Racialized social relations in higher education:

Black student and faculty experiences of a Canadian university

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Abstract

Universities are dynamic sites of the production of knowledge and power that both reflects and shapes broader social, cultural, economic and political relations. This dissertation examines racialized social relations in Canadian higher education from the site of a university in Montreal. Drawing on anticolonial and critical race theories and using methods of institutional ethnography/ political activist ethnography, I study how Black people describe and analyze their experiences at the university, how the university's institutional texts and discourses shape their activities, and how neoliberalism may be altering these relations. Former and current Black students and faculty members describe experiences of racialization mediated by differences of gender, nationalism, culture and class. Black people's activities at the university over the past five decades have consistently involved navigating the racialized and racializing environment and working for anticolonial, anti-racist change through community and coalition building, various forms of service work within the university, organizing non-formal teaching and learning, and political activism. This dissertation demonstrates the importance of this work in developing critical consciousness, contesting colonial-capitalist ideology and maintaining and furthering the emancipatory potential of higher education.

Resumé

Les universités sont des sites dynamiques de production de connaissance et de pouvoir qui reflètent et transforment des relations sociales, culturelles, économiques et politiques plus larges. Cette thèse examine les relations sociales racisées dans l'éducation supérieure au Canada à partir d'une université à Montréal. En mobilisant les théories anticoloniales et la théorie critique de la race, ainsi qu'en ayant recours aux méthodes d'ethnographie institutionnelle et d'ethnographie politique engagée, j'examine comment les personnes Noires décrivent et analysent leurs expériences à l'université, et aussi comment les textes et les discours institutionnels et universitaires transforment leurs activités et la manière dont le néolibéralisme influence ces relations. D'anciens et actuels étudiants Noirs, ainsi que des membres du corps professoral, décrivent leurs expériences de racisation arbitrées par les différences de genre, de nationalisme, de culture et de classe. Pendant les cinquante dernières années, les activités des personnes Noires à l'université ont toujours impliqué une navigation dans l'environnement racisé et racisant de l'institution, le travail pour un changement anticolonial et antiraciste à travers une mobilisation communautaire et coopérative, ainsi que diverses formes d'offre de services à l'intérieur de l'université, mais aussi l'organisation d'espaces d'enseignement et d'apprentissage informels et d'activisme politique. Cette thèse démontre l'importance de ce travail pour le développement d'une conscience critique, qui conteste l'idéologie capitaliste et coloniale et afin de soutenir et d'avancer le potentiel émancipatoire de l'éducation supérieure.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation examines social relations between Black people and a Canadian university in Montreal, Québec in order to reveal the ways in which knowledge and power are racialized and organized across differences of gender and class (Bakan, 2014; Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald & McKenna, 1991; Carpenter & Mojab, 2011b). Mapping how these social relations have developed over time and how Black people have engaged, shaped and resisted them, I shed light on processes of racialization[1] in the construction of Canadian and Québécois settler colonial nationalisms and on the role of the university in relation to neoliberal capitalism. I thus locate Black people's experiences and the function of Black difference within a broader, historically grounded and continuously developing form of social organization in Québec and Canada (Carpenter & Mojab 2011b).

This work is constructed from the site of McGill University, which has a long history and reputation as an establishment of the Anglophone elite of Canada (Frost, 1980; MacLennan, 1960; MacLeod, 1997; Westley, 1990). Formally established before Confederation in Canada and supported by some of the wealthiest and most powerful British settlers and multiple generations of their families, I contend that McGill's histories speak powerfully to the role of the Canadian university in constructing and reproducing Canadian national ideologies and social-economic hierarchy. McGill's location in Québec where there is a Francophone majority and French settler colonial and nationalist sentiment, make it a particularly generative site from which to launch this study. My identity as a Black woman of mixed race ancestry from a working class background further informs this work. I was born in the United States and raised

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[1] I use the terms 'racialized' and 'racialization' throughout this dissertation to indicate the social processes through which "race" is socially constructed and imposed through ongoing historical

in Montreal, deeply influenced by the activism and social justice commitments of my parents in their work as educators and social service and community workers. My own ongoing engagements as a learner, educator, community worker and researcher in Montreal mean that I am implicated and participating in the social relations under examination (Hampton, 2010, 2011). Therefore I am explicit in situating my background, politics and experiences as they relate to this research.

This introductory chapter is organized into three sections that lay the foundations for my dissertation. First, I discuss the establishment of formal education under settler colonialism and trace major highlights in the development of the Canadian university as both a site of White settler nationalism and domination as well as a site of struggle and resistance. I then describe the structural conditions of Black people in Canada and situate Black Canadian Studies in relation to the contemporary university. The second section of this chapter offers what I call a story of disjuncture, a narrative account describing key aspects of my transition into McGill University and activist communities within and around the university. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the objectives and research questions guiding this study and an overview of how my dissertation is structured.

Settler Colonialism and Education

Formal education in what would become Canada and the United States began in the seventeenth century with the establishment of colleges and universities run by missionaries and geared primarily toward Indigenous populations. In New France, Jesuits founded the Collège des Jésuits in 1635 with the purpose of converting Indigenous Peoples to Christianity (Wilder, 2013). This was followed by the Séminaire de Québec, founded in 1663 to prepare future priests and (as

of 1668) evangelize Indigenous youth and indoctrinate them into French culture (Miller, 1996;

"Séminaire de Québec, n.d.). British North American institutions in the Thirteen Colonies were

established during this era with similar purposes—for example Harvard's Indian College (1636)

and the College of William and Mary (1693)—to Christianize Indigenous youth, teach them

Latin, English and Greek; to socialize them in English cultural norms and beliefs, and make them

loyal to the British crown (Wilder, 2013). In both British North America and in New France, the

belief was that such schooling would create a generation of Indigenous young men who would

go on to propagate the Christian European beliefs and values that they had learned in school,

within their own communities (Wilder, 2013). A "rudimentary Christian education" was also

provided for slaves (Trudel, 2013, p. 178), and this seems to have included at least some of the

Black slaves who the colonizers brought with them and imported as well as for Indigenous

slaves[2]. Olivier LeJeune, largely thought to have been the first Black slave sold in New France,

attended the Collège des Jésuits (Thwaites, 1898; Trudel, 2013). Overall, the role of formal

education in the seventeenth and eighteenth century colonies was understood to be the religious

conversion of colonized populations and of training priests and nuns (Magnuson, 1992; Milner,

1986). Otherwise, for the White settler population, children's education was understood as

something that took place at home in the family rather than in schools (Magnuson, 1992).

As the settler population grew following the military conquest of New France by the

British in the mid-eighteenth century, the role and control of education expanded and gained

prominence. The British authorities created the Royal Institution for the Advancement of

Learning in 1801 to establish state schools to teach Protestantism, the English language and

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[2] Most slaves in what is now Canada were Indigenous; Black people account for approximately one third of the 4,200 slaves identified in Marcel Trudel's (2013) study of two hundred years of slavery in Canada. See further discussion of slavery in Chapter Four.

British culture to the White settler youth of the growing colony. The Rebellions[3] delayed

significant educational institutional development until after the united Province of Canada was

formed in 1841. However, by the end of the century all provinces except Québec had a Ministry

of Education and compulsory education laws.

From the outset, French Catholic schools operated at a disadvantage compared to those of

the Protestant system, as the latter were better supported and had more resources (Milner, 1986.

See also Chapter Four). In Québec where French-speaking Catholics formed a majority of the

population, the Catholic Church secured the role of "principal defender of French Canadian

culture and values" (McRoberts, 1993, p. 54) within this broader context of Anglo-dominance.

Consequently, the church held control over education in Québec until well into the 20th century;

the province had no compulsory education laws until 1943. The government gained full control

over education for the first time following the establishment of the Provincial Ministry of

Education in 1964 (McRoberts, 1993; Milner, 1986), a situation both reflecting and reinforcing

the ongoing dominance of the Anglophone minority in the province.

Dominant ideas and concerns regarding the education of Indigenous and Black

populations also shifted during the nineteenth century. Indigenous peoples had lost their value

within the settler colonial society as they were no longer needed as military allies and no longer

played as vital a role in the fur trade (Leslie, 1982; Miller, 1996); thus dominant perceptions of

them shifted from "the warrior image" to that of "an expensive social nuisance" (Leslie, 1982, p.

32. See also Miller, 1996). Colonial officials sought to contain Indigenous populations through

the establishment of reserves and assimilate them through an aggressive and intrusive program of

religious and vocational education (Miller, 1996). By 1860 "the 'nation-to-nation' relationship"

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[3] Regarding the 1837-1838 Rebellions that led to the union of Upper and Lower Canada see
http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rebellions-of-1837/

between Indigenous Peoples and the settler colonial authorities was effectively abandoned

(Lawrence, 2003, p. 7). During this same time, the Black population grew by the thousands, as

the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act in the United States drove former Black slaves into the Province of

Canada. As Black communities began to form (and Chinese labourers were recruited to complete

the Canadian Pacific Railway) concerns within the settler population about 'keeping Canada

White' increased, as did practices of racial exclusion and segregation.

When the Canadian government was established in 1867, the Constitution Act granted

the provinces control of education systems, while the federal government claimed jurisdiction

over Indigenous Peoples through the Indian Act. Lamenting the failure thus far to achieve

assimilation of the Indigenous population, a series of reports built a case for what would become

Canada's Indian Residential School system by the end of the century.[4] Colonial authorities

determined that it was necessary to remove Indigenous children from their parents' immediate

influences and (re)socialize them in government funded industrial boarding schools for religious

and agricultural training (Haig Brown, 2002; Miller, 1996; Ryerson University, 2010; Jeff

Thomas, 2002; TRC, 2012). Within these schools thousands of Indigenous children would die

and tens of thousands would endure horrifying experiences of physical, sexual, emotional and

psychological abuse. The formal federal program was instituted in the 1880s, and the last of

these schools was not closed until 1996.[5]

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[4] Most notably, the 1844 report of the Bagot commission established by the Governor General of British North America; Superintendent for Education Egerton Ryerson's report of 1847; and following Confederation, Nicholas Flood Davin's 1879 "*Report* on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds" commissioned by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald.

[5] Indian Residential Schools and the intergenerational damage they have caused to Indigenous Peoples was a major focus of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation commission (www.trc.ca; see also The Residential Schools Settlement at http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca).

The exclusion and segregation of Black people by White settlers was increasingly accommodated by Canadian legislation by the turn of the twentieth century (Backhouse, 1999; B. Walker, 2012). White parents did not want their children educated with Black children, hence school segregation—*de jure* in Ontario and Nova Scotia and *de facto* in many places elsewhere—existed from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century (Backhouse, 1999; Hamilton, 2008; McLaren, 2004). Black communities (particularly Black women) responded by opening schools for Black children denied access to public education and through organizing academic, vocational, artistic, cultural and spiritual education programs in Black community centers and churches (J. Bertley, 1982; L.W. Bertley, 1980; A. Cooper, 1991, 2002; Hamilton, 2008; Hampton & Rochat, forthcoming; McLaren, 2004).

The Canadian University

With the establishment of separate schools for Indigenous education, the primary role of "new world" colleges and universities became to educate the sons of the colonial elite and unify the British colonies (Axelrod & Reid, 1989; Pietsch, 2013; Wilder, 2013). In addition to promoting European classical knowledge, the university served as a site for the development of racial ideology that aimed to justify slavery and colonization without contradicting European Enlightenment ideals about freedom and equality (L.T. Smith, 1999; Wilder, 2013). Especially following the publication of Charles Darwin's influential works—*Origin of the Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871—scholars sought to resolve tensions between religion and the science of evolution in the building and shaping of new nations (Axelrod & Reid, 1989). The promotion and production of "knowledge" that asserted the genetic superiority of White people and denied the humanity of Indigenous and African peoples was thus a key aim of the Canadian

university as it sought to produce "noble, intelligent, unselfish men" to serve the social good of

the nation (Axelrod & Reid, 1989, p.xiv. See also H. Campbell, 2003).

Over the course of the 19th century several universities were founded across Canada. As

they had in the United States, Scottish merchants and clergymen were especially active in

establishing institutions of higher education (Wilder, 2013). Colonial administrator George

Ramsay (Lord Dalhousie) founded Dalhousie University in Halifax in 1818, modelling the

school after the University of Edinburgh. McGill University was established in Montreal in 1821

on the former estate of colonial merchant James McGill. Popularly touted as the "Harvard of

Canada" since the late 19th century (Wesley, 1990), McGill University played a particularly

significant role in the further development of higher education in the settler colonial nation (see

Chapter Four). The University of Toronto was founded as King's College in 1827 by James

McGill's close friend and associate Bishop John Strachan, who was also one of four trustees of

McGill's will and among the founders of the university in his name (J.I. Cooper, 2003; Craig,

2003; Frost, 1980). The Church of England controlled King's College until 1850 when it became

a secular institution and was given the name it bears today. Queen's University was established

in 1841 by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and modelled, as was McGill, on the universities

of Edinburgh and Glasgow. By 1871 there were 17 universities and colleges in the Dominion of

Canada, across which 1561 students were enrolled—roughly 0.4 percent of the population at the

time (Axelrod & Reid, 1989). In 1908, the University of Alberta opened under founding

president and former McGill professor of mathematics and physics Henry Marshall Tory and the

McGill University College of British Columbia was established under the chancellorship of

Francis Carter-Cotton. The McGill University College of British Columbia was set up under the

governance of the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning[6] and awarded McGill

University degrees until becoming the University of British Columbia in 1915 (MacKenzie,

1957). Highlighting the roles of the universities in the westward expanding Canadian Dominion,

Carter-Cotton stressed his gratitude in a letter to McGill Principal Sir William Peterson, written

in the early twentieth century:

> The benefit our Province has derived from your connection with it, it would be
> impossible to estimate. Many young people have received a University education for
> whom otherwise it would have remained an unaccomplished dream. An interest in higher
> education has been fostered, not only in the young, but in our people generally, and our
> sense of unity with other parts of the Dominion and with the Empire as a whole, and of
> the possession of common ideals of citizenship and culture has been deepened.
> (MacKenzie, 1957, para. 8).

