Mis/classification: Identity-based Inequities in the Canadian and Global Post-secondary Context

Introduction

by KelleyAnne Malinen

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This special cluster of three articles represents the response to an *Atlantis* call for papers entitled "Mis/classification: Identity-based Inequities in the Canadian and Global Post-secondary Context." The CFP aimed to explore how elements of post-secondary institutions produce, maintain, or resist equitable or inequitable outcomes for equity-seeking groups. It welcomed critical scholarship in the broad sense of the term, invoking an overriding concern with one or more forms of human emancipation, including work under rubrics of critical feminism, critical sociology, critical disability studies, or critical race theory. We were interested in submissions that might explore the intersectionality of in/equities in the post-secondary context, as well as submissions that offer intersectional approaches for addressing such inequities. We were looking for reflections that would explore, on the one hand, systemic recalcitrancies manifest in post-secondary institutions, and, on the other hand, what has worked and/or is working to address issues of inequity. The three articles selected for publication answered our call in three distinct registers. Motapanyane and Shankar problematized marginalization of minoritized women from post-secondary leadership roles, Wright troubled the consenting/nonconsenting binary at the heart of consent education, and Smith and Gacimi considered menstrual inequity/menstrual justice on campus. Although the call for papers resulting in this thematic section welcomed submissions from and/or about international contexts, all of the articles included

here address data from Canadian post-secondary institutions.

The article "Increasing Pathways to Leadership for Black, Indigenous, and other Racially Minoritized Women," by Motapanyane and Shankar, draws on the authors' research, expertise, and subject positions. The article shows that Black, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized women are increasingly under-represented in post-secondary leadership positions. It raises concerns about institutional orientations toward equity that are merely performative, comprised of elements such as ineffectual anti-bias trainings, and strategic plans that emphasize equity, diversity, and inclusion, but lack mechanisms to accomplish this trio of terms, as well as reliance on underrepresented populations for surplus EDI labour. Motapanyane and Shankar offer concrete suggestions for moving beyond public relations-oriented lip-service toward real change. Their suggestions are organized under the rubrics of governance, commitments of practice, data collection, and recruitment and hiring.

Wright's article "Trauma-Informed Consent Education: Understanding the Grey Area of Consent Through the Experiences of Youth Trauma Survivors" problematizes the consenting/nonconsenting binary at the heart of consent education, a dominant modality of sexual violence prevention in Western universities today. Drawing on qualitative interviews with youth trauma survivors, Wright speaks to how the effects of trauma may produce dynamics at odds with this binary. This author argues that grey areas need to be accounted for in the interest of making consent education more trauma informed. As it stands, consent education programs meant to benefit students by preventing sexual violence may ironically alienate, or even revictimize those who have experienced sexual violence and are living with its effects. Wright suggests consent programming that acknowledges the complexity of consent and eschews binary models. This article advocates an explicitly anti-oppressive approach that is cognizant of the disproportionate vulnerability of marginalized communities to sexual trauma.

Finally, following analysis of qualitative responses from an exploratory survey, Smith and Gacimi's "Bloody Burdens: Post-secondary Students and Menstruation on Campus" explores how students experience and manage menstruation. Their article also considers how inequities associated with menstruation can be addressed. Students report dealing with cost of menstrual supplies, physical and emotional symptoms, missed classes, as well as shame and stigma. The authors note that provision of free menstrual supplies is often presented by post-secondary institutions and media outlets as a sufficient response to calls for menstrual justice. However, whereas free supplies help to address financial costs, they do little to address penalties associated with missed classes, much less shame and stigma of menstrual bleeding.

Variations on the contradiction between an ultimate desire for radical change and more circumspect, though still ambitious, calls for reform appear throughout the three papers. Smith and Gacimi note a contradiction between the focus on concealing menstruation and the more radical objective of eradicating the shame culturally associated with having one's period. The authors express the importance of balancing immediate requirements for menstrual products needed, at least in part to conceal menstrual blood, with Utopian aspirations for a future in which the shame that motivates the urgency for menstrual supplies does not attend bleeding.

Wright's article can be read as engaging tensions between ideals and reality in another way. In a sense this piece suggests typical consent education programs have erred by proceeding as if students inhabit a context where a clear difference between consent and non-consent exists and needs only to be demarcated. An interesting question arising from Wright's contribution is whether there is a possible future in which "no means no," "yes means yes," and grey areas need no longer be accounted for.

Finally, in providing guidance for "progressively dismantling standardized Eurocentric, androcentric, and corporatized academic workplace cultures," Motapanyane and Shankar emphasize their commitment to decolonial change, considering whether this commitment is at odds with the reform-oriented character of their contribution. Ultimately, they argue that progressive reform should accompany and be at the service of more radical change, and that reform-oriented measures must not offer cover for the maintenance of traditional hierarchies.

Taken together, these three pieces provide actionable suggestions for immediate change while pressing toward more radical transformations of post-secondary institutions, cultures, and practices.

Increasing Pathways to Leadership for Black, Indigenous, and other Racially Minoritized Women

by Maki Motapanyane and Irene Shankar*

Abstract: Leadership positions within post-secondary institutions (PSIs) remain elusive to women generally, and to Black, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized women in particular. In this paper, we argue that pathways to leadership, particularly for non-traditional, non-normative and critical approaches that can come from the differently situated epistemic positioning of Black, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized women, are important as beginning steps towards progressively dismantling standardized Eurocentric, androcentric, and corporatized academic workplace cultures. This type of reform is essential preliminary work in the process toward greater equity and inclusivity in academic institutions. Note then that we are writing of a significant amount of substantive change needed to enact crucial initial reform, in tandem with, and beyond which we should continuously push for more radical transformation (Dryden 2022; Patel 2021). As such, we propose initiatives that universities can take to address some of the common gendered, racialized, and class-related exclusions and inequities evident in academic workplaces. This is in acknowledgement that academic institutions, having demonstrated a predilection for the co-optative and performative, are barely able to reform meaningfully, let alone engage the "transformation" and "decolonization" with which reform is often confused and erroneously conflated. Grounded within institutional research, we detail the commitments required from governing bodies, the changes necessary in academic decision-making spaces, the need for timely and transparent data collection infrastructure, and other institutional changes required to enhance the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Black, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized faculty and academic leaders. Together, these practices constitute preliminary reform necessary to create opportunity for more meaningful practices of inclusion.

Keywords: gender, race, class, leadership, inclusion, reform, post-secondary institution, academia

Résumé: Les postes de direction au sein des établissements postsecondaires demeurent généralement inaccessibles aux femmes, et plus particulièrement aux femmes noires, autochtones et d'autres minorités raciales. Dans cet article, nous soutenons que les voies d'accès à des postes de direction, en particulier en ce qui concerne des approches critiques non traditionnelles et non normatives qui découlent du fait que les femmes noires, autochtones et d'autres minorités raciales se trouvent dans une situation épistémique différente, constituent un bon premier pas vers le démantèlement progressif des cultures des milieux de travail universitaires eurocentriques et androcentriques qui sont normalisées et que l'on gère comme des entreprises. Ce genre de réforme est un travail préliminaire essentiel pour parvenir à une plus grande équité et inclusion dans les établissements universitaires. Soulignons que nous parlons ici d'un grand nombre de changements importants qu'il est nécessaire d'apporter pour adopter une première réforme indispensable, en parallèle avec une transformation plus radicale que nous devrions promouvoir continuellement ensuite (Dryden 2022; Patel 2021). Nous proposons donc des initiatives que les universités peuvent prendre pour remédier à certaines des exclusions et des inégalités les plus courantes liées au genre, à la race et à la classe sociale que l'on retrouve dans des milieux de travail universitaires, et ce, en reconnaissant que les établissements universitaires, qui ont démontré une prédilection pour la

cooptation et le rendement, peinent à procéder à une véritable réforme, et encore plus à entreprendre la « transformation » et la « décolonisation » que l'on confond souvent, à tort, avec la réforme. En nous appuyant sur la recherche institutionnelle, nous décrivons en détail les engagements que doivent prendre les organes directeurs, les changements à apporter aux processus décisionnels des universités, l'importance de disposer d'une infrastructure de collecte de données rapide et transparente, ainsi que d'autres changements institutionnels nécessaires pour améliorer le recrutement, l'embauche et le maintien en poste du corps professoral et des dirigeants universitaires noirs, autochtones et issus d'autres minorités raciales. L'ensemble de ces pratiques constitue une réforme préliminaire qu'il est nécessaire d'adopter pour pouvoir mettre en place de véritables pratiques d'inclusion.

Mots clés: genre, race, classe, direction, inclusion, réforme, établissement postsecondaire, milieu universitaire

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Introduction

Disparities in Academic Leadership

Women are glaringly under-represented in the leadership structures of many Canadian and American post-secondary institutions (PSIs) (AWA 2019; Cukier et al. 2021; Silbert et al. 2022). Over the past twenty years, women leaders in American PSIs have remained near or at 30 percent, with a slight increase of 4 percent since 2011 (Bartel 2018). The UK statistics are just as dire, with only 17 percent of chancellors and principals identifying as women (Beer 2015; Manfredi et al. 2019). Similar under-representation of women in leadership is present in India, Australia, Hong Kong, and European nations (Aiston and Yang 2017; Catalyst 2020). Political scientist Malinda Smith's examination of the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities found that 100 percent of provosts and VP academics were white, and 66.7 percent identified as male; 80 percent of presidents were white, and 86.7 percent identified as male; 92.2 percent of deans were white, 32 percent identified as female, and only 7.7 percent were a visible minority or Indigenous person (male and female combined) (AWA 2019). There is a stark absence of women with disabilities, trans and non-binary persons, and racially minoritized women[1] within leadership positions (Wilson-Kovacs et al. 2008; Hamilton-Page 2021).

In the United States, racially minoritized people account for 17 percent of college and university presidents, and women of colour hold only 5 percent of leadership positions (ACE 2018; Crandall et al. 2017). These statistics indicate a downward trajectory in relation to senior positions for Black, Indigenous, and racially minoritized women within academia (Khan et al. 2019). While there has been an increase in registration and graduation rates of Black, Indigenous, and racially minoritized women at undergraduate and faculty levels, our numbers significantly decrease as we go higher up the leadership chain, leading to our almost complete absence in PSI leadership (as indicated in the AWA 2019 graph below). Thus, university leadership positions are primarily held by white men, with an increasing representation of white women within the ranks (Long 2022)—a phenomenon that Dr. Malinda Smith (2010) has aptly termed the diversification of whiteness (ACE 2018; AWA 2019; Johnson and Howsam 2020; McChesney 2018; Whiteford 2020).

Graph 1: Canadian Universities - U15 Leadership Pipeline 2019

Reproduced with permission from Dr. Malinda Smith

This leadership lacuna for racially minoritized women is facilitated by the intersections of racial, gender, and economic inequality (Khan et al. 2019; McChesney 2018). Specifically, institutional exclusion and discrimination is enacted through resistance to diverse leading styles and prioritization of a very narrow and ethnocentric model of leadership, racist and gendered discrimination in pay and promotion, disproportionate mentoring and service commitments, and the cloning effect—where white men (and increasingly white women) are inordinately recruited and mentored for senior posts (Beer 2015; Khan et al. 2019; Mainah and Perkins 2015; Puwar 2004). Black women are also more likely to be read as lacking the 'right' temperament for leadership due to racist stereotypes of Black women as angry, volatile, and/or difficult to work with, particularly those who challenge academia's racist and exclusionary practices (Neimann 2012; Collins 2000; Puwar 2004). As sociologist Nirmal Puwar aptly states, "Bodies do not simply move through spaces but constitute and are constituted by them. Thus, it is possible to see how both the space and the normative bodies of a specific space can become disturbed by the arrival of Black and Asian bodies in occupations which are not historically and conceptually marked out as their 'natural' domain" (2004, 32).

Racially minoritized women are also more likely to be tokenized, underestimated, excluded, and deemed to lack credibility/knowledge (Chance 2021; Collins 2000; Mainah and Perkins 2015; Puwar 2004; y Muhs et al. 2012). Moreover, faculty from marginalized groups tend to be overextended due to greater mentoring and service demands, which leads to greater burnout and exhaustion rates (Ahmed 2021; Griffin and Reddick 2011), all of which have been further exacerbated by the pandemic and continuation of state-sanctioned anti-Black[3] violence (Njoku and Evans 2022). Not only is much of the cur-

rent academic terrain detrimental to the career advancement of racially minoritized women into leadership positions, but the disproportionate (multiple) demands and resulting exhaustion also present serious challenges to equity and retention within presently held positions (Bhopal, Brown, and Jackson 2018; Kelly 2022). Within leadership positions, racially minoritized women find themselves undermined, discredited as biased, and tasked with managing institutional risk and public image (Ahmed 2012; Chance 2021; Kelly 2022; Puwar 2004), often to the detriment of the transformative change with which they are tasked. The white colonial and corporatized operation of academia continues to privilege the expertise and experiences of white administrators (Arday and Mirza 2018; Maylor 2018). As explained by Puwar, authority is naturalized for those who are unmarked by race (white bodies), while racially minoritized individuals are over-determined and defined by their racial identity, constructing us as unqualified "in terms of whom and what [we] represent" (2004, 64). Accordingly, racially minoritized women, diversely othered as foreign elements in many academic institutions, come up against a wall that, in Sara Ahmed's words, represents "the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present … a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into spaces created by institutions" (2012, 175).

Despite decades of writing, data, and research on the explicit marginalization of racially minoritized women in academia, there has been little foundational change (Ahmed 2012; Griffin 2016; Hull et al. 1982/2015; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981/2021; Njoku and Evans 2022). In 2017 Frances Henry and a group of fellow researchers of demographic patterns who focused on racially minoritized faculty in Canadian institutions asked, "whether institutions seem ready to accommodate not only their presence but also their scholarship, pedagogy, service inclinations, and cultural and social capital shaped by their communities" (302). The team examined "what life is like for racialized and Indigenous faculty members in universities shaped by neoliberal individualism, merit, competition, and entrepreneurship" (Henry et al. 2017a, 302).

These remain pressing questions today. As universities talk of transformation and decolonization,[2] the leadership and the institutional priorities continue to centre Eurocentric administration and curriculum, positivist research, and corporatized workplace cultures that are res-

istant to meaningful inclusion and change (Douglas 2022b; Patel 2021). In this context, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are operationalized as a business product. There is still scant attention to the racial discrimination, violence and micro-aggressions faced by racially minoritized faculty and students within universities (except for the unconscious bias training that is itself an industry). Nor is attention given to the inequitable workload and working conditions, including the expectation that racially minoritized faculty and staff transform academic institutions without adequate support or resources, while experiencing the brunt of the institution's failures, nor to the superficial deployment of EDI strategies, which tend to prioritize liberal programming, optics, and tokenistic or cluster hiring into status quo academic culture and operation.

We were moved to write this paper in response to the unreflective adherence to Eurocentric administration, operational standards, and curriculum in PSIs, and the infuriating strategic commodification of EDI to mask the continued enactment of aggressions and discrimination against racially minoritized faculty, students, and staff. As tenured academics, with leadership experience fraught with many of the challenging dynamics described in existing literature, we are well acquainted with university structures and their limitations. Informed by our own subject positions, research expertise, and data from extensive institutional research (both existing literature of the field, as well as institutional surveys, data collection and reports with which we have been involved), we provide an intersectional feminist analysis of post-secondary leadership, with suggestions for concrete reformative measures.

Why Name Reform?

In writing this paper, we have asked ourselves, is it not a betrayal of decolonization to name reform as the current state of things and present options for improving conditions relative to the reality of the current landscape, rather than speaking of radical transformation? Leadership composition by way of meaningful and truly diverse inclusion is one key factor constituting a baseline for improvement to the dire material conditions experienced by racially minoritized faculty right now, and it forms an important part of an infrastructure that could present openings for more transformative change. We have seen the negative role of EDI-promoting Eurocentric, corporate-focused leadership in enacting veto over meaningful

change. As two tenured faculty members, with considerable experience within academia, we remain skeptical of universities' claims to decolonize while being firmly entrenched in neoliberal and colonial structures.

Universities continue to engage in exploitative labour practices by hiring faculty on teaching contracts that are devoid of stability, appropriate income, or retirement benefits (CAUT nd; Santos 2016). For instance, Chandra Pasma and Erika Shaker's (2018) study found that more than half of all faculty positions within Canadian universities are contract positions, with 80 percent of these positions being part-time. Women and racially minoritized academics are over-represented as contingent faculty (Abawi 2018; Navarro 2017).

Similarly, in Canada, while PSIs have readily adopted implementation of land acknowledgements, and email signatures abound with such statements, there remains a considerable gap in meaningful community outreach and in addressing the role that PSIs play in neo-colonialism— (Indigenization strategic plans notwithstanding) (Douglas 2022a; Monture 2010; Tuck et al. 2010). The conference organized by the Canadian Association of Cultural Studies (CACS) (October 27-30, 2022) themed, "Another University, Now," and asking, "What if the university was rebuilt with an explicit agenda to centre the lives of the oppressed?" (CACS 2022), is an important and encouraging critical intervention in present practices. What would it mean to see perspectives from this vantage point begin to infuse the highest decision-making spaces of the university, in a manner that is different from and disruptive of leadership diversity as just another, in the words of this call for papers, neoliberal "managerial class"? We speak of reform because this is the accurate language for the steps currently taken within many academic institutions promoting EDI; and we propose improvements as necessary to substantive progressive change.

The use of accurate language is important. Using a language of decolonization to speak of basic equity-oriented reform acts as a barrier to transformation by presenting the bare minimum, continuing gaps and exclusions, and performativity as radical metamorphosis. It is a sure means of pre-emptively averting decolonization. It is in naming and addressing things as they are, including our placing of the course of action identified here as also in the context of reform, that we "hang on to the hope of transformative change" (Thobani 2022a, 3).

Leaders have a key role in workplace culture, working conditions and institutional mandates (Arday and Mizra 2018; AWA 2019; Kelly 2022). We have seen how a simplistic approach to diversity in the highest decision-making bodies of the university, such as the Board of Governors, fails to disrupt the Eurocentrism and neoliberalism of business as usual. Inclusive leadership necessitates diversity, not only in gender and ethno-cultural background, but also in epistemology, including class consciousness and an appreciation of knowledge production as the pursuit of a truly diverse cultural and intellectual commons (Alcoff 2001; Collins 1986; Crenshaw 1989; Mills 2007; Mohanty 1988; TallBear 2014; Wylie 2012). We recognize that change and diversity in leadership can still legitimize colonial processes and, as such, may be utilized by colonialist institutions to further delay and derail transformation. We are also aware that colonial institutions have a long record of appropriating and utilizing measures instituted by scholar activists as legitimization tools (Ahmed 2012; Fadda and Olwan 2022; Thobani 2022b). Nonetheless, in the face of (mis)appropriation and utilization of "diverse leadership" for further legitimation of colonialist and exclusionary practices, we should not relinquish the immediacy and efforts to improve the workplace for racially minoritized women currently in the university (students, staff, and faculty).

Since academia as a whole is proving to be detrimental to our health and wellbeing (Douglas 2022a; Nash 2019), strategies of survival are essential (Ahmed 2017). Indeed, as "space invaders," the reaction to our presence is often dissonance and violence, compelling us to develop and enact immediate survival strategies (Puwar 2004). Kecia M. Thomas's (2013) phrase "from pet to threat," regarding the experiences of Black women in academia encapsulates this reality well. It is precisely for these reasons that we are not solely asserting the need for greater representation of racially minoritized women in leadership, but also calling for a change in the institutional understanding of and approaches to leadership.

Currently, many historically marginalized and underrepresented people who enter leadership find the position to be incredibly hostile and detrimental to their overall health and welfare (Douglas 2022a; Kelly 2022). Thus, strategies to "diversify leadership" must also include changing the conditions of leadership itself so that it becomes a less volatile and damaging place for those that take on these positions.

This paper provides concrete strategies that universities can employ to create pathways for racially minoritized women to assume positions of leadership in meaningful and effective ways, as well as suggesting approaches that build an infrastructure that is more conducive to equity in concrete terms.

Strategies for Representative & Inclusive Leadership

The glaring absence of racially minoritized women in leadership has continued despite proclamations on the part of PSIs of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), which allow institutions to look like they are enacting equitable practices without the continued resource allocation, policy changes, or power-sharing that actually clear a path to meaningful change (Ahmed 2012 and 2021; Smith 2010). Without diversity (in cultural, epistemic, class and other positionings) in perspectives from racially minoritized women at the table, the concerns and issues pertinent to Black, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized people in academia continue to be overlooked and universities continue prioritizing performative measures put forward by public relations offices and their legal counsel.

As explained by Patricia Hill Collins, the exclusion of Black women from leadership has resulted in the "...elevation of elite White male ideas and interests and the corresponding suppression of Black women's ideas and interests…" within academia (2000, 7). This prevailing exclusion of racially minoritized women from leadership positions requires institutions to examine the business-as-usual practices and assumptions surrounding definitions of leadership, established mentorship methods, and normalized routes to leadership.

Are understandings of leadership broad enough to include and support different leadership styles and philosophies, or are they centred around one particular (traditionally "masculine," Eurocentric) epistemic and cultural set of expectations? Are there multiple routes and opportunities for preparing and mentoring a diverse group of emerging leaders within the institution? Is EDI-oriented succession planning strategically and broadly incorporated within the institution? Tailoring programs and leadership development to the particular needs of specific career stages is additionally advised (Laver et al. 2018). For instance, during the early career period racially minoritized women typically grapple with heavy research, teaching, and service loads as they make their way through the tenure-track process, including a disproportionate load of mentoring and support of students of colour on campus and engagement in EDI advocacy and service, work-life balance and parenting, forming social and academic networks while navigating chilly workplace climates, and identifying and securing mentorship opportunities. Despite having more expertise and skills dealing with the aforementioned realities, mid-career faculty still confront the stubbornly persistent structural barriers that produce the gaps in leadership we highlight in this paper.

In this following section, we present four features and accompanying recommendations in the building of effective infrastructure to support the recruitment, hiring, and retention of racially minoritized women into academic leadership. We stress the importance of anti-racist, intersectional feminist practices that are open to the viewpoints and challenges of the margin(alized) when those perspectives come into the status quo centre (hooks 1984/2014). Our recommendations are predicated upon stable funding and resources, and workplace culture in which commitment to a diversified leadership and faculty and staff is absorbed into core operations, lessening vulnerability to suspension or termination in times of austerity.

1. Governance

Stemming from pressure to address the prevailing lack of diversity and the exclusionary climate of academia, PSIs have created EDI policies and implemented diversity committees, and composed strategic plans and mission statements that express EDI as important components of institutional identity, values, and mandates. As we have argued thus far, these plans, mission statements, and committees often function to sustain the optics of equity, diversity, and inclusion, rather than generating substantive change. They uphold a PSI branding/marketing strategy designed to signal inclusive spaces, which itself can serve as the very basis on which progressive transformation is deflected and deferred (Ahmed 2012; Dua and Bhanji 2017). For instance, in Canada, one hundred universities and colleges maintain membership with Universities Canada, a consortium of post-secondary institutions committed to EDI by way of seven inclusive excellence principles (Universities Canada 2017).

It is worthy of note that these seven principles articulate EDI goals at a visioning level, without clear directives, such as hiring metrics, pay equity self-assessment, or modes of recourse, along with accountability for delivery shortfalls. Such approaches—accounting for the diversity of institutional context—are symptomatic of the aforementioned challenge of discursive/rhetorical keenness coupled with budgetary squeamishness. Metrics and explicit targets that allow for regular periodic review of progress are instrumental to making concrete progress. Additionally, administrative and resource support for EDI-aligned disciplines and areas of study (e.g., Africa and Diaspora Studies, Equity Studies, Indigenous Studies, Race and Ethnic Studies, Women's and Gender Studies) strengthens recruitment and retention of racially minoritized women, who are often present in greater numbers in these academic locations.

