

Indigenous Achievement and Institutional Accountability: A  
Review of the University of Manitoba's Procedural Environment

by

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## **Abstract**

My research locates Indigenous theory, western critical theory, as well as feminist and gender theory to examine the racialized and gendered patterns found within the policy, physical and virtual learning environments at the University of Manitoba. My work considers the implications of difference within educational institutions that were not designed for Indigenous Peoples, yet that actively recruit them. It also analyzes the institutional indifference that challenges resistance to the structural power imbalances that reproduce violence. Like my refusal to acknowledge that the University of Manitoba is doing enough to keep Indigenous students safe, I refuse to list policy recommendations within my thesis. Rather, I introduce my lived experience of racialized and sexualized violence in hopes to start discussions about reimagining procedural, physical, and virtual learning spaces to ensure Indigenous knowledge production can transpire in safe and meaningful ways.

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## Introduction

### # Establishing the Logics of Complaints as Research

In academic spaces, complaints and critiques vocalized by marginalized peoples are often misunderstood or bluntly ignored by those in power. Given that complaints can bring into question the systems and harms committed by someone or something, they comment or point to difference. As Sara Ahmed (2021b) establishes in her most recent work, *Complaint!*, the act of complaining becomes interpreted as what she calls, rocking the boat (152). In this way, the complainer's demand for accountability is met with people in power who may disregard the complaints to avoid having to acknowledge the harms committed and adjust structures that perpetuate violence (Ahmed 2021b, 152). Likewise, the rudimentary logics of complaints introduce and describe the structuring of institutions. For Ahmed (2021b), "a complaint can be how you learn about institutional violence, the violence of how institutions reproduce themselves, [and] the violence of how institutions respond to violence" (180). They locate, confront, resist, and expose violence by "trying to destabilize things, to stop things from being as they are" (Ahmed 2021b, 152). Possibly most important to my research is understanding how complaints become "registered as a product of not trying to assimilate to the culture of an institution" (Ahmed 2021b, 152). And here is why.

After experiencing a sequence of sexualized and racialized violence at the University of Manitoba, my research shifted. The obstructing interruption and the weight of the violence I endured became my central focus as a result of trauma. It occupied my mind, as the violence seemingly followed me everywhere. I developed severe nightmares and panic attacks, I became terrified to leave my apartment, and I became extremely anxious to attend online lectures out of fear that the violence would continue to follow me as it seemed to encroach in all spaces of my everyday life. The interruption caused by this violence motivated my research. My proposed topic of research was obscured as I felt it imperative to strategize new ways to present my complaints as they were continuously silenced and ignored, and my experience became misunderstood by those who should have been protecting me. Instead, the disciplinary authorities at the university, i.e., those who are administratively required to manage the instances as described throughout my thesis, worked tirelessly to protect themselves and the institutional structures. While I was weighing the impact of the violence through attending several counselling services, several disciplinary authorities were weighing how to manage my

complaints. As Ahmed (2021b) reminds me, disciplinary authorities “might stop one complaint that has been made in order to stop another complaint from being made that would be deemed riskier to the reputation of an institution” (190). My attempts to rock the boat were going against the objectives and ambitions put forward by the university, which is why silencing my complaints, as difference, became one of their top priorities.

### **# Outlining Institutional Objectives**

The University of Manitoba, situated on traditional Indigenous lands, proposes to increase visibility for “the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that will result in improved access, recruitment, retention and completion for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners” (University of Manitoba 2022a). On paper, this initiative is imperative and promising for students looking to further their education within post-secondary studies. However, I argue that it is essential to critique the material application of the university’s ambitions, goals, and visions that aspire to recruit marginalized students, namely, to examine its proposed strategies towards ensuring that campuses and learning spaces are safe and free of racialized and sexualized violence. The promotional values associated with inclusion and diversity platforms offer academic institutions in western Canada a competitive edge. They demonstrate an acceptance of and willingness to maintain a diverse campus community, among which, Indigenous Peoples become centralized.

As an example, the University of Manitoba’s website dedicates an entire webpage, filled with resources, to Indigenous students. When navigating the webpage, a central message imparts that the Indigenous community on campus is working “to build and expand [their] presence and visibility at UM while creating a safe environment for students and staff to work and learn” (University of Manitoba 2022a). The webpage also grounds Indigenization through its use of photographs of buildings designated as Indigenous spaces, ceremonies celebrating Indigenous graduates who have completed their degree requirements, resources to support Indigenous learners who are pursuing varying programs and degrees, and a reminder that not all university spaces are safe for Indigenous students. The featuring of separate spaces and resources, where Indigenous students can go to feel included and safe, does not seem reassuring enough. In the section titled, *Where we are going*, the Office of the Vice President (Indigenous) reminds us that the university’s commitment “to enhancing an effective, supportive and nurturing learning environment for the Indigenous community is an ongoing process” (University of Manitoba

2022a). The title seems indicative that this undertaking has not been attained. Instead of the entire campus community working together to meet the needs and safety of Indigenous students, the Office of the Vice President (Indigenous) is extending itself to attain the symbols and ambitions put forward by the University of Manitoba. As my thesis argues, it is crucial to make space and take up room within institutions that were not designed for Indigenous Peoples. However, this work must be done with utmost care and intentions. As stated with the university's recent rebranding, the new logo, introduced in 2019, "still features Manitoba's bison on the rising prairie landscape. She is heading into that wind, climbing on an angle to represent our collective struggle to get to a better place. Within the landscape, a gold flame burns, symbolizing the resilience of our community and our commitment to reconciliation" (University of Manitoba 2022b). Together, these webpages reassure students, present positive experiences and a collective unity. Simultaneously, they are riddled with symbols of genocide (Telliet 2019; Daschuk 2019), and an ongoing colonial narrative of progress. We must then ask ourselves what happens to the lived experiences of Indigenous students who do not meet these promotional campaigns, but rather become victims of ongoing systemic colonial violence. It is therefore imperative to examine whether the university's desire to further Indigenization and inclusivity is performative.

### **# Exposing the Performativity of Institutions: Responding to Violence**

Towards the end of my first year in the Master's of Arts program in Indigenous Studies, I experienced a sequence of racialized and sexualized violence by neo-Nazis while conducting my responsibilities as a Teaching Assistant for a first-year introductory course to Indigenous Studies, as well as when sharing my experience as a Research Assistant while working with the Centre for Human Rights Research. In both academic spaces, I was subjected to online violence that only escalated. While attempting to respond to the instances, through using the university's policies and resources, I was met with confrontation, victimization, and inappropriate behaviours from those who are contractually obligated to keep students and staff safe from sexual violence, discrimination, and harassment (University of Manitoba 2020a, 1.1; University of Manitoba & Canadian Union of Public Employees 2018-2022, 29.3; Government of Manitoba 2022, 43.1). The apparent disregard for upholding its obligations caused disillusionment in relation to its explicit desire for Indigenous achievement; the disciplinary authorities failed me, a Métis student and employee, and my colleagues throughout the course of the violence I endured. As made



apparent, the university is still comprised of colonial spaces that are not safe for Indigenous Peoples. We are continuously met with adversity when complaining about and demanding transformative changes to its structural policies and learning environments.

As with my experience, the university's performative claims to inclusion and diversity, and its desire to make room for Indigenous bodies are insufficient. Its refusal to consider our safety lacks concern for Indigenous students, those the institution is trying so hard to recruit. Indigenous bodies bring many attributes to universities. Some of which include, cultural epistemologies, distinct worldviews, an appreciation for diverse knowledge production, critical Indigenous thought, knowledge of whiteness, and unfortunately, an awareness that they will be met with racialized and sexualized violence in university spaces. As a Métis student who is navigating the disciplinary authorities' fragility, I have been made aware of administrative policies and teams that become consequences of institutional indifference to Indigenous achievement. Their refusal to intervene and manage instances of sexualized and racialized violence suggests implicit needs for revisions to their current policy environment that will instead promote Indigenous voices and critiques. My use of the term fragility works to explain the structuring of colonial spaces, whereby these spaces are sustained through the development of white possession (Moreton-Robinson 2015, 49). Institutions maintain positions of power by imposing administration over someone or something. Thus, they control the narrative, and all apparatuses found within their encompassing structures. The fragility of these institutions reveals itself through resistance, and in the case of my research, through way of complaints, and the disillusionment that configures these establishments. Under critique, the mechanisms that structure seemingly omnipotent institutions become tangible, and as a result, vulnerable to fragmentation. And so, my thesis is divided into two parts that argue through personal narrative and critiques of the University of Manitoba's policies related to violence, that it requires a simplified and direct approach to its procedures and bylaws. As a result of my recent experiences and the continual use of virtual academic platforms, it is exigent to call attention to the inadequacies of the existing policy processes that do not keep Indigenous students safe.

As I navigate my experience in writing, I was and continue to be met with challenges. Complaints reveal the inherent mechanisms that dissociate and silence women, specifically marginalized women from their own narratives. In essence, complaints and how institutions respond to them depict "the different ways you can be made to disappear from your own story"

(Ahmed 2021a, 4). Therefore, here are some of the demands that I strive to make clear throughout my thesis:

1. Abusive behaviour, harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence will not be tolerated.
2. All violations will be investigated.
3. Assaulted individuals will be supported.
4. Violators will be expelled if students, fired if staff.
5. A Vice Provost will have overall responsibility to see these demands through.

I am not asking for much, rather I am asking for very little. If the disciplinary authorities are contractually obligated to see our safety through, and if they desire to see Indigenous students succeed, they should not have any issues meeting these demands.

### **# Refusal to Intervene Violence: Universities as Colonial Spaces**

As with all colonial spaces, racism and intersectional structures like sexism are prevalent and obstructive. In practice, these ideologies work subliminally to uphold colonial and patriarchal apparatuses. Tensions arise when challenging these structures, as the institutional desire for inclusion is met with resistance. As stated in the introduction of *Complaint!*, Ahmed (2021b) is indebted to Black students and students of colour “who have pushed universities to address their complicity with slavery and colonialism by challenging the ongoing use of campus security and police, by asking questions like, ‘Why is my curriculum White?’ or ‘Why is my professor not Black?,’ by calling for the removal of statues of slave traders or the renaming of buildings named after eugenicists” (23). In a way, complaints can expose the colonial history of institutions, and resistances to them may indicate whether universities are willing to be accountable and discuss the implications of this history. My thesis will explore how academic institutions reproduce colonial spaces, by which I mean, spaces that were not designed for Indigenous Peoples. Participating in these spaces can be challenging as we must continuously prove our authenticity as Indigenous Peoples in places that research and observe us, and in some ways seemingly archive us. However, Ahmed (2021b) commends universities to be not only “places we can go to learn” but to be “holders of many histories of learning” (22). I argue that it is vital to challenge existing approaches to learning and educational cultures to ensure that histories of violence are thoroughly documented, including those that take place at the very institutions that teach colonial histories.

Moreover, the historical record concerning Indigenous Peoples is quite intensive. We exist in educational spaces and museums through records, skeletal remains, and cultural devices, but not through our being there. As Dr. Emma LaRocque (2010) argues in *When the Other is Me*, “the logical outcome of ossifying Native society is that if Native people change, the Indian will vanish! Seen this way, an archiving mentality becomes crucial” (137). We become archived as a way to preserve our authenticity; however, our current experiences and narratives remain obscured. Therefore, identifying the disciplinary authorities’ responses, or lack thereof, to racialized and sexualized violence is integral to the safety of Indigenous students as a way to reveal that universities continue to operate as colonial spaces.

Developing and contributing to an archive of violence endured at the University of Manitoba will reveal the university’s negligence to uphold its ambitions and objectives, and creates an awareness of the extent and tolerance of white supremacy and sexual violence within its structures. Following former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s apology for the federal government’s assimilative efforts in the Indian Residential School system in 2008, the former President of the University of Manitoba, David Barnard, introduced the *UM’s Statement of Apology and Reconciliation* in October 2011. To bridge the university’s assimilative efforts with reconciliation, Barnard (2011) states that “the next logical step in healing is telling our own story.” His one-page acknowledgement recounts a brief history of residential schools, the university’s participation through its training of residential school teachers, and closes with apologies to survivors. Barnard stresses the importance of adding the university’s voice to the national apologies, while simultaneously distancing itself from the present violence happening on its campuses. Thus, it is crucial to understand the importance of being heard, and whether our voices are documented. As Dian Million (2009) questions, “Why does the subjective record of experiences matter? [...] If it is not ‘documented’ (legitimated in its own time), how does it exist? Is it silenced or deferred?” (72). She also questions whether violence occurs if the victim “has no words to name it or if [their] silence is enforced discursively and physically” (Million 2009, 72). The idea of archiving experiences, voices, and apologies remains crucial to upholding accountability and to understanding the histories of violence within colonial institutions. It then must be asked: what happens when our voices are omitted or obscured. Does this act privilege erasure? As Ahmed (2021b) argues, “racism is deleted by white people when its acknowledgment would compromise their sense of collegiality with other white people” (201).

Returning to the idea of institutional reputations, omitting complaints against the disciplinary authorities' refusal to keep Indigenous students safe is necessary as exposure to institutional violence would compromise the university's desired reputation of inclusivity and the reconciliatory efforts put forward within Barnard's statement of apology.

Likewise, with increased demonstrations surrounding, Black Lives Matter and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Peoples, institutions that are dedicated to uplifting these movements, are trailing them with minimal action. Transformative involvement in social justice movements requires "addressing issues of inequality, power, responsibility and ethics, and challenging the normalized practices through which inequalities are maintained" (Essed 2013, 1395). Supporting the call to social responsibility means being accountable to our inherent participation in maintaining these structures. The university's deceptive efforts are telling of where it truly stands. It names the violence as something of the past, distances itself from its continual involvement, and refrains from dismantling the systems that reproduce harm.

#### **# Universities as Sites of Colonial Reproduction: Thesis Format**

Academic institutions, like the University of Manitoba, maintain western knowledge production, as well as govern their university community through systematic laws and policy procedures. As such, they uphold western values found within course materials, discourse, and behaviours. It becomes the responsibility of the university community to make themselves aware of and adhere to the bylaws that structure the institution. In essence, they become subjects to the functionality of academic instruction, most often without realizing it. Louis Althusser describes this process as the reproduction of relations of production in *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*. As he asserts, educational state apparatuses take "...children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most 'vulnerable,'" and applies "a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy)" (Althusser 2014, 251). He refers to these processes as "mechanisms which produce the vital result for the capitalist regime" (Althusser 2014, 252). Academic instruction through its deadlines, methodologies, and languages, as examples, reflect the morals required to uphold this mode of production: students remain docile by sitting quietly unless instructed to speak, while professors stand and instruct.

Likewise, Theodor Adorno discusses the implications of subject positions within *Minima Moralia* through critiquing the impact of capitalism on everyday life. Post Second World War, Adorno reflects on the deformations of life and the incessant abstractions that follow heightened capitalism (Adorno 2020, 18). He documents the abstractions through short essays and aphorisms without any apparent connection from one idea to the next. The numbering, classification, and disjuncture between ideas helps accentuate both the formalities of the capitalist mode of production, and the stresses of alienation. As discussed within his work, the “sphere of consumption” obscures and limits autonomy, as life becomes not one for living, but one for participating in the reproduction of labour power. For Adorno (2020), “to speak immediately of the immediate is to behave much as those novelists who drape their marionettes in imitated bygone passions like cheap jewelry, and make people who are no more than component parts of machinery act as if they still had the capacity to act as subjects, and as if something depended on their actions. Our perception of life has passed into an ideology which conceals the fact that there is life no longer” (15). In this way, abstractions remain prerequisites to capitalism to disguise the limitations and ambiguities of implicit participation. Capitalism has been structured to dismiss confrontation and adversity to its mechanisms. Instead, it repositions those who challenge its systems as independent problems needing to be managed. While capitalism does not come into conversation much in my thesis, grounding the logics in which Adorno positions this mode of production, which reproduces state ideological apparatuses—i.e., academic institutions—remains imperative to associate the functions of his work with the format of my thesis.

Adorno’s structuring and format reflects the abstractions of my recent experience navigating the policy procedures at the University of Manitoba. The disarray surrounding the violence I endured does not permit a linear timeline. Rather, it is layered, and complex. Thus, using the writing style introduced within *Minima Moralia* demonstrates a reflective method to navigate an impairing experience with an academic institution that reproduces violence through its policy environment, actions and inactions. I have omitted the numbering of each subsection for hashtags as a response to the performative nature of the university’s participation in social justice movements and its inclusivity campaigns. Its timely posts on social media about sexual violence awareness, queerness, and Indigenous Peoples follow sexual violence awareness week, International Women’s Day, Pride, and Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Details of my experience can

be made into hashtags as a way to insert myself into these campaigns through resistance and critiques. They can be formulated as difference to the positive environments that the university puts forward; as another way to archive my complaints through abbreviation. As an example, I can rephrase #UMIndigenous as #UMIndigenousStudentsAreNotSafe. Using hashtags is demonstrative of intentional ways to write myself into the narratives that continuously work to silence me. Thus, I have written both sections of my thesis, Lived Experience as Narrative and Policy Review using this format, as it best describes my encounters with institutional violence.

The former section theorizes my experiences of navigating the University of Manitoba's policy environment to create meaningful engagement with my research. The use of critical theory reiterates how lived experiences are rooted in structures and systems that make up societal behaviours and patterns. My personal narrative presents accountability, and locates my positionality in relation to an academic institution that claims to support Indigenous students. The ivory walls that strive to maintain Indigenous recruitment mirror intricate boxes that we must conform to, to fulfill our degree requirements. As such, my thesis examines how the policy environment neglects Indigenous students' safety while on campus and within virtual learning spaces as a result of COVID-19. The shift to virtual learning towards the end of the academic year in 2020 was not set up proficiently to ensure students' success without disruption from neo-Nazis. As a result, myself and some of my colleagues were met with resistance and a horrid display of racialized and sexualized violence.

I have limited the analysis within the latter section to procedures that follow the university's disciplinary process. The policy review comprises several procedures put forward by the University of Manitoba, which include non-academic misconduct, discipline, student by-laws, sexual violence, and the non-existent but forthcoming zero-tolerance policy on racism. My analysis reviews the *Student Discipline* bylaw, the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure, the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment (RWLE)* policy, the *Sexual Violence* policy, and the *University of Manitoba's Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Violence: A Final Report*. I recognize the latter document is not a policy however, it provides additional data surrounding sexual violence on campus, and in time, will inform changes to the *Sexual Violence* policy. Unlike this procedure, no other reports exist to inform changes to policies concerning discipline, harassment or racism. Thus, this associated document brings into question the performative nature of changing the

policy environment. For the purpose of my thesis, I have decided to review only parts of the bylaws that directly apply to my experience.

### **# Positionality as Reflexivity**

In all academic writing, it remains crucial to locate yourself and your positionality with the encountered themes, experiences, and literatures. Margaret Kovach stresses the importance of self-location in *Indigenous Methodologies*, especially when confronting western academic instruction. She argues that “...keeping one’s location front and centre is a way that individuals can consciously assert from where their strength comes, and ensures that their integrity will not become compromised by the trials of academic research” (Kovach 2009, 112). In many ways, self-location maintains accountability to our research, and provides an opportunity to share our strengths and fragilities as academics. It allows moments of reflexivity and the ability to ground ourselves in our research.

As such, I am a Métis woman born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am in the process of learning about my Métis identity, as I was not granted the opportunity to connect with my Métis relatives earlier in life due to substance use and alcoholism. I recognize my Métis family that held land and lived in the Red River Settlement, now recognized as High Bluff, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk, and my English, Scottish and German settler family that lives predominately in Winnipeg and Dauphin. As I navigate my Métis identity, I am confronted with familiar names like, Monkman, Drain, and Cummings, and feelings of anxiety, as they remain solely names to me. My fragility appears while pursuing Indigenous Studies, as the disconnection sometimes makes me uncomfortable when reading about realities I have not experienced. Feelings of not being Indigenous enough persist as I am still in the process of learning customs and meeting family for the first time. Thus, my fragility reveals itself through vulnerability. The Métis histories I was taught up until recently polarized Métis authenticity as lower class, living in big communities, speaking Michif, jigging, and moving west post-resistances in 1870 and 1885. However, my familial experiences have never followed this trajectory. Since 1859, my Métis ancestors, the Houries, lived and continue to live on the same land in the Parish of High Bluff. They lived in a two-storey house with three separate bedrooms on the top floor. They had a family of twelve, but from what I gather at this moment in time, they lived relatively isolated from other parish members. They hired Métis people from the road allowance to work their farm land, and for the most part, lived a relatively middle-class life. Family members who struggled

with substance use and poverty became ostracized, and as my immediate family, I do not know much about them or how and where they connect with my relatives. My Métis identity is a work in progress, but for a few students in an introductory class, it became something to take, to sexualize and to use against me.

I have been reminded of my Métis identity in several ways, but never through the extremes I experienced while working at the University of Manitoba. The university remains a complex site as it acts as a place of learning on a physical campus through a program that teaches Indigenous histories, whiteness, and reproductions of power relations. It also brings together a group of people to discuss community, and it is a place that tolerates racialized and sexualized violence. Thus, I am hoping to put forward solutions by way of my thesis to help strengthen the safety of the university community, specifically for Indigenous students. I have lived a relatively sheltered life, where the safety of my middle-class status and my skin colour allows me to navigate the world as a woman, and not as a Métis woman. The associated privilege has intensified my fear of white supremacy on campus as I have never been directly exposed to such displays of racialized and sexualized violence. In some ways, I have internalized these instances, and believed that they were my fault and that I should not have reacted emotionally. Therefore, like my refusal to accept that the disciplinary authorities are doing enough, I refrain from comparing experiences with those who have lived through decades and centuries of racialized and sexualized violence. My refusal embodies an awareness that the disciplinary authorities tolerate abusive behaviours, regardless of scale or lasting impact.

The relevance and importance of my positionality is to acknowledge that, prior to the experiences I will recount in detail throughout my thesis, I have been privileged with ignorance as I have not had to live with the looming reminder of the everyday racialized and sexualized violence that exists on the physical campuses and within the virtual learning platforms at the University of Manitoba. To quote Pierre Bourdieu (1992) in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, “when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted” (127). My experience of the institutional world, my habitus, allowed me to remain ignorant to the everyday occurrence of this violence. However, many Indigenous students cannot escape it as easily or at all. Thus, reflexivity is imperative to my work, to understanding how I position myself, and how my positioning may reproduce harms if not introduced with care.



