women.

What is known of violence against Indigenous people helps to put MMIP in perspective, but the list of unknowns is vast. So much research is required to fully understand MMIP in its full breadth, but where to start? This study seeks to answer that

question by exploring MMIP conceptually as a contemporary feature of colonization. By understanding MMIP in this holistic way, future questions for study may be specified with a historical and sociological perspective as opposed to a singular, modern social problem. The following chapters will address this purpose in the linkages between present Native experiences with MMIP and the previous discussion of literature.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

"As academics, we are hesitant about speaking for others because we are concerned that we will appropriate meaning through misinterpretation; the question is, in effect, '"Can we hear?'" (Petrillo, 2007).

The methodology of this work aims for nothing less than to truly *hear* Native voice and reflect it. A voice which extends far past modern MMIP and rings through hundreds of years of oppression, violence, and racism. Capturing the breadth and depths of which can't be done in a single thesis project. This particular study is but one piece of a larger body of work evolving out of partnerships with Indigenous organizations and individuals. The data reflected here has been gathered for that larger continuing work and only the materials relevant to the research purposes for this thesis project are included. This research will serve as a foundational block upon which the future research and actionable work can be built towards addressing MMIP and violence against Native people.

Data Collection Process

Forming out of a partnership between research teams at two universities, the initial steps of the broad work were focused in cultivating an understanding of MMIP and developing trusting relationships with Indigenous partners. The research team applied for funding for site visits where a preliminary listening tour was conducted. From the information gathered, the team developed questions and attained IRB approval to formally collect invitational in-person focus group data that fostered a deeper understanding of MMIP in a general context. This second wave of in-field listening produced sets of questions specific to thematic factors identified from focus groups;

colonization, human trafficking and violence, jurisdiction and law enforcement, and structural racism to name a few. To answer these questions, focus groups, both in person and via web-based platforming, began with two question sets: one for general factors of MMIP and one specific to the history of colonization in relation to MMIP. Due to interruptions from the COVID-19 global pandemic, all interactions were moved online and revised to include one-on-one interviews as focus groups became difficult to populate. IRB approval was obtained for all steps of this project including these conditional revisions. Taking into account that Indigenous people were/are disproportionately impacted by the outbreak of disease, data collection was understandably stalled and thusly, only two web interviews were conducted.

The web interviews and in-person focus groups were semi-structured and conducted in agreement with standard qualitative methods. Focus groups are a widely accepted form of data collection, particularly in marketing, sociological, and behavioral fields (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). The intention of a focus group is to create an atmosphere of cohesion and safety for participants whilst providing the space for verbal and physical notes and observations consistent with interpersonal interviewing. The main benefit of focus groups for qualitative research is the quick form in which patterns of experience and perspective can be identified (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). The two focus groups conducted for this project occurred during an organizational training conference enabling participants from a wide cross section of locations to engage together. All of the participants from these focus groups are advocates in their Native communities and thusly very knowledgeable about MMIP and violence against

Indigenous women. Their varied experience quickly developed into shared patterns and notable themes.

Interviews, similar to focus groups, are considered one of the best modes of obtaining rich and meaningful qualitative data (Gruber, et al., 2008). They serve as purposeful conversations that are structured specifically for deeper engagement with social phenomena (Gruber, et al., 2019). In an age of digital exploration, it is important to briefly discuss the value of utilizing a technological space for qualitative interviews. There is concern that web interviews are less authentic than in-person consultations, but it is suggested that they not only reduce the cost of travel and the considerable inconveniences to both researcher and participant but may also increase comfort level and reduce stress (Gruber, et al., 2008). Both parties may participate in familiar, non-threatening environments and may tailor anonymity to their preferences, preventing respondents from being influenced by body language or the appearance of the interviewer (Gruber, et al., 2008). From the researcher's standpoint, web interviewing provides increasing services in automated recording and digital transcription, allowing easier interaction with data (Gruber, et al., 2008). For this work, web interviews certainly granted both parties a much more convenient interaction and safety in discussing difficult topics. This format also allowed for the safe distance necessary during a global pandemic.

All focus groups and interviews followed a semi-structured form and were recorded and transcribed for coding. Saturation was reached for the specific themes pertaining to the research purpose: to explore MMIP as a modern manifestation of colonization. All of the IRB approved questions for both general MMIP inquiry and colonization specific sets can be found in Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix. Follow up

questions consistent with the development of organic conversation are not presented in the Appendix but the researchers did ask for clarification, examples, and additional details when relevant.

Included here are a few sample questions from each theme. All of the questions and sub questions were designed to discern the big picture of MMIP in all of its factors. The broad angles of the following questions allowed the research team to begin to process specific topical directions for future study and informed the selection of MMIP in relation to colonization for this foundational work.

General MMIP sample questions

When we use the phrase, "Murdered & Missing Indigenous People" what does this mean? How are people missing? What type of murders? What people? How long has this been going on?

What makes people vulnerable to such victimization?

What structural changes need to be made to address the issue of MMIW? What are the barriers to making these changes?

The questions developed for the general focus groups (Table 1, Appendix) allowed the research team to gain an understanding of the prevalence of MMIP. Additionally, they allowed some foundational inquiries into what 'missing' means in this context. The information from these focus groups resulted in concentrating research efforts on colonization as related to MMIP. The following colonization specific questions (Table 2, Appendix) were used in subsequent interviews.

Colonization sample questions

While we talk about MMIP as a modern concern, we all know that similar patterns have occurred throughout history. What other forms have you seen historically?

How/have these different types of MMIP throughout history resulted in cultural changes? What have Indigenous people lost?

What does "healing" mean to you culturally? What traditional/spiritual practices help you to recover from loss?

These questions focused on understanding how colonization currently impacts individuals and Indigenous communities. By focusing on specified questions relating to past and present violence, the research team was able to gain deeper insight of concepts like violence against women, patriarchy, and cultural practice. Recognizing Native perspective in this sense, helped organize the relationship between colonization and MMIP.

Sample

The sample of participants in this study are Indigenous community/tribal citizens, members of Indigenous organizations, and advocates who are currently working with or impacted by the MMIP crisis. Together they represent several nations and reservations across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions of the United States. Across two focus groups and two interviews there were a total of nine participants (n=9). To preserve confidentiality, demographic and identifying information are anonymous.

Analytical Strategy

Although the method for data collection followed standard practice with IRB approval and informed consenting participants, there are some extra considerations to make when conducting formal research with Indigenous communities. Amid the long list of historical offenses against Native peoples is a pattern of mistreatment by researchers and academic institutions (Thomas et al., 2009). The removal of children to be placed in boarding schools, stealing data, medical experimentation, misrepresentation, and

profiting/advancing non-Natives are just a few of the reasons that there can be a significant distrust of academic researchers (Morton et al., 2013). Additionally, "Tribes are often more vulnerable because they are in the difficult position of seeking data and research funds while struggling against simply 'being studied'" (Harding et al., 2012, p.7). On the part of the researcher, it is also often difficult to break out of Western approach, which is necessary to capture and reflect Native voice and agenda (Harding et al., 2012). With these concerns in mind, it becomes all the more important to ensure that the researchers utilize respectful practices and centralize Native intention (Thomas et al., 2009).