Equity related leadership know-how (knowledge, experience, and effectiveness with equity implementation) is a key component of successfully enacting equity and a persistent limitation in many academic institutions. Recruitment and retention of leaders from demographically under-represented and non-traditional—in status quo terms—groups in leadership, racially minoritized women in particular, is a core means of mobilizing concrete institutional commitment to equity through targeted strategic practice, and forms part of a larger platform of implementation that consigns stable, consistent funding and resources to institutional diversification.

This is a symbiotic approach in which demonstrated commitment through proper resource allocation, along with recruitment and retention efforts, serves to increase the probability of attracting and retaining a diverse leadership pool. Retention may be addressed by growing institutional infrastructure, including policy, administration, curriculum, programming, services and social supports and effective community outreach and community relationships. The establishment of an effective governing policy outlining institutional commitments to address multiple and intersecting axes of exclusion, specifically, via recruitment, hiring, and retention of racially minoritized women is of fundamental importance to sustainable, long-term implementation of equity, including at the highest academic, administrative, and leadership levels. Strategic plans should go beyond broad vision and value statements to include details of practice and execution, including targets and timelines where appropriate.

Too often, there is a disorganized approach to the implementation of complementary commitments such as equity, Indigenization, and internationalization. This fosters confusion, lack of coordination, and even a sense of competition between these areas, particularly in the context of fiscal austerity. Racially minoritized women, who are especially implicated in the success of such initiatives, yet largely absent in their administration, are first to have their positions terminated when they are present and are particularly vulnerable where instability and lack of coordination frame institutional goals. As such, university governance must demonstrate inclusive awareness and practice that is attentive to multiple factors, including local and global considerations (Caruana and Ploner 2010) as permutations of the factors listed above. A critical assessment of the norms of leadership (ethnocentrism, androcentrism, class, style) is also key, and as we discuss in the following section, it can be undertaken through a commitment of practice (demonstrated through detailed and transparent annual reports regarding practices undertaken and their effectiveness) for those university administrators with authority and power to create pathways to leadership.

2. Commitment of Practice

Structural and interpersonal acts of racism remain realities of post-secondary institutions (Ahmed 2012; Dua and Bhanji 2017). EDI anti-bias training is a common administrative response to internal critiques and grievances highlighting the aforementioned reality, and has been shown to be ineffective in changing workplace culture and material conditions (Dobbin and Kalev 2018). Sociologists Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev found that, "despite the poor showing of anti-bias training in academic studies, it remains the go-to solution for corporate executives and university administrators facing public relations crises, campus intolerance and slow progress on diversifying the executive and faculty ranks" (2018, 49). Anti-bias training involves short-term awareness-raising and educational programming that can take the form of online modules or in-person sessions. These are often provided as one-offs and sometimes offered at recurring intervals. This programming is focused on attitudinal change as a means of making workplace culture more amenable to the presence of members of historically marginalized groups. As implied by the word "training," this type of programming also suggests a stage of training completion upon which the individual has been officially "trained." The trained individual leaves the

workshop with a certificate documenting their "knowledgeable" status, or is able to signal their newly trained status via a mention on annual reports or on their curriculum vitae. This status of completion becomes a *fait accompli* to which the trained individual may gesture for the purpose of promotion and/or service in decision-making spaces.

It is not difficult to see how voluntary or mandated participation in such programming could lead to opportunistic performativity, resentment, and re-entrenchment of bias (subsequently even harder to address under the guise of having been trained in anti-bias), and ineffectiveness due to the overarching focus on attitudes and feelings over material commitments. In fact, and arguably, the focus on feelings and attitudes acts as a convenient distraction and deterrent from substantive change that requires serious resource commitments, power sharing, and collective governance. Though it could be argued that the latter does not happen without the former, the pattern has been that the latter happens very little despite the preponderance of the former. Given this reality and as academics who are particularly invested in seeing the effective implementation of equitable working conditions, we are much less concerned with "what's truly in a colleague's heart" than with a principled and clear institutional commitment to equitable workload, salary, benefits, and procedures for evaluation, promotion, and meaningful inclusion in decision-making. Focused on these conditions, a commitment of practice involves implementation-focused skills acquisition and practice orientation for academic administrators, faculty, and community. This should be available to members of hiring, promotion, and other appointment committees, including the highest-ranking university administrators and boards. Models for implementation, setting targets, evaluating progress according to clear metrics, and instituting accountability measures are all important components of a practice of commitment to equity.

Intersectional feminist frameworks (Collins 2000) have much to offer in this regard. For instance, from this body of work comes a linking of attitude and practice that is focused on change implementation requiring attention to the various ways that stereotypes of racially minoritized women shape and distort committees' understandings and evaluation of our applications, presentations, and overall candidacy for leadership positions. Morever, practical mechanisms are needed for dislodging these stubborn practices, as well as accountability measures that target their prevalence. In fact, there are systematic barriers in place for those of us who are situated within intersections of marginality-barriers that impede recognition of our leadership styles and exclude us from leadership opportunities (Martimianakis 2008). A commitment of practice in this sense should be vetted by knowledgeable professionals within PSI (such as faculty members from aligned fields). Leads of such initiatives can be selected from the faculty pool of those with research and/or teaching expertise, and those with a track record of effectively working on institutional reform. These faculty members must be adequately supported and compensated for their labour.

3. Data Collection

Demographic data, workplace climate surveys, and data on pay equity, promotion, and tenure are regularly collected by the university but rarely publicly circulated (Henry et al. 2017b). Furthermore, the quality, type, and reach of the data are often inconsistent. For instance, at one of the authors' institutions, demographic data on faculty and staff appointments have been the purview of the Human Resources office, which has delineated its search and data organization along the wo/men gender binary. Given the higher numbers of women occupying lower-level staff, adjunct, and tenure-stream positions in PSIs (Henry et al. 2017b), the overall numbers when presented along this simplistic gender binary may indicate that women employees at the institution outnumber men, but this is an inaccurate picture of their locations relative to sites of security, rank, decision-making, or authority; nor is it any measure of their level of influence, participation and inclusion. Moreover, such data presentation fails to make visible the persisting ethnocentrism and demographic over-representation of white people in many PSIs. Results of a 2019 survey by Universities Canada based on responses from eighty-eight universities present the separated categories of "women" and "racialized people," indicating that while progress has been made for women (mostly white) in senior leadership positions (consistent with Smith's research) (AWA 2019), "racialized people are significantly underrepresented in senior leadership positions at Canadian universities and are not advancing through the leadership pipeline. While racially minoritized people account for 22 percent of the general population, 40 percent of the student body (both undergraduate and graduate), 31 percent of doctoral holders and 21 percent of full-time faculty, we comprise only 8 percent of senior leaders at

Canadian universities" (Universities Canada 2019, 10). Here we have an example of the helpful application of some disaggregation in data collection, yet simultaneously, the lack of an intersectional framework, which perpetuates the too common erasure of racially minoritized women in equity planning and implementation.

Inadequate data collection and the aforementioned lack of circulation allow PSIs to invoke plausible deniability (Douglas 2012). These reports should be disseminated to the university and the wider community, which will allow both university members and the public to gauge the effectiveness of the institution's EDI policies. Disaggregated data collection informed by an intersectional feminist analytic framework is crucial to the effective implementation of anti-racist practices. Each year, PSIs should publicly and transparently address how they have worked to close the gaps indicated in the data. This creates an opportunity for PSI community members to more clearly see and speak to the gaps and problems, and be able to respond in a manner that targets commitments of practice.

4. Recruitment and Hiring

Hiring is a cornerstone of redress and taking steps toward truly diverse, pluralistic, and effective practices of inclusion and equity implementation. It is important to see this integration across the institution, including the highest leadership levels where demographic homogeneity has remained strikingly persistent. Targeted recruitment and selection methods vary, where they exist at all beyond the general employment equity statements that accompany job ads. Indeed, successful recruitment often manifests in the context of explicit calls—a job posting asking for particular experiential knowledge, ethnocultural identification, as well as professional training— for instance, in cluster hires related to Indigenization efforts. In this way, equity and the prioritization of racially minoritized women candidates do not remain simply statements of broader principle in the job advertisement, but also a priority of practice in the hiring process by way of targeted recruitment criteria. A strong commitment to equity in hiring entails consulting with and ensuring the participation of experiential and subject experts on campus (racially minoritized faculty and those in equity-oriented disciplines), and doing so with just compensation and recognition for the ways that the racially minoritized faculty on many university campuses are inequitably tasked, over-committed and over-worked in relation to equity initiatives.

Early stages of the hiring process can be a symptom of arising points of tension. For instance, the requirement of statements about candidates' commitment to EDI as part of the application package raises the question of whether Indigenous or Black cluster hires are exclusively predicated on candidates who ascribe and align themselves with the neoliberal EDI vision of the university. Is simply being an Indigenous or Black academic with expertise in a particular discipline/area sufficient basis on which to meet the institution's mandate to engage in historical redress? Or is every candidate who is considered within the realm of "diversifying the institution" also required to tie themselves to the labour of EDI as a precondition of employment? Rather than requiring such statements from candidates, it is arguably more appropriate for the institution and hiring committees to provide candidates with a document outlining the steps and concrete measures taken to build an infrastructure and workplace that demonstrates thoughtfulness and preparation for the diversity that the institution is seeking to attract and create. Demographic and aggregated data collection, consistent reporting of the results of recruitment, short-listing of candidates, and hiring should be standardized across the institution and compiled as part of the regular data collection and dissemination mechanisms of the university. This serves as a route to establishing accountability measures for persisting gaps and inequities.

Considering the adjunctification of academe, and the prevalence of women and racially minoritized faculty in the "lower-rung" academic positions, racially minoritized internal candidates should be actively supported and encouraged to apply. Additionally, universities must seriously commit to tracks for permanency and security for such candidates. It is well known that as internal candidates, adjuncts and academics on temporary contracts are seldom selected for tenure-stream positions (Bose 2022; Muzzin and Limoges 2008); these positions more often go to outside candidates. There are numerous factors that play into this reality, one of which is the constraint that heavy teaching workloads, as a means of piecing together a living income, place on publication records. But this pattern of overlooking internal part-time or limited term candidates happens often in the case of competitive internal candidates (Davis 2017; Faucher 2015).

Moreover, universities will use cluster hires as an excuse for this continued practice, thereby addressing one inequity at the expense of another. Unions and faculty associations have not necessarily been helpful in this regard, and in some cases, have exacerbated the problems, either treating the concerns of part-time and adjunct faculty as fringe and/or failing to adequately bargain for security and good working conditions for these academics, or, as in a recent case, playing an active role in the de-skilling and labour exploitation of racially minoritized women faculty (Bose 2022; Khan 2021).

Numerous resources are now available online that guide preparedness for recruitment, interviewing, hiring, and post-appointment support under the rubric of equity, diversity, and inclusion. For instance, the American Psychological Association's online guide, "How to Recruit and Hire Ethnic Minority Faculty," provides a thoughtful compilation (American Psychological Association 1996). The Canada Research Chairs Program (Government of Canada) guide, "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: A Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention" (Canada Research Chairs 2018) also provides a detailed list, although it was compiled on a general basis and not with the specific aim of increasing the numbers of racially minoritized in academic leadership. Guidelines such as these, tailored to the institutional context, should be made available to hiring committees and updated regularly in conjunction with a committed anti-racist practice engaged and demonstrated by university leadership and members of hiring and promotion committees.

Conclusion

The underrepresentation of racially minoritized women in senior academic leadership and from the domain of academic leadership development remains a reality in the post-secondary sector. The glass ceiling, gendered pay gap, and motherhood tax, among other biases and forms of workplace discrimination to which women are subjected, are intensified in the case of racially minoritized women. In addition, there are the following contributing factors in recruitment, retention, and leadership gaps within PSIs: practices of evasion and hindrance in hiring, promotion, and upward mobility; racist stereotyping, tokenization, and damaging workplace culture; and ineptitude and failure to adequately address consequent experiences of isolation and alienation, as well as the res-

ulting exclusion, retreat, and departures of racially minoritized women.

Academic leaders play an integral role in shaping institutional culture, the working environment, and the inclusive learning environment for students. In the absence of racially minoritized women from the highest decision-making spaces, particularly those holding alternative and marginalized perspectives and epistemic positions, issues germane to faculties' working and students' learning conditions will continue to go unaddressed. Moreover, racially minoritized women scholars' academic trajectories must have the opportunity to proceed unhindered by racialized, gendered, and class-based discrimination.

The absence of racially minoritized women in leadership persists despite, as a cursory survey of Canadian university strategic plans and mandates will attest, PSIs' claims of being inclusive and committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion principles.

As racially minoritized women faculty members in Canadian universities, we are cognizant and carry the weight of persisting challenges to equity within PSIs. Progress in diversifying academic leadership has been made with an increase in appointments for white women in overwhelming contrast to the continuing under-representation of members of racially minoritized groups (Universities Canada 2019). As stated by Dr. Malinda Smith, VP provost of equity and diversity at the University of Calgary, despite public commitments and statements on racial justice, the leadership and knowledge gap has only gotten wider during the pandemic (Smith 2021). Moreover, recent cluster hires and appointments of racially minoritized academics into senior management positions in EDI, which as a whole do not meet the threshold of a critical mass (Joecks et al. 2013) for upper administration, are admissions into workplaces that are still largely Eurocentric, neoliberal, and masculinist in orientation and operation. EDI senior administrators still have a layer or two of predominantly white veto power above them, which is the problem against which we write here; and there is the added consideration of recruitment and hiring conventions for such roles.

What are the expected and lauded signifiers of thought, articulation, and practice? What kind of pushing and to what extent can one push within the bounds of biting the hand that feeds them? Stories abound of the harsh realities faced by these academics and administrators as

they navigate these still hostile and stubbornly resistant spaces (Kelly 2022).

To address the systematic erasure and absence of racially minoritized women from leadership positions, we have provided a few concrete approaches. Rigorous critical examinations of institutional and workplace culture, shared governance and power among a truly diverse group of people, and a commitment of practice as exemplified in data collection and recruitment and hiring, are important components of being critically responsive to pressing current issues of concern in academic communities. Implementation of these strategies forms the ground from which universities can move beyond performative tactics and empty equity statements to much-needed change, meaningful inclusion, and leadership opportunities for racially minoritized women.

Endnotes

1. Black, Indigenous, and other racially minoritized women are all under-represented within leadership positions and as such, there is some common ground on the basis of which we can commiserate with each other's experiences of exclusion and discrimination. All the same, there are discriminatory practices and modes of exclusion that are particular to Black and Indigenous women. In this paper, when discussing overarching and collective experiences, we have utilized the broader term of racially minoritized women and in other places we have written specifically about experiences of Black and/or Indigenous women within academia. There is insufficient literature attending to the granularity of racialization as it relates to the experiences of women facing exclusion and marginalization in Canadian academe. Experiences of and data regarding racially minoritized women tend to be aggregated together by researchers and thus, information about specific groups is still sparse. Our discussion particular to Indigenous and distinct groups of racially minoritized women is somewhat limited by sparse literature and data.

2. Decolonization is used here to refer to the goal of dismantling the colonial and now neo-colonial rules/codes, hierarchies, and modes of power consolidation, and the prioritization of colonial knowledge and practices embedded within higher education. It involves attention to the realm of the psyche as it is shaped by the aforementioned elements, and to the importance of cultural, political, and economic self-determination.

3. Anti-Black racism comprises structural and interpersonal practices that are discriminatory towards people of African descent according to their particular histories and locations in the rubric of European colonization and racial constructions past and present. These are historical and ongoing societal racist practices that deny people of African descent social, economic, and political opportunities as well as permitting the enactment of structural and interpersonal violence.

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Trauma-informed Consent Education: Understanding the Grey Area of Consent Through the Experiences of Youth Trauma Survivors

by Jessica Wright

Abstract: Sexual consent education has emerged in recent years as the most popular method of preventing gender-based violence. Yet, the concept of consent used in much contemporary programming problematically oversimplifies sexual exploration and the power dynamics it is imbued with by asserting that consent is as simple as "Yes" or "No." The messiness of sexual negotiation or the 'grey areas' of consent that youth may experience are left unaddressed. By examining the experiences of youth trauma survivors through a trauma-informed lens, the limits to binary consent education become clear. I draw on empirical data from nine open-ended interviews with Canadian youth trauma survivors to demonstrate how a trauma-informed lens may be implemented in consent education. I argue that educators should include understandings of consent which falls outside the Yes/No binary in order to adequately address youth survivors' vulnerability to sexual (re)victimization. I examine how three of the psychosocial impacts of trauma, dissociation, hypersexuality, and struggles with acquiescence, refuse the binaristic model of consent and should be considered for trauma-informed consent education. While education alone cannot end rape culture, addressing the grey area of consent in consent education may help reduce preventable harm for survivors, as well as youth more broadly.

Keywords: sexual consent, gender-based violence prevention, consent education, trauma-informed, sexuality education, youth, higher education, sexual violence

Résumé: Ces dernières années, l'éducation au consentement sexuel s'est révélée être la méthode la plus populaire pour prévenir la violence fondée sur le sexe. Pourtant, le concept de consentement utilisé dans la plupart des programmes d'aujourd'hui simplifie exagérément l'exploration sexuelle et les dynamiques de pouvoir qui s'y rattachent en laissant entendre que le consentement se résume à un simple « oui » ou « non ». La complexité de la négociation sexuelle ou les « zones grises » que les jeunes peuvent rencontrer en ce qui concerne le consentement ne sont pas abordées. Si l'on se penche sur les expériences des jeunes ayant survécu à un traumatisme en adoptant une approche tenant compte des traumatismes, les limites de l'éducation au consentement binaire deviennent évidentes. Je m'appuie sur des données empiriques recueillies lors de neuf entrevues sans orientation précise avec de jeunes Canadiens ayant survécu à un traumatisme pour démontrer comment une approche tenant compte des traumatismes peut être intégrée à l'éducation au consentement. J'estime que les éducateurs devraient intégrer la compréhension du consentement qui ne se limite pas au simple « oui » ou « non » afin d'aborder de manière adéquate la vulnérabilité des jeunes survivants à la (re)victimisation sexuelle. J'étudie comment trois des effets psychosociaux du traumatisme, à savoir la dissociation, l'hypersexualité et les difficultés liées à l'acquiescement, s'opposent au modèle binaire du consentement et devraient faire partie de l'éducation au consentement tenant compte des traumatismes. Bien que l'éducation ne puisse à elle seule mettre fin à la culture du viol, intégrer la question des zones grises liées au consentement à l'éducation à celui-ci peut contribuer à réduire des préjudices évitables pour les survivants, ainsi que pour les jeunes, de manière plus générale.

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Sexual consent education has emerged in recent years as the most popular method of preventing gender-based violence (GBV), particularly at post-secondary institutions around the globe (Marine and Lewis 2020; Kulbaga and Spencer 2019). These educational initiatives are supposed to reduce incidences of sexual trauma by teaching youth to express a clear "Yes" when they desire to participate in a sexual act, or a clear "No" when they want to avoid it. However, the concept of consent used in much contemporary programming problematically oversimplifies sexual exploration and the power dynamics it is imbued with by asserting that consent is as simple as a "Yes" or "No" verbal response ("Consent is Simple" 2016; Brady and Lowe 2020). Underlying the idea that consent is simple is the assumption that students can embody what I term a "normative consenting subject," one who is always rational and transparently self-aware about their desires and will (also see Saketopoulou 2019). Not everyone can easily fit their experiences into that of the normative consenting subject at the heart of so much consent education (Wright 2021a). Moreover, by not attending to the less simple aspects of consent, youth may blame themselves for sexual harm perpetrated within the 'grey zone' of consent. Consent education may inadvertently reinforce victim-blaming logic.

This article examines what consent education might look like if it centered the experiences of youth trauma survivors in its framework, where the subject of consent is recognized as a person transformed by experiences of harm. In Canada, for instance, where my research sample is based, youth trauma survivors are more than twice as likely to be sexually re-victimized than their peers who do not have histories of trauma (Statistics Canada 2017). Furthermore, North American research finds that survivors who are disabled, mad, queer, trans, and/or Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) experience even higher rates of victimization due to the ways in which rape culture is perpetuated by systems of domination such as white supremacy and cis-heteronormativity (Patterson 2016). This suggests how great the need is for a different approach to consent education that centres the experiences of those most likely to face sexual violence.

This article draws from an empirical study I undertook with youth trauma survivors. I conducted nine open-ended interviews that explored participants' understandings and experiences of consent and consent education.

Participants were 18–22-year-old undergraduate students from a large, urban Canadian university. I draw on the interviews as key data for how consent education can be reimaged with a trauma-informed perspective. This article begins to articulate a consent education model based on the experiences of these and other youth survivors. The framework moves beyond verbal Yes/No consent models to address the complexities of youth sexual relations in the contexts of systemic, intersectional power relations. Consent education that uses a trauma-informed lens and is based in the lived experiences of youth trauma survivors shows up the limits to much consent education in its inability to address the subjectivities of traumatized young people, and the vulnerabilities they face as a result of their experiences of sexualized trauma. A more trauma-informed approach would not only better serve the needs of traumatized youth, it would also make a range of harms against young people more preventable.

I begin with an examination of typical consent models used in most mainstream consent education, which often reject the very existence of grey areas of consent. As I expand upon below, experiences within the grey area are those that are not easily classified as consensual or criminal but can create significant harm. In the second section, I situate my argument within a burgeoning field of scholarship that also troubles a dichotomous concept of consent to argue for an understanding of the grey area of consent. I then turn to the methodology of the larger study from which the qualitative data of this paper is excerpted. Finally, I discuss the findings of the study in relation to my overarching framework. I examine how understanding about three of the psychosocial impacts of trauma, dissociation, hypersexuality, and struggles with acquiescence, could be used to shape trauma-informed consent education.

Consent is (Not Always) Simple

The model of consent considered the most progressive is the affirmative consent model ("yes means yes"), which differs from the older "no means no" model in that it not only emphasizes respect for refusal but also empowers clear, positive expressions of consent (Beres 2014). However, across the different models used, much mainstream consent education reduces consent to something simple that is expressed through a clear "Yes" or "No." This is symbolized by the viral video produced by the British Police force titled, "Consent is as Simple as Tea" (Brady

and Lowe 2020; Thames Valley Police 2015). The video suggests that, just as you would not pour tea down someone's throat when they do not want tea, you should not engage in sexual acts with someone without their consent. Like the message in the video suggests, consent is often considered easily discernible (Fischel 2019). As one award-winning, Toronto-based campaign slogan read, "Consent is Simple: If it's Not Yes, it's No" (2016). Despite the subjective complexities one may be experiencing during a sexually-charged interaction, one should be able to funnel those feelings into either a concrete "Yes" or "No." In this way, consent discourse disregards the emotionally charged circumstances of sexual interactions and the way body/mind arousal influences decision-making.

Saketopoulou (2019) explains, "The concept of affirmative consent presumes a subject who is fully transparent to herself and who can anticipate the precise effects of her assent" (133). The unconscious forces at work during an encounter challenge the expectations affirmative consent set upon the subject. Further, the assumption of self-transparency aligns well with the demand of neoliberal sexual citizenship for self-mastery; in a neoliberal context, violence prevention is conceived of as an individual's ability to act and react to protect themselves from their fellow citizen, who is "primarily self-interested, and thus always already threatening" (Shewan 2018, 4). This individualistic frame for understanding sexual harm prevents sexual violence from being addressed through structural change (Colpitts 2021).