Throughout my thesis I will introduce many critical theorists, feminists, and post-structuralists. Some names may have readers questioning my choices and the contradictions imposed through my decision to include the voice of Althusser, for example, who committed the inexcusable and horrid act of violence through murdering his wife. While she was silenced to death, he continued conversations surrounding his theoretical contributions and prominence in Marxist and French philosophical circles. As my thesis works to identify policies that have failed to keep Indigenous students safe, and by way of their failure, have tolerated racialized and sexualized violence towards women, it is essential for me to explain my use of Althusser and why he shows up throughout my work. Prior to learning about this horrific action towards his wife, Althusser was one of the first critical theorists who motivated my research with critical theory. He is mentioned when explaining academic institutions as state ideological apparatuses, however, as these institutions reproduce harms towards Indigenous Peoples and women, any mention at all seems contradictory. Therefore, I have omitted his voice in many sections to ensure my thought process does not reproduce this same violence.

In addition, my thesis was informed by first reading Sara Ahmed's blog, *feministkilljoy*, and then through reading her most recent work, *Complaint!* In many ways, my thesis is in conversation with Ahmed's contributions to the critiques of academic spaces as unsafe for those the institution was not designed for. I was able to locate myself and my experiences in the many examples she illustrates throughout her work, which led me to question the impact and tolerance of racialized and sexualized violence within academic institutions that were established to eradicate difference globally. Her portrayal of doors, power imbalances, institutional reputations and the reproduction of violence, are all indicative of harms committed by institutions that refuse to intervene and restructure the structures that perpetuate harm. Complaints often do not lead to justice for the Complainant; rather, they are met with resistance to transformative changes out of fear that these complaints will cause more harm than good. Thus, Ahmed is cited extensively throughout my thesis as all contexts, critiques, and explanations are relevant and portray the violence that structure academic institutions.

### **# Sequence of Events**

As my experience does not necessarily permit a linear timeline, I have decided to include a sequence of the violence I endured to help guide readers.

- 1 February 2021: Initial disruption occurred in the introductory course resulting in increased security measures to keep students safe. The university's security services were notified of the instances. My colleagues and I tested various virtual platforms to host class safely.
- 3 February 2021: Disruptions persisted resulting in the online classroom moving from Zoom to Microsoft Teams. My personal social media accounts were targeted and stalked.
- 5 February 2021: Myself and the Professor continued to be targeted outside of class. Enhanced security measures were added for class to continue on Zoom. All students were required to register using their university email, and were vetted by myself and the other Teaching Assistant to access class.
- 8 February 2021: Disruptions continued regardless of enhanced security measures. Disciplinary authorities were notified, and class was postponed until they deemed it safe to continue.
- 22 February 2021: Class resumed with a new Professor using the same 'secure' Zoom link. The disciplinary authorities had not deemed class safe to continue.
- 3 March 2021: Myself and the other Teaching Assistant were advised to abandon all security measures as a test, and I became the new target as a result. Class switched to a new Zoom link. Non-students were able to access the classroom, and sent me an inappropriate message regarding my appearance. A waiting room was enabled, and several attempts were made to gain access to the class by non-students.
- 5 March 2021: Attempts persisted to gain access to the online classroom, with success. Students received private messages concerning my sexuality, and a supposed naked photo of me was circulated to everyone in class. After this attack, class moved from live lectures to asynchronous recordings.
- From 5 March to 14 April 2021: I worked with the Department of Indigenous Studies, the Dean of Arts' Office, and I was introduced to the Sexual Violence Resource Centre. My experience travelled to several graduate students, student centres, and departments without my permission or consent.
- 27 April – 27 July 2021: After class ended, I continued working with the Dean of Arts' Office, Sexual Violence Resource Centre, and several administrative departments to resolve the racialized and sexualized violence. After receiving resistance to rectify the

instances, I submitted an Impact Statement to the Dean of Arts' Office in attempts to receive closure.

- 28 July 2021: Disruptions persisted during a Question-and-Answer period offered by the Research Assistants working at the Centre for Human Rights Research. An individual impersonated me, and circulated the same supposed naked photo to participants of the meeting. They disguised the link as examples of paperwork offered by the Centre.
- 28 July 2021 – 15 September 2021: I continued working with administrative departments and the Sexual Violence Resource Centre to identify solutions to the sexualized and racialized violence. Communication ceased with all administrative departments as they advised nothing would come of the violence I endured.
- 6 December 2021: My final communication with the Sexual Violence Resource Centre, advising that they will remain supportive.

## **Part I: Lived Experience as Narrative**

### **Introduction to Part I**

The first part of my thesis theorizes my lived experience as narrative to discuss the layered violence I endured as both a graduate student and employee of the University of Manitoba. I begin by introducing the university's history of violence and social ideologies that structured and continue to structure the institution. I then locate the violence I endured as a Teaching and Research Assistant to demonstrate how this violence persisted. I conclude this section by summarizing the extent of the violence I endured, while looking at transformative structural changes to ensuring the safety of Indigenous students. I consult Ahmed's discussions of power imbalances, institutional failures to responding to complaints, the confining nature of complaints, as well as the internalization and reproduction of violence. I also incorporate critical theory and post-structuralism in my analysis to understand the logics of social ideologies that work to reproduce racialized and sexualized violence. The convoluted organization of this section provides an outlook into my experience post-violence, as I navigated communications with several administrative departments. I am hopeful that the frustration and confusion identified within my written voice is most clear.

### **# Governing, Governance**

Unfortunately, there are concerns with data collection and the documentation of violence. In conversation, I was explained that reports are often compiled by those directly affected by the

violence they are writing about. Once completed, reports are then sent to those who require evidence of the violence in question in order to understand structural barriers and how to effectively generate change. One of the main issues with reports is the implicit governing that occurs once they are made available to governing authorities. The emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual labour that goes into writing reports is transferred to those who govern our everyday lives. In this case, the University of Manitoba is the governing body, and my complaints comprise the report. As with changes to governing apparatuses, Michel Foucault retraces the genealogy of biopower in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, and how it is used by sovereigns to make live and let die. The governance of life and death remains in the control of “the sovereign [who] exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring” (Foucault 1978, 136). In this example, power equates the right of seizure (Foucault 1978, 136). In the classical period, in Western discourse, governing apparatuses shifted from the “right to take life or let live [with] a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death” (Foucault 1978, 138). This new form of governance came into effect when the ideology shifted towards administering and sustaining life.

Notably, academic institutions reflect the governing ideologies that Foucault explores in his theory of biopower. Universities, as state apparatuses, became “diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 1978, 140). They worked to maintain relations of production “in the sphere of economic processes” (Foucault 1978, 141). As Althusser (2014) explains, ideological state apparatuses, i.e., schools, maintain relations of production through education, as an example. He states, “the reproduction of labour-power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order. [...] In other words, the school [...] teaches ‘know-how,’ but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (Althusser 2014, 236). Academic institutions, as governing authorities, regurgitate ideologies by writing them into policies, which are also referred to as procedures or by-laws. In addition, these institutions “acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, [...] guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony” (Foucault 1978, 141). They classify and manage bodies to ensure the progression of the mode of production, while simultaneously excluding bodies that do not belong: those who show resistance to its regulations.

Similar to the shift that Foucault mentions between ancient and classical forms of biopower, institutional policies reflect a desire to administer and sustain life, and its associated rights. Thus, institutions, according to policies, work to ensure “the ‘right’ to life, to one’s body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or ‘alienations,’ the ‘right’ to rediscover what one is and all that one can be” (Foucault 1978, 145). If students are not afforded the right to life, in this sense, the institution works to disallow them to the point of death: to not show them care, resulting in their exclusion from the university community.

The institutional dystopia governs these rights with the help of the knowledge collected in written reports, i.e., complaints. Receiving insight on current governing structures, how well they work, and what changes are required allows them to perpetuate power over our bodies. The disciplinary authorities know what exists, how it exists, and how they can maintain these existing structures in ways to accommodate their objectives. Reports, and in my experience, complaints, are designed to identify where change needs to happen. Perhaps this is why complaints are not circulated to those who need to read them the most. Ahmed identifies the necessity of complaints to learn about environments. In this example, she contrasts institutional promotion with the lived experiences of those living with a disability: “There is a gap between how universities promote themselves as positive environments for equality and diversity and how universities are experienced by disabled academics. We are learning more about the gap between an appearance, a positive environment, and what some experience, a hostile environment” (Ahmed 2021b, 154). Complaints that identify gaps often remain at lower levels, and with those who are most aware of what needs to change. Unfortunately, within the hierarchy of institutions, these individuals cannot effectively generate transformative environments.

In my experience, I received the most support from those who could not action change. Professors from several departments, the Sexual Violence Resource Centre, and my external counsellors were the ones who showed up and supported me as I navigated the repercussions of the violence I experienced. They were the ones who were most frustrated with the situation, and how the disciplinary authorities were not willing to conduct an investigation to identify the responsible student(s). Their placement in the governing structure allowed them to voice their concerns, but it did not provide them with the ability to let die. As Althusser (2014) sympathizes, “I ask pardon of those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they ‘teach’ against the ideology, the system and the

practices in which they are trapped” (252). Like Althusser, I thank those who stood alongside me as I navigated the endless bureaucratic red tape. As the university was built using a hierarchal model, those at the top, whom I had the opportunity to meet with, are the ones who could generate effective change. As they refused to do so, I was met with resistance at the bottom. As I mentioned in my Impact Statement, I know my place at the university and how it is increasingly challenging to introduce change as a result.

### **# Academic Institutions as Colonial Sites**

The University of Manitoba’s campuses are located on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Ininewak, Anishininwak, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis. The university’s history reflects the colonial legacy that persists. Comprised of several buildings in its early years, the university has since expanded its campuses, and remains somewhat impartial to those who were wrongfully and forcefully dispossessed from their lands during treaty negotiations and resistances. Randall Akee (2021) explores how some of the most prominent academic institutions in the United States (U.S.) could only exist by dispossessing Indigenous Peoples of their lands and enslaving others. He evaluates the success of U.S. educational institutions alongside their history of land theft and the “enslaved labor resources of others” to conclude that “there has been no accounting or thorough restitution made” to those who were forcefully removed from their land (Akee 2021, 123). The intricacy of what Akee defines as landgrab universities is land dispossession. In the Manitoban context, the establishment of the University of Manitoba prepared future teachers in both science and arts at St. John’s College, Manitoba College, as well as in the French language at what is now l’Université de Saint-Boniface. Its continual expansion throughout the twentieth century allowed predominantly settler women and men to fulfill their careers and advance their livelihoods.

Meanwhile, Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed of the same opportunities as many did not own property as required by Canadian law. In addition, to obtain a university degree in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, First Nations would need to disenfranchise and move away from their reserves, as many still do. The intergenerational suffering, as a result of land dispossession, debilitated Indigenous lives and cultures. For most, “the lack of savings subsequently impacts the ability of families to send their children to college, invest in new businesses, pay for necessary healthcare, or improve their homes. Deprivation accumulates over generations” (Akee 2021, 124). Thus, the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from land,

although it may seem distant, impacts future generations as they were never offered support to help cover financial expenses required to obtain university degrees. As James Daschuk (2019) articulates throughout *Clearing the Plains*, the establishment of Indian administration that led to excessive disease and death through the mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada's early years of colonization enabled this vicious cycle to work itself into future years of Indigenous livelihoods.

The university remains a colonial institution through the perpetuation of Indigenous violence on its physical campuses and within its online learning spaces. In the past, this violence reflected forceful removals from land to access specific territories for its white settler student body. Today, the university distances its past through territorially acknowledgments, resurrecting the history of campus lands (University of Manitoba 2017, 1) and by announcing its “strategic priorities for Creating Pathways for Indigenous Achievement” (University of Manitoba 2020d, 31). The decades in between seem to remain unquestioned. As Akee (2021) explains, “while dispossession and loss of land are immediately disruptive, the intergenerational impact is not often assessed. [...] What [this] fails to account for are the cumulative costs and lost opportunities associated with the stealing of Indigenous lands. Numerous choices and decisions faced by Indigenous [P]eoples have been constrained, generation after generation, due to the taking of their lands” (125). The lost opportunities are reflective of the university's desire to give back to Indigenous Peoples, although their offers appear to be limited. Daschuk (2019) includes critical responses to *Clearing the Plains* where Mary-Ellen Kelm discusses Canadians' “inability to fully grasp the foundational violence of our nation's past” (207). Kelm articulates the importance of “historical amnesia and intractable problems” to allow distance between the past and present (207). As mentioned in my Introduction, the university's structures perpetuated educational violence through training teachers for residential schools, and as mentioned here, through its placement on stolen land that perpetuated dispossession. How the university responds to systemic violence is telling of its accountability and positionality by way of its tolerance of racialized and sexualized violence. In addition, Dian Million (2009) argues that “academia serves as a gatekeeper, challenging alternative forms of knowing. Because the emotional knowledge of our [Indigenous] experience is an alternative truth, it is challenged ferociously” (64). Million's argument is reflective of the history of the Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of

Manitoba, as well as offers insight into the history of racism at the university that helps contextualize my experience.

At the height of Indigenous Peoples' social movements in the 1970s, following the rejection of late Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's *White Paper*, and the release of Harold Cardinal's book, *The Unjust Society* in 1969, Canadians were becoming increasingly aware of the injustices Indigenous Peoples were experiencing. Unfortunately, Indigenous Peoples were still exposed to everyday racism and feelings of unsafety while navigating university campuses at this time. According to the University of Manitoba, there were approximately 13,377 students enrolled, fifty of whom were Indigenous (University of Manitoba 2019a). With such a low enrollment rate, "students would comment [that] they felt isolated physically and culturally while on campus, sometimes going days or weeks without seeing another Indigenous person. Services for Indigenous-specific student needs were non-existent. [...] [And m]any wanted to practice and utilize knowledges from their cultures and communities in their academic and social life" (University of Manitoba 2019a). To promote social justice movements on campus, eleven students in the Faculty of Arts created the "... *Indian Métis Eskimo Student Association (IMESA)* to advocate for Indigenous issues and inclusion on the campus of the University of Manitoba" (University of Manitoba 2019a). Their collective advocacy and inclusionary efforts extended past the structures set by the predominately white campus community.

As was seen in the Faculty of Engineering's newspaper, *The Cursor*, Indigenous Peoples were subjected to horrid displays of discrimination and harassment. IMESA challenged the derogatory comments made towards Indigenous Peoples in an article that "depicts Indians as violent, drunken, promiscuous, and physically repulsive" (Reed 1971, 1). Interestingly, I was not able to locate this article in the university's archives, in its libraries, or by reaching out to the Faculty of Engineering. It seems to have disappeared without a trace. However, the University of Manitoba Archives was able to locate several articles from *The Manitoban* and *The Winnipeg Tribune*, which detail responses and outlines some of the derogatory and stereotypical characterizations used to describe Indigenous Peoples who frequented bars on Main Street in Winnipeg in the 1970s. As stated in *The Manitoban*, "among the references to Indians in the *Cursor* story are the following: \* 'Each one of us (was) wondering what he would look like with a tomahawk buried in his skull.' [...] \* 'Three Indian women, each old enough to be my mother, approached us and asked us to buy them a drink. After appraising them from head to toe and



deciding that we couldn't profit from them, we said 'no'' (Reed 1971, 1). The late president of IMESA responded to the article, demanding legal action, while questioning whether "this article [is] a reflection of the mentality and attitudes of the engineering student body in this university? [...] To what extent does it express the opinions of the entire university student body towards the Canadian Indian people?" (Reed 1971, 1). The article depicts racialized and sexualized violence that six white men from the Faculty of Engineering were able to publish, without punishment, towards Indigenous Peoples. *The Winnipeg Tribune* published an article titled, "U dean apologizes for Indian story," which reflects the outrage expressed by the Indigenous community in Winnipeg. An emergency meeting was declared at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, where the Dean of Engineering publicly apologized for the article. In response, Indigenous Peoples vocalized their frustrations and their concerns with the insufficiency of receiving a mere apology. According to *The Winnipeg Tribune* (1974), an Indigenous man vocalized how "Sympathy has never got the Indian people anywhere ... we can't even spell the bloody word." [...] 'It's high time the universities across the country began legislating against students who write and publish this kind of literature'" (4). The Dean of Engineering followed up their statements with another apology, and advised that "there is little that can be done about preventing similar articles in the future" (*The Winnipeg Tribune* 1971, 4). The patterns are evident and repetitive. Racist and sexist behaviours prevail. Institutions only respond if it is in their best interests. The responses include apologies, as well as a disregard for transformative changes. Following the printed article in 1970, responses were actioned quickly as a result of pressure from IMESA, and dissipated from the news just as fast. If Indigenous Peoples want to see changes, they must action them themselves, as was seen with the creation of the Department of Indigenous Studies, which followed this article in *The Cursor*. First offered in the Fall of 1971, *Native Views*, a free class taught voluntarily by Indigenous students, transformed over the course of three years into the Department of Indigenous Studies that remains needed to this day.

Clearly, there is a history of violence towards Indigenous Peoples at the University of Manitoba. This history cannot be compartmentalized in the past, as it is ongoing and ever-present. The protection of six white men students from receiving punishment after printing and circulating an article that engages racist stereotypes and sexualizes Indigenous women promotes the tolerance of racist narratives that "nothing can be done." Relating this history to my experience heightens the exhaustive work that goes into making complaints. As Ahmed (2021b)

states, “Complaints teach us who has to do ‘more work’ to get through and thus who is spared from having to do ‘more work’ to get through. I have learned about what it means to be spared from doing ‘more work’ from talking to those who are not spared” (234). Not only did my complaints follow the narrative that “nothing can be done,” they also disregarded past histories of violence that remain present, and that continue to uphold structural power imbalances.

### **# Made Aware**

Two professors, one who stepped away, one who took their place; the Department Head of Indigenous Studies; staff from the Department of Indigenous Studies; graduate students in Indigenous Studies; the Indigenous Student Centre; the Sexual Violence Resource Centre; the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs; the Dean of the Faculty of Arts; the Vice-Provost of Student Affairs; the Director of Security Services; an IT Security Coordinator; the Director of IT Security & Compliance; the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); the Office of Human Rights and Complaint Management; staff from the Department of History; staff from the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies; the Centre for Human Rights Research; and the Executive Director of the Office of Risk and Compliance. Parts of my experience were circulated to everyone listed, although I was never given the space to disclose my truth, in full; only fragments. Like this list, my experience was layered, which made it intelligible to share only relevant parts to relevant people. Much like the compartmentalization of the colonial past and present, the compartmentalization of my experience feels inadequate, as it is necessary to exposing the disciplinary authorities’ inability to protect staff and students. The university’s timelines and policy processes fragmented my capacity to share my truth entirely. Accordingly, the act of compartmentalization works to uphold colonial regulation. As Glen Coulthard (2014) quotes Fanon in *Red Skin, White Masks*, “the ‘colonial world,’ [...] is ‘compartmentalized, Manichean, and petrified’; it is a world in which the ‘colonial subject’ is ‘penned in,’ lies ‘coiled and robbed,’ taught ‘to remain in his place and not overstep his limits’” (113).

Compartmentalization produces stagnancy, as the colonial structures reproduce the colonized subjects’ immobility (Coulthard 2014, 113). Through abiding by the institution’s regulations, the complainant becomes immobile as the very act of voicing a concern reduces them to the problem (Ahmed 2021b, 150). They are designated a problem for challenging the disciplinary authorities’ bleak regulations that maintain the status quo.

### **# Tolerating Anti-Indigenous Violence**

In 2018, anti-Indigenous content was plastered on the Fort Garry campus through the hanging of “it’s okay to be white” posters in several university buildings (CBC News 2018). The harms displayed were part of a “co-ordinated international effort by neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups” (CBC News 2018). The intentions were to incite fear. In response to the posters that were hung up again in 2019, Delia Douglas, Dr. Marcia Anderson, and Ry Moran, expressed concern over the university’s heightened silence. They called for communal “responsibility for creating a safe learning and working environment, one that is free from racism.” They also expressed how “silence locates the burden of responsibility on those who are the targets. This is another form of racialized hostility and is how racism persists, dehumanizes and divides” (Douglas, Anderson, and Moran 2020). They continue by stating the problem with the university’s refusal to respond to racist sentiments: “the status quo of silence is no longer tolerable. Silence does not address the existence of racism rather it offers racism a place of escape – ‘hiding in plain sight’ as it were” (Douglas, Anderson, and Moran 2020). Lastly, they acknowledge the university’s aims to create “a proactive response to challenging racism,” while admitting much work must be done to ensure safety for all (Douglas, Anderson, and Moran 2020). As noted in this example, professors and staff at the University of Manitoba are calling for active engagement and a more pressing response from disciplinary authorities. In addition, this article calls attention to an understanding of the complexities surrounding the university’s response; by acknowledging the harms committed, they are providing space for and allowing time to reflect on the violent actions, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of denouncing these behaviours.

It is most concerning that the attacks mentioned in this article went unacknowledged by the university’s disciplinary authorities. They became more personal, as emails were sent to at least eleven faculty members, and a fax with the same message was sent to the Women’s and Gender Studies department, signed by “A Wyatt. Man” (Abas 2019). As noted by Abas (2019), “the poster campaign originated on the online message board 4chan, where organizers encourage individuals to hang the posters anonymously in Halloween costumes. The goal is to use a simplistic phrase to ‘bait’ those who respond to it into revealing anti-white sentiments.” The connections between 4chan and the university continue but with a more personalized approach. Through the use of virtual learning spaces, these individuals were able to create immediate hysteria and feelings of unsafety, while still remaining anonymous. Like Halloween costumes,

the non-student perpetrators hid behind fake usernames that are virtually untraceable. If 4chan organizers were asking individuals to hang posters on campus, these individuals must live nearby. If they want access to online classrooms, they must enlist the help of a registered student. The message remains: they were here, and they continue to be here.

The disciplinary authorities claimed to complete an investigation of the attacks in 2018, but were not able to identify the responsible individuals. As reported by Alexandra Paul (2018), the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) did not indicate “whether the incident was being investigated as a potential hate crime.” Rather, “due to the nature of the complaint, the report [went] directly to [their] intelligence unit for follow up. It will be up to them to determine if further investigation is needed” (Paul 2018). Passing the torch instead of explicitly stating the foreseeable outcome remains a useful tactic for the WPS. Using the same response we received regarding the online attacks in March, the WPS advised in 2018 that because there was no threat to one’s physical self or property, the hanging of posters would not be considered a hate crime. The logic put forward by the WPS does not sufficiently respond to blatant acts of racism. A message was being circulated that a group of assumed white students are not accepting of difference or marginalized peoples’ achievement. As these reminders have persisted over the last three years, I fear they will continue to spread fear and cause harm. Both the physical campuses and virtual learning spaces were and continue to be unsafe for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. Without apprehending the responsible student(s), the university is signalling that this behaviour is tolerated.

