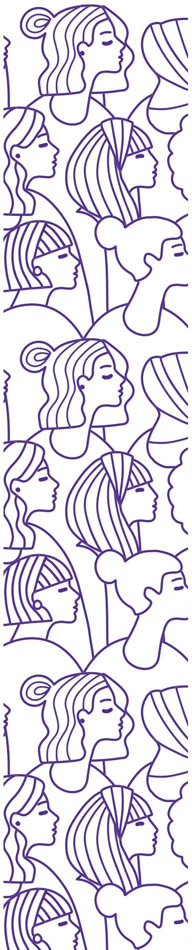

Portrayals Of Gender-based Violence In The Media

A Research Background & Literature Review for Aura Freedom's *Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence In The Media*

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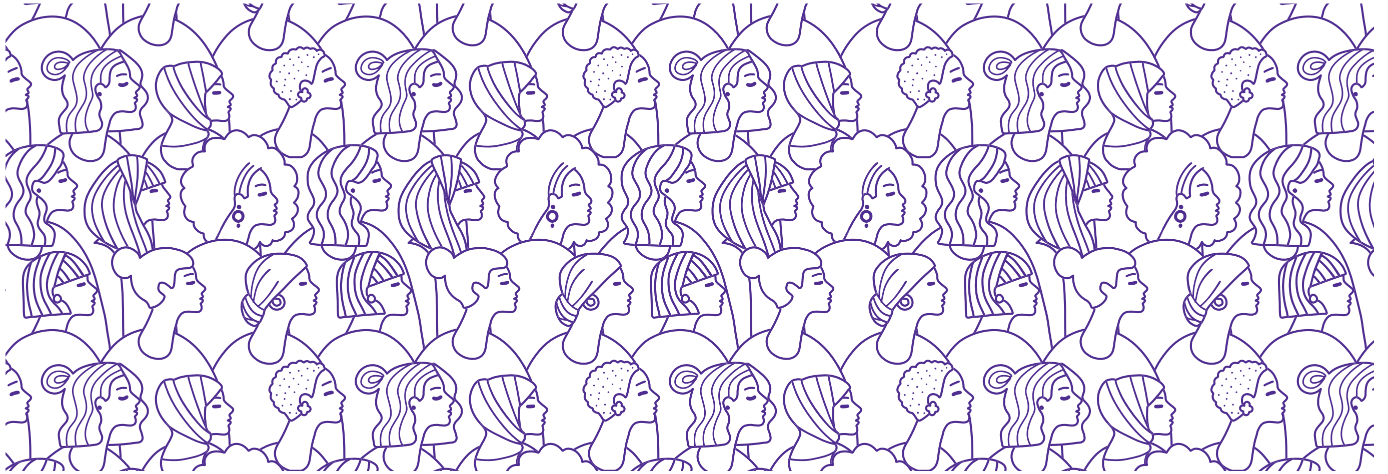
Aura Freedom acknowledges the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.

Women and Gender Equality Canada
Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada
Canada

2023



Aura Freedom is a grassroots feminist organization working in Canada and internationally to end violence against women and human trafficking.

Our vision is a world in which all women and girls live free from violence. Each and every one of our initiatives strives to one day make that vision a reality.

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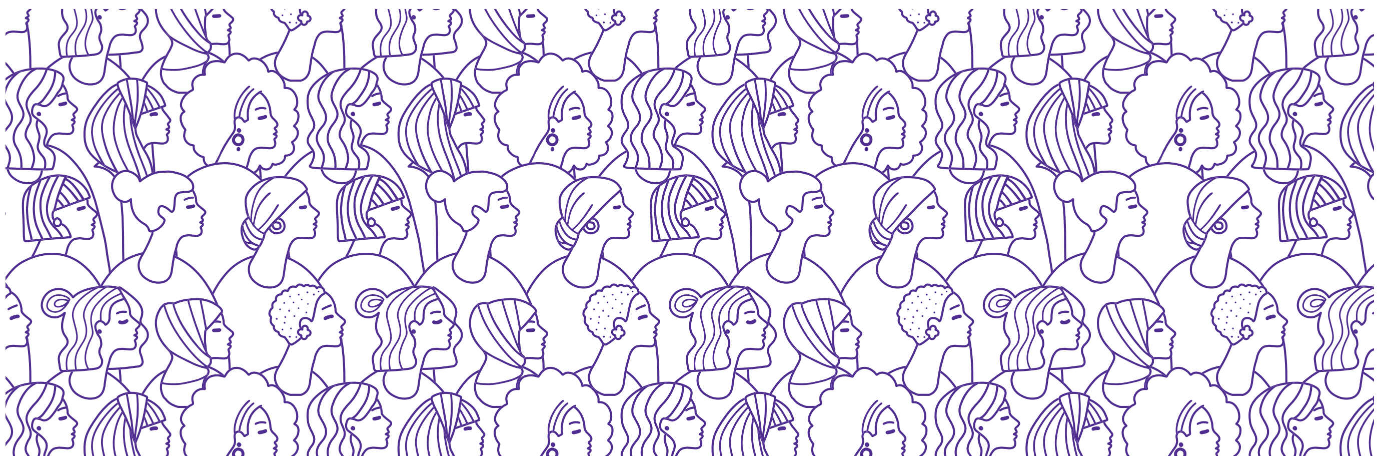
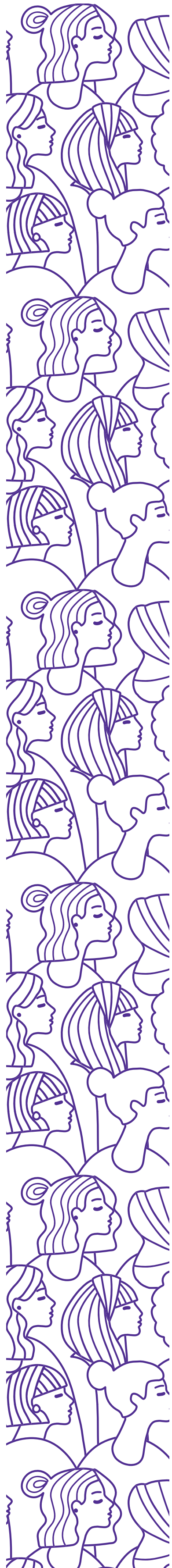




Preface

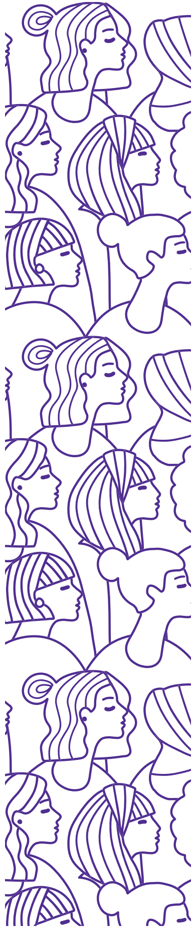
This document is a combined research background and literature review for Aura Freedom's ***Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) In The Media.*** The first section of this document serves as a literature review for GBV in general, and is followed by a second literature review specific to violence against Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. Both literature reviews contain a survey of existing media guidelines for portrayals of GBV, as well as a thematic analysis of the research and other literature on this topic.

Gender-based violence is defined as *violence committed against someone based on their gender, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender.* GBV is experienced around the globe and Aura Freedom's Executive Director Marissa Kokkoros describes it as "*one of the most prevalent and normalized human rights abuses there is*" (Kokkoros, 2020). Most GBV is perpetrated by men against women, also known as Violence Against Women (VAW) or Male Violence Against Women (Aura Freedom, 2023). Our official definitions of GBV and VAW for the scope of this project can be found in Aura Freedom's ***Guidelines on GBV In The Media.***

Both literature reviews (general GBV and Indigenous GBV) are organized around themes that were extracted from our initial analysis of existing guidelines. The four main themes are *Voices, Language, Frameworks* and *Impacts*, which we define later. These four themes are expanded upon in the Indigenous literature review, with the addition of the theme of *Visibility*, as well as two others that aim to reframe, restore, and return agency to Indigenous Peoples through Desire-Based and Trauma-Informed approaches to transformative journalism.

The purpose of our two literature reviews (general and Indigenous-specific) is to inform the creation of Aura Freedom's new ***Guidelines on GBV In The Media***, as well as to ground our research with the National Network for Aura Freedom's **GBV In The Media** project. The National Network is a pan-Canadian group of GBV experts, advocates, activists, feminists, academics, survivors, journalists, other media guideline creators, and more. The Network also includes a parallel, Indigenous-led National Network which is comprised of Indigenous GBV sector workers, educators, researchers, advocates, and others. The National Network and Indigenous National Network support the **GBV In The Media** project by providing expertise, insight, and feedback on key project materials, including Aura Freedom's final media guidelines.

By analyzing existing guidelines and literature, we identified key questions and areas for transformation, and incorporated them into our collaborative research with the National Network. We were able to explore how existing



media guidelines reflect current research findings, and discuss ways to build on this work and continue to push the boundaries of **Transformative Media**. Our definition of transformative media below is heavily inspired by the Out for Change Transformative Media Organizing Project 's 2014 definition, and incorporates other elements that we found relevant to this project.

> **Transformative Media** pursues social change from an intersectional perspective rooted in an understanding of power structures, the dismantling of colonialism, and the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and other positionalities; it is creative and imagines forms of solidarity that push beyond traditional boundaries and break the traditional moulds of media and journalism; it is rooted in the lived experiences of the communities it seeks to represent and is accountable and sensitive to the needs of these communities; it is an iterative, collaborative movement for liberatory social change. (Aura Freedom International, **GBV In The Media** project, 2022).

Thus, Aura Freedom's ***Guidelines on GBV In The Media*** are rooted in both our findings from our literature reviews, as well as the feedback and recommendations of the National Network and Indigenous National Network of our **GBV In The Media** project.

General Research Background & Literature Review

Asking New Questions:

Analyzing Media Representations of Gender-Based Violence and Exploring Opportunities for Transformation and Advocacy

Orlaith Croke-Martin - Research Lead on Aura Freedom's GBV In The Media project

Introduction

This general analysis (followed by an Indigenous-specific one) is broken down into two parts. Part I, the Research Background, will serve as a general overview of research on representations of gender-based violence (GBV) in the media. Part II, the Literature Review, will serve as a review of existing guidelines on media representations of GBV, explore how existing media guidelines reflect current research findings, and discuss ways to build on this work and continue to push the boundaries of **Transformative Media**, as defined above.

Part One: Research Background

In the Research Background, we collect the existing research on GBV representations in the media and highlight common findings and lines of thought, as well as the discrepancies and gaps in the research and existing policies. We highlight the harmonies between different researchers, authors, and communities, and put them in discussion with each other. Our goal here is not to find an answer, but rather to seek out the questions, both explicit and implied, in existing literature on this topic. Using the themes extracted from this analysis, we highlight research that examines GBV representation in the media, the discourses that this representation both reflects and reinforces, and the real impact of media representation on survivors, their communities, and and our society as a whole.

The majority of the research discussed in the Research Background does not specify its population of interest beyond gender. Moreover, many of the articles included do not focus on a specific form of GBV, or they discuss multiple forms of GBV. Where the articles do specify a form of GBV, we have generalized the results to GBV as a whole. However, we recognize the differences in media representation of different forms of GBV, and of different groups who experience GBV at the intersection of gender oppression and other forms of systemic oppression like race, class, ability, and many others. We acknowledge that in order to gain a properly nuanced understanding of how media representations of GBV varies across different communities and forms of GBV, it is not enough to generalize research that does not reflect these differences. While in our Research Background we are limited in our exploration of the intersections of different social positionalities and how they are differently represented in media coverage of GBV, our regular consultations with the National Network for our **GBV In The Media** project, as well as focus groups held with additional stakeholders, approach each theme from an intersectional perspective, with expert voices representing various marginalized communities and different forms of GBV. Please see Aura Freedom's ***Guidelines on GBV In The Media*** for a list of all our National Network members and focus group participants.

Voices

In this section, we will examine the research on the use of voices of authority in representations of gender-based violence in the media. Existing media guidelines consistently highlight the issue of voices of authority in coverage of gender-based violence in the media, asking: *who are the experts that the media rely on for their information, and why*? Existing media guidelines also discuss the overreliance on law enforcement officials as sources of information, and the exclusion of GBV experts and survivor voices in media coverage as the primary issues within this theme.

In media coverage of crime stories, law enforcement officials are quoted the majority of the time (Welch et al., 1997). By quoting professionals in the law enforcement and criminal justice system, journalists imply that these are the experts on the topic (Fairbairn and Dawson, 2013). However, research on this topic highlights several issues with the use of law enforcement officials as the primary sources of expertise and information in coverage of gender-based violence in the media.