The affirmative consent standard has, however, been promoted as normative due to its utility in legal discussions, as for instance its potential to provide the "least-bad standard available for sexual assault law" (Fischel 2019, 3). Yet, the affirmative consent model needs to be investigated and expanded for sexuality education to account for the nuances in experiences of providing or receiving consent. North American organization Planned Parenthood's (2019) "F.R.I.E.S." affirmative consent model (Freely Given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic, Specific), for example, presumes consent can be assured through attention to ongoing consent during an encounter, though what that looks like in practice can be unclear; there are moments in between checking in with a partner where feelings can shift unexpectedly, and moreover, there are moments where one may be unclear about one's own desire and will.

Promoting consent as something simple and binary means that programming promotes the idea that anything in between the two poles of "Yes" or "No" is dangerous. When consent education was introduced into public schools in Ontario, in 2015, the government's website read, "There is no grey area when it comes to consent" (Government of Ontario 2019, n.p.; Francis et al. 2016). This is the sentiment that runs throughout the curriculum as well—the idea that consent can be funneled into a neat "Yes" or "No" (Ontario Ministry of Education 2015a, 2015b). Like with Ontario's curriculum, the grey areas of consent are generally ignored or demonized (Gavey 2005). The propensity to deny the existence of the grey area is one that arguably emerged because survivors continue to be blamed for their experiences of violence, with those who disbelieve them citing ambiguous circumstances as well as rape myths, such as, "She was asking for it," or "She would've been more upset if she wasn't into it." Rape myths are indeed something to challenge since, as the UN Women's organization has noted, "People use [these ideas] as an attempt to blur the lines around sexual consent, place blame on victims, and excuse perpetrators from the crimes they have committed" (2019, n.p.). However, like with the UN Women's consent campaign that uses the slogan "When it comes to consent, there are no blurred lines" (2019, n.p.), rejecting rape myths is too often conflated with rejecting the grey area of consent (also see Ray-Jones 2016; Alcid 2013).

A Framework for Understanding the Grey Area of Consent

The grey area can be understood as an area of experience that is not easily categorized as consensual and wanted, nor as violent or criminal. Consent researchers demonstrate that the consent process tends to be imbued with ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradictions that index the existence of grey areas and the social relations of power that inform these experiences (Gilbert 2018; Cahill 2014; Butler 2011; Gavey 2005; Muehlenhard and Peterson 2005). Grey area experiences represent "unjust sex" or an unjust sexual experience—not a clear case of assault but not a "just" experience either (Gavey 2005). Gavey introduced the term "unjust sex" through research with heterosexual women. She found that the discursive framework of heterosexuality naturalizes normative scripts where men are sexual aggressors and women acquiesce to men's advances. This sociopolitical context is one imbued with ethical ambiguities concerning the grey area of consent.

Despite the presence of unjust sex in our society, researchers exploring ambivalence in sexual interaction note that it tends to be problematically invisibilized in discourses around sex (Gilbert 2007; Butler 2011). As Bay-Cheng and Eliseo-Arras (2008) note, "Contrary to [the] common conflation of consent and wantedness, a growing number of studies indicate that saying 'yes' to a partner's sexual overture does not necessarily signal unequivocal interest or desire" (386). Muehlenhard and Peterson (2005) have argued that a dichotomous model of consent (wanted/unwanted) often fails to represent the nuances of embodied sexual exploration, and thus does not allow for a full understanding of the sexual landscape nor individuals' particular experiences (16). Muehlenhard's research with Rodgers examined women's token resistance (refusing sex with the intention of then participating in it) in the late 1990s and early 2000s; they had asked participants to recount experiences in which they were willing, wanting, and intended to engage in sexual experiences, and the researchers shared a "moment of horror" when they realized that most participants ended up recounting negative experiences or ones that were ambivalent, even though they were also descriptively willing (16; Muehlenhard and Rodgers 1998).

Researchers like Muehlenhard and Rodgers laid the groundwork for articulating what Muehlenhard and Peterson term the "missing discourse of ambivalence" in sexual interactions and for moving beyond a research model that depends on a binary of wantedness/unwantedness (2005). What emerged was an understanding that consensual sexual experiences can be both wanted and unwanted, as well as that women are socialized to acquiesce to sex that can look a lot like sexual assault and rape (Gavey 2005). Despite the work that sexuality researchers have done to demonstrate that there is a grey area when it comes to consent, troublingly, these findings are not reflected in consent education due to the reliance on a binary concept. Thus, contemporary, mainstream consent education often fails to capture the ambiguity or ambivalence people experience while negotiating sexual consent, which can create grey areas where preventable harms remain unaddressed.

Viewed from the perspectives of youth survivors of sexualized violence and abuse, typical binary consent models

may do far more harm than good. As I demonstrate, youth with histories of trauma are in a unique position to shed light on how consent talk may fail to capture ongoing and yet preventable harms.

Methods

I conducted nine open-ended interviews with youth trauma survivors, aged 18–22 years, to investigate their experiences and understandings of consent and consent education. Participants self-identified as trauma survivors and were undergraduate students at a large, urban Canadian university. Most participants were BIPOC, LGBTQ, first-generation Canadian, disabled and/or struggled with mental health issues. The interviews were conducted using feminist, trauma-informed methods that included, for instance, creating a non-hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee marked by mutual self-disclosure, making space for "unruly" emotions, and being flexible regarding the shape and duration of interviews (Ullman and Townsend 2008; Campbell et al. 2010). I engaged a feminist poststructuralist methodology which included examining the functions and effects of the discursive "grid of regularity" through which we understand our experiences as normative or "other" (St. Pierre and Pillow 2000, 2; Britzman 1995; Lather 1992). I looked for the tacit assumptions attached to the concept of consent used in consent education, as well as how survivors struggle to meet the demands of the normative consenting subject. Interview data underwent analysis modelled after St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), which was an analytic process that acknowledged the many different interpretations that can be derived from data. A peer de-briefer assisted in analysis, which was completed using NVivo.

Dissociation, Hypersexuality, Acquiescence, and the Grey Area

The participants' experiences point to three patterns in post-trauma behaviour that impact consent processes: struggles with dissociation, hypersexuality, and acquiescence. When participants were asked about their coping mechanisms, all but one described struggling with dissociation and acquiescence, and most engaged in compulsive sex to cope with trauma. The findings demonstrate that many coping strategies that are known to be used by trauma survivors may interfere with the ability to receive or withhold consent.

Dissociation

Research on post-traumatic responses has demonstrated that there is a common—though not universal—reaction to severe trauma that results in survivors dissociating from themselves to the degree that they may, quite suddenly following trauma, adopt a new sense of self they do not recognize, and/or experience the "new" traumatized self as a "shell" of the person they once were (Herman 1997; Brison 2002). When a survivor is unable to connect to themselves because they have severely dissociated, they may experience a dissonance between their post-trauma sexual behaviour and that of their former, non-dissociated self. This dissonance has implications for consent processes because consent will not be full or meaningful if one does not feel authentically connected to their sexual decisions.

Broadly, dissociation is experienced as an alienation from one's self. It manifests in a variety of ways, including the following: feeling fragmented or that one's experiences are not their own; feeling alienated from one's body (depersonalization); feeling alienated from one's environment; amnesia (loss of memories or ability to recall the past); time distortions/trauma time (the past feels like the present; time speeding up or slowing down; loss of small or large periods of time); feeling nothing and feeling too much, which can all feel like a variation of numbness (Boon et al. 2011; Van der Hart et al. 2006). While there is a body of research on dissociation following trauma (e.g., Webermann and Murphy 2018; Boon et al. 2011) and how the self can become "undone" (Brison 2002), there is a gap pertaining to what this or other emotional responses to trauma mean for understanding ethical sexual practices, and thus for consent education.

Consent is far from simple when somatic information is unavailable due to dissociation, as participants' narratives revealed. Ryan, 18, describes dissociating and thus being unable to access a sense of self from which to determine or assert their sexual wants and needs:

> Sometimes during sexual experiences I just detach myself from how I'm feeling, both physically and emotionally. I just let it happen.

Like most participants in the study, Ryan expressed a powerlessness and a disturbing tendency to feel like they

had to acquiesce as a result of being overwhelmed and unable to access an internal compass. While dissociation can be self-protective, it can also sever someone's connection to their body/mind, which can have disastrous results for survivors. In an article for *GUTS Magazine,* habib (2020), a childhood sexual abuse survivor, writes of their experience struggling with dissociation: "In my case, my constant floating and ignorance of what was happening inside me led to an autoimmune disease that impacted my digestive system. The trick that kept me shielded from the deepest kind of pain and hurt for so long had gone haywire and had turned my own body against me. I had mastered my floating trick so well that I still did not feel pain, even though my insides were ulcerated and bleeding" (n.p.).

While this may sound medically spurious to some, habib's numbness or "floating trick" resulted in it not being possible to recognize the physical pain reverberating through their body/mind.

Other survivors of trauma also face the repercussions of unidentifiable distress and pain put "out of mind" by dissociative coping. One study participant, Bella, 18, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, describes being unable to feel physical sensations while dissociating during a sexual encounter:

> We were just standing there in the bathroom … and he just suddenly started kissing me.… I was kind of standing there and totally taken by surprise, and I didn't really want to make out with him, it just kind of happened … and over the next twenty minutes probably, all his clothes were off definitely, like some of mine were off, and he was kissing me and doing other stuff, and I realized that I couldn't feel any of it, I was totally numb. Not just, it wasn't just that I wasn't turned on or couldn't feel anything like that, it was like, I physically couldn't feel him touching me. My skin was totally numb.… I don't really remember the sequence of events that well and the fact that I was that numb probably means I was dissociated.

Bella's experience demonstrates that when dissociating during a sexual experience, survivors can both recognize that something is "off" and yet not feel like they can pro-

cess the meaning or extent of their numbness. Not being able to feel because one is dissociated means that pleasurable and painful sensations are unavailable or quieted. In relation to consent negotiation, somatic information is missing that is essential to determining one's consent to an activity. The grey area experiences that dissociation can create are unintelligible within binary consent education. Moreover, while trauma survivors who are dissociative may be forced to ignore their pain, this is compounded by the systemic denial of girls' and women's experiences of pain, particularly BIPOC and disabled girls —from endometriosis to sexual harassment in K–12 education (Edwards 2019).

Consent education could unpack social norms that undermine youth's ability to recognize injustice; this includes helping youth listen to their bodies. Applying a trauma-informed lens to consent education means acknowledging that consent may be impossible when one is severely dissociative. In other research, trauma-related dissociation increased women's likelihood of being sexually re-victimized (i.e., Snyder 2018; Zurbriggen and Freyd 2004). This research suggests that attending more directly to how traumatized survivors have difficulty navigating consent to sexual activity could powerfully inform consent education around the range of embodied experiences that bear on the very conditions of being sexual within the context of traumatized people's lives. What might consent look like when trauma is centered in the very conceptions of sexual ethics and care that undergird consent education?

Furthermore, the binary model of consent that makes dissociation unintelligible in consent education—like experiences of hypersexuality and acquiescence discussed below—reflects the harm of binaries fundamental to much of Western thinking. Binary logics are deeply colonial and institute present-day, normative constructions of sex and gender, which require conforming to rigid cis-heteronormative, biologically essentialist binaries of male/female and accepting the conflation of sex and gender (see Morgensen 2010). These norms perpetuate the ongoing violent, traumatic disciplining of those who cannot imitate them, such as with disproportionately high rates of GBV against Two-Spirit, queer, trans and non-binary people (Patterson 2016). Rejecting colonial logics in consent education may involve a trauma-informed lens that allows space to emerge for ambiguity and more complex ways of knowing about sexual pleasure and harm.

Hypersexuality

One of the less-discussed adaptations to trauma that survivors use, and one which may be a challenging topic to carefully raise in consent education, is frequent and/or casual sex. Hypersexuality, a clinical term that some survivors identify with (Flint 2021; King 2015), is the compulsive-like pursuit of sex to manage emotional dysregulation. After she was raped a second time within the span of two years, one participant, Natalia, 18, described starting to party every night until the early morning, drinking until blacking out, using frequent and casual sex to cope, as well as overspending. Here she explains her process of using heavy drinking and sex to cope:

> I felt like, in the moment, I didn't feel anything other than "Oh I'm having a good time." And then when I was sobering up it was like "I've put myself in this position again … why? I can't claim anything right now." I can't be like, "Well this person still had sex with me while I was unconscious" because it's like, I put myself in this position. And then I'd be like "Ok let's forget this again." And [I'd repeat] the same pattern again and again. How many times can I do this before I don't feel it again? Or don't remember it.

Natalia describes using substances and sex to escape from pain though it put her at increased risk of experiencing sexual harm. She had a belief that she would be sexually harmed despite efforts to protect herself, which was understandable given her experiences but also put her in harm's way. She explained,

> You know, if they think they can just do whatever they want to my body, then I may as well just get so wasted that I can't tell what's happening, because like I really don't have a say in that situation.

Her coping mechanisms were thus linked to many interactions where consent was unclear. She tended to blame herself for this ambiguity, in turn fuelling more drinking and harmful interactions. She describes getting inebriated, having sex, and feeling like she was forfeiting her consent by clouding her own judgement:

> I think it's definitely that consent gets blurred when you go through trauma and you want to do so many things that will cloud your judgment: drink, have sex, or like anything like that. For me, at that point [of drinking and having sex frequently] I was like, you know, I'm tainted as a person—that's how I felt, and I was just like it does not matter what happens to me.

When compulsively using sex to try to manage emotional dysregulation, survivors may feel disconnected from themselves or like they are only partially participating in sex. This is not to say that survivors lack agency when the choices they make to survive may appear counter to their best interest (see Bay-Cheng 2019). Instead, trauma-informed consent education could recognize that youth trauma survivors are agents who may use sex and/or substances to cope and who may need validation around the shame that emerges from their behaviour.

As sex coach, speaker, and self-identified survivor of complex trauma Psalm Isadora has said about her experience, "Sex was like my heroin, it was somewhere I could go to escape myself. For one second in time, my ego dies, I forget my name. And I remember, at the time, they weren't empowered experiences…I would beat myself up about it and go have sex again to escape" (Isadora 2016, n.p.).

Psalm's experience, like participants in my own study, reflect how sex in the aftermath of trauma can represent an attempt to escape from pain: the desire to transcend the self, however fleeting, through sex. For some survivors, pursuing sex may be an attempt to regain control over their sexual experiences, to choose sex rather than to submit to it.

For others, seeking sex after trauma may be an attempt to excite the body/mind and feel *something*—perhaps something other than pain—when trauma has taken away a sense of safety in the world and created a numbness or dissociation from the body. Seeking sexual experiences can also represent an attempt to forge a connection with someone (or one's self), where trauma has severed one's former familiarity with one's place in the world in relation to others. Thus, developing a sense of sexual savviness, and using sex to cope, may play an im-

portant role in some youth's attempts to navigate the impacts of trauma.

However, compulsively seeking sex can also create and contribute to the grey zones in sexual intimacy that make sexual consent so difficult, and perhaps not possible. Harm that happens when a young person is compulsively seeking sex may be more likely to be written off as their own fault, by themselves and others. Acknowledging the presence of hypersexual youth—and the different reasons for their own hypersexualization—in consent education may help make consent programming more sex positive as well as create space to attend to some of the ways that survivors relying on this coping mechanism may face increased violence and self-blame. Additionally, not all young people, and young women in particular, are sexualized in the same ways. For example, girls who are Black, Latinx, or Asian face stereotypes about their sexuality that may increase their objectification and thus victimization, experiences that can be compounded in the case of trauma survivors. Taking into consideration the intersections of various oppressions is necessary in the further development of a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive framework for consent education.

Acquiescence

Trauma shapes embodiment and some people's body/minds in ways wherein they refuse to act "normatively" to assert and protect themselves. This is an important consideration for trauma-informed consent education since survivors may have an especially difficult time discerning and expressing a "No." Particularly for survivors with histories of childhood abuse and maltreatment, assertiveness is a major challenge. One participant, Ryan, 18, a survivor of emotional and physical parental abuse, explains their experience:

> I grew up in an abusive household so I was physically and emotionally abused. In my first relationship, I was repeatedly sexually coerced…. It was repeated guilt-tripping. My boyfriend at the time would threaten to harm himself or fake having mental health issues. Or maybe he did struggle a bit and then he exaggerated that to get things out of me. He'd ask for a sexual favour even though I'd told him I'm not comfortable with that or that I'm not in the mood for

> that. And then he'd randomly bring up things and say, "I feel really shitty, this is the least you can do for me." … In general when I didn't do [what he wanted] he'd threaten to hurt himself…. And I'd do what he wanted…. I had trouble saying no, so even if I did say no, and he would push on, I found it hard to keep saying no. Yeah. I'm scared to refuse out of past experience.

Survivors like Ryan who grew up being abused or maltreated learned beliefs that complicate their ability to both understand their own feelings and needs, as well as advocate for their own safety (Mark and Vowels 2020). Herman (1997) writes about children and youth coping with abuse: "She [the survivor] must develop a sense of self in relation to others who are helpless, uncaring, or cruel. She must develop a capacity for bodily self-regulation in an environment in which her body is at the disposal of others' needs" (101). Having been forced to acquiesce to others' needs and wants as they were growing up, survivors of abuse may struggle to establish boundaries and thus to find safety in relationship to others.

Moreover, some youth with histories of trauma learn that abusive behavior is a display of love. hooks (2000) explains, "Most psychologically and/or physically abused children have been taught by parenting adults that love can coexist with abuse. And in extreme cases, that abuse is an expression of love. This faulty thinking often shapes our adult perceptions of love…. As we would cling to the notion that those who hurt us as children loved us, we try to rationalize being hurt by other adults by insisting that they love us " (7).

In other words, survivors may not perceive harm as unusual, or they may blame themselves for harm, and thus abuse may not warrant creating distance from an abusive situation (DePrince and Gagnon 2018). Leila, 22, is a survivor of parental neglect as well as sexual assault as a teen. When I asked if she could think of a time when she was asked to engage in a sexual act and what followed felt messy, she responded,

> I think that's a constant. I don't know if that makes sense, but I know that when I'm asked to do something, I'll consent to it. Then I have these issues, not during, but after the fact—of going back and thinking,

> "Did I really want to do that? Why did I say yes to it?"

Women survivors, in particular, may struggle to assert their boundaries as they have a tendency to suppress angry feelings so as to not create a stir or negative reaction. Haines (2007) writes, "Nearly all the survivors I have worked with report having had sex when they didn't want to. It's almost as if this were taken for granted; unwanted sex becomes such a given for survivors that many hardly notice it anymore" (321). Unfortunately, struggling to refuse unwanted sex is something commonly experienced by survivors.

Consent education that is attentive to how some youth are socialized not to assert themselves in contexts of abuse could help address some of the needs that young people with these experiences have, providing a key opportunity to provide care to these students. Intersecting axes of oppression can further compound and complicate young people's struggles with acquiescence. For example, gendered and racialized cultural norms, including stereotypes pertaining to how acquiescent one should be, may complicate conversations about how to be assertive in the contexts of sexual intimacy. Ryan, for example, was raised by strict Catholic and socially conservative Chinese parents who tried to discipline them to be a "proper" subservient Asian girl growing up. The intersection of disciplinary religious discourse, conservative, diasporic Chinese culture, and the expectation to conform to cisgender and heterosexual norms all shape the context within which Ryan can or cannot stand in their own truth and be assertive. Incorporating a feminist anti-racist lens into consent education would help to counteract the legacy of white supremacy and the ways it perpetuates GBV against BIPOC, LGBTQ youth.

Discussion

The expectation in many consent education programs to remove any ambiguity or ambivalence from practices of sexual exploration may be difficult for many youth to embody, but it may be impossible for trauma survivors who must navigate the psychosocial impacts of trauma. Consent education initiatives that presume "consent is simple" risk promoting victim-blaming messages to those who cannot fit their experiences into a "Yes' or "No" model. To make programming more nuanced and effective, consent education could incorporate a trauma-informed framework, building models of consent that

take the realities of young people who have been sexually abused not only seriously, but as a foundation for consent practice and its difficulties. DePrince and Gagnon (2018) offer an overview of the hallmarks of a trauma-informed framework for GBV prevention: [1] "efforts to recognize the prevalence of traumas in our communities"; [2] "conceptualize survivors' symptoms in the context of and as adaptations to the trauma"; [3] "empower survivors as an intervention goal"; and [4] "appreciate the role that power plays in survivors' relationships, and strive for collaboration between providers and survivors" (15). Consent education that incorporates a trauma-informed lens would refuse a binary "Yes/No" model of consent and would include acknowledgement of survivors' struggles with consent.

Furthermore, a trauma-informed framework should be explicitly anti-oppressive. Experiences in the grey area of consent are widespread due to ongoing systemic inequities that shape rape culture, such as cis-heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism, sanism and ableism. Though it is beyond the scope of this article to explore in depth, it is notable that in North America consent education is taught on land that was taken through genocidal violence that used rape as a tool of war (Hunt 2016). Survivors and their peers may benefit from conversations about how sexual politics and widespread experiences of "unjust sex" (Gavey 2005) are shaped by historical and contemporary social relations of power that are deeply colonial. Trauma-informed programming could move beyond a transactional, binary model of consent and recognize that consent is imbued with power dynamics that reflect systemic power relations which traumatize so many young people, as the participants in this study have helped explain.

Conclusion

Though consent education is a promising tool to address gender-based violence, its effectiveness depends upon further investigation, particularly given its recent emergence. The binary concept of consent used in much contemporary consent education presents a troubling oversimplification of the inherent ambiguity of sexual exploration, as well as the politics of the grey area. Consent education initiatives must not unintentionally reinforce victim-blaming messages by leaving out the messy experiences of consent negotiation, particularly those of youth trauma survivors. Youth survivors struggling with the psychosocial impacts of trauma, such as dissociation, hy-

persexuality, and challenges with acquiescence, will not see their grey area experiences in binary consent education and, thus, may blame themselves for sexual harm done to them by others. Moving beyond binary consent education means offering survivors and their peers tools to both understand traumatic coping mechanisms and the ways in which these mechanisms can increase the risk of being harmed or, conversely, harming another. Moreover, shifting to a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive framework for consent education that does not rely on a binary concept opens up the possibilities for addressing persistent systemic forms of oppression that create grey areas for all youth. Notably, future research should examine the lessons for consent education from BIPOC, Two-Spirit, queer, trans and/or non-binary communities who cite a legacy of challenging binaries and refusing a normative model of consent (see Bauer 2021; Beres 2021; de Heer et al. 2021). Principles of disability justice should also be incorporated into anti-oppressive, trauma-informed consent education (Wright 2021b). Furthermore, conversations about consent that centre talk of mutuality are an encouraging method of fostering the ethic of care needed to prevent GBV (Lamb et al. 2021) and may be particularly useful in addressing grey areas. While education alone cannot end rape culture, recognizing the needs of survivors living with histories of trauma in consent education, as well as the messiness of consent for all youth, are important steps in reducing preventable sexual harm.

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Bloody Burdens: Post-secondary Students and Menstruation on Campus

by Lisa Smith and Rim Gacimi

Abstract: In this paper, we discuss a qualitative data set that was gathered as part of a survey aiming to document access to menstrual supplies on campus and impacts on students. This research emerged in response to the growing interest in menstrual equity on campus, as well as literature examining student experiences of menstruation in the Global North. Through a thematic analysis, three main themes emerged: menstruation happens on campus, menstruation is managed on campus, and finally, the "solution" to the "problem." Woven throughout the paper are notes on changes on the campus where the study took place and as the research unfolded—including the installation of barrier-free dispensers. In closing, we offer a postscript on the challenge of simple fixes—such as swapping out dispensers—in relation to addressing supports needed for menstruators. We found that menstruation is a burden that is experienced differentially by students, and outcomes and impacts cannot easily be confined to expected campus spaces, such as toilets. To this end, there is no easy fix, and we should not lose sight of the deeper and ongoing work ahead within post-secondary settings and beyond.