Along with founding institutions in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the settler

colonial universities of Canada functioned as part of an expansive, transnational British imperial

network, symbolizing and propagating European civilization and Western knowledge while

helping to shape and define the settler colonies in which they were located (Pietsch, 2013).

Settler universities were connected to but distinct from colonial universities established by the

British in India and Africa, with racialized and gendered social and institutional practices that

promoted connections between settler scholars and those in Britain (Pietsch, 2013). While

Americans were generally marginalized along with Africans and Indians in British academic

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[6] In 1852 the role of the Royal Institution changed to solely that of the McGill University Board
of Governors (Frost, 1980).

networks, given its geographic proximity to the U.S., "Canada came to function as something of a 'hinge' between the British and American academic worlds" (Pietsch, 2013, p. 7).

As the twentieth century got underway, the role of Canadian universities began to shift again in order to adjust to rapid industrialization and the development of capitalist society. "The inauguration of the Canadian Officers' Training Corps at McGill in 1912 symbolized a more direct military role for universities" in the "growth of militarism and self-conscious imperial sentiment" in the lead up to the first world war (Axelrod & Reid, 1989, p. xvii). Educational institutions played crucial roles in "teaching the war" and "preparing students to take their place in it" (S. Fisher, 2011, p. 54). Universities served as sites of military research, recruitment and training, and academics published articles and essays geared toward public school teachers and their role in promoting patriotism in elementary and secondary school classrooms. (For example, see Susan Fisher's discussion of articles appearing in *School: A Magazine Devoted to Elementary and Secondary Education,* published by the University of Toronto's Faculty of Education [S. Fisher, 2011, especially pp. 51-62]). As the war increased the need for and importance of scientific research, the National Research Council was founded in 1916 and began offering national scholarships for graduate student research, most of which were awarded to students at McGill and University of Toronto for the next twenty-five years (Axelrod & Reid, 1989, p. xviii). This new era in higher education was also characterized by increased access to the university by the middle classes and the development of academic specialization and professionalism including new professional programs such as social work, nursing and education.

Hence the role of the Canadian university was to promote patriotism and the values of the country's European "founding nations" and to provide middle-class youth the necessary

education to maintain or improve their social status and contribute to the well-being of the nation

(Axelrod & Reid, 1989; Bruneau, 2012). During and following World War II, perceived (and in

some case demonstrated) connections between science, Communism and espionage positioned

Canadian universities as critical sites within the "emerging national security state" (Whitaker &

Marcuse, 1994, p. 143). The founder and president of the Humanities Research Council of

Canada from 1943-47, Watson Kirkconnell, was fervently anti-Communist and believed that

Canadian scholars had a duty to combat totalitarian education and that he "had a special mission

to clean communism out of Canadian campuses" (Whitaker & Marcuse, 1994, p. 278). Many

Canadian academics were accused and investigated as Communist sympathizers and/or traitors

to the Crown, most notably at Queen's, University of Toronto, and especially at McGill.

Following investigations of several scientists at McGill in the late 1940s, the university gained

an "unearned" reputation as a "hotbed of Communism" (Whitaker & Marcuse, 1994, p. 107).

This characterization of McGill was short-lived, as then Principal Cyril James was "an

impassioned public advocate of Cold War preparedness" (Whitaker & Marcuse, 1994, p. 107).[7]

Nevertheless it was a very serious charge, especially in Québec where anti-communism rivalled

that of McCarthyism in the U.S. (Whitaker & Marcuse, 1994). Francophone Québécois had long

understood Marxism as a threat to Catholicism worldwide (Whitaker & Marcuse, 1994)[8], and

media reports of Communist traitors associated with McGill must have only exacerbated the

perception of the University's role in the oppression of the province's francophone majority.

By the 1960s, Canadian universities had entered another period of extensive growth.

Following the war, the federal government provided support for veterans to attend university and

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[7] Re. the university's attempts to purge Marxist professors in the 1970s see Dixon, 1976
[8] Whitaker and Marcuse trace this sentiment back to the secularizing and radical politics in France during and following the Revolution (1789-1799), which they describe as having "left Québec, as it were, a political and cultural orphan" (p. 293).

increased funding to universities. Hence universities were expected to become accessible to a broader, more diverse portion of society and to be governed in ways that involved the participation of professors, staff and students (Bruneau, 2012; Jones, Shanahan, & Goyan, 2001; Newson & Polster, 2010). In Québec, education was a central issue of the Quiet Revolution from the late 1950s to late 1960s as a French middle class emerged and made demands for the expansion of state responsibility for education and other social services. Major reform aimed to redefine education as a secular, state run system crucial to the social economic and political development of Québec. Most adults in Québec did not have more than a sixth grade education and postsecondary school attendance was especially low for francophones. Beginning in 1967, a system of tuition-free (French and English) Collèges d'enseignement general et professionnel (CEGEPs) was created to prepare students for university or the work force. Subsequently, beginning in 1968, the public, French *Université du Québec* system established several campuses throughout the province, expanding access to university education for greater numbers of francophone students (Magnuson, 1980; McRoberts, 1993)[9].

    The university as a site of struggle.

    While I refer to "the university" I note that contemporary universities are not just one thing—they are varied public and private, teaching and research-based institutions and "political agents that operate in a complex terrain of local, national, regional and global forces. They are (sometimes simultaneously) vehicles for the projection of political and economic power as well as sites of resistance to these factors" (Chou, Kamola & Pietsch, 2016, p. 8). Students and faculty have organized in universities to address a wide range of internal issues such as equity and diversity in admissions and hiring, program offerings, curricula and administrative policies as

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[9] For a detailed description of Québec's contemporary postsecondary education system see Trottier, Bernatchez, Fisher, and Rubenson, 2014.

well as broader social-political issues such as civil rights, militarization and warfare, environmentalism, imperialism and globalization. Professors and students have organized in local and national faculty and student associations, and in some institutions have been able to form labour unions and negotiate collective agreements (Jones, et al., 2001; Schuetze, 2012). Indeed, the extensive educational reform in Québec following and since the Quiet Revolution has been largely forced through student activism, particularly through the use of strikes and collaboration with labour unions (AJP, 2012; Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Lacoursière, 2007; Mehreen, Bonin & Hausfather, 2014; Mills, 2010; Milner & Milner, 1977).

As they were in many other societies where oppressed people were rebelling in the 1960s and early 1970s, Québec universities were critical sites of anticolonial and antiracist organizing. A new generation of French Québécois nationalists increasingly understood themselves as a colonized people under the colonial-capitalist domination of the English and argued for national independence and socialism for Québec. As a particularly provocative symbol of enduring, White Anglo-Canadian power in Québec in contrast to an inadequate French school system (at all levels) McGill University was a significant target of such activism (Bédard et al., 2001; Mills, 2010; Milner & Milner, 1977; Warren, n.d.). The university also faced increasing anticolonial and antiracist resistance from Black students and activists, to which I turn my attention below.

Black educational activism.

While the activism of the civil rights and Black Power eras led to a widespread Black student movement and the institutionalization of Black Studies in several universities in the U.S. (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012), such gains were not achieved in the Canadian context. The 1960s and early 1970s were also a time of Black student resistance and uprising in Canada, particularly in Montreal (Affan, 2013; Austin, 2013; Mills, 2010). As I examine more closely in Chapter

Four, from 1968-1970 Montreal's two English universities, Sir George Williams University

(which later became Concordia) and McGill were dynamic sites of radical Black activism. Two

overlapping events in particular during this time deeply impacted Black students and

communities not only in Montreal but also across the country and beyond national borders, for

decades and generations to come[10]. The first was an international Congress of Black Writers

organized by students and held at McGill in the fall of 1968. The Congress was centred on Black

Power, Pan-Africanist, anticolonial and anticapitalist dialogue and speeches by several high

profile Black scholars and activists. The second was a persistent campaign of pressure and

organizing by students at Sir George Williams (SGWU) who had accused a White instructor of

racially discriminatory grading practices against Black students. After months of pursuing justice

through the formal channels of the university, the students escalated their tactics and took over

the university's computer centre in February 1969. Up to 200 students held the space for nearly

two weeks until riot police intervened to clear them from the building. The eviction ended with a

fire, millions of dollars of damage to the university and the arrest of 97 students (more than half

of who were White).

      The Sir George Williams affair and its aftermath was nothing less than an extended

international political incident and perceived matter of national security that loudly reverberated

throughout Black communities in Canada. The events focused local, national and international

attention on institutional racism and Black resistance at SGWU and in Montreal, and involved

major investigations of activists by national and international government agencies, in some

cases resulting in prison sentences and deportations (Austin, 2013). Black Montrealers were

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[10] While these two events are of particular historical significance it is important to note that they
took place within a broader context of local social-political organizing and activism (including
several other conferences and events) and international anticolonial uprising.

involved in the direct action, in support demonstrations, in raising legal funds; they prepared food and visited activists in jail (see Affan, 2013). The Honourable Juanita Westmoreland-Traore, then a young Black lawyer affiliated with the Negro Citizenship Association, represented the ten Black students who were sent to trial, publicly denouncing the racial bias inherent in the proceedings (Ricci, 2013). Montreal Black community organizers and educators responded with greater emphasis on Africentric education and Black community activism (Williams, 1997). Black student activists courageously maintained pressure on the universities in the months and years that followed the Sir George Williams Affair, communicating and collaborating with students and activists in other Canadian universities and Black communities, demanding the decolonization of education and establishment of university Black Studies programs. In Chapters Four and Seven I examine this work by successive cohorts of Black student activists and the strategic managing of and resistance to such pressure for institutional change by university administrators at McGill.

As a response to Black student activism (both the events at SGWU and within other universities and communities) and within a broader period of growth and development of Black communities, Black Canadian educators and community members organized programs to promote access to higher education. The Quebec Board of Black Educators (QBBE) was founded in Montreal in 1969 and established the DaCosta Hall summer school program in 1970 to provide Black senior high school students with academic support and mentorship to this end (Bayne & Bayne, 1995/2009). McGill University made a one-time contribution of $12,000 to the first DaCosta Hall Summer Project (Bayne & Bayne, 1995/2009) and McGill, SGWU and Dawson College (CEGEP) guaranteed admission to graduates of that first cohort as long as they had graduated from high school (Bayne & Bayne, 1995/2009; Calliste, 1996; Williams, 1997). A

slightly different, perhaps more specific version of this early history of DaCosta Hall (Beck, 1970) describes Black students at McGill as having organized the 1970 summer remedial program called "Across the Halls" to offer Black high school graduates the opportunity to complete courses they required to gain admission to McGill. McGill had acknowledged only fifteen African Canadian students enrolled at all levels of study for the 1969-70 school year and consequently provided the $15,000 to run the summer program. McGill agreed to accept 20 of the 90 students who were accepted into the summer program and in the fall, 14 students from the Across the Halls program were accepted and registered at McGill. Six others, according to Beck (1970), were accepted but unable to attend courses at McGill "due to an inability to pay fees" (p. 1). This last point is significant, highlighting that even when tuition is waived, various mandatory fees associated with higher education can maintain financial barriers.

Similar programs were set up in Toronto and Halifax during this time, and Black student activists played key roles in pressuring universities and gaining institutional support. As a result, Transitional Year Programs (TYP) at the University of Toronto and Dalhousie University were established in 1970 to support Black and Indigenous students in accessing university education[11]. Although the educators and students involved with the TYPs have had to remain vigilant and mobilize support through periods of intense struggle to keep the programs in place, both continue at the time of this writing (Allen, 1996; Arenburg, 2012; K.S. Brathwaite, 2003a).

The Dalhousie and University of Toronto TYP programs have supported thousands of students in entering and succeeding in university. However, the ongoing need for their continued existence speaks to widespread social-economic inequity and to the slow pace of institutional change within these universities (K.S. Brathwaite, 2003b; C.E. James, 1997). Much work

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[11] The TYP at University of Toronto also accepts students from working class backgrounds

remains to be done to make the university experience an accessible, engaging and intellectually relevant and nourishing one for working class, Black and Indigenous students once they are admitted. Some argue that TYPs challenge the status quo of universities by their very existence—in the students they attract to the university, their critical pedagogical approach, their emphasis on mutual support and collective wellbeing, their community orientation—and as such can be critical instruments of change (K.S. Brathwaite, 2003b). However as University of Toronto TYP co-founder and educator Keren Brathwaite (2003b) has argued, universities have a responsibility to "move beyond the add-ons of TYPs, Steps to University, Bridging, and other special programs (important as these are) to a more holistic, encompassing approach" (p. 76). The need for institutional change beyond admissions is made clear in DaCosta Hall graduate Clifton Ruggles' reflections on his time at McGill in the 1970s:

> As the professors made references to people I had never heard of, it was as if they were speaking in a foreign tongue. I stood there transfixed, afraid to open my mouth. It was like being in an insane asylum; nothing made sense. It was as if the terrain had suddenly shifted precariously and I had lost my bearings and reference points. I had been stripped of whatever voice I had. As I sat there trying to decode this unfamiliar gibberish I hesitated to contribute my ideas because I felt I would not be understood. I had this wonderful opportunity to go to university and I did not want to blow it; I did not want to embarrass myself for fear it would reflect badly on my race. When I did speak, the other students stared at me blankly. I felt that they did not hear my words, they only saw my Blackness. It seemed they could not comprehend the significance of my presence there. As a result of these experiences in White academia I became mute and invisible.
>
> (Ruggles and Rovinescu, 1996, p.11)

As Ruggles' reflection attests, genuine access to the university for Black Canadians is a matter of

much more than formal admission (K.S. Brathwaite, 2003a; Stewart, 2014). The erasure of the

histories, experiences and cultural and intellectual production of Black people can marginalize

and alienate Black students and make them feel devalued. As I discuss throughout this

dissertation, such experiences mirror and reinforce social marginalization and exclusion in

Canadian society more broadly. In the next section I provide an overview of the systemic

inequity that shapes Black people's educational experiences in Québec and Canada with

particular attention to the development of Black Canadian Studies. Black Canadian Studies

encompass pedagogical and artistic practices, research and scholarship geared toward furthering

knowledge produced by and about diverse Black communities in Canada and the Diaspora.