After the posters were hung up in 2018, Indigenous students felt increased tensions on the Fort Garry campus. As Shayla Seymour-Hourie stated, “You need to find your own sense of belonging because ... you know this wasn’t an institution meant for us. We weren’t meant to be here” (Gonzalez 2018). Students shared concerns over the possibility of heightened violence, and have expressed feelings of unsafety and that “their existence is being questioned” (Gonzalez 2018). As racism occurs every day, affecting Indigenous students on campus, much of their direct experiences with racialized violence go unreported. The constant variable is the disciplinary authorities’ inaction. In addition, I have taken part in conversations where folks have shared the few safe spaces on campus for Indigenous students. Does this not set a precedent? Indigenous students do not feel safe in online classrooms nor on the wider physical campuses as a result of a lack of effort to ensure their safety. The Indigenous Student Centre also received

“Zoom bombings” during Fire Side Chats in 2021: a space that is designed for Indigenous students and staff to feel safe while learning about traditional teachings with Elders. The lack of preventative measures creates a tolerance of anti-Indigenous violence in academic spaces. It also demonstrates a need for accountability from the disciplinary authorities regarding its due diligence to Indigenous students. To put it bluntly, do not recruit us if you refuse to keep us safe.

### **# Notepad Gone Rogue**

Post-attacks within the introductory course, my desk was flooded with scraps of paper. Some are dated, some are titled, some include lists of names, some include meeting minutes. Almost all mention the words: wellbeing, frustration, violation, Indigenous, harassment, privacy, and they are riddled with countless question marks. Documenting the policy process has not been easy. Even though a majority of the scrap pieces of paper are not dated, my memory is able to piece them together. Working through my thesis has been both therapeutic and retraumatizing. I have had to read and re-read the following words several times over: confidentiality, harassment, re-traumatization, failings, responsibility, unsafe, investigation, and *Respectful Working and Learning Environment*. Countless conversations transpired, discussing the same subjects. All of which confirmed the disciplinary authorities’ negligence to keep me safe. I documented these conversations, knowing they would be somehow useful. Now, I am able to present their reluctance to counter institutional indifference. This term reflects the distancing committed by institutions to effectively propose solutions to instances of violence. As Audra Simpson (2016) explains, “states that are built upon violence [...] still act violently, either at a bureaucratic level, at an economic level [...] or through a violent indifference” (3). She associates the latter term with the example of the federal government’s performative remorse and apologies concerning residential schools, while refusing to launch an inquiry into the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Peoples (Simpson 2016, 3). Institutional indifference then, perpetuates violence as it refuses to erect transformative changes that locate and dismantle structures that allow it to transpire. As with my experience, bringing attention to this violence means that the disciplinary authorities have to acknowledge and address its reproduction of violence.

### **# Names**

Johnathan Bernstein, Fredrik Kleppe, Adam Fuller, 335742, Stella Maris, Emile Foidstein, Body, jinjin, Jonathan, Eric Jefferson, Catherine, Kevin Zelskinsky, Daniel Goldberg.

These are some of the names of non-students who were trying to access the introductory course during the attacks in both February and March. It is interesting that many alt-right individuals thought to use Jewish last names in hopes to deceive us and gain access to class.

### **# Twenty-Four Views, Five Days**

It was challenging to become the target of individuals who worked tirelessly to ensure their anti-Indigenous violence was received. On Monday, 1 March, I received a private message on Zoom during the class lecture. It was from a non-student who successfully accessed the class. I did not recognize their name. By this point in the semester, I had memorized a majority of the class list to speed up the vetting process. The non-student commented on my appearance, saying that I looked good today. They concluded the message with a winking-face emoticon. Immediately after receiving this direct message, I turned off my camera. I was subjected to unwanted sexual commentary during a class lecture. After removing the individual from class, I reported the instance to the other Teaching Assistant and Professor. The next two classes, me and the other Teaching Assistant worked tirelessly to cross-reference students in the waiting room with the class list to ensure non-students would not gain access to class.

On Wednesday, 3 March, individuals whose names we did not recognize joined the waiting room but were not let into class. Myself and the other Teaching Assistant were optimistic that they gave up. However, on Friday, 5 March, I received a private message from a student I recognized. They mentioned that they received a “concerning message about me” from someone in the class. One minute later, this supposed non-student circulated a message to the Zoom chat. The former message read, “Did you see Sarah[‘]s onlyfans?? (Sarah Hourie), she is literally selling nudes at our school lmfao.” The latter read, “uhh Sarah you need to check your facebook right now, your ex boyfriend is leaking pictures of you.” The individual provided a link to an IMGUR photo, along with these two messages. I was mortified. It was 11 March by the time I had supports in place to preview the photo. When retrieving the link, I was asked to verify if the photo was of me, “in whole or in part.” The photo was uploaded to IMGUR approximately seven minutes before it was circulated to our class. Within five days, it received twenty-four views. Who viewed the photo, and why? Were students curious to see if it was of me?

### **# Elicit Reaction**

One of the university’s IT Security Coordinators inspected the link to ensure the supposed naked photo was safe to open. As mentioned in email correspondence, the actual photo

had no mention of OnlyFans. Thus, IT suspected that “this statement was just to [elicit] a reaction.” The photo was previewed by the coordinator: at least one view had an explanation.

### **# Describing Someone Who Looks Like You**

“The image is of an individual, in what appears to be a bathroom, taking a mirror selfie with frontal nudity. Partial nudity of side angle of lower body.” This description was included in one of the email threads, asking me to confirm if the photo was of me—in full or in parts. “If I were her, I would want it taken down at the first opportunity.” This message was included in an email thread, three days after the final attack in March. “IT has made a copy of the photo linked to the class with the bare bits black boxed (it was a topless shot) and is wondering if you could confirm whether it is flat out not you, or if some of it is from other images of you that have been photoshopped onto someone else (IT thinks not, as if so, it is a professional level edit) as this impacts how they will proceed.” This message was included in another email thread asking me to confirm my identity in the photo.

I was asked twice, in two separate email correspondences, from two somewhat strangers, to confirm my identity in the photo. Descriptions of the photo were included in both emails. A white man provided the former description, and an Indigenous woman the latter, without warning, as they were aware that it could be unsettling to view. Neither of them asked if I would like a separate description of the photo, before previewing. They created an edited version, should I be more comfortable previewing that photo. They took the time to create black boxes to hide my potential boobs and ass. This correspondence does not follow a trauma-informed approach; rather, it assumes awareness of the issue in real-time. I had asked the IT Security Coordinator to confirm the link was safe to open, not to identify the body parts captured in the image. At this point, I had not yet previewed the photo. So, this person could have been me. IT could have been describing my body, my ass, my boobs, my mirror selfie, my bathroom.

### **# Sexualization of Indigenous Women’s Bodies**

Sexual violence towards Indigenous women has been ongoing from the onset of global colonization. Lands, like the bodies of Indigenous women, have been conquered, weaponized, and over-sexualized to secure the objectives of white patriarchy. As Anne McClintock examines in *Imperial Leather*, colonial maps of predominately Indigenous territories have used women’s anatomy to depict the location of treasure and dangerous landscapes. She argues that the map reproduced in Henry Rider Haggard’s novel, *King Solomon’s Mines*, “is [on one hand,] a rough

sketch of the ground the white men must cross in order to secure the riches of the diamond mines. On the other hand, if the map is inverted, it reveals at once the diagram of a female body. The body is spread-eagled and truncated—the only parts drawn are those that denote female sexuality” (McClintock 1995, 3). The implicit gendering of imperialism and conquest have persisted through time to impart colonial narratives. McClintock (1995) continues: “female figures were planted like fetishes at the ambiguous points of contact, at the borders and orifices of the contest zone. Sailors bound wooden female figures to their ships’ prows and baptized their ships [...] with female names. Explorers called unknown lands ‘virgin’ territory. Philosophers veiled ‘Truth’ as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil” (24). Imperial minds introduced a narrative of superiority that authorized their ability to discover, imbue knowledge, and transform land for imperial exploitation and productivity. In reading the description provided by McClintock, to do so, they dispossessed Indigenous women from these territories as they maintained power through their sexuality and their ability to reproduce Indigenous lives.

Therefore, proclaiming the need for white expansion. As stated,

within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason. Within colonial narratives, the eroticizing of ‘virgin’ space also effects a territorial appropriation, for if the land is virgin, colonized peoples cannot claim [Aboriginal] territorial rights, and white male patrimony is violently assured as the sexual and military insemination of an interior void. (McClintock 1995, 30)

Inevitably, this narrative has been used through time to uphold white supremacy and the need for continual Indigenous dispossession. Meanwhile, Indigenous women have been and continue to be subjected to overt sexualization that remains prevalent in procedural language, as well as in the perception of their bodies.

The historical analysis of sexualization emphasizes the established white male gaze towards Indigenous women. Our bodies are used to depict the assumed power imbalance. We remain captive in these narratives, and without exposing their false claims through penalizing students who uphold these attitudes, we remain subjected to them. Tasha Hubbard explains the correlation between the everyday violence towards Indigenous women and the damaging messages found within popular culture. She asserts, “the high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and increased incidents of relentless harassment are rooted in the belief that Indigenous women do not have agency and are therefore always available as sites of violence



without consequences” (Hubbard 2020, 68). Our bodies, and how they are perceived, become centralized in discussions concerning our own livelihood.

The partially nude photo, which could have been of me, was used as evidence to convince the Dean of the Faculty of Arts that punishment was in order, while the unacknowledged violence of stalking, unwanted sexual commentary, and racial harassment was ignored. The Dean’s Office prioritized confirming the evidence: was the photo of me or did it depict parts of me. Instead of reframing the extent of the violence, and how nothing that transpired should have been allowed to happen, the Dean’s Office reduced my experience to the sole evidence they had: the naked photo. This evidence was circulated to various disciplinary authorities as the only punishable offence. As a whole, what happened to me, and my colleagues, did not warrant an investigation. It all came down to a body. As Sherene Razack (2016) argues, “settler society has a compelling need to see visible inscriptions of colonial power on Indigenous bodies” (307). In many cases, involving sexual violence towards Indigenous women, Canadian laws aim to be indifferent and consist of “a determined looking away from colonialism” (Razack 2016, 296). They do not protect Indigenous women from experiencing sexualized and racialized violence, nor do they punish those who perpetuate it. As is the case of Cindy Gladue, an Indigenous woman who was brutally assaulted and left to die in a hotel bathroom. The violence surrounding her murder continued in the courtroom, when her vaginal tissue was used as evidence to humanize her case (Razack 2016, 287). Razack contextualizes the apparent need of Gladue’s body to assert legal action. She states, “it was the lethal inscriptions on Cindy Gladue’s flesh that risked being obscured if her vagina was not introduced as evidence” (Razack 2016, 306). The explicit abstraction of Gladue’s murder allows for systemic violence to prevail. The process of obscuring and dehumanizing our experiences of violence allows our testimonies, our tears, and our vulnerabilities to remain unheard or unseen by those who are reluctant to keep us safe. My experiences of violence were obscured and reduced to a single nude photo. Nothing else was deemed relevant enough to incite an investigation. The Dean’s Office only considered the most overt violence as it had tangible evidence. What could have been my body was used to perpetuate the sexualization of Indigenous women, and was later used to prove that nothing had actually happened, according to the Criminal Code and the university’s policies. I was reduced to a technicality. As Ahmed (2021b) argues, “Having the eye of the institution land on you is to be subjected to more and more requirements; you have to tell them more about yourself, give them

intimate details about your life, about going to the toilet; you have to turn yourself into data; even pee can end up a pie” (144). The implications surrounding the circulation of a naked photo are examples of sexualized violence that Indigenous women have had to endure since colonization. As such, white supremacists will continue to believe they have power over our bodies, and that circulating this narrative is acceptable. The disciplinary authorities’ lack of concern allows these racist and sexist narratives to prevail, which minimize the lived experiences of Indigenous women.

### **# Consent**

5 March 2021 comprised the worst of the targeted attacks I experienced as a Teaching Assistant. It became apparent that the responsible student(s)’ objective was to incentivize attacks on newer academics. Departmental staff reached out as they became aware of what happened. I had little energy to respond, but perhaps I should have been more transparent. Without my consent, a member of the Department of Indigenous Studies reached out to other departments within the Faculty of Arts, the Indigenous Student Centre and the Sexual Violence Resource Centre. My inbox was flooded with messages from concerned individuals who were willing to support me as I navigated the bureaucracy of the institution, but the methodology did not follow a trauma-informed approach. In initial correspondence, I was known as “the TA.” Nobody knew my name, but they had heard my story. My experience was conveyed as a TA “who is being horribly sexually harrassed [sic] by a student in one of their online classes.” When this correspondence was circulated, I had already advised that I was working with supports of my own. I did not ask to locate additional supports. It felt as though I was continuously made voiceless as my experience travelled to recipients I did not engage. Thus, I asked to close the circle of those made aware. I also encouraged that I be made aware of everyone who needed to be a part of the conversation first. Included here are my exact words, “If possible, please let me know who’s been made aware of these instances. I understand that I have a wonderful community that’s supporting me through this, but I will feel more comfortable if we engage in the next steps as a smaller team. If other folks need to be made aware of what’s going on, that’s fine. But please let me know beforehand, if possible.” I regret the hesitancy of my word choices, “if possible, if we, that’s fine.” I was not fine. I did not want it to be a possibility. I wanted to take control of my experience, but lacked courage to do so. I was so frightened by how the disciplinary authorities may respond that I did not want to overstep my boundaries; boundaries I

had not yet established. I was so concerned with hurting others that I ended up hurting myself the most. My boundaries were overlooked several times during the investigative process, and I did not realize the extent of my hurt. I was so focused on not exasperating others that I let myself down.

The passivity of my vocabulary is reflective of the lack of control I had over the conversation concerning the sexualized and racialized violence I experienced. As Ahmed describes, when feeling a shift in an institution's rhetoric and desire to confront the issue, the complainant often does not proceed with making the complaint. In describing a story, she asserts that, "she wasn't sure whether to go through with the complaint because of what she was being told [...]. Complaints are often treated as sticky data: if they stick to you, you fear, you are taught to fear, you will end up stuck" (Ahmed 2021a, 1). Without feeling supported by those who can initiate change, the complainant feels as though they are at fault for voicing the issue. The power imbalance recreates itself as the narrative becomes individualistic, feared, and of no benefit.

### **# Investigation**

One of the most painful experiences of the violence I endured was processing the aftermath. Since informing the Dean of the Faculty of Arts I have demanded an investigation to identify the responsible student(s). However, I do not believe a student from the course conducted the harassment entirely; I believe they were responsible for enabling those who did. Out of precaution, myself and the other Teaching Assistant changed the Zoom link several times. Each time we used Zoom, a few non-students tried to or successfully accessed the lectures. Someone from the class was sharing the link to a platform with neo-Nazis. As I will discuss further concerning the violence I endured as a Research Assistant, these attacks were not classified or considered a hate crime, nor do they fit within the university's existing policy environment. The possibility for a formal investigation was introduced as "student non-academic misconduct" that was being led by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. As the attacks occurred in an online setting, and did not introduce harm to one's physical self, one's property, or one's pets, the Winnipeg Police Services refused to intervene and take over the investigation.

By April, I had narrowed the suspect pool of student to five individuals who attended each class that was attacked, all of whom except one, were white men students, and each student gave me suspicion to believe they could have been responsible. Some students lingered after lectures without reason, some students submitted assignments with questionable content and

were very angry, and one of the students' names showed up twice in the final attack, whereby one of their accounts circulated the nude photo; however, nothing came of this information. I was forced to veto one of the five students from the list, as the Professor knew their family, and although they "are definitely alt-right," the student is "a good kid." I was also forced to veto another of the five, as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts dismissed all assignments as they did not explicitly mention hate speech. The Dean was not inclined to interview all students to further refine the list. A reoccurring statement made by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts was to protect the privacy of the students: "we have to be very careful with private information such as the name or names of any suspected students." This regurgitated statement reflects their disinclination to make any serious efforts to identify the responsible student(s). However, it is worth repeating that I felt denied my own privacy throughout the attacks and the following correspondence as my experience circulated, without my consent, to several third parties at the university. It was made clear during the initial pursuits for an investigation that one would not take place as the responsible student(s) could not be identified. In addition, we could not circulate our evidence to produce an investigation as it was considered "intellectual property." Thus, if anything, the disciplinary authorities should circulate a campus-wide statement explicitly identifying and affirming that anti-Indigenous racism is not admissible in university spaces.

### **# Three-Hundred-and-Twenty Dollars-and-Fifteen-Cents**

Following the instances in March, the Department of Indigenous Studies offered myself and the other Teaching Assistant financial compensation through setting up a PDA account for "ordering a few hundred dollars' worth of books through the university bookstore." The remuneration covered the extra hours we worked to ensure the safety of the class. Our efforts consisted of testing the classroom's pedagogies in Microsoft Teams and WebEx as opposed to Zoom, familiarizing ourselves with the class list to expedite the vetting process, and monitoring students' safety during class discussions. As an example, we learnt how to enable Zoom's functionalities without limiting student participation. Without the help of representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Dean of the Faculty of Arts would have refused to provide actual financial compensation. The Dean delayed payment for four months as they could not agree on a price and kept offering our union lesser amounts. The union's initial offer was \$900; the Dean finally agreed upon \$320.15. As I mention in my Impact Statement, I

was doubtful that I would receive this compensation. Initially, members of the Department of Indigenous Studies advised that they could not increase the terms of our contract “due to union rules.” However, our union was never contacted about this request. The bureaucracy of this process was debilitating, as the Dean put a price on my experience of racialized and sexualized violence. I felt worthless as the Dean refused to investigate and identify the responsible student(s), and paid me a third of the price that was initially proposed. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts’ failures to provide a safe work and learning environment sent a strong message about their priorities: they tolerate racialized and sexualized violence, and would rather ignore the harm by compensating students. It all comes back to money.

### **# Brevity**

In most cases concerning sexual violence, institutions tend to amplify their response in attempts to swiftly brush the matter under the rug. As in my experience, I was met with prompt correspondence after the final attack in March, which did not respect the time I required to process the violence I endured. As more individuals were looped into the conversations, I felt the need to interject to control the outcome, and to determine what was happening and what was going to happen. Phrased differently, I had to take control over the decisions that would impact me the most. The promptness to address the harassment reflects a colonial trope, whereby in attempts to appear as concerned and willing to support those affected by violence, we become subjected to revictimization. Neglect is coupled with paternalism. Myself and my colleagues remained at the disposal and discretion of the university’s disciplinary authorities. We had to prove that we were deserving of safety. We were advised that the initial attacks were our fault, as we did not have the proper security measures in place to prevent the responsible student(s) from letting non-students into the virtual classroom. Though, ironically, we were advised to abandon all security measures to see what would happen. The lack of internal communication, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts’ desire to handle the situation as quickly as possible allowed for additional harm. As Ahmed (2021b) explains, “Complaints about assault can be treated as an assault. As such, the person who is complained about is turned into the one *really* being persecuted” (207). In addition, if we did not vocalize our frustrations and desires to step away from assisting with the course, nothing would have transpired. We were the ones who stressed we had enough and demanded that the disciplinary authorities identify the responsible student(s). Our efforts are best explained by Ahmed’s discussions of the complainant having to direct

communication. She states, “The person who puts the complaint forward ends up being *the conduit*; they have to *hold* all the information in order that it can be circulated; they have to keep things moving” (Ahmed 2021b, 36). Much like our experience, we were the ones who, although mentally, emotionally, and physically drained by this violence, had to continue insisting that the disciplinary authorities take action.

It seems as though once financial compensation was ‘agreed’ upon, the disciplinary authorities felt they had done everything in their power to address the situation, and decided to end any possibility for an investigation. The financial compensation was set to arrive 23 July 2021. Representatives of the Canadian Union for Public Employees informed me of this arrival time, not the disciplinary authorities, who had completely withdrawn from communications, as though the situation had been resolved. Early on, I decided I would not settle for anything less than identifying the responsible student(s) as they caused harm to myself, my colleagues and students. Considering that the disciplinary authorities refrained from informing me of the progression of an investigation, which action items would be implemented from my Impact Statement, and how instances of violence would be prevented in the future indicates their lack of support and empathy for victims of violence in its academic spaces.

### **# A Well-Oiled Machine**

The disciplinary authorities’ neglected support in areas that could create transformative change. I received support from some Professors in Indigenous Studies, History, and Women’s and Gender Studies, the Sexual Violence Resource Centre, and an external counsellor who all reassured me that what transpired was inappropriate. However, it is imperative to note that these individuals could not implement transformative change. This discourse is indicative of the disciplinary authorities’ reluctance to acknowledge the institutional power imbalance. The university’s proud portrayal of Indigenous achievement is met with selectivity that complicates its narrative. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) introduces in *The White Possessive*, a “power-evasive” discourse that “involves a selective engagement with difference” (96). She asserts how, “in this way, race blindness functions discursively to hide the power imbalance between those who are marked by ‘race’ and those who do the marking” (Moreton-Robinson 2015, 96-7). Accordingly, the university’s discourse surrounding merit and success promotes a reluctance to admit how its tolerance of violence debilitates Indigenous achievement. To quote Ahmed (2021b) in her discussions of the establishment of anti-racist task forces,

Because many of the sexualized abuses of power that shaped our conditions of study happened out in the open, our task was not simply to point to what was happening, and not simply to reveal the presence of abuses of power. Instead, what we were faced with was a struggle to change how these abuses of power were understood, how they were made sense of, and how they were valued: a reorienting of knowledge that was normalized. What we were trying to do was challenge the acceptance of these abuses as permissible and inevitable. (264)

We should not have to continuously challenge the normalization of power imbalances.

Moreover, racialized and sexualized violence should not obstruct our success.

The disciplinary authorities' failure to provide adequate support demonstrates their lack of concern for Indigenous safety. Moreton-Robinson examines an Indigenous woman, Leesa's, experience of racism while working in a predominately non-Indigenous hospital. She states, "when Indigenous [Peoples] raise issues of racism within the workforce, they are more often than not positioned as 'troublemakers' or are represented as being 'too sensitive.' What is often not understood by one's 'white workmates' [sic] is the way in which the work environment supports and normalizes their behavior and attitudes" (Moreton-Robinson 2015, 99). In vocalizing her experience with racist colleagues, Leesa was perceived as the problem that needed to be managed. An investigation of the instances did not transpire, rather Leesa was relocated to several hospital wings while her white colleagues continued to work without punishment. In this example, Leesa was met with "a culture that supports management's refusal to deal with [her] grievances in a serious and professional way and lacks disciplinary processes for the staff involved, which, by omission and commission, reinforces the tolerance and perpetuation of racism" (Moreton-Robinson 2015, 107). Noticing who feels safe enough to incite racism indicates those who feel sheltered by the power imbalances that structure institutions. Ahmed (2021b) makes note of these instances, and asks us to think about "*who* as well as *what* is protected" (196). Likewise, the responsible student(s) felt safe enough, perhaps by way of anonymity, to continuously harass me and my colleagues within several university spaces. They did not fear retaliation as the disciplinary authorities refused to actively punish their transgressions.