Keywords: menstruation political and social aspects, menstrual/period products, post-secondary students, menstrual equity

Résumé: Dans cet article, nous discutons d'un ensemble de données qualitatives qui ont été recueillies dans le cadre d'une enquête visant à documenter l'accès aux produits d'hygiène féminine sur le campus et les répercussions sur les étudiantes. Cette recherche a été menée en réponse à l'intérêt croissant pour l'équité en matière de produits d'hygiène féminine sur le campus, ainsi qu'à la documentation sur les expériences menstruelles vécues par les étudiantes dans les pays du Nord. Une analyse thématique a permis de faire ressortir trois thèmes prin-cipaux : les menstruations sur le campus, la gestion des menstruations sur le campus, et enfin, la « solution » au « problème ». L'article est truffé de notes sur les changements survenus sur le campus où l'étude a été menée et tout au long de celle-ci, notamment l'installation de distributeurs facilement accessibles. En conclusion, nous proposons un post-scriptum sur le défi que représentent les simples solutions, comme le remplacement des distributeurs, pour répondre aux besoins des personnes qui ont des menstruations. Nous avons constaté que les menstruations sont un fardeau qui est vécu différemment par les étudiantes, et que les effets ne peuvent pas facile-ment être limités aux espaces prévus sur le campus, tels que les toilettes. Il n'y a donc pas de solution miracle, et nous ne devons pas perdre de vue les efforts consid-érables et continus qu'il faudra déployer dans les éta-blissements postsecondaires et ailleurs.

Mots clés: menstruation aspects sociaux et politiques, produits d'hygiène féminine; étudiantes de niveau post-secondaire; équité en matière de produits d'hygiène féminine

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The scarlet lady comes to campus…

> One day, I had an unexpected visit from the Scarlet Lady and I was with my male classmates. It was very embarrassing to head to the washroom and come right back to where they are and head off again holding a small pouch. (woman, 24, domestic student [DS])

> I am very grateful for the menstrual products at the Douglas College Student Union. They provide very high quality products (100% organic cotton) and they always have an excess. This puts me at peace of mind because otherwise, I would have to run to the mall to purchase some and buy underwear/pants if need be. (woman, 27, ds)

So begins a typical day of managing menstruation on campus. Gender, gender roles and identity, concealment, emotions, navigating to the restroom (and sometimes off campus), preparatory work, cultural euphemisms, all come into play in these excerpts from study participants sharing experiences about menstruation on campus. Menstruation management—which includes blood, pain, emotions, relational networks, but also various forms of activism and advocacy—is part of the experience of menstruating students navigating through post-secondary campus spaces. The politics of menstruation are a somewhat recent arrival to the Canadian campus equity space and have gradually built up in pockets across the country. Student-led menstrual justice movements across Canada are part of and connected to grassroots and community-based mobilization, at both local and global levels.

Research into menstruation and impacts on access to education is building (Cotropia 2019; Sebert Kuhlmann et al. 2020; Sommer and Sahin 2013); however, there is a tendency to reify, rather than challenge menstrual shame and stigma and intersecting inequities. The broader needs of menstruators are often, though not always, pushed to the side, especially within the context of discrete demands for change. As such, we sought to gain a deeper understanding of post-secondary student experiences with menstruation on a typical Canadian undergraduate campus through a campus-wide audit and mixed-methods survey. This paper presents a thematic analysis of qualitative responses that were gathered as part of the survey.

Following a discussion of the broader context and theoretical frameworks, we present the method and thematic categories. To situate the research and participants' responses, we weave throughout the paper notes on changes on the campus where the study took place and as the research unfolded—including the installation of barrier-free dispensers. Overall, participants shared rich and varied accounts which highlight how menstruation happens on campus, the ways they manage menstruation, and the broader political work at play as they navigate campus spaces as menstruators.

Menstruation is a burden that is experienced differentially by students; women and gender-diverse menstruators are impacted in a range of ways by existing social strictures and expectations, as well as campus policies and practices. And yet, outcomes cannot easily be confined to expected campus spaces, such as toilets. There is no easy fix, even if we did find strong support for free menstrual supplies in campus restrooms. The rising profile of menstrual equity as part of campus politics and the lived experiences of students thus presents an important space for menstrual justice that is worthy of further examination.

The "Problem" with Menstruation on Campus

The research discussed in this paper did, in part, begin in the restroom and with dispensers such as those pictured below in Figure 1. Many will recognize these reflections of a bygone era, replete with knobs, cranks, and dusty pads. As the research was beginning, an initial demand to replace one dispenser in one restroom on campus was put forward at the annual general meeting for the faculty association by a faculty member who was part of the initial research team. The motion was passed enthusiastically and without debate. The cost of the dispenser was paid for by the faculty association, and yet it took another three years to be installed. At the time, the student union building and security desk were the only places where one could access free menstrual supplies on campus. Menstrual supplies were available for purchase at the campus bookstore, which had been illegally charging provincial tax since the 1980s, and federal tax since 2015. During the course of the research, we also uncovered several hidden caches of supplies in faculty

desks, and counsellors' offices. Through tracing the supplies on campus, we began to see connections to broader and related equity struggles, including, but not limited to, the politics of restrooms on campus.

Figure 1: Menstrual product dispenser, located in women's restroom, New Westminster Campus, Douglas College, Fall 2019.

In the Canadian post-secondary context, the past twenty years have seen rising demands for the inclusion of equity issues within policy, educational programming, and the physical structures of campuses (see Campbell 2021; Henry and Tator 2009; Quinlan et al. 2017). Demands for change and inclusion reflect the inter-connected nature of many social movements and post-secondary populations—women, racialized groups and individuals, Indigenous peoples, and 2SLGBTQ folks. Rising interest in equity issues reflects a push for post-secondary institutions to respond to broader political shifts and has also led to demands by students, faculty, and staff for services related to specific needs and accommodations. A related and recent example at Douglas College includes all-gender restrooms, to support the needs of gender-diverse campus community members (Del Cid-Luque 2019; Dobie 2016). All-gender restrooms on campus are part of a broader series of shifts, for example, ensuring students can change their name within educational management systems, and that

gender-diverse students are included in considerations related to education and equity within new programs and policies at the institution. Something that begins in restrooms does not end there and may include connections to other equity issues—such as menstrual equity.

Menstruation is an everyday bodily experience. Menstrual blood can be captured by supplies, including but not limited to, menstrual cups, washable pads and tampons, disposable pads, tampons and liners, as well as toilet paper. Free bleeding, or allowing blood to flow without capturing, is not generally practised within North American society and is typically shunned. While menstruation is associated with blood, it includes many other bodily experiences, such as cramps, pain, general discomfort, period poops, and increased urination. It relates to reproductive health and well-being, such as, endometriosis, poly-cystic ovary syndrome and peri-menopausal flooding. It includes emotional experiences, ranging from joy, embarrassment, shame, irritability, and annoyance, which are intimately tied to one's cultural and social identity. It also connects in and is part of social and cultural attitudes towards menstruation, and by extension power, oppression, privilege, and intersecting inequities. Finally, it is part of the maintenance of the gender binary, and menstruation management is often understood along gendered lines, where women are perceived as insiders and men are perceived as outsiders. Menstruation has also long been identified as an important site for feminist activist intervention (Delaney et al. 1976; Seaman 2012; Shuttle and Redgrove 1978). More recent work has elucidated the shifting nature of activism under the third-wave of feminism (Bobel 2010). There is also a growing public feminism aimed at moving menstruation into the spotlight (Okamoto 2018; Weiss-Wolf 2017) through writing, film, activism, community, and grassroots mobilization, extending across the globe.

In Canada and globally, the movement for menstrual equity—including destigmatizing periods, bringing an intersectional lens to menstruation, raising awareness about menstrual precarity, the need for sustainable and safe supplies, pushing for better access to education and reproductive health, pushing back against laws that limit access to supplies—is intertwined and connected with education, and post-secondary students. Many activists and advocates began their work within the menstrual justice movement while at college and university, such as Nadya Okamoto (Harvard University) and Zeba Khan

(UBC). At [Institution name], the students' union was a signatory on the Period Promise campaign—making a commitment to provide free supplies and end period poverty—prior to the [Institution name] faculty association voting to install a barrier-free dispenser. Activism by students exists in tandem with a growing body of scholarship that documents the impacts of menstrual stigma and lack of access to menstrual supplies within the K-12 system, as well as the post-secondary sector. A range of informally published reports by student groups have helped situate campus inequities in the broader Canadian context (see Khan and Oveisi 2020), highlighting existing issues and advocacy by student groups, grassroots, and community organizations. In a systematic review of the scholarly literature, Munro et al. (2021) found that most scholarly studies examining the post-secondary context and menstrual equity were quantitative in nature and examined low middle-income countries. The researchers note that menstruation can negatively impact education, including "absenteeism, participation and concentration in class, or academic performance" (18), and that there is a need for "program and policy responses" (1).

In the Canadian context, recent policy changes include the removal of the sales tax on menstrual supplies, in 2015, and policies at the provincial level to make menstrual supplies freely available to students in the public K-12 education system. Changes happening on post-secondary campuses are thus part of a much broader movement that has in part emerged out of student experiences on campus, but also awareness of related issues within society more generally.

Asking for More from Menstrual Equity

Menstrual equity has been key for highlighting menstruation as a site of culturally defined shame, taboo, and stigma. Within North American society, menstrual blood is meant to be concealed (Chrisler 2011) and failure to conceal, and needing to identify a need for accommodation related to menstruation are understood as forms of "failed femininity" (Fahs 2018). Menstrual equity has been important for elucidating a framework for menstruation as an equity issue and identifying how menstruators are differentially situated in relation to power structures and within institutions. However, menstrual equity is often reduced to the issue of free supplies. The news media is a prime culprit for this oversimplification and reports abound of a single-issue win (Rodrigues

2021)—free supplies in educational settings—as opposed to the broader work of groups seeking change in schools, universities, and beyond.

The reduction of an equity issue to a single fix can be important for strategic purposes. Scala (2020) notes that the Canadian Menstruators intentionally focused on the tampon tax as a single-issue, in order to maximize lobbying strategies and strategic alliances comprised of divergent and often competing groups—such as media, opposition MPs, and the general public. Menstruation is, of course, not a single-issue struggle. Providing someone with free supplies does not address needs related to pain, cramps, discomfort, nor the feelings of exclusion that result from being "othered" because of one's gender identity. In addition, it is important to situate menstruation advocacy on campus and off within the broader history of the development of menstrual supplies as the solution to the "problem" of menstruation. We ought to be wary of a tendency to reinforce product-based solutions for equity seeking groups, provided by the market, that then extend into institutions seeking to meet needs. However, we also ought to be wary of the tendency within menstrual equity to ignore the underlying power structures that push towards managing menstruation in particular ways as freedom and empowerment.

Relevant to the Canadian context, a settler-colonial nation, Risling Baldy (2017) challenges the universality of menstrual stigma, highlighting that the disgust and shame associated with menstruation, as well as women's bodies more generally are deeply intertwined with colonialism. Accommodating menstruators by facilitating concealment may not mean liberation and empowerment for all, especially where cultural practices and traditions have been suppressed. In addition, the strong association between women and menstruation, ignores girlhood, trans and non-binary menstruators, as well as times when menstruation does not occur even when one is gendered female, including peri/menopause or amenorrhea.

As Bobel and Fahs (2020) have stated, "We are curious about (and puzzled by) the contradiction that, while menstruation has come out of the closet, there is still a deep investment in concealing it" (955). They seek to disrupt frameworks that centre on public health, rights-based approaches, and equity alone by proposing a new vision for menstrual activism called "radical menstrual embodiment" (973).

The radical vision we advocate is a conceptualization of the end goal of activism, that is, the construction of a progressive narrative and plan for action in which menstruators are freed from body-based stigma and its mandate to conceal and contain the menstrual body... [W]e are advocating for the erosion of a mandate of any kind—the world we want is one where menstruators are supported to care for their bodies in the ways that are right for them. (974)

We find inspiration in the notion of radical menstrual embodiment, yet we are troubled by the difficulties, within the range of structures and systems right now, faced by menstruating students who *have* discrete needs—an emergency supply, supplies provided in all restrooms, or the need to be able to leave without shame. Such needs occur and require support now, not in some utopian futurescape. How can we acknowledge these needs and still hold fast to Bobel's and Fahs' (2020) mandate?

The work of Tronto (1994) and feminist care ethics are helpful. For Tronto, care is understood as central to justice work. Post-secondary institutions are increasingly being asked to take up equity issues and offer care, based on demands from students and hopefully, an assessment of what is needed. However, care work is a process, and one that ought to connect with and reflect an understanding of the deep and embedded nature of structural injustices that lead to "othering" in the first place. Drawing on Tronto, we can understand menstruation on campus as connected to needs, know that those needs will vary, and understand that whose needs are recognized will be a function of privilege. Finally, Tronto urges institutions and people engaging in care to understand the work as ongoing and reflexive, meaning there will always be more to do. With these working theoretical frames in mind, we turn to the method and themes that emerged from analysis.

Method

The qualitative responses discussed were gathered through a mixed-methods exploratory study, involving a survey and campus audit. The study aimed to document access to menstrual products and student experiences with menstruation on campus. The research was reviewed and approved by the [Institution name] Research

Ethics Board and data was collected between October 2019 and July 2020. The final sample consisted of 370 participants. Of those participants, 97 percent self-identified as women, 4 identified as men, 3 as transgender men and 1 as non-binary. The sample was highly skewed towards domestic students with 91 percent of participants being Canadian citizens or holding permanent resident status. The remaining 9 percent were international students. As for racial and ethnic background, 41 percent of participants identified as racialized as a person of colour, and 6 percent reported having Indigenous heritage.

Quantitative responses documented students' use of campus facilities, their experiences with unexpected spills (leaks, overflow, and stains), the different ways they managed flow, impact on class attendance (absences and lateness), and reported interruptions of education-related activities due to their periods.

This paper focuses on participant responses to two open-ended prompts:

Prompt 1: One aspect of the research project is to collect stories about student experiences of menstruating on campus. Do you have any stories you would like to share about menstruating on campus?

Prompt 2: If you have any additional thoughts of comments, please share them with us here:

In total, 194 students provided responses ranging in length from 1 to 193 words. As this study was exploratory, the data cannot be taken to be representative of the campus population at Douglas College or at post-secondary campuses in Canada. Participants could opt in or not to these questions, meaning we are unable to draw conclusions about the statistical significance of different kinds of responses and demographic characteristics. Participant responses offer reflections of menstruation on campus and shed light on broader changes happening on campus.

An in-depth thematic analysis (Bryman, Teevan, and Bell 2009) of responses was carried out by two researchers working simultaneously to ensure for reliability in the identification of themes. Responses were reviewed on two separate occasions in a four-phase approach, draw-

ing on a modified version of the "Listening Guide" (Doucet 2008), which included a reflexive positioning by researchers throughout the data analysis process, to identify experiences outside the researchers' vantage point. Both researchers had experience of menstruating on campus and could relate at times to what students shared. In other cases, experiences of exclusion were outside of our own embodied reality, as for example in the accounts of trans-menstruators. Awareness of our own positionalities and collaborative analysis were key to ensuring we attended to the complex realities of students that came through in what they shared.

The first reading captured general impressions and how menstruation was presented within participant's comments; the second reading noted common words, phrases, and stories; the third reading drew out unique or individual experiences, as well as relationships and connections that were part of, and extended beyond the campus experience; the final reading developed and identified connections to the theoretical framework and literature. Three main themes emerged: menstruation happens on campus, menstruation is managed on campus, the solution to the "problem." We present each theme in turn and behind participant comments we provide gender, age, and student status, either domestic (DS) or international (IS). Given the specific nature of the dataset, we have refrained from modifying or editing excerpts and wherever possible present participant comments in their entirety.

Menstruation Happens on Campus

> I felt blood beginning to leak through my pants but told myself I would finish the exam first before taking care of it. I used my jacket to cover the stain that was slowly forming on my pants so my peers wouldn't notice it when I got up to hand in my exam. (woman, 19, DS)

While it may seem obvious to say so, the research, revealed that menstruation happens on campus. It happens regularly, and with a high degree of unpredictability. For example, 68 percent of study participants indicated that they had an unexpected period while on campus. Further, 63 percent experienced leaks, overflow, and/or blood stains while on campus. We argue that these findings are unsurprising, and they have been reported in other informal audits and studies. However, in the qual-

itative responses, we began to understand the deeper layers of how students experienced menstruation on campus. Like the student above, several participants shared experiences of menstruating during exams and class time.

> It was while I was actually coming back from the bathroom. As soon as I entered the class and sat down on my chair, I felt my period. I was too embarrassed to get up and leave because I had just come back. So I waited for our next class break and went home. I knew I had bled through my pants. When it comes, my experience while on my period is a pretty horrible one. It's heavy and cramps spread down my legs, so I find it best just to get home and wait until the worst has passed through. (woman, 18, DS)

Participants took time to share specific observations about their menstrual cycle. They noted that menstrual flow could be heavy, light, or unpredictable. They also highlighted how menstrual flow was part of other related bodily experiences, such as cramps, mood, emotions, and overall comfort.

Participants highlighted connections between their menstrual cycle and health and body wellness more generally.

> I have Atypical Endometriosis, so during menstruation and ovulation I get extreme cramps that can sometimes feel like sharp contractions. The pain can get to the point where I am incapacitated for a few days. Luckily I haven't experienced a bad episode yet, but I worry I might have one during class or an exam and have to rush home. Most of the time though I am taking advil in class to be able to stay and learn, but because of the endometriosis, I can't always tell when I'm going to bleed and how heavy it will be. Sometimes I'll go two months before I menstruate other times only twenty days. It's not fun having to remember and be prepared at all times for your period to start and/or for extreme cramps to take over. (woman, 25, DS)

In another case, a participant shared that their health condition meant that their period does not come unexpectedly.

> I have a low iron deficiency, so when my period does come unexpectedly, it doesn't leak through visibly. So I could ignore it until I get a ten minute break to go to the bathroom. (woman, 18, DS)

Diverse experiences highlighted the ways that menstruation was perceived as connected to health and body wellness generally, but also the ways that participants described varied accounts of menstruation as embodied on campus. Several participants took the time to indicate that they did not have issues to report. As one participant stated, "Gratefully I have never experienced that while on campus," (woman, 21, domestic student).

Experiences shared about menstruation often involved descriptions about the impact of things typically used in the restroom—such as pads, tampons, or toilet paper. However, participants also wrote about other supplies, including contraception.

> I have an IUD so I don't experience periods as intense as others, therefore that's why my responses do not often show that my school life is impeded by having a period. Many other menstruating humans do not have my luxury therefore having a period is a much more stressful time. (woman, 29, DS)

Menstrual supplies are like toilet paper, but they are also not—as students made note of other devices they relied on for support. Prevailing cultural and social norms keep menstruation as a largely hidden element of campus life. However, participants provided rich and varied accounts of the diverse experiences that comprise how menstruation happens on campus. In the next section, we turn to the ways students manage menstruation, as they navigate through campus spaces on a daily basis.

Menstruation is Managed on Campus

> As a user of reusable menstrual products, ie. cups, cloth pads, I tend to always be prepared and therefore have no unusual (to

my belief) experiences to share. (woman, 32, DS)

Menstruation management is often associated with the capturing of blood by using menstrual supplies. Indeed, throughout responses, participants shared the various things used to capture menstrual blood-—tampons and pads, toilet paper, reusable pads, menstrual cups, and hormonal contraception (IUDs, nuva ring, and the oral contraceptive pill). However, study participants also expounded on other kinds of work, including pre-emptive and preparatory, gaining and acquiring knowledge of access points, and suppressing and navigating a range of emotions and embodied experiences.

Many participants expressed the notion of coming to campus prepared.

> Although I am starting my full time program in September, I have visited the campus multiple times to speak with advisors about the program I am going into. During that time I was menstruating, however I came prepared with the products. (woman, 33, DS)

As the participant below shares, preparation has helped them avoid "horror stories."

> … i always do my best to be well prepared for any possible issues involving menstruation so i don't really have any horror stories (woman, 18, DS)

As the participant below highlights their experience of managing menstrual blood has been impacted by having a supply always with them, but also the timing of their cycle.

> I am often prepared as I keep my menstrual cup with me and have simply been lucky in that it has always begun between classes. I have never been disrupted mid-class due to menstruation. (woman, 27, DS)

The managing of menstrual blood was intimately tied to a range of preparatory work that feeds into the "norm of menstrual concealment," which supports and reflects North American standards for "acceptable feminine roles" (Wooton and Morison 2020, 89).

Many study participants shared accounts of needing a supply and not having one on hand.

> When I finished my morning class, I started to feel cramps and dizzy. So, I went to the washroom to check if I'm on it and I did have my period. I checked my bag if I had brought extra pads but, I didn't so I started freaking out. In the end, I had no choice but to use toilet paper as temporary pads and they were uncomfortable to be in. When I got out of the washroom I hurriedly went out off campus to go buy pads at the stores because I didn't know that Student Union and the bookstore had them on campus. (woman, 18, DS)

Shared themes that emerge in this excerpt is the unexpected nature of menstruation, bodily cues that are experienced, heading to the bathroom, realizing one does not have supplies, and using toilet paper as a make-shift pad, even though it is less desirable. In addition, this student, along with several others in the study, noted that at the time, they were unaware that free supplies could be accessed at the student union building. The politics of concealment thus extend to knowledge-building in terms of access points within public spaces, for example, post-secondary institutions.

Many students shared stories where emergency menstrual supplies in restrooms would provide a temporary resolution.

> I had gotten my period in the middle of class, I felt that something was wrong and did not feel right. I had realized what it was during the break of my class and I had leaked my period all over my underpants and I had cleaned my underpants as much as I could with toilet paper. I luckily had a pad that I used and as soon as class was finished, I went to the nearby store to purchase new underpants to continue on with my day. It was such a hassle, but that is what periods are. They are a hassle. (woman, 23, DS)

For the student above, the need extended beyond a menstrual supply to include underwear. The student also highlighted how the experience connected to their general experience of periods as a "hassle." Thus, in addition to needed physical supports, participants highlighted a range of emotions and bodily experiences tangential to and connected to the experience of menstruating while on campus. Common words that emerged across participant responses were, "shame," "embarrassment," "being discreet," "discomfort," "annoyance," "stress," and "hassle." Other common phrases related to bodily experiences, such as "feeling like blood is seeping through." Finally, one participant only shared three words, "No. Too embarrassing."

Management of menstruation involved suppressing and navigating a range of emotions and embodied experiences within spaces that were perceived and experienced as unfriendly to menstruation and menstruators. Experiences shared related to the strictures and rules of classroom spaces and especially formal assessments, such as exams and presentations. Several participants spoke to how specific aspects of physical structures shaped emotional experiences related to the comfort of managing menstrual supplies in institutional settings, such as campus restrooms.

> When I am changing my pad/tampon the gap in between the doors are quite big so I feel awkward when people are looking through to see if the stall is empty and if I am changing someone could probably see me changing. (woman, 19, DS)

The physical structures of the campus space also created barriers to access points and contributed to experiences of being excluded and "othered." Existing access to supplies on campus at the time of the study was limited to woman-identified restrooms. Thus, in addition to not being able to access supplies in restrooms to support menstruation if needed, one participant shared the emotional impact of the existing distribution system and made a requested change.

> As a trans man, it would be nice to be able to access period products in the mens restroom. It would even be better to have an all gender bathroom in each campus with period products. I feel uncomfortable going to the office to get pads or buying period products myself. I'm always using toilet paper as pads or having to go to my sisters house for pads, which has made me late for

class multiple times. (transgender man, 22, DS)

As this participant highlights, because of their gender identity, they are cut off and excluded from the limited supports that are available. To manage menstruation, they use toilet paper or have to leave campus to access supplies. Accessing what one needs—supplies directly in the men's restroom and/or an all gender restroom with period products—is all the more urgent and vital.