To address these concerns, the researches employed methods of Grounded Theory for data collection and analysis, with the intention of prioritizing the participants. Grounded Theory, as described by Charmaz, may take several different paths and may be tailored to the needs of the specific research (2006). This provides the researcher flexibility in the process as opposed to a defined set of methodological rules which, in turn, allows for the space to "consider how participants invoke ideas, practices, and accounts from both the larger and local cultures of which they are a part" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 40). That flexibility allowed the research team to spend time engaging with potential participants, actively listening, and building trusting relationships. With an ethnographic bent, Grounded Theory seeks to capture the lives of the participants through engaged listening and intentional data processing (Charmaz, 2006). The emphasis on taking in a whole culture, focused the researchers on Native perspective, forcing considerations outside of Western paradigm. Though no qualitative data is completely raw—unintentional interpretation happens at all stages—the goal is to hear the direct

ideas from participants with space to draw out potential unintended threads in a way that is respectful of their culture (Charmaz, 2006).

Applying the principals of Grounded Theory for qualitative research, information was gathered via immersive observation, the consumption of texts, and field work. This practice familiarized the researchers with topical, cultural, and relational groundwork for appropriate and thoughtful engagement of sensitive information. The recorded and transcribed data was coded by four researchers to ensure thematic reliability. Coding was practiced in three stages in accordance with Grounded Theory. Stage one followed Charmaz' suggested initial line-by-line coding along with memo writing to protect the nuances in the work (2006). The researches did this separately and came together to discuss common themes in the construction of broader in-vivo codes to "preserve participants' meanings of their views and action in the coding itself" (Charmaz, 2006). Stage two, or "focused coding" involved each researcher separately piecing the language, ideas, and incidents of the transcripts into those previously identified themes (Charmaz, 2006). Once again, coming together to check for reliability and to determine if there were themes that had yet to emerge. Splitting into teams of two, the researchers coded interview data within the existing themes that emerged from the focus groups to preserve consistency. In Stage three, researchers identified codes most relevant to this project's research question and separated once more to identify specific topical refrains in quotational reference.

In summation, transcribed qualitative data from two in-person focus groups and two web-based interviews was coded by researchers into 24 undeveloped themes. The majority of those themes will accompany additional data collection in future works by the

research team. Three of those codes, having achieved saturation, were identified for deeper analysis to address the research purpose of understanding MMIP as a manifestation of colonization: 1) Historical trauma 2) Ways of missing 3) Connectivity.

The code "historical trauma", was originally broken down into 15 subcategories mentioned or very strongly implied. Many of these were very closely linked or overlapped in the coding process so they were condensed into eight main subthemes of historical trauma along with the number of times each was identified, as is represented by the adjacent numbers in (Box 1):

#1. Forms of Historical Trauma Discussed by Participants
State sanctioned/forced removal/sovereignty (28)
Racism (18)
Gender & patriarchy (23)
Traditional practice/cultural identity (18)
Boarding schools/assimilation (22)
Violence/sexual violence/prostitution/trafficking (24)
Generational trauma (12)
Silencing history/voice/keeping 'us' down. (17)

Twenty-two subthemes were originally identified within "ways of missing" and the number of instances within each was recorded. They were condensed to account for relation and overlap into 12 subcategories. Collapsing those subcategories once more, six were ultimately identified as the most prevalent to this research and were selected for discussion (Box 2)

#2. Subcategories of Ways of Missing as Discussed by Participants
Murdered/missing (includes trafficking, kidnapping, suicide) (35)
Missing information (19)
Foster care/boarding school/adoption (8)
Missing parents/generations/groups/forced removal (9)
Missing from culture/connection/identity (24)
Missing from attention/forgotten/unsolved (11)

"Connectivity" as a research code is deeply woven into every aspect of the overall data. Identifying themes presented a unique challenge as the concept of 'connectivity' was intermingled with all other themes and subthemes. For this reason, it demanded a different approach so that the most project specific information was allowed to come through. Remembering again that this project is one piece of a larger body of work, the many subthemes of connectivity will appear in future work. For the purposes of developing a 'big picture' understanding of "connectivity" in relation to MMIP and colonization, it has been broken down, not by incidental prevalence like the two previous codes, but into 4 overarching concepts (Box 3).

#3. Thematic Connectivity as Discussed by Participants
Connections that were broken by colonization (27)
Broken connections that amplify vulnerabilities (49)
Connections to people who are missing (32)
Connections that are resilient or reform and repair (46)

Limited participant quotations were chosen as examples for each of the three themes based on clarity and context and can be viewed in the following data and analysis chapter. The three themes will be discussed in terms of participant intent along with the unintentional threads that emerged through coding with Grounded Theory. The next chapters have made focused efforts to accurately and appropriately represent the relationship between MMIP and colonization from Indigenous perspective.

CHAPTER IV

DATA AND ANALYSIS

"...traditional environmental knowledge, stories, and other intellectual property are important sources of a tribe's collective wealth and the inheritance of succeeding generations"
(Harding, et al., 2012).

Once again, it is of highest value to remind the reader of the attitude with which the researcher approaches data and analysis. The term "data" itself is purposefully sterile to communicate objectivity, but the quotes and language that follow are living text; the breath, gift, and common heritage of many Indigenous people. Furthermore, remembering that this particular project is purposed in setting a broad foundational understanding and attitude for future work, the approach for this section is to clearly reflect the relationship between past and present using the codes: 1) Historical trauma 2) Ways of missing 3) Connectivity. Keeping this simplistic intention present in mind, the cyclical complexities of that relationship can emerge, even subconsciously, from the voices and language of participants.

Historical Trauma

'Historical trauma' refers to those colonial events and intentions that were designed by settlers to achieve cultural genocide and assimilation. These range from physical violence to systems designed for racial oppression, to religious and value-based cultural disruptions. Both historical actions and their modern manifestations are represented within the theme, truly illuminating the lack of distinction between 'past and present'; the interwoven message being that there was no 'end' to colonization. One participant spoke directly to the oppression of colonial morality and its endurance into the present.

"You went from the preacher telling the guy he can only have one wife, you know, or he could go sit in jail…. you went from that to this western system, and there was no, there's no transitions there's no resources."

Upon the intrusion of European modality, the Indigenous were not *even* granted the space or those "resources" to adjust in their own right. This unsubtle takeover threw the Native being into a chaotic state of survival that was compounded by the traumatizing events detailed in Chapter 2. Participants illuminated how those events remain in the collective conscious as cross generational elements of colonization in the following quotations.

"So once Native Americans were driven (from) their land, they were forbidden to speak their language. They were forbidden to express their culture and then the diseases like smallpox, tuberculosis all came into play. I mean, so much. I mean, that's physical. Plus, just the emotional and psychological wounding over that lifetime, it just kind of crosses generations"

"And our past cultural directors have told us that it was a matriarchal system. And then when (the) white soldiers came and kind of took over the Native American lands and their way of life and culture and identity and tried to force the patriarchal system on them, and it's just a lot of times carried over."