On a larger scale, the university resembles a machine, constituting many moving parts that sometimes do not work in tandem. Adorno explains the disillusion of work when reflecting on its necessity. As he describes, in reading Hebbel, "in all the brightly-coloured contorted marionettes, we see the revolving cylinder that sets them in motion, and because for this very

reason the captivating variety of life is reduced to wooden monotony. [...] The quality of things ceases to be their essence and becomes the accidental appearance of their value” (Adorno 2020, 241-2). Throughout trying to manage this bureaucratic nightmare, I was exposed to the university’s internal mechanisms and their inherent indifferences. It became apparent that the university’s strive for Indigenous achievement dissipated when the disciplinary authorities did not offer adequate support or solutions during and after the instances in March. How can they prioritize Indigenous students’ success if they refuse to keep us safe? I was left seeing the operator behind the curtain who did not assure my success as they did not provide a safe work and learning environment. The illusion was revealed. Perhaps this is where reform could be most effective. There is a need for consensus and cooperation among all staff and faculty to ensure transformative changes. Having those who are most supportive agree that the disciplinary authorities permitted violence, while those in power remain ignorant, creates a frustrating narrative, hence my decision to almost abandon my studies entirely. As the disciplinary authorities refused to take responsibility for their actions and inactions in preventing violence within its academic spaces, I was not sure with whom to communicate to ensure change. Out of frustration, I involved a Vice Provost after the second-attack in July. They advised that they should have been made aware sooner, which indicates the disciplinary authorities’ inability to communicate internally, putting additional responsibilities on the Complainant.

### **# One Day More**

A day after I submitted my Impact Statement to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, I was subjected to another attack. The attack transpired in a public Question-and-Answer forum that was hosted by the Research Assistants working with the Centre for Human Rights Research (CHRR). I was nervous to attend the forum, as this was my debut on Zoom since the instances in March. Sixteen minutes into the Q&A period, I noticed someone posted a message to all attendees using my name. After noticing the IMGUR link, I notified my employer and immediately spiralled into a severe panic attack. I had never experienced such strong emotions, as I fainted and regained consciousness on my floor. I was in disbelief. I thought I had freed myself of this situation after having submitted my Impact Statement. I did not have twenty-four hours of relief before being subjected to violence in another university setting. Clearly, I was being followed by someone who could not stand a Métis woman taking up space. I feared for my



colleagues, as most of them from the Centre for Human Rights Research were marginalized women.

### **# Entrapment**

In attempts to recount my story in full, while using my own words, I submitted an Impact Statement to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts in July 2021. It took me months to complete, as it was draining to relive what had transpired. The day after I submitted my statement, I was subjected to another personal attack, in a separate university space. At the time, I was working as a Research Assistant for the Centre for Human Rights Research. Myself and other Research Assistants hosted a public Question-and-Answer session for students who were interested in working with the CHRR. We met students virtually to discuss how we joined the CHRR, our projects, and how we enjoyed working with our research teams. As previously noted, minutes into the conversation, someone impersonating me circulated a link to the same IMGUR photo that was used in the attacks in March, with the difference being that this link was broken; they included an extra backslash to delay people from visiting the IMGUR website.

I am not sure why they chose to circulate a broken link. The status of the link made it seem personal: they wanted me to know that they were not going away. The responsible student(s) felt safe enough to incite violence within another university space as the disciplinary authorities tolerated their actions. Returning to Moreton-Robinson (2015), she explains how whiteness is maintained in the workforce. She examines the precedents of white superiority, whereby Leesa experiences an array of racist behaviours from her white colleagues. She asserts, “the fact that they felt they could make such [racist] statements aloud indicates that they felt safe in the institutional context to air such views. Their sense of safety signals that such comments are considered normal within the white space of the hospital” (Moreton-Robinson 2015, 106-7). The normalization of violence within institutions legitimizes these behaviours, and allows them to transpire without punishment.

To my disbelief, the disciplinary authorities continuously refused to investigate as there was no concrete evidence as to whether this attack was connected to the former, and it was still unclear who was responsible. They needed evidence to collect evidence. The use of VPNs and fake usernames prevented any possibilities of cross-referencing names from the public Q&A with the suspect list I helped create for the first-year introductory course. My efforts to receive closure through submitting an Impact Statement were dismissed. The Dean of the Faculty of

Arts' continual reluctance to identify those responsible for perpetuating racialized and sexualized violence incentivizes their behaviour to such a degree that it will worsen.

### **# Disruption through Non-Consensual Photographs**

After experiencing the attack at the Q&A forum, the Sexual Violence Resource Centre advised that these individuals would not be using the same photo if they had additional information to circulate. The responsible student(s)' approach intends to be disruptive. Their persistence is clear. The association of my name with the same image demonstrates their desire to ensure people think this image is truly of me. The implicit threat repeats the same narrative: associating my name with this frontal and side nude. The extensive time between attacks makes it even more personal: there was a four-month gap. In addition, they used the same style prompt, although it was more discrete to ensure people viewed the photo. The prompt read, "we will be giving out chrr forms at the end of this [...] they will look like this." Sarah Hourie sent this message to everyone attending the public Q&A. Along with the message, was the link to the IMGUR photo.

### **# Mansplaining Safety Precautions**

After being subjected to a second attack in a separate university space, I attended a meeting with the Vice Provost (Academic) and the Director of Campus Security. During the meeting, I listened to a man explain several definitions of safety, with the intention of identifying a personal safety plan that I could use moving forward. The Director was well versed with these definitions. Accordingly, there is miniscule "s" safety, and majuscule "S" safety; the former being informal and everyday safety practices and the latter being safety as defined by law. Initially, there were queries about whether this attack was a stand-alone episode or part of a sequence of personalized attacks. I believed it was the latter, and that it will continue to be personal. Throughout the meeting, I was advised of the UM APP, which includes a safe walk program, I was reminded to park my car under a street light and to never have my back to a doorway. I was instructed how to program Siri when dialing 9-1-1 and how to use the emergency blue light buttons on campus. Most importantly, I was reminded to trust my instincts.

The Director of Campus Security conveyed the definition of a crime as a criminal offence, and how my experience was not a hate crime due to the official definition in the Criminal Code. As I wrote on a scrap of paper, per the Criminal Code, the definition of a hate crime does not include "uttering threats." In attempts to understand the implications of the

Criminal Code, I located three potentially relevant sections, although they insufficiently define my experiences of sexualized and racialized violence. In Section 318 (1), the Criminal Code defines Hate Propaganda as “advocating genocide.” As stated, “In this section, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part any identifiable group, namely, (a) killing members of the group; or (b) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction” (Government of Canada 2021, 351). Other sections of the Criminal Code do not consider the unwanted sexualized comments and the distribution of the nude photo as a hate crime, nor as sexual violence. As identified by the Director of Campus Security, uttering threats is considered an offence in the Criminal Code, but those uttered during the attacks are not. As stated, “Every one commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat (a) to cause death or bodily harm to any person; (b) to burn, destroy or damage real or personal property; or (c) to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of any person” (Government of Canada 2021, 302-303). The intent was to ensure psychological harm, not bodily harm, and therefore it is not considered a threat within the Criminal Code; it was not severe enough. Moreover, because the nude photo was not of me, the acts of circulating an image impersonating me is not considered an offence. As identified, an intimate image must be “in which the person is nude, is exposing *his or her* genital organs or anal region or *her* breasts or is engaged in explicit sexual activity” (Government of Canada 2021, 190, italics added). I did not give consent to share this photo, but because the photo was not of me, it would not be considered a punishable offence. Lastly, the Criminal Code does not define sexual harassment. It solely references sexual assault, whereby a sexual activity must occur for it to be considered an offence (Government of Canada 2014, 145-6). Listing these definitions found within the Criminal Code suggests its impracticality to keep citizens safe with the rapidity of technological advances. The barometer consists of physical harm as according to the Criminal Code; physical violence is the only way to violate someone’s body. It is almost as if the perpetrators incited specific harms that would not allow for an investigation; even though they induced psychological harm, I was not in any apparent physical danger.

Aside from listening to someone who loved hearing their own voice, one of the most frustrating parts of this meeting was being told that all I required was “one distinguishing thing” to trigger an investigation to then identify the responsible student(s). Without one, I could not

request an investigation, nor could I issue a complaint following the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* policy, as I did not have a respondent on the receiving end. My fear stemmed from not knowing my threat level. How did this student(s) locate me in this university space? Did they seek me out or did they happen to stumble upon the Centre for Human Rights Research social media pages? The University's Security Services were tasked to use several web crawlers in hopes to identify whether someone had posted the Zoom link on 4chan or QAnon. As they were not able to locate which platform hosted the Zoom link for non-students to access and share, the investigation was shelved a second time. Perhaps the non-students tracked my name to access the public Zoom link; perhaps it was personal. The Director of Campus Security was using enforcement at the local police level to track the non-student(s) who were disguising their locations using international VPNs. He advised that he could look into different environments at both provincial and national intelligence agencies, although I refused.

In my experience, I had to do all the work to instigate some sort of investigation. Now, all of the shared safety tips required me to do the work to keep myself safe: I would have to download the UM APP and request the safe walk program, I would have to park my car under a street light, I would have to be aware of my surroundings so as not to have my back to a doorway, I would have to program Siri when dialing 9-1-1, I would have to locate and activate the emergency blue light buttons on campus, and I would have to trust my instincts. When will it be someone else's turn to keep me safe? It is demanding and exhausting to be alert at all times.

However, the pattern is obvious. As a woman, I have to know how to keep myself safe. I have grown up knowing what could happen to women if we are not aware of our surroundings. We are the ones keeping ourselves safe by vocalizing when we do not feel safe at all, and still, nothing can be done to protect us. The specifics of the Criminal Code make it impossible to punish those responsible for inciting harm, as evidenced during the safety lecture with the Director of Campus Security. The apparent disregard for our safety makes me question why sexual harassment and violence is so hard to define. These barriers speak to larger societal patterns that are inherently patriarchal, colonialist, racist, and paternalistic. Historically, sexual assault by rape was "a socially pervasive phenomenon [...] that functioned as a 'process of conscious intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear'" (Backhouse 2008, 9). As a colonial act, rape was a "'function of male imperialism over and against women,' and a violation of women's 'right to self-determination'" (Backhouse 2008, 9). Most disturbingly, rape

laws were not meant to keep women safe, but rather, “to preserve valuable female sexual property for the exclusive ownership of those men who could afford to acquire and maintain it” (Backhouse 2008, 9). In essence, sexual violence has been and continues to be tools of domination and subjectivity, as men believe they possess control over women to conduct sexual assault, an ideology that is further sustained through judicial proceedings which remain intrinsically patriarchal. However, men, particularly those who are tied to white supremacy, are finding new methods to ensuring this subjection of and domination over Indigenous women’s bodies. Intimidation combined with settler anxieties reinforces the perverse nature of colonialism that is “justified by the legitimating ideology of racism” (Green 2017a, 11). If the purpose is to incite fear, and the acts of sexualized and racialized violence are successful through specific tactics that do not adhere to the Criminal Code, the federal government should update its definitions to reflect these new found methods. At minimum, they should consider these instances punishable offenses by nature of their purpose regardless of whether they cause physical harm.

#### **# How to Not Locate Online Anti-Indigenous Attackers**

One of my main concerns of the investigation process included the disciplinary authorities’ unwillingness to think outside the box. The non-students who successfully gained access to both the classroom space and public lecture used VPNs to evade tracking. This tactic was obvious to the IT Security Coordinator and my colleagues. The Director of Campus Security used the inability to track these individuals’ actual locations as an excuse not to investigate. As explained during the meeting with the Vice Provost (Academic) and Director of Campus Security, because the individuals’ IP Addresses could be traced back to the United States, they would have to reach out to the state police to enact an international investigation. Instead of admitting that it would be challenging to trace their actual locations, as a result of VPN, the Director of Campus Security implied that without contacting outside support from the United States, they could not proceed with an investigation. Once again, the responsible student(s) seemingly outsmarted a trained law enforcement officer as “nothing could be done” to keep me safe.

#### **# Victimization Persists**

Interestingly, the disciplinary authorities have not acknowledged their faults or taken accountability for their inaction to ensuring a safe and healthy work environment in their virtual

learning spaces. They have repeatedly failed to keep me safe, as they did not believe I was subjected to personal attacks, even though the same individual(s) followed me to separate university spaces and used the same content to incite harm. In attempts to prove that it was the same individual(s), I vocalized that information about the Q&A session was only uploaded to the Centre for Human Rights Research's social media platforms: Facebook and Instagram. It may have been shared by other university social media pages, but for the most part, it was only circulated to those who follow the Centre's platforms. As a student who has been a part of the university community for several years, I do not partake in these social media pages. Usually, they are frequented by individuals who want to keep themselves updated on events or news that may be relevant to their academic experiences. Thus, those who caused harm earlier in March must have been following these pages or took time out of their day to locate me, sign into the public event, change their username to impersonate me, locate the nude photo, and circulate it to everyone in attendance. This individual(s) displayed a targeted attack that I fear will persist until the disciplinary authorities have identified the responsible student(s). As well, the offending and offensive students have learned a powerful message that will stay with them: they can get away with it. They may pass that message on to other students, and I fear that they will all learn how well the disciplinary authorities protect them in the structural shroud of whiteness.

### **# We Hear You**

In an attempt to discuss the status of an investigation, I met with one of the Vice Provosts (VP) and the Head of Security. Before discussing this possibility, they had requested a separate meeting with the Sexual Violence Resource Centre (SVRC). The SVRC's representatives were advised that I could only meet with the VP and Head of Security if there was no mention of an investigation. I could not discuss the rationale for impeding an investigation, nor the reasoning for their decision. Instead, I was provided with a meeting agenda, which listed pre-determined discussion points that were prepared by the VP and Head of Security. I was furious. I was advised that before the start of the Fall 2021 term, a meeting would take place between me, the VP and Head of Security to discuss the status of an investigation. Three weeks into September, I was told an investigation would not take place. Despite my frustrations, I agreed to partake in the meeting, during which I was reminded that both the VP and Head of Security hear me.

Yet, they did not hear me as I could only meet with them if I did not ask questions or discuss the implications for an investigation. How could I be heard if I was not able to vocalize

my main concern? Their lack of awareness surrounding their course of action made it seem as if this meeting agenda was adequate, and something I would want. At minimum, the SVRC met with me beforehand to unpack the discussion points and propose appropriate questions that the VP and Head of Security would be inclined to answer. I was never asked what I wanted to discuss, rather I was told what we would be discussing. Engagement from the ground up to express, share, and review institutional failures prefaces methods to address institutional micro-aggressions (Johnson and Musayett 2018, 94). Shelly Johnson and Mukwa Musayett (2018) encourage conversations, naming the processes, and taking action to address institutional harms (94). As they argue, engagement at all levels would encourage people “to discuss examples of witnessing or experiencing disrespect, lack of reciprocity, and lack of safety within the academy, as well as instances where respect, reciprocity, and safety were demonstrated. Making space for truth-telling is a key component of this first step” (Johnson and Musayett 2018, 94). This methodology is reflective of the appreciation expressed by some Professors in Indigenous Studies when I first spoke of my experiences. As the VP and Head of Security were not willing to listen as diligently, they could not keep me safe. The SVRC’s representatives were the only ones who truly understood how to support me throughout this entire process. They had the courtesy to vocalize the truth and acknowledge that my demands fell silent.

The VP and Head of Security’s narrative that ‘we can hear you’ is impractical. As my experience has and will imply, the university’s structure is not receptive to marginalized voices that challenge difference. Sarah Hunt entrenches Gayatri Spivak’s arguments within *Can the Subaltern Speak?* to describe the significance of witnessing as methodology. Researchers, and especially Indigenous researchers, are met with relational responsibilities to the communities they are engaging in their work. In my practice, as a Métis researcher, my relational responsibilities extend to those who have experienced sexualized and racialized violence in learning spaces, and those who were not provided with sufficient avenues to share their experiences. As Hunt (2018) writes, “in other words, being a witness means sometimes creating new language, new stories, new avenues for validating those voices that are most at risk of being erased” (284). When using existing and normalized institutional apparatuses, the disciplinary authorities do not hear us because they cannot hear us.

Therefore, I aim to create an awareness of the institutional harms that distance complainants of sexualized and racialized violence. One can assume these instances transpire

within academic spaces, but without knowing the extent of the harms committed, we cannot justify demands for transformative change. We cannot say the existing structures and systems do not work; we must prove it. Unfortunately, the disciplinary authorities are reluctant to do this work to create a safer community. Thus, my responsibility includes documenting what I have witnessed throughout my experiences to initiate accountability. As Hunt (2018) articulates, “in witnessing the stories, I am obligated to ensure they are not denied, ignored, or silenced. [...] recalling an event or story as a witness is about bringing those responsibilities into the present through confirming their power” (288-89). In a sense, this work comprises recognition, although not on institutional terms. I am working to validate my truths for myself and others, as the disciplinary authorities are unable to do so. Perhaps not by choice but rather due to the colonial structures that uphold the status quo. Anna Cook (2016) refers to this inherent practice as the “sustained epistemology of ignorance” (74). She positions felt theory as a decolonizing methodology to “interrogate how settler colonial conditions of speech prevent testimonies of abuse from being heard in *unsettling* ways that disturb the narrative of Canada as a non-colonial nation” (Cook 2016, 71). Providing room to vocalize violence is insufficient if those listening are not equipped or ready to listen to the transgressions in meaningful ways. Therefore, to maintain accountability and their responsibilities to Indigenous students, the disciplinary authorities must decolonize how they listen and report instances of racialized and sexualized violence.

After my last meeting with the Vice Provost (VP) and Executive Director of Security, post-second attack as a Research Assistant, I was advised that I could recap my experience to them if I desired, but it was not something they would force me to do. That was the final communication I had with the disciplinary authorities, after being informed that I could only meet with the VP and Executive Director of Security if I refrained from mentioning the investigation—something I refuse to do. I received clarity about the functions of disciplinary authorities through knowing that my complaint and my experiences of violence had been filed away. Ahmed (2021b, 39) describes the filing away process as a burial. Eventually, instances of violence are locked away in dusty old file cabinets, and our experiences become alienated as a result. And so, to quote Ahmed (2021b), “If a complaint is made to create more time and more room, a complaint can take time and leave you with even less room. The less time you have, the less room you have, the more conscious you become of who is given time, who is given room” (41). The brevity of communications and superficial emails post-attacks sets a precedent that the



Faculty of Arts will provide the bare minimum of actual support, attention or empathy as it does not have time nor does it make time to receive complaints of sexualized and racialized violence.

### **# Interrupting without Disrupting**

For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have used traditional pedagogies to engage with colonial discourse. As an example, the practice of witnessing ensures success to those working through western knowledge production. Marilyn Dumont reflects on her use of watching to help further her education in *A Really Good Brown Girl*. She writes, “I just watched and followed; I was good at that, good at watching and following. It was what I did best, I learned quickly by watching. (Some learning theories say that native kids learn best by watching, because they’re more visual. I always knew that I learned by watching to survive in two worlds and in a white classroom)” (Dumont 2017, 30). Likewise, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s telling of *Kwezens makes a lovely discovery* imparts traditional ways that Indigenous Peoples use witnessing as an educational tool. Following the story, Simpson compares Kwezens experience with hers, where her own reflects a rigid learning environment that is not immersive in traditional Anishinaabe pedagogies. She asserts that no one asked “for my consent to participate in their system. My experience of education was one of continually being measured against a set of principles that required surrender to an assimilative colonial agenda in order to fulfill those principles” (Simpson 2014, 6). Therefore, the use of witnessing as a survival tactic provides the opportunity to embody traditional pedagogies in non-traditional environments. Remaining unapologetically Indigenous while navigating colonial bureaucratic policies allows clarity to the emerging issues. In my experience, it reinforces that I am not to blame for the disciplinary authorities’ tolerance of racialized and sexualized violence. As Simpson (2017) asserts, “when we do something ‘nice,’ like hand out free coffee and donuts along with information flyers, racist Canadians might be taken aback because they are being confronted with the opposite of their assumptions about ‘Indians.’ But there is also something that doesn’t feel very authentic or genuine to me. I don’t want my racist neighbors to like me because I gave them free Tim Hortons coffee” (235). Likewise, I will remain vigilant as I continue my studies within an institution that does not keep Indigenous students safe. Moreover, I will continue to challenge and confront the disciplinary authorities, as required, to ensure myself and others’ safety.

### **# Dehumanization**

In almost all of the meetings I attended with the disciplinary authorities, I experienced some form of invalidation. I had to listen to an explanation of navigating campus safely (I am a woman); how to use Zoom's safety features (as if I had not been using these features for weeks); I had been provided with pre-determined agendas outlining discussions; I was told what I could say during these discussions, all while having disciplinary authorities advise that they could 'hear' me. I read through emails from departmental staff and disciplinary authorities saying what process I should want and what resources I should have asked for. A dean rolled their eyes at me as I recounted my experience of violence; I had departmental staff arguing over how this situation could have been prevented; and I was advised that what had happened was somehow mine and my colleagues' fault for not doing enough.

Upholding the university's colonial values is reflective of their desire to erase. This erasure is completed by invalidation or only hearing relevant parts of a story that the disciplinary authorities are willing to engage. I am reminded of Dr. LaRocque's examination of dehumanizing techniques used to uphold Eurocentrism. She discerns the troubling historical and contemporary erasure when stating, how it "is reflective of an ongoing colonial tactic of denial: Erase by selection (by simply not noticing the relevant parts) not only the records that attest to hate and racism, but also the Native documentation and analysis of it. Here again, we see the power of prejudice" (LaRocque 2011, 64). In the context of my experiences, my inability to adequately express my feelings resulted in dehumanization. I was not to show an emotional response as the disciplinary authorities were not willing to notice the impact of its transgressions. LaRocque (2011) introduces anger as an "an expression of moral outrage against injustice" that is used by marginalized peoples (70). She does not limit anger to solely a feeling. When an institution is up against Indigenous anger, it tends to discredit their expressions by neutralizing "the 'negative' or 'accusatory' tones that *they* hear" (LaRocque 2011, 70). Thus, when working within parameters set out by institutions, resistance cannot take place. Ahmed (2021b) refers to this concept as "the immanence of complaint," whereby "the more we challenge structures, the more we come up against them. This is how: to try to intervene in the reproduction of a structure is to learn how it is reproduced" (165). Engaging with institutional bodies, and following their policies and procedures will not allow for change, as the complainant rests under the discretion of those in power. For Ahmed (2021b), "Power is [...] the ability to influence how we are received" (169). When confronting power and obstructing structures with difference, our

experiences are subjected to dehumanizing and invalidating policies and surrounding practices. The onus is placed squarely on the individual to ask for change, and hope that their requests comprise one of the solutions the institution puts forward.