As much as emergency supplies were identified as important, accessing physical supports for menstruation in the form of supplies was connected to emotional and relational supports as well.

> When i was in my secondary school. I got my periods. It was unexpected. I went to restroom. I realized i don't have and pads with me. I asked my teacher for help. I was so embarrassed at that time but my teacher made me feel comfortable and relaxed. (woman, 18, IS)

This participant highlights the impact of menstrual stigma on an experience within an educational setting. Here, care expressed by the teacher—as relational, reciprocal, and embodied—helped this student "feel comfortable and relaxed," even though they were navigating a challenging experience—getting one's period unexpectedly at school and not having a supply on hand. Menstruation management was thus expressed as individual emotional and body-work, but was also tied to navigating institutional spaces and structures, and finding sites of support and care with varying degrees of success.

The Solution to the "Problem"

> I really appreciated doing this survey, I think it is great that people are potentially thinking of way that a menstrual cycle may affect a student on campus. I personally struggle with really bad cramps, back pain, headaches and irregular periods which makes days at school during my time of month often uncomfortable and I cringe when it happens. Also, I personally have always felt that menstrual products should be free, this is a function that women cannot control and ends up being quite costly. I'm

working and attending school but sometimes I think about the students that aren't working and struggling to make ends meet, $7-20 depending on how heavy ones flow is adds up in a year! Plus I very much so think that feminine hygiene products should be more readily available to the public. Thank you for allowing me to take part in this survey! (woman, no age provided, DS)

On Canadian post-secondary campuses, students are managing menstruation within a general cultural ethic where menstruation is understood as an individual problem to be managed—concealed, controlled, and contained. Participants expressed frustration, disappointment, but also a sense that it was time for things to change; for many participants, the lack of support for menstruation and menstruators within campus space, but also beyond, was unjustifiable. The excerpt above highlights the day-to-day political work carried out by students where complex social networks are engaged to bring about menstrual flow management, the extent to which they were aware of the broader issues at play, and the value they saw in the research as a whole.

In addition to several comments about the value of the survey, we also noticed a few students sharing advice directly with us (the researchers) or noting advice that they regularly shared with friends, such as, "wearing dark coloured lowers/ jeans" and always being sure to have pads *and* tampons in backpacks. Advice sharing by study participants is connected to broader networks of gendered relational support that are part of the management of menstruation on campus, and off.

> I always carry around extra tampons with me, but sometimes I have experienced leaking. When this occurs, I usually gather some toilet paper and wrap around my underwear as a makeshift pad (perhaps I should carry around additional underwear come to think of it!) and change my tampon. Also, I have a supply of Advil on hand if needed. This has come in handy for other students. I have more requests for pain management than for supplies (pads or tampons). Leaks, etc. can be embarrassing, but I think dealing with the cramping is

more inconvenient and can have a negative impact on learning. (woman, 49, DS)

Participant comments highlighted the extent to which students understood needed supplies in a broad fashion as connected to their own menstrual experience, and also to the problems of others on campus.

Within participant comments coin-operated dispensers were a common focal point for needed change. However, participants also provided lengthy responses that wove between their own experience and the broader social justice issues at hand.

> I have experienced several occasions when I have unexpectedly started bleeding in class and did not have menstrual products with me. At those times when I am not prepared to handle my period, I have felt distress and embarrassment. I do not have friends to lend me products during class time and can rarely afford to purchase products on my own (I still rely on my mom). It is during these times when I truly feel the most oppressed by society. Menstrual products should not feel like a luxury and all women should receive equal access at all times. Sometimes my flow is so heavy I have to leave lectures every half hour, which can be distracting for myself and everyone around me, but I feel like I shouldn't have to miss out on learning because of menstruation! Ideally, I would like to see free menstrual products in all public washrooms with options that are safe and effective (scented products should not be allowed, and pads should be comfortably wearable). (woman, 20, DS)

The individual above highlights the regularity with which menstruation occurs unexpectedly on campus. They speak to the expensive nature of supplies and identify this as an equity issue. Their final comment was reflected in other participant responses as well. Several participants highlighted products accessed in dispensers were often dissatisfactory and "uncomfortable." Participants also emphasized that supplies ought to be hypoallergenic and sensitive to issues of environmental sustainability. Thus, while there was general support for menstrual supplies in the restroom, this was by no means

understood as a one-dimensional fix. To this end, participant comments reflected broader tension points in the politics of menstruation and a demand that any institutional response be responsive to the diverse needs of menstruators.

Overall, we were amazed at the nuanced and wide-ranging set of accounts that study participants expressed. The study itself also led to related and unsolicited discussions in hallways, offices, and more as people across campus learned of the research. Faculty members regularly stopped by [Author A's] office to express their thoughts about the topic, and shared detailed accounts of related experiences. Most often conversations would close with people expressing support for the existence of free supplies on campus. In other cases, people came to author's (Lisa) office because they knew she was doing the research and were in need of a menstrual supply. They figured she would have some (which she did, including Tylenol and Advil). Other people wished to share other research and activism they thought needed to happen on campus, such as experiences related to peri-menopause and menopause, in-depth qualitative work to highlight experiences of gender-diverse menstruators, the importance of cultural experiences and identity as tied to menstruation, and circles for Indigenous students to explore and understand processes of cultural reclamation and the menstrual cycle, to name a few. Indeed, much more research is needed.

At the close of the full research project, a report was prepared and shared with members of the college community, including the student union. They went on to prepare their own report, which led to a submission, in September 2021, in the budget for Facilities and Operations, to install and stock barrier-free menstrual product dispensers in all campus restrooms. The ask was simple, confined and straightforward—free menstrual supplies in all restrooms to support gender equity on campus and the dignity and well-being of students. The dispensers were installed in March 2022.

Throughout this paper, in addition to responses from participants, we have shared notes on changes on campus, including political work and advocacy of students and faculty. Reflexive and attuned observations are key to highlighting the work of privilege in addressing equity issues. Within the presentation of data, this meant that the experience of a small population of gender-diverse menstruators was key for highlighting needs that would

be left out by a generalized picture of the issues. Similarly, we are aware that the capacity to pull levers for change on campus remains a function of power and privilege. In this case, students were ideally situated to make a request that led to a broader change. As a team of faculty and student researchers engaged in applied and feminist sociology, we were able to play a small, but important role through research.

Post-script on Simple Fixes and Ongoing Work

Figure 2: Menstrual Product Dispenser, Douglas College, April 2022

Excerpt from a conversation overheard in a classroom by the author (Lisa), where two students were discussing the new barrier free menstrual product dispensers:

> *"Did you notice that they have supplies in the restrooms now."*
>
> *"Oh yeah, that is so cool. Though the other day I went in to get a pad and the dispenser was empty. Luckily there was someone there. She ran down to the next restroom that had a dispenser that was stocked."*
>
> *"Thank god someone was there!"*

The research discussed in this paper aimed to assess access to menstrual supplies on campus and impacts on students. Almost three years later, things look different on the campus: barrier-free menstrual product dispensers are installed in all restrooms, with signage explaining why. Things also look different in the broader Canadian political landscape. Following a wave of new policies at the provincial and municipal level, the federal government recently announced a pilot menstrual equity fund

(Ibrahim 2022). Our awareness as researchers of the work that was already happening at the time of the study on our own campus and elsewhere has grown immensely. From Free Periods Canada to Moon Time Sisters to Bleed the North, we have seen student-led advocacy related to menstruation expand and grow. At [Institution name], because of their work to push for barrier-free dispensers, members of the students' union are now looped in with a broader community and movement.

Thus, I (Lisa) had to pause and listen to an exchange between students (outlined above) about how changes play out in real life. In the Winter of 2022, the [Institution name] student union began a pilot project that provides reusable menstrual supplies—including washable pads and menstrual cups--to students. They understand, as do we, that free disposable pads and tampons in restrooms are not enough. Indeed, students who used reusable supplies shared feelings of security and independence. Equally, students who used IUDs or hormonal contraception indicated feelings of control and certainty around their cycle and its predictability. There is still so much more to do; we have no doubt that students will be left to do much of this work, while the college takes the credit, for yet another equity checkbox. Drawing on Bobel and Fahs' notion of radical menstrual embodiment and Tronto's invitation to care as part of the political work of justice, we find hope in a vision of a campus and society that truly recognizes, supports, embraces, and welcomes menstruation and menstruators. What could it look like?

The vision will include the following. Menstrual supplies when needed and in the form one desires outside of a frame that reifies existing standards for respectability, but equally commercial profit through the "business of menstruation," and the performance of equity by institutions. The capacity to step away and care for oneself without penalty. The continued strengthening of relational supports and the broadening out of how menstruation is understood and how menstruators can be. We dream of a deep reimagining of out-dated structures, such as toilets divided along the gender binary, where accommodation is an after-thought awkwardly adapted around physical structures that limit possibilities from the outset. Policies could include a range of menstrual supplies as essential and needed within medical insurance, such that the cost of emergency supplies within restrooms would be offset considerably and the waste generated by disposable supplies could be reduced signific-

antly. We envision deeper work to shift cultural perceptions of menstruation at the individual and societal level that would remove pressure to continue in the face of our bodies. We seek spaces to explore and consider the range of experiences menstruators confront when working through the deeply embodied experience of menstruating. Such work is a burden, but one we might welcome for the rewards that could come, and the new possibilities that could emerge. However, we caution against assuming that any institution or individual can do this work alone, even if the post-secondary sector can be a place to start. So, barrier-free dispensers within post-secondary restrooms does not mean the work is over, even if it is *a* step forward.

Acknowledgements

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Research

"I wish my mom was here."An Autoethnographic Account of Obstetric Violence in Mexican Healthcare Services

by Estefanía Díaz

Abstract: This article offers an account of obstetric violence in abortion procedures within the Mexican healthcare system. Through autoethnography, the author narrates and analyzes personal experience to identify the social and political implications, as well as the intersections of gender and class present in state-funded abortion care. The importance of the topic stems from the emergence and strengthening of the feminist struggle to conquer reproductive rights both in Mexico and in other countries throughout Latin America. As a result of the autoethnographic writing, the article discusses the tension where decriminalization of abortion—an important goal for the feminist movement—doesn't ensure that women can undergo this procedure in conditions free of violence, since abortion stigma might still prevail.

Keywords: abortion, autoethnography, obstetric violence, reproductive rights

Résumé: Cet article propose un récit de violence obstétricale lors de procédures d'avortement au sein du système de santé mexicain. Au moyen de l'auto-ethnographie, l'auteure raconte et analyse son expérience personnelle afin de déterminer les implications sociales et politiques, ainsi que les intersections de genre et de classe sociale qui existent dans les soins abortifs financés par l'État. L'importance de cette question émane de l'émergence et du raffermissement de la lutte féministe dans la conquête des droits génésiques à la fois au Mexique et dans d'autres pays d'Amérique latine. En raison de sa rédaction auto-ethnographique, cet article discute du stress qui subsiste lorsque la décriminalisation de l'avortement, un objectif primordial du mouvement féministe, ne garantit pas que les femmes subissent cette intervention dans des conditions exemptes de violence, puisque la stigmatisation entourant l'avortement pourrait toujours prévaloir.

Mots-clés: avortement, auto-ethnographie, droits génésiques, violence obstétricale

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"The act of telling a personal story is a way of giving voice to experiences that are shrouded in secrecy." (Ellis and Bochner 1991, 79)

A trip to Mexico City

5:30 a.m.

We arrive at the clinic in an Uber that drove us there from the bus station. It's still dark. The city, one of the biggest cities in the world, is still asleep. There is no traffic, so we get there in about thirty minutes. There are people already lined up at the door. The woman I spoke with on the phone said they only had ten spots available each day in this clinic, so I count the women that are waiting in line; there are six. I sigh in relief that my partner and I arrived in good time.

Introduction

In this paper I aim to analyze obstetric violence within state-funded abortion care in Mexico. I argue that violence remains integral to the provision of abortion care despite its legalization, since the legal status doesn't necessarily impact the stigma within society or the treatment provided by health-care workers (Kumar, Hessini, and Mitchell 2009). The following discussion shows how little attention is given to obstetric violence in abortion processes. As stated by the organization Women Help Women (WHW) (2017), the term obstetric violence is more associated with pregnancy and childbirth and, although violence and mistreatment during these procedures is a serious and very common violation of women's rights, it is also important to shed light on violence that women experience when seeking and undergoing an abortion.

Reproductive rights remain a central issue of the feminist agenda in Latin America. I argue that legalization of abortion care should perhaps not be the end point of the feminist struggle regarding reproductive freedom. More information is needed about abortion experiences even in those places where abortion is legal and provided by the state. As asserted by bell hooks,

> Ongoing discussion about the wide range of issues that come under the heading of reproductive rights is needed if females of all ages and our male allies in struggle are to understand why these rights are import-

ant. This understanding is the basis of our commitment to keeping reproductive rights a reality for all females. (2000, 30)

Method

In this article, I use autoethnography as a method to document my experience within an abortion care clinic in Mexico City. Through autoethnography, researchers seek to understand cultural experience by describing and analyzing personal experience (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010). Holman, Adams, and Ellis argue that authoethnographic writing does not consist only of writing for ourselves, but it also seeks to offer reflection and insight for readers and audiences:

> In autoethnography we see an explicit and intentional directedness toward others, either through the offering of insight that might help those who relate to a person's experience or in a desire for others to bear witness to particular struggles. (Holman, Adams, and Ellis 2016, 35)

An autoethnographic approach to narrating my experience highlights the intersections of gender and class within reproductive health, with no intention to generalize, but instead to reveal my socially and politically situated experience within the Mexican health system, and to identify and contextualize the violence I lived through. Autoethnography provides a methodological ground for me to analyze my personal experience, and to further understand the social, political, and cultural context where it is embedded. Ellis, Bochner, and Adams state, "When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity" (2010, 4). As a researcher I also position myself as a feminist and as a lower middle-class Mexican woman. Therefore, I argue that the knowledge that stems from the analysis of my experience is also socially and politically situated.

Abortion's legal status in Mexico

In Mexico, abortion is regulated by each individual state which can decide under which circumstances this procedure is legal, for example, in the case of rape, or risk to the woman's health. Abortion is legal on the grounds of

the woman's free choice within the first twelve weeks of the pregnancy in Mexico City and in other six of the 32 states (Sinaloa, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Veracruz, Baja California, and Colima). In Mexico City it was legalized on April 26, 2007, as a result of efforts by feminist and human rights organizations. Since the summer of 2018, the feminist movement known as *Marea Verde,* which originated in Argentina, has extended throughout Latin America, and has become the symbol of the struggle to expand women's reproductive rights in Mexico (GIRE 2021). The pressure originated by this movement, and the progressive acceptance that abortion has gained among Mexican society, has made it possible for the legalization of the procedure in the states previously mentioned. In Oaxaca it occurred in 2019, and in the remaining five states in 2021.

In Mexico City, the law went into effect the day after its approval through a program called Legal Termination of Pregnancy. This program provides the service publicly and free of charge to any woman who requests it, whether she lives in Mexico City or not, which means that this right also extends to women who can travel to the city. However, this also means that women's rights are conditioned by their place of birth and whether they are able to travel. The Legal Termination of Pregnancy Program (ILE Program) in Mexico City has been a national and regional example of access to legal, safe, and free abortion services provided to women, not only in Mexico City, but from other states and even other countries (GIRE 2018, 50). According to GIRE, a nonprofit Mexican organization that advocates for reproductive rights, as of October 2018, approximately 30% of the people who used this service lived outside of Mexico City.

Back to the trip…

7:00 a.m.

A guard opens the door to the clinic and indicates that only the women can come inside. Partners or friends must wait at the door. The clinic is small, just a narrow hallway and two doors, one leading to a bathroom and the other to a small office, an operating room, and a waiting room. It is seven o'clock in the morning, on any given Monday, in an abortion clinic in Mexico City and nine or ten other women are sitting with me. The receptionist asks us for our documents and hands us an identification form to fill out with our data: nationality, age,

place of residence, etc. The doctor calls us one by one for an ultrasound.

I see the faces of the other women as we wait, anxiously, for our names to be called from the other side of the door. I am nervous so, to calm my anxiety a little, I observe everything. I focus on every little detail of the small waiting room, the bright green walls (such an odd colour for a clinic), the woman sitting behind the desk, the white floors... I watch the other women waiting with me: some are younger, and others look older, hair in ponytails and buns, casual and sporty clothes, their eyes fixed on the documents that we all have in front of us and that we must be filling out. I want to make eye contact with any one of them, so we can tell each other that we know why we are here and that we understand each other. I want to talk to the girl sitting next to me. I want one of them to tell me that everything will be all right.

"Hey, do you know what we should put here?" she suddenly asks me, while pointing to a section of the application.

"Yes," I reply in the nicest voice I can muster and show her the response on my application. I hope this will lead to a conversation, but that doesn't happen, and we are in silence again.

I hear my name from behind the door, get up from the chair and walk slowly to the ultrasound room. The doctor instructs me to lie down and uncover my belly. I feel a chill as he passes the ultrasound machine over my pelvis.

"Seven weeks," he says to a nurse.

"Do you live here in Mexico City?" he asks me.

"No, I live in another state."

"Oh, in that case we can't give you the abortion pills so you can take them at home because you won't be able to come back for the check-up. We will have to use the other procedure. Go get your things and come back here."

"She doesn't live here, so today we will do two Manual Vacuum Aspirations," he says to the nurse, and the conversation ends.

So, without any further information, without asking me, the procedure I was to undergo was decided.

8:00 a.m.

I do as he says and arrive at a small room, the name on the door indicates "Recovery Room," there are only two chairs and a small bench between them. In the background, I can hear a national news program on TV. One of the chairs is already occupied by one of the girls I saw in the waiting room at the beginning. There is an older woman standing next to her. I am guessing it's her mother. The girl seems very young, much younger than me. She is tall and very thin. She has short reddish-orange hair with dark roots. She is wearing a black t-shirt and jeans. Her eyes are wide, and they stand out in her small, thin face.

I say hello and sit in the empty chair. The girl's mom is talking to her. She tells her that the receptionist asked for her to bring her daughter a sandwich and she's going to see where she can buy one. "I wish my mom was here too," I think to myself. My partner is outside, but he is not allowed to be in here with me. The girl's mom can be here because she is a minor.

After a while, the nurse comes in to give us IVs. I have always been afraid of needles. "Why is the IV necessary?" I think to myself, starting to get even more anxious.

"Excuse me, do you know if the procedure hurts?" I ask in a low, shy voice, almost a whisper. He turns to look at me, laughs, and leaves the room without answering.

I don't doubt my decision. I know that I don't want to be a mother. My body is mine, I think to myself, (is it really?), but I am afraid. "What are you thinking about?" my partner asks me while we are sitting in my garden, minutes after the two stripes appeared on the pregnancy test.

"I just don't want to die," I answer.

10:00 a.m.

The same doctor who did the ultrasounds comes in the room. He is young, perhaps about ten years older than me. He is short and speaks with a strong accent from the centre of the country.

"I'm going to ask you some questions for your file," he says and approaches the girl and her mother first. The space in the room is very small, so doctor-patient confidentiality doesn't seem to exist here. Don't we deserve privacy? It seems we don't. I listen. I listen because I want to get to know the girl sitting next to me, even a little. The girl who, by mere coincidence, is living this with me. I listen because I'm scared, and I don't want to think about anything else.

"How old are you?" The doctor's voice has something in it that I can't identify clearly at first; it seems perhaps a mixture of tiredness and boredom.

"Fifteen," she answers.

"At what age did you start menstruating?"

"I don't remember."

"When was the first day of your last menstruation?"

"I don't know."

"About two months ago?"

"Yes, maybe."

"Do you use alcohol or drugs?"

It's at this moment, after the last question, that I can finally pinpoint what I hear in the doctor's voice: condescension. He seems to ask her questions thinking he already knows the answers, and not even looking at her in the face when he speaks to her. I can guess what the doctor sees in that tall, thin body of the fifteen-year-old girl sitting next to me: just another irresponsible teenager. It's what he sees in all of us. I look at her again, her big eyes and carrot-coloured hair.

"Which birth control method do you want to use after this? They are all free."

She looks at her mother, confused, and after a few seconds, she answers: "I don't want to use any method. I'm not going to have sex ever again."

The doctor lets out a sneering laugh. I look at her. The truth is, after this, I don't feel much like continuing my sex life either.

"Now you say that, but you are going to have sex again eventually, and what I don want is to see you here again afterward."

The room remains silent for a few seconds after that last comment. With the doctor's last words still lingering in the air, the atmosphere is tense. The doctor goes at it again: "I mean, it's your decision, I'm only thinking about you. I'll tell you what. I'm going to fill out some forms, and I'll be right back for you to tell me which method you want."

I feel uncomfortable witnessing this conversation, something about what I just heard doesn't feel right, but I don't say anything. I don't want to make the doctor angry or contradict him. At this point, I feel like my future depends on whether he decides if I can undergo this procedure or not, the final decision is his. It's a free public service here. It's not supposed to be conditional on anything, but I feel like it is. I think the girl next to me notices it too because, when the doctor comes back, she tells him that she decided to use the contraceptive implant. Am I witnessing a case of forced contraception?

After that, it's my turn to give my medical history, so the doctor now sits in front of me and starts asking me the same questions he asked the orange-haired girl. I notice the same condescending tone, the same paternalistic attitude. My answers are quite precise because I have been trying to be careful with my reproductive health for some time now. I see that he notices this, and for the first time since he has been speaking to me, he turns to look at my face and his tone changes slightly. When we are through with the questions, he asks me what I do for a living—a question he did not ask the girl sitting next to me. I answer that I am a teacher.

"You look too young to be a teacher. But now that I think of it, maybe you can help me. I'm going to enroll my daughter in elementary school. Do you honestly recommend that I put her in a public or a private elementary school? Which one do you think is better?"

A few moments earlier he didn't consider that I deserved to be looked at in the face when speaking to me, and now he wants my professional advice? I had to demonstrate some knowledge about my reproductive life and prove that I have a degree for me to deserve his attention and even some respect. For him, the orange-haired girl didn't deserve any of that.

My body is not mine; I have learned. My body is an object that can/should be assessed by others. Others who can qualify it as deserving (or not) to be seen, respected, loved.

12:00 p.m.

A couple of hours go by and I am still in the recovery room. The girl and I are waiting, and during this time, the receptionist lets the mother know that she can no longer be in the recovery room with her daughter, so she leaves. We barely say anything to each other. I am too nervous to speak at all. I can only ask myself again and again, "How did I get here?" while I pretend to watch the TV. Suddenly, the doctor comes back and turns to look at me.

"Come with me. We are going to start with you," he says as he points to the operating room.

I get up from the chair and realize that I am shaking. I feel as if my legs will not be able to support me, let alone carry me the remaining stretch to the door. The fear that I had been trying to numb during the previous hours suddenly emerges with force and it floods every inch of my body. I manage to cross to the door and I see a stretcher right in the middle of the room. It has two supports at one end where, I imagine, I will have to put my legs, just like in my gynecologist's office. The lighting in the room is cold and very bright. At that same end of the stretcher there is a lamp that radiates intense white light directed towards were my legs are supposed to be. The nurse is already inside the room.

"Lie down and put your legs in the supports," he tells me.

I follow his instructions without saying anything. *I wish my mom was here* I think to myself. The nurse and I remain silent. I am still shaking. A few minutes later the doctor comes in and, with a wavering voice, I ask him,

"Doctor, does it hurt?"

"Yes, very much."

"From one to ten?"

"Eleven." His tone is cold and indifferent.

I didn't expect that answer. Maybe I was hoping for

some comfort, someone to reassure me that everything would be okay because I was not able to say that to myself. *But how does he know what it feels like*, I thought. The nurse must have seen the panic printed all over my face because he says, "Oh well, it's too bad, but this happens when we are not responsible, and now we must live with the consequences. You could've easily avoided this if you had used a condom."