In a strong statement of generality, the next quote imparts the disdain the colonists had for the Indigenous way of life and their original intention to achieve and maintain total control. The "carry over" mentioned above can be seen in a glimpse of that historical pain and anger as it is still felt generationally and individually, ringing through the terse and uncensored language of the participant.

"…we got put into a little mushroom status on the reservation. I'll just plant you here and you fuckin' stay. We know you like to roam so we're gonna plant you."

As illustrated in the quotations above, ultimately, there is no 'post-colonization'. Indigenous communities are *still* continually affected by removal, patriarchy, Christian morality, and a lack of support or resources. In as much as these historical traumas can be broken down into topics for the sake of research, continual overlap between each of the eight sub themes (state sanctioned/forced removal/sovereignty, racism, gender/patriarchy, traditional practice/cultural identity, boarding schools/assimilation, violence/sexual violence/prostitution/trafficking, generational trauma, silencing history/voice/keeping 'us' down) illustrates the complexities and interconnectedness of victimization and vulnerability. That is, layer upon layer of patterned trauma that inseparably feed into one another. The disruption to Native being and the imposed, forceful control over land, law, and physical beings, started cycles of violence. The use of boarding schools, specifically, reverberated through participants' experience of both generational and even personal traumas. An effective tool for the colonizer, mandatory residential schools allowed a Christian, patriarchal government to maintain control over the Indigenous in various forms as detailed by participants.

> *"Like first of all you had the boarding schools, and churches got paid from the government to do that, so trafficking children, and a lot of them we know were molested and used (by), we could call (them) pedophile rings now, with these ministers and priests… that was the boarding school stuff."*

> *And same with youth, they experience violent crimes at a high rate and... And then just I think, the Native American children, they have high rates of child neglect and foster care placement. And, you know, you can trace that kind of back to colonization when they were trying to put everybody in boarding schools and strip away their culture."*

> *"Yeah, there still are boarding schools on by where I live. It's about an hour north (of) here. There's boarding schools that are in South Dakota. A lot of our clients have attended or even their children do attend."*

While the mandatory attendance of boarding schools was lifted, the participant's note of their current operation serves as a constant reminder of the State's ability to assert its dominance at any time and in any form. By communicating to the Native that the settler government had dominion over their children—Native future— they were able to force parents, kinships, and communities into a state of helplessness. The high rates of violence against children and continued separation from their families into state systems, as relayed above, is the maintenance of colonial control.

The sexual violence that occurred in boarding schools, especially against girls, and the imposition of patriarchy is also recognized as a recycled experience for Native women. From hyper sexualization to prostitution and even the internalization of gendered devaluation, abuses against Indigenous women and their children continue, directly feeding into MMIP as discussed below.

"And of course, growing up female. You know in a world that tells you you're nothing if you're by yourself you know, and your kids don't count."

"...violence against Native women and children is, it's a lot higher compared to the typical non- Hispanic White population. You know, Native American women are they're murdered at a very high rate. I think it's more than 10 times the national average in fact."

"...they talk about these women that the soldiers would pay with whiskey, but were they just numbing the rape?"

"...these Johns' mentality is to control and possess Indian women because of colonization in this country. They wanted to be like Pocahontas, so they had Pocahontas so they could say they 'bunned' (cultural term for 'had sex with') Pocahontas…"

These statements refer to direct historical patterns of survival sex, desperate coping mechanisms, gendered isolation, and patriarchal violence. They echoed the literature pertaining to historical trauma and the ways in which it results in self destructive behaviors and mental/emotional health conditions. Specifically, suicidality was a common point of participant discussion as an example of trauma's toll on the mind, body, and spirit. One participant made this link directly.

"That happens a lot though, when we have young women who commit suicide, and they always, practically mostly all of it leads back to the trauma they suffered, and you just don't want to live with it."

This quote poses an inference about trauma experienced in the lives of Indigenous women and girls now, but it is assumed throughout the data that historical traumas and modern traumas are one and the same for Native people. These traumas, of course are neither just patriarchal, nor just physical. While the participants' discussed overt discrimination and gendered violence at length, a common thread wove through the data: colonial traumas and racism are being cycled both externally and internally in self perpetuation.

"And they just- and more and more and more traumatized and incredibly vulnerable"

"And so that cycle of substance abuse, unresolved trauma. The historical trauma. Just kind of plays a role throughout their lives as adults."

"And that's generational. So, then you have all that trauma, and what comes on with trauma? Poverty, cheap drugs, meth, whatever they can get, crack… you know alcohol-"

Those historical traumas layer into susceptibility to current abuses and result in conditions like SUDs and economic and health disparities, all of which feed into the

stigmas that cause social isolation. The consequences of that isolation are once again, cycled back into social inequalities, but more so, they exist in blatant racial discrimination. The following quotations build the narrative of mounting generational traumas into the social problems that cycle vulnerabilities, stereotypes, and racism into new generations.

"You know, Rosa Parks got kicked off the bus whenever. My kids got kicked off in '92. You know, that's messed my history of my kids."

"And you just when you think that the Native and white relations are getting better here comes Trump. And now it's just resurfacing because I have fourth graders now saying: 'I went to school and they (non-Native kids) said when Trump's president we're (Native kids) gonna have to go back to our own schools.' And all that progress you think you made just went straight out the door and then that's just our reality."

That refrain "…just our reality" is perpetual throughout the data. The *normalcy* of discriminatory language and exploitative violence results in ever-renewing historical and modern traumas. This furthers racial and gendered disparities and desperate coping mechanisms which, in turn, cause deeper vulnerability to state and interpersonal maltreatments. From the discussion of this vicious cycle, the original intention of colonization carries through to keep the Native from moving forward. This was illustrated when a participant explained:

"So, you have these systems that are broken, so internally here we are struggling and blaming ourselves and calling each other stupid and whatever, whatever and being perceived as stupid by everybody else. And because we can't fix these systems that never worked in the first place- you know, one of the counsel men he kept saying 'Its broke. Our court system is broke.' And finally, my brother said, '[redacted name] it never worked in the first place.'"

Carrying that a step further, those systems were never *meant* to work for Indigenous people, rather they were and still are designed to keep Native nations in a holding pattern of oppression. Reclaiming cultural identity and accurate historical education and representation are continually stalled in survival mode. By constructing social problems within Indigenous communities and continuing in the tradition of external abuses, Native voices are essentially silenced. Prevented from reversing the cycle, they are purposefully held static in forced dependency on the external forces that keep them down.

"You know, they grow up in part white, part native culture and are not understood fully in each culture."

"They're just not teaching this correctly in schools. I think that's a big factor too-"

"I mean so we're at their mercy we really are were at their mercy whether they wanna investigate, whether they wanna take something serious we don't have somebody with that kind of voice."

Having to sit "at the mercy" of laws and jurisdictions that may or may not respond to murder or a missing person, is the quintessential representation of a historical pattern and its contemporary effect. If tribes aren't allowed the resources to investigate or prosecute violent crimes and state or federal players may choose to ignore them, it stands to reason that MMIP exists at such extreme prevalence because there is no prevention, no protection, and no process. This exemplifies the inequality of Intersectionality in that the oppressive systems constructed by colonists are perpetuated to keep Natives cycling in layered trauma. This allows the settler to stay in power and protects their legitimacy. One participant directly called out this methodical power dynamic as *fear* of Native strength:

"They're scared we're gonna actually heal. We might actually rise up and scalp 'em all again or get our land. She said, 'We might actually get our land. We might be able to make a case where we can be strong people again and uh, not get looked down upon' she said."