I confronted exhaustion as I worked extensively to demand an investigation. I had to identify the disciplinary authorities' involvement in the investigation, what they had heard and what they should know. I had to create a suspect pool. I had to demand that something come of this violence. I truly believe if I had not broken down in tears in front of my advisor, nothing would have happened. I was advised that classes would not continue until the responsible student(s) was identified. I was advised to keep my mouth shut, and not discuss what was happening in the introductory course. I was advised that I would be updated on the status of an investigation from a Vice Provost (VP) moving into the Fall term. I was told this would never happen again. These promises fell through. Class continued with a new Professor. I did not hear from the VP's office until the end of September. And the attacks did happen again, in a separate university space. I was repeatedly failed by a system that claims to create pathways for Indigenous achievement (University of Manitoba 2019b). As mentioned previously, because of these experiences, I almost chose to step away from the university entirely.

### **# Structures that Benefit the Status Quo**

It is evident that the University of Manitoba caters to those the institution was initially built and designed for: white settler men and women. These individuals express the least concern about the university's existing structures and policies as their presence does not prompt difference when navigating its physical and virtual spaces, and procedural environment. As Moreton-Robinson (2015) asserts, "the regulatory mechanisms of [...] nation-states are extremely busy reaffirming and reproducing [white] possessiveness through a process of perpetual Indigenous dispossession, ranging from the refusal of Indigenous sovereignty to overregulated piecemeal concessions" (xi). Likewise, the lived experiences of the participants in the *Campus Climate Survey*, express that those who confront the systems and demand justice or changes are often people of colour, international students, Indigenous Peoples and folks from the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. To provide context, this survey was circulated to students in 2018 to gain "insight into [their] attitudes and experiences regarding sexual violence" (Peter and Stewart 2019, 7). The governing data collected within the survey supposedly will inform a response strategy, as well as ways to create a culture in which sexual violence is not tolerated at

the University of Manitoba (Peter and Stewart 2019, 7). However, this culture has not been achieved as the disciplinary authorities still tolerate cases of sexual violence without consequence.

Fear to report incidents of sexual violence and harassment is strongly based on how complainants would be perceived by others. As Ahmed (2021b) articulates, “Complaints are made even harder because of what follows being known as someone making a complaint, what surrounds complaint: informal conversations, gossip, rumours that circulate to pathologize the complainer” (127). The decision to report, or not, is based on how others will or will not respond, if others will or will not retaliate, and if others will or will not take the complainants seriously. In some ways, responding to violence by way of complaint is performative as complainants must not be overly reactive to transgressions. In essence, not being able to express anger, to show frustration, or to be upset is reflective of Glen Coulthard’s analysis of *resentment* and *ressentiment*. In the latter definition, Coulthard (2014) asserts that, “[...] what implicitly gets interpreted by the state as Indigenous peoples’ *ressentiment*—understood as an incapacitating inability or unwillingness to get over the past—is actually an entirely appropriate manifestation of our *resentment*: a politicized expression of Indigenous anger and outrage directed at a structural and symbolic violence that still structures our lives” (109). The damaging effects of these definitions associates Indigenous anger with blame: we are to blame ourselves for our inability to move on from past harms. Moreover, Dr. LaRocque theorizes Indigenous anger as the basis of Indigenous resistance within academia. She asserts, “To call Native writers ‘bitter,’ ‘angry,’ or any number of related labels is to imply there is something emotionally or psychologically wrong with them. [...] ‘Anger’ as used by oppressed people is not a psychological problem to be diffused by therapy; it is not just a feeling, it is an expression of moral outrage against injustice” (LaRocque 2011, 70). In essence, the disciplinary authorities’ refusal to take Indigenous students and instances of sexualized and racialized violence seriously perpetuates the idea that harms committed during the early stages of colonialism no longer exist in the present. Accordingly, dividing settler colonialism into past and present does not signify its legacy has ended. As Coulthard (2014) continues, “rather than addressing these structural issues, state policy has instead focused its reconciliation efforts on repairing the psychologically injured or damaged status of Indigenous people themselves” (121). Thus, the disciplinary authorities’ reluctance to dismantle the colonial structures that are foundational to the institution, and that

allow racialized and sexualized violence to prevail, emphasizes that the policies work as entrapment; they do not support Indigenous students' emotional wellbeing. As stated in the Preface of the *Campus Climate Survey*, the report was challenging to write after hearing "how frustrated and angry many students [were and continue to be] with the UM in regard to sexual violence" (Peter and Stewart 2019, 6). Our anger is justifiable, but not taken seriously as the disciplinary authorities continue to maintain the status quo. Thus, introducing additional supports but not changing the existing policy environment that structures the university projects stasis.

### **# Mandatory Training**

In attempts to identify practical solutions, the Vice Provost (Academic) and the Executive Director of Security mentioned the creation of a three-hour workshop that will discuss consent and how to work with those who have experienced harassment in trauma-informed ways. Unfortunately, they advised that they cannot make the workshop mandatory for all staff. Thus, those who will register for the training will most likely be aware of how to manage instances of harassment and violence. The folks who need to take this course will not be in attendance as it is most likely not of interest. My concern remains: until there is transformative change, the disciplinary authorities should make this training mandatory to ensure everyone who needs to know, knows.

### **# Repetitive Nuances**

Reading through several policies and reports concerning sexual violence and harassment has made me realize the impracticability of doing this work. I have read, and re-read, the definitions of sexual violence and harassment; almost as if to convince myself of their definitions: what happened to you *was* sexual violence and harassment. However, I do not need this justification. Those who know of these reports and actually read them do not need to be reminded of what is considered sexual violence. Those needing this reminder will never venture into the university's Governance webpage. Reading these definitions is only repetitive if you read these policies and reports. If you stray away from them, the connection may not be made as easily. So, why am I doing this work? Why am I re-triggering myself by re-reading these definitions? Well, as reflected in my experience, if I do not do this work, it will never get done. Under the current structures, those who are violated must be the ones to demand change, and actually participate in making that change. I was continuously denied solutions and transformative strategies to preventing violence in the future. Thus, I decided to document my

experiences of violence, and of navigating institutional policies as a way to make my complaints clear. As Ahmed (2021b) mentions, “The riskier it is to speak out, to put a name to a complaint, the more inventive we need to become. When we are blocked by following the official paths, we create our own pathways, ways of communicating, whisper networks, unofficial ways, old ways, of passing information down a line” (296). And so, this is my line. We need to remain disruptive and question the status quo of institutions that function with too many independent moving parts.

### **# Built Different**

“All these photos along the UMSU wall, that’s the student union, and you know, right up to the 1970s, you don’t see any people of colour in the photos” (Gonzalez 2018). Indigenous students are constantly made aware of their otherness while attending academic institutions. The institutional acceptance and tolerance of the perpetuation of racial harassment amplifies their otherness. We must acknowledge the history of condoning anti-Indigenous racism in spaces designed by and for settlers. In the immediacy of trying to respond to the violence, the disciplinary authorities failed to acknowledge the history behind anti-Indigenous rhetoric. As Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt (2020) argue in *Storying Violence*, “there is a common dissociative tendency in contexts of colonialism, where there exists undeniable racialized hierarchies and patterns of discrimination that inform social interactions, yet law and politics are said to be immune from these influences” (66-7). The ‘dark chapter in Canadian history’ trope influences Indigenous Peoples’ feelings of uncertainty when requesting or demanding safety. The disconnection between colonial history and contemporary contexts abstracts their emotional responses. As Starblanket and Hunt (2020) continue, “at a systemic level, narratives of colonial violence are often dismissed by settlers as fabrication of historical revisionism while peaceful histories of colonial settlement and development are regarded as the ‘correct,’ ‘unbiased,’ or ‘true’ version of the past and present” (67). Thus, if those in control of reproducing histories that omit the legacy of violence towards Indigenous Peoples remain in control, how can they interact with Indigenous concerns empathetically in contemporary contexts? One of the subheadings of Starblanket and Hunt’s chapter in *Storying Violence* is titled, *The System isn’t Broken, it was Built This Way*, which reigns truthful in institutional environments that tolerate systemic violence and harassment towards Indigenous Peoples. The policies that govern academic institutions are not broken or in need of fixing; rather, they were fashioned to omit the disciplinary authorities’ responsibility and accountability to keep students safe.

## # Asking for Permission

Demanding justice as an Indigenous person is challenging, as we are often met with a multitude of fine lines to walk, stay away from, or never overstep. Simpson, recognizes this internalized feeling when discussing decisions against direct action during Idle No More. She states,

there is an assumption that if I act nicely, calmly, and happily, Canadians will support me because it is the right thing to do, because it feeds into Canada's international narrative of themselves as being a champion of human rights and the benevolent empathic state that cares about the oppressed. There is an assumption that if we behave as 'good Indians' in the eyes of white liberals and even of what remains of the Canadian Left, we will be rewarded with rights and recognition. There is an assumption that I need to come at this from a place of pity, victimhood, and powerlessness. (Simpson 2017, 234-5)

Unfortunately, I fell into this disillusion when working with the disciplinary authorities to resolve the sexualized and racialized violence I experienced. I felt powerless when I was inundated with support from department staff and graduate students I did not know. I felt victimized when the disciplinary authorities did not listen, and instead advised that it was my fault for what had happened. I felt pity for myself when I could not show the disciplinary authorities my true frustrations out of fear that they would shelve an investigation entirely, which they did.

Asking for permission to be heard, to be frustrated, to get the disciplinary authorities to cease tolerating racialized and sexualized violence is unreasonable. Refusing a paternalistic form of engagement stresses my disinclination to be recognized by an institution that perpetuates harm. Rachel Flowers introduces the implications of re-orienting Indigenous women's refusal with acts of love. As she quotes Sartre, "Each person is responsible for her own action and evading such responsibility is to live in bad faith, 'the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth'" (Flowers 2015, 38). Unlike all levels of the university's administration, I refuse to let myself believe the violence I endured was my fault. The narrative that places onus on individuals for their involvement in instances of violence allows structural harm to prevail. Flowers continues her discussions through weighing the helpfulness of billboards that deem Indigenous women responsible for their own murders if they hitchhike. She states,

rather than providing adequate transit along the Highway of Tears, billboard signs were erected instead, which read, 'Girls don't hitchhike on the Highway of Tears - Killer on the Loose.' This public discourse reinforces the idea that Indigenous women and girls

simply need to stop engaging in risky behavior rather than address the structural and ideological conditions that allow and depoliticize violence against Indigenous women. (Flowers 2015, 40)

The structural and ideological conditions that allow room for harmful behaviours and disconcerting blame simultaneously deny space for Indigenous women to exist. The policy review that will follow in the next section is beneficial to the university community as it associates evidence of violence with ways to improve its response strategies. Of most importance, it is beneficial to insist my refusal to ask permission. This work is not performative; rather, it is to inform Indigenous students of my experience so they remain vigilant when navigating the university's physical and virtual learning spaces. As Flowers (2015) reassures, "Indigenous women's love is not a given; it is the result of tremendous desire to survive" (40). And so, I will continue to express my truths on my own terms to survive the bureaucratic red tape.

## **Part II: Policy Review**

"Rebuilding a roof entails first deconstructing it, which is to say, taking it apart shingle by shingle. Then, it means reconstructing it. But I find the very frame that holds the shingles is so rotten that it too needs to be gutted, and a whole new structure needs to be built before any new shingles can be nailed in. Simply repairing the roof would be poor carpentry." – Dr. Emma LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*

### **# Introduction to Part II**

In this section, I intend to review existing policies that concern sexualized and racialized violence to gauge the disciplinary authorities' willingness to prevent and penalize these behaviours in their physical and virtual learning spaces. At present, there are no policies specifically targeting racial harassment at the University of Manitoba. The Rady Faculty of Health Sciences launched a *Disruption of all Forms of Racism* policy in August 2020 however, it does not apply to campuses or schools outside of Medicine (UM News Today 2020). So, the instances of violence I experienced cannot be defined as racialized violence using the definitions provided within Rady's policy. The lack of communication between institutional entities reflects a decentralized and frustrating process to dealing with racialized and sexualized violence. Ahmed's (2021b) critiques of policy environments interrogates "*how* procedures become part of the problem" (40). Thus, along with problematizing definitions, punishable offences, and suggested outcomes as noted within the policies, I will analyze and critique the structural



deficiencies that inform the procedural environment. Now, to offer proper introductions to the apparatuses that perpetuate violence.

The *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure reflects the harms committed by responsible student(s) (respondents) within university spaces. To contextualize the relevancy of this policy to my experience, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts advised that they would only pursue an investigation along the lines of non-academic misconduct. I was directed to the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment (RWLE)* policy, if an investigation was not possible following non-academic misconduct. As the disciplinary authorities refused to identify the Respondent by way of investigation, I was advised to issue a formal complaint against them using the RWLE policy. However, I was not able to issue a complaint as the Respondent was never identified. Thus, the disciplinary authorities repudiated the harms committed by neglecting to address the sexualized and racialized violence altogether.

Once I began working with the Sexual Violence Resource Centre, I was made aware of the following policies, and how they may contribute to an investigation. The *Student Discipline* bylaw reflects the initial document to consider before pursuing an investigation. The *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure defines a complaint, and how members of the university community can respond to one. Initially, I was not informed of the sexual violence policies on campus and their applicability to the instances of violence I endured. Thus, I will review the *Sexual Violence* policy, as well as the *University of Manitoba's Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Violence: A Final Report*. As noted previously, I realize the latter document is not a policy. However, it provides additional qualitative and quantitative data that reinforces the impracticability of the existing *Sexual Violence* policy.

As made clear throughout my experience, the disciplinary authorities have little awareness of policies concerning sexualized and racialized violence, which is indicative of the work that is needed to address violence systemically. For example, the disciplinary authorities refuse to acknowledge that the campus community they have created and continue to reproduce, remains unsafe. Perhaps these policies were created to govern us, perhaps to keep us safe. Regardless, they have failed me, on a personal level, to feel worthy of protection. The narrowness of these policies is inadequate to confront psychological harms, as well as sexualized and racialized violence. The apparent tolerance of violence and the renewal of policies that engage violence after-the-fact remain obstructive to transformative change. Therefore, it is

imperative to dissect the policy environment that reproduces systems of violence. As Ahmed (2021b) argues, “A complaint provides a *phenomenology of the institution*” (41). Thus, this section is organized following the logics of the policies and their apparent order. I have read the policies in full, but I will only discuss relevant sections, and how they have informed my experience. Confronting the harms that reproduced harm has been challenging enough, which is why my analysis remains selective.

### **# Effective Dates, Effective Measures**

The *Student Discipline* bylaw was created in 2009, and was revised in 2021. It is set to be reviewed in 2028, and applies to students, faculty, college, and school councils, unit heads, academic staff, and employees. As introduced, the bylaw “is to outline the Disciplinary Actions available to Disciplinary Authorities and the subsequent appeal process available to Students for findings of Academic Misconduct and Non-Academic Misconduct” (University of Manitoba 2021, 1).

The *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure came into effect in 2016, and is set to be reviewed in 2028. The intent of this procedure is to state acceptable behaviours for the university community. It details the investigation process if the policy is breached, as well as defines discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and violence—unjust treatments that disciplinary authorities supposedly do not tolerate.

The *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure came into effect in 2009, and includes the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* and *Sexual Violence* policies as parental procedures. The general purpose of this policy is to capture the expected behaviours of the university community, and to ensure a safe and healthy work environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence. Unlike the *Non-Academic Misconduct* policy, it defines sexual violence, and not sexual assault. It describes the consequences and punishable breaches, as well as defines who is responsible for overseeing punishment. The Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management (OHRCM) is “appointed by the University of Manitoba to implement this Procedure and its related Policies” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 5). All matters relating to this policy will be streamlined through the OHRCM, instead of following the ordered hierarchy of appointed authorities.

The *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* (RWLE) policy came into effect in 2009, and was revised in 2020. It is set to be reviewed in 2023. This policy prohibits “behaviour

that is likely to undermine the dignity, self-esteem or productivity of any of its members and prohibits any form of discrimination or harassment” on university property or within university-related activities (University of Manitoba 2020b, 1). To promote and support a healthy and safe working and learning environment, the disciplinary authorities are committed to “provid[ing] an inclusive and respectful environment, [that is] free from discrimination or harassment as prohibited in the Manitoba Human Rights Code” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 1).

The *Sexual Violence* policy came into effect in 2016, and outlines the principles for guiding, assisting and supporting those who have experienced sexual violence at the university (University of Manitoba 2020c, 1). This policy ensures “respect and compassion, as part of a trauma-informed approach that is rooted in Intersectionality and that is culturally sensitive to a person’s background, perceptions and experience” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 1). It provides additional descriptors and how it will be used. As an example, it describes sexual violence as systemic, the versatility of its impact and to whom it applies (University of Manitoba 2020c, 2). Thus, it informs the disciplinary authorities’ approaches to ensuring an intersectional action plan, although it does not include much detail. As stated, “acts of Sexual Violence can also be acts of discrimination. University strategies to address Sexual Violence are therefore informed by broader equity, diversity and anti-discrimination initiatives and goals” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 2). As it lacks accountability by not listing these initiatives and goals, one must assume the performative nature of this policy.

The *Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Violence* was conducted at the University of Manitoba in 2018. According to the executive summary, the university is inclined to create “a culture in which sexual violence is not tolerated – and where those who do experience it are adequately supported” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 7). As introduced, there is a need for “a comprehensive sexual violence prevention, education and response strategy [that] would benefit the University” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 7). And so, Dr. Tracey Peter, a professor in the Department of Criminology and Sociology, and Don Stewart, the Executive Director of Student Support Services, as well as three research assistants created a survey to “identify areas of greatest risk, determine gaps in services, and collect helpful information” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 7) that would support the need for a better response strategy. As this survey was distributed to all University of Manitoba students in 2018, it does not include the exposure to sexual violence through virtual learning. Rather, this survey examines sexual violence that

occurs on campus, and within its physical spaces. Within a year of the survey's publication date, it had become outdated.

The disciplinary authorities' accountability remains nonexistent as a result of its reluctance to manage instances of violence. Through reading these policies and their effective dates, it is upsetting although not surprising that they would create a sexual violence policy nearly a decade after its procedures concerning discipline and non-academic misconduct. In addition, the disciplinary authorities have only recently started work to create a policy that challenges racism on campus. As inherent structures of colonialism, racism and sexism have existed since the onset of colonization in Canada. They are long-standing apparatuses that have been used to uphold the normalization of western society. The disciplinary authorities' refusal to acknowledge these harms up until recently are reflective of its performative nature to follow the trends of social justice movements. As an example, the #MeToo movement, founded in 2006, was at its height in 2016, which was around the time the *Sexual Violence* policy was created. According to *UM News Today* (2020b), following the release of a university-commissioned report, *Responding to Sexual Violence, Harassment and Discrimination at the University of Manitoba: A Path Forward*, discussions began concerning the need for a safe, inclusive, non-discriminatory environment that is free of harassment and sexual violence. President Benarroch stated that amendments to and the creation of these policies were based on community input and best-practice standards (UM News Today 2020b). Moreover, the inclusion and diversity policy that will explicitly concern racism follows the height of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2019. The zero-tolerance policy on racism follows extensive conversations between disciplinary authorities in 2020 and 2021. These discussions followed the *University of Manitoba's Strategic Plan: 2015-2020* and the anti-racism pillar that was identified within *Our Shared Future: Building on our Strategic Plan* (University of Manitoba 2022c). The latter document situates conversations post-COVID-19, which addresses over a decade of work. These institutional patterns develop following heightened social justice movements where allyship is determined through active participation. Perhaps these timelines are coincidental. Regardless, they are reflective of the disciplinary authorities' ongoing ignorance and their silencing of victims of violence until deemed socially unacceptable. Consecutively, we remain an afterthought.

## **# Patterns**

Effectively, racism and sexism are fundamental patterns that exist within the colonial structures that make up Canada. Historically, these patterns were “legitimated by racist assumptions that were especially prejudicial to Indigenous women” (Green 2017b, 168). Joyce Green (2017b) frames this “foundational and useful ignorance” that works to sustain indifference to settlers’ privilege and that structures the oppression of Indigenous Peoples (168). During the onset of colonization, settlers and colonial officials did not work with Indigenous Peoples to understand their distinct cultures, social, economic, and political structures. Rather, they used their ignorance advantageously to project racist assumptions that would strengthen their objectives: to colonize what is now known as Canada. When marginalized peoples spoke of institutional violence, their claims were not heard as they countered apparatuses that sustained hegemony and ignorance. As Patricia Hill-Collins (2002) explains in *Black Feminist Thought*, “One important factor that contributes to these long-standing silences both among African-American women and within Black feminist thought lies in Black women’s lack of access to positions of power in U.S. social institutions. Those who control the schools, news media, churches, and government suppress Black women’s collective voice” (123). Hill-Collins examines the hypervisibility of Black bodies in contrast to their inability to vocalize instances of racialized and sexualized violence. The existing structures accentuate their bodies, while neglecting their safety. Thus, justice remains obscured.

These familiar patterns also materialize and reproduce in academic spaces, as well as institutional structures. Linda Alcott discusses examples of cultural anxieties that inappropriately materialized when responding to charges of Eurocentrism in *Visible Identities*. A Black student spoke of the prevalence of Eurocentrism when selecting required courses and looking at their content, to which a white professor blurted out, “my family was extremely poor, and I had a very difficult time even getting to college” (Alcott 2006, 12). Alcott reveals how, “One tries to raise a reflective discussion concerning various forms of racism and cultural imperialism, and one is heard as assuming homogeneity, total culpability, and a whole variety of things about all people designated white” (Alcott 2006, 13). In similar conversations, Alcott (2006) explains how discussions pertaining to sexual violence and harassment “evoke charges of ‘male bashing’ even when no casual analysis is even broached, much less developed and defended” (13). She concludes these examples by realizing how charged responses create a reluctance to discuss racism or sexism and their structural impacts (Alcott 2006, 13). It makes one question whether

social justice can be actualized as discussions are often confronted with historical baggage and cultural anxieties that surround instances of racialized and sexualized violence. As Hill-Collins (2002) reminds us, “what appear to be natural and normal ideas and practices concerning sexuality are in fact carefully manufactured and promoted by schools, organized religions, the news media, and, most importantly, government policies” (134). I would argue ideas concerning race are also included in these institutional mechanisms. As such, these patterns are actualized through the regulation of marginalized bodies and through governing policies. This analysis makes clear the pre-determined outcome of calling attention to these patterns. Ahmed (2021b) explains how “The one who complains about white supremacy, who challenges structures such as patriarchy, or who even questions ‘these things,’ is heard as hostile however she speaks. You are heard as hostile if you do not pass over the structures that stop you from being able to be in the room” (156). The regurgitation of these patterns does not allow room for conversations surrounding racialized and sexualized violence, as reflected in my experience as both a Teaching and Research Assistant. Rather, the governing policies that structure the university community normalize these behaviours that then reproduce violence. For Ahmed (2021b), working through the policy environment teaches us “what is required to be a good citizen [...] Those who challenge how power works come to know how power works” (47-48). The normalization of this violence, and the refusal to acknowledge and respond to it reminds us, as Indigenous Peoples, that we are only able to exist within these spaces if we remain subordinate or outright disappear.