Statements from law enforcement officials are often limited to the characteristics of an individual crime, providing little to no additional context (Fairbairn and Dawson, 2013). In this way, these statements can be seen as “neutral” or “objective”— the supposed experts only provide the simple facts of an individual crime, thus negating the need for the journalist to provide alternative or opposing perspectives (Bullock and Cubert, 2002). However, Marian Meyers argues that the simplistic narrative provided by law enforcement officials does not serve the interests of the media or the public, as it assumes that the cause for any particular case of GBV lies within the relationship of the victim and the perpetrator, rather than the systemic violence against, and oppression of women (1997). In other words, by reducing GBV to the “who, what, where” of an individual incident, law enforcement officials (and the journalists who rely on them) are denying the systemic nature of GBV as a whole. Indeed, Cathy Bullock argues that under its thin veil of objectivity and neutrality, the narrative provided by law enforcement officials is inherently anti-feminist as it places authority in the patriarchal systems of law enforcement and criminal justice (2007). Furthermore, these systems are also inherently racist and colonialist, thus further negating any objectivity or neutrality of the law enforcement/legal systems. Meyers and Bullock both point to the fact that providing platforms to voices that solely focus on the legal facts of an incident of GBV and that fail to place an incident within a wider social context is not neutral, but rather actively in opposition to feminist, anti-racist and anti-colonialist movements (1997; 2007).

While there is an overrepresentation of law enforcement officials in media coverage of GBV, existing guidelines and research point to a lack of representation from GBV experts and organizations, as well as survivors (Bullock, 2007; Worthington, 2008; Fairbairn and Dawson, 2013; McGuiness, 2007; Gillepsie et al., 2013). In a study that analyzed all male-perpetrated intimate partner homicides reported in three daily newspapers in Toronto, Canada within two separate time periods (1975-1979 and 1998-2002), Jordan Fairbairn and Myrna Dawson found that virtually no articles included statistics about GBV, cited GBV researchers, or provided information on advocacy groups or women’s shelters - it was not specified if the articles included close relations to the victims (2013). While Fairbairn and Dawson found that coverage of gender-based violence in the media has improved in some ways, such as employing less perpetrator-excusing and victim-blaming, the exclusion of GBV experts in media coverage contributes to the perception that GBV is an individual, legal, or criminal problem rather than a societal one (2013). By including the expertise of GBV workers and survivors, media coverage could improve social understanding of GBV and its root causes, and draw attention to the need for social support and solutions for this issue (Fairbairn and Dawson, 2013).

Furthermore, GBV towards marginalized women, in comparison to GBV towards the ‘ideal’ white, straight, able-bodied and privileged victim, is vastly underreported and almost invisible in the media (Hart & Gilbertson, 2018; Gilchrist, 2010). This is extremely problematic, as women within marginalized communities are more likely to experience GBV compared to the survivors that are deemed more ‘newsworthy’ and ‘deserving’ of sympathy as victims (Lykke, 2016). The invisibility of survivors from marginalized communities in the media normalizes the violence they face, as it is not considered worthy of coverage, which exacerbates their marginalization as enforced by the combination of structural sexism and racism. Thus, lack of representation of marginalized communities and their voices in media contributes to the normalization of increased rates of violence towards them.

Fairbairn and Dawson also draw attention to a key issue in media coverage of GBV that is less represented in existing guidelines: the lack of women’s professional representation in the media industry (2013). This is supported by a large-scale review of research pertaining to media coverage of GBV, which suggests that the lack of coverage of GBV stories could be due to the lack of women in media (Sutherland et al., 2015). The review cites the Women’s Media Centre, which estimates that in

the USA, men outnumber women 1 to 3 in news and media (Sutherland et al., 2015). This is further compounded by issues of race, gender identity and other factors, to force those from marginalized communities into the difficult decision to leave the media industry (Wilkinson, 2020). In Canada, MediaWatch research shows that daily newspapers rarely cite women as experts compared to men (Hackett & Gruneau, 2000). The State of Knowledge paper suggests that the lack of representation in this industry shapes the decisions about what stories to cover, thus impacting how much GBV is reported on in the media (Sutherland et al., 2015). Echoing this, Fairbairn and Dawson argue that the absence of women in the media industry, paired with the exclusion of women as cited sources in media stories, reinforces the gender inequality and gendered oppression that lies at the root of GBV (2013). This can be further expanded to other forms of identity that experience higher levels of GBV, such as race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Research demonstrates that gender sensitivity training, as well as the presence of more women in media, can have a positive impact on GBV coverage in the media (Worthington, 2005; Worthington, 2008). Media coverage of GBV has improved significantly in recent years, specifically in terms of victim-blaming and perpetrator-excusing, and it also has the potential to do so in its use of sources (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013). Nancy Worthington produced interesting research that examines the effect of intentional feminist reporting on GBV (2008). She found that including survivor perspectives and challenging dominant GBV discourse in media reporting can reassert and validate this perspective, but it can also "*reveal which patriarchal discourses are most formidable even in the face of conscious attempts by media encoders to challenge them*" (Worthington, 2008; Esteal, Holland, Judd, 2015). In this research, the addition of feminist reporting led to increased pushback from readers, who noticed the difference from regular and expected frameworks in media coverage (Worthington, 2008). This study brings up an interesting challenge to the perhaps overly simplistic solution of "just add women" by highlighting how integrating a feminist and experience-centred perspective to media coverage of GBV is not a solution in and of itself. Rather, while the media has a significant impact on public perception of GBV, this research goes to show that **Transformative Media** cannot and will not happen overnight.

Indeed, both within existing media guidelines and the research, there is a lack of clarity on how often to include survivors' voices and perspectives. There is general agreement that coverage of gender-based violence in the media should center the survivor and their experience, and place this experience within a wider social context (Sutherland et al., 2015). However, Worthington's study raises an important point, highlighting potential negative impacts of centering survivors and exposing them to scrutiny (2008). Some guidelines address this, emphasizing the importance of receiving consent from survivors in the use of quotes, and discussing the responsibility of journalists to use quotes that do not incur speculation of the survivor's story (Our Watch, 2019). The World Health Organization's (WHO) Ethical And Safety Recommendations For Interviewing Trafficked Women goes into considerable depth on this topic, advising journalists to inform survivors of the risks of working with the media, to ensure that the media coverage does not re-traumatize the survivor, and to be prepared to offer resources or contact the authorities in emergency situations (WHO, Zimmerman, 2003). Furthermore, while some research emphasizes the importance of including personal sources to humanize and personalize the survivor, other researchers argue that the overemphasis on personal sources reduces GBV to a personal problem, rather than a societal one (Bullock and Cubert, 2002; Bullock, 2007). This is another example of the challenges to center survivor perspectives without creating an individualized perception of GBV.

Language

In this section, we examine research on the language used in media portrayals of GBV and how it can challenge or reinforce prevailing discourses about GBV, its perpetrators, its victims/survivors, and women in general. Language-related guidelines are often presented in a "say this, not that" format, which seems to suggest that problematic language in media portrayals of GBV is simply rooted in a lack of awareness of the correct terminology. However, the research discussed in this section emphasizes that language choices are not made in a vacuum, but rather shaped by overarching discourses about GBV—which would imply that a vocabulary switch is not an answer to the deeper issue of language in media coverage of GBV. Instead, the research presented in this section calls us to examine our word choices and how they reflect harmful narratives of GBV.

Much research has been dedicated to examining the sensationalist nature of language used in media coverage of GBV and the impacts of this language on social understanding of GBV. The media will often use sensationalism within depictions of GBV as a means to promote more readership and interest (Cullen, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2016). This is often found within headlines of GBV incidents (i.e., "*From Love To Murde*r" or "*Crimes of Passion*"), as well as in descriptions of victims, survivors, and perpetrators (Jukic, 2016). For instance, the media will include an excess amount of details when recounting GBV incidents, such as naming the amount of times a victim was stabbed, or recounting the details of a victim's torture (Jukic, 2016). The inclusion of these graphic details trivializes the crime, creating an almost cinematic portrayal of the incident by using words that promote a shock factor in the reader and viewer (Jukic, 2016; Journalists Against Violence Against Women, 2021). This newsworthiness is compounded if other ideal factors are present in a case, such as the presence of an "ideal" victim, or an "othered" perpetrator who is unknown to the victim. (Sutherland et al., 2016). Non-violent forms of GBV, such as coercion and grooming, are often the clearest warning signs of more severe GBV; however, they are much less represented in news media, creating a lack of education and awareness that could increase prevention of other forms of GBV.

In a study on media coverage of domestic violence in the USA, Bullock identified three primary frameworks used by the media (2007). The first frames stories in a dry, objective tone and relies heavily on legal and police authority, the second frames the perpetrator and victims as inherently "other" and different to "normal" society, and the third overemphasizes the impact of GBV on people other than the victim (Bullock, 2007). Within the second framework, media coverage will "other" both the perpetrator and the victim, and also "other" the incident of GBV itself, using words like "*unthinkable*", "*shocking*", "*bizarre*", or "*out of a horror movie*" (Sutherland et al., 2015). When sensationalizing the perpetrator of GBV, media might use words such as "*beast*", "*monster*", or "*nocturnal*" and other dehumanizing words (Sutherland et al., 2015). The misrepresentation of GBV often relies on Hollywood-esque stereotypes, emphasizing the sensationalist details of a story and creating an image of GBV as a rare occurrence only perpetrated by monsters. Beyond propagating false beliefs about the rarity of GBV, the reliance on stereotypical representation of GBV may influence a victim's likelihood of seeking help if their story does not align with the dominant representation of GBV.

Often working in tandem with sensationalism, stereotyping language in media portrayals of GBV relies on deeply-rooted discursive ideas about GBV, its victims and perpetrators, and women as a whole. This language is used to normalize and reinforce stereotypes of GBV, but also gendered, cultural, and racial stereotypes. It is difficult to separate stereotyping and sensationalist language, as they are often inextricably intertwined with one another—stereotypes rely on sensationalist stories to bolster their credibility, and sensationalism relies on deeply-rooted stereotypical beliefs to garner attention. The misrepresentation and stereotyping of GBV is often present in the form of the "rape myth", a term coined in the 1970s (Sutherland et al., 2015). Under the premise of the rape

myth, sexual violence exists on a spectrum ranging from "real" to "not real", wherein the only "real" form of sexual violence "*happens in public places, is perpetrated by a stranger and involves aggravated violence*" (Mason & Mockton-Smith, 2008). Other GBV stereotypes are related directly to the perpetrators and survivors of GBV. Custers and Van den Bulk describe two major stereotypes: the "ideal victim" and the "ideal perpetrator" (2013). The ideal victim is always "*female, vulnerable, more powerless than the perpetrator and unrelated to the perpetrator*", while the ideal perpetrator is "*typically men who are poor, psychotic, uneducated, or, more recently, immigrants (or a combination of these)*" (Esteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Custers & Van den Bulk, 2013). By relying on these stereotypes and tropes, media portrayals of GBV reinforce harmful narratives about GBV and women, as well as racialized people, that at best narrow society's definition of "real" GBV and "deserving" victims, and at worst directly propagate GBV.

Furthermore, media portrayals of GBV often also rely on racial and cultural stereotypes, which is reflected in their language. When there is media visibility of GBV towards marginalized women and gender diverse people, stories are often framed by "rape myths" that are not only gendered, but also underscored by tropes of race, class, ability, and other social positionalities (Meyers, 2004; Jackson, 2013; Jiwani, 2014). These tropes are used to further "other" survivors and perpetrators, distancing them from the "ideal victim" worthy of grief and sympathy (Hart & Gilbertson, 2018). For instance, portrayals of GBV perpetrated by or experienced by Black persons may rely on racist stereotypes of sexual deviance, either justifying their perpetration of violence, or completely denying their victimhood (Lykke, 2016). Or, in the case of violence against women with disabilities, media may rely on stereotypical narratives of consent and sexuality that exclude disabled persons as having sexual agency (Shildrick, 2009). Due to the lack of representation of GBV against and within marginalized communities, these tropes and myths remain prevalent in media portrayals of GBV.

Sutherland et al. identify how racial stereotypes about promiscuity are enabled in media portrayals of GBV as a way to assign blame, either to a perpetrator or a survivor of GBV, suggesting that race makes one more or less prone to sexual violence (2015). Beyond the individual level, stereotypes are also used to assign blame to an entire culture, suggesting those who belong to certain cultures are more prone to GBV. Gill writes in *Problematizing "Honour Crimes" within the Canadian Context* that words such as "*tribal*" and "*barbaric*" are commonly used to perpetuate fearful and wary ideas about Islam amongst the West (Gill, 2022). Amongst the portrayal of GBV incidents, these same words are often used in headlines for GBV incidents involving Muslims (Gill, 2022). Using stereotyped language normalizes certain GBV incidents as "traditional practices" within certain cultures (Gill, 2022; Jiwani & Young, 2006). An example of this is Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C), which is often reduced to "traditional cultural practices" and not acknowledged for its global and cross-border nature, and its embeddedness in gendered oppression (Equality Now, 2022). The history of the use of racial, cultural and other stereotypes against marginalized women and communities and the impacts of this media representation on these communities will be further discussed in *Impacts*.