The power in this declaration alone collapses 'historical trauma' into a singular and simplistic statement of Native reality within a power dynamic. Encompassing several hundred years of violence and denigration along with the complexities woven into current experiences, it can be boiled down to the original intention of colonization and its current form. To heal, to become strong, to be a whole people again threatens the position of the powerful, so instead trauma is not only allowed to endure across generations, it is fostered in racism, sexism, health disparities, inaccurate representation, substance problems, and ultimately MMIP.

Ways of Missing

Conceptually, 'ways of missing' directly addresses MMIP by capturing not only the violent or desperate acts that physically remove people, but also the ways in which people are missing from culture and relationships. The broad spectrum of 'ways of missing' from suicide to human trafficking, to missing from public attention, depicts a straight line between 'missing' as an internal vulnerability to 'missing' as the result of external forces. The following 'ways of missing' serve to illustrate the definitional framework for the term "missing" as discussed in chapter 1 (physically missing, missing from culture, missing from social/political recognition) and to build upon that definition with the experiences from Indigenous communities.

Establishing that initial three-part lens for 'missing' asked the reader to think about missing people in terms outside the bodily disappeared. Upon allowing the concept

of 'missing' to emerge from the Native voices however, it became clear that the original three-tiered concept was inadequate. The data confirmed that 'missing' occurs in many additional forms that were then added into the working definition. The six clusters in 'ways of missing' (Murdered/missing, missing information, foster care/boarding school/adoption, missing parents/generations/groups/forced removal, missing from culture/connection/identity, missing from attention/forgotten/unsolved) build into that initial framework.

Once again, the subthemes within 'ways of missing' cross into each other on many levels not the least of which is shared experience and knowledge. The participants revealed a contextual gap between themselves and the researchers consistent with the intersectional differences of race, class, culture, and privilege. That is to say, Native life in the present is so saturated with 'ways of missing' it is difficult for people outside to fully grasp, which feeds into being missing from the social recognition. The ubiquity of physically missing and/or murdered individuals and the normalcy with which participants speak of it, reveals the volume of the MMIP crisis in a way that quantitative data cannot. The participants illuminate, not a cavalier tone, but the detachment that accompanies constant exposure to violence and trauma in the quotes below.

"To me it's just that simple. It's Native people that are not around. Or that have been murdered, we know, sometimes we do know what happened to them. But there's a lot of them that we don't know and may never know."

"..when I think of murdered and missing, I always think of those cases where they're unsolved."

"She was just she was found dead she had been raped and someone killed her."

"We knew a lot of murdered women."

"We are seeing, we are actually seeing a lot more human trafficking just in the last two years, we've had to hire two, two human trafficking case managers to, help the high rates of human trafficking in the native population."

The specific words used by participants when discussing MMIP—*just, simple, a lot*-- generate a comfort level with the subject that speaks to vast prevalence. Along with the shocking regularity of MMIP, the subtheme of 'missing information' with regard to missing people, emerged from discussion. Not only are people gone or found dead, but knowledge of them, of the details of their disappearances and deaths is also missing. This lack of information extends also to people who are 'missing' due to other factors such as foster care, imprisonment, running away, or missing from family ties.

"...you have all these people that get taken away as children and they go into foster care, and then you'll hear people talking about them, their relative or cousins or somebody that went to foster care, but they don't know where they are now. And you know, did somebody do away with them, did they get adopted out, are they in jail, you know, why haven't they ever come back?"

"But is also does includes men. There are sometimes, like my community is missing one right now, that's been missing for a few years and we have no leads…"

"But it's just… sure they went looking for her and then they let her go, she didn't have a family that spoke up for her so she stayed missing and she's gone. Maybe she's buried somewhere, maybe she's died somewhere."

To extend this point, there is also a distinction to be made between formal, confirmed information, and anecdotal or community knowledge that may be true, but is unsubstantiated. From participant discussion, there seems to be a conflict: what is known vs. what is not vs. what is observed. More specifically, this conflict was expressed in

skepticism related to cause of death. Participants reverberated law enforcement's regular

declarations of "exposure" when a body is found, rather than fully investigating the

death. Similarly, the discussions revealed a wide suspicion regarding suicides.

"But we have a lot of other women, they call it a suicide, or 'she died of exposure' and they were in abusive relationships…"

"Because they all choke 'em out, strangle 'em, and hang 'em to make it look like they've committed suicide when they're actually murdered."

"… that's right what you said though about that girl that I remember when she was 12. They didn't say she was murdered. They just found her by the river dead. They knew she was raped because she only had her top on, but it wasn't talked about that she was murdered. It was it was unspoken…"

He died in 2011 of exposure because he went on a walkabout, basically when he was drunk in a winter storm and got lost. So there's another one for you…. He was missing for three days and they found him and he had a big knot on his head, but they couldn't prove anything."

The distrust woven throughout these statements is altogether related to historical

trauma, present jurisdictional battles, and the experience of not being taken seriously by a

racist criminal justice system. The attitude when sharing these stories was almost

inquisitive; why would people report to a system that doesn't do its job, completely

ignores evidence, and continues to exploit children? In this way, 'missing information'

can be absorbed into missing from social and political concern and attention.

Regardless of the form it takes, the vacuum of information causes a lack of

closure. It is not just individuals who are missing. Threading from colonization, the

concept of missing groups or generations unfolds. Forcibly displacing nations, tribes,

families out of their ancestral homes, and utilizing boarding schools to further that

separation is once again patterned in the present. Health and class disparities as well as

substance abuse issues are lifting out large numbers of parents and children.

"They (ancestral grandmothers) went and stayed with immigrants to survive and became their wives"

"They removed everyone off the reservation and sent us all over the place. Some of them came back and some didn't. So that caused a lot of trauma too, just pick your family up and let's go to California."

"Then alcohol came in then grandmas end up raising all their grandbabies"

"Now we have as many kids, the latest statistic I heard, we have as many kids in foster care as we've ever had in boarding schools. And once again, we're getting a lot of documented cases of the sexual assault in these places and that the states do it for money."

"We've got so many lost children out there too, we've got (in place) two little girls. Both the parents are incarcerated, she's in jail and he's in jail. So they don't have enough foster placements for our children…"

Of course, this relates to groups and individuals 'missing' ties and traditions of

culture and Native identity. Noting again the impact of colonization, several generations

were more less kidnapped from culture and tradition. As a feature of that separation,

Native/tribal history and with it, the familial knowledge that builds individual identity,

was removed from the overarching societal narrative. This missing connection with

history and attention puts a gap in cultural and even individual knowledge.

"We lost our way of life."

"I have been crying for help to help me learn who I am."

"They just feel undervalued. Overall, with, you know, they have a strong history here in the United States and they feel, you know, school systems don't teach that."

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"...you know we would always say we're invisible. So, you know it was always African American, Hispanic, and Asian American. It's like nobody even thought about us."