Black scholars have repeatedly argued that the failure to establish Black Studies programs is

reflective of a broader, persistent undervaluing and refusal to recognize the intellectual work of

Black scholars in Canada (Hudson & Kamugisha, 2014; Walcott, 2014)[12]. More specifically,

resistance to the recognition of Black Canadian Studies as an academic field reflects long term

investments in the systematic construction of Canada as a White nation wherein Black people are

imagined as visitors or immigrants having always recently arrived from elsewhere (Ash, 2004;

Austin, 2010; Bristow, Brand, Carty, Cooper, Hamilton & Shadd, 1994; McKittrick, 2006; Pabst,

2006; M.S. Smith, 2003; Stewart, 2014; Thobani, 2007). "Black Canadian" is thus a negated and

contested identity, assigned a perpetual outsider status despite the fact that as of 2011, the Black

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[12] Important if slow progress in this regard has been made at Dalhousie since the establishment
of the James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies in 1991. Under the current
James Robinson Johnston Chair, Dr. Afua Cooper, an interdisciplinary Black and African
Diaspora Studies minor has recently been established (see Tattrie, 2016).

population of Canada was 945,665; more than 43% of Canada's Black population were born in Canada and roughly 9% were third generation or more (Statistics Canada 2011).

Systemic Inequity and Education in Québec and Canada

Black people in Canada face persistent and severe social inequality, both impacted by and impacting their/our ability to access higher education. Key determinants of university educational achievement include levels of parental (particularly paternal) education, family income, living in a two-parent family until 15 years old, having a strong sense of belonging to one's ethnic group and many friends who share the same ancestry, and whether or not one has felt out of place in Canada by 15 years old (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009). Considering these variables in relation to Black communities (both locally and nationally) reveals the matrix of oppression within which Black people in Canada are entangled, and the manner in which social capital and power beget more social capital and power.

Canada has been constructed as a White nation through "a state sponsored campaign of social exclusion" (Galabuzi, 2006, p. 1) that has included limiting and controlling the size, occupational profile and social-economic mobility of Black and other racialized populations.[13] For example, the Immigration Act of 1910 permitted the refusal of immigrants of "any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada." The law remained unchanged until

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[13] This includes Québec and applies to notions of Québec nationhood as well, although the Québécois have not always been assumed White. I discuss this further in Chapter Two, when I examine Québec's policy of interculturalism through a lens of Critical Race Theory.

the Immigration Act 1952 and subsequent changes to the regulations in 1962.[14] This began a

period during which Caribbean women were recruited into the country to fulfill demands for

domestic labour (see Silvera, 1989), contributing to gendered patterns of Black community

development (Calliste, 1993). Today's immigration policies continue to disadvantage Black

families and others from the global South through privileging a European ideal of the nuclear

family prolonging and preventing family (re)unification (ACLC, 2012, pp. 16-18). Black people

in Canada have the highest rates of lone-parent families in the country (approximately 27% in

2006) the vast majority of which are led by Black women (Mata, 2011; Torczyner, 2010). Given

the rapid growth of the visible minority population in recent decades is expected to continue

(Malenfant, Lebel & Martel, 2010), the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights (UN CESCR, 2016) has recently called on the Canadian state to address

pervasive racial discrimination including disproportionate rates of unemployment among African

Canadians, the overrepresentation of Black children in foster care, "long-standing issues faced by

Indigenous and African Canadian children in accessing and completing primary and secondary

school" (p. 10) and the lower educational achievement of these groups.

The development of a racialized school-to-prison pipeline, a phenomenon usually

associated with the United States (Hirschfield, 2008; Wald & Losen, 2003), is increasingly

recognized in Canadian contexts (Gebhard, 2012; Kovalenko, 2012; Rankin, 2009). Black youth

in Canada are criminalized through racial profiling and disproportionate surveillance and

punishment in their communities and in their schools (ACLC, 2012; Denov & Farr, 2010; Eid,

Magloire & Turenne, 2011; P.S.S. Howard, 2006; C.E. James, 2012a; Kelly, 1998a, 1998b;

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[14] For an overview of Canadian immigration policy see Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier
21: http://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-immigration-acts-and-
legislation

Solomon & Palmer, 2004). Black people are disproportionately identified for social service intervention and incarcerated through the youth and adult criminal justice systems (ACLC, 2012; Denov & Farr, 2010; Livingstone, 2010). Indigenous and Black people are drastically over-represented in Canada's prisons (Brosnahan, 2013); the 2013 annual report by Canada's correctional investigator Howard Sapers identified a 90% increase in the Black inmate population since 2003 and found that Black inmates are over-represented in maximum security prisons, more likely to be subjected to the use of force, and are released later in their sentences (Barrett, 2013).

Black educational attainment in Canada has thus been impacted by racialized and gendered immigration and citizenship policies that have limited family and community stability and development (Calliste, 1993; Khenti, 1996; Matas, 1996), a racially biased "justice" system (B. Walker, 2010, 2012; J.W. St. G Walker, 1997; St. Lewis, 1996) and by a national system of economic apartheid through which racialized people are discriminated against and largely confined to the lowest paying jobs (ACLC, 2012; Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Galabuzi, 2001, 2006). While Canadians tend to underestimate the extent of class inequality, Canada is among the most economically inequitable industrialized nations, characterized by ever-increasingly severe income and especially wealth inequality. In 2012 for example, "the 86 wealthiest Canadian-resident individuals (and families) held the same amount of wealth as the poorest 11.4 million Canadians combined" (MacDonald, 2014, p. 5). Black people are overrepresented in semi-skilled and low-skilled occupations (Government of Canada Labour Program, 2006). Unemployment and poverty rates in Canada are much higher for visible minorities, especially Chinese, South Asian and Black (National Council, 2013). For example, according to the 2006 census, the unemployment rate in Canada was 21% higher for those who identify as Chinese than

for White Canadians, 73% higher for those who identify as Black, and 95% higher for those who

identify as West Asian/ Arab (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p. 7). The percentage of Black people in

Canada with a university degree has increased over the past two decades but at 15.6% still lags

behind that of the non-visible minority population (16.4%) and especially that of the visible

minority population overall (27.9%) (Government of Canada Labour Program, 2006).[15]

Moreover, while most immigrant groups achieve increasing levels of educational attainment

across generations, Black people who immigrate to Canada do not (Abada et al., 2009).

In Montreal the Black population is the second largest in the country (following Toronto)

at 147,100 representing 9% of the City of Montreal population and 29% of visible minorities

(Statistics Canada, 2013)[16]. Whereas the Chinese and South Asian communities represent the

largest visible minorities nationally and within Vancouver and Toronto, Black people in

Montreal represent the largest visible minority, followed by Arabs (National Council, 2013). I

use the term "Montreal's Black community" to refer collectively to the multiple, diverse and

overlapping communities of Black people in the city. French is the official language of Québec,

impacting immigration patterns and choices of neighbourhood. Approximately half of the Black

population in Montreal are immigrants, predominantly from Caribbean and increasingly, African

countries. As of 2006,12.3% of Black people in Montreal spoke English only, 42% spoke only

French and 44.5% were fluent in both of these languages (Torczyner, 2010). The Black

community is geographically dispersed in the city, with francophone Black communities

concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of the city and English speaking in the centre-west

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[15] The increasingly high level of educational attainment among visible minorities is in part due to an increasingly racialized immigrant population and immigration policy that awards points for higher levels of education.
[16] In the broader Montreal Census Metropolitan Area 216, 310 Black people account for 6% of the overall population and 28.4% of visible minorities.

and southwest areas. Language laws and rates of bilingualism also largely shape schooling and

employment experiences in Montreal. Many immigrant children are not eligible for English

language schooling[17] and language regulations within the French school system can contribute to

layers of systemic disadvantage experienced by Black allophone and unilingual Anglophone

families (Hampton, 2010). Moreover, Black youth's motivation to pursue higher education may

be lessened by their awareness of employment inequity and wage disparities (Abada et al.,

2009). In other words, not only do access to and the successful completion of postsecondary

education remain tenuous, but the assumed social capital of a university degree also does not

necessarily trump anti-Black racism in the work force, making university education an unreliable

indicator of social economic mobility for Black people in Canada. Indeed in Montreal there is a

higher rate of unemployment among Black graduate degree holders than among non-Black, non-

Indigenous people who have not completed high school (Torczyner, 2010, p. 69).

Canadian and Québec education systems at all levels both mirror and reproduce racial

hierarchy and relations of national inclusion/exclusion and domination/subordination (Ghosh,

2008; C.E. James, 2010; Lund, 2006; Lund & Carr, 2010). From elementary school through

university, the erasure of Black people's presence and contributions from Canadian histories and

persistently Eurocentric curricula reinforce the denigration of Black peoples and cultures and

cause Black learners to feel like perpetual outsiders (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac & Zine, 1997;

Denov & Farr, 2010; C.E. James, 1997; Kelly, 1998a, 1998b). While Black students have studied

at McGill since as early as the mid-19th century, their presence and contributions have largely

been erased from institutional histories. The university maintains a large White majority, with

particularly few Black students and faculty from Québec and the rest of Canada (Austin, 2007;

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[17] See Québec regulations regarding eligibility for public schooling in English at:
http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/parents-and-guardians/instruction-in-english/eligibility/

Ruggles and Rovinescu 1996; Williams, 1997; Winks, 1997). Montreal Black community literature is scattered with references to the prominence of McGill; to notable Black students and 'Black firsts' who attended McGill (L. Bertley, 1977; J. Bertley, 1982; Handleman, 1964; Hudson, 2014; Israel, 1928; Potter, 1949; Williams, 1999), and to moments of political and class conflict between Black—particularly international—students attending McGill and other members of Montreal Black communities (Affan, 2013; Handleman, 1964). Information concerning the racial and ethnic identity of students is not collected as part of the university's admissions statistics (Mendelson, 2011), however 2009 undergraduate student demographic data collected through an online survey indicated that 71.3% of the students surveyed identified themselves as White, with the next largest ethno-racial group being 10.1% of students who identified as Chinese (McGill University, 2011). 2.7% of participating students identified themselves as Black (McGill University, 2011), confirming a significant underrepresentation.

Black and Aboriginal professors continue to be dramatically underrepresented in the Canadian academy (CAUT, 2010; Eisenkraft, 2010). While different students and faculty members are impacted differently by the underrepresentation of Black professors, it nevertheless remains a pervasive issue: 83% of university professors in Canada are White ("not a visible minority"), while Black academics account for just 1.6% (CAUT, 2010). This underrepresentation often leads Black academics to feel alienated and tokenized (Bernard, 2001; A. Henry, 2015, forthcoming; Henry & Tator, 2012; C.E. James, 2012b; Stewart, 2009, 2014), and it reinforces the perpetuation of Eurocentric curricula and the undervaluing of critical, applied, and community-oriented research (Henry & Tator, 2012; Nelson, 2011). Moreover, as York University Professor Carl James critically asks,

What does it mean when the generation that produces knowledge, is so unrepresentative

of the generation that consumes it? […] One of the things I've always argued when I

think of Blacks' relationship with the university, is that we spend a lot of money

providing, and giving students scholarships to universities and colleges […]; but we

never think about what that person is going to consume once they get there. We just think

it's nice for them to go to university, but if the university is constantly only reproducing

European ideas and the people doing the research are doing the same—*what* are we

sending the young people to university *for*? What can we expect of them in helping to

further knowledge that is needed and relevant to our community? (C. James, personal

communication, 12 March 2014)

At McGill, a recent report by the Social Equity and Diversity Education Office indicates that just

9.2% of the academic staff at the university identify as a visible minority (Bastani and Tesfaye,

2015), compared to 32% of the City of Montreal population (Statistics Canada, 2013). Related to

but beyond the scope of my examination here, Black people are more visible in non-academic

staff positions, most strikingly as contracted security guards. This reinforces longstanding

notions that Black people are 'naturally' best suited for physical labour rather than the

intellectual work of the academy and reflects the racialized hierarchy of labour that characterizes

the social order (economic apartheid) of Canadian society more broadly.