Research has demonstrated the impact of language on social understanding of GBV and empathy for survivors (Sutherland et al., 2015; Anatasio and Costa, 2004; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress and Vandello, 2008; Carlyle, Orr, Savage and Babin, 2014). Often, these studies examine the capacity of different language to increase sympathy or decrease perceived responsibility towards the victim or survivor of GBV (Sutherland et al., 2015; Anatasio and Costa, 2004; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress and Vandello, 2008; Carlyle, Orr, Savage and Babin, 2014). In this way, we can identify a question in the research: *what is the potential of language to go beyond avoiding harm, and towards transformative advocacy for GBV survivors*? We are interested in the potential for the use of language to not only encourage sympathy and empathy for an individual survivor, but also to open the reader's eyes to the systemic

nature of GBV and its deep connection to patriarchy. For instance, we wonder, what would be the effect of using words like "*misogyny*" and "*femicide*", when discussing the many forms of violence (physical and otherwise) that lead to the eventual death and disappearances of millions of women?

Frameworks

In this section, we examine research that analyzes medias' framing of GBV, and the potential impacts of different frameworks of understanding GBV. Linking deeper sociopolitical meaning to events previously deemed "personal" and "private" has been a long-running project of feminism — making everything from Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) to abortion political. *Frameworks*, as a theme, encapsulates our two prior themes as whose voices we turn to for expertise and what language we use to portray GBV, and the women who experience it, is a reflection of our understanding and framing of GBV on a wider level. The media guidelines related to *Voices* and *Language* seek to place GBV within a social framework that identifies the systemic and institutional nature of GBV.

In order to better understand and define a social framework of GBV, we can look to episodic frameworks, and why they are harmful. In their article *Enduring Themes and Silences In Media Portrayals of Violence Against Women*, Esteal, Holland and Judd define episodic frameworks as ones that *focus on the individual and thus invoke an audience reaction that places responsibility on the individual, and removes collective responsibility* (2015). A social or thematic framing, in comparison, emphasizes the social and political context of an issue, invoking an audience reaction that recognizes social responsibility (Esteal, Holland and Judd, 2015). Examples of linking social and political context can range from providing wider statistics of GBV, to linking an individual incident of GBV towards an Indigenous woman to the genocide of Indigenous women and peoples, to discussing the role of unhealthy masculinity and normalized violence in sports culture. What these examples have in common is that an individual incident of GBV is not framed as a once-off, out-of-the-ordinary, singular event, but rather it is framed within a larger narrative of systemic violence against women—which is, unfortunately, anything but out-of-the-ordinary. Stories told within an episodic framework, by comparison, have the opposite effect.

Sensationalism both reflects and reinforces an episodic understanding of GBV, whereas a social framing of GBV is reflective and supportive of a sense of social responsibility for GBV. In her study of emotional abuse coverage in media stories about IPV, Christy-Dale Sims concluded that when readers engaged with episodic framing of GBV, they assessed that emotional abuse is not part of women's everyday lives (2008). Through media selection of stories, sensationalism, and "othering"' language, an episodic framework is one that paints GBV as an anomaly, rather than a pervasive form of gender inequality. Comparatively, Richards, Gillespie and Smith found in their 2011 study of American news stories that media coverage that employed a social framework was more likely to provide resources to survivors of GBV, and used GBV advocates and experts as their sources of information (2011). This study, while replicated once, is too small to draw any real conclusions; however, it is easy to imagine how a deeper understanding of GBV would lead to the use of social framing and a recognition of the importance of resources for women seeking support and expert voices in the GBV sector (Gillepsie et al., 2013). Even with a superficial understanding of the media industry, an obvious question arises about the capacity for media professionals to employ social framing, and their willingness to do so in a culture that rewards sensationalism.

This question is somewhat answered in the research: media professionals, especially in the age of internet-based news coverage, are under pressure to cover breaking news with great speed, and to increase reader interest by covering "newsworthy" stories (Wozniak & McCloskey, 2010; Marhia, 2008). Marhia's 2008 study even indicated a notable difference in depth of coverage between online

and print formats, concluding that online news formats offered more superficial coverage of stories on sexual violence (2008). Sutherland et al. hypothesized that the pressure to create "bite-sized" coverage of breaking news is incompatible with the deeper analysis required to place an incident within its social framing (2015). This type of coverage fits within the category of news coverage of GBV stories that Bullock identified as the "*law enforcement/legal frame*" in 2007, in which media uses a detached tone and simple descriptive facts to imply objectivity and relies on law enforcement and criminal justice voices of expertise (2007). As discussed in our analysis of *Voices*, this frame also fails to take a feminist and social perspective of GBV and to recognize individual incidents of GBV as part of a larger pattern of gender oppression and patriarchy.

The issues related to *Frameworks* demonstrated in the research are that media coverage of GBV tends to employ episodic frameworks, either in the form of sensationalism or the overreliance on an oversimplified law enforcement perspective. This is, to some extent, due to constraints on journalists, or perhaps a lack of awareness on the part of the journalists. Indeed, research has shown a decrease in sensationalism and victim-blaming in media coverage of GBV over time, suggesting that awareness and training have a significant effect on media's capacity to produce stories that align with feminist goals (Fairbairn and Dawson, 2013). In regards to constraints on journalists, Worthington's case study on media coverage of a university campus sexual assault provides an interesting perspective (2008). She argues that while the constraints on journalists' agency are related to the newsworthiness of a story, journalists may work to create opportunities to integrate feminist perspectives and meaningful agency in their coverage of these stories (Worthington, 2008). For example, Worthington noted in the case study that the journalist exercised their agency to build relationships with their sources, and prioritize the wellbeing of their sources over their contribution to the newsworthiness of the story (2008). Worthington also noted that the resources of the media organization were spread thin, and they would likely not have identified the larger pattern of violence occurring at this university campus without a third party informant alerting them (2008). This indicates the vitality of relationships with external GBV sector organizations, whose expertise is of value to media organizations interested in creating transformative stories on GBV.

Impacts

Finally, we examine research on how the impacts of GBV, and the discourse around it, are represented in the media. We are interested in how the media represents the impacts of GBV, as well as how the media addresses the underlying causes of GBV and draws connections between those causes and news coverage of GBV. The theme of *Impacts* is applicable both to individual events of GBV reported in the media, where the effects on individual survivors and their wider communities are represented, and to media representations of GBV that take on a wider social framework, where the effects of systemic GBV and gendered oppression are examined on a societal scale. Furthermore, within the theme of *Impacts*, we explore how the media acknowledges their own potential impact on survivors of GBV and the movement to eradicate GBV.

In 2013, WHO released a report examining the impacts of GBV, drawing clear links between GBV and poor physical and mental health outcomes, cycles of violence and intergenerational trauma, substance abuse disorders, suicide rates, and poor child development (WHO, 2013). Within the GBV sector, this knowledge is not news—we see the lifelong impacts that GBV can have on survivors. We also know that GBV can have long lasting effects on survivors' families and wider communities (Aura Freedom International, 2022). Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety released a report in 2018 detailing the impacts of GBV that we would recommend for further reading on this

topic (ANROWS, 2018). This report is one of many that highlights research that demonstrates the direct social and health costs of GBV against women (ANROWS, 2018). Another Australian report, this one delivered by PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia in 2015, breaks down the financial cost of GBV. This detailed report draws clear lines between GBV and various social support services, and its conclusion is best summed up in its title: *A High Price to Pay*. For information about the societal impact of GBV specific to a Canadian context, we recommend reading Aura Freedom's Beijing +25 Parallel Report entitled *Relentless Resilience,* specifically the *Gender-Based Violence In Canada Across The Sustainable Development Goals* section, which demonstrates the impact of GBV on the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Of course, it is important to note that while GBV has known mental health impacts, not all those who suffer from mental health issues experience or perpetrate GBV.

Despite the volume of research on the impacts of GBV, this theme is not as prevalent in other research on media representations of GBV. While research on media representations of GBV generally acknowledges the impacts of GBV both individually and societally, as well as the impact of media on GBV discourse, there is little discussion about how these impacts should be included in media coverage. Interestingly, this is not reflected in existing media guidelines, which often emphasize the importance of highlighting the impacts of GBV and make connections between the impacts and social costs of GBV to evoke a sense of social responsibility in the reader (Our Watch, 2019). This lack of coverage on this topic in the research undoubtedly contributes to the lack of clarity around how exactly to represent the impacts of GBV—on the one hand, we can recognize the importance of demonstrating the severity of GBV and its consequences for survivors, but on the other hand, media professionals should be careful not to overemphasize (and perhaps sensationalize) these consequences, reducing a survivor and their community to victimhood.

In Sutherland et al.'s *State of Knowledge* paper, the primary focus related to *Impacts* is the provision of resources like helplines, shelters and statistics about GBV (2016). However, this paper does not clearly connect these resources with the knowledge of impacts of GBV. As mentioned in the *Frameworks* section, the provision of these resources is correlated with the use of a social framework in representation of GBV, suggesting that media professionals who have a wider perspective of GBV also have a deeper understanding of the impact that media can have on GBV awareness and discourse. In 2008, Carlyle et al. theorize that the provision of resources and information in news media indicates that the issue that is being reported on is societal and requires public information (Carlyle et al., 2008). As such, the provision of resources inherently implicates the media as responsible for intervening in societal issues, through raising awareness and education. Fairbairn and Dawson liken this to SARS, and we can extend this comparison to COVID-19; it is very common that articles on COVID-19 have multiple resources dedicated to combating COVID-19 misinformation and the spread of the infectious disease, indicating a recognition of the impact and role of media on public education and awareness (2013). However, as Fairbairn and Dawson put forth in their research on changes in Canadian media coverage of IPV over time, the provision of resources in media coverage of GBV is not at all commonplace (2013).

Unfortunately, the lack of research on the relationship between media representation of gender-based violence and its impacts limits our ability to further explore the *Impacts* theme. We know the impact that media has on public discourse around, and awareness of, social issues such as GBV. We know the impact that GBV has on survivors, communities, and general society. What we do not yet know, is the potential positive impact on GBV that transformative media could have—*what would it mean for the public to gain a deeper and nuanced understanding of how GBV impacts not only survivors, but their families, communities, and the everyday life of all women and gender diverse people?*

Part Two: Literature Review

In the Literature Review, we review existing guidelines on the representation of gender-based violence in the media from a multitude of different organizations both within Canada and internationally. Some of these guidelines are broad and cover GBV as a whole, while others are more specific to representation of one form of GBV, or of GBV against a particular community. Many of these guidelines echo each other's recommendations, often citing other guidelines as their primary source of information (Sutherland et al., 2016). We reviewed several guideline documents, identified their commonalities and differences, and analyzed them within four main discursive themes: *Voices, Language, Frameworks and Impacts*. The next sections will discuss each theme in detail and highlight best practices for media portrayals of GBV across the different guidelines we reviewed.

Voices

The theme *Voices* points to how media portrayals of GBV determine whose voices, stories and perspectives are uplifted, and whose are silenced. Historically, women's voices, especially marginalized women's voices, have not been given the credibility and authority that they deserve in reports on GBV. While this trend may have shifted in recent years, media portrayals of GBV in today's media still reflect a reluctance to listen to the real experts on matters of GBV: those with lived experiences (Sutherland et al., 2016). These experiences are not limited to firsthand, personal experiences of GBV, but also include grassroots experience working with survivors of GBV, or working more broadly in the GBV sector.

Many of the existing media guidelines and toolkits for reporting on GBV emphasize the importance of seeking and amplifying the voices of experts and people with relevant lived experiences (OAITH, 2021; Sutherland et al., 2016; femifesto + collaborators, 2015; Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017). In a review of contemporary literature on media reporting of GBV, researchers found that media relies too heavily on sources related to law enforcement or the criminal justice system for comments or expertise on GBV in their stories (Sutherland, McCormack, Esteal, Holland and Pirkis, 2016; Esteal et al., 2021). To rely on the voices of law enforcement or criminal justice system professionals is to obscure the voices of the women involved, or those of experts within the field of GBV. The review also argued that when media use a "police frame", the public are merely given simplified facts (who, what, where, etc.) related to a singular episode, rather than an accurate portrayal of how women experience violence, both within these singular incidents, and on a wider, social scale (Sutherland, McCormack, Esteal, Holland and Pirkis, 2016). This framework, and who journalists choose to quote in a story, can have a significant effect on how GBV is portrayed and whose voices are silenced in these portrayals (Easteal et al., 2021).