I turn to look at the man sitting to my left, the one who has just uttered those words. For a few seconds, I doubt if I heard correctly. Did a health-care professional say those words to me? Suddenly, I don't feel frightened anymore because, instead, I start to feel anger rising in my body. I turn to look at the doctor, who didn't seem too surprised by the nurse's remark. *How can they talk to me like that? I say to myself. You can't contradict him, what if he gets angry? You better shut up.*

"Do you think I don't know that? Do you think I don't know that I could've avoided this?" I ask, trying not to sound as angry as I feel, even trying to sound a bit playful.

"Well, I think it's a matter of principles and family values. My parents taught me well, and I have never had sex without a condom. It all depends on the values they taught us. Don't you agree, doc?"

My body is not mine, and I am not able to defend it.

So, it turns out, this is not only my fault, it is also my mother's fault, since she was in charge of my upbringing, but, according to the nurse, she wasn't very good at it. According to him, this isn't my partner's responsibility either since I am the only one lying in an operating room in the middle of Mexico City, naked and with my legs in the air. I am the only one that must hear the nurse's unsolicited opinion. I didn't respond to that last comment, I couldn't, I didn't know what to say and I was afraid. The doctor nodded.

"We're about to begin," he said.

The nurse put his hand in front of my face, suggesting that I could hold it if I needed to. I didn't want to. How could I lean on the hand of someone who had been so violent to me a few seconds before? But I needed to lean on someone, so I took it. For the next five or six minutes, even after the local anesthesia, I felt what I re-

member as the most pain I have experienced so far. I felt like I was burning inside. I screamed.

"Don't scream. Don't scream because you're going to scare the girl outside."

I stopped screaming and squeezed the nurse's hand tighter.

"It's over. Get up whenever you can, the nurse will give you something for the pain and help you get back to the recovery room."

I didn't reply and I didn't cry. As the doctor had instructed, the nurse diluted something for pain in the IV, and then took me by the arm and helped me walk back to the recovery room. It's over now, I kept saying to myself. The orange-haired girl was there, she saw me and asked, "Does it hurt?"

"Yes," I told her, "but it ends fast."

I sat down and the receptionist brought me a sandwich, an apple, and juice that my partner had bought for me.

"You must eat before we let you go," she said. I began to nibble on the apple, realizing that it had been over twelve hours since I had last eaten anything, but I wasn't hungry.

"You need to eat faster," the nurse said to me as he passed through the recovery room. I grabbed the sandwich and began to eat.

"Can my partner be here with me?" I asked him

"No, no one else can be in here."

1:00 p.m.

It took me about an hour to finish my lunch, listening in the background to the sound of a morning talk show on television. In that hour, it was the girl's turn to go to the operating room. She also screamed. I don't know if she had been ordered, like me, not to do so, but she did and very loudly. When she was inside, I remembered I had my headphones in my backpack, so I quickly took them out and connected them to my cell phone. I opened Spotify and clicked on the first song that came up. A few minutes later, she came back to the recovery room, but

she didn't sit in her chair, instead, she laid down on the bench that was between both chairs. She was crying.

Is forcing us to live this alone part of the punishment we deserve for the decision we have made? She didn't touch her lunch, she just cried. As I watched her, I felt like I had to do something to ease her pain. I brought my hand to her head and began to touch her orange hair, taking strands between my fingers. Neither of us said anything. In the silence of the recovery room, you could only hear her sobs and the voices of the TV show hosts. Now, from a distance, I understand that I wanted to make her feel safe and accompanied, but in the solitude of that small recovery room, I also needed to feel that way and through that small gesture of empathy, I was also seeking to comfort myself.

"Have you finished your lunch?" the doctor asked me.

"Yes."

"How are you feeling?"

"I am fine. Can you explain to me how I should take care of myself in the next few days?" My voice was trembling. I felt tears gathering up in my eyes, but I didn't cry. Instead, I tried to make my voice sound as confident and tempered as possible. Not crying in front of them was the only way I found to protect myself. I needed to protect my vulnerability and my privacy somehow, after how exposed I had felt and the attacks I had not been able to respond to.

"You can go now," the doctor told me after giving me a series of instructions for the following days. I grabbed my backpack, said goodbye to the orange-haired girl, who had stopped crying by then, and I left the clinic. As soon as the door closed behind me, I ran into my partner's arms, to a warm and strong embrace. As soon as I found myself there, I allowed myself to cry, and I cried a lot.

"What happened? Are you okay?" he sounded worried.

"I don't want to talk," I answered and continued crying as we walked towards the street.

A few steps ahead I saw the girl's mother and she came up to me.

"Hi, did you see my daughter in there? Do you know if she's okay? They won't give me any information about her." Her voice, quick and loud, was the voice of a desperate mother who wanted to be with her daughter.

"Yes, I was with her. She is fine. She is eating her lunch because she needs to eat something before they can let her go."

That same afternoon my partner and I took a bus back home. Looking at the road, the countryside, and the trees from the bus window and as we left behind the clinic, remebering the nurse's words, and the doctor's condescending tone, I was able to talk to my partner about what had happened.

Discussion

Obstetric violence and abortion

According to Women Help Women (WHW), obstetric violence includes any physical, psychological, or sexual aggression that occurs during pregnancy, childbirth, or abortion care and involves "the appropriation of women's bodies and reproductive processes by health workers" (WHW 2017). GIRE states that the term refers to invasive practices and unjustified provision of medication, refusal of treatment or postponement of medical care, scolding, teasing, insults, manipulation of information, lack of respect for women's privacy, as well as coercion to obtain their "consent" and other discriminatory and humiliating treatment (GIRE 2018, 83).

> The most common episodes of obstetric violence during abortion care include giving false information regarding the abortion, threatening to report the abortion to the police, denying or delaying care for a legal abortion or medical emergency, placing contraceptive devices without the woman's consent, performing procedures that are not medically indicated and/or without adequate pain management. (WHW 2017)

As stated by this organization, the term obstetric violence is more associated with pregnancy and childbirth, however, violence experienced during abortions is less talked about since it is influenced by cultural beliefs, stigma, and stereotypes. Obstetric violence is the product of both institutional and gender-based violence. In the

case of obstetric violence in abortion processes, GIRE states that women will continue to face violations of their reproductive rights, even when they seek access to interruptions under circumstances contemplated in the law. If abortion continues to be socially viewed as a crime, instead of a health service, obstetric violence will continue to occur even when it is legalized.

According to Kumar, Hesini, and Mitchell, "Abortion stigma is defined as a negative attitude ascribed to women who seek to terminate a pregnancy that marks them, internally or externally, as inferior to ideals of womanhood" (2009, 628). Women who terminate a pregnancy are challenging a moral order, because "either clandestinely or through established health systems, [they] may be perceived as challenging the inescapability of maternity and defying reproductive physiology" (Kumar, Hesini and Mitchell 2009, 628). Despite abortion being one of the most common gynaecological procedures, given that three out of ten pregnancies end in induced abortion (WHO 2021), there is still a cycle of silence surrounding these experiences that makes them seem less common than they really are, marking women who terminate a pregnancy as deviant from the norm. Kumar, Hesini, and Mitchell write, "Various labels such as promiscuous, sinful, selfish, dirty, irresponsible, heartless or murderous are applied to women who abort in different contexts" (2009, 629).

Ariza (2013) uses the term "the masculine right to punish" to describe the historical right that men have had to correct behaviours that are labelled as disobedience in women. Although she is talking specifically about domestic violence, Bedoya-Ruiz, Agudelo-Suárez, and Restrepo-Ochoa (2020) argue that the term can also be used to gain a better comprehension of obstetric violence. In the case of an abortion, the connection between both concepts becomes more noticeable when factoring in the stigma that surrounds the termination of a pregnancy and the way women who abort are seen and portrayed. Therefore, obstetric violence is a manifestation of enacted stigma. In the experience I narrate in this autoethnography, such punishment can be identified in two ways. These are physical punishment, as in the inadequate pain management during the procedure, and social/emotional punishment, as in the lack of privacy, the guilting remarks and the impossibility of being accompanied before or after the procedure, as well as the lack of control of the process that will be submitted to our bodies. Moreover, forced contraception acts as a method

to further ensure that such 'mistakes' will not be committed again.

Stigma can also act upon those of us that undergo an abortion procedure and influence how we respond to such punishment. According to Tamayo, Restrepo, Gil, and González, "The stigma of abortion can be perpetrated by self-recrimination and feelings of guilt, which lead women to accept being mistreated by medical personnel who believe that healthcare resources are being spent on a patient who 'did this to herself'" (2015, 12). I can't say that I believed myself to deserve being treated the way I was, because I knew that I didn't. However, I did believe that there was nothing I could do about it, that I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to a clinic where it would be legal, and, on top of that, I wouldn't have to pay anything, it would be free. What else did I want? How it happened and the way I was treated were just things I thought I would have to endure.

I have argued that the legalization of abortion in Mexico City opened a possibility for Mexican women who, like myself, live in contexts of criminalized abortion. However, this also results in discrimination based on place of birth, residence and social class, since only women with enough resources to travel can have access to this service. Bedoya-Ruiz, Agudelo-Suarez, and Restrepo-Ochoa (2020) argue that when analyzing obstetric violence, gender can't be the only category taken into account because race and class must also be considered. bell hooks (2000) asserts that state-funded and free abortions will always be under attack by conservative groups and that this health service is only one aspect of reproductive freedom, which should not take precedence over other issues, such as forced sterilizations. Practices such as coerced use of contraceptives, within public abortion clinics, which aim to further control the patient's capacity to get pregnant after an abortion, constitute another violation of women's reproductive rights. Making obstetric violence visible during the termination of a pregnancy implies challenging two beliefs. First, there is a belief that women can have an abortion but they deserve a 'punishment' for doing so. That is, there must be some degree of pain—physical or psychological—perpetrated by others and derived from the process that leads the patient to learn from the 'mistake' and not commit it again. Second, that by deciding to terminate a pregnancy, we give up the right to receive dignified and respectful treatment by health-care workers.

Autoethnography and the possibilities of choice

Why is it important to speak about obstetric violence in abortion procedures? And why use personal experience to do so? These questions, especially the latter, were in my mind for several months. I wrote the first draft of this article for the final assignment of an autoethnography class I took at the beginning of 2021. The story came out of me as if it had been waiting patiently in my memory until I gained the courage to put it in words: it stormed out. Silvia Bénard, who has a long academic trajectory within the autoethnographic field, and Elda Monetti, were teaching that class. They both commented that I had been very brave for sharing my story and that I should consider publication.

So, I continued to work on it, but when the time came, I couldn't bring myself to submit it. I considered writing under a pseudonym and/or writing in another language. I discarded the first option, but went for the second one. I realize it may not seem as a very logical choice, and I can't explain why switching the language made me feel safer, but it did. Like Tamara Coon (2013), I was afraid of how my colleagues would perceive my decision and how it would influence my future job opportunities. Although the feminist struggle in Mexico has come a long way, the stigma of abortion weighs heavy, and with the rise of conservative groups, it's still a very controversial subject in society. What if this ends my academic career when it is barely starting? What if some stories are better kept private and in silence? Lived, as Swafford writes, "in the white spaces between letters, in scenes that happen offstage, in the privacy of one's mind" (2020, 100).

What made me take that leap? It was the memory of myself during the days following our trip to Mexico City. During that time, I experienced a profound need to read other women's abortion experiences. I can't explain exactly what drove me to search online for them, almost obsessively. Reading those stories made me feel as if I wasn't the only person that had gone through this, and it helped me make sense of what had happened. The first motivation I had for writing and seeking publication of this text was for it to be available to other women, and I chose autoethnography for that.

According to Metta, women's autoethnographic writings become sites for intervention and resistance, since they place women at the centre of scholarly texts and critical analysis, "creating knowledge about women's bodies and embodied experiences in these ways exposes the very structures of power, surveillance, and control" (2016, 498). I argue that writing stories about gender violence in abortion experiences contributes to destigmatize such procedures and nurture and broaden the academic discussion of abortion. Furthermore, autoethnographies that shed light on the multiple and diverse experiences of abortion challenge what has been known as the "acceptable abortion" (Kumar, Hesini and Mitchell 2009; Swafford 2020). The acceptable abortion is the one in which the woman is ashamed and apologetic of her story and her decision: "Women who terminate their pregnancies are expected to be contrite or vaguely apologetic when exercising their rights" (Kumar, Hesini and Mitchell 2009, 628). Therefore, the acceptable abortion is the one lived in silence; the acceptable abortion story is the one that is never told.

> By creating new knowledges of women's lives and experiences that have been marginalized based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality as well as their lived experiences of trauma and violence, feminist autoethnographers can reclaim their authority and sovereignty over their own narratives and knowledge-making. (Metta 2016, 491)

I am a part of the pro-choice movement because I believe in women's right to choose and have control over their bodies. I believe in our right to exercise our reproductive autonomy. I exercised that right and I travelled to a city that recognizes and protects it. By doing so, as Kumar, Hessini and Mitchell (2009) argue, I transgressed the social construct of the inevitability of motherhood. The paradox of choice is that my right to choose seemed to end there. When everything was over, I was angry for not being able to defend myself. My theoretical knowledge as a social researcher and feminist allowed me to name and identify the violence that I lived in the aftermath of what had happened. Nevertheless, it did little for me in the moment. The structure and normalized practices within the hospital made me feel powerless. bell hooks asserts, "If women do not have the right to choose what happens to our bodies, we risk relinquishing in all other areas of our lives" (2000, 29). When writing about the constraints and possibilities of choice within abortion clinics, Swafford argues,

Women who have abortions don't get to choose the culture of stigma surrounding abortion experiences […] We don't choose to bear witness to anti-abortion violence and dwindling access to health care and the public regulation of our reproductive bodies. We have to look. It's about time others do, too. (2020, 98)

To write this text seemed to be the only other choice I could make.

Afterword

On September 7th, 2021, the Supreme Court of Mexico declared unconstitutional the criminalization of abortion by free choice. This decision sets an important precedent for the subsequent legalization in the rest of the country. However, although decriminalization is an important achievement in the feminist struggle, there is still a long way to go to guarantee the exercising of this right in conditions free of violence. Kumar, Hessini and Mitchell (2009) are careful to warn us that legalizing abortion may help change attitudes towards this health service or increase the stigma that surrounds it. The question of how the law affects felt and enacted stigma, as demonstrated here, deserves further research

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Feminist Pedagogy in the Neoliberal University: The Limits of Precarious Labour

by Jacqueline Potvin and Kimberly Dority

Abstract: In recent years, feminist pedagogy has been advanced as a strategy for disrupting the neoliberal corporatization of the university classroom. In this paper, we recognize and trouble this disruptive potential, examining how the working conditions faced by adjunct instructors affect our ability to put our commitments to feminist pedagogy into practice. Based on our own experiences as sessional instructors, we argue that conditions such as heavy workloads, alongside limited access to institutional resources and community, contribute to faculty burnout and hinder our ability to build and maintain feminist student-instructor relationships. Drawing on existing scholarship on feminist pedagogy, and emerging work exploring the challenges of teaching within the neoliberal university, we argue for the need to extend and complicate dominant understandings of feminist pedagogy as a series of values and practices that individual instructors can implement, and to recognize how its enactment is limited by the adjunctification of higher education. This paper pertains to instructors, particularly those in feminist departments, seeking to apply feminist pedagogy across the university.

Keywords: adjunctification, care, feminism, neoliberalism, relationality

Résumé: Au cours des dernières années, la pédagogie féministe a été mise de l'avant comme stratégie pour entraver la privatisation néo-libérale de la salle de classe de l'université. Dans cet article, nous reconnaissons et nous bouleversons ce potentiel perturbateur, en examinant la façon dont les conditions de travail des professeurs auxiliaires ont une incidence sur notre capacité à mettre en pratique nos engagements par rapport à la pédagogie féministe. En fonction de nos propres expériences à titre de chargés de cours à temps partiel, nous estimons que des conditions, comme de lourdes charges de travail, jumelées à un accès limité à des ressources pédagogiques et au milieu institutionnel, contribuent à l'épuisement professionnel du corps professoral et entravent notre capacité à forger et à entretenir des relations féministes entre les étudiants et leurs professeurs. En nous appuyant sur les connaissances existantes en matière de pédagogie féministe ainsi que sur de nouveaux ouvrages qui explorent les défis posés par l'enseignement dans une université néo-libérale, nous soutenons le besoin d'accroître et de complexifier les interprétations dominantes de la pédagogie féministe sous forme de série de valeurs et de pratiques que les professeurs peuvent mettre en œuvre et de reconnaître les limitations de son adoption en raison de la structuration de nature agrégée et auxiliaire de l'enseignement supérieur. Cet article concerne les professeurs, surtout dans les départements universitaires féministes, qui aspirent à mettre en œuvre la pédagogie féministe dans l'ensemble de l'université.

Mots-clés: féminisme; néolibéralisme; professorat par association; relationnalité; soutien

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Introduction

When Women's Studies programs first began to be established in the 1960s, they were understood as both a reaction to, and a disruption of, the traditional university's devaluation of women as both subjects and creators of academic knowledge (Currier 2021; Robbins et al. 2008). Feminist pedagogy has been situated as a means through which to challenge the power relations inherent to the university system, modelling and enacting teaching practices that empower students as agentic subjects, rather than asking students to adopt and acquiesce to dominant ways of being and knowing in the classroom (Bondy et al 2015; Crabtree et al. 2009). More recently, feminist pedagogy has been presented as a means of challenging a neoliberal university system that, having adopted the market logic of capitalism, treats students as consumers and instructors as service providers (Feigenbaum 2007). It has also been acknowledged that feminist pedagogy's disruptive potential continues to be limited by the institutional structure of the university itself (Busse et al. 2021). Our own experiences as contract faculty have highlighted to us that feminist pedagogy, even in explicitly feminist departments, continues to be treated as an individualized practice that instructors can enact, but which is not institutionally supported. While feminist departments can be viewed as participating in conditions hostile to feminist pedagogy, these are the outcome not of individual pratices on the part of leadership or departments, but of systemic issues including the growing reliance on precarious workers. Despite the appearance that feminist practices have been adopted by the university, these have been subsumed into the institution's overarching neoliberal logic, and have not led to changes in its underlying structures. As contract faculty, our working conditions have rarely encouraged, or even allowed for the enactment of feminist pedagoy, despite our commitment to it. This article is a pedagogical reflection, contextualized in academic scholarship, on how the increasingly precarious working conditions in which university instructors teach limits and undermines the disruptive potential of feminist pedagogy as a tool of teaching for social justice. Although these reflections pertain to our experiences within and outside of women's studies and feminist departments and are relevant to instructors applying feminist pedagogy across the university, we feel they are particularly salient for those working in women's and gender studies departments that actively promote feminist pedagogy.

Context: Feminist Teaching as Precarious Work

We taught our first courses as lead instructors in a department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research, where we were also completing our doctorates. As students and instructors within this department, we valued and were committed to feminist pedagogy. This commitment included a desire to disrupt hierarchical notions and practices of power, recognition of ourselves and our students as relational subjects, and enactment of an ethics of care. Yet as our teaching careers progressed, our commitments were challenged by the difficulties of teaching as contract faculty, and the ways in which our working conditions limited our ability to enact feminist pedagogical practices. Our experiences revealed that the precarious working conditions of contract faculty are both an issue of social justice in and of themselves, and a barrier which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to enact feminist and other critical pedagogical practices.

Our concerns are encapsulated by an incident experienced by Jacqueline during her fourth year of contract teaching. At that time, she had taught six courses in four departments, often filling in for tenured faculty on sabbatical and hence rarely teaching the same course twice. She received largely positive teaching evaluations, despite the challenges. She was also preparing for her doctoral defence, and she was exhausted, as well as nervous at not having immediate employment lined up once the degree was completed. A month before the winter semester began, and weeks before defending, Jacqueline was hired to teach a first-year health science course on the social determinants of health, which she would later learn included nearly 500 students, in a department in which she had not previously taught. In a process not unusual for contract faculty, she was given a rough version of a past syllabus, with weeks to finalize a reading list and adjust proposed assessments to the size of the course. All this was done while most administrative faculty and staff were on winter break and while managing communication with students who were already panicking about the first midterm.

One of the first topics covered was the health effects of working conditions, including the rise of precarious employment across various sectors and focusing on service industries, such as fast-food restaurants. Standing in front of whatever proportion of 500 students chose to attend that class, Jacqueline outlined how precarity, lack of interpersonal connection, devaluation of skills and lack of professionalization contribute not only to decreasing job satisfaction but to measurable physical and mental health effects. These working conditions, she explained, lead to heightened stress, greater sickness, premature death, and increased risk of mental health issues such as depression. Although she was not speaking specifically to working conditions in the university, in that moment, Jacqueline experienced a strong affective response, realizing that as contract faculty, she too was subject to ongoing precarity and isolation. What she was describing to students, many of whom were dismissive of and disinterested in this required course, was how the working conditions of *her own* employment were wearing down her body and her mind. She was experiencing burnout and she felt alone and incompetent, and also frustrated. How could a department hire her to teach students about these effects while simultaneously subjecting her to them? This highlighted in a visceral way the inherent irony of being hired to teach social justice by a university that makes such work burdensome, and which exploits those who do it. Not surprisingly, this semester was one during which Jacqueline felt largely incapable of enacting her personal commitments to feminist pedagogy and fostering meaningful relationships with her students.

This paper was born out of the frustration of that teaching experience, including how we had both internalized our perceived inability to enact our pedagogical commitments in moments such as this as a personal failing, rather than as the outcome of our working conditions. Precarious working conditions are themselves an outcome of a deeply problematic trend in which universities increasingly rely on contract faculty, who face long-term precarious working conditions as tenure-track jobs decrease (Foster and Bauer 2018). Like many others, we view feminist pedagogy as having the radical potential to disrupt and challenge the neoliberalization of the contemporary university. Yet we struggle to reconcile this commitment with acknowledgement of how our teaching is limited by the contemporary university system, and in particular, by its increased reliance on contract labour.

In this paper, we outline what feminist pedagogy is, and how it has been situated as a disruption of the neoliberal university, while also highlighting the limitations of this disruptive potential. We then move into a reflexive analysis, based on our own experiences, of how our ability

to enact two central characteristics of feminist pedagogy —disruption of hierarchical power and acknowledgement of students as relational subjects—has been limited by our working conditions as contract teaching faculty. Given the inherent tension between pedagogical practices oriented towards social justice, and the injustice of current hiring practices and working conditions within higher education, how can precarious workers be better supported to enact feminist pedagogy?

Defining Feminist Pedagogy

Like the term feminism itself, feminist pedagogy is a contested term. As Briskin notes, "[A]ssuming a singular meaning to feminist pedagogy is…problematic. Just as there are multiple feminisms, so there are multiple feminist pedagogies" (2015, 66). For instance, intersectional approaches to feminist pedagogy often incorporate insights from anti-racist, decolonial, and queer theory. In its various iterations, feminist pedagogy does denote a shared perspective towards teaching, as well as a set of core shared principles arising from and aligning with feminist theory. Namely, feminist pedagogy understands teaching as a both a form of, and pathway towards social justice and carries at its core a commitment to disrupting oppressive power relations within and outside the university (Bondy et al 2015; Currier 2021). Feminist pedagogy recognizes issues of sexism and social injustice as relevant to both the subject matter being taught, and the ways in which this subject matter is taught. It frames teaching as a practice that can address these injustices by transforming and empowering students, and by disrupting academic practices that are themselves understood as unjust (Crabtree et al. 2009). One of the ways feminist pedagogy seeks to problematize oppressive academic practices is by challenging the understanding of academic knowledge as neutral. Both students and teachers bring their own lived, experiential knowledge to the classroom (Currier 2021). Not only is this experiential knowledge important for its intersectional value, but it maintains that students and teachers come to the classroom as complex beings, who are living and working in relation to each other, and to the world outside the classroom in ways that require critical ethical accountabilities. In this paper, we will focus on these two components of feminist pedagogy, while recognizing that it is much more heterogeneous in its articulations within and beyond the field of Women's Studies, and extends beyond the two central tenets upon which we have chosen to focus.