Black and other racialized professors who do acquire academic positions are often

subjected to interpersonal and systemic racism normalized through a pervasive academic culture

of Whiteness (Douglas, 2012; F. Henry, 2004; Henry & Tator, 2009, 2012; C.E. James, 2012b;

Nelson, 2011; Schick, 2002; Srivastava, 2008; Stewart, 2009, 2014; Walcott, 2014). This

"culture of Whiteness" was named by Canadian anti-racist scholar Frances Henry (2004), in her 2004 report examining systemic racism at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. The visible minority and Aboriginal faculty members whose experiences Henry examined described feeling "detached, alienated and marginalized" in the context of an institutional culture defined by Anglo-Eurocentric White power and privilege and "dominated and shaped by the attitudes, beliefs and values of White men" (F. Henry, 2004, pp.18-21). Within this institutional context, understood as characterizing "many other universities" (Henry, 2004, p.20), Black Canadian Studies has been written into existence in the early 21st century, only through the determined persistence and resilience of Black intellectuals within and outside of the academy (Hudson & Kamugisha, 2014; Kitossa, 2012), who collectively laid its foundations in the preceding decades. (Examples include: J. Bertley, 1982; L.W. Bertley, 1977, 1980; Brand, 1991, 1994; Bristow, Brand, Carty, Cooper, Hamilton & Shadd, 1994; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Brown, 1991; Calliste, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Case, 1977; Carty, 1991; Clarke, 1997a, 1997b; Cooper, 2000; Dei, 1997; Dei et al., 1997; A. Henry, 1992, 1993, 1998; D. Hill, 1981; C.E. James, 1990, 1997; Kelly, 1998a, 1998b; Philip, 1992; Ruggles & Rovinescu, 1996; Saney, 1998; Shadd, 1991; Silvera, 1989; St. Lewis, 1996; Walcott, 1997, 2000; Williams, 1989, 1997).

Black Canadian Studies and the Neoliberal University

    Since the establishment of the James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies at Dalhousie University in 1991, Black Canadian Studies has gained greater academic presence, leading to the founding of the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) in 2009

(https://bcsa.wordpress.com/) despite neoliberalism and its impact on postsecondary education.[18]

Neoliberalism is a set of ideas and social-economic policies based on the assumption that the

best way to advance human wellbeing is through entrepreneurship and a political-economic

institutional framework that promotes and protects free markets, free trade and private property

rights (Harvey, 2005, 2007). Creating space for capitalist expansion through increasing

commodification and privatization, neoliberal governments cut social spending—including

educational funding—and have retracted support for social programs established in the middle of

the twentieth century.

As a global and globalizing project building on extensive histories of colonial and

imperialist relations between industrialized and underdeveloped nations, neoliberal capitalism

and its impact on post-secondary education is not only an issue in Canada and throughout North

America but worldwide, throughout Latin America, India, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe (see

Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Goswami, 2013; Ochwa-Echel, 2013; Sears & Cairns, 2014a, 2014b;

Edu-factory Collective, 2009). Rather than thinking of universities as mere victims of these

external pressures however, it is important to understand what Chou, Kamola and Pietsch (2016)

term "the transnational politics of higher education," characterized by historically constructed

connections and tensions driven by "competing interests, asymmetrical power relations and

political contestation at local, national and regional levels" (p. 2). As I examine throughout this

dissertation, these politics are deeply racialized and bound up with settler nationalisms and

capitalism.

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[18] York University, Queens University and Alberta University have also established Chairs geared toward African Diaspora Studies, without specific focus on Black Canada (see Walcott, 2014).

Universities are still largely governed and supported by members of the business elite representing particular capitalist, corporate and political interests (Ervin & Woodhouse, 2014; M. Horn, 1999, 2000; Schuetze, Bruneau, & Grosjean, 2012). What some refer to as "the neoliberal university" is characterized by rapid increases in tuition fees, increasing corporate presence on university campuses and increasing corporate control of research agendas, increased surveillance and repression of activists and scholars, decreasing job security, and increasing demands on teaching and administrative staff (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Downs & Manion, 2004; Kloet & Aspenlieder, 2013; Smeltzer & Hearn, 2015). Support for the "hard sciences" and technology is increasing in an era of growing value placed on militarization (Engler, 2013) and entrepreneurship (Sears & Cairns, 2014b) while the study of societies and social problems are increasingly dismissed as concerns of the past (Singh, 2014). Moreover, neoliberal governments deregulate corporate enterprise and expand capitalist economic development to enabling increased corporate access to "natural resources," thereby intensifying the ongoing destruction of Indigenous peoples' ways of life and accelerating the devastation of the environment. Universities are complicit in these processes, investing in the lucrative fossil fuel industry and many refusing to do divest despite fossil fuel divestment campaigns at universities across Canada (http://www.gofossilfree.ca/campaigns) and around the world (E. Howard, 2015).[19] Rather than a new set of relations, this represents the continuation of colonial and capitalist expansion. As Glen Coulthard (2014) critically points out, the Canadian settler-colonial state has over time used different means to gain access to land and resources, but the ends have remained the same, " to shore up continued access to Indigenous peoples' territories for the purposes of state formation, settlement, and capitalist development" (p. 125). It is within this context that the Canadian

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[19] For a list of McGill's investments in the fossil fuel industry see
http://divestmcgill.com/mcgills-investments/

government seeks "truth and reconciliation" with Indigenous Peoples and in which Indigenous

Studies are consequently receiving increased funding and other forms of institutional support.

This has led some critical Indigenous scholars to question the sincerity and motives of a newly

claimed willingness to "recognize" and engage Indigenous Peoples (Belcourt, 2016; Chrisjohn &

Wasacase, 2009; Coulthard, 2014; A. Simpson, 2014; L. Simpson, 2011).

Black scholars in Canada have also made critical interventions in discourses surrounding

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), thus situating histories of African enslavement

and Black people in Canada as part of this project (see examples in Mathur, Dewar & DeGagné,

2011). As Walcott (2011) argues, we must ask: "what is being reconciled, with whom and to

what [ends]" (p. 346)? What might 'truth and reconciliation' look like for Black Canadians?

What is the role of Black scholar in the neoliberal university and how, if at all has this role

changed? Black intellectuals in the United States have consistently expressed ongoing concerns

about the de-politicization and containment of Black Studies through its institutionalization in

universities. They have debated for decades whether Black Studies should be an academic

project to include the histories and contributions of Black people, a tool of cultural nationalism

or a vehicle for more radical social change (Harding, 1974; Norment, 2007). These questions and

concerns remain of great importance to Black scholars in Canada as well. Hence I respectfully

situate this dissertation within the field of Black Canadian Studies and take up long-term,

ongoing discussions among Black intellectuals in Canada about what and who "Canadian,"

"Black," and "Black Canadian Studies" represent, how these categories function, and the role of

the University in their (re)production and/or refusal. As noted above, my journey into this field

of study begins with my family and upbringing in Montreal and reflects three decades of

working with/in social services and a range of community-based organizations in Montreal as a

youth and family worker, artist, educator and researcher. I arrived at McGill University in my mid-forties, intending to continue my work developing Emancipatory Art Education with/in Black communities (Hampton, 2011). However, as I share in the story that follows, a number of unexpected experiences in my first year of my doctorate challenged my self-concept and my thinking about education in Québec and Canada, thus changing the direction of my research.

My Story of Disjuncture

"Why do you want to go to that *White school* and try to impress those *White people*?" This question from a youth upon hearing of my acceptance into a doctoral program at McGill would prove much more significant and complex than I anticipated. "But by that logic," I retorted at the time, "We should ask why do we live in this *White province*? In this *White country*? (The youth interjected—"yeh, why *do* we live here?!") Well just because the population of a place is predominantly White," I continued, "doesn't make it a White place *only 'for'* White people…"

The question was related to one posed by another Black youth when I started my Master's degree in Art Education: "Why do you want to go into art?! Art is for *White people*, Rosalind!" These millennial youth understood the society in which they live as divided into exclusive, racialized spaces. What did this mean for their futures, in Québec and Canadian contexts, particularly in the absence of a Black critical mass and political power? Their comments made clear that success in institutional contexts associated with what are commonly understood as the higher achievements of Western civilization, such as education and fine art, is still understood to imply and require a willingness to "act White" (Amadasun, 2013; Charland, 2010; Ogbu, 2004). At the same time, failure within such institutions runs the risk of confirming

racist stereotypes about the identities, achievements and potentials of Black people (Inzlicht and Schmader, 2012; Steele, 2010)

My resistance to considering McGill as a "White school" was shaped by an educational career of being one of few Black students in my classes and of "doing well" and liking school none the less. I had grown up in an ethnically and racially diverse, poor and working-class neighbourhood and attended predominantly White and middle class public school. I had always enjoyed and succeeded in school and resented the suggestion that this somehow contradicted my strong identification as a Black woman and member of Montreal's Black community.

I expected the much older, more elite, research university would be a challenge, which was precisely what I was looking for. I would be the first person I was aware of on either side of my family to do a PhD and I began the degree feeling nervous, confident and excited. There were two other Black students in my cohort and one of the first readings assigned was by Black Canadian author Dionne Brand: both situations that seemed promising to me in terms of Black people being present and Black Canadian scholarship represented in the curriculum. The reading, however, was a deeply disturbing one in which Brand explains her disengagement from a PhD program. She describes how coping with the racism and demands to assimilate in academia had made her feel increasingly, cumulatively "wounded in the brain" (Brand, 1994, p. 172). She describes well-intentioned friends, family and community cheering her on, not realizing that she had to quit as a matter of her own survival. I found the reading and subsequent brief discussion in class highly upsetting. No one else, least of all perhaps the professor who had assigned the reading, seemed particularly troubled by the implications of Brand's essay. It was as if profound, soul-crushing racism in the academy was an accepted given, along with the idea that the only viable option for racialized students was to assimilate (at great personal risk) or to leave.

The following week in this same class I chose the latter. I don't recall what if anything in particular was happening, but I was struck by the overwhelming feeling of having to get out. I barely managed to explain to the professor that I "needed a break" before tears began streaming down my face. I rushed out of the building and ran up the hill upon which the school is built and into the nearby woods. I sat on the ground by a stream until I was able to catch my breath and collect myself. Then I went back.

The next week I quit my community pottery class. I had been throwing pottery for two years and loved it, but suddenly could not settle into the making, could not focus away from my thoughts. I could not centre myself or the clay piled on the wheel. As I left, in tears, I explained to the instructor that I had just started a PhD and "didn't have time" to throw pottery anymore. I believed at that moment that PhD students must not have enough time, quantitatively, to engage in non-academic activities. I wasn't thinking about the way that not having enough time for something also connotes the belief that something is not *worth* your time.

"Having enough" time was a statement about time, about value, about psychological space and geographic place. It was also about the nature of the time in which I found myself having to function—a different time, and different way of "doing" time. The university's was a time that extended uninterrupted back to the early 19th century; a time wrapped in that time and (re)living that time as a causative force. I felt as if within this colonial time, I was fixed in what Frantz Fanon (1967) called the "historicity" (p. 112) of Blackness—that my Blackness was already predetermined and reified according to colonialism and centuries of a dehumanizing and authoritative European gaze. "Doing time" at the university seemed to require synchronizing my rhythm to that of the institution, but I could not get the moves. I felt 'behind,' and as though there would never be enough time for me to catch up with what seemed for everyone else to be

the "natural" flow of the dominant university culture. (See Ahmed, 2014, pp. 50-53 on the

additional work of "being in time" that is required by some of us in order to appear cordially

willing rather than willful, difficult and in the way).

In addition to being out of sync with the elite, White colonial culture of the university, I

was also responding to an institutional emphasis on rapid, measurable production. Capitalism

demands the creation of products and profits at an ever- increasing rate, a project driven and

facilitated by various technologies that speed things up. Such a pace and orientation is in

contradiction with my process-oriented art practices that require slow, reflective, whimsical

experimentation with ideas and materials. It is in contradiction with community work entailing

trusting relationships built over time. As neoliberal universities are run more and more "like

businesses chasing money and customers," emphasis shifts to the quantity of scholarship rather

than its quality (Martell, 2014, para. 16). Hence my sense of needing to adjust to a normalized

"work rhythm that is rushed, riddled with anxiety and pressure to be ever-present" (Mountz, et

al., 2015, p. 8), made sitting meditatively in front of a pottery wheel experimenting with clay for

hours suddenly seem like a waste of time that should be used on academic work.

From the onset of the doctoral program, students were frequently reminded that we were

expected to complete our PhD within four years, and told that if a personal crisis were to impede

our progress we should request to formally "stop the clock" so as not to run out of time. This

reflected a Eurocentric, linear conception of time with an internalized ticking clock counting

down to a finish line. I had to progress through the program and produce, to be industrious, not

lazy; intelligent, as opposed to *slow* (Shahjahan, 2014; L.T. Smith, 1999). There was also an

immediate, heavy emphasis placed on writing funding applications and meeting a related series

of deadlines. There was much recognition and celebration of individual students who had been

awarded high profile scholarships in the past. Especially for those of us who had never engaged in such an exercise, the pressure of this task was enormous and everything about it encouraged individualism, self-promotion and competition. In considering me as a potential candidate for one the more prestigious of these awards, a senior professor referred to me as "Black, but gets along well with White people." Apparently based on my educational background and the professor's observations of my character, this assessment was intended as a compliment. It served as a clear assertion of "the institutional value placed not just on my ability to get along with others, but on my perceived ability to get along with *White* people, *even though* I'm Black. The statement both acknowledged the White supremacy of the environment, and called on me to cordially respect both the racial hierarchy and the norm of not confronting it" (Hampton, forthcoming). I think that was the day I acknowledged to myself that it *was* a "White school," even if I wasn't yet entirely sure what that meant.

I was overwhelmed by a heavily racialized sense of class alienation that somehow made it feel all the more like a "White school." For the first time in my life I began to think critically about class. My earlier conception of class had been limited to an association with money rather than a broader understanding of class and its far-reaching implications, and I vaguely understood racialized economic inequity as a product of racism. As some critical race theorists have observed, Black people have often focused on the immediacy of fighting racism, while notions about racial solidarity can and have been used to obscure class power and exploitation (hooks, 2000; Guinier, 2004). A broader critical race praxis that situates race within a network of interlocking and interdependent social relations while recognizing the significance of group identity and racial solidarity seeks to advance this antiracist struggle.

Finding a conversation.