### **# Vulnerability Confronts Hierarchy: Structuring the Policy Process**

The University of Manitoba, as an institution, remains hierarchal in its structures. Complainants, those bringing potential action forward, must present instances of violence to a predetermined sequence of staff in hopes to receive justice. The linear order of disciplinary authorities determines whether the actions committed by those responsible violate the policies. The sequence is as follows: Academic Staff (Professors), Department Heads, Faculty Deans, the University of Manitoba Security Services, the Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management, Vice Provosts, and lastly, the President. After reporting an incident, the severity of the offence is determined by this sequence; the Complainant cannot influence an investigation. They must follow this sequence. Importantly, this order applies to all policies. If Academic Staff do not think it severe enough for the Department Head’s review, the action committed will remain at their level of authorized discipline; and therefore, the status quo remains unchanged.

Violations move linearly, at the discretion of those who may not have the time, energy or desire to uphold social justice.

Perhaps it is no fault of their own. With increased workloads, number of publications, classroom sizes, and university deadlines, professors are met with pressures to “raise their academic rank through the quality and quantity of scholarship in order to maintain their competitive edge and funding sources” (Olenick et al. 2019, 1). The pressures and demands of institutions sometimes outweigh the realities of support. Likewise, students may be unaware of the increased workload when requesting support from disciplinary authorities to help them navigate instances of violence. Like students,

a child seeing the tightrope-walkers singing, the pipers playing, the girls fetching water, the coachmen driving, thinks all this is happening for the joy of doing so; he can't imagine that these people also have to eat and drink, go to bed and get up again. We however, know what is at stake. Namely, earning a living, which commandeers all those activities as mere means, reduces them to interchangeable, abstract labour-time (Adorno 2020, 241).

The acceptance and normalization of institutional structures that reduce professor's support due to increased workloads may be deceptive in its material form. Ultimately, the university, as an employer, requires professors to sustain quotas. As Philomena Essed (2013) argues, these mechanisms are rooted in patriarchal notions. Academic spaces normalize “male cultures [...] and, more so than in the early 1990s, the pressure is on, around the world, to produce more and reflect less, to accept a corporate model of the university thus creating academic professionals who feel that they have no time to organize politically. A commitment to social justice struggle can add to existing pressures” (Essed 2013, 1401). She calls for transformative changes using an intersectional model that eliminates gendered pressures within male-dominated spaces. Thus, in order to take care of students, the university, as an employer, also must look after its academic staff to provide and maintain collective supports. These supports should extend to staff to ensure they are available to address issues of sexualized and racialized violence while maintaining their ever-increasing workload. A relatively simple solution could include being aware of the policies and providing direction to students to help them access more specific supports, i.e., the Sexual Violence Resource Centre, opposed to following the linear course of action. It is inexcusable for professors to overlook the severity of violence, regardless of whether they have time. Likewise, students should not have to reach out to the sequence of staff, nor should they have to pressure higher-ups because of the inaction of those at the bottom of the hierarchy.

The linear sequence proves inadequate of the policy environment as it reproduces violence. As an example, the Professor of the introductory course recommended that I not share my experiences of violence, as they were happening. In addition, they compared my experiences with theirs as a way to reassure that what had happened was “not so bad.” These responses subject the complainant to further marginalization as they remain unheard. As Gayatri Spivak (2010) argues, “we [...] need the project of listening to subalterns, patiently and carefully, so that we, as intellectuals committed to education, can devise an intuition of the public sphere in subalternity. [...] If this teaching work is not performed, subalterns remain in subalternity, unable to represent themselves and therefore needing to be represented” (232). The problem rests with the hierarchal structure of disciplinary authorities who may not have time to listen attentively or express compassion and concern as the institutional model does not acknowledge or validate difference. They work within set parameters whereby complainants cannot easily challenge existing policies nor can they advocate or pressure disciplinary authorities to prevent violence as it exists inherently within the institutional structures. Therefore, to rectify and strategize actionable solutions, pronounced changes must come from within the hierarchy.

#### **# Definitions, Definitions, Definitions...**

Upon reviewing the policies that concern sexualized and racialized violence, it is evident that the disciplinary authorities’ approaches to social justice are reflective of colonial governing structures. The use of definitions in colonial procedures work to individualize, compartmentalize, and divide. Historically, legal definitions within colonial policy were used to enfranchise First Nations to ensure the apprehension of land for settlers to invade. Harold Cardinal (1999) explains in *The Unjust Society* how the *Indian Act*, as a “simplistic legalism” eliminated “roughly 250,000 native people who, under the American system, would be recognized as Indian” (16). Similarly, the University of Manitoba’s policies define harassment, sexual violence, discrimination, and for the purpose of my thesis, non-academic misconduct, to create an awareness of behaviours it considers harmful. I question what it means to put forward these definitions if disciplinary authorities provide opportunities to exclude or invalidate other interpretations; riddling some experiences to technicalities that cannot be located within their procedural environment. How can the disciplinary authorities justify which experiences are worthy of their resources and time to investigate? I understand the intentions of specifying what they consider inappropriate behaviour, but simultaneously, if not dealt with carefully, this



process can create barriers to reprimanding students who instigate racialized and sexualized violence. In essence, many of the policies are outdated, as they do not locate or define inappropriate behaviours within virtual learning spaces. Below, I analyze how these definitions reproduce violence through creating barriers by locating them within my experiences of violence.

As defined in the *Student Discipline* bylaw, reprimand “means an action intended to convey stern disapproval to a Student by means of recording their Academic Misconduct or Non-Academic Misconduct on their [...] academic history / transcript” (University of Manitoba 2021, 4). The responsible student(s) was not reprimanded. Their actions did not receive stern disapproval. The instances of violence were not recorded on their academic history or transcript. The disciplinary authorities’ refusal to investigate to identify the responsible student(s) reproduces violence as they may continue to insight harm in other academic spaces. In other words, through inaction, the disciplinary authorities condone these behaviours as permissible.

As defined in the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure, “violence means, i) the attempted or actual exercise of physical force against a person; or ii) any threatening statement or behaviour that gives a person reasonable cause to believe that physical force will be used against the person” (University of Manitoba 2018, 4). According to this definition, the disciplinary authorities reinforce the narrative that violence can only consist of physical assault. Until the violence escalates physically, it is not considered punishable.

As defined in the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure, non-academic misconduct means, “any conduct that has, or might reasonably be seen to have, an adverse effect on the integrity or proper functioning of the University or the health, safety, rights or property of the University or members of the University Community” (University of Manitoba 2018, 5). This policy also lists examples of misconduct. I have chosen to include only those applicable to my experience. They are as follows, “threats of harm or actual harm by any means (including electronic means) to another person, including but not limited to: discrimination; harassment; stalking behaviour, including repetitive behaviour directed at a specific person which reasonably causes that person alarm, distress, fear or a change of normal behaviour; and violence” (University of Manitoba 2018, 5). In addition, the policy lists inappropriate or disruptive behaviour as non-academic misconduct. Regardless of the severity of

violence, it still remains at the discretion of the disciplinary authorities as the policy does not define the pivotal terminology used: harm, alarm, distress or fear. The victim's judgment of the violence endured is subjective and discredited by those who actualize the policy environment.

As defined in the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, "consent means that all persons involved demonstrate, through words or actions, that they freely and mutually agree to participate in a contact or an activity" (University of Manitoba 2020a, 3). As previously outlined, I did not consent to the violence I endured, obviously, nor did I consent to sharing my experience with other departments within the Faculty of Arts, the Indigenous Students Centre and other graduate students in Indigenous Studies. Why define consent if the disciplinary authorities refuse to follow its definition? Well, Ahmed (2021b) reveals that "Having evidence that the organization has failed to follow its own policies and procedures becomes evidence of insubordination because that evidence implies that those who govern the university should be bound by something other than themselves. Of course, we might answer by saying that those who govern or manage educational institutions should be bound by laws, policies, and procedures" (47). Questioning the applicability of the definitions provided within governing environments exposes the "emptiness of that *should* [...] Policies become for others to follow" (Ahmed 2021b, 47). Once again, procedures reveal the institutional power imbalances that silence difference.

As defined in the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, discrimination means "differential treatment of an individual or group on the basis of any Protected Characteristic" (University of Manitoba 2020a, 8). Interestingly, this policy mostly identifies discriminatory actions condoned by the institution or its staff. The example given to describe an instance of discrimination reads as follows, "systemic discrimination resulting from interrelated actions, policies, or rules which together have a discriminatory effect" (University of Manitoba 2020a, 9). Thus, it addresses potential discrimination towards students and staff by the institutional policy environment. However, the definitions of discrimination do not apply to my experience as a student committed the overt violence.

As defined in the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, personal harassment means,

- i) a severe single incident or a series of incidents of objectionable and unwelcome conduct or comments, directed toward a specific person or group, which does not serve a reasonable work or academic purpose, and objectively would have the effect of creating an intimidating, humiliating, hostile or offensive work or learning environment; ii) verbal

or written abuse, threats or intimidation that objectively is humiliating or demeaning; and iii) objectionable and unwelcome conduct or comments that objectively would have the effect of impacting the mental or physical health of another person. (University of Manitoba 2020a, 10)

In addition to this definition, the policy outlines human-rights-based and sexual harassment. It follows with definitions of sexual violence and assault. It remains unclear whether I can use all applicable definitions or if I have to choose one that is most relevant to my experience. Trying to compartmentalize the violence I endured as a single definition is debilitating as it reduces the complexity of the violent actions, as well as the violence reproduced through the policy environment.

As defined in the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, sexual violence includes “any sexual act or act targeting a person’s sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person’s consent, and includes, [...] Sexual Harassment” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 11). So, my experience would be categorized as sexual violence? In addition, would the disciplinary authorities’ responses to the sexual violence be categorized as violence? I did not consent to the descriptions provided in the email correspondence concerning the nude photo, when asking to confirm my identity nor did I consent to sharing my experience with other members of the university community. And so, the confounding nature of navigating policies concerning violence reproduce violence. It is harmful to piece together how my experience conforms to these policies.

As defined in the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, sexual assault “is characterized by a broad range of behaviours that involve the use of force, threats or control towards a person, which makes that person feel uncomfortable, distressed, frightened, threatened, and is carried out in circumstances in which the person has not freely provided Consent, or is incapable of providing Consent” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 11-12). The policy does not define threat, leaving ambiguity surrounding the violence I experienced. Again, I never provided consent.

As defined in the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure, sexual harassment includes, “one serious incident or a course of objectionable and unwelcome sexual conduct or comments directed at an individual that includes, but is not limited to: (a) unwanted sexual attention” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 12). My experience comprises a myriad of complicated and intersecting layers, which appear to be reflected in all definitions concerning sexual violence,

assault, and harassment, yet the severity of the instances was not deserving of an investigation. I must then ask how these definitions provide actionable solutions?

As defined in the *Sexual Violence* policy, “reprisal measures include, but are not limited to: i) discipline; ii) academic penalties (in the case of students); iii) demotion; iv) termination of employment; v) termination of an academic appointment; vi) any other measure which significantly adversely affects working conditions or educational experience; and vii) a threat to take any of the measures referred to above” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 5). Notice how the policy does not read, “reprisal measures *can* include.” It successfully outlines the disciplinary actions, but here is the catch: “‘Reprisal’ means any measures taken against a Complainant, Respondent, or any other person because they have asked for advice regarding this Policy or Procedure, brought forward allegations of a Breach or made a Formal Complaint, cooperated with an Investigation, or rejected a sexual solicitation or advance” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 4). Does the *Sexual Violence* policy really mean anyone, or does it require a Complainant and Respondent similar to the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* policy? As Ahmed (2021b) argues, “If making a complaint requires learning more about an organization’s own policies and procedures, that knowledge is often about what policies do not do, how procedures are not followed or are deliberately bypassed in order to secure a desired outcome” (50). Thus, the definable ambiguity confuses the working objectives of promoting safety by detailing what the disciplinary authorities tolerate, while excluding preventative measures.

Definitions of sexual violence and harassment within the *Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Violence: A Final Report* are impartial to those identified within the policy environment. The definitions found within the report are more reflective of one’s experience as opposed to rigid abstractions. It is challenging to value definitions that represent experiences of violence as they are written to exclude; only instances of violence that fit within a policy’s criteria are punishable. However, the following list proves it to be possible. Sexual harassment “is broadly defined as unwanted sexual attention,” and can include “verbal (e.g., unwanted sexual comments) and non-verbal conduct (e.g., gestures or posting pictures of a sexual nature)” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 16). The *Campus Climate Survey* “defines sexual violence as *any* violence (physical, emotional or psychological) of a sexual nature [that] has a strong negative effect on physical and mental health” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 16). These definitions create room for the complainant to identify their relation to or can be reflections of their experiences of sexual

violence. Ultimately, they provide clear understandings of violence without causing additional harm. In addition, the report provides a summary of the methodology used to gather information about sexual violence. It lists topics of discussion, as well as provides a trigger warning for those who may be sensitive to the presented data. The disciplinary authorities should invest their time and resources to re-work the policy environment to include definitions that consider violence more broadly. I question their decision to wait until 2028 to review the policies, if meaningful changes were identified by way of the *Campus Climate Survey* in 2019.

In reflecting on the rigidity of the disciplinary authorities' definitions of sexual violence, I wonder if the narrowness enables their refusal to prevent this violence. Are they using the Criminal Code as a reason to avoid responsibility of defining sexual violence themselves? If so, they are putting additional responsibility on complainants to demand transformative changes. The disciplinary authorities are ostracizing those most vulnerable to bring forward a traumatizing experience that they have to live with, in hopes that it reflects a definition provided within the policy environment. And if not, the complainant must relive instances of violence without reason. Relegating such responsibility to an individual, opposed to opening up a potentially large discussion seems, by nature, colonial and patriarchal. Investigating instances of violence as stand-alone episodes allows institutions to not accumulate information that reveals racialized and gendered patterns. Institutional negligence reduces collective subjects, including those who are more likely to experience these behaviours, i.e., Indigenous Peoples, to victims of violence and not systemic violence. Thus, as a Métis woman, it is challenging to confront such barriers when being met with two intersecting ideologies that have been and continue to be used to determine the fate of Indigenous lives. Our experiences of violence become abstracted when using the definitions provided within the policy environment, enabling the reproduction of violence as a consequence.

### **# Understanding Individual Responsibility through Data Collection and Management**

As with all institutional structures, we can expect disciplinary authorities to use reports to govern the university community. There is a section within the *Campus Climate Survey* that asks students to list what they consider effective measures to reduce or prevent sexual violence on campus. In some ways, those subjected to violence are expected to be 'pro-active' in its prevention entirely. They are the ones responsible to provide instruction on how to keep themselves safe. Even if they ask for men to stop enacting violence; they must indicate that they

do not feel safe because men enact violence. As an example, suggestions within the survey, while practical, do not bring attention to the rooted patriarchal ideologies that perpetuate violence towards women. Suggesting an increase of lighting on campus (Peter and Stewart 2019, 96) does not resolve the possibility of violence. Some may argue increased lighting may bring attention to those navigating physical spaces. Suggestions can only do so much to keep women safe knowing that patriarchy prevails. As stated by one of the respondents to the survey, “But the onus is always on me to report, remember everything accurately and even to produce ‘evidence’ such as pictures of marks weeks afterwards. Why don’t we start by educating our men? So I’d love to see the university really get behind advocating for women publicly and where needed, politically. Don’t just pass the buck to women on campus and call it ‘self-empowerment’” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 97).

While the *Campus Climate Survey* considers the respondents’ qualitative and quantitative data to understand their experiences of violence, this documentation may reproduce harm. The lack of initiative from the disciplinary authorities to produce effective and meaningful change is concerning, as those who directly experience violence are pressured to fulfill this responsibility. Those who bravely shared their insights within the *Campus Climate Survey* may become abstracted from their experiences as it is unclear how the disciplinary authorities will utilize this information moving forward. Deborah McGregor, Jean-Paul Restoule, and Rochelle Johnston (2017) acknowledge the dangers of research, as it can “entrench positions of power” (81). In doing this work, institutions that have created power imbalances recreate them through its systems and policy environment. Thus, like respondents to surveys, students must keep the disciplinary authorities accountable through determining their level of engagement with the commentary provided in reports. I question whether disciplinary authorities will follow up with a draft response strategy for those to review, and how many of university community’s voices and concerns will inform the policies that govern our everyday lives. Data collection can be effective, but also dangerous if not managed with proper care.

Colonial methodologies prevail through transforming lived experiences into figurative data for governing purposes. One of the questions posed in the *Campus Climate Survey* asks of the disciplinary authorities’ ability to respond to difficult situations. If the respondents have not encountered violence or worked with the policy environment, on what grounds should they respond to this question? Would their responses not skew the figures for those who have had

terrible experiences with disciplinary authorities? As reflected in one of the graphs, according to those who responded, a majority were favourable of disciplinary authorities in their ability to handle incidents fairly and responsibly, believed them to respond quickly in difficult situations, that they protect the safety of students, that they handle crises well, and that there are good support systems available on campus (Peter and Stewart 2019, 27). The quantitative data praises disciplinary authorities for their ‘effectiveness’ in maintaining a safe environment. Meanwhile, the qualitative data reveals lived experiences. One respondent had written that “their assaulter is still walking around on campus, [and that] it makes [them and others] feel very unsafe” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 34). There is also a demand to make perpetrators known, as well as to educate them. As another stated, “[the perpetrators] need to know that this won’t be tolerated and that there will be consequences” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 34). Many of the respondents briefly contextualize their experience with sexual assault, harassment, or violence, as well as weigh their decision to report based on the ineffectiveness of the disciplinary authorities. Imagine that? The *Campus Climate Survey* reviews concerns of sexual violence on the university’s campuses, while simultaneously students are being told by both disciplinary authorities and their policies that they are unwilling to enforce safety in transformative ways.

As identified, policies rely upon the actioning of individuals. It is their responsibility to demand justice as, according to the *Sexual Violence* policy, disciplinary authorities “[encourage] individuals to bring concerns about an alleged Breach to an appropriate authority, and [protects] those who bring forward such allegations against Reprisal” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7). Members of the university community encouraged me to bring forward my experiences through requesting an emergency department meeting to discuss what had transpired in March. Since the institutional organization consists of a multitude of independent moving parts, it became frustrating and overwhelming to identify all those I needed to inform. Until I brought forward my frustrations, I was not protected as an employee, nor as a student. My immediate supports should not be responsible for the disciplinary authorities’ indifference. Rather, the latter is responsible, as following the *Sexual Violence* policy, as an example, they comprise the delegated authority.

Included in this policy are additional protections: “Nothing in this Policy or the Procedure is intended to discourage or prevent a member of the University Community, including students and employees, from filing a complaint with, for example, the Winnipeg Police Service, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, professional regulatory bodies, or

from exercising any other legal rights pursuant to any other law” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 10). However, it is the complainant who is then responsible to undertake these additional protections to ensure their safety. They have to decide if they want to file a complaint with the Winnipeg Police Service, Manitoba Human Rights Commission, and other legal bodies. As institutions that uphold colonial law, these avenues are ineffective, especially for Indigenous Peoples, and more specifically, Indigenous women. Historically, these institutions regurgitated institutional indifference by refusing to care for Indigenous Peoples. Flowers (2015) associates this lack of care with “unjust forms of state-sanctioned violence” (26). She continues by framing how the operation of these “mechanisms [are] designed to ‘ensure its own preservation’ by reproducing power relations of domination” (Flowers 2015, 36). Thus, the Winnipeg Police Service, for example, may reproduce unjust forms of state-sanctioned violence towards Indigenous Peoples to ensure the preservation of its authority. Complaining to such a rigid institution may not be effective as a result of this reproduction of violence. In addition, Starblanket and Hunt (2020) argue that “as the institutional relationship between Indigenous, federal, and provincial governments has never been reconfigured in a way that deviates from [its] colonial origins, it should come as no surprise that the criminal justice system continues to operate in a way that reflects its earliest mandate” (63). For one, the Criminal Code only determines what is legal and what is illegal; it does not enact protection. Likewise, it does not associate sexual violence with emotional or psychological distress; it too remains selective in its definitions.

As I write this section, I am reminded of the harsh realities of being a Métis woman who is trying to complain to and about an institution: I must state my case against a rigid, colonial, patriarchal system that does not tolerate ‘buts.’ I must follow the law, and hope that it applies to my experience for there to be justice. If not, I have to work through the trauma I experienced, while pursuing my academic career as if nothing happened. I should get over it, right? I am still a student who must complete their degree. I was never granted or informed of extensions or solutions to help me through the academic year. I had to ask for everything that I was granted. As Foucault (1978) reminds us, “Law cannot help but be armed, and its arm, par excellence, is death; to those who transgress it, it replies, at least as a last resort, with that absolute menace. The law always refers to the sword. But a power whose task is to take charge of life needs



continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms” (144). And in this instance, the sword represents the institutional apparatuses that allows life or lets it die.

With its publication date of 2019, the *Campus Climate Survey* is outdated as it does not include instances of sexual violence within virtual learning spaces. Of the fifteen-hundred respondents, the majority were cis-gendered, heterosexual, white women. The lived experiences that were transcribed into abstract data are not representative of the entire university community. Rather, the disciplinary authorities have access to govern all students on the basis of these respondents and the concerns they vocalized in 2018. Moreover, it is unclear how the survey informs the proposed response strategy, and whether it has been drafted. And so, solutions that derive from this report, if not treated timely or with care, will reproduce violence.

### **# Linear Progression**

As expected, the policies comprise steps; some of which are interchangeable with other procedures, and need to be reviewed together to navigate the bureaucracy at the University of Manitoba. To preface, the narratives found within these policies are not presented in trauma-informed ways. They are listed on the university’s Governance webpage, in no apparent order. Provincial policies are included alongside the exhaustive list. Recently, hyperlinks to supportive resources for sexual violence have been added to the webpage, although it does not list a general support service, making it challenging to navigate these documents. The policies themselves are not lengthy, although they reflect rigid approaches to ensuring safety. As an example, the procedures reflect a linear sequence. They determine the disciplinary authorities, the allotted timeframes, and the severity of the consequences. In all of the policies I have read, to instigate an investigation, a Respondent must be identified. The disciplinary authorities must know who is responsible before investigating the matter at hand. If the Respondent is not identified, they will not proceed with an investigation, a complaint following the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* policy cannot be made, nobody can be penalized for non-academic misconduct, or for eliciting sexualized and racialized violence within the university’s learning spaces. Surely, this process is reasonable; we cannot punish an individual if we do not know who is responsible. However, the disciplinary authorities’ refusal to investigate to identify the Respondent remains conflicting. As previously noted, the violence I endured was not punishable in the Criminal Code, so, by default, the responsible student(s) managed to avoid punishment entirely while reproducing violence. Thus, the existing policy environment is indifferent to students’ safety.