The best practices related to the theme of *Voices* outlined in different guidelines for reporting on gender-based violence in the media. primarily address which sources to use for media reporting (Sutherland, McCormack, Esteal, Holland and Pirkis, 2016; femifesto + collaborators, 2015; Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017). Sutherland et al. provide a summary of these best practices in their review of contemporary literature on media reporting GBV:

Avoid using distant acquaintances who are likely to know little about the background and circumstances of the incident; judiciously use those with an emotional connection to the perpetrator and subject of the violence; don't rely solely on the police or other law enforcement personnel for comment and/or seek alternative and expert voices, such as comment from survivors, community advocates or researchers (Sutherland, McCormack, Esteal, Holland and Pirkis, 2016).

In their *Style Guide*, the Trans Journalists Association echoes this advice in relation to media coverage of trans experiences and stories and highlights the importance of intersectionality and lived experience in media representation of communities who are marginalized. The *Style Guide* advises that trans persons are experts on their experiences, and that trans voices should be the experts cited in stories portraying these experiences (Trans Journalists Association, n.d). Indeed, experts on trans women's experiences of violence can more effectively place this violence in a wider context, emphasizing the intersecting roles of misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, in a way that the simple facts of "who, what, where" cannot. This example can be extended to other marginalized communities that also experience heightened rates of GBV, as their experiences cannot be disentangled from their positionalities. Expertise rooted in lived experiences within these diverse positionalities is essential for transformative media portrayals of GBV.

This is echoed in other guidelines as well. Journalists Against Violence Against Women put out guidelines that recommend editors "*to assign the topic of violence against women only to women journalists who are knowledgeable or experienced in reporting on this phenomenon whenever possible*" (2021). These guidelines also recommend that editors "*encourage journalists to attend training events and to refer them to manuals, recommendations and guidelines for responsible media reporting on sexism, discrimination and violence against women, and to refer them to peers who have pertinent experience and who report on this topic in an ethical manner.*" (2021).

The Trans Journalists Association's *Style Guide* also recommends a longer term solution of hiring more trans reporters and journalists, who are able to bring their own expertise and lived experiences to their work (The Trans Journalists Association, n.d.). Again, this recommendation can be extended to members of other marginalized groups, who experience intersecting forms of oppression that influence their experiences of GBV. Implementing long-term solutions that focus on the inclusion of diverse voices ensures that portrayals of GBV stem from an understanding of intersectionality and systemic forms of oppression.

Language

The theme of *Language* is the most highly-discussed in research and guidelines on reporting of GBV. Guidelines for media reporting on GBV emphasize the importance of using correct language and terminology, even to the extent of giving it titular importance in *Use The Right Words* (femifesto + collaborators, 2015). Of course, the words we use play a vital role in how meaning is conveyed both implicitly and explicitly, and influence how a GBV news story is understood by the reader. There are several sub-themes of note within the theme of *Language*: sensationalist language, stigmatizing language, stereotyping language, and how these types of language frame GBV, the credibility of survivors, and the concept of consent, are a few examples often cited in guidelines. In this section, we will describe these different categories, and the best practices related to language in GBV reporting.

One of the most discussed aspects of language in GBV reporting is sensationalizing language, or the use of overly dramatic or overly graphic language to draw in the reader's attention and cause a strong reaction to the story (Journalists Against Violence Against Women, 2021). In their review of media guidelines for reporting on GBV, Sutherland et al. report that while sensationalist language is often used to create a "shock" factor or to entertain readers, it can also be used to obscure the true nature of GBV (2016). By using language that focuses on the graphic and violent details, journalists perpetuate a clichéd portrayal of GBV and obscure the less "buzz-worthy" aspects, warning signs and forms of GBV (Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017).

Similarly, many guidelines for reporting on gender-based violence in the media discuss the use of euphemisms to downplay GBV (Sutherland et al., 2016; femifesto + collaborators, 2015; Sonke Gender

Justice and Health-E News, 2017; OAITH, 2021). Unlike sensationalist language, which uses graphic descriptions of violence to entertain and instill a sense of fear, the use of euphemisms such as "*sex attack*" ignores and downplays the violence of GBV (Sutherland, 2015; Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017). Such euphemisms also imply a mutuality between the perpetrator and victim of GBV, implying that a "*sex attack*" is analogous with consensual sex, rather than using language like "*sexual assault*" or "*rape*" to emphasize the lack of consent and inherent violence of an act (Sutherland et al., 2016). Furthermore, the use of other euphemisms such as "*sex scandal*" or "*domestic dispute*", rather than "*sexual assault*" or "*intimate partner violence*", creates the image of a private matter, rather than a criminal one.

Finally, guidelines also draw attention to language that casts doubt over the credibility of the survivor's story. In its simplest forms, this can involve the journalist choosing words like "*alleged*" or "*claimed*", rather than "*said*" or "*shared*" or "*reported*" to describe the survivor's story (Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017; Journalists Against Violence Against Women, 2021). More implicitly, journalists can choose language that plays into stereotypes with negative connotations. For example, journalists commonly use words like "*prostitute*" or "*immigrant*" to describe a victim in a story on GBV, relying on the negative connotations behind these words to frame the story (Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017). In other words, readers can "read between the lines" and make assumptions about the victims and their credibility based on the stereotypes used to describe them.

The best practices related to language are quite simple, and are summed up well in the previously mentioned toolkit entitled *Use the Right Words* (femifesto + collaborators, 2015). Across most of the guidelines included in this review, the best practices related to language in media portrayals of GBV are easily applicable (though still incredibly effective) fixes, such as *"avoid these words"* and *"use these instead"* (Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017; femifesto + collaborators, 2015; Sutherland et al., 2016; OAITH, 2021).. Many guidelines also provide simple, easy to understand explanations as to why certain language must not be used. The guidelines around language are extremely important and, more notably, useful to journalists who are looking for simple instructions on portraying GBV—guidelines around language are easy to understand, implement, and incorporate into policy.

However, future guidelines could discuss the potential for the language used in journalism to go further—to empower survivors and prevent GBV, rather than simply avoid further harming survivors and perpetuating inaccurate perceptions of GBV. Existing media guidelines have created extensive lists of examples of incorrect language and their more neutral, appropriate counterparts. By building upon existing feminist excellence, *how can we inspire more transformative reporting of GBV, radically change the way it is viewed in our communities, and create media guidelines for showing solidarity with the movement to eradicate GBV*? Beyond language that is neutral, or supportive at best, *how can we use language as a means to create transformative journalism on GBV?*

Frameworks

The framework in which GBV is placed is another commonly discussed theme in guidelines on media portrayals of GBV (OAITH, 2021; Our Watch, 2019; Easteal et al. 2021). Simply put — are journalists placing incidents of GBV within a wider social context and identifying its roots in gender inequality, systemic racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and other forces of oppression? Or, are they framing incidents of GBV as singular, one-off incidents that are not reflective of a larger, global human rights issue? By framing incidents of GBV within its wider social context of sexism, misogyny, patriarchy and white supremacy, journalists have the opportunity to present it as a pervasive social issue, rather than a private matter (Sutherland et al., 2016). This removes the blame and responsibility that is often placed on victims and survivors, and combats stereotypes with accurate

figures about the nature and rates of GBV experienced by different populations (Sutherland et al., 2016). However, media often still plays a role in perpetuating frameworks of GBV as a series of singular incidents within private relationships or that push an incorrect narrative about who perpetuates, and who is affected by, gender-based violence (Gillepsie et al., 2013).

When reporting on violence against women, the media often relies on frameworks of GBV to "explain away" the incident. Drawing on Bullock and Cubert's article on portrayals of domestic abuse in the media, Gillepsie et al., put forth five different harmful frameworks that are used by the media to portray femicide, intimate partner violence, and GBV (2013). These frameworks are described as "*(1) focusing on the behavior of the victim, including blaming the victim or excusing the perpetrator; (2) normalizing the event as commonplace; (3) suggesting the incident was an isolated event; (4) indicating the victim and/or perpetrator are somehow different from the norm; and (5) asserting that domestic violence perpetrators are 'disordered' and should be easily identifiable.*" (Gillepsie et al., 2013; Bullock and Cubert, 2002). While these frameworks were originally identified in portrayals of domestic abuse, they can be extended to other forms of GBV. They argue that these frameworks do not place GBV in its social framework, and thus draw attention away from GBV as a systemic form of violence and oppression against women (Gillepsie et al., 2013). The failure to place incidents of GBV in their wider social context has been proven to result in individualistic attributions of blame and responsibility from audiences (Sutherland et al., 2016).

The importance of *Frameworks* is also evident in how we frame our understanding and perception of survivors and perpetrators of GBV. As discussed in the two previous sections, survivors and victims of GBV are often reduced to labels and stereotypes, placing them in the context of the negative connotations associated with their given stereotypes or associated communities (Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017). For example, the framing of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM/C) and its victims can often be tied to harmful stereotypes and reduced to an issue of the cultures in which FGM/C is considered a traditional practice. However, in order to combat FGM/C, journalists must place it within its global context of patriarchy and control over women's sexuality and freedom (Equality Now, 2022). The reliance on these frameworks and stereotypes perpetuates dangerous and harmful misconceptions about levels of GBV in marginalized communities and result in victim-blaming or perpetrator-excusing attitudes (Gillepsie et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016).

Within the theme of *Frameworks*, the best practices outlined in current media guidelines are relatively simple as well: place incidents of GBV in its wider social context (OAITH, 2021; Our Watch, 2019; Easteal et al,. 2021; Easteal et al. 2021). There are a few suggested methods to tie episodes of GBV to its social context. The first and most practical suggestion is to include statistics and figures about GBV, especially to highlight higher rates experienced by marginalized communities (Our Watch, 2019). However, the guidelines published by Our Watch in 2019 provide a reminder that statistics on GBV are often inaccurate due to lack of reporting, and that implicit biases play a role in how statistics are interpreted (Our Watch, 2019). In particular, statistics on GBV experienced by women in marginalized communities could be interpreted as the fault of the victims due to negative stereotypes associated with these communities. For example, Indigenous women who are victims/survivors of GBV are often associated with harmful stereotypes that stigmatize and sexualize Indigenous women and Indigenous peoples in general, and these stereotypes are used to explain or excuse the GBV. Another common example is sex workers who experience GBV, whose profession is heavily stigmatized and used to justify violence. Thus, future guidelines should build on this suggestion by emphasizing the importance of explaining statistics, rather than leaving them up for interpretation.

More broadly, an additional best practice for portraying gender-based violence in the media is tying episodes of GBV to a larger social theme of gender, racial, or different types of systemic inequality

(Our Watch, 2015). Different guidelines recommend tying GBV incidents to "*gender inequality*", "*patriarchal gender norms*", "*intersectionality*", and a "*broader public health issue*" (Our Watch, 2015; Sonke Gender Justice and Health-E News, 2017; Our Watch 2019; Veto Violence, n.d.). In 2020, Equal Press released resources that went into the "how" of social context, urging journalists to "*take into account the unique ways that marginalized communities are more vulnerable to gender-based violence, and the barriers that may prevent them from accessing support and services*". While social context is widely cited as one of the most important factors in portrayals of GBV, it seems that many existing guidelines do not delve deeper into how exactly journalists can tie in wider social contexts of systemic inequality (Sutherland et al., 2016). Furthermore, different guidelines use different language to describe "social context" (e.g. gender inequality vs gender norms), creating a lack of clarity about this best practice — especially for media professionals with little or no background education on GBV. When discussing GBV towards Indigenous women, there are slightly more specific examples of social context in which to frame incidents of GBV, such as "*racism, dispossession, intergenerational trauma, forced child removal and entrenched poverty*" (Our Watch, 2019). But again, when a media professional has little or no background knowledge of how this social context intersects with GBV, it could be more difficult to implement this practice, especially within the confines of a short article. This signals a need for transformative journalism as an integrated practice in the media profession, so that media professionals receive the training and education needed to feel confident in their approach to intersecting social factors that affect GBV.

Overall, the importance of *Frameworks* is touched on in almost every set of existing guidelines on media portrayals of GBV. How an incident of GBV is framed and tied into its wider social context has direct impacts on how the story is received by the public, and how the public constructs social attitudes towards victims and perpetrators of GBV, and GBV as a social issue. The best practices related to *Frameworks* are easy to understand, but not always easy to implement—especially for those with less background knowledge of systemic oppression and inequality.

Impacts

Impacts relates to how portrayals of GBV acknowledge and address the impacts of GBV, and its portrayal in the media on survivors and their communities, and society as a whole. This theme overlaps with *Voices, Language*, and *Frameworks*, as the best practices related to these themes indirectly aim to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on survivors and victims of GBV. The best practices related to *Impacts*, however, aim to directly address and mitigate negative impacts on survivors and victims by explicitly acknowledging short- and long-term impacts of GBV, and providing resources to survivors, victims, and women as a whole. This is explored more in-depth in the Indigenous-led Literature Review, through an examination of violence against Indigenous women and girls in the media.