In the first semester of the doctoral program, we were introduced to the idea of selecting an academic discourse community to join, through identifying the scholars and body of scholarship within which we hoped for our own work to be situated. In addition to research and reading, this involved producing annotated bibliographies and literature reviews, as well as learning about peer review publishing and journal rankings. I continued to struggle—this level of academia seemed entirely oriented toward competition, prestige and hierarchy. I learned the word "genuflect" when a professor explained that we were to genuflect to established key theorists and researchers in our writing.

One night in a class on research methodologies we were asked to work in pairs or small groups to create a film using a cell phone around the theme "joining a conversation." I worked with Rima Athar, a woman with whom I was becoming friends, and produced a short film we called, interchangeably, *Creating a Conversation* and *Finding a Conversation*. As women of colour concerned about social justice we felt the theme had to be altered as we had yet to locate an academic discourse community that we wished to join. Our film ended up dramatically differently from those of our colleagues, who produced pieces shot in well-lit indoor spaces, featuring student and teacher characters addressing the theme quite literally.

Creating/ Finding a Conversation consisted of a series of short scenes lasting just over 2½ minutes, with no (spoken) narration, dialogue or acting. We used an app that mimics old film (i.e. grainy, flickering, with scratches, dust and light leaks) and shot the piece from a first person perspective. It begins outside, at night, as the viewer-protagonist approaches the building in which the Faculty of Education is located. The only sound is that of the harsh wind that blew into the microphone as we recorded. The door to the building is opened and the viewer enters the

lobby and looks around. The muffled voices of other people in the building can be heard in the distance. The viewer approaches a brick wall alongside a staircase, moves up the stairs, slowly towards and eventually into complete darkness. The camera movement is jagged as it approaches a door. Now in an enclosed stairwell, the camera makes sharp movements—darting glances up and down the stairs. There is no sound, except that of feet as the protagonist quickly descends two steps, stops and looks back up. A brief glimpse from within a dark space, into a brightly lit one; a disorienting angle makes it unclear whether the viewer is looking up or down. In total darkness and the sound of wind, there are several seconds of loud banging, scratching, grinding noises, followed by the sound of running water and then breathing: three slow, deep breaths. The closing shot is without sound and shows two hands and two bare feet in the grass.

Creating/ Finding a Conversation is about disorientation, dislocation, fragmentation, fear and grounding. Rather than carefully mapping out each scene, Rima and I set out to communicate a shared counter-story of graduate school and the ambivalent prospect of entering academic careers. We took turns holding the camera and decided what and how to shoot in the process. We shot the completely dark scene towards the end in the woods by the stream that I had run to weeks earlier. The only time either of us appears in the film is in the closing scene, featuring my left and Rima's right hands and feet. While the project was conceived, completed and first screened all in the course of one three-hour class, making the film was a deeply meaningful experience that continues to resonate. The conversation that Rima and I found was ultimately our own, that we created, through our breath, and through our grounding outside of the university.

"Becoming" an activist.

The largest union of non-academic workers at the university was on strike for the entire

fall semester in which I began my doctoral program. The senior administration simultaneously

downplayed the strike and attempted to criminalize the workers in both its public and internal

discourses and through securing court injunctions controlling where and how workers could

picket. Initiatives to support the striking workers were the first 'extra curricular' activities in

which I got involved as a doctoral student.

On November 10th 2011, I participated in a massive student demonstration against

proposed university tuition hikes in Québec; all afternoon I walked arms linked with friends.

Like many people, I had never been part of such an enormous demonstration and it forged for me

an embodied connection to iconic images I had grown up with of the U.S. civil rights movement

in which my parents met. The demonstration ended with many of the protesters flooding onto

McGill's downtown campus, where several students had occupied the fifth floor of the senior

administration building. It had grown dark and started raining, and the people I had been walking

with had left. I stood alone, on the periphery at first, watching, eventually moving down into the

crowd gathered outside of the building.

Everything was suddenly a blur of riot police, shields, batons, students, banners, signs, a

megaphone. I was standing beside a young woman who appeared to be in her early twenties,

younger than my son. Our arms were linked and we were squeezing tightly, bringing our bodies

close together. The people were yelling "Solidarité!" The police were yelling "Bouge!" We

stood still, and a big policeman forcefully pushed us to the ground with his shield, reached

forward and pepper sprayed us across our faces from no further than 6 inches away. I was

blinded and became profoundly disoriented. I have no recollection of getting up and off of the

campus. In the adjacent street, protesters were still yelling and police lines kept pushing people further away from the campus. Tear gas, yelling, screaming, rain. I finally turned from the scene and ran the two miles home, arriving muddy, wet, and stunned.[20]

The next afternoon I was back outside of the administration building with a group of students and professors, demanding answers from the senior administration regarding why riot police had been called onto campus and being asked by the press for interviews. I was suddenly seen as "an activist," just in time for a province wide student strike—the largest and longest in Canadian history.

I thus found and joined an "activist" conversation, a discourse *and* action-oriented community within and against the university and its practices of labour exploitation, competitive individualism, oppressive top-down power hierarchy, and racist and patriarchal discrimination. The streets, administrative offices and other sites of direct action were generative spaces of learning and I found a strong sense of belonging in a small yet diverse group of students, professors and activists (I discuss these experiences further in Chapter Seven). I found time for activism, found the timing of activism. I was shocked by the impact of being labelled "activists" and by how many journalists and writers wanted to interview us. Student activists were constantly being invited to write contributions for special journal issues about the movement, to attend conferences and give workshops.

I also began to develop a stronger class analysis through activism in the context of the student / social movement (Choudry, 2012; Collectif dix novembre, 2014; Hampton, Hartman, Hurley & Lamarre, 2012; Lamarre, 2012), and through worker activism and labour union organizing at the university (AGSEM, 2013). Unexpectedly, as the student movement gained

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[20] For more on the events of November 10th 2012 at McGill see Nov. 10 Independent Student Inquiry, 2012; Sharp & Roberts, 2012

momentum, I also found a new sense of belonging beyond the university. Thinking about notions

of "citizenship" and the role of education in producing "good citizens" early in my second

semester at McGill I wrote:

> As an activist in the Quebec student movement at this particular moment in time, I have
>
> never before felt more like a "citizen" of this province. I feel as though many of us who
>
> are now active at McGill, like those Anglophones who were radicalized by Opération
>
> McGill in the 1960s, find ourselves with a new sense of our role in defending the
>
> province and fighting for its decolonization. As students here we inherit the right to
>
> affordable post secondary education, standing on the shoulders of those who came before
>
> and fought for us (and many of whom are still around, fighting alongside us). I think a
>
> lot of us feel that we inherit the responsibility to continue this fight for those who will
>
> come after us. […] I don't have any illusions that racism is not still present, that there are
>
> not Quebecois students who I march with who do not necessarily see me as "like them".
>
> But I guess my feeling about this for now is that they don't have to, and I don't have to
>
> be, as long as we are committed to our common goals. (Excerpt from journal entry,
>
> February 29, 2012).

The language of "defending the province" is striking and catches me off guard as I read it years

later. It captures both my passion as I was swept up in the mobilization, and the Québec

nationalism that I was absorbing as it increasingly permeated the chants, rhetoric and political

discourses of the movement. Moreover, my stated aim of fighting for the province's

"decolonization" contradicts the settler colonial basis of that nationalism, and illuminates the

tension within which I and other racialized and Indigenous activists were situated. While many

of us understood neoliberalism—of which the proposed tuition hikes were a part—as an

extension of settler colonialism, it was clear that the *Printemps d'érable* was not an anticolonial

or decolonizing movement per se. The student movement drew heavily on histories of class

struggle in Québec, and as it has been since the 1960s, the primary organizing frame was

combative syndicalism through direct democracy (Mehreen, Bonin and Hausfather, 2014;

Sheppard, 1989), with a notable influence and presence of anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist

activists.[21] As such it remained largely White- and Euro-centric, as well as masculinist,

requiring persistent interventions from Indigenous, feminist, anti-racist and anti-colonial activists

to force more inclusive and progressive critiques and analyses (Bigaouette and Surprenant, 2013;

Ferrer et al., 2014; Hampton, Luxion, and Swain, 2014; Palacios, Hampton, Ferrer, Moses and

Lee, 2013; Pedneault, 2014).

By the end of the spring I would describe the greatest challenge of the preceding nine

months not as the police violence, relentless pace of protest actions, surveillance or disciplinary

hearings at the university, all of which I was subjected to; rather, the greatest challenge was

coping with what I felt were reductive and dismissive responses to the movement by some

members of Montreal's Black community (Bayne, 2012; Morgan, 2012). In private emails, face-

to-face debates, social media exchanges and published articles (Hampton, 2012, July 8;

Hampton, 2012, July 17), I argued for Black people's participation in the movement. On more

than one occasion it was suggested to me that I was being naïve, uppity, and/ or ignorant in

aligning myself with "the students" (as if Black people were not students) and that the Québécois

'them' has never cared about the Black (assumed not-Québécois) 'us.' Ultimately the question

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[21] For anarchist analyses of the movement see "Strike While the Iron is Hot" Part 1 at
http://www.crimethinc.com/texts/recentfeatures/montreal1.php
and Part 2 at http://www.crimethinc.com/texts/recentfeatures/montreal2.php
See also Submedia TV (2013) Street Politics 101, at http://www.submedia.tv/street-politics-101/

had shifted from why I would want to go to "that White school" to why I would associate myself with "that White student movement."

As the 2012 movement revived old Québécois organizing frames and tensions, it also exacerbated and renewed longstanding dichotomies between reformist and radical, Africentric and Marxist, and exclusively-Black and integrationist approaches to social-political organizing within English speaking Montreal Black communities (Affan, 2013; Hampton and Rochat, forthcoming). Such tensions are part and parcel of heterogeneous communities and reflective of the complexity and simultaneity of multiple aspects of identity and interlocking oppressions. Racism would have us believe that "Black/ African Canadian" represents a homogeneous group and social location; collective experiences of racialization and racism are very real in shaping the material conditions under which Black people live, turning one's 'Blackness' into "something intimate that touches the ontology of personhood" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 68). No matter how powerfully it is lived however, "race" remains fluid, symbolic and representational, and Black people *should* be expected to hold a range of political and socio-cultural positions and indeed do (Hudson & Kamugisha, 2014; Kitossa, 2012).

Ultimately, the racialized destabilization and dislocation I experienced in the university and student-activist environments created space in which to engage other frames of analysis and ways of knowing the world. What I thought I knew was called into question, and these problems of knowing (G. Smith, 1990)—about racism, class and education—inspired the shape of this research. Questioning whether I could be successful in this school caused me to question the conditions of my earlier educational successes; becoming oppositional and defiant in a school setting caused me to think critically about compliance; about what makes a student, a university, or an education "good" or "elite." Having been involved in community work and organizing in

Montreal for decades prior to the 2012 student movement, I am struck by questions regarding the ways in which universities can be such edifying sites of activism and about the proximity of activist communities to universities. As Black and Indigenous feminists have long asserted, limited notions of "activism" erase the critical organizing and resistance of women and other members of racialized communities (Collins, 1986, 2009; Hampton & Rochat, forthcoming; Henry, 1992; L. Simpson, 2011). This important work and these communities hence often go unrecognized by activists outside of these communities, thereby limiting the potential vision and capacity for disrupting dominant power dynamics within movements as well as in achieving broader reaching social change (Choudry, 2015).

At the same time, activist experiences in and around the university have broadened the scope of my concerns and analysis and deepened my social-political engagement. Without leaving the city in which I've lived since I was five years old, in coming to McGill I had 'left home' in the sense that Bernice Johnson Reagon (1983) describes as necessary in working for social change. Bernice Johnson Reagon (1983) describes the tendency to try to organize from within little rooms that feel like home because they are organized around sameness and provide some retreat from broader social and political relations. While they exist, these can be nurturing spaces "where you sift out what people are saying about you and decide who you really are" and what you really want (Reagon, 1983, p. 358). However, Reagon makes two critical points: first, we cannot survive by staying in our little room. It limits our reach and contains us as well as any threat we may pose to current social arrangements—"when those who call the shots get ready to clean house, they have easy access to you" (p. 358). Second, if we seek social and political change in the diverse societies in which we live, we have to know how to organize and struggle within these societies through building coalitions with others across multiple differences. Rather

than working primarily with people who are like you and share your interests and perspectives, coalition work requires working across deep differences and consequently feeling uncomfortable, even unsafe. "Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do" (Reagon, 1983, p. 359).

Activism also came with heavy conditions and consequences. Student activists were subjected to surveillance and political profiling by campus security teams as well as the municipal police, and while governments manipulated legislation and used the court systems to criminalize protesters and repress the movement (Dhavernas, 2014), university administrators manipulated and constructed new codes of conduct in attempts to discipline and control student and faculty activists (Lamarre, 2012; Hurley, 2014. See also Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson & Tilleczek, 2006; Sears and Cairns, 2014). In sum, joining an activist community in and around the university was a messy experience of learning through engagement in social action (Choudry, 2012; Foley, 1999). Through the combined formal and informal learning I experienced on and off campus I gained a better understanding of myself and of Québec society and politics and came to understand myself as a political actor within a broader sphere. These experiences raised my awareness of the production of knowledge as it relates to social and political power and made me want to learn more about "the way relations of power and knowledge are organized in and through the university [that] makes it possible to live these relations without reflecting on them" (Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald and McKenna, 1991, p. 7). In the past, my educational experiences allowed me to keep one foot at 'home' while going to and from school 'getting' education. The combined experience of becoming a McGill student and activist was an entirely different, two-feet-in experience that led to an intense period of embodied learning. Inspired by

and part of this journey, my dissertation research documents and draws on the experiences of

twenty-one other Black people regarding their time at McGill with the intention of revealing the

role of the University in the production of racialized socialized relations.