Students must also learn how to keep themselves safe, as was first and endlessly made clear to me when I met with the University of Manitoba's Security Services.

In addition, if a responsible student is identified, the extent of their punishment is expulsion, but they can re-apply as directed by the disciplinary authorities. They would be willing to re-introduce individuals who willingly elicit harm into their learning spaces. Will we be ever safe? Termination only exists for professors; it does not include students. I feel strongly that those who perpetuate or instigate racialized and sexualized violence will never reconsider their harmful actions as long as gendered and racist patterns are maintained. They will continue to elicit harm if given the opportunity, which the disciplinary authorities have provided. As a result of the existing procedural environment, it is clear that disciplinary authorities tolerate this kind of behaviour as they do not outline transformative strategies to prevent it.

The *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure introduces the steps for conducting an investigation. As previously stated, my experience did not allow for one, as the responsible student(s) was never identified. Regardless, the Department Head is to advise the instances of violence to the Faculty Dean's Office. Due to the severity of the violence, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts was involved immediately (we skipped a step). According to the policy, Faculty Deans should only be involved if the instance happens repeatedly, which it did (it is acceptable that we skipped a step). And to conclude the hierarchy, the University of Manitoba's Security Services should only be notified if the instance is considered a criminal offence (oops). In my experience, the disciplinary authorities did not follow this linear set of instructions; nobody seemed to know who to involve, and at which point. The investigation seemed to have intersected various disciplinary authorities, and did not follow the progression as outlined within this policy. It is concerning that the Vice Provost (Students) informed me that they should have been notified immediately, as they were not involved until the attacks in July. However, according to this policy, the Vice Provost did not need to be involved as the responsible student(s) was never identified. It is challenging to follow this outline, as in my experience, nobody knew if a criminal offence had taken place until the link was deemed safe to open. We needed to inform Security before Security should have been notified. In addition, I did not think to review whether what had happened would be considered a criminal offence, and when or if Security should be involved. All that mattered to me, in the moment, was finding

protection. As a matter of fact, I do not believe any experience of sexualized or racialized violence is ever as transparent as the procedural environment perceives it to be.

### **# Setting the Standards: Reproducing Violence**

Vague wording sets the precedent for all policies included in this review. They consist of autonomous yet layered objectives. The policies include a sequential methodology, while excluding transparency. They emulate a one-size-fits-all, black-and-white transcript that the university community must follow to ensure their safety within the physical academic spaces. These procedures do not list exceptions to experiences incurred, nor do they acknowledge the disciplinary authorities' indifference. As an example, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts advised that if the responsible student(s) was ever identified, they would be expelled, proving the severity of the racialized and sexualized violence I endured. The *Student Discipline* bylaw also outlines expulsion as a serious consequence. Thus, if the disciplinary authorities and policy environment advise that expulsion would be the appropriate course of action, why would they not follow through with an investigation? Unfortunately, because the responsible student(s) was never identified, they may continue to incite harm within other academic spaces. Regardless of the severity of violence, the weight of the "if" favoured the responsible student(s).

What is more troublesome is the appealability of all punishments condoned by the disciplinary authorities. Students automatically regain their rights and privileges "upon the lifting of [punishments]" (University of Manitoba 2021a, 4). Even expulsions are applicable for "either a definite or indefinite period of time" (University of Manitoba 2021a, 6). The implications surrounding such procedures are accommodating to all students, including those who incite racialized and sexualized violence. It is disheartening and triggering to know that these students have the ability to return to the university community. The rigidity of institutional approaches to transformative changes are inappropriate and ineffective. They create an unsafe environment that lessen students' desire to bring forward complaints. For example, this environment reproduces hostility through its tolerance of violence as it allows violent students to reapply if ever expelled. As dangerous as it can be to complain, it is "necessary in order to address not only the failure of an environment to be open and inclusive but [also] the hostility of that environment" (Ahmed 2021b, 154). Therefore, my complaint of violent students must extend to the hostile policy environment that tolerates their behaviour. And so, the disciplinary authorities should explicitly

make known unacceptable behaviour that will prevent students from re-applying at any given time, once committed.

Hostility prevails as those who have authority over the policy environment also control decisions concerning violations and discipline. In addition, making procedures follow stringent regulations, through listing adjunct policies that are derived from both provincial and federal law enable the reproduction of violence. For example, none of these listed entities recognized the severity of the sexualized and racialized violence I experienced. Over the course of my studies, I have learnt how colonial rule is used to save itself, and those it was designed for. As an educational institution, the university has transformed into a bureaucratic moneymaking machine that cares more about financial gain than its employees and students. Essed (2013) describes the positionality of ‘good’ versus anti-racist colleagues that enable the reproduction of structural violence. The former does not “rock the boat, but [makes themselves] ‘marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical’” (1395). As a consequence, the latter are subjected to disciplinary actions and victimization for vocalizing safety concerns. Ahmed (2021b) reminds us that, “A complaint seems to amplify what makes you not fit, picking up what you are not, becoming more evidence [...] that no matter what you do or how far you go, you will not be ‘one of them.’ You complain because you do not belong here. And your complaint becomes evidence that you do not belong here” (158). This notion of rocking the boat by way of complaining amplifies our replaceability. For Adorno (2020), institutions within the capitalist mode of production ensures the efficiency of our substitution:

For every person, with all his functions, society has a stand-in ready, to whom the former is in any case no more than an intrusive occupier of his workplace, a candidate for death. So the experience of death is turned into that of the exchange of functionaries, and anything in the natural relationship to death that is not wholly absorbed into the social one is turned over to hygiene. In being seen as no more than the exit of a living creature from the social combine, death has been finally domesticated: dying merely confirms the absolute irrelevance of the natural organism in face of the social absolute (247).

In this way, we are reminded of our positionality within an institution that tolerates racialized and sexualized violence. Indigenous Peoples only have value to the university if we are submissive to its policies and administration. Our replaceability embodies the disciplinary authorities’ reluctance to keep us safe, and therefore, to keep us at all.

The influential relationship between colonialism and capitalism are foundational to the overall imperial project. It resembles a business partnership where one social ideology must

employ the other to function. J.M. Blaut (1993) argues the immense profitability of colonialism through which “considerable sums of money were invested in efforts to learn as much as possible about the people and resources of the regions to be conquered, dominated, and perhaps settled, and to learn as much as possible about the regions already conquered in order to facilitate the administration and economic exploitation of these regions” (23). The University of Manitoba’s active participation in training teachers for residential schools, as an example, enabled the colonial project to diffuse in Canada. In formative years, knowledge that existed within western academic institutions predominately validated European inventions, belief systems, and up until the 1970s, racist assumptions concerning Indigenous Peoples in Canada. However, in more recent years, the turning inward and apologizing for its participation in assimilationist efforts allowed the university to think of itself as good through its decision to do good. As Jessica Kolopenuk (2020) argues, “a growing call for a more just society [is] achieved through the liberal forms of diversity and inclusion” (27). This growing desire to do good through being good is reflective of a progressive narrative, something the University of Manitoba apparently strives for in its recent rebranding. However, the issue with this narrative reveals itself through the abstraction of justice, whereby “virtue has not been a moral pursuit of justice for its own sake, but for the sake of securing and recuperating sovereign authority and control” (Kolopenuk 2020, 28). Phrased differently, we must question whose justice is maintained and reproduced through the desires for diversity and inclusion. Ahmed (2021b) argues how this process enables those who are not men, not white, not cis-gendered, and not able-bodied to receive heightened surveillance through their recruitment to diversity committees (157). Setting the standards means reproducing specific standards. Ahmed’s analysis confronts these standards through questioning what would happen if they are challenged, i.e., if whiteness is not maintained. She argues, “Whiteness can be reproduced in the spaces where it is supposedly being questioned. You even have to do the work of questioning the terms of their terms (‘if you want to decolonize, we’ll do it on our terms’)” (Ahmed 2021b, 158). These standards, as evidenced through my experiences of violence and within reading the policy environment concerning sexualized and racialized violence, maintain whiteness. Questioning these standards by putting them into conversation with instances of violence estranges the complainant from the institution when asking for protection.

**# When One Door Closes, They All Close**

Following the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure, the racialized and sexualized violence I experienced is defined in section 2.3(i) as “any activity or event on property owned or controlled by the university” (University of Manitoba 2018, 4). As this policy predates COVID-19, it does not specifically mention online or virtual spaces as those owned by the university. However, the university’s purchase of Zoom licenses will have to suffice as a managed possession for the purpose of my argument. According to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, matters of the events were investigated as non-academic misconduct, which after reviewing the policy, seem reasonable. However, a formal investigation did not take place as the disciplinary authorities could not identify the responsible student(s). So, the wording should reflect the formalities of the policy itself. Instead of indicating the possibility of disciplinary action the policy should read, “[only identifiable] students [that were identified without investigation] will be subject to Disciplinary Action for any instance of Non-Academic Misconduct” (University of Manitoba 2018, 6). Even still, the word ‘any’ seems misleading. In my experience, as the responsible student(s) was not identified, no one could be subjected to disciplinary action. Therefore, even though a student committed non-academic misconduct, they remain protected under the policies; to indicate ‘any instance’ is deceptive.

The policy also mentions the possibility of cross-referencing parent procedures and the listed governing documents towards the end. This method does not concern trauma-informed approaches to managing instances of racialized and sexualized violence. It is tedious and exhausting work to read through one of these policies, never mind sifting through additional procedures to identify supportive information. As this policy, and others, do not seek to identify those responsible for eliciting harm, it reflects a breach of the procedures themselves: the disciplinary authorities are not willing to take matters seriously enough to apprehend the student(s) who repeatedly actioned racialized and sexualized violence and disruptive behaviour in an Indigenous-led, Indigenous content course. The responsible student(s) vocalized racial slurs, misgendered students, and subjected staff to repeated violence from February to March. And the university has allowed them to continue with their studies and, quite possibly, their offensive actions.

This policy also includes troubling definitions concerning appeals. As stated, a student is “permitted to continue in their courses or program until the time for appeal has elapsed or until the Student has waived in writing the right to appeal, whichever occurs first” (University of

Manitoba 2021a, 7). Following this sentence, the policy outlines when students are not to attend their courses or program. It reads, “Where if the Disciplinary Action were not implemented, the safety of members of the University Community would be compromised” (University of Manitoba 2021a, 8). Our safety was compromised, repeatedly. The responsible student(s) remained in class, until live lectures were discontinued and asynchronous recordings were uploaded for students to watch. The responsible student(s) caused such disruption that the safety of the entire class and the pedagogical strategy being use was compromised. An appeal never transpired, as the disciplinary authorities did not conduct an investigation. The responsible student(s) was never expelled, rather, they received a passing grade. My rights as an employee and student under this policy were compromised. Their rights were so well protected that no one in authority even attempted to find out who they were.

The opportunity for an investigation ended halfway through my reading of the policy process. The remaining content of the procedure outlines punishment, the rights of the accused, as well as the accuser. The policy did not allow the opportunity to investigate to remove the responsible student(s) from the university community as they remained anonymous. It is disturbing to know that the responsible student(s) can continue to pose a threat to another course. I may encounter them again, and never know who is responsible for initiating harm. I will likely never know if they abuse another employee or student, and escalate their behaviour. The disciplinary authorities will have no way of knowing their behaviour was part of a pattern, and will treat it as an episode; in the unlikely event that it leads to discipline, it will be categorized as if it a ‘first time offense,’ perhaps even inspiring leniency, as a result.

Likewise, the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure details events that pertain to university matters only, as it concerns maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment. It proceeds to individually dissect concepts that are central to the procedure. To premise each concept, the Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management (OHRCM) advises that, “any member of the University Community who commits Discrimination [as an example] in relation to a University Matter will be subject to discipline” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 8). In reading the first few pages, the policy does not mention whether the responsible student(s) needs to be identified for it to be effective—it is still promising. This policy, although not explicitly dealing with racism, is the only one that mentions this type of discretion as a punishable offence.

Unfortunately, the violence I endured cannot be punished using this policy. On page twelve, the section titled, *Disclosures*, articulates that my experience does not match the technicalities listed. As there is no Respondent to the disclosures, I cannot submit a complaint to the OHRCM. This narrative remains the most disappointing of all: nothing can be done to resolve the racialized and sexualized violence I experienced as both a graduate student and employee of the University of Manitoba. Without a Respondent, there cannot be an investigation. To provide context, the step-by-step process of requesting an investigation starts with advising the OHRCM of the incident. In my experience, the events that transpired did not warrant an investigation, even though there was “imminent risk of harm to the University Community and/or the broader community” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 13). The next step is to identify whether there is risk to the safety and security of someone of the university community. Then, both employees and students are to create a safety plan with the University’s Security Services. Next, includes the following words, “Complainant” and “Respondent.” After reading those words, I knew immediately that a formal complaint and investigation would not occur as we did not know who was responsible for inciting harm. We just knew they were one of a small number of possible student culprits, and that was not enough.

Unfortunately, the policy environment reflects the impracticability of introducing transformative change. As an example, the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* (RWLE) policy is successful in selective circumstances. This policy aspires to maintain an “inclusive and respectful work and learning environment, free from discrimination or harassment” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 1). Like all, it revoked the potential for an investigation on the second page: in order for a formal complaint to be made using the *RWLE* policy, the Respondent must be identified. So, regardless of whether “members of the University Community, including every student and employee, are entitled to a respectful work and learning environment,” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 4), if the Respondent is not identifiable, nothing can be done to ensure a safety and respect. In essence, the policy is misleading. It comprises more wishful thinking than concrete, actionable solutions.

The RWLE policy is infuriating to read as it introduces superficial approaches taken by the disciplinary authorities to protect students and staff. As someone who experienced violence towards Indigenous Peoples, and more specifically, Indigenous women, the disciplinary authorities should have approached the instances by showing enough flexibility in how they



interpret their policies that would have ensured my safety. As stated within the RWLE policy, the disciplinary authorities are willing to “adopt procedures, protocols, and practices,” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 6) to ensure individuals bring forward complaints even if the policy has not been breached. I was never given any solutions, procedures, protocols, or practices to ensure my safety other than a lecture on campus security. Even though the disciplinary authorities claim to “take action respecting any person under the University’s direction who subjects a student, an employee, or any other member of the University Community, to Discrimination or Harassment,” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 6) the following subsection explains the selectiveness of their commitments. The policy asks all members of the university community to “bring forward credible evidence of a Breach of which they become aware, to an appropriate authority” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 6). Keyword: credible. The disciplinary authorities advised that we did not have sufficient evidence (i.e., one distinguishing thing) to proceed with an investigation.

As I read through several policies concerning non-academic misconduct, disclosures and complaints, each showcasing an alleged commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy learning and working environment, I am repeatedly met with closed doors. Ahmed has much to say about the mechanisms behind complaints: “to go through a formal complaint process is to be channelled in a certain direction. You end up having to complain about how your complaint is handled, having to say ‘no’ to how the institution records your ‘no’” (Ahmed 2021a, 3). Academic institutions do not seem prepared to respond to complaints against their own governing apparatuses. When meeting them with resistance, the individual instead becomes the problem needing to be managed—discreetly, of course. Like these policies, the disciplinary authorities govern the student body to make students feel small. It encourages promises for a safe and healthy learning and working environment, while simultaneously making minimal effort to ensuring the safety of students. As Ahmed (2021a) explains, “a complaint as something you are doing can acquire exteriority, becoming a thing in the world; scratching away; a little bird, all your energy going into an activity that matters so much to what you can do, who you can be, but barely seems to leave a trace; the more you try, the smaller it becomes, you become, smaller; smaller still” (4). In my experience, the complainant is meant to feel small when met with the largescale ambiguity of institutional policies. Through reading and trying to interpret the broad definitions presented within the procedures, and not being able to locate my experience within

them, I internalized the violence by criticizing my involvement in dominant racialized and gendered patterns. As I attempted to navigate the policies to understand what could be done, I was met with closed door, after closed door: a linear progression that is rooted in the rigidity of colonial institutions.

For Ahmed (2021a), this progression is realized in the process of complaints:

You are more likely to notice doors when you hit them rather than enter them. Doors are not just physical things that swing on hinges, though they are that, they are also mechanisms that enable an opening or a closing. [...] Doors can be, to borrow from Audre Lorde, ‘the master’s tools,’ teaching us how the same house is being built; how only some can enter; how others become trespassers. (5-6)

Imaging these doorways in physical spaces, instead of navigating the virtual world of email correspondence, reflects one of the drawings Ahmed refers to in her blog post: non-sensical squiggles. Confronting the written policies and meeting with disciplinary authorities virtually within the comfort of my home was exhausting. I cannot imagine having to walk around campus to discuss the violence that transpired in actual offices, in actual buildings. I would have to move between the Allen Building to visit the Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management, Fletcher Argue to speak with the Department of History and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Welcome Centre to speak with Security Services, the Isbister Building to speak with the Department of Indigenous Studies and the Department of Women’s and Genders Studies, Migizii Agamik to decline speaking to the Indigenous Student Centre, the Administration Building to speak with the Vice Provosts, Robson Hall to speak with the Centre for Human Rights Research, and finally, moving to UMSU University Centre to speak with the Sexual Violence Resource Centre. Each office has a door, and each door except a few of those in Women’s and Genders Studies, History, Indigenous Studies, and the Sexual Violence Resource Centre would have slammed shut without support.

In 2018, when the *Campus Climate Survey* was distributed, “there was strong overall endorsement for mandatory training for staff/faculty on responding to disclosures, awareness training on supports and reporting processes for students, and [the] establishment of a ‘one-stop’ sexual assault centre on campus” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 10). Of the list of action items, only one has successfully materialized. The latter recommendation was enacted in 2019, and is monitored by amazing staff. The Sexual Violence Resource Centre (SVRC) was my primary support system when working through the sexualized and racialized violence, as they have maintained conversations throughout the extent of my thesis writing. In all honesty, they remain

the sole bodies from the university who have followed up with me, and continuously offered support after my cry for an investigation was stifled. However, it is discouraging that only one of the recommendations has since been established; the Sexual Violence Resource Centre can only do so much. While helpful, engaging, supportive, and overall amazing, the SVRC is sustained by the institutional structures that reproduce violence. Thus, they can provide support to an extent, but they are also up against the same procedural environment that I was trying to navigate. The mechanism behind the door (i.e., the disciplinary authority in charge of opening and keeping it shut) would have allowed me a glimpse of the possibilities for actionable efforts, but in the end, declined any punishable offences to the responsible student(s). Complaints, like doors, work in tandem in academic institutions: they impede transformative change.

### **# Trauma-Informed Dialogue**

Regardless of whether a Complainant is successful in progressing a formal complaint, there remains a possibility of it not proceeding to an investigation. Again, the verdict depends on the disciplinary authorities. Interestingly, one of the only mentions of trauma-informed discourse in all policies within this review is found within the *Disclosures and Complaints* procedure. As stated, “members of the Human Rights Advisory Committee will have training in the diverse ways in which trauma and Intersectionality affect individuals” (University of Manitoba 2020a, 17). This approach is suggestive of whether all university staff are equipped with the same trauma-informed and intersectional training. Based on my experience, they are not. As a graduate student, I am advised to read all materials before asking questions. I am expected to know my rights as a student, and what is required of me before asking my advisor, committee members, and the like. As I did not anticipate this violence, I never thought to read the appointed policies. Now, as I am reflecting on what happened, and why the disciplinary authorities decided not to investigate, I am confronted with the level of distress that could arise through reading these procedures. I experienced several panic attacks while working through them for the first time as they re-triggered memories of the transgressions. Therefore, even if some staff are equipped with trauma-informed training, the policies themselves are not written in trauma-informed ways. Colonial language, and its associated ambiguity is emotionless, and construed using patriarchal notions of criminal law. In ways, reading these policies contributed to my vulnerability as I would severely dissociate while re-experiencing what had happened. I had to work extensively with my external counsellor to help manage my dissociations, anxiety, and overall wellbeing

before proceeding with my research and writing. And so, each policy confirmed the worst to be true: the responsible student(s) is protected, whereas I am not.

The disciplinary authorities claim to “support those impacted by sexual violence” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7), as well as ensure a “trauma-informed and intersectional approach” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7) through the implementation of the *Sexual Violence* policy. Interestingly, this policy does not define trauma-informed, nor does it outline what these approaches resemble. As my experience travelled to several departments and graduate students without my knowledge or consent, it does not appear to follow a trauma-informed approach. Moreover, the following statement seems impractical considering the scale of the disciplinary authorities. According to the *Sexual Violence* policy, “individuals will not be asked to repeat their accounts more than is necessary” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7). Unless the disciplinary authorities are willing to organize and communicate with one another to resolve instances of sexualized and racialized violence, complainants will unfortunately need to repeat their accounts more than is necessary. In my experience, I met with several disciplinary authorities, most of whom were unaware of the instances and who had been previously informed.

Accordingly, the university prides itself in “responding to Sexual Violence in a manner that minimizes re-traumatization and promotes recovery, empowerment, and self-determination” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7). After the final instance in March, I woke up to countless emails from supportive individuals, most of whom I did not know. My experience travelled to several departments, student centres, professors, and graduate students without my knowledge and consent, and to preserve the integrity of my story, I had to tell and re-tell it to whoever I needed to inform in hopes of initiating an investigation. Ahmed’s analysis of time helps explain my experiences of navigating the institutional policy environment. She writes, “To make a complaint was to witness institutional time conflicting with the time of experiencing [violence]. [...] Each time we made movements or adjusted ourselves in order to move time forward, either to leave, [...] or to disclose what happened to us, the institution moved to keep us in place, reminding us of the stability of violence” (Ahmed 2021b, 268). Throughout the telling and re-telling of my experience, I had to convince or be convincing of the systemic violence I endured. The university’s ‘intersectional’ praxis evades its interdependent responsibility. Million (2009) explains the impact of felt theory on colonial history as “Indigenous women [created] new language for communities to address the real multilayered facets of their histories and concerns

by insisting on the inclusion of our lived experience, rich with emotional knowledges, of what pain and grief and hope meant or mean now in our pasts and futures” (54). She continues by acknowledging institutional indifference through its perpetual marginalization of Indigenous women and their ‘feminine’ experiences—not their experiences as Indigenous women. For Million (2009), “Our voices are still positioned in a particular way, definitely reminiscent of the past silences we know so well, contingent to our colonized position now” (55). As the institution was not designed to accommodate Indigenous experiences, it is challenging to safely locate those of Indigenous women. The perpetual silencing of our lived experiences restricts our ability to engage with and discuss our multilayered confrontations with systemic violence. Therefore, personal narrative intellectualizes western history, as it couples lived experiences with affect. Million’s (2009) reliance on personal narrative implies that “feelings are theory, important projections about what is happening in our lives” (61). If the disciplinary authorities are truly using intersectional approaches, they need to not only make room for Indigenous voices and experiences, but they also need to relinquish authority to Indigenous women to create space that is conducive to their safety and success. As the disciplinary authorities function as isolated moving parts that seemingly do not communicate with one another, I was forced to retraumatize myself by sharing and re-sharing my story over the course of four months. It seems redundant to explain the disciplinary authorities’ shortcomings: their colonial rhetoric does not allow room for experiences of violence. If the university acted as a centralized entity that communicated information or informed the Complainant of the appropriate authority, I may have been spared re-traumatization. Instead, here I am, writing my truths through a policy review, in hopes to regain power over my experience.