The various 'ways of missing' as participants discussed them represent a tapestry of situational instances that cannot be untangled from one another. The complexity of 'ways of missing can be illustrated with one participant's story of a young girl who was raped and no one believed her. In her pain she hung herself:

"But she chose to go over to her own house—again the utilities were off, no electricity in there, they couldn't pay their bills—she went down in the basement, it was cold. So, no one found her til' the next day when they couldn't find (her) anywhere and they start looking for her and they finally went over to the house, they found her in the basement and cut her down."

All in one statement with just one sentence of context several 'ways of missing' emerge: A child missing from societal belief of her rape. Missing from the resources to keep the electricity in the home, therefore missing from family nearby to help. Physically missing for a whole day. Found missing from life, and now her family is missing her. In review of the data pertaining to 'ways of missing' it is clear that each type of 'missing' informs another, building more vulnerabilities into those already established by 'historical trauma'.
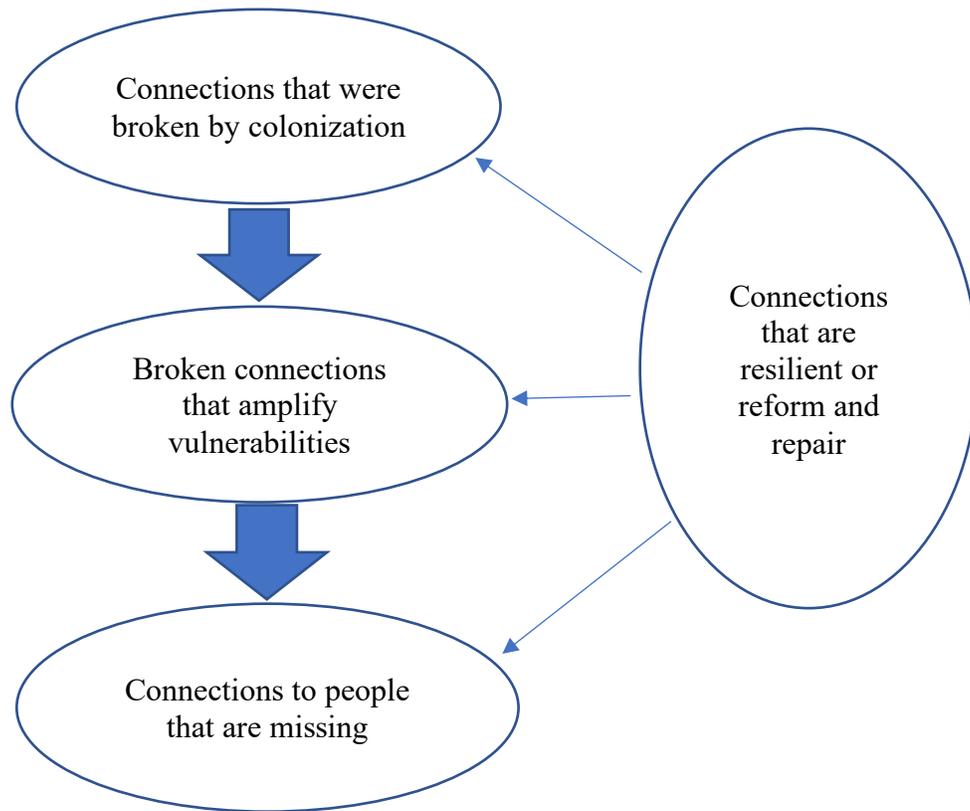
Connectivity

As discussed in Chapter 2, intrinsic connectivity to all of life is what characterized the pre-colonial mode of Native being. It is fitting then that connectivity also characterizes, both in the traceable and abstract, the relationship between 'historical trauma' and modern 'ways of missing'. The disruption of connection rings through the data on many levels ranging from separation from land and spirituality to weakened

values and broken kinships that increase vulnerability. To the opposite emphasis, other positive connections have remained resilient or are being reformed in communities and traditional practice. Recalling from Chapter 3 that 'connectivity' as a code was broken down into four overarching concepts rather than subthemes (connections that were broken by colonization, broken connections that amplify vulnerabilities, connections to people who are missing, connections that are resilient or reform and repair), the following discussion narrativizes the thematic data into the relationships that give perceptible shape to MMIP as a manifestation of colonization.

In a method of cultural genocide, as detailed in the literature, colonization broke connections to land, kin, spirituality, language, tradition… etc. and introduced, via assimilative practices, systems and values that conflicted with Native connectivity. This created 'connections' that were maladaptive, abusive, and in comorbidity with other vulnerabilities such as lack of resources and disease. The destruction of traditional connections replaced with those that were abusive, resulted in a population saturated with individuals that are very literally connected, in one way or another, to those who are missing and/or murdered. Even still, the positive connections to kin and culture that have held in spite of colonization's best efforts, and still more that are being remade are working to resist the breakdown of connectivity. These big picture relationships are illustrated below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Connectivity Illustrated

Many of the connections that were broken have already been discussed in terms of historical traumas. However, when viewed from the perspective of interconnectedness within Nature, kin, language, spirituality, tribe, land…etc., the narrative shifts out of stale concepts of victimization. Rather, disrupted connectivity is equal to disrupted Indigenous *being.* This is exemplified by participants in both the breaking of very specific connections, and in macro level disruptions, in the quotes below

"So just the, you know, the Native way of life was just struck. Disrupted. It was destroyed by white European settlers."

"So our ancestors' spirit lives in our hair. And when you cut it, it breaks that connection to the ancestors. They know that. They (colonizers) knew that, they did it on purpose. So that was the first major thing they did for assimilation and then changing their clothes. And then educating them on colonial curriculum."

"Because now you introduced a whole society that does not mesh with what I believed and what family was. We do not have cousins. We have sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles and grandma and grandpa. And that's it. So, all the kids are raised by the aunts and uncles and the moms and dads, but they're all like the same, they're all like moms and dads… that whole tribe system was lost."

"I'm speaking right now from an ancestor right now. OK, I am channeling it right now. So, these are his words. So, then the men began to beat their wives out of frustration and cheat on them and not parent the children. That's what happened. So, then that was- they lost their identity. So they have never recovered that, never. And then because they lost their identity, the incest and the molestation started to occur."

Recalling the list of colonial abuses one by one is useful to understanding the layers of trauma among First Nations, as individuals and a collective. Zooming out of those singular actions and events, the commonality is lost connectivity. In very specific terms, like the cutting of hair, and in sweeping forms like male identity. On another tier, colonizers didn't simply strip people of connection, they orchestrated the structures that would *replace* traditional healthy bonds with disfunction. This increased the vulnerability to harms and, as the last quote noted, even turned the abuse inward, against the self and others. Out of "frustration," missing identity, and general trauma, disfunction and harm to connections has become an internal malady within many Indigenous communities. This is in addition to continuing external damages. Many lateral abuses, exploitative relationships, and detachments from the self, kin, and outside world, are all listed by participants as present broken or dysfunctional connections. The singular quote to follow sets up a picture of whole groups now characterized by interrupted connectivity.

"I mean how can you have a community that's 85% alcoholic and drug addicted and not expect to have- We're in anomie. It's total anomie"

That anomie was created by uprooting, both literally and figuratively, from their identities in connection and it self-perpetuates in the continual severing of bonds. The

results are ever fracturing the traditional connectivity that defined Indigeneity.