Overview of the Dissertation

  Objectives and research questions.

   This research project aims to retrieve, document and examine narratives of former and

current Black students and faculty, regarding their experiences of McGill University and the

meanings they attribute to them. I examine a selection of texts and discourses of the university,

with particular attention to those related to race, colonialism, ethnicity, diversity, equity, and

Black people and communities. Prioritizing Black Canadian Studies as the primary disciplinary

location of this work, I critically engage with the ideas and work of Black scholars working in

Canadian universities. Finally, and most importantly, this work is geared toward the production

of educational research that is relevant and accessible to Black communities in Canada.

Reflecting these objectives, the questions that guide this study are: How have Black people and

communities historically engaged with McGill University? How do Black people describe and

analyze their educational experiences at McGill University? How have and do the university's

institutional texts and discourses shape these relations? And how, if at all, is the current context

of neoliberalism altering these relations?

  Structure of the dissertation.

   This dissertation is composed of three main sections. The first section includes the

introduction and describes my research design (Chapters One, Two and Three), the second

(Chapter Four) offers a critical examination of the university's origin stories and the construction

of its institutional histories. The third section includes my examination of participants' activities and experiences at the university (Chapters Five through Seven), followed by a brief conclusion (Chapter Eight).

In this first chapter I have set the context of this work and situated myself personally and politically in relation to the study. Chapters Two and Three put forward my research design and offer a review of the literature which informs my theoretical framework and methods of inquiry. I describe my approach to this research as a Critical Institutional Activist Ethnography that combines aspects of critical ethnography, institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography and is informed by critical race and anticolonial theories and critical (Black, Indigenous, Marxist) feminisms. In Chapter Four I analyze McGill University's origin stories and the ways in which institutional historical texts, discourses, and display practices function in the present. The following three chapters move into the experiences of participants and address their work in navigating the university environment, resisting colonial racial ideology and racialization, and working for change through academic service and organizing non-formal teaching and learning. In Chapter Eight I summarize and conclude my findings and analysis, and offer closing remarks regarding their implications.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Influences

Understanding contemporary racialized social relations requires critical analysis that can explain the pervasiveness of racism and its material impact on people's lives, as well as how racial hierarchy has been constructed and continues to be normalized through social institutions such as the law and education. In this chapter I describe the anticolonial and critical race theoretical perspectives that, along with Marxist feminist methods of inquiry (see Chapter Three), have informed this research and shape my analysis. These orientations, while distinct from and at times in tension with one another, share a common commitment to the production of scholarship with direct relevance to the day-to-day experiences and concerns of people facing racial, gendered and class-based oppression.

On Blackness and Whiteness

In this dissertation I capitalize the words "White" and "Black" when used to describe racialized identities and social relations. I work from the assumption that race is not a biological fact but a socially constructed category. Race appears to have a fixed meaning while functioning as what Stuart Hall described as a "floating signifier" (Jhally, 1997). The meaning of race (what and/ or who it signifies) remains fluid and determined within specific historical, social, political and geographic contexts. Based on phenotypic characteristics (skin tone, hair texture and the size and shape of various body parts) and ethnic, national and cultural origins, particular groups of people are racialized as not-White (see Chapter One, footnote 1). References to Black, Red, and Yellow people, "people of colour" and "visible minorities" all reflect this notion of a neutral, normalized Whiteness from which other "races" deviate. Black people, simply stated, have been

constructed as the most not-White of all. Whiteness is constructed and expressed "through the negation of Blackness, or according Blackness only negative meaning" (Dei, 1997, p. 243). That is, conceived in binary opposition to Blackness, the value and dominance of Whiteness relies on the ongoing production of a devalued, dehumanized Blackness (Carty, 1991; Dei, 1997; Dyer, 1997).

This is not to say that some Black people in Canada have not embraced the understanding of our selves as 'Black' and built communities, cultural practices and politics around experiences of 'Blackness.' Indeed I recall my impatience when a professor during my Masters degree called into question my reference to Montreal's "Black community"—no Black person had ever made such a comment to me. "That's your problem," I thought at that time, "*We know* who we are!" After all, it was not as though Black people I knew did not understand that "the community" was actually composed of many fluid and overlapping communities with significant differences among and between them. While Black people may arguably contribute to the reification of the notion of race by claiming it in this way, they/we do so as "a protective response to Whiteness" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 69) rather than as an assertion of dominance over others. As Zeus Leonardo (2009) writes, "race was created by and for Whites" (p. 69) and benefits all White people, albeit to differing extents. Nevertheless, this research takes up the challenge of thinking about the meaning of Black communities, and of "Black" as a subject position and political concept.

This research is also about understanding and defining Whiteness—what specifically makes a university or a country "White," and how does this relate to "White people"? While the term "racialized" is used to refer to people from "visible minority" groups (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; St. Lewis, 1996) and this is how I use it here, White people are also "racialized" in the sense that "White people" is also a socially constructed racial category that refers to skin colour.

White people and Whiteness are related concepts, but it is important not to conflate them as doing so reduces anti-Whiteness to personalized criticism of White people while leaving systemic White domination intact.

Whiteness is a racial discourse and social practice that posits White people as idealized subjects, superior to those who are understood as not-White. Whiteness is "primarily about the exercise of power" (Levine-Rasky 2013, p.4). As a way of knowing and worldview "supported by material practices and institutions" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 170) Whiteness confers unearned privileges and structural advantages on White people including the psychosocial, economic and political power to define and to exclude Others (Frankenberg, 1993; Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2009; Levine-Rasky, 2013; Yancy, 2004). Whiteness also grants White people the right to accumulate material resources from and at the expense of Indigenous Peoples and people of colour (Dumas, 2014; Harris, 1993; hooks, 1990; Leonardo, 2009).

White people who embrace Whiteness as identity use "White racial knowledge" (Leonardo, 2009, pp. 110-118) and a range of strategies to normalize and conceal its effects on their lives and on the lives of non-White people, that is, to remain "colourblind" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; Frye, 1992; Leonardo, 2009; Levine-Rasky, 2013; Lipsitz, 1998; Schick, 2002). In so doing, they maintain and reproduce White dominance. "Without Whiteness" as Noel Ignatiev (1999) points out, "skin colour would have no more significance than foot size or ear shape" (p. 5). Because a White supremacist system is already in place, without the explicit acknowledgement, disruption and refusal of that system and how it benefits them, White people contribute to upholding it (Leonardo, 2009; Ignatiev, 1999; Kelley, Schuwerk, Krishnamurthy & Kao, 1997; Roediger, 1994). While White people have choices about whether they attempt to maintain and reform Whiteness or to abolish it (Roediger, 1994), Whiteness as ideology cannot

be transformed into something that is not oppressive, or not racist—by definition it is always about racial domination (Leonardo, 2009).

Critical Race Theories

Critical race theories examine and critique systemic racism and processes of racialization and engage and centre the knowledge production of members of racialized groups. Sociology has its origins in an approach which focuses on society's "underdogs" only in so much as those groups are understood as deviant and/ or passive and politically naïve victims of social mismanagement (Gouldner, 1968). In contrast, critical approaches recognize that those situated at the bottom of social hierarchies are often acutely aware of the structural arrangements that maintain their oppression (Torre, 2009; Collins, 1986; 2009). Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed through the work of legal scholars in the United States who sought an alternative praxis for understanding and confronting the erosion of civil rights gains and persistence of racism in the later twentieth century. I consider the scholarship identified with this theoretical perspective as part of the much longer intellectual traditions—critical race *theories*—upon which it draws, particularly the Black radical tradition since the early twentieth century. Radical Black feminism is and always has been an essential part of this tradition (Gore, Theoharis & Woodard, 2009; Hudson & Kamugisha, 2014; Katz-Fishman & Scott, 2002; Kelley, 2002; McDuffie, 2011). The theorizing and activism of radical Black women—including many from poor and working class backgrounds and whether or not they thought of themselves as feminists—is embedded in the foundations and woven throughout this tradition. In recognizing the "deep interconnectedness of struggles around race, gender, sexuality, culture, class and spirituality," radical Black feminists have expanded and complicated understandings of Black liberation (Gore

et al., 2009), producing "one of the most comprehensive visions of freedom" (Kelley, 2002, p. 152). The Black radical/feminist tradition is one in which racial and gender oppression are understood in relation to colonialism and capitalism and the role of state and corporate power in enforcing them. In fighting against racism, sexism, homophobia, and patriarchy Black radical feminists direct their energies toward resisting dominating and oppressive systems and institutions, explicitly challenge discourses that normalize state repression and construct alternatives in theory and practice (Boyce Davies, 2008; J. James, 2013). For me, the 'critical' in critical race theory must reflect the 'radical' of the Black radical/feminist tradition.

Critical race theories in education.

Critical race educational theories reveal and connect interpersonal experiences of racism in schools, structural racism embedded in school systems and the role of education in reproducing broader racialized social relations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Dixson, 2013; Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2009). As in critical race legal scholarship, CRT in education critiques liberal ideology as it manifests in dominant notions such as colourblindness (Choi, 2008) and meritocracy (Park & Liu, 2006; Stewart, 2009) and in deficit discourses that pathologize students, families and communities of colour as essentially deviant, lacking and in need of some form of benevolent White intervention (Closson 2010; Henry 1993; Yosso 2002; Yosso 2005). The enduring myth of meritocracy posits that success in society is based solely on ability, talent and hard work, ignoring long histories of systemic inequity and oppression and social hierarchy. It is thus a racialized, gendered and class-based ideology that is used to try to justify elite social status (Choi, 2008; Guinier, 2015; Mijs, 2016). Merit is a "subjective value rather than an objective fact" (Stewart, 2009, p. 54) that masks the role of preferences, preferential treatment and historical practices of inclusion and exclusion in relation to social

opportunities. Erasing this historical context through meritocratic discourse allows those who benefit from current structural arrangements to redirect and transform social critiques of the power relations that work to their benefit into judgements of individuals and groups as deficient, not good enough, not working hard enough.

While liberal assumptions such as meritocracy suggest that as long as White and non-White people have equal access to state institutions, that equality will follow, CRT scholars have problematized this assumption through theorizing the failure of desegregation in the United States, particularly the desegregation of schools, to bring about racial equality. Civil rights lawyer and critical race theorist Derrick Bell argued in 1980 that the practical value of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision deeming the racial segregation of public schools in the United States illegal was questionable. More than two decades later, Black children continued to receive inferior public education due to racial discrimination and practices of "re-segregation in desegregated schools" (Bell, 1980, p. 531). Through desegregation many Black students had also lost the support of Black teachers who understood their communities and were personally and professionally committed to their success. Bell's (1980) argument and subsequent critical race analyses of *Brown v Board of Education* and decisions informed by it (e.g., Bell, 2004; Guinier, 2004) have produced the theories of interest convergence, interest divergence and racial liberalism. These concepts are helpful tools for considering the Canadian context and understanding the ongoing failure to racially integrate major institutions, particularly for Black people (Stewart, 2014; Nelson & Nelson, 2004).

Interest convergence.

Bell (1980) argued that while Black people had been fighting against school segregation and the inferiority of Black schools for a century, what had made 1954 different and led to the

Brown decision was *the convergence* between White and Black interests. Specifically, a move towards integration at that time converged with the interests of the White dominant class. While some White people were certainly driven by morality, the decision came in the context of the Cold War, the need to reassure Black people (particularly WWII war veterans) of their access to the American dream, and the need to further industrialize the South, where the segregated plantation society was seen as preventing further development (Bell, 1980). As the United States and the Soviet Union competed to convert formerly colonized nations to their respective economic and political systems, the U.S. could not afford the increasingly bright and international spotlight on American segregation and other blatant racial injustices while positing itself as the pinnacle of democracy (Bell, 2004). By the late 1970s, as these points of interest diverged, so too did the Court's willingness to enforce the *Brown* decision, making school integration increasingly less feasible. Subsequent rulings would require only those school districts found guilty of *intentional* discrimination to a desegregation plan (Guinier 2004), and by the beginning of the 21st century White parents were suing school boards that promoted integration through considering race in the assignment of students to schools. Finally, a 2007 US Supreme Court decision regarding public schools in Kentucky (*Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*) and Seattle (*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District no. 1 et al.*) ruled in favour of White parents' claims that racially conscious assignments to schools violated the constitutional rights of their children (Leet, 2014; Dumas, 2014), effectively marking "the end of *Brown"*(Dumas, 2015). CRT thus demonstrates that desegregation in and of itself does not equate to integration.

While the legal and education systems of the United States and Canada differ in significant ways, the underlying ideologies that inform how Black people are situated within

them share much in common. While the Black population in Canada has been much smaller than that of the U.S., as I discussed in Chapter One Canadian institutions have always been structured by racial hierarchy and oppression. The smaller Black population has meant that this group has had less power to pressure the state; most segregated Black schools in Canada were closed during the mid-to-late 1960s (Backhouse, 1999; Hamilton, 2008; McLaren, 2004), after the *Brown* decision in the US, and racial discrimination was legal in Canada until the 1982 passing of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Aylward, 1999; J.W.St.G. Walker, 1996). Critical race theoretical analyses tell us that while gains towards inclusion may be made when dominant interests converge with those of the oppressed, we should not expect that Black people's access to state institutions alone will disrupt those institutions to the extent of fundamentally changing them. This forces us to consider the historical and ideological foundations and functions of these institutions in relation to the historical and material conditions of Black people in Canada. As George Dei (2012) argues, "integration (as we know it) has not led to success for our youth, so we must be critical and ask: Integration for whom, how and at what/ whose expense?" (p. 109).

Critiquing racial liberalism.