Similarly to placing GBV within its social context, explicitly acknowledging the long-term impacts of GBV shifts the focus away from a singular episode and towards a deeper understanding of the consequences of GBV. In *Use the Right Words*, the guidelines emphasize the importance of focusing on the impacts of GBV on survivors, rather than creating sympathy for perpetrators or minimizing the harm done (femifesto + collaborators, 2015). Furthermore, by emphasizing the long-term social, financial and health impacts on survivors and their communities, authors portraying gender-based violence in the media can draw connections to the social and financial costs of GBV on society as a whole (Our Watch, 2019). For example, Our Watch estimated in their *National Guidelines* that the consequences of violence against women in Australia cost society 21.6 billion dollars a year (2019). Similar to how placing incidents of GBV within their social context may elicit attitudes of social responsibility, tying the impacts of GBV on survivors to the long-lasting social and economic impacts may also elicit attitudes of social and political responsibility to address GBV.

Additionally, several guidelines recommend providing resources for survivors of violence, such as crisis lines and warning signs for abuse and coercive control. Providing these resources in media articles is an explicit acknowledgement of the potential role the media can play in supporting survivors of GBV and promoting the use of help-seeking resources for survivors (Sutherland et al., 2016). Furthermore, by describing warning signs of abuse and coercive control, the media can also play a role in educating the general public about abuse that is not generally deemed "newsworthy" (OAITH, 2021). Acknowledging forms of abuse such as coercive control that typically lead up to more severe incidents can also emphasize the systemic and widespread nature of GBV, rather than focusing the audience's attention on episodic cases (OAITH, 2021).

Finally, some media guidelines address the use of images accompanying GBV news stories (Sutherland et al., 2016). The guidelines generally advise against the use of images that may be triggering to survivors of GBV, or that are unnecessarily graphic (OAITH, 2021; Sutherland et al., 2016; femifesto + collaborators, 2015). While this is a less common guideline in comparison to others, it is also an example of a guideline that explicitly acknowledges the long-lasting impacts of GBV on survivors and their families/communities (Sutherland et al., 2016). It also recognizes the responsibility of the media to portray GBV in a way that acknowledges these impacts and how sensationalist and graphic language and imagery can cause further harm to survivors (femifesto + collaborators, 2015; OAITH, 2021).

The best practices related to *Impacts* are similar to those related to *Frameworks* in that they are simple in theory, but require a nuanced approach grounded in a deep understanding of GBV. Sutherland et al. discuss how only some media guidelines recommend the provision of help-seeking resources, despite research that many women suffering from abuse do not know where to seek help (2016). They argue that this reluctance to recommend this guideline could be due to a myriad of reasons, including a lack of space and time for media professionals to include this information, or a lack of clarity about when and whether this information is useful (Sutherland et al., 2016). Furthermore, they note that very few existing guidelines have recommendations based on imagery, and this may be because there is less research to support this recommendation (Sutherland et al., 2016). The best practices related to *Impacts* in existing media guidelines encourage journalists and media professionals to self-examine their work and identify the potential impacts that portrayals of GBV can have on survivors and those who surround them, as well as actual rates of GBV. Future guidelines should aim to create practical, implementable recommendations to build on this work, that remove any ambiguity about how to emphasize the impacts and consequences of GBV on survivors, their families/communities, and wider society.

Conclusion

Based on existing guidelines for media representation of GBV, we extracted four main themes to structure our review of the research around this topic. Using this method, we were able to identify the primary area of concern of past guideline creators, examine the research that supports these guidelines, and identify the questions —both in the guidelines and in the current body of research on this topic. In *Voices*, we confirmed the overreliance on law enforcement voices and pointed out the false objectivity of these voices, as well as determined that implementing sensitivity training, relationship-building with expert organizations, and creating long-term changes in representation within the media industry were key action points for future guidelines. In *Language*, we re-emphasized the impact that harmful language can have on audience perception of GBV, and put forth the question of how to promote the use of transformational language rooted in solidarity with GBV advocates in future guidelines. In *Frameworks*, we noted the importance of placing GBV within a wider social context to illustrate the systemic nature of the problem, while drawing attention to the potential lack of

capacity or lack of incentive in the media industry to do so, despite good intentions. We highlighted the importance of relationships with GBV organizations and experts to cover the gap in capacity. Finally, in *Impacts*, we put forth questions about the media's ability to self-implicate and hold itself accountable in the fight against GBV, as it does for other social and public safety issues.

As mentioned in the introduction, we did not set out to find answers in this research review, but rather to find the questions that had not been asked yet. In our research with the National Network for Aura Freedom's **GBV In The Media** project, we put forth these questions to the members, and continued to tease out ideas, tensions, and inspirations.

> "...what would it mean for the public to gain a deeper and nuanced understanding of how gender-based violence impacts not only survivors, but their families, communities, and the everyday life of all women and gender diverse people?"

Indigenous-Specific Research Background & Literature Review

Reframing, Restoring, and Returning:

Redirecting Narratives Surrounding Indigenous Experiences of Gender-Based Violence in the Media

Sabrina Lamanna, MA – Indigenous Research Lead on Aura Freedom's GBV In The Media project

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) occurs in Canada at rates that are beyond concerning. More than 4 in 10 women have experienced GBV in their lifetime, and approximately every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her partner (Statistics Canada, 2021). Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGTBQ+ peoples are even more likely to experience violence, as they are 12 times more likely to be murdered or go missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than white women (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). In order to contribute to ending experiences of GBV for Indigenous women, section 6.1 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (The National Inquiry) calls for media corporations and social influencers to take decolonizing approaches to their work. It specifically calls for media to ensure appropriate and accurate representation of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGTBQ+ peoples and the issues that affect them, support them in sharing their stories from their perspectives, and "*take proactive steps to break down the stereotypes that hypersexualize and demean Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people*" (The National Inquiry, 2019).

While some research shows that media representation of Indigenous Peoples reinforces the harmful stereotypes and racism that contributes to the genocide of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, other findings show that media can also work to reframe, restore, and return their self-determination. The functions of *Reframing, Restoring, and Returning* were originally considered as good practice for Indigenous research by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999). Kyllie Cripps (2021) explains that in the context of reporting on experiences of GBV faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGTBQ+ peoples:

> Reframing is taking control over the ways in which Indigenous issues and social problems are constructed and communicated to the public, recognising that too often such issues are framed by outsiders with their own normative views and bias. By reframing the lens that has shaped the news media's narratives of Indigenous women's violent deaths, the stereotypes that have diminished their lives and their worth can be challenged but also held accountable. Further, through the actions of 'restoring' and 'returning', the women's narrative becomes visible and their truth and lives can be honoured. (Cripps, 2021, p 308)

Indigenous and non-Indigenous women's organizations and scholars alike are calling for actions towards reframing, restoring, and returning Indigenous women's power and agency according to The National Inquiry.

Indigenous women and communities are aware of the fact that the genocide of MMIWG2S+ is pervasive and ongoing for a specific reason. In the words of Audra Simpson (2016), "*Canada requires the death and so called 'disappearance' of Indigenous women in order to secure its sovereignty*" (p 1). The murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls work to further break down Indigenous communities and their cultures, because our women are matriarchs and stewards of culture in our families and communities. Violence against Indigenous women, and the impacts of GBV such as losing children to the child welfare system, create cyclical, ongoing genocidal patterns that violently remove women and girls from communities because their presence threatens the very foundations of the Canadian state. For these reasons, Aura Freedom is committed to honoring the truths and aspirations of Indigenous women and girls by calling attention to the roots of their experiences of GBV through **Transformative Media**, and that this process be both designed and led by Indigenous women themselves. Our definition of transformative media is defined above in the Introduction of this document.

We believe that engaging in **Transformative Media** practices will contribute to ending GBV for Indigenous Peoples by reframing, restoring, and returning power to Indigenous communities, particularly women and girls. By reframing, restoring, and returning stories surrounding Indigenous experiences of GBV through transformative media, journalists can answer *The National Inquiry's Calls for Justice* as these practices will support accurate, survivor-centred depictions that will contribute to ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and communities.

While the first Research Background and Literature Review in this document refers to media representations of GBV in general, the following Research Background/Literature Review examines secondary source qualitative and quantitative data from various stakeholders with interests and obligations to contribute to resolving GBV in Indigenous communities. I analyzed more than eighty scholarly journal articles, government reports, and media guidelines from a variety of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and movements with the aim of positioning their voices alongside each other in their calls towards ending gender-based violence in Indigenous communities.

As mentioned in the Introduction of this document, this research will be guided by the four themes extracted from our initial analysis of existing guidelines on GBV In The Media: *Voices, Language, Frameworks*, and *Impacts*. For an Indigenous-specific context, I have added three additional themes of *Visibility, Trauma-informed,* and *Desire-based*. *Trauma-informed* and *Desire-based* considerations reflect the values of reframing, restoring, and returning, and can be positioned as solutions towards better reporting practices for the themes of *Voices, Language, Frameworks, Impacts, and Visibility*.

In the sections that follow, I review the themes of *Voices, Language, Frameworks, Impacts*, and *Visibility* as they are addressed by each source - Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, scholars, and government bodies - to clearly situate their positions towards each theme alongside each other. Such a framework allows clear comparisons and solutions to be drawn between the sources and themes in order to provide a holistic foundational resource for Aura Freedom's ***Guidelines on GBV In The Media.***

Voices

In any topic of discussion, there are different variables relating to *Voices* that carry a tremendous amount of power. Factors such as who is speaking, who they are speaking to, and what they are (not) speaking about all contribute to the overall narrative and its impacts. When it comes to media representations of Indigenous experiences of GBV, it is integral to consider whose voices are being centred, whose voices narrate the story, and who the target audience is. Even more important to consider is whose voices are being left out, and what is not being voiced when violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples are addressed in the media.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous women's organizations alike are concerned with the way voices are engaged when it comes to reporting Indigenous experiences of GBV In The Media. Saturviit, the Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, speaks to the need to break the silence surrounding what abuse truly is and to raise awareness about abuse in the community (2015). They believe that the use of survivor voices and expert opinions rather than police accounts would better serve the understanding of what abuse is and how it can be resolved (2015). femifesto + collaborators (2015) also agree that the voices of experts such as survivors, scholars, and those with experience in the field of supporting GBV survivors should be centred when reporting on Indigenous experiences of GBV—which reflects reframing, restoring, and returning agency to Indigenous women.

Scholars also agree that the voices of experts should be uplifted in discussions of GBV against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples—especially those of survivors, so that they can

both address their needs and reach solutions within their own political contexts and realities (Simpson, 2017; Coulthard, 2015; Tuck, 2009). According to Donna Klingsphon (2018), it is necessary to "*hear the voices of Indigenous women, to gain their perspectives on how they view the issue of domestic violence and identify strategies they would find effective while supporting their cultural beliefs*" to represent a more meaningful narrative that encourages resolutions for GBV from within Indigenous political contexts. Ferris, Ladner, Allard, and Hughes (2018) call for the co-developing of media reports between journalists and Indigenous survivors of GBV, as well as the families and communities of those affected. For Ferris et. al, "*it is critical to give vulnerable populations ownership, voice, and control over all archival records about which they are the subject. Part of these rights over one's own records would be the right to keep records private and/or to remove them from public archival institutions if one so chose*" (p 103). Honouring the voices of Indigenous survivors of GBV not only ensures that their own perspectives and needs can be addressed; it also reframes, restores, and returns power and agency to victims, survivors, and their communities.

Documents created by and for government bodies surrounding Indigenous experiences of GBV do not address or recognize *Voices* as a variable that has the potential to both influence and work towards resolving GBV. Government initiatives that address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples are written in a way that centres the voices of state agents like police and government ministries, as they are positioned as responsible for implementing resolutions that aim to "*challenge victim blaming*" (Government of Canada, 2021), for example. According to Sarah Fotheringham, Lana Wells, and Sharon Goulet (2021), there is limited long-term government funding allocated to Indigenous-led GBV prevention, which suggests "*minimal government commitment and absence of cultural understanding regarding [domestic violence] in Indigenous communities*" (p 1). In the sections that follow, I will explain how the government's lack of attention towards the importance of *Voices* can have negative effects for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples who experience violence.

Language

The kind of language that is used to describe violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples in the media is equally as important to be aware of when aiming to prevent and eliminate GBV. One of the most prominent calls for change is in regard to the narratives used to explain accounts of Indigenous experiences of GBV. While there are many narrative styles that harmfully depict violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, most Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and scholars are concerned with victim-blaming as well as damage-centred narratives found within the media (and society in general) that do not honour the lives of victims and survivors.

The Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH)'s *Femicide Reporting Recommendations* encourage reporters to refrain from including any negative language or imagery to describe survivors of Indigenous GBV, in addition to avoiding sympathetic language to describe the perpetrator (2021, p 3). As the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability highlights, presenting perpetrators of femicide as "'*a great father', or 'a loving guy' leaves the impression that killing was out of character*", which also serves to influence sympathy for the perpetrator rather than the victim or their family (Femicide in Canada, 2020). Global Protection Cluster (2014) highlights that using terms such as "alleged" or "supposed" when describing actions of a perpetrator can also "*reinforce the disbelief that a crime actually occurred*" (p 2), ultimately serving to influence doubt for the perpetrator's benefit and encouraging victim-blaming narratives. Many organizations agree that using phrases such as "*alleged*" or "*supposed*" to describe a crime should be avoided whenever

possible (White Ribbon Campaign, 2011; Global Protection Cluster, 2014; Journalists Against Violence Against Women, 2021; Equal Press, 2020).

There are other common *Language* practices in media reporting guidelines that should be avoided in order to disengage victim-blaming narratives. femifesto + collaborators (2015) assert that headlines that ignore the perpetrators by noting "*woman stabbed*", "*woman assaulted*", "*woman beaten*" simultaneously fail to acknowledge who is responsible for GBV, which perpetuates victim-blaming through the erasure of the perpetrators. The impacts and importance of making perpetrators of GBV visible in order to end GBV are discussed in the sections that follow. Organizations like OAITH (2021) and Equal Press (2020) also recommend that reporters avoid sensationalist language and graphic depictions of Indigenous GBV, as depictions of GBV that imply it was "*an exemptional deviation from the norm*" fail to capture the frequency of Indigenous GBV (OAITH, 2021, p 3). However, Global Protection Cluster (2014) calls attention to the importance of not presenting GBV as a normal feature of culture or community life in a given context; as for Indigenous Peoples, high rates of GBV within community are not normal—it is an issue that has been influenced and increasing as a result of settler-colonialism, which I will discuss further within the theme of *Frameworks*.

To avoid normalizing sensationalist narratives surrounding GBV, femifesto + collaborators (2015) recommend that reporters should simply name the kind of violence experienced and carry on with the story. In this way, transformative journalism can work to normalize realistic conversations about how common GBV is for women in its various forms, especially for Indigenous women. Failing to consider the frequency of GBV, and relate Indigenous experiences of GBV to the overall colonial violence, including MMIWG2S+ and the genocide of Indigenous Peoples that it contributes to, also shadows the pervasive nature and severity of Indigenous GBV and its impacts that I discuss later. Calling attention to the wider issues of femicide and the ongoing colonial genocide of Indigenous Peoples will ultimately advance public awareness and efforts to end Indigenous experiences of GBV, especially when the contributing factors are also identified.

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council (NBAPC) created media guidelines that specifically suggest journalists ask themselves reflective questions about the language they engage, such as, "*Have I avoided using any language that stereotypes or prejudges?"* and, *"A missing person is a missing person regardless of background or ethnicity. Am I mentioning that someone is Indigenous because it's relevant to the story or is it gratuitous?*" (N.D., p 11). Journalists should not only be careful about when they represent Indigeneity, but also how they represent it. NBAPC recommends that journalists consult with community leaders or family members who have the capacity to share for their feedback on accurate and responsible representations that honor the livelihoods and perspectives of those involved (NBAPC, N.D.).

> When it comes to the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples who have experienced GBV, Equal Press (2020) calls for journalists to highlight the strength and resiliency of Indigenous people. Do not portray them as disempowered victims, but instead recognize them as strong nations of people who have sustained themselves and this land since time immemorial who have sophisticated traditional governance systems, culture, language, and sustainability principles. (Equal Press, 2020, p 33.)

For additional accurate representations of personal identity, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Women (2020) call on the media to "*avoid making gender-based assumptions, including in the depiction of traditional feminine/masculine characteristics or roles*" (p 8). These are important considerations not only for reporting on GBV, but for reporting practices more generally, as stereotypical

representations of feminine/masculine gender roles serve as a contributing factor to GBV and its prevalence in society by hyper-sexualizing women, and influencing unhealthy masculinity, as well as rape culture (White Ribbon Campaign, 2011). In turn, UNICEF and UN Women (2020) specifically recommend avoiding "*sexist interpretations of the characteristics and roles of men and women in society*" in media publications (p 8).

UNICEF and UN Women (2020) call for journalists to use gender-inclusive narratives through the use of gender neutral language and "they" pronouns unless the victim or survivor has specified their gender. Saturviit (2017) also aligns with gender-neutral language to address the crisis of GBV in Nunavik by framing the issue as "*Missing or Murdered Nunavimmiut*", which refers to a person from Nunavik rather than a man or woman. As our main focus is to address representations of men's violence against women in this project, it is also important not to ignore or erase the cycles of violence that Indigenous men have and continue to experience as a result of colonialism, which influences the violence they perpetuate against men, women, and 2 spirit peoples. Saturviit (2017) highlights that Indigenous men and women are all affected by cycles of verbal, physical, psychological, sexual, financial, and family abuse as a result of intergenerational trauma caused by colonialism and residential schools. Scholars such as David Milward (2022) agree that colonialism and residential schools are responsible for initiating cycles of violence for Indigenous Peoples, and note that witnessing violence at home and in communities further contributes to ongoing cycles of violence due to intergenerational trauma. However, many GBV sector organizations have noted that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples who have experienced cycles of abuse and trauma do not always go on to perpetuate violence themselves.

Scholars also agree that *Language* is a very powerful tool that can be used to reinforce, or overcome, harmful stereotypes about GBV (Abaraham & Tastoglou, 2016; Tuck, 2008). Narratives that engage in monolithic depictions of GBV survivors as victims, particularly Indigenous survivors, serve to uphold what Eve Tuck (2008) describes as a "*damage-centred*" approach to narratives that reinforces colonial subordination, marginalization, and violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples as discussed by The National Inquiry. Tuck acknowledges that while a victim-centred focus is often well intended and rooted in the desire to affect social, political, and/or material change through the pursuit of justice and accountability, the sole focus on damage has been historically unsuccessful when pursuing Indigenous justice, especially for MMIWG2S+. When looking specifically at cases involving violence against Indigenous women, a study by Jenna Walsh (2017) indicates that only fifty four percent of those who murder Indigenous women are charged in comparison to an eighty four percent national indictment rate. By focusing solely on their victimization in the criminal justice system and ignoring their positions as community matriarchs, the narrative of Indigenous women as a vulnerable population in need of "saving" by the same colonial systems that influence marginalization and violence towards Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGTBQ+ peoples is upheld. Thus, it is clear that the damage-centred narrative is restrictive and reproduces specific gendered and colonial effects within the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women.

Tuck is not the first scholar to highlight the ways that narratives have power and influence over social marginalization. Others such as Judith Butler (2009) and Achille Membe (2019) explain how language and narratives can be tools used to define and determine whose lives are grievable, and more despicably, whose lives are deserving of death. Lena Carla Palacios (2016), Kylie Cripps (2021), and Yasmin Jiwani (2009), highlight how Indigenous Peoples who have experienced GBV are often described by the media as "*high risk*", "*prostitutes*", and "*drug- addicted*". Cindy Baskin (2020) explains that media "*discourses argue that because many victims are poor Indigenous sex workers and*

addicted to hard drugs, they are at 'high risk' of violence because they put themselves at risk due to 'bad choices'" (p 2091). This discourse blames Indigenous women for the reality that colonialism has forced upon them, and obscures the unequal social conditions which shape "*choices*" for Indigenous women, which are really not choices at all. As a result of victim-blaming narratives, the collaborated work between Aura Freedom and the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (2020) for Aura Freedom's *Gender-Based Violence Resource Centre* also highlights that "*Many still blame Indigenous women and girls for the violence they experience, instead of recognizing how colonization and systemic racism have created an environment where they at the greatest risk of violence and exploitation in Canada*" (Aura Freedom International, 2020).

Furthermore, Katherine Morton (2018) calls attention to the ways that media depictions associate Indigenous women with "*prostitutes*" and "*drug addicts*", who are stereotypically (and wrongfully) casted as "undesirable" members of society, which only serves to reinforce a lack of care for the life and death of populations participating in activities deemed to be socially "*ugly*". According to Palacios (2016), narratives that influence a disregard for the life or death of a human being enact an additional kind of discursive violence by inciting a lack of empathy and disregard for Indigenous women, their communities, and their overall experiences of GBV. By using narratives that cast Indigenous women as worthy of experiencing GBV and femicide, the media is ultimately serving to reinforce the continuity of colonial genocide against Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, and their communities. Melanie McGruder (2021) advocates the need for scholars and journalists alike to connect single cases of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples to femicide as a pervasive abuse of human rights, which is also connected to the genocide of Indigenous women and their communities, in order to raise awareness that contributes to ending these social conditions.

Government bodies share some similar concerns with grassroots organizations and scholars surrounding the language used to describe Indigenous experiences of GBV. They are focused on eradicating the victim-blaming narrative that is perpetuated by some journalists when referring to those who have been harmed in disparaging ways (Cripps, 2021). Government bodies also encourage journalists to give attention to Indigenous experiences of non-physical GBV by naming emotional, financial, and psychological abuse (Government of Canada, 2021). While the Government is taking initiative to address the importance of *Language* in responding to GBV, there are some significant gaps and issues with their own consideration of language.

One key piece of information pertaining to *Language* and considerations of what constitutes GBV for Indigenous Peoples is the failure to name structural violence and colonial violence that directly influences Indigenous experiences of GBV. According to Equal Press (2020), "*Indigenous women face a particular kind of colonial violence—this and marginalization, systemic racism/discrimination, and forced sterilization are all considered GBV against Indigenous peoples*". While The National Inquiry highlights that the Government of Canada enforced genocide against Indigenous Peoples, the government fails to consider these actions as a form of GBV that must be resolved. In their 2021 campaign to end GBV, the Government of Canada acknowledges physical, emotional, financial, and psychological violence as GBV, but does not recognize structural and colonial violence and thus fails to apply the rigour necessary to end GBV within Indigenous communities. In order to truly end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples, the government must take responsibility for repairing structural and colonial violence that also directly contributes to the ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples.

Frameworks

The theme of *Frameworks* is discussed in detail by Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and scholars alike. Each of these sources frequently link the framework and structures of settler-colonialism, including racism and sexism, to Indigenous experiences of GBV (Equal Press 2020; NBPAC N.D; Saturviit 2015; NIWRC N.D). Organizations such as Saturviit (2015), Equal Press (2021), and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Centre (NIWRC) (N.D.) assert the importance of acknowledging that abuse happens within Indigenous communities as a direct result of colonialism and intergenerational trauma. Saturviit (2015) connects intergenerational trauma to experiences within residential schools initiated by the Government of Canada, which are known to have perpetuated sexual, psychological, physical, and emotional violence against Indigenous communities until 1996. According to femifesto + collaborators (2015), "*We need to be careful about how this conversation is racialized. If it's mainly white women's bodies we're protecting, we've seen how that plays out in communities of colour with men of colour being profiled and criminalized and the rapes of women of colour being seen as low priority or somehow not as egregious*" (p 40). As previously mentioned, damage-centred narratives not only position settler-colonial institutions and settlers as "saving" Indigenous women, reinforcing the conditions of subordination and violence, but also identify who is worthy of death and public mourning.

UNICEF and UN Women (2020) assert that journalists should draw further attention to racist and sexist frameworks affecting GBV such as "*inequitable gender norms, attitudes, power imbalances, patriarchy, and harmful masculinities*". They also call for journalists reporting on GBV to "*highlight that situations like COVID-19 can lead to an increase in [violence against women/violence against children], but that it is never a cause or an excuse for violence*" (p 7). To this end, it is important that media professionals include frameworks not as excuses or scapegoats for acts of GBV, but instead recognize frameworks as the circumstances and wider context in which GBV flourishes.

It is equally as important for media professionals to avoid isolating acts of GBV in singular, episodic frameworks, and instead report experiences of GBV as part of wider societal issues that contribute to femicide, and the ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples. According to OAITH (2021), episodic framing of GBV ignores the role of patriarchy, gender inequality, misogyny, and systemic racism as the root cause of femicide, which contributes to the genocide of Indigenous Peoples. Excluding these facts makes journalists complicit in myth-making and reinforcing institutions that uphold and perpetrate femicide and Indigenous genocide. Relating experiences of GBV back to contexts that influence femicide and Indigenous genocide will ultimately contribute to raising public awareness of the circumstances in which GBV prospers, so that we can reform these to eradicate GBV within Indigenous communities and the general Canadian population more broadly.

Scholars also recognize the importance of reforming colonial, patriarchal, and paternalistic frameworks that allow Indigenous experiences of GBV to persist so frequently (Abraham & Tastoglou, 2016; Wolfe, 2006; Klingsphon, 2018; Kuokkanen, 2014; Dorries & Harjo, 2020). It is well known that colonization is rooted in the racist presuppositions of Europeans who believed that Indigenous Peoples did not know how to properly care for or govern themselves, because Indigenous communities held values about relationality and the world around them that colonizers could not understand. According to Sheri M. Huhndorf (2021), the state's racist presupposition that Indigenous Peoples cannot manage their own matters materialized due to the fact that the very existence of "*native communities controvert[s] the political authority and territorial claims of colonial nation states*" (p 564).