Feminist Pedagogy as Disruption to the Neoliberal University

Recent scholarship on feminist pedagogy has highlighted the specific ways feminist pedagogy can disrupt the neoliberal university system that treats students as consumers, and education as a path to becoming productive and rational economic subjects. This scholarship outlines how higher education has been integrated into the logic of neoliberalism, and how this integration is seen as damaging to students and to teaching practices (Rohrer 2018). Neoliberalism, though associated with an emphasis on individual freedom, private property rights, and a retreat of the state, also involves "extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action" (Brown 2005, 39-40). As such, Brown argues that neoliberalism "is best understood not simply as economic policy but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes human life exclusively as homo economicus" (2015, 176).

Within higher education, neoliberalism is associated with cuts to government funding, and subsequently a need for universities to acquire private funding sources. Since private funders tend to prioritize fields that are understood as providing the greatest perceived market value, increased reliance on private funding "reflects and deepens existing inequalities," often disadvantaging humanities and social sciences (Stein et al. 2019). The neoliberal university also treats students as a consumer market that the university must competitively recruit (Feigenbaum 2007; Rohrer 2018). Such recruitment is often based on a university's ability to market itself as offering students high returns in the form of future employability, even in the face of changing job markets themselves marked by precarity, and by a diminishing return on educational investments (Peterson 2020). In these ways market logics extend to the university administration, with education broadly positioned as a commodity to be branded and purchased. Adopting market logic, including prioritization of "efficiency and profit motives" (Busse et al. 2021, 33) extends to hiring practices, specifically, increased reliance on contract faculty as a cost-saving measure, both because contract workers cost less to hire, but also because they represent flexible costs that can easily be cut if needed, through non-renewal of contracts (Peterson 2020). The increased preference for both private and public funding to be directed at fields understood as having economic value, either in producing

workers or contributing to economic growth, means that fields deemed "distant from the market" may face particular pressure to do more with less, further contributing to reliance on contract faculty.

Neoliberalism and its associated market logics have also impacted the classroom, including teaching practices and the relationship between students and instructors. As Feigenbaum summarizes, "corporatization of the university has led to the construction of students as rational, economic decision makers" whose primary interest is in a form of higher education that increases employability and economic success post-graduation (2007, 337). This has prompted the prioritization of programs that are understood as preparing students for the job market, and career-applied learning across departments and programs (Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015). In other words, Mitchell argues, "higher education is no longer defined in terms of the knowledge and skills of democratic citizenship, but rather in terms of the attainment of the complex skills necessary for individual success in the global economy" (qtd in Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015). This configures students as consumers, and higher education as a product. It not only emphasizes student learning, but student satisfaction, encapsulated by practices such as end-of-term evaluations (Busse et al. 2021). As we will show, student evaluations have been used to evaluate teaching effectiveness, ever more simplistically, by reducing it to a form of customer satisfaction surveys (Busse et al. 2021).

The neoliberal university is understood as problematic for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, the ways in which it de-emphasizes critical thinking skills and makes it more difficult for instructors to enact feminist and other critical pedagogies (Rohrer 2018). While there has been some movement towards valuing engaged and active learning that does, to some degree, align with the positioning of students as agentic knowledge creators, Llewellyn and Llewellyn argue that within the neoliberal classroom "good judgement and critical thinking are seen as dependent on individual capacity, and as instrumental for personal capital rather than as emerging from community" (2015, 13). That is to say, critical thinking, which is central to feminist pedagogy, is also (re)constructed within market logics and aligned with the neoliberal overvaluation of individualism. Configuring students as rational economic subjects can pose a challenge to instructors who wish to engage in questions of systemic and communal oppression and emancipa-

tion, but also for those who want to engage in pedagogical practices that challenge individualistic, career-applied learning. Nevertheless, the construction of the student as neoliberal consumer has also been contested, and feminist pedagogy has itself been positioned as a means of disrupting this configuration and of the neoliberal logic of the university writ large. For instance, Llewellyn and Llewellyn also argue that feminist pedagogy's relational approach challenges the hyper-individualism of neoliberalism, and in doing so subverts the neoliberal ideology of the contemporary university and its effects. Feigenbaum (2007) outlines how her feminist pedagogy has led her to vulnerability in the classroom and the use of "teachable moments" to challenge the career-oriented learning of the neoliberal university. Similarly, Rohrer argues that feminist pedagogy, by "historicizing our locations and relations is antithetical to neoliberalism" (2018, 577). Feminist pedagogy then has been situated by these authors, among others, in opposition to, and as a viable means of disrupting and moving beyond the limitations of the neoliberal classroom.

While there is potential for feminist pedagogy to challenge the neoliberal university system, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of this potential. For instance, Feigenbaum, though committed to treating her students as whole and relational beings who cannot be de-contextualized from their lives outside the classroom, recognizes that this approach has often put demands on her to be flexible in ways that add to the emotional labour she does, not only within, but also outside the classroom. More recently, Busse et al. outline how their own efforts to enact feminist pedagogy has been consistently impeded by the structures of the neoliberal university itself. They describe how issues such as the ways classrooms are set up, or the required adoption of master syllabi reinforce hierarchical power relations within classrooms, undermining possibilities for adopting more democratic or empowering pedagogical practices. As such, they argue, "the logic of neoliberalism creates potentially insurmountable obstacles for critical and feminist teaching and that marginalized feminist teachers face particular challenges on neoliberal university campuses" (2021, 30).

Little has been published on the explicit ways in which precarious work undermines the radical potential of feminist pedagogy. This is likely because, as Busse et al. note, the ability to critique the university as an institution is in part made possible by job security (2021). In

this paper, we begin to outline how, our positions as contract faculty in a sector increasingly dominated by precarious working conditions has limited our own ability to enact what we understand as two of the central tenets of feminist pedagogy: disruption of hierarchy and relationality in learning and research. Furthermore, when feminist pedagogy is itself configured as something that aligns with the logic of neoliberalism, it obscures how academic institutions can enable, support, or limit the enactment of feminist pedagogy.

Contract Faculty as Precarious Workers

The neoliberal restructuring of universities has had a significant impact on the working conditions of faculty. Over the last twenty years, the relative number of permanent positions available has dwindled (Brownlee 2015; Callinicos 2006; Rose 2020). Canadian universities now rely heavily on faculty who hold temporary, contract positions. Canadian academic institutions have framed the pattern of hiring on a course-by-course basis as a cost-saving measure, necessitated by significant cuts to public funding for universities over the past three decades, amplified following the 2008 financial crisis (Brownlee 2015). As Brownlee argues, however, the impact of this crisis on higher education Canada "was primarily political in nature." He explains, "Many institutions used the crisis to justify a series of austerity measures, such as hiring freezes, course/program reductions, layoffs, and service cuts" (Brownlee 2015, 98). These measures resulted in fewer opportunities for contract faculty at the time of their implementation, and continue to place contract faculty in vulnerable positions within the institutions where they teach.

Notably, there tends to be a higher concentration of women and people of colour in contract faculty positions (Brownlee 2015). In a recent study of 2,606 contract faculty working in post-secondary institutions across Canada, Foster and Bauer found women and racialized contract faculty not only "work more hours per course, per week than their white male colleagues," but they are also "over represented in lower income categories" (2018, 5). According to this study, it is also women and racialized individuals who are asked to perform unpaid tasks outside of their contract work, such as administrative duties. Institutional "efforts" toward "diversity, equity and inclusion" also often falls into the hands of these precarious workers as well (Ahmed 2021). According to

Rose, contract faculty now "occupy more than half of all teaching positions in postsecondary institutions in Canada, particularly in Ontario and British Columbia" (2020,16). This claim is supported by research by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), which shows that "54 percent of faculty appointments in Canadian universities are short term contract appointments, rather than permanent" (CUPE cited in Rose 2020, 7). These short-term contract appointments are not only low paying, they also come with few benefits or opportunities for professional development. As Rose aptly explains, "non regular faculty constitute a reserve of low-paid and marginalized academic workers, and an increase in the number of doctorates granted each year in Canada guarantees a continuous supply of highly exploitable workers" (2020, 7).

The impermanence of contract faculty positions creates a lack of job security. Foster and Bauer found that job in/security was a key concern for contract faculty, with respondents citing the "lack of protection against dismissal," as well as the "lack of certainty around rehiring and contract renewal" as significant stressors (2018, 23). Under these precarious conditions many contract faculty workers find themselves "permanently on the edge of unemployment, having to make do with causal, temporary, perhaps, part-time work, or combining several jobs" (Callinicos 2006, 24). Indeed, income insecurity leads many contract faculty to work multiple jobs. Foster and Bauer found that as many as 48% of respondents said they work in at least one other job on top of their work as contract faculty. Lack of job security and a living wage also has a negative impact on long-term decision making. Many describe feeling constrained in their ability to make financial or personal commitments, such as buying a home or having a child. For instance, "(45%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that they feel secure enough in their employment to make major financial commitments, such as purchasing a home. Only (17%) answered positively" (Foster and Bauer 2018, 23).

Although some individuals might be re-hired multiple times to teach the same contract, they never obtain "the assurance that the job is secure or has the same benefits and career development options as permanent colleagues" (Foster and Bauer 2018, 8). Being continuously asked to re-apply for their jobs, sometimes as frequently as every four months, is demoralizing. This is amplified in cases where contingent faculty discover (as we have)

that they no longer have the opportunity to be rehired, and no one even thought to email them.

Access to departmental resources are often limited for contract faculty. Foster and Bauer found that contract faculty often share office space, with only 23% having "dedicated office space for themselves" (2018, 22). Since use of office space may be carefully scheduled, sharing space not only has an impact on one's ability to work and meet with students, but can have a negative impact on one's professional development. Lacking space within a department can contribute to contract faculty's isolation from their colleagues, and their diminished opportunities for networking and collaboration. In the following section, we explore how the working conditions of contract faculty limit our ability to engage in feminist pedagogy. Drawing from and reflecting on our own experiences as contract faculty, we demonstrate how that possibility is curtailed by precarity.

Valuing Experiential Knowledge and Challenging Professorial Authority

Feminist pedagogy, alongside other emancipatory approaches to teaching, includes an interest in disrupting hierarchy and hence, professorial authority in the classroom. This commitment is inextricably linked to its overarching commitment to dismantling hierarchical relations outside the classroom, and to the emergence of women's studies as a response to how the masculinized and male-dominated academy historically produced knowledge and expertise about women, without valuing women's own experiences or knowledge production (Bondy et al. 2015; Currier 2021). Feminist pedagogy thus values how the social positions occupied by women and other marginalized communities allows them to produce unique situated knowledges, acknowledging that our differential standpoints allow us to see the world from unique vantage points (Crabtree et al. 2009). This perspective challenges the construction of the rational, masculinized academic expert as epistemologically neutral. The valuation of lived experience as a source of knowledge is not the same as populist beliefs that personal opinion trumps rigorous knowledge production and expertise (Rohrer 2018). Rather, lived experience is valued as one form of knowledge, and as a valuable tool for knowledge production. This problematizes the traditional construction of university professors as all-knowing and unbiased experts, particularly when teaching about subjects such as gender injustice, racism, classism

etc. that faculty and students may have themselves experienced first-hand.

Because feminist pedagogy values situated knowledges, while also viewing students as complete and complex beings, it challenges the construction of students as sponges who absorb and reiterate knowledge, or as vessels to be filled (Currier 2021). Feminist pedagogy values critical thinking, and often positions the professor as more of an expert guide, rather than a dispenser of objective facts (Briskin 2015). Student knowledge is valued, and students are situated not only as 'active learners' but knowledge producers who contribute to and strengthen the learning of their fellow students and professors (Bondy et al. 2015). In this way, feminist pedagogy has historically been strongly associated with challenging professorial authority.

While challenging authority and valuing the experiential knowledge of students is central to feminist pedagogy, it has raised important and ongoing concerns. Problematizing authority can minimize or devalue the expertise that professors do bring to the classroom, making it difficult to hold students accountable and to be taken seriously when presenting ideas that challenge students' existing understandings of the world and their place in it (Bondy et al. 2015). This is particularly the case for professors who themselves embody marginalized identities, such as professors who are women, who are racialized, or who are visibly gender non-conforming (Busse et al. 2021). Professors from marginalized communities "do not have the same kind of authority, are not seen as experts, and do not walk into the classroom with authority to devolve" (Busse et al. 2021, 32). In our own experience of teaching outside of women's studies and social justice programs, having a doctorate in women's studies is sometimes devalued by students who view our education and teaching styles, not as evidence that we come to the classroom with unique and valid knowledge, but as 'biased.' This reaction reinforces ongoing concerns with how to invite students to challenge professorial authority that we may not hold effectively, not only because of our embodied identities and social positionings, but also because of the ways our field of research and expertise itself is targeted by neoliberal ideologies.

The concerns outlined above are of particular significance to contract faculty. This is largely because of the real and perceived importance of student evaluations in ensuring continued employment, and the assumed correla-

tion between effective teaching and student satisfaction. Student evaluations are a required component of any application for tenure-track positions and are often also requested when applying for contract work. We ourselves have taught in programs that have established cut-off points in student evaluations, which can be used to justify non-renewal of non-tenure-track faculty contracts. The dependence on student evaluations is another component of a neoliberal university system that seeks quantifiable, straightforward, and efficient means of evaluating instructors, and which produces data that is easily, if simplistically, understandable to administrators (Busse et al. 2021). Yet, research has demonstrated that student evaluations are impacted by student bias, and tend to be lower for professors who are women and those who are racialized (Merritt 2008; Mitchell and Martin 2018; Chávez and Mitchell 2020). These concerns are relevant to all faculty occupying marginalized positions, however they are especially important for pre-tenure and contract faculty whose employment is more vulnerable.

One study shows that in an online class where all components were the same except for the disclosed gender of the instructors, students who believed their section was taught by a woman provided lower evaluations than those who believed their section was taught by a man (MacNell et al. 2015). High course evaluations have also been associated with problems in later performance and course advancement (Carrell and West 2010) reinforcing widely held beliefs that course evaluations can be indicative of whether a professor is "likable," and whether their course is perceived as easy, rather than whether or not it is effective. In this context, instructors who employ feminist pedagogy may experience additional challenges, due to the discomfort students may have with course material that challenges not only their existing understanding of the world, but also their place in it. Asking students to analyze and reflect on their own experiences of privilege is known to produce discomfort that, while understood within feminist pedagogy as crucial to student growth and learning, may result in less than flattering evaluations (Busse et al. 2021).

When one is evaluated primarily, if not exclusively, by students, the power dynamic between instructors and students shifts in ways that make it more difficult to invite students to challenge our authority and knowledge. In our experience, the continued reliance on student evaluations can lead to trepidation among contract faculty to challenge students or to push back against prob-

lematic views for fear of angering students. For example, one of us once received an evaluation claiming that we did not value student opinions because we "told them when they were wrong." Busse et al. report a similar instance in which they received a comment, taken up as concerning by their administration, that they "silenced" students (2021, 45). Such comments reinforce the understanding that professorial authority, for many of us, is tenuous. This creates a situation where professors who challenge students' existing knowledge or ways of thinking will likely face the consequences of poor student evaluations which may undermine future employability. This is particularly problematic for instructors whose course materials or practices challenge the status quo. Busse et al. (2021) promote a more complex evaluative system that asks students to reflect on their learning throughout the course. While this suggestion offers one strategy for responding to the problems of traditional student evaluations, its potential is limited for contract faculty who must continue to submit formal student evaluations for every job application, and who may lose renewal of their contracts if their evaluations do not meet a perceived minimum standard. When student evaluations are the only means of garnering feedback, and are the primary measure on which our re-employment is based (whether in practice, or in perception), it can also contribute to the construction of contract faculty as disposable. Significantly, when contract faculty are viewed as easily replaceable, the departments benefiting from our labour also have little interest in supporting our professional development as instructors. Poor evaluations are thus less likely to be taken as a guide for how to improve teaching in the future but more as a reason not to re-hire the instructor in question.

Relationality

Feminist pedagogy is grounded in an understanding of humans as relational beings (Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015). As relational beings, we come into a world that is ready-made, and through socialization we acquire our ways of perceiving and understanding it. From this perspective, our connections to, and relations with others are understood as central to the co-constitution of the self. This position is fundamental to the disruptive potential of feminist pedagogy, since it undermines the ideal of the detached independent neoliberal subject (Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015). By enacting relationality in ways that subvert the traditional hierarchical power dynamics within the classroom, feminist pedagogies re-

frame the understanding of students and teachers (Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015). Everyone is seen as coming to the classroom as complex beings, existing in relation to one another and the world outside the classroom. This framework is central for valuing situated knowledge and challenging professional authority, as described above.

Relationality also informs an ethics of care, which is largely, though not universally, associated with feminist pedagogy. Care is a multifaceted relational practice that occurs at numerous sites, while scaling and grounding a sense of ethical responsibility. An ethics of care is premised on the notion that "the ability to give and receive adequate care is central to human well-being" and that injustice unfolds through "practices, institutions, structures and discourses which inhibit or subvert adequate care or which lead to exploitation, neglect of a lack of recognition in the giving and receiving of care" (Robinson 2013, 137). Pedagogically, an ethics of care acknowledges the importance of student-professor relationships and highlights how student learning and well-being are improved when professors truly care for their students. When professors view their students as embedded and interdependent this produces a sense of accountability to each other (Llewellyn and Llewellyn 2015, 17). Such an ethics of care is observable in Feigenbaum's (2007) guiding of her students through the 'teachable moments' that arise in her classes. Notably, an ethics of care does not mean being soft or coddling; instead, it involves holding students accountable for how they treat each other, and the effect of their own knowledge production on others. An ethics of care thus supports students and their well-being, while also supporting their learning.

We have struggled to reconcile our view of teaching as relational with the long-term precariousness of our working conditions. Even when teaching in departments that value feminist pedagogy, there is inadequate support when it comes to its practical enactment by contract faculty. There is also very little care for contract faculty themselves. The conditions of precarious work, which isolate contract faculty from others and deplete our emotional energy, break down the possibility of cultivating relationality with students and colleagues. Contract faculty are often spatially and socially ostracized within the departments in which they work. Burnout, which exhausts one's ability to empathize genuinely, is also common. Importantly, the undoing of our capacity to foster relationality and to build relationships of care with our students is produced by structures within the institution itself. This raises important questions about how working conditions faced by contingent faculty not only exclude people with disabilities, but can also produce disability by harming physical and mental well-being of workers (Ahmed 2021).

Isolation

One way that precarious working conditions of contract faculty are rendered invisible by academic institutions is through isolation. To be isolated is specifically *not* to be in relation to others. Contract faculty often experience isolation within the departments where they work. One of the most common and explicit examples results from not having a dedicated working space within the department. As described above, many contract instructors share an office with other instructors, a situation with which we are familiar. In our experience, sharing office space can make meeting with students difficult, and can add another barrier to developing strong student-teacher relationships. It requires that we schedule our office hours around our office-mates, and accept that this space may be explicitly delegated for meeting with students rather than for academic work. Lacking a room of one's own in which to work is particularly challenging for contract faculty who are struggling financially, and may not have a designated workspace at home, and/or cannot afford to work regularly in coffee shops. Alternatively, one might have access to an office that is explicitly designated for work and *not* for meeting with students. During one contract period, Jacqueline was required to schedule office hours in a departmental conference room. Any time one of her (hundreds of) students wanted to meet outside of regular office hours, Jacqueline had to book a room. This not only added to her administrative burden, and her sense that her work was not supported in this department, but it also meant that connecting with students was extremely difficult since meetings needed to be carefully planned more than a day in advance. Requests from students to meet thus often resulted in a level of frustration and annoyance that made it difficult to view these meetings as meaningful opportunities for connection. Given that availability and willingness to meet with students is one of the criteria addressed in student evaluations, lack of working space not only contributes to isolation from students, but may also have a negative impact on evaluations themselves.

Not having a physical space in a department further isolates contract faculty from their colleagues. According to Foster and Bauer, many contract faculty workers report feeling invisible within their departments. Respondents describe feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed while attending departmental meetings, social events, or even simply if asked, "What do you do for a living?" As one respondent indicates, "[I am] now 7 years in and staff barely know me" (Foster and Bauer 2018, 34).

For many, the department in which they teach is their only real academic community—albeit one in which the majority of contract faculty do not really feel they have a place. As contract faculty, we primarily communicated with the incredibly lovely and helpful admin assistants, and in some departments, never met with full-time faculty. There are other avenues for support, such as friends or online discussion boards, but this is not a replacement for feeling like a valued part of a community. Isolation of contract faculty from full-time faculty may also make it more difficult to build solidarity between the two groups, and hence to collectively advocate for improved working conditions.

Burnout

Not knowing if you will have a job from term to term, in combination with managing student learning and engagement, being rendered virtually invisible within your department, and adapting and producing new course material, often on short notice—all while desperately trying to maintain writing and research, takes a heavy toll. Precarity has a cumulative effect, resulting in a state where one is mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted. This sense of depletion can become so profound and all-encompassing that it makes it difficult to accomplish all but the most pressing tasks. This phenomenon, described as burnout, "represents an erosion in values, dignity, spirit and will" (Maslach and Leiter 1997, 17). Burnout is a multidimensional, depleting experience that is common for those working in caring professions, such as health professionals, counsellors, therapists, teachers, and professors (Maslach and Leiter 1997; Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison 2016). When one experiences burnout, their passion for their work deflates. One loses the energy to engage, gradually becoming cynical, and ineffective at their job (Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison 2016). Although burnout is often understood as an individual problem, which can be addressed through individualized practices of self-care, it is often created by

working conditions and expectations that require employees to push beyond their physical and mental capacities (Peterson 2020; Ahmed 2021). Burnout can be worsened by precarious working conditions, with employees unable to ask for improved conditions or to manage these expectations for fear that their job will be lost or non-renewed (Peterson 2020).

Our experiences of burnout as contract faculty have shown us that when you are burnt out you have very little energy to go above and beyond in your teaching, including to engage in the kinds of practices that feminist pedagogy demands. We are dedicated teachers who are passionate about our field. Ultimately, we want to have a positive impact on the world and others through teaching. However, we have both had experiences of burnout as contract faculty that have quelled this passion. While we might have been confident, motivated, and attentive to our students at the beginning of the term, by the end of it we found ourselves exhausted, and just trying to make it through the day. For example, at our best, we respond to student requests with compassion, even if we feel they are being somewhat unreasonable in their requests, or rude in their tone. However, by the end of term, we each witnessed our capacity to engage with our students compassionately, or view them as holistic beings, dwindle. As one's emotional resources are stretched, and one receives more and more emails asking questions that could easily be answered by looking at the syllabus, for example, one might tend towards frustration, rather than an ethics of care. If you are Kim, you do not respond to the email, struggle to fall asleep, let it bother you all the next morning, arrive to class fuming and ready to deliver your responses live. If you are Jacqueline, your responses might be terse and curt because you don't bother to hide your annoyance. While we have both experienced shame at these responses, we feel it's important to keep in mind that "burnout is not a problem of the people themselves but of the social environment in which they work" (Maslach and Leiter 1997, 18). It can stem from many things, including but not limited to, work overload, lack of control, breakdown of community, and unfairness in the system (Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison 2016, 105). Furthermore, faculty members who are women are often expected to engage in more emotional labour and service duties within their departments and in relationships with students (Bauer 2002; El-Alayli et al. 2018). As is often the case with feminized forms of labour, this work is not supported by the university and often does not contribute to faculty's

professional advancement. Faculty in women's studies departments often take on even more emotional labour in part because of the pedagogical commitments we have outlined, and because of the topics that tend to be included in our teaching (Bauer 2002). This labour contributes to burn-out among female faculty and women's studies instructors, which in turn makes it more difficult to perform this labour and to be in meaningful relation with our students.