In her pivotal essay *From Racial Liberalism to Racial Literacy: Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Divergence Dilemma*, Lani Guinier (2004) revisits the *Brown* decision and its failure to lead to educational equity, focusing on the liberal ideology that undergirded the decision. While generally rejecting scientific racism, liberal ideology offers an individualized and static view of racism that is inclined to maintain a notion of Black *social* inferiority. Guinier (2004) notes that the liberal emphasis on the psychological impact of segregation on Black people and on protecting Black children from stigma and self-hate

mobilized White middle-class sympathy by pathologizing Black people. Moreover, this focus

failed to consider how "segregation also shaped the personality development of Whites (Guinier,

2004, p. 96). Liberalism presents racism as irrational, and assumes it will surrender to logic and

interracial contact; emphasis is thus placed on facilitating interracial contact to promote

tolerance. This focuses attention on the right to proximity to Whiteness and its benefits rather

than on deconstructing White supremacy. In *Brown,* the tactic of desegregation was thus

misconstrued as the goal. Consequently, the 1954 decision ended up redefining equality "not as

a fair distribution of resources, but as the absence of formal, legal barriers that separated the

races" (Guinier, 2004, p.95). In failing to address power relations, the decision preserved the

racial hierarchy embedded in U.S. society and allowed for more subtle forms of racialized

segregation to develop, leaving (particularly working class and poor) Blacks with "an eerie

nostalgia for the feeling of community" that had characterized Black segregated schools

(Guinier, 2004, p. 97. See also hooks, 1994 and 1988/2014). Subsequently, while wealthier

Whites were able to relocate to avoid the integration of their neighbourhoods and schools, poor

Whites became most hostile towards desegregation as it forced them into proximity with Black

people and thus threatened "their psychological position of relative privilege" (Guinier, 2004, p.

107). Attention to interest divergence can highlight the ways in which racism produces

"interdependent yet paradoxical relationships between race, class and geography" (Guinier,

2004, p.100). In treating race in a vacuum and assuming institutional racism to be the result of

individual prejudice, the *Brown* decision failed to take into account the divergence of class

interests between middle class and poor Blacks and between elite and working class White

people, promoting "White solidarity rather than collective cross-racial mobilization around

economic interests" (Guinier, 2004, p. 96). Hence Guinier argues that racial literacy, or the

ability to decode and understand the ways in which racial ideology structures hierarchies and

frames national narratives, is critical for understanding intra-racial economic and political

interest-divergence. Not only does racial liberalism fail to dismantle structural racism, it

maintains racial hierarchies through cloaking and reinforcing interest-divergence. We must work

toward the more complex demands of racial literacy, that will enable us to perceive and analyze

race in its "psychological, interpersonal and structural dimensions," in specific contexts, as it

interacts with "class, geography, gender, and other explanatory variables" (Guinier, 2004, p.

115).

Racial literacy requires rethinking liberal assumptions about rights with critical attention

to how rights, constructed by and requiring recognition from the state, can validate inequitable

power arrangements by setting up state-defined parameters of how we imagine justice. Through

the formality of official "rights and freedom" we are assured that the societies in which we live

are the democracies they say they are. While racialized communities have relied on rights

granted by the state in order to fight discrimination at all levels of society and to hold

governments accountable to the liberal democratic commitments they claim to uphold, it is

important we recognize the limitations of rights discourses and the freedom they are assumed to

protect and secure (Delgado, 1987; D'Souza, 2012; Matsuda, 1987). In the context of this

research, a racially literate analysis of the right to post-secondary education in Québec requires

attention to the historical rights and socio-economic conditions of Black and working class

people in Québec and Canada, to historic and ongoing struggles for access to postsecondary

education in Québec, to dominant state (legal, educational) discourses related to Black people

and to how these conditions, struggles and national discourses are interrelated. With this in mind,

in the section that follows I examine the discourses of Canadian multiculturalism and Québec

interculturalism that shape educational policies and practices.

Canadian multiculturalism and Québec's interculturalism.

Multiculturalism as the philosophy and official policy of Canadian nation building and social cohesion is one of Canada's most renowned features. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 identifies multiculturalism as a "fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity" and an "invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future" (Government of Canada, 1985, 3.1.b). First introduced by Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1971, the policy asserts a federal commitment to the recognition and promotion of the "cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society" as well as "the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" (Government of Canada, 1985, 3.1.a).

As Augie Fleras (2012) asserts, Canadian multiculturalism can be read in two interrelated ways: as an "inclusivity narrative" that provides a framework for respecting differences and removes barriers to "full and equal participation in Canadian society," and as a "hegemony narrative" designed to bolster "political and economic interests and the priorities of the Canadian state, with its prevailing distribution of power and privilege" (p.47). An anticolonial critical race framework supports the latter, critiquing multiculturalism for its failure to address racism and White supremacy, and for exaggerating and reifying cultural and religious differences, erasing class inequity, and depoliticizing and diverting the anticolonial and antiracist struggles of Indigenous Peoples and people of colour (Anderson, Khan, and Reimer-Kirkham, 2011; Bannerji, 2000; Douglas, 2008; Dua, Razack & Warner, 2005; E. Mackey, 1999; Philip, 1992; Razack, 1998; Saloojee, 2004; Thobani, 2007; Walcott, 2000).

Multiculturalism set up notions of hyphenated-Canadian cultural communities (French-Canadian, African-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, Native-Canadian, etcetera) and "ordinary,"

"*Canadian* Canadians," who are White and assumed to be of Anglo Western European ancestry

(E. Mackey, 1999). Constructed on the heels of the Quiet Revolution in Québec, the policy of

multiculturalism replaced that of bilingualism and biculturalism of the 1960s, which had

recognized the French and English as the "two founding races" of Canada and sought to develop

an equal partnership between the two (Yalden, 2012, p.30). Canadian multiculturalism was to

promote national unity through recognizing (while containing) the Québec language minority

demands and integrating various ethno-racial groups, "all against the backdrop of a historically

assumed British dominance" (Haque, 2012, p. 236). However, in the context of Québec

nationalist resistance to Anglophone hegemony, multiculturalism was understood to demote the

Québécois from one of two founding races whose interests took precedence over those of "other

ethnic groups" (Yalden, 2012, p.30) to one of many 'cultural communities' within the

multicultural (albeit bilingual) nation.

Consequently multiculturalism has faced great resistance and opposition in Québec.

Ongoing discussions and debates about Québec's status as a "distinct society" and/ or a nation

(either within the nation of Canada or separately), and how 'Others' might best be "reasonably

accommodated" led to an official alternative policy of interculturalism (Bouchard, 2011;

Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). While multiculturalism denies a dominant culture even as it arguably

seeks to integrate an increasingly racialized, non-European immigrant population into one,

Québec's policy of interculturalism explicitly identifies a Francophone linguistic and cultural

dominance in Québec to which immigrants are expected to adapt. A key theorist of

interculturalism since co-chairing the Commission, Québécois sociologist Gérard Bouchard

(2011) is explicit in his assertion that "interculturalism is not a disguised (or 'underhanded,' as

has been said) form of multiculturalism" (p. 438). Bouchard (2011) identifies Canadian

multiculturalism as being structured by a diversity paradigm that views "the nation as composed of a collection of individuals and ethnocultural groups placed on equal footing and protected by the same laws" (p. 441). Québec interculturalism on the other hand, is structured by a paradigm of duality, "where diversity is conceived and managed as a relationship between minorities from a recent or distant period of immigration, and a cultural majority that could be described as *foundational*" (p. 442, emphasis in original), with 'foundational' referring "less to a moment of settlement or a founding act than to a process spread out over time" (Bouchard, 2011, p. 442, n.13). For Québec interculturalism, Bouchard argues, the "long-established minorities" including "Aboriginal communities" and the "Anglophone population" are also considered foundational cultures (Bouchard, 2011, p. 442).

The stakes at issue in relation to Québécois identities and politics are complex. Understanding 'culture' as a stand-in for 'race,' biculturalism recognized the Québécois as having acquired the status of Whiteness. However, in failing to position the French/Québécois in a privileged position in relation to racialized communities, multiculturalism threatened this status. As Corrie Scott (2015) discusses in her recent essay *How French Canadians became White folks*, the notion of two races in nineteenth century Canada was not merely a matter of the word "race" being used to distinguish different national origins. Scott (2015) examines political cartoons and the Lord Durham *Report on the Affairs of British North America* published in 1839 to demonstrate how the French were racialized in many of the same ways associated with contemporary racism. They are described as lazy, backwards, ignorant, and "not so civilized, so energetic, or so money-making a race" as the English (Lord Durham quoted in Scott, 2015, p.5). Through the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s (and, somewhat ironically, through taking up discourses of anticolonial and Black civil rights struggle), the "'not-quite-White' French

Canadians became White Québécois" (Scott, 2015, p. 11) with "access to White privilege and

the everyday unearned institutional and material advantages of being White" (Scott, 2015, p. 14.

See also Austin, 2013, Chapters 3-4). Interculturalism is meant to secure this status.

       While a more nuanced examination and comparison of multiculturalism and

interculturalism is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is important to note that the two

coexist, overlap and share a common root in 'culturalism' (Van Praagh, 2012), that is, a notion of

whole, fixed cultures that act as determining forces in peoples' lives (Vertovec, 1999). Both

policies are aimed at managing 'cultural' difference—particularly that of immigrant newcomers

and racialized Others—without disrupting the dominant Québec/ Canadian status quo. Both

policies "are predicated on the assumption that central authorities possess the right to define what

counts as differences, and what differences count, so that newcomers can be different, but only in

the same way" (Fleras, 2012, p. 49). Multiculturalism and-interculturalism prioritize the interests

of ongoing competing colonial nationalisms and White settler anxieties regarding the

management of ethno-racial Others. While the institutionalization of these policies arguably

reflects the defeat of the "homogeneity paradigm" (Bouchard, 2011) and of longstanding

organized efforts to 'Keep Canada White' (Bannerji, 2000; Galabuzi, 2006; Pitsula, 2013;

Thobani, 2007), they are at best, "a first step towards a more critical anti-racist approach" (Dei,

2011, p.16. See also Narain, 2014). I have shown how a critical race analysis of education in

Canada and the policies and practices that shape it reveals practices of "accommodating" racial

'Others' based on White settler nationalist interests in maintaining the dominant class and

preserving the current social order. Hence while liberal discourses in Canada have often

celebrated "multicultural education" as progressive and inclusive, I join other critical scholars in

arguing for the necessity of an explicitly anticolonial politics and philosophy of education if we

are serious about engaging its emancipatory potential.

Anticolonialism

I did not anticipate that understanding colonialism and its effects would be such a prominent part of this research about Black people and our relations with the university in Canada. This underestimation on my part was not happenstance, but reflects the limits of a socialized way of thinking about antiracist struggle as an identity-based issue separate from colonialism. Studying racialized social relations focuses attention on how we *do* race, how the meanings and material conditions associated with Blackness are produced and enacted in and by the lived experiences of self identified Black people interacting with the university. By examining racism in this way, colonialism emerges as an ongoing project bound up with capitalism that both generates and relies upon the (re)production of particular racialized and gendered power relations.

My first exposure to critiques of colonialism were postcolonial feminism, art and cultural theory developed in the late twentieth century—theorizing imagined communities, diaspora, destabilized identities, borders and nationalisms; mimicry, hybridity, mestizaje, and in-between/ interstitial / liminal/ third spaces (B. Anderson, 1991; Anzaldúa, 1999; Bhabha, 1993, 1994; Fusco, 2001; Hall, 1993; Lugones, 1987; Mohanty, 1984; Young, 1995). These concepts were and continue to be important to my thinking and work, but they did not bring me into a direct social-political confrontation with the here-*and*-now colonialism of contemporary Canada in which I am situated. I perceived Black and Indigenous peoples as allies in antiracist struggle but did not see how colonialism affected or implicated me personally beyond my interest in and support for local 'Mohawk struggles' in Kahnawà:ke and Kanehsatà:ke. I thought of colonialism

as something that happened long ago to Native peoples in Canada and the United States, and lasted into the 1960s in other places such as the Caribbean, Africa, and India. Postcolonial theory provides important ideas for thinking about language and identity, but as Leila Angod (2006) and others have noted, postmodern and postcolonial thinking "can lead to a fragmentation that yields nihilism and relativism" whereby "each individual becomes an outsider to everyone else" (p. 165). Angod (2006) describes a similar experience to my own in relation to her shift from postcolonial to anticolonial frameworks. She writes that while postcolonialism and postmodernism seek to liberate the individual from "false and oppressive notions of essentialized identity," this idea can actually be "paralyzing, particularly for bodies of colour" (p. 165). She experienced this paralysis herself, noting that she "found it a strange irony" that such theories that "value transgressing boundaries and claiming hybridity […] seemed to use difference to box [her] into [her]self," leaving her "no site of resistance that [she] felt [she] could legitimately occupy" (Angod, 2006, p. 165. See also Carol Latchford's description of feeling "halved," "scattered," and "dispersed" [2004, p. 166]). In sum, my first engagement with postcolonial theory was through art and cultural studies. It stimulated and challenged my thinking, yet overall it remained largely a critical academic exercise that I had difficulty connecting in concrete ways to my day-to-day life.

Critics of postcolonial scholarship argue against both the implication that colonialism has ended (as suggested by the "post") and the academic, often abstract language of postcolonial writing that is inaccessible and does not represent the experiences of millions of people displaced by colonialism (Chibber, 2012; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Dirlik, 1997; J. Fisher, 2001). Indigenous Peoples' struggles against colonialism "are not abstract struggles against abstract phenomena; [they] are the struggles of people resisting erasure, amputation, and genocide"

(Kempf, 2009, p. 5). Antiracist scholarship and activism that ignores the lived experiences and political struggles of contemporary Indigenous Peoples contribute to the colonial project through accepting the limits of a liberal-pluralist framework that reduces Indigenous nations to cultural groups within an already settled multicultural Canada (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). The Canadian nation state is not a fait accompli; it has thus far failed to complete its settler colonial project of eliminating Indigenous nations, dispossessing them of their lands, and absorbing what remains of Indigenous cultures and people (A. Simpson, 2014; Lawrence & Dua, 2005).