Participants specifically noted family violence, identity crisis, and methamphetamine.

"Racism due to their skin color and not understanding their traditional beliefs or the family dynamics that they have with the strong kinship ties of living together in a family unit…I mean, just high rates of poverty and health conditions, violence. Not feeling like people understand, like who they are, where they belong. Or, like I said, they're traditional practices, then that kind of makes it hard for some of our clients that we have seen. They tell us that it's been hard to develop a healthy sense of identity."

"And I hate to say that about my people, but that drug (meth) is so strong they'll do just about anything to get it."

"I have a girl who was groomed her whole life she was sexually physically mentally emotionally spiritually abused by virtually everyone in this extended family or kinship network. I mean she was just groomed to be a mess. She didn't have a father figure. And I noticed, when any of the father figures are missing or absent or maybe doing something, he it seems like they know who. They know their targets you know what I mean?"

On yet another level, negative or dysfunctional connections are not only made to flourish in Native communities, but there seems to be an effort to protect them. The participants told story after story of highly abusive men, shielded and even celebrated after perpetrating violence against their own community members.

"...the same thing with perpetrators (frustrated huff) we just honor and hide them so well in our own communities um, you know, and it causes a lot of anger with people because there's that data out there that perpetrators, people that are murdering women and children, are non-native but in our own communities we know that it's our own relatives."

This quote should not be viewed as a cultural problem, but as the direct result of historically broken connections. Firstly, imposed patriarchy disrupted the connection to the self in identity interrelated and responsible for others, and replaced it with male supremacy. Secondly, the broken egalitarian system, also created a dysfunctional

communal connection that enables gendered violence yet still seeks to protect

perpetrators who are kin. The doubling up of negative connections formed by outside

forces and the subsequent internal damages to Native connectivity have created a

breeding ground for unchecked violence.

In this way, a new pattern of connection is reported by participants; the

widespread connection to those have been, currently are, or will be missing. This is

where the delineation between the many 'ways of missing' and MMIP is clarified. Every

person who participated in this study spoke to the concepts discussed above regarding

'missing' as a range of conditions, but they also *all* had intimate connections to persons

physically lost.

"My sister's mother was a missing and murdered woman."

"I have a friend that she lives down around (place) and, uh her daughter was actually murdered a few years ago now."

"It still affects me a great deal because um, I knew her really well, she was with us…"

"We've had some um girls, actually three nieces of mine, supposedly committed suicide all in one year."

"And his daughter committed suicide at 14. She hung herself in a tree."

This refrain of connection to MMIP goes on and on. Many of the participants

shared connections to murdered kin, disappeared community members, or memories of

childhood friends lost to traffickers; connection within connection. Tying back to the

normalcy discussed in both 'historical trauma' and 'ways of missing', connection to the

missing and/or murdered is on a scale that surpasses reason. The devastation of those

traumatic losses can once again be cycled into the traumas that amplify vulnerabilities.

It would, however, be inaccurate to the picture of connectivity, not to also include

the ways in which Native being has resisted, adapted, and reformed. Though much of that

cultural, familial, and spiritual glue was indeed, destroyed by colonization, Indigenous

resiliency endures, especially when Individuals, families and communities tap into

positive bonds and reclaim tradition. Through the language of participants, it becomes

clear that *reconnection*, from social media interactions to traditional healing ceremonies

and the passing of custom, can work against all of the previous forms of trauma,

disruption and 'missing'.

"But then the cases too, that they've had successes; several families on our reservations were families (that) were active and they got up there and said "We got to find her!" until they found them."

"And they did a 'wiping of tears' for them. You know, it was just a, just a little short ceremony to say you know,' We care about you'. We want to help you wipe away-"

"Because we're connecting. A long time ago, when I was growing up, just to get to place we didn't have (interstate) we went on a two this way. We didn't have social media. Now we have this connection and you see this person over here and you realize that there's a person missing over here. Not just my reservation it's happening too. We're seeing-connecting the dots now. We didn't have that before."

"And then… there's so many talented, talented Native women out there, and they want to keep that tradition of beading or moccasin making or regalia making, going... Sewing. And it's really neat because we have some younger ones coming and then the older generation will help teach them how to sew or how to do this certain intricate bead pattern. So, the intergenerational involvement from an elder to, to a youth, you know, a younger adult, is really neat."

"...the sweat, going home on a walkabout. I went home for three weeks and they taught me, cousins and aunties, how to do frybread…So it's not the same for Natives to learn it through a video and pass down that heritage. You have to have somebody show you."

Building new *connections*, reforming *connection* to traditional practices, and *connecting* families and communities—essentially reestablishing what was broken by colonization—can be healing on many levels. From community efforts in recovering missing peoples, to individual growth in relationship to spirituality and culture, to utilizing modern connective resources to address social problems, the resilience in Native connectivity can still be found. The following chapter will marry the themes discussed in the data to the literature, centralizing 'connectivity' as the defining core of the relationship between colonization and MMIP.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

"We choose to live in both worlds. Respect that choice."
- Participant 2

The language quoted above reflects the seamlessness between the past and the present; historical traumas, modern ways of missing, and the connective tissue that is working to progress what it is to be *Indigenous.* This thesis, as an exploration of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People crisis, uncovered, not only the depth of that relationship, but that "missing" fundamentally refers to the connectivity that was and still is persistently threatened by colonization unending. The historical emblematic murder of the Native "mode of being" as explained by Jewett & Garavan (2019) has translated into a range of intersectional factors that leave people exceedingly vulnerable to physical murder and other types of violent victimization. The interconnectedness of the various ways of missing purposed by historically traumatizing events, all build to the realization of broken connectivity, which is both the defining core of MMIP *and* the key to resistance, resilience, and healing.

Discussion

Many of the colonial offenses and conditions of Native existence discussed in Chapter 2 are related to the MMIP crisis in that they combine to illustrate the wholistic narrative from pre-colonial into the modern. Just as Lemkin's theory of cultural genocide dictates (Short, 2010), the participants noted physical, biological, and cultural harms both as historical traumas and current ways of missing. Forced displacement to the boarding schools that still exist, egalitarian society to compulsory patriarchy, and mass rape to

human trafficking, the links in all of these chains are the separation of Indigenous nations from the collective identity in life blood connection.

That interconnectedness is what protected Native communities from the types of harms they presently face. As Pacheco regarded, a healthy tribe was derived out of beneficial individual participation and thusly individuals were valued, protected, and sustained (2009). Women held in high regard and very seldom assaulted (Deer, 2015) makes the volume of rape and sexual assaults reported by participants especially disturbing. The contrast between interrelation and responsibility to everything and the "anomie" born of trauma is a powerful picture of communal loss. As described by the participants, the community connection has been severely fractured to the point where aunts sell their nieces' bodies for drugs and Native men are so deeply missing from non-patriarchal identity that they have become violent towards their own people. To that point, it is notable that relevant empirical data suggests that violence against Natives is largely perpetrated by non-Natives, as reported in the literature (Rosay, 2016). While stories of interracially perpetrated violence related to MMIP were shared, the general sense from many of the participants reflected lateral violence. The ambiguity of the 'who' is interpreted by the author as another form of 'missing' from information. The lack of standardized or broadly collected data on MMIP contributes to the confusion regarding perpetrators, again amassing vulnerability.