Unlike the current circumstances in Canadian society, matriarchal First Nations held a high respect and honor for the mental and spiritual strength and power of Indigenous women and 2 spirit peoples (Klingspohn, 2018). The paternalistic and patriarchal foundations of colonial frameworks attacked the origins of many First Nations that were matriarchal societies prior to European contact, in order to mediate the threat Indigenous women's authority posed against the state. According to Klingspohn (2018), the forced colonization and violent assimilation of Indigenous Peoples is "*the main social determinant of health for Aboriginal people in Canada, as they led to intergenerational trauma, with communities struggling today against discrimination, stigma, poverty, and social exclusion. Most disturbing and damaging are the outcomes of domestic violence*" (p 1). It is clear that structures of colonialism employ racist and paternalistic frameworks to subordinate Indigenous communities, particularly women, because their strength and role in nationhood threatens the sovereignty, and very existence of the colonial state (Simpson, 2016; Million, 2013).

As previously mentioned, the continued forced colonization of Indigenous Peoples is deeply connected to the ongoing genocide of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples in Canada. According to Sarah Deer (2009), "*rape and sexual violence are deeply embedded in the colonial mindset. Rape is more than a metaphor for colonization—it is part and parcel of colonization*" (p 50). By violently attacking the matriarchal origins of Indigenous communities, and perpetuating multiple forms of abuse through residential schools, the state is directly attacking Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, and their communities. As Heather Dorries and Laura Harjo (2020) argue, "*the violence experienced by Indigenous women...is symptomatic of processes of settler colonial dispossession and the erasure of Indigenous political orders*". Enforcing patriarchal and paternalistic colonial frameworks is about more than assuming control over land and peoples: it is about stripping Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples of their tribal rights and leadership roles and contributes to genocide and the ongoing "*evisceration of Indigenous nations*" (Million, 2013, p 7).

According to Margaret Abraham and Evangelia Tastsoglou (2016), the state's paternalistic framework is also directly responsible for influencing political and media portrayals of women who experience GBV as victims, "*whose agency is limited, and who need to be supported (thus controlled and regulated) by the state*" (p 578). Their argument supports Tuck's (2009) assertion that damage-centred, victim- centred representations of Indigenous women serve to reproduce specific gendered and colonial effects within the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples. Consequently, "*dominant faming often misses essential details and voices*" surrounding the realities of, and necessary resolutions for, violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples occurring as a direct result of the Canadian state (Cripps, 2021).

To this end, the dominant frameworks engaged to discuss Indigenous experiences of GBV in the media must address the ways its persistence is a direct result of state colonialism. The National Indigenous Women's Resource Centre (NIWRC) specifically calls upon journalists to "*focus on federal and local authorities' accountability and culpability*", and "*hold powers and authorities to account*" (N.D). It is also integral to address the additional short and long term health issues that GBV within Indigenous communities contributes to, such as injuries, addiction, and mental health (Williams et. al, 2021). Journalists have a responsibility to report on all the factors contributing to GBV within Indigenous communities, which includes connecting their narratives to the larger frameworks reinforcing environments for GBV to prosper, so as not to blame Indigenous communities for the circumstances influenced by colonialism. In doing so, journalists can reframe violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples in a way that helps us to resolve the larger frameworks and roots of the issue to end GBV at the source.

While it is clear that frameworks of colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and racism at the heart of the

Canadian state are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment where GBV is pervasive in Indigenous communities, the state does not recognize its responsibility to move towards structural reform in their plans to resolve GBV. An international review of domestic violence prevention plans for Indigenous Peoples by Sarah Fotheringham, Lana Wells, and Sharon Goulet (2021) found that Canadian government plans gave little consideration toward the impacts of colonization, or situating the issue and resolutions within Indigenous worldviews. They also found that various plans announced by governments around the world do not address the social and institutional frameworks that influence GBV in Indigenous communities, while simultaneously assuming the jurisdictional authority to end GBV (Fotheringham et. al, 2021). In doing so, government plans to end GBV actually serve to reinforce the structures of colonialism that perpetuate violence, thus reproducing specific gendered and colonial effects within the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women and 2 spirit peoples.

It is obvious that in order for GBV to be eradicated in Canada, especially for Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people, the colonial frameworks that influence GBV by reinforcing heteropatriarchy and white supremacy must be called into the conversation in order to be reformed. Thus, it is necessary that transformative journalism follows the NIWRC's call to "*Contextualize the crisis as part of the problem of colonization and its lasting impacts like systemic discrimination and poor policies against Indigenous People in the U.S. and Canadian justice system*". The NIWRC asserts that focusing on the need for legal reforms "*might be what a legislator needs to realize that they need to introduce a new law to congress or parliament*" (N.D). Including information that explains the social and political circumstances influencing higher rates of GBV in Indigenous communities is necessary to address and resolve the issue at the source.

Impacts

Experiencing GBV influences a number of wider impacts for individual, family, and community life for non-Indigenous women and Indigenous women alike. I have previously discussed the impacts of the *Voices, Language*, and *Frameworks* engaged when reporting Indigenous experiences of GBV. In this section, *Impacts* are considered in relationship to GBV and media reporting in two ways: the necessity of addressing the impacts and effects of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples when reporting on it, and the importance of recognizing the various impacts of media representations of Indigenous GBV.

The NIWRC encourages journalists to write follow up stories that include the long term impacts of GBV on survivors so they can also be addressed and resolved (N.D). Indigenous women's organizations such as Saturviit (2015) note that two of the major impacts of GBV relate to family trauma and the child welfare system, and these experiences also create cycles of violence that influence further intergenerational trauma. According to Statistics Canada's *2021 Census Report,* Indigenous children currently account for 53.8% of children in foster care, which is stark considering that Indigenous Peoples overall make up just 5% of Canada's total population. Marie Ellen Turpel-Lafond (2016) highlights that Indigenous girls within the child welfare system experience twice as much sexual violence within the system than other girls in care. Thus, it is integral that journalists call attention to the impacts of violence against Indigenous girls, such as abuses within the child welfare system, in order to end these cycles of violence that further contribute to GBV.

Organizations also note that the way reporters frame GBV within Indigenous communities creates further negative impacts for survivors, families, and communities. The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (2020) highlights that the language used to describe both the victim and the perpetrator impacts societal understandings of violence against Indigenous women, girls,

and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples. For example, they explain that "t*he focus on use of alcohol in incidences of femicide in the news and in the media diffuses responsibility and accountability for perpetrators of violence against women*" (Media Tips, 2020), thus perpetuating victim-blaming. Beyond media reporting on GBV, The White Ribbon Campaign (2011) calls attention to the ways in which the media in general hyper-sexualizes women, particularly Indigenous women, which "*has had a profound impact on men's sexual violence against women*" (p 14). With that being said, media professionals must take care in their approach not only towards stories about violence against Indigenous women, but also the ways in which media portrayals of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGTBQ+ peoples more broadly may influence rates of GBV.

Scholars also note that media organizations have the power to impact societal attitudes and knowledge surrounding violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples by way of good and bad reporting (Cripps, 2021; Jiwani, 2009). In an investigation of Indigenous women as newspaper representations in Vancouver, Meghan Longstaffe (2017) found that "*Reporters' words re-inscribed old stereotypes [about Indigenous women], which in turn helped reproduce some of the barriers that impacted Indigenous women living in the city*" (p 254). As previously mentioned, when journalists focus on victimization or stereotypical depictions of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, the language and narratives used to describe GBV can serve to reinforce their disempowerment (Tuck, 2009; Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016). Yasmin Jiwani (2009) argues that media representations that reinforce stereotypes and victimization enact a kind of symbolic and discursive violence as an impact of language, which further contributes to violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people.

Jiwani (2009) refers to the damage-centred narratives commonly used by reporters to portray GBV within Indigenous communities as the "*violence template*". According to Jiwani (2009), news stories often describe Indigenous women who experience violence as "*fitting a particular profile—that of the drug-addicted prostitute. Similarly, stories about custody and access continuously reiterated a construction of Aboriginal women as inept, drunk, addicted, mothers who did not seem to be capable of maternal feeling*" (p 8). It is integral to recognize that the violence template influences public perception and (lack of) empathy towards Indigenous experiences of GBV as previously discussed. The violence template negatively impacts Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people experiencing violence by stereotyping, eliminating empathy, and connoting that it is typical, and thus acceptable, for these women to experience violence. In order to overcome these depictions, transformative journalists can commit to reframing, restoring, and returning stories surrounding Indigenous GBV to the context and authority of those who are being discussed.

Government plans focus little attention on the importance of resolving the impacts and cycles of violence that occur as a result of GBV against Indigenous Peoples. However, they do consider the importance of recognizing the various impacts of media representations of GBV more generally. One federal report created to take action to end violence against women and girls in Canada notes that "*while social media can promote harmful concepts related to sexuality, it can also be harnessed to 'uproot rape culture and promote positive cultural change,' by engaging Canadians in critical and educational dialogues*" (2017). Government plans also call for the inclusion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys in media prevention strategies to end GBV, as the same report notes that men and boys learn unhealthy masculinity through media such as TV and music, contributing to the harmful rape culture women face daily (2017). Mobilizing the media, and engaging men's perception of media in this way has the potential to influence the eradication of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous experiences of GBV.

Visibility

Organizations, scholars, and government bodies alike call for the media to make violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples visible as a social issue in order to end it. Valerie Wieskamp and Cortney Smith (2020) note that "*more than 95 percent of the missing and murdered Native women cases studied were not covered by the national or international media. This lack of media attention in conjunction with inaccessible, and often inaccurate, law enforcement data render Native trauma as invisible*" (p 75). While increased media attention and reporting on GBV is important, it can clearly be problematic if stories include harmful language and inaccurate frameworks. Many Indigenous women's organizations, such as the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT), have reframed media coverage of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls as a means of resisting harmful or non-existent portrayals of the genocide. The NWRCT created a *4000 Cover Stories Campaign*, which aimed to place 4000 MMIWG2S victims on the "*front page*" of a newspaper, since many of their stories went unreported (NWRCT, 2022). Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and scholars are ultimately calling for more survivor-centred approaches to reporting, in order to increase accuracy and visibility.

Many Indigenous grassroots organizations and movements use social media campaigns to raise awareness about the pervasive issue of GBV within Indigenous communities, and connect these episodes of violence to the wider ongoing genocide of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2 spirit peoples. These portrayals challenge harmful mainstream media depictions by making visible the humanity and livelihoods of victims and survivors while also condemning the violence they experience, and connecting that violence to wider framework issues affecting Indigenous communities. In doing so, they reframe Indigenous issues according to Indigenous political contexts, effectively asserting self-determination. Media professionals should pay close attention to the ways in which Indigenous Peoples are already engaging in transformative journalism, as they exhibit excellent examples of the reporting practices necessary to end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples.

Global Protection Cluster (2014) as well as UNICEF and UN Women (2020) also recommend that journalists should seek consent and guidance from survivors and/or families of victims about the narratives they engage, the way that stories are presented, whether images should be used, etc. These organizations also call for journalists to make the perpetrators of violence visible in their reports. To this end, UNICEF and UN Women encourage journalists to:

> Highlight the actions of the perpetrator in the description of the violence. Avoid making the perpetrator invisible. For example, avoid "xx women were victims of homicide." Instead, highlight "xx women were killed by a partner." Depictions of violence that make the perpetrator less visible reinforce problematic perceptions of women as "victims" of crimes that happen to them, as opposed holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. (UNICEF & UN Women, 2020, p 7).

In order to end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, it is integral to make the perpetrators of violence visible so that we can prevent and resolve GBV.

Scholars agree that journalists should clearly identify who is perpetuating GBV against Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women. As Jackson Katz (2006) explains, violence against women is really a men's issue because men are the number one perpetrators of GBV. According to Saturviit (2020), in Nunavik, it has been reported that when GBV occurs in their communities, sixty-five per cent of the time a family member was the perpetrator. It is integral to connect the violence Indigenous men perpetrate to the long lasting, ongoing, intergenerational effects of violent colonial assimilation,

especially the residential school system. As David Milward (2022) explains, residential schools planted the seed for Indigenous over-incarceration and violence in communities by directly and violently harming students mentally, physically, sexually, and culturally. There is a deep cycle of violence influenced by residential school experiences that continues to be perpetuated as a result of intergenerational trauma (Milward, 2022). This is another important reason why journalists must not gloss over the Frameworks that reinforce violence against Indigenous women in their reporting, so as to make visible the root causes of that violence, as well as to "*Avoid portraying Indigenous people as a problem and make sure not to insinuate that they are to blame for the violence they face*" as a community (Equal Press, 2020).