Treating students with care and guiding them through periods of learning relies on emotional resources, including an ability to empathize. However, burnout makes it extremely difficult to enact an ethics of care, and to respond to student distress in a way that supports their continued engagement and learning, rather than alienating them. This issue must be addressed beyond the all-too-common solution of individualized self-care exercised through consumption—a solution that places responsibility on the individual to manage the effects of over-work, including expectations of intensive and unsupported emotional labour.

Conclusion

We had considered ending this paper with a series of suggestions of how tenure-track and tenured faculty can help support contract faculty, yet we recognize the tension between suggesting how individual departments and faculty members can support precarious instructors and recognizing that solving these problems ultimately requires systemic change. On one hand, we recognize that increasing access to resources, including professionalization, and providing access to more robust forms of evaluation can help address the limitations faced by contract faculty. In our experience, despite poor working conditions and remuneration, contract faculty often continue to take on contract work because they have not been trained to position themselves for, and seek employment outside of academia. We have also been encouraged to continue to take short-term teaching contracts by fellow academics who perpetuate the myth that leaving the university is a form of failure or giving up, and that if one simply continues to work hard enough for long enough, tenure track employment will be secured (Peterson 2020). While we believe strongly that precarious working conditions must be addressed as a systemic issue, we also recognize that in the face of declining permanent positions, graduate programs should devote more resources to preparing graduates for work outside of academia. We have both, at least for the time being, left contract teaching despite our love for it and feel we would have greatly benefitted from such professionalization.

As Busse et al. (2021) acknowledge, despite having incorporated some elements of feminist and critical pedagogies in the form of active and engaged learning, the neoliberal university ultimately does not share the goals of feminist pedagogy and hence is not motivated to create the conditions under which feminist pedagogy can be enacted. It is also likely that, despite ongoing critiques of adjunctification, universities will continue to rely on precariously employed contract labour, particularly in light of the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and expectations of continued cuts in public spending. Hence, it is tempting to situate the solution in creating a broader community of support for contract faculty within departments that do, at least to some extent, see the value of feminist pedagogical approaches and which can adopt certain practices to make working conditions somewhat more tenable. However, we make these suggestions tentatively, acknowledging that individual departmental practices ultimately do not solve the central problem: the precarity of contract work. To create conditions under which feminist pedagogy can be fully realized as an alternative to neoliberal approaches to teaching, and under which contract faculty are treated fairly, precarity itself must be addressed as a systemic issue.

Changing working conditions on a systemic level requires building solidarity with tenured and tenure-track faculty and administration, as well as challenging neoliberal attitudes towards university funding. Building this solidarity is made difficult by institutional mechanics that often keep contingent and long-term faculty isolated from each other. In addition to the conditions we have discussed, being in separate unions can limit opportunities for collective action. However, even when in the same union, it does not guarantee that this union, or long-term faculty members, will prioritise the specific needs of contract faculty. Our experience with these conditions points to the need for tenure track faculty to also reflect on how they might be benefiting from contingent labour, as well as how they too might benefit from challenging the neoliberal structures that produce the perceived need for adjunct instructors. We say this with recognition that tenure-track faculty hold institutional privileges, while also facing institutional pressures and

often burnout. Building solidarity is also a struggle because of the high turnover of adjunct faculty. We have both left teaching because neither of us saw it as sustainable work, offering us little opportunity for career advancement. Our decision to leave was also shaped by our feeling that we were not able to fulfill our commitment to feminist work. High turnover highlights the challenges of enacting change as the surplus of PhDs willing to take on adjunct work diminishes our power as labourers in relation to the university, and makes it difficult to sustain long-term relationships of solidarity. This points to the need to build solidarity both across the university and outside of it. It may also require changing public attitudes towards universities that challenge funding cuts and policies that treat universities like businesses. Based on this analysis we feel a key action is to explicitly incorporate labour politics into women's studies departments, including honesty with undergraduate and graduate students about the working conditions within these departments.

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Book Review

Women's Lived Experiences of the Gender Gap: Gender Inequalities from Multiple Global Perspectives

by Yang HAN

Yang HAN is a lecturer in University of Shanghai for Science and Technology. She received her PhD in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Her research interests include corpus-based translation studies and critical discourse analysis, especially concerning gender, ideology, nationality, and translation. She is currently working on applications of corpus in the study of English translations of Central political literature and children's literature. She is mainly interested in describing translation features and uncovering the inner workings, ideology, and potential factors influencing the features of translation.

Book under Review: Angela Fitzgerald, ed. 2021. *Women's Lived Experiences of the Gender Gap: Gender Inequalities from Multiple Global Perspectives*. Springer Nature Sustainable Development Goals Series.

Keywords: critical friends, feminist qualitative research, gender gap, interdisciplinary, lived experience

The concept of the gender gap has come to succinctly refer to inequalities between men's and women's lives in terms of income, resources, opportunities, and power. Many feminist scholars and organizations have long been committed to fighting for women's rights by researching ways to bridge the gender gap (Roseberry & Roos 2014). This can be examined by quantitative means, such as the gender gap index (World Economic Forum 2020). In addition, gender gaps or disparities are frequently studied through statistics, including pay inequity, health service inequities, legal inequalities, differential treatment of men's and women's right to parental leave, and other means (Eerola et al. 2019; Heymann et al. 2019; International Labour Organization 2018; Xiong et al. 2018). These areas have been primarily the domain of policymakers and statisticians.

In contrast, *Women's Lived Experiences of the Gender Gap: Gender Inequalities from Multiple Global Perspectives* explores qualitative methods of articulating gender gaps and related issues in various fields, such as labour markets, politics, culture, and motherhood, from a global perspective. Further, the "critical friends" method adopted in this book permits the author of each chapter to invite a colleague to give further insights and a critique of the subject matter in the chapter (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller 2014). The critical friends methodology helps to deepen the level of critical analysis, present diversified voices, and provide a wider geographic perspective, through which the experiences of the gender gap in Europe, Mexico, the US, and other countries are revealed. Overall, this book contextualizes qualitative data within relevant scholarly literature to offer an in-depth analysis, along with new perspectives in research on the gender gap.

The book consists of thirteen chapters. The first chapter, written by the editor, Angela Fitzgerald, gives an introduction to the background and the purpose of the book, in order "to present how the gender gap is experienced by women in different contexts and doing it in ways that statistics and figures cannot achieve" (2). This is followed by two research questions: what are women's lived experiences of the gender gap, and how does this work contribute to reducing it. The editor introduces critical friends and feminist research as the methodologies used in the collection, suggesting that these two methods together provide readers with new modes for understanding the gender gap.

The remaining twelve chapters are divided into three parts. Part One (Chapters 2-5) is about women's work and political participation. Chapter 2, by Maria Arteaga-Villamil, compares the gender bias and conflicts experienced by female professional managers in Mexico and Spain by means of observation and in-depth interviews. In Chapter 3, Mirza Aguilar-Pérez, using a qualitatively orientated research project (2015), analyzes the work experiences of Mexican female participants in the *au pair* program and points out that the tension of this program is mainly reflected in the contradiction between Mexican women seeking international communication and American families seeking low-cost labour. This study would be more convincing in revealing the gender gap if it had examined the similarities and differences between male and female roles in similar programs or programs in which men and women participate together. In Chapter 4, through a discussion of the obstacles that women must overcome in obtaining political rights in Mexico and Bolivia, Edmé Dominiguez Reyes, whose field is international relations, points out that equality in political participation is only the first step of real gender equality. Chapter 5 discusses the situation of Indigenous women under the combined influences of gender, national identity, and socio-economic conditions. Author Paloma Bonfil is not confined to the perspective of gender here, but takes many factors into account and concludes that the realization of gender equality cannot be separated from narrowing the class and race gap as interconnected metrics of inequality.

Part Two (Chapters 6-9) focuses on the relationship between culture and the gender gap. In Chapter 6, by analyzing the career and works of three female writers, author Eva Moreda Rodríguez, who works in arts and culture, shows that the success and visibility of female novelists writing in Galician is scarce and partial. This is further studied in Chapter 7, where author Olga Castro analyzes the inequalities faced by Galician female novelists with regard to the translation of their works into other languages, in the hope of gaining recognition in a wider literary market, such as readers in Spanish-speaking countries and readers in the Anglosphere. This research highlights the interweaving effects of gender, race, and language on writers and readers. Chapter 8 illustrates the concept of colourism in contemporary American culture through the study of three black female celebrities of African descent. Courtney C. Young investigates the influence of colourism on women and their work and the experience of gender inequality in a white-dominated society. As an extension of this chapter, Philathia Bolton examines the influence of colourism in Chapter 9 using selected novels as examples. She indicates how hierarchy, whiteness, and patriarchy aggravate the gender gap. In general, Part 2 emphasizes women's experiences in the cultural field. A comparative analysis of male writers and works would be helpful to show how racism and colourism impact the gender gap.

Part Three (Chapters 10-13) explores the life experiences of mothers, a specific and often overlooked life experience of women. Chapter 10 deals with maternal regret and the attitude of society toward this regret. Tiina Sihto and Armi Mustosmäki analyze the views expressed by regretful mothers in an anonymous online discussion forum for Finnish mothers. Chapter 11 puts Finnish maternal regret in a broader context, and compares it with similar social media discussions in Spain and Anglophone countries. Authors Valerie Heffernan and Katherine Stone suggest that maternal regret as a social phenomenon is more easily understood and accepted where there is an acknowledgement of inadequate institutional support for mothers. Chapter 12 examines chronic pain experienced by mothers from a phenomenological perspective, highlighting the gender gap in western medical knowledge and behaviour. Author Irina Poleshchuk reveals the complexity of the moral dilemma experienced by mothers with chronic pain, putting forward new moral perspectives and pluralistic subjectivities. Chapter 13 uses Emmanuel Levinas' ethics to guide and enhance readers' understanding of maternal chronic pain. Valerie Oved Giovanini uses a series of contemporary studies and practical experiences to demonstrate and emphasize the need to reconsider traditional values. With a declining fertility rate in many countries, this section is of timely significance. However, this section

offers relatively little discussion of the relationship between mothers' experiences and the gender gap.

Overall, this book is a useful contribution to the gender gap discussion. First, the interdisciplinary and intersectional feminist perspective shows dimensions that cannot be measured by quantitative indicators alone. These factors add to existing reports, providing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences with respect to the contemporary gender gap. Second, the research fields, contexts, and positions of the authors of this book are diverse. This reflects the broad influence of the gender gap on women and the necessity to bridge the gender gap in relation to class, race, culture, and language. Finally, the critical friends research method provides for critical engagement across and between diverse topics and perspectives, producing new knowledge of women's lived experiences of the gender gap. While this method is not an innovation of this book (see Coghlan & Brydon-Miller 2014), this application to gender-gap research is new. With this method, authors of paired and interconnected chapters dialogue, making evident their comments as critical friends of each other. In this way, readers are provided with further insights and a different contextual interpretation of a particular issue.

Future research can address some of the collection's oversights. While claiming a global perspective, the book nonetheless centers on Europe, Mexico, Bolivia, and the United States, while the experience of the gender gap in Asia and Africa, in particular, are missing. Inviting the critiques of scholars, activists, and other "critical friends" from outside of the original geographical areas considered in the collection, would have been one way to extend the reach and relevance of the book.

Despite these shortcomings, this study of the gender gap through new qualitative feminist research methods, complementing and expanding upon other efforts to describe and challenge gender gaps, has much to offer further research on the gender gap.

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Book Review

Lands and Bodies: Disrupting Colonial Biases through Methodology

by Ellen Ahlness

Ellen Ahlness is a Race and Gender writer for *Education Maksad* and an Arctic Studies researcher. Her scholarship centers on examining Arctic Indigenous activism and political organization resulting from health and livelihood challenges presented by an increasingly warming Far North. Her current work has shifted to emphasize the impact of technologies on health—particularly across race and gender lines—in formal organizational settings. Her work can also be found in *Ecologia Politica*, *World History Connected*, and *Managing Multicultural Scandinavia*.

Book under Review: Liboiron, M. 2021. *Pollution Is Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Keywords: decentering theory, decolonization, holism qualitative methodology

There are many things that disproportionately affect Indigenous populations across the globe: climate change, rising sea levels, and natural resource extraction in ancestral homelands are but a few of the many issues that are the focus of environmental justice scholarship. The recent COVID pandemic greatly impacted the economic, social, and health outcomes of American and European Indigenous populations (McLeod 2020). Data from the early pandemic revealed a concerning trend: even though a majority of the Western population greatly reduced their transportation and consumption, global pollution rates hardly changed (Tian et al. 2021). The people who bear the brunt of this continued pollution are Indigenous and colonized peoples globally.

This unjust reality is the focus of *Pollution is Colonialism*. The text challenges environmental discourses that propose populations have "rights" to consumption and disposal. Liboiron confronts the dominant assumption that the goal of environmental politics is to *mitigate*, rather than eliminate pollutive practices. In a world where environmental degradation so drastically affects ways of life, interrupts traditional livelihoods, and even threatens survival, how can we justify *any* amount of pollution as tolerable? How can any amount of harm be an acceptable loss? Liboiron argues that colonialism is a pragmatic and intellectual practice with entitlement at its core, fundamentally shaping the way we treat both land and knowledge. Divided into an introduction and three parts on methodology, colonialism, and pollution, each segment deals primarily (though never unilaterally) with these subjects in turn.

Part I, *Land, Nature, Resource, Property,* opens with the foundational premise of Liboiron's work: environmental pollution is not only indicative of colonialism, but is a fundamental pillar of the colonial relationship to land (7). Liboiron argues that, rather than a natural

byproduct of consumption, pollution is an invention of colonialism (36). This reads reminiscent of Mead's argument that war is not a given result of human interaction, but an invention (2015). In both cases, the implication is clear: it is erroneous to blindly accept these large-scale harms as necessary, if undesired, byproducts of social development. Power dynamics are not a necessary byproduct of interactions, though the condition of entanglement—whether between men and women or humans and land—often imagines parties to be in conflict, rather than parts of a broader system. The latter view is in line with holism, which is well-articulated in Indigneous and Traditional Knowledges (ITK), articulating the connection between body, mind and emotion, and also the connection between humans, other life, and earth systems.

Part II, *Scale, Harm, Violence, Land,* demonstrates the linkages between anti-colonial land relations to reproductive justice, continuing in a long tradition of environmental justice and ecofeminism (Plumwood 1991). Parallels between bodies (human and otherwise) and land advance the argument of holism. Liboiron grapples with the way damage from adverse events, such as pollution, cause bodies and lands to become further entangled together. Just as the body is linked to mind and spirit, the land is made up of entanglements among water, soil, minerals, microscopic life forms, and more.

Finally, Part III, *An Anticolonial Pollution Science,* articulates how colonialism is directly, if not always intentionally, facilitated through dominant scientific research and knowledge dissemination. Liboiron acknowledges that challenging the status quo is neither an easy nor rapid process. Describing this resistance as *constant* and *painstaking,* Liboiron encourages readers to find hope in the ongoing practice of consistently and deliberately evaluating and selecting methodologies in their own work. Widespread efforts to do so may lead to less universalized, less whitewashed, and less differentiated relationships between people and land (78-80).

A significant portion of the book is dedicated to engaging methodology, particularly through acknowledging and demonstrating how colonial assumptions and biases persistently pop up in knowledge production, reproduction, and dissemination. This focus on methodology carries through the book in a fine, unbroken ribbon. Nearly all of the science and research conducted as part of land relations borrows from dominant Western scientific the-

ories, tools, and techniques. As a result, challenging the dominant mode of land relations (e.g., *domination*) starts with adopting new tools. Liboiron establishes through concrete examples how these tools can be applied, for instance, how the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) is progressively anti-colonial in its embracing of specificity and environmental holism (20-21, 26).

Pollution is Colonialism teaches readers about the inherent colonial nature of research and the methodologies it entails. Perhaps its most valuable contribution is in providing a blueprint for anticolonial science research. Even activities as simple as adopting statistical measures, isolating variables, presenting information uncritically through graphical form, or applying template sampling patterns all represent the unchallenged perpetuation of colonial techniques. Liboiron invites readers to more deeply consider how knowledge travels and surfaces in the political framing of land or earth systems.

Readers may find themselves surprised or taken aback at some of Liboiron's prescriptions. After all, these are some of the most foundational aspects of environmental studies that students are taught in public education. Yet these challenges to what has become common-sense thinking in science is precisely what is so beneficial about Liboiron's contribution. It demonstrates how deeply engrained our reliance on these tools truly are, and the discomfort we may feel being asked to change them demonstrates how deeply these non-holistic ways of knowing are entrenched in our systems of knowledge. As such, while the specific methodological critiques and recommendations may be most directly applicable to graduate students and professionals, the considerations *Pollution is Colonialism* advances may be even more relevant to general readers. The earlier we "learn to unlearn," the more readily we can transition to methodologies and theoretical frameworks that undermine unfettered pollution.

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Literary Work

Walking Into Myself

by Sohini Chatterjee

You haven't told your mother that you refuse to read silence on Mondays/That language is further ashore, floating away/your skin is louder than justice is arcane is moribund/you let grief overstay its welcome and have the floor threaten to collapse under its weight for endless winters/because summer is now renegade/resistance is returning to yourself in the middle of nowhere/waiting for spring blue of the skies and learning how to learnteach/you are so small that the story of your survival is immense is desert rain/wear brown femme rage to the classroom and call it feminist praxis/call it tidal wave/call it habitance/from your brown, Mad, small, and broken, to mine/heirloom as history as harvest that you cannot refuse/you understand hunger that lasts a year, mourning that lasts longer/yet you offer yourself to the world, whole/they call it thunderstorm, you know it is feet in the sand/decolonization but what about love/resilience cannot buy you furniture can buy you respect in a house where your accent is too foreign/where you open your mouth and all they hear is trespasser/"she has been crying for seven months"/summon the flood because being hollowed out is a disservice when you can be carried away/so you walk into yourself and stay/your kin awaits

Sohini Chatterjee is a PhD Candidate and Vanier Scholar in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at Western University. Her work has recently been published in *Women's Studies: An Inter-disciplinary Journal*, *South Asian Popular Culture*, and *Fat Studies*. Her areas of academic interest revolve around queer and trans activism, queer cultural studies, critical disability studies, and resistance movements in India.

Literary Work

Two Poems

by Susan Hays Bussey

In Other Words

Whenever a man calls me "a strong woman"
I know to get ready for what's coming next.
There will be some reckoning; he'll test the claim,
The need for strength thus written into my future.
He may explore architectural integrity.
Or investigate my tensile limit.
Such men want to see what I will take,
How much I hold. It's not a compliment.
I am a strong woman but
I am strong like coffee
(Take it in—see how you'll change)
Not like a Glad trash bag.
I'm strong like whiskey straight
And I will not bear the weight again.

The Sheets of Our Youth

A Poem in Response to My Sister's Post on Facebook

The sheets where we slept were king-sized
for those eight years we shared the battered mattress,
and we fought over them
as though they weren't sufficient for our child-sized frames,
(as though each other were the threat of thievery in bed.)
They were hand-me downs to our mother from hers:
The cast-offs for a daughter who married ill (twice),
Laundered and dried and ironed
For those years before we got them
By Lizzie, who kept our Grandparents'
Basement smelling like starch year-round.
The sheets of our youth were manufactured in the 1950s
In textile mills in the Carolinas, or Virginia
From cotton grown in Texas, or Alabama,
On farms that were owned by men and not yet incorporated.

So when you announce you are looking for
The smooth, crisp coolness of
The sheets you remember from your youth?
You are misguided by terminology and technicalities.
Percale? Low-thread count? Irrelevant.
You will not find those sheets in this or any lifetime.
But since you are looking
May you find something to fill the space,
To spread over a woman's place of rest
With all the texture of memory.

Susan Hays Bussey is an Associate Professor of English at Georgia Gwinnett College where she teaches composition, American literature, and sentence diagramming when she gets the chance. She earned her PhD in American Literature at Washington University in Saint Louis. Dr. Bussey has special interest in representations of gender and age, and critical race theory. She has published and presented on works that explore racial and gender identity, including Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Literary Work

Ode to M. Night Shyamalan

by donalee Moulton

Today, I became invisible.

This is my 20/20 superpower;
uninvited, yet all too real.

A gradual metamorphosis, I see
Now in hindsight:
No meta physics or exploding world,
No ringing of the bugle
No senses tingling
No deflecting bracelets to mark the occasion

A flash of time
60 years in the making

Here I stand
sans mask and tights.
Slightly stooped
Laser-corrected vision
Trying to untangle this web of confusion

Yesterday on my daily planet
people nodded
as I walked by.
They saw
me.
Apologized as they bumped me
accidentally.
Waved from across the street,
parking lot, grocery aisle
as if seeing me for the first time.
There you are.

Little did they know
My real identity
Waiting to emerge
Silently, relentlessly
Without aid of alien spacecraft
radioactive spider
or amazon queen to coddle me
into my new persona

Today is August twenty-second.

A new me is sculpted
From clay
And tradition, expectation
Indifference

Now I walk into rooms
Unnoticed
Cloaked in forceless fields
Shielded from sight
I see animated faces looking
In my direction
Hands at their sides
Eyes focused elsewhere

Today I turned 62,
or 58, 71
perhaps.
Age is irrelevant
once you are in
visible

if only I were
bulletproof

donalee Moulton's poetry has appeared in *Arc*, *The Queen's Quarterly*, *Prairie Fire*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Carousel*, *Fireweed*, and *Whetstone*, among others. She is a former editor of *The Pottersfield Portfolio* and *Atlantic Books Today*. donalee lives in Halifax happily surrounded by family, friends, pets, and poetry.

Literary Work

My body of dissidence

by Rhea Ashley Hoskin

Where I once wished you would shrink, you continued to grow
And where I wished you would grow, you shrunk.
When I needed you to be brave, you were vulnerable.
And when I anchored my self-love in your strength,
You became weak and fragile.
Ached under the weight of your years.
I can rip out your hair, wax, pluck or shave,
but you will regrow.
I will regrow
And I always already am.
When I wanted to quit, you kept going
Air in my lungs, blood in my veins.
The ultimate rebel, my body.

Your aches, your pains
that expose a lifetime of war upon you.
Still you persist
In a world that subdues your rebellion at every turn
And host to a mind that befalls to toxic beauty culture
You never gave up,
To grow and exist precisely as you saw fit,
And to resist every restraint the world has put upon you

Thank you for showing me all the ways that I am resilient,
For keeping time through the lines on my face,
So that I never lose track,
So that I don't take tomorrow for granted.
Thank you for teaching me the ways that I persist,
The ways that I am resilient
And the ways I prevail despite myself.

My body, the ultimate rebel
Who will not kowtow to the dictator that infiltrates and occupies my mind
Who, even when falling into line, is always already planning its revolt
A body from whom society has tried to distance me
To separate *me* from *it*
Mind from *body*
To keep me from knowing
The rebel I am

Dr. Rhea Ashley Hoskin is an interdisciplinary feminist sociologist whose work focuses on Critical Femininities, Femme Theory, and femmephobia. Her work examines perceptions of femininity and sources of prejudice rooted in the devaluation or regulation of femininity. Dr. Hoskin is an AMTD Global Talent Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Waterloo, where she is cross-appointed to the departments of Sociology & Legal Studies, and Sexuality, Marriage, & Family Studies. She completed her MA in Gender Studies and her PhD in Sociology from Queen's University. In 2019, she was awarded the Governor General's Academic Gold Medal at Queen's University for her doctoral work.