Clear links can be drawn between colonial practices and MMIP. "Exposure" for example, is noted in the data as a frequently assigned cause of death when a Native body is discovered. This same explanation was also cited as the cause of death to many thousands who didn't survive the violence of removal (Deer, 2010). Include between

these incidents of death, the 'exposure' to violence, poverty, substance, environmental harms, and even violent legislation. The existing prevalence of sexual violence and trafficking also echoes the original colonial justification that Native bodies are inherently "rapable" (Smith, 2003). The assimilatory practices and discriminations of boarding schools were noted in lack of accurate history taught and even the racist language of non-Native children. On a macro level, the refusal of a government to acknowledge the reality of missing and murdered Indigenous people and labeling it in a way that removes responsibility, is in itself, a historical pattern reflected in the data.

Jewett & Garavan profoundly speak of the new mode of Native being as structured, not around connectivity, but around trauma (2018). Recalling the literature of historical trauma, and the ways in which it crosses generations, direct linkages to the data are revealed. Historical loss informing high rates of substance abuse and related disorders is documented (Weichelt et al., 2012) and the participants spoke at length about alcohol, methamphetamine, heroine and other illicit substances. Walters et al. (2011) and Lawson-Te Aho & Liu (2010) spoke of the spiritual damages of historical trauma and the ways in which it is realized in the physical and emotional body in health disparities and destructive behaviors. Several instances of suicide, deep sorrow, and cries for belonging reverberated throughout the discussions.

Colonial violence, redirected internally, compounded all of the historical traumas that have caused deep struggles with identity. This may have even caused some Native women to believe that separating from their indigeneity would decrease their susceptibility to violence (Pacheco, 2009). From the data, some women and girls feel "no option" but to leave out of feeling undervalued and disconnected. In essence, to avoid

'going missing' for reasons of trafficking or kidnapping or murder, one must 'go missing' from their racial and cultural identity. This is a clear example of "…how intersecting identities produce distinctive social experiences for specific individuals and social groups…" (Collins, 2015, p. 12). Referring back to the concept of 'nation' discussed in Chapter 2, the dominant settler race has effectively used representation and many other means to control the national identity, making 'Indigeneity' viewed as an unsafe identity. To the contrary, intersecting identity can also create cohesion and the development of mobilization in the context of inequality (Collins, 2015). "We choose to live in both worlds…" as stated above, may be an example of working to create a new Native identity grounded in both traditional, connective practice, and modern societal constructs.

All of the social and interpersonal conditions described in both the literature and by participants, have relegated this population to the most vulnerable and least represented group in the social stratification. The lack of attention and social support noted in the data reflects W.E.B Dubois' "Representation" as a mode of maintaining social dominance (Allan, 2013). This representation, or lack thereof, serves both as a way of missing, and a method of controlling social perception of Indigenous narrative. That is, what little *is* represented in many forms of media, is overt racial discrimination, appropriation, romanticism, and the general performance of stereotypes. For example, the hyper sexualization of the "Indian Princess and the Squaw" as discussed by Smiley (2016), was apparent in the data recalling 'John's' playacting the colonizer "bunning Pocahontas". Jewett & Garavan speak of media representation as destructive to Native people in two forms, both of which serve colonist capital: "We can turn the Native into the savage or the noble savage. We can dehumanise [sic] either by racism or

romanticism" (2018, 49). This translates in a destructive way, even when the limited

representation could be socially empowering, like in the case of Standing Rock and the

Dakota Access Pipeline, discussed in the literature, the false messages of Native

intentions and needs still facilitates white appropriation and the settler's assumption of

control (Jewett & Garavan, 2019).

The colonist majority's representational strategy comes through in the

"invisibility quoted in the data. Never to discount the offenses or harms against other

racial groups, it is still notable that the Indigenous are often forgotten in a broad social

context. This has been labeled, for this study, as a 'way of missing' in that social isolation

separates Native communities from true allyship and contributes to vulnerability to

violence such as kidnapping, trafficking, rape and murder. It also serves to prevent

connection that Indigenous groups could form with outside allies.

The prevalence of racism must be included in this discussion as it appeared in

many forms throughout the data in the microaggressions that contribute to identity crises

and in the stories of violence and MMIP. As discussed by participants in relation to

historical trauma, current conditions like poverty, drug offenses, family violence, lack of

resources and access, are all also factors of cyclical state discrimination. Rather than

viewing these social problems as products of the many traumas caused by colonization—

in need of space and sovereignty to heal—they just become grounds for the settler to

continue to believe in the legitimacy of their occupancy (Thielen-Wilson, 2014). The

system was structured and is constantly maintained with the understanding that as long as

the Native is perceived to be suffering, the settler can justify staying to *help.* Realizing of

course, that *help* continues to perpetuate suffering or at least prevent healing. For this

reason, there is no incentive for a colonist government to address MMIP and other violence against Natives. This is represented in the data with statements of being ever "at their mercy" in regard to whether or not state agents feel like investigating deaths. It's a strong, however not unreasonable assertion that MMIP and other social problems facing Indigenous communities serve the interests of the colonist government which is why they are "scared we're gonna actually heal". This conceptually speaks to MMIP, not only as contemporary form of colonial violence, but the current design of a White colonist power dynamic. It can be concluded that without the opportunity for connectivity—to the traditional, the cultural, the kin, the self, the spirituality—that Indigenous people will remain at the mercy of the settler, just as designed.

The purpose of this work has been defined in the historical traumas of colonization that disrupted Indigenous connectivity and have resulted in many ways of missing, creating the vulnerabilities unique to the MMIP crisis. Though the relationships and dynamics discussed here are deeply complex and layered with many histories, theories, and conceptual frames, the research clearly establishes MMIP as a modern manifestation of European colonization and the intentional cultural genocide of First Nations. It would be disrespectful however, to end the discussion without marking the deep resilience of the participants and the Native spirit as a whole.

Upon reflection, the researchers did not encounter an attitude of victimization, rather an honest understanding of what engineered the breaking of connection, acknowledgement of a very complex reality, and all the intention to *find* who and what is *'missing'*. The remark of Petrillo (2007) was that 'tradition' in the Native mind is in constant forward motion; defining, redefining, and constructing the practice of tradition

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through "interrelations". The beginning quote reflects the intention to create forward connection and cultural identity, only requesting that the colonizer get out of the proverbial way so First Nations can heal.

Pacheco (2009) discusses the practice of healing through modal connection to one another and the emotional and spiritual restitution that is required to remedy individuals and communities. European colonization forced the severing of the connection that has diminished the communal ability to respond to and heal from trauma, both current and historical. However, as Lawson-Te Aho & Liu (2010) and Schultz et al. (2016) suggested, narrative reversal, personal and communal healing can occur through confronting historical traumas and utilizing culturally relevant practices.