Beyond the cycles of violence perpetuated by intergenerational trauma as a result of residential schools, research also shows that Indigenous women are frequently subject to further violence by non-Indigenous men outside of intimate or family relationships (Smye, Varcoe, Browne, Stout, Josewski, Ford-Gilboe & Kieith, 2020). According to a recent Statistics Canada report, Indigenous women were "*significantly more likely to have experienced physical violence by a non-intimate partner in their lifetime*" (Heidinger, 2022). Moreover, the *Sisters in Spirit* grassroots initiative by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) found that "*Indigenous women and girls were more often killed by male acquaintances or strangers than by male partners*" (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2020). This is a stark difference from non-Indigenous women in Canada, who are more likely to be killed by someone they know like a family member or intimate partner (VAWnet, 2021). According to Cindy Baskin (2020), "*White men who attack Indigenous women often tell them that because they are Indigenous, the police will believe them as White men when they say that the women are lying. Indeed, the fact that the police tend to dismiss Indigenous women by labeling them as 'uncooperative' or 'unreliable' is what these men count on*". For all of these reasons, it is important to make visible the offenders of Indigenous GBV, and also the frameworks that perpetuate violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples.

Government bodies agree that journalists should increase reporting on violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples in order to raise awareness to work towards ending its tenacity. Although, it has been clearly demonstrated that journalists must work hard to both increase reporting on GBV within Indigenous communities, as well as increase their own awareness of transformative journalism that can reframe, restore, and return power and agency to Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ peoples and their communities. In the sections that follow, I will outline the approaches to transformative journalism that organizations and scholars recommend, which are *trauma-informed* and *desire-based*.

Reframe, Restore, Return: Trauma-Informed

Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and scholars have discussed the need for trauma-informed approaches to reporting. Equal Press (2020) explains that "*Using a trauma-informed approach means integrating an understanding of trauma into your interactions with victims/survivors, and taking steps to avoid re-traumatization or minimizing the individual's experiences of trauma*" (p 7). Klingspohn (2018) outlines how trauma-informed reporting is also survivor-centred, which "*embraces a recovery-focused, strengths-based approach, with an understanding and response to the impacts of trauma, where psychological, physical, and emotional safety are paramount (for providers and service users) and provides opportunities for control, empowerment, and recovery*" (p 4). Through being survivor-centred, trauma-informed approaches to reporting on GBV quite literally reframe, restore, and return power to Indigenous Peoples and their stories—which can ultimately work to end GBV and the monolithic damage-centred narratives that serve to reproduce Indigenous marginalization and genocide within settler-colonialism.

It is integral for journalists to use trauma-informed methods when interviewing and reporting, in order to ensure that participants and readers are at minimal risk of potential re-traumatization. Global Protection Cluster (2014) offers safe and trauma-informed interview tips for journalists, such as ensuring a private and secure setting, maintaining respect for survivors, and informing survivors of their right to refuse any questions or stop the interview altogether. Global Protection Cluster also reminds journalists to never report intimate details that could put survivors or their families at risk of retaliation (2014). For these reasons and more, Tamara Cherry - expert on trauma-informed journalism and author of *Trauma survivors and the media: A qualitative analysis* – calls for journalists to cover stories responsibly by giving survivors, victims and their families ongoing and informed consent (Goldsbie, 2022). One way of ensuring that parties consent to their media representations is for journalists to consult with those involved and allow them to read the story before it's published. Indigenous journalist Duncan McCue emphasizes that media professionals have a duty to "*be a story-teller, not a story-taker*", and to give parties agency about how they and their trauma are represented (Goldsbie, 2022).

To avoid triggering readers and sensationalizing violence when publishing a story, various organizations suggest that media reporters of all kinds should avoid in-depth descriptions of violent acts, and instead name the kind of abuse experienced, such as physical abuse, and continue on with the story (femifesto + collaborators, 2015; UNICEF & UN Women, 2020). UNICEF and UN Women (2020) also recommend for journalists to include "*calls-to-action, including information about locally available support services*" (p 7) in order to both raise awareness of how communities can contribute to ending GBV, as well as clearly offer opportunities for further support for survivors of GBV—whether they are the subject of the article, or the audience. Saturviit (2015) notes that workshops to support addiction prevention, anger management, healthy relationships, and overall mental health should be made more accessible, and the media could play in a role in creating awareness about the importance and need for programming that can restore individuals and communities. Journalists can also include similar resources within their articles, or connections to help lines for victims, survivors, their families, or any readers who are vulnerable to stories of GBV as a responsible way of being trauma-informed. To further support Indigenous Peoples experiencing GBV, journalists could also include the *Calls to Action* that have already been made available to the public by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and The National Inquiry as a way of reframing stories to remind audiences that these pre-existing calls require immediate attention in order to end GBV and the overall genocide of Indigenous Peoples.

The National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which was initiated by the Government of Canada, also specifically calls for trauma-informed reporting practices. Call to Action 6.1 calls for media, news corporations and outlets, and any other association or institution with power to influence, to take a decolonizing approach to their work and publications, specifically in supporting "*Indigenous people sharing their stories, from their perspectives, free of bias, discrimination, and false assumptions, and in a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive way*" (p 187). In a 2017 report created to support Taking Action To End Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada, the House of Commons makes a specific request for the need to report incidents related to cyberviolence "*in a manner that is survivor-centric and trauma-informed*" (p 57). Uplifting trauma-informed approaches in accordance to these *Calls for Action* supports the reframing, restoring, and returning of Indigenous stories towards Indigenous contexts in a way that validates their experiences and contributes to ending GBV in addition to the overall genocide of Indigenous Peoples.

There has been a recent push by many different grassroots organizations and academics to not only be trauma-informed, but also violence-informed. Western University (2020) defines violence-informed approaches as distinct in that they intend to minimize the possibility of further harm, both

socially and structurally. Violence-informed approaches both recognize and seek to avoid perpetuating ongoing violence, rather than focusing on past trauma (Western University, 2020). Aura Freedom agrees that it is essential for GBV advocates, transformative media professionals, and all our allies to commit to both avoiding re-traumatization through trauma-informed approaches, as well as averting the perpetration of further violence through violence-informed approaches.

Reframe, Restore, Return: Desire-Based

Rather than solely focusing on violence and victimization, Indigenous scholars such as Gerald Vizenor and Eve Tuck call for Indigenous stories to centre survivance. Vizenor (2009) refers to survivance as an active sense of Indigenous presence and agency, which Tuck (2009) believes should be explored through desire-based frameworks rather than focusing on community damage. For Tuck, desire-based frameworks can overcome damage because they contextualize not only the issues facing communities that have been historically disenfranchised, but also the agency, wisdom, power, and resilience these communities and their actors maintain (Tuck, 2009). Tuck believes that members of communities with complex histories embody survival and resilience as a result of their experiences, and that collectively they are best suited to determine their needs for a prosperous future. In Aura Freedom International's *Relentless Resilience* campaign and *Gender-Based Violence Resource Centre*, Mary Ann Shoefly from NWRCT explains it best when she says "*We are not asking for permission anymore*" (p 8).

Engaging desire-based frameworks when reporting on violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people would resemble the commitment which Equal Press calls towards "*shifting the dominant colonial narrative about Indigenous Peoples in Canada by broadening stories that are written about Indigenous Peoples in the media—focus on the strength and resiliency of Indigenous Peoples, Nations, communities, knowledge, ways of being and knowing*" (p 25). Desire-based stories would also uplift the Indigenous Peoples and organizations who are already excelling at resolutions proposed by organizations, scholars, and government bodies, as I addressed earlier. For example, the Native Women's Association of Canada created their very own *National Action Plan* in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and specifically commit to addressing the wider frameworks of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy that influence Indigenous experiences of GBV and contribute to the overall genocide of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples. Furthermore, according to Global Protection Cluster (2014), "*Drawing attention to positive stories of empowerment and resilience, for example, can assist in illustrating how survivors often act as advocates and agents of change*" (p 2), which effectively reframes, restores, and returns, stories towards Indigenous power and agency.

It is clear that desire-based frameworks are also survivor-centred. UNICEF and UN Women (2020) suggest media depictions of GBV should represent "*survivors as empowered people who decided to speak up*" rather than as victims. As previously mentioned, survivors should always have the power to determine their participation and how their words and stories are depicted in the media. Consequently, media professionals also must commit to uplifting their choices, and to celebrating survivance in order to collectively suspend damage in the context of better reporting practices of violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people, that will contribute to ending not only GBV, but overall Indigenous genocide. Furthermore, it will require media to commit to reframing, restoring, and returning stories in a way that honors the various calls for change within the *Voices, Language, Frameworks, Impacts,* and *Visibility* of Indigenous GBV.

In order for journalists to ethically and meaningfully engage in desire-based approaches to reporting on violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples, scholars such as Klingspohn (2018) outline that there is a need for people in media to undergo cultural competency and safety

training that is trauma- and violence-informed to really contribute to ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples. As Moore (2001) asserts that any strategies developed for Indigenous women must be self-determined in order to be significant and empowering, cultural competency and safety training for media professionals should also be determined by Indigenous women, girls, gender diverse peoples, and organizations that support them. According to Klingspohn (2018), this kind of "*collaborative recovery approach would help to change the perspective of the women from victim to survivor*" (p 5)—thus, self-determined, desire-based reporting gives agency to survivors and provides them with culturally relevant resources for their healing.

Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples demonstrate agency and self-determination through the media in a variety of ways. From social media activism to grassroots initiatives and campaigns, Indigenous women and their supporters have received a great deal of attention as a result of their efforts. For example, Moete-Pickering, Cote-Meek, and Pegoraro (2018) have found that Indigenous social media users are successfully engaging the #MMIWG hashtag to reframe narratives and stereotypes of GBV against Indigenous women. In their purview, the attention that their messages illicit increases visibility and creates a sense of mobilization from within Indigenous political context, effectively demonstrating self-determination by reframing, returning, and restoring agency to Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ peoples and their communities. Journalists could also include hashtags in their articles as part of desire-based reporting to both spread awareness and draw attention to these efforts that positively reframe, restore, and return agency to Indigenous Peoples. As Longstaffe (2017) asserts, media professionals have the opportunity to use their "*positions to advocate for women marginalized by race, poverty, and violence*".

It takes diligent, transformative journalists to ensure that reports of Indigenous women's activism are (re)framed in a way that liberates them and their communities as agents of change to overcome colonial subjugation, genocide, and GBV. For Isela Perez-Torres:

> Journalists have the human and professional responsibility to cover and give appropriate follow-up to all these cases of violence and to the struggle of their families. They must distance themselves from patriarchal and racist ideologies, from the discourse of the elite and their economic interests and take as an example the great lesson that the families of the Indigenous victims of violence are giving right now to Canadian society as a whole: the value of their daughters and of Indigenous life. (Perez-Torres, 2016, p. 171).

Conclusion

It is clear that media representations of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples can be both harmful and helpful, depending on how stories and their facts are engaged. In this literature review, the risks and rewards of particular approaches to reporting on Indigenous GBV have been examined alongside their effects in order to help determine best practices for reporting in a way that will contribute to ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people. Research shows that reframing, restoring, and returning the themes of *Voices, Language, Frameworks, Impacts,* and *Visibility* to the contexts and authority of Indigenous victims, survivors, and their communities, can work towards ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people by ensuring the most accurate version of accounts is told, which will lead to relevant, community-specific solutions. By engaging transformative journalist practices such as reframing, restoring, and returning, media professionals and corporations can contribute to answering the *Calls for Justice* made by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by supporting accurate, survivor-centric depictions that will contribute to ending GBV for Indigenous Peoples.

> **"Violence against Indigenous women, and the impacts of GBV such as losing children to the child welfare system, create cyclical, ongoing genocidal patterns that violently remove women and girls from communities because their presence threatens the very foundations of the Canadian state."**

Postface

The extensive literature reviews in this document examine Indigenous and non-Indigenous literature on media representations of GBV, and the aspirations for better reporting put forward by survivors, grassroots organizations, academic articles, State of Knowledge papers, meta-analyses, media guidelines, and government bodies. Collectively, we have found that calls for change surround the themes of *Voices, Language, Frameworks, Impacts, and Visibility*, and offer two themes that aim to reframe, restore, and return agency to Indigenous Peoples through *Desire-Based* and *Trauma-Informed* approaches to transformative journalism. Our findings demonstrate widespread agreement that GBV must be represented in an accurate and considerate way in the media in order to prevent and address it, according to the knowledge and aspirations of GBV experts. Our research in this document also serves to reinforce the expert voices from the National Network and the Indigenous National Network of Aura Freedom's **GBV In The Media** project, with whom we collaborated to create our transformative ***Guidelines on GBV In The Media***.

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