### **# Protecting Those Who Incite Harm**

The responsible student(s) remain protected by the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* policy through their use of anonymity. The option to terminate academic appointments is for employees only, and as mentioned above, expulsion is indefinite, but in most cases, students have the option to re-apply after an allotted time. Respondents maintain their confidentiality as determined by the disciplinary authorities. If there is concern for another policy breach, or the health and safety of an individual or group is at risk, the disciplinary authorities will disclose the name of the Respondent (University of Manitoba 2018, 26). As such, the procedure protects the privacy of Respondents but not of Complainants. My

privacy was invalidated repeatedly, but the Respondent, if ever identified, could maintain their privacy throughout the policy process. Ahmed explains the protection of some individuals through another example of a door. She states, “a door can be used to create a space freed from the scrutiny of others, or to protect some from the consequences of scrutiny when the doors don’t stop that scrutiny. [...] What enables abusive behavior is thus what conceals that behavior” (Ahmed 2021b, 188). Like a door, if the violence is not seen, i.e., if it exists behind closed doors, it can continue to terrorize those without consequence. Ahmed (2021b) continues, “Ensuring violence is not seen is a way of protecting some people: if you can’t stop their abusive behavior, you stop the behavior from being seen. It might be that some people are protected because of how violence is not seen” (189). Anonymity, alongside the disciplinary authorities’ refusal to intervene, effectively enabled the violence, and remains an example of how the responsible student(s) maintain protection. They are protected through the protection of whiteness: this instance of violence cannot be punished without acknowledging the broader tolerance of white supremacy within the university’s spaces. I do not feel safe knowing that they remain on campus, and they know me, they know how to terrorize me, but I do not know who they are because the policies do not allow the disciplinary authorities to investigate all instances of racialized and sexualized violence. As in my case, I had to prove the severity of the violence to demand an investigation, but I was not taken seriously enough for one to materialize.

### **# Anonymity Prevails**

In considering the inadequacy of the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure, there is a concerning disregard of anonymous evidence. As stated within the discipline subsection, “anonymous material may only be considered in a disciplinary decision where it would not violate the principles of procedural fairness, and it would not conflict with an applicable collective agreement” (University of Manitoba 2018, 24). The measures surrounding anonymity do not consider or anticipate the move to virtual learning spaces. The University’s Security Services spoke to the frequent attacks that materialized following the presence of online Indigenous-content courses and resource spaces. They referred to these instances as ‘Zoom bombings’ that allude to one-time events for the purpose of disruption. However, the fact that I was stalked and endured violence in two separate academic spaces suggests these personalized attacks were part of a collaborated effort to bring psychological harm to a Métis woman

academic. The responsible student(s) incited harm through the use of anonymity, and maintained their anonymity throughout the disciplinary course of the policy process.

The confidentiality section of the *Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Concerning Behaviour* procedure does not mention whether the disciplinary authorities will request the consent of Complainants throughout the investigation process. As stated, “in respect of an incidence of Non-Academic Misconduct or Concerning Behaviour, the University will not disclose the name of the Complainant, the Student, or the circumstances related to the complaint to any person, other than where the disclosure is: a) necessary to investigate the complaint or take corrective action with respect to the complaint” (University of Manitoba 2018, 13). Regardless of whether the complaint progresses through the hierarchy of disciplinary authorities, to ensure the process is trauma-informed, it should be communicated with the consent of those directly involved. The circulation of my experience without my knowledge or consent reflects a reproduction of violence. Not only was I being stalked and violated by a student(s) I did not know, I then had to inform strangers from the institution of what had happened without knowing what they knew or what their intentions were.

### **# Problems of Indigenization**

As made clear throughout my thesis, the policy process listed in each procedure is outdated. The university, as an institution, claims to advocate for Indigenous achievement, and that it stands in solidarity within Indigenous Peoples. If this were true, it would be receptive to criticism and revisions to its current policies to ensure the safety of Indigenous students and faculty. The blatant disregard for our wellbeing during and after the violence I experienced reflects institutional indifference. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2021) recognizes how language and the framing of responses to Indigenous rights is riddled with colonizer/settler anxieties and privilege, which dominates any commitments to Indigenization, decolonization, reconciliation, or recognition (xii). Similar to concerns with colonial rhetoric, the lack of consultation with Indigenous Peoples is apparent in its policies. When I met with a Vice Provost and the Executive Director of Security, I was confronted with their lack of awareness concerning Indigenous pedagogies and methodologies used to conduct class. Their pre-determined discussion items did not include any concern for these pedagogies when introducing enhanced security features on Zoom. As Cardinal (1999) argues within the creation of binding legal documents, “when the plans are drawn up, they assume that because an Indian was in the room, or in the building or in

the vicinity, he has been consulted and involved. They act indignant and bewildered when the Indian not only refuses to accept it as ‘his’ plan but emphatically tells the white man what he can do with it. They say, ‘what is the use of trying to do anything for the Indian? He isn’t interested’” (55). Safely introducing Indigenous students into colonial institutions is only effective if there is a radical reimagining of its spaces. The reliance on messaging that the university is inclusive projects exclusivity as it refuses criticism of its institutional apparatuses. Like governments, the university embodies “the foolish man who sees his house rotting. Instead of repairing it or replacing it, he whitewashes it in order to make his gullible neighbour believe that all is well” (Cardinal 1999, 56). Similarly, Essed argues that “if ‘you’re not responsible for any community you’re not answerable to any community’” (1397). The university often forgets that Indigenous Peoples attend their campuses and academic spaces; they are not possessions or willing subjects of its bureaucratic misconduct.

I attempted to bring forward the racialized and sexualized violence I endured to those who could enhance the safety of the university community, and was disillusioned throughout the process. Ahmed’s (2021b) use of Audre Lorde’s term, “the master’s tools,” helps identify “When procedures are developed in house, it is not surprising they are often used to keep that house in order. It is also not surprising that those who use formal complaints procedures end up leading an effort to modify the tools” (50). I could only vocalize my concerns if they aligned with the university’s objectives. When I did not receive support, I became cautious as I feared threatening relationships with faculty and staff. I suppressed my emotions and the impact of the violence to remain amicable amongst my colleagues. Ahmed discusses the implications of trust, and how the lack of accountability and being receptive to complaints establishes a fear of retaliation. She argues, “We did not trust the institution. We did not trust them to protect us, and we also did not trust them to act. We did not trust their judgement of their motivations. It was the institution, after all, that [...] systematically looked away from what happened in the open” (Ahmed 2021b, 265). The intensification of this lack of trust and fear of retaliation extends when explicitly naming those who reproduce violence. For Ahmed (2021b), “Insisting that the institution take notice of, respond to, and no longer implicitly condone this climate meant intensifying the ways we were already vulnerable” (265). It remains alarming that nothing came of the violence, and that a student(s) who does not agree with Indigenous content and does not respect Indigenous voices is allowed to remain on campus. My vulnerability increases through the tolerance of anti-



Indigenous racism, sexist attitudes, and a policy environment that does not keep Indigenous students safe.

### **# Upholding Fundamental Pillars**

As stated, the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* (RWLE) policy provides a framework titled, “Implementation of Vision” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 5). This statement characterises the entitlement of all students and staff at the University of Manitoba. It advises that “members of the University Community, including every student and employee, are entitled to a respectful work and learning environment that is: a) free from discrimination; [and] b) free from harassment” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 4). The university has also provided an outline to action this vision. Most of the items rely on educating the university community of its policies and their application. As an example, the RWLE policy states its “best practices to facilitate early resolution of conflict between members of the University Community and/or to address behaviour that falls short of Harassment or Discrimination, but nevertheless has a negative impact on the work and learning environment” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 5). The disciplinary authorities are working to ensure that “i) no member of the University Community is subjected to Discrimination or Harassment while participating in a University Matter; ii) no employee is subjected to Discrimination or Harassment in the workplace; and iii) no student is subjected to Discrimination or Harassment in the learning environment” (University of Manitoba 2020b, 5-6). Evidently, there are discrepancies within the procedure, as the disciplinary authorities could not ensure my safety from discrimination or harassment in the working and learning environment as an employee or as a student. This policy is impractical in its inability to address the loop holes that have been created as a result of virtual learning. It makes me question the barometer of racialized and sexualized violence one must experience to actuate the policy environment.

Accordingly, the disciplinary authorities are committed to “maintaining a healthy and safe work, learning, living and social environment for all members of the University Community” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7). At this point, I sound like a broken record. But here is where I noticed some changes. The disciplinary authorities outline their commitments as follows, “making available and actively promoting programs to educate and train University Community Members on the prevention of and response to Sexual Violence” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 7). As per discussions with a Vice Provost and the Executive Director of

Security, I do not believe introducing a non-mandatory course on responding to disclosure aligns with maintaining a safe working environment that prevents sexual violence. As it is not mandatory, it does not reflect a structured commitment that requires all members of the university community to be equipped with preventing and responding to sexual violence. If the disciplinary authorities included a required course or training workshop, its objectives would appear more imperative to prevention.

The disciplinary authorities proceed to identify their responsibility to the university community. As part of this section, it advises that “all members of the University Community especially those in instructional, supervisory, or managerial positions to: b) bring forward evidence of a Breach” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 8), although it does not mention the consequences if the individual breaching the policy is in one of those positions. It seems as though the *Sexual Violence* policy does not apply to those in power, unlike the *Disclosures and Complaints* policy. It objectifies the experiences as though sexual violence happens solely between students, and not those who reproduce violence structurally. The disciplinary authorities make clear that education is one of the essential methods to preventing and addressing sexual violence (University of Manitoba 2020c, 8). However, if education on sexual violence is not mandatory, how can they ensure that all members of the university community are aware of its prevention? Their commitment seems superficial, as those who are in need of education are those who often refuse non-mandatory training.

### **# Reproducing Violence through Education**

There is exclusive mention in the *Campus Climate Survey* of the need to inform research using an intersectional approach. One respondent appreciates the work completed so far on sexual violence, although mentions the lack of “repercussions from displays of racism, and the reporting procedures go nowhere. It is a very helpless sequence of events” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 25). The Rady Faculty of Health Sciences’ and the University of Manitoba Graduate Students’ Association have put forward statements and policies concerning anti-racism, and the University of Manitoba launched a task force in 2020 to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion. Their mandate includes, “(a) [strengthening] leadership and planning, (b) [increasing] diversity and equity, and (c) [building] an inclusive community” (University of Manitoba 2020d, 8). Supposedly, inclusion will address racism. The task force identifies the presence of racism on campus but does not inform nor develop solutions. Specifically, as of yet, there is no strategy for

reporting instances of racism. Sifting through the qualitative responses, there is an apparent demand for a zero-tolerance policy, as well as increased education. As a response, the University of Manitoba has put the onus of education on the Department of Indigenous Studies, History, Political Studies, Sociology and Criminology, and Women's and Gender Studies through the newly mandated 'I' requirement. *UM News Today* quotes the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs, Faculty of Arts as stating that "Students are often shocked when they learn about the devastating effects of settler colonialism" (2021). However, the key institutional bodies who are advocating for this requirement do not mention how these effects reproduce in their own spaces. Without offering supports to ensuring safety, professors must act independently to keep themselves and students safe from those unwilling but who must now take an Indigenous Studies course to graduate.

### **# All Talk, No Action**

The responses found within the *Campus Climate Survey* and the *President's Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion* document changes members of the university community want to see. As an example, respondents request mandatory training even though this educational opportunity remains a barrier to achieving a safer learning environment. There is apparent concern and a need for these action items, as the objective remains to introduce a zero-tolerance policy on racism. Students discern a "need for the University to create an environment in which sexually inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated" (University of Manitoba 2020d, 71). As another student demands, "[the] University of Manitoba must implement a zero-tolerance policy for racism and discrimination. Believe students and do something" (University of Manitoba 2020d, 307). Students also want to challenge the disciplinary authorities' leniency and hesitation with reporting instances of violence. As one student argues, "it seems like the U of M cares more about looking like it has a sexual violence policy instead of actually prosecuting offenders" (University of Manitoba 2020d, 78). The lack of appropriate measures and action items have students feeling as if "the University is more concerned about its public image than the wellbeing of students" (University of Manitoba 2020d, 80). Perhaps there is hope that the disciplinary authorities will appropriately intervene and robustly support and care for those experiencing violence, even though these actions have not yet materialized. Students are actively vocalizing priorities that they need to feel safe while navigating the physical campuses, yet they are continuously met with resistance. The introduction of new policies or revisions to existing

policies is comparative to Ahmed's discussions of window dressings. She argues, "The new procedures and policies allowed the university to appear at the front, in public, as having created a new culture that was more supportive of those who made complaints about harassment. Behind closed doors, the culture was unchanged. We need to remember that complaints are mostly made behind closed doors, the places that are withdrawn from the public gaze" (Ahmed 2021b, 55). Thus, there is an idea that the disciplinary authorities claim to offer supports and that they do not tolerate racialized or sexualized violence, yet they do not issue these supports as they are made available. Their reluctance to actualize transformative changes is incessant on the maintenance of patterns and the reproduction of violence.

### # Momentary Freak-Out: Disillusion Continues

In attempting to compile a progression of the university's policies and procedures, I noticed the inaccessibility of its webpages. Following the online Academic Calendar, there is a tab that reads, University Policy and Procedures. It outlines a selective list relating to academic and behavioural policies. While reading through the list, I noticed some of the policy names are different than those outlined throughout my thesis. As an example, the university lists a *Respectful Work and Learning Environment and Sexual Assault Policy and Procedure*. Out of fear that I had to re-write my entire thesis, as the policies are seemingly different than what I have listed, I scrambled to locate and preview this specific policy for reassurance. I located the link to the Governing Documents webpage, which categorizes all "institutional-level policies, procedures, bylaws, and regulations approved by the Board of Governors, Senate, and the University Administration" (University of Manitoba 2022d). Once on the webpage, I retrieved the *Sexual Violence* policy through the index list. Assuming it would be considered a governing document concerning students, I scanned through the listed procedures. The university has since updated its webpage from my initial search, presumably because we are now into 2022. Regardless of the surface changes, the policies remain the same, except for the titles. As listed on the Governing Documents webpage, the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment and Sexual Assault Policy and Procedure* is titled, *Disclosures and Complaints Procedure (formerly RWLE and Sexual Assault Procedure)*. There is considerable red tape when navigating this procedural environment. If it is not changes to the procedures themselves, it is changes to their location on the university's webpages, or changes to their names. It remains exhausting to keep pace with the institutional reorganization, while simultaneously working through racialized and sexualized

violence. It is demanding to remain informed of governing policies as students and employees if the disciplinary authorities are not able to keep track of their own procedural environment.

## **# Conclusion**

Theorizing my experience of navigating the University of Manitoba's policy environment creates meaningful engagement with my research. My personal narrative presents accountability, to an academic institutional that actively recruits Indigenous students. Margaret Kovach identifies the methods to locate a relevant research topic. As she articulates, "Regardless of the origin of the research question, it ought to respond to a need. Furthermore, the researcher should be able to show that there is a gap in the knowledge that the proposed research can assist in filling" (Kovach 2009, 114). Therefore, my research remains beneficial to the University of Manitoba as it contributes to governing reports and data that reveal a need for transformative institutional change.

The existing policies expose discrepancies in the disciplinary authorities' support of those who have experienced racialized and sexualized violence. My experience reveals the structural disregard of the policy procedures as the governing bodies remain unaware of the disciplinary processes and of the policies themselves. Coupled together, they reproduce violence through tolerating racialized and sexualized violence. As specified in my Introduction, the proposed reformative changes throughout my thesis are relatively straightforward: the disciplinary authorities' need to become stringent in their capacities to no longer tolerate racialized and sexualized violence within its academic learning spaces. Meaning, the disciplinary authorities must be thoroughly trained in the policies they put forward, and they must extend them to include virtual spaces. As examined within my research, the presence of racialized and sexualized violence within online learning platforms exists, and has become more prevalent over the years. Historically, this violence was conditioned through normalizing and legitimizing racism, "which [then became] encoded in law, policy, education, and the political and popular culture of the colonizer" (Green 2017b, 174). As in my experience, it remains apparent that the normalization of this violence continues to exist within educational and legal structures.

In attempts to reimagine the institutional spaces, I was met with indifference, which was perhaps no fault of the disciplinary authorities. Systemically, "if there [is] no valid institutional background for resistance, it [cannot] be recognized" (Spivak 2010, 2). As Spivak (2010) continues, "My point was not to say that [the subaltern] couldn't speak, but that, when someone

did try to do something different, it could not be acknowledged because there was no institutional validation” (2). Institutions are structured to promote knowledge production that are reinforced by behaviours and rhetoric that only create room for specific bodies and epistemologies. In many ways, they remain reflective of the colonizer’s model of the world. As Adorno (2020) reminds us,

while the schools drill people in speech as in first aid for road-accident victims and in glider-construction, the pupils become increasingly mute. They can give lectures; every sentence qualifies them for the microphone, before which they are placed as spokesmen for the average; but their capacity for speaking to each other is stifled. It presupposes experience worth communicating, freedom of expression, and at once independence and relatedness. In an all-embracing system conversation becomes ventriloquism (146).

The capacities to speak independently remains factual. Like the state, the university allots “the role of a puppet that does only what is wanted of him, never want he wants. The attitude of the federal government screams at the Indian, ‘Yours is not to reason why, but to do as I bid’” (Cardinal 1999, 119). The university, as an institution, does not respond well to resistance as it does not know how. Instead, it attempts to create room for othered bodies to promote their diversity and inclusivity campaigns however, it does not know how to protect us as its institutional design was not for us. Thus, Indigenous Peoples remain othered.

Our marginalization prevails as the university’s policies neglect our safety. One of the most challenging sentences to read within the *Sexual Violence* policy concerns discipline. As stated, “the University reserves the right to initiate a University Instituted Investigation in accordance with the Procedure, and/or to report the incident to local police services, even without the consent of the Complainant, if it believes that the safety of the University Community is at risk or if reporting is required by law” (University of Manitoba 2020c, 9). Our safety was at risk or perhaps not, according to the procedure. It should define the risks, so students are aware of whether their experiences of sexualized and racialized violence would be considered severe enough to investigate. Otherwise, this process, as I experienced it, will remain frustrating and pointless. I re-traumatized myself for months in hopes that my work would lead to some sort of investigation; that the responsible student(s) would be identified and held accountable for their actions. Instead, the disciplinary authorities, due to their inactions, had me continue with my studies and work as if nothing had happened. Through trying to adhere to the policies, and working respectfully with administration I was reminded “that life has become the ideology of its own absence” (Adorno 2020, 201).

It is reassuring, while simultaneously discouraging, that other students are requesting the same changes from the university. There are demands for additional staff training, consequences for those who have committed sexualized and racialized violence, and learning opportunities to properly and appropriately respond to disclosures. As such, students have and continue to recognize that they are up against an institution that willingly maintains the status quo as it does not want to upset “the balance of the community” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 41). It is telling that pre-existing legislation outweighs the need for reform. In addition, over a quarter of the students who experienced sexual violence at the university did not report, as they “did not think anything would happen” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 43). Some students did not report as they did not have enough energy to “deal with reporting the incident due to school or work demands” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 43). The implications of not reporting stresses that students prioritize their academic standing over their right to be safe. Expectations to manage increased workloads, while navigating the competitiveness of academia and being subjected to racialized and sexualized violence should not excuse the disciplinary authorities from neglecting their transgressions. Our experiences should not be so easily abstracted, and academic institutions should not use alienating powers to insulate themselves from responsibility. The disciplinary authorities need to commit to the prevention of violence as students do not feel safe nor are they willing to work through their experiences as a result of institutional indifference. As examples, the following responses from the *Campus Climate Survey* are alarming: “I didn’t think what had happened was serious to talk about. [...] I thought I would be blamed. [...] I was afraid of not being believed. [...] I didn’t know how to report the incident on campus. [...] I didn’t want to lose control of the situation by having people tell me what to do” (Peter and Stewart 2019, 44). The apparent disregard for experiences of violence, and the silence that surrounds these issues is troubling. The latter response reminds me of my experience, and how I intervened to obtain some control over what was happening. I empathize with students’ concerns for reporting, and how the university’s policies create uncertainty surrounding the unknown.

Moreover, the university’s structure is not centralized. Instead, it has independent administration for each service. This structure can reproduce violence for students who are trying to navigate webpages filled with redundant information. The delivery of information should be streamlined to reduce stress and the possible re-traumatization of those who have experienced sexualized and racialized violence. The university’s policy process abstracts and deforms

experiences of violence. Complainants are not met with care or concern for their safety and wellbeing. They are left to struggle through the policies or to remove themselves from the hostile environment completely. Sara Ahmed has helped me navigate the University of Manitoba's policy environment throughout writing my thesis. She has been there, every step of the way, through examples, statements, arguments, all of which seem to explain the powers of doors, and those who hold them open or slam them shut. She also mentions how closing doors can operate as a survival strategy: "she closes the door to the institution by withdrawing herself, her commitments, from it" (Ahmed 2021a, 13). However, my experiences remind me of the power I produce from being here. To quote Ahmed (2021a), "Behind closed doors: that is where complaints are often found, so that is where you might find us too, those of us for whom the institution is not built; and what we bring with us, who we bring [with] us, the worlds that would not be here if some of us were not here; the data we hold, our bodies, our memories" (13). Thus, it is important that we remain here, although we must be met with an institutional commitment to keep us safe. We have a right to be here, just like we have a right to be safe. Indigenous Peoples bring many attributes to academic institutions. It is crucial that the University of Manitoba starts recognizing these insights by maintaining a healthy and safe work and learning environment that is campus-wide. In addition to offering us safety, the disciplinary authorities must be transparent and acknowledge the colonial legacy that prevails through its tolerance of racialized and sexualized violence. Unlike the residential school apology that former President Barnard presented in 2011, I hope the university's governing bodies take meaningful action. As Ahmed (2021b) frames, "What apologies are doing depends on how they are worded. Those who apologize do not have to say *what* they are apologizing for, [...] you might apologize for hurting someone's feelings, which makes the hurt feelings the problem as well as the obstacle to reconciliation" (211). Therefore, like my refusal to provide recommendations as part of my thesis, I refuse to acknowledge my complaints as problems needing to be managed. Ahmed has given me confidence and the assurance that my complaints are legitimate and worthy of attention. So, I will continue to critique the University of Manitoba's structures until they have been dismantled, and rebuilt using complaints and critiques as their foundation.



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