This was also recognized by participants in those efforts to reconnect to kin and tradition through beading and sewing, the spirit, through sweats and 'wiping of tears' ceremonies. These were the bright spots in the data that serve as proof that colonization has yet to *completely* destroy Native connectivity. The mere fact that the participants spoke to the research team is a part of connective resilience and the formation of allies. The power of 'naming' as illustrated by Stuckey & Murphey (2001) was present in the focus groups and interviews; *naming* the historical source of the trauma, *naming* the many current social problems, *naming* the perpetrators, all this by itself is reconnective work. As the literature stated, there is creative power in the simple act of speaking—even breathing—and "…one shapes the world by naming the world. Names then are powerful forces, for they are the loci of negotiations over social authority and cultural identity" (Stuckey & Murphey, 2001 p 75). By breathing then, and naming MMIP, violence

against Native people, historical traumas, ways of missing, and connections, Indigenous people continue to resist.

Limitations

As expressed in Chapter 3, this study took place during the global COVID-19 pandemic. This influenced the method of data collection as well as the general ability to collect that data. The inclusion of more focus groups and interviews, as well as at least one more in-field research trip, were intended. Due to the difficulties of social distancing, and access limitations, the research team was unable to obtain the desired volume of data. This challenge, however limiting to the research process, did not affect the ability to reach saturation for the themes discussed.

Recognizing bias is always important to the research process, though it may serve as both a limitation or a reinforcement to the work itself. For this project, the author feels it's significant to acknowledge two biases. Firstly, is that of privilege; as the author's note stated, all members of the research team identify as 'white'. Though this was approached with open honesty and care, it cannot have helped but to influence the interpretation of literature and data. All efforts were made throughout the research process to challenge, in conversation, in relationship building, in data collection and analysis, to prioritize Native voice over 'whiteness'.

The author and primary researcher of this thesis project must also acknowledge a second bias that occurred in opposition to racial designation. Throughout the two-year process of researching the population and topics, the immersion in literature and closeness of resulting relationships, developed a prejudice *against* colonization and the

many features of it still in practice. Objectivity was intended in all stages of the work, however it is notable that the author was not impartial.

On another limiting tier, the intersectional concept regarding social capital, plays out in the very existence of this work. Being researched in an academic organization constructed by colonists and also conducted and composed by researchers who are already in empowered social roles, this project, just by being, builds capital for the systems that have marginalized and disenfranchised First Nations. In effort to redirect that social capital, this project and all related future efforts by this research team are committed to prioritizing the needs and intentions of Indigenous partners as well as sharing any and all findings/data with them.

Future Research

Future research with Indigenous people and cultures should always be considering *forwarding* the ever-forming cultural identity as Indigenous peoples create it. There are many unique nuances to violence against Native peoples, researching any of which, may produce positive outcomes from broader social recognition to the detangling of jurisdictional confusion, to ultimate tribal sovereignty. In consort with this specific work, it is recommended that the foundation for continued understanding of this topic should include the heritable attitudes, values, and practices of modern settler generations. Just as trauma and interrupted connection passes generationally, so might the arrogances and ideals of colonists pass to modern generations. Both, as a method of holistically conceptualizing modern violence against Indigenous peoples and deciphering the present mindset of occupiers, could a framework for the broad approach to healing and reparations be devised.

Regardless, the importance lies not in the many avenues that future research could take, but in the intention to decolonize academic study. To achieve this, the purpose in any form or field of research, should occur with deepest regard, and even the permissions of Native voices. Better yet, that work should be done in reciprocal giving, appreciating the gift of cultural knowledge and sharing the results and ownership with Indigenous partners (Harding, et al, 2012). Countering the colonization, past and present, that has achieved such devastation, begins with centering respect for Indigenous people by shifting out of Westernized paradigms and truly listening. Only then, can violence against Indigenous people be addressed with *Native intention and connectivity.*

Table 1: General Questions for Focus Groups on MMIP	
General MMIP Questions	**Sub questions:**

1. When we use the phrase, "Murdered & Missing Indigenous People" what does this mean? How are people missing? What type of murders? What people? How long has this been going on?	a. Do you think MMIW is related at all to human trafficking?
	 b. If yes, can you tell me about the kind of cases you see?
	           i. Sex trafficking?
	           ii. Labor trafficking?
	           iii. Survival sex?
	           iv. Domestic/Familial trafficking?
	             v. Other?

2. Do you think the rate of Murdered and Missing Indigenous People (M&MI) is a problem for South Dakota?	a. If yes, how big of a problem is this? Why has it received less attention here than Canada and more recent reports in areas such as Omaha, NE? b. If no, why?
3. What makes people vulnerable to such victimization?	a. What role do you think (economic inequality, drugs & alcohol, homelessness, childhood abuse and neglect, lack of transportation, other) plays in creating the MMIW issue?
4. What efforts does your community make to recover, heal, and respond to this problem? To victims/families of victims?	
5. What structural changes need to be made to address the issue of MMIW? What are the barriers to making these changes?	a. Are jurisdictional issues a barrier? b. Are tracking and reporting issues a barrier? c. What has been your experience working with law enforcement? i. What type of law enforcement (e.g. tribal, state, DCI, FBI, BIA) d. What has been your experience working with US Attorneys? e. What has been your experience working with state and federal politicians on this issue?

Table 2: Focus Group/Interview Questions on Colonization	
Impact of Colonization Questions:	**Sub questions:**
1.Many scholars have tied the murdered and missing tragedy with colonization. Do you think there is a connection? (Probe to get at why & how connected).	
2. While we talk about MMIP as a modern concern, we all know that similar patterns have occurred throughout history. What other forms have you seen historically?	a. Prompt for trail of tears b. Genocide c. Boarding schools d. Foster care system e. Forced displacement
3. How/have these different types of MMIP throughout history resulted in cultural changes? What have Indigenous people lost?	a. How/have these losses contributed to the MMIP issue?
4. Has colonialization contributed to lateral violence (violence of native against native) – in general and particularly violence against women and girls? How is this related to the MMIP issue today?	
5. Has your cultural identity been affected by any of the following:	a. Colonial oppression b. Capitalism c. Patriarchy f. Displacement i. If so, in what ways?
6. What do you think are the key factors playing into the MMIP crisis?	
7. What role does gender play in the MMIP crisis?	
8. What is the cultural understanding/perception of gendered violence?	
9. How do your communities respond to violent/abusive men?	a. Are they sanctioned? b. Are they protected/defended? i. If so, why do you think this is?
10.What significant moments are celebrated/honored for girls and women in your community? What traditions are associated with these points in time?	
11. What significant moments are celebrated/honored for boys and men in your community? What traditions are associated with these points in time?	
12. What are the greatest pressures that Indigenous youth face today?	
13. What are the steps that need to be taken to deal with those factors?	(And work to address MMIP?)
14. Does the MMIP crisis impact your communities' familial, traditional, cultural, spiritual practice(s)?	a. If yes, how?
15. How are indigenous people and groups fighting back against these forces?	a. What are culturally meaningful tools you have? b. What forms of resiliency have you seen? c. What resources or types of support are needed (and from whom) to advance these efforts
16. What does "healing" mean to you culturally? What traditional/spiritual practices help you to recover from loss?	
17. Is there anything else you would like us to know regarding a connection between MMIP and Colonization?	

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