An anticolonial approach calls for explicitly socio-political critique grounded in material conditions that can address the ongoing nature of colonialism within contemporary social relations and change these relations. Canada is hence understood as a settler colonial nation-state in the here and now, and colonialism, rather than an event, is recognized as a lasting structure sustained by ruling class interests, exploitation, land theft and genocidal policies towards Indigenous peoples (Anderson, Khan & Reimer-Kirkham, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; A. Simpson, 2014; Wolfe, 2006). Settler colonialism is primarily about the ongoing accumulation of land (Coulthard, 2014; A. Simpson, 2014; Wolfe, 2006), undergirded by the European notion of the land as property that offers "natural resources" to be exploited and used by capitalists for "development." This is in stark contrast to Indigenous Knowledge systems that understand the land as a living force that we learn with and from (L. Simpson, 2011, 2014a). As Mel Bazil of Gitimt'en Clan explains, "these are not *resources*, this is a life force. A life force that we have relationships to. We don't *own* it. We don't *own* the rivers, we don't *own* the salmon—we have *relationships* with these worlds" (Toghestiy & Bazil, 2014, 1:17). These relationships are guided not by rights to the land, but by *responsibilities* to the land according to the living law (Toghestiy & Bazil, 2014) that goes back thousands of years. In direct opposition to capitalist ideals that

"depend upon infinite resources, infinite growth in a finite world" (Toghestiy & Bazil, 2014, 2:44), these responsibilities require taking as little as possible to ensure survival and treating the land in ways that promote more life (L. Simpson, 2011). The land is thus central to anticolonial praxis. It is a struggle "*for* land in the material sense, but also deeply *informed* by what the land *as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13).

Racist social relations informed by colonial ideology continue to produce and reproduce "specific modes of colonial thought, desire, and behavior that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 16. See also A. Césaire, 2000). An anticolonial commitment involves challenging this ideology and the national institutions of government, law, education and media that are crucial to perpetuating and upholding it, and drawing from and constructing "alternative, oppositional paradigms based on the use of indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference" (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 301).

The evolution of my understanding of colonialism reflects the limits and functions of formal public schooling and liberal academic, activist and popular discourses that work from the assumptions and within the ideological parameters set up by the ruling class. The first stage of deconstructing the colonial myths I grew up with was gaining the awareness that colonialism and slavery were part of Canada's origins. This largely self-driven and community-based adult education involved a process of unlearning what public schooling and mainstream discourses had taught me about the country within which I was raised. A significant part of this learning took place through participating and working within Black and Rastafari communities, learning

through discussions with local elders and people who had lived experiences under colonial rule in Caribbean and African countries (e.g. see Colman, 2005; Waterman, 2003). Of particular significance was the time I spent at *Ethnic Origins* bookstore in Montreal's Little Burgundy, which like many Black owned and operated bookstores, was a site of communal gathering and informal learning across disciplines, ripe with opportunities "to access knowledge that was often devalued or omitted from mainstream schooling" (M.T. Fisher, 2006, p. 83. See also, M.L. Hill, 2011). Widespread ignorance regarding histories of colonialism and slavery in Canada continue today; undergraduate students continue to tell me they are hearing of these histories for the first time since entering to university.

Understanding Canada as a settler colonial nation in the present can be seen as the next stage of troubling a national mythology that was called into question but not dismantled through postcolonial studies. Key to this conceptual shift is understanding that European colonizers arrived during a particular "colonial era" but never left, hence colonialism is ongoing and most importantly, it remains contested, resisted and indeed, *un*settled. Colonialism is not over, and consequently neither is an individual and collective responsibility to work to deconstruct and replace colonial ideology, practices, and structures.

A third phase of this process involves reconsidering the meanings and functions of "Blackness" and critically situating "Black Canadian" in relation to settler colonialism, Indigenous Peoples and understandings of Indigeneity. This means that recovering early Black histories in Canada also requires grappling with how those histories implicate Black people in the development of the settler colonial capitalist nation state. The pervasive and powerful nature of the racism faced by racialized peoples has led to a tendency to focus on what we perceive to be 'our own problems' and to assume positions of innocence in relation to the oppression of the

Indigenous other (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Razack, 2004). An anticolonial commitment rejects this innocence and requires that demands for equal rights and representation for Black people in Canada be paired with those for Indigenous self-determination and restoration of land (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Razack, Smith & Thobani, 2010). In reconsidering our identities, social locations and the potential for social change, we must assume that dominant ideologies do not represent our only or necessarily our best options or the limits of possibility. This is not only about changing what we think, but *how* we think; an anticolonial position requires learning to think outside of the parameters of colonial ideology. As Himani Bannerji (2014) explains,

> ideology is not merely content—only a set of ideas generated through relations of power. The production of this body of content or ideology is actually a form of thinking, which can make all kinds of ideas move from their own social location in language to becoming this obscuring anti-social context. (p. 135)

Bannerji refers here to the compartmentalization and reification of concepts like "race" that separates them from the social whole and material conditions within which they are lived and produced in the everyday. This Marxist feminist critique of ideology is intended to reveal the ways in which ideology reifies and represents part of a situation as though it were the whole, thus masking the broader social relations that dialectically produce the situation (Allman, 2001; Bannerji, 2014; Carpenter & Mojab 2011a, 2011b; D.E. Smith, 1987, 1999; G.W. Smith, 1998). Through pre-determining the parameters of discourse, ideology protects the current social structure that preserves and reproduces the power of the dominant class. More specifically, as long as antiracism is conceived of solely in terms of a struggle for racial equality granted by the state, the broader settler colonial, capitalist social order that produced and reproduces racist

social relations of domination and subordination remains unchallenged. It is in this way that Robin D.G. Kelley (2000) asserts that the production and circulation of colonial ideology promoting racial and cultural hierarchy has been "as essential to colonial rule as police and corvée labour" (p.9).

Critiquing colonial ideology.

Claiming an anticolonial political position involves attending to the complex processes through which knowledge is produced and disseminated according to ideologies constructed as "logic" and "common sense". Colonial ideology organized the world into dichotomous categories of civilized /human/ Christian and uncivilized /nonhuman/pagan that rely on the European modernist conception of the White bourgeois colonial man as the ideal subject of a universal mankind (A. Césaire, 2000; Fanon, 1967, 2004; L.T. Smith, 1999; Wynter, 2003). This very limited and limiting notion of the human includes gender subcategories of "man" and "woman," with the European bourgeois woman imagined not in a complementary or balanced relation to man, but "as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the White, European, bourgeois man" (Lugones, 2010, p. 743). Categories of racial (White/not-White) and gender (man/woman) difference served to legitimize European colonial conquest and domination of non-Europeans and to institutionalize a hetero-patriarchal gender system that naturalized a European colonial social hierarchy, instituted gender violence (Hartman, 1997; L.B. Simpson, 2014b), and created ideals of 'man' and 'woman' from which the colonized were always already disqualified (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Hartman, 1997; Lugones, 2007; Razack, Smith & Thobani, 2010; A. Smith, 2006; Thomas & Wynter, 2006; Wynter, 2003). Replacing earlier European conceptions of a divinely ordered hegemony with that of an evolutionarily ordered hegemony (Wynter,

1994), colonial ideology naturalizes social hierarchy and normalizes oppression, dispossession,

exploitation and elimination masking the potential for other ways of relating across social,

political and cultural differences. As academics have played seminal roles in the construction of

colonial ideology, they also have challenged and continue to challenge it, disputing assumptions

of European humanism and disrupting its classificatory system in order to reconstruct our

understanding of human being and the premises of knowledge production (Dei, 2014; Dei &

Asgharzadeh, 2001; Grande, 2013; Scott & Wynter, 2000; Wynter, 1994).

For Black intellectuals, this project necessarily requires (re-)addressing the meaning of

Blackness as identity and social location, the function of race and racialization, and the

construction and conditions of anti-Black racism. As we challenge classifying systems and

ideological thinking to understand settler colonialism not only as a historical event but an

ongoing process and enduring social and political structure (Alfred, 2010; Wolfe, 2006), and

capitalism as "not only an economic but also a social and political system" (Bakan & Dua 2014,

p. 8), the trans-Atlantic slave trade and institution of slavery in the Americas can be understood

to persist as a pervasive "relational dynamic" (Wilderson 2016) based on the construction of

Blackness as subordination (Hartman, 1997, p. 119. See also Hartman, 2007; Sexton, 2010).

Perceiving colonialism, capitalism and slavery in these broader terms and as they mutually

support and enable one another complicates and layers analysis to better account for the

"multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, White supremacy and the totalizing character

of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain

colonial patterns of behavior, structures, and relationships" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 14).

Anticolonial thought pushes us to re-examine the construction of Blackness in a manner

that addresses the relationships between Black peoples in the Diaspora, Africa and African-ness,

and the ways in which the relations of slavery turn/ed Africans into slaves and slaves into a

Black underclass. For Black people in the Diaspora, embracing an "African" identity—often in

the absence of specific knowledge of one's personal African ancestral origins—has been a means

of rejecting Eurocentrism and resisting White supremacy. It is part of a Black liberation politics

since the 19th century that has variously promoted Black / African cultural pride, a racially

defined sense of nationhood, Black social and economic solidarity, Black armed self-defence,

and the return of Black people to the African continent. While various Black nationalist/

liberation/ Africentric movements have been critiqued for promoting racial essentialism,

religious dogma and /or romanticized notions of Africa, they have also provided critical counter-

narratives to colonial propaganda presenting the continent as the antithesis of civilization and

progress, and Black peoples as savages. Anticolonial critical race praxis today requires the

continuation of this critique and counter-narration regarding Africa and African-ness. The

continual erasure from memory of the colonization of African countries and reinforcement of the

notion of Black people as the property of Europe and its settler nations alienates Black peoples

from a sense of Indigeneity[22] and from other Indigenous peoples and undermines Black-

Indigenous solidarity in anticolonial struggle (Mutamba, 2014; A. Smith, 2014). European

colonizers constructed "Black" as an ontological category ascribed and fixed as the 'natural'

identity of African slaves and their descendants, thus creating a group without attachment to a

land base other than that defined as the settler colonial nation. Over generations, colonial social

relations have maintained the constructed binary opposition of White superiority and Black

inferiority, which is used to justify ongoing racialized relations of dominance and subordination

and to set up the terms of anti-racist struggle within the ideological parameters of the settler

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[22] I am referring here to a sense of being Indigenous Africans, ancestrally connected to but
displaced from African land through colonial dispossession.

state. It is in this sense that Quijano (2007) claims that the notion of 'race' has been "the most efficient instrument of colonial domination invented in the last 500 years" (p.45).

In identifying myself as "Black" I signify my (assumed African-) American paternal family and ancestry, the communities with which I identify and within which I ground myself, my engagement with/in various cultural practices, and my commitment to a leftist antiracist Black politics that I learned as much from my White mother as from my Black father. Conceiving of "Blackness" in anticolonial terms requires further situating the production and function of Blackness within specific historical and material relations of colonialism and capitalism. While some anticolonial theorists assert that racialized peoples in Canada are and should understand ourselves as settlers (Lawrence & Dua, 2005), others believe that the conflation of moving and settling somewhere and *being a settler* is deeply problematic. In the introduction to Lorenzo Veracini's (2010) overview of settler colonialism, the author asserts a distinction between settlers and *migrants*, emphasizing the differences between migration and conquest and the need to consider a group's displacement and relation to sovereignty. For Jared Sexton (2010), Black people born in the U.S. are "neither native nor the foreigner, neither colonizer not the colonized," rather they carry a unique status of "descendants of slaves" (p.41) that reveals an "irresolvable discrepancy between blackness and immigrant status" (p. 53, note 51). African Canadian anticolonial scholar George Dei similarly argues that racialized peoples who did not come here to colonize and dispossess should not adopt a notion of ourselves as *settlers,* as this word is "particularly accorded to a particular body, the Anglo Saxon, who could go into a space and *claim, colonize, dispossess!*" (personal communication, April 22, 2014). It is important to remain critical and self-reflexive regarding moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012) that deflect attention from our obligations to Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island while

noting that, as Iyko Day (2015) asserts, to fold racialized groups into a generalized status of settler "constrains our ability to understand how their racialized vulnerability and disposability supports a settler colonial project" (p. 107).

Whether or not we call ourselves "settlers", it is crucial that we recognize that we live on "land that is appropriated and contested, where Aboriginal peoples are denied nationhood and access to their own lands" (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 134). We must examine our responsibilities in relation to settler colonialism and Canadian nation building; and understand that we are implicated in this colonialism when we live on unceded Indigenous land, seek Canadian citizenship and make demands on the Canadian state for rights as Canadians (Alfred, 2010; Day, 2015; Dei, 2014; Mutamba, 2014; Thobani, 2007). Moreover, we are responsible for whether or not we perpetuate a settler colonial "logic of elimination" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 387, 388), which assumes a constant need to eliminate in order to replace Indigenous Peoples through genocide and/ or assimilation and/ or the erasure and obscuring of Indigenous knowledges, what Sandy Grande (2013) refers to as "epistemicide" (p. 376).

Indigenous epistemologies and practices can provide alternatives to Eurocentric paradigms that serve colonial and capitalist structures. Dei (2014) asserts that the notion and role of the Black/African Scholar in Western academia is not a matter of identity politics and is not to suggest an essentialized Black subject or experience. It is to build on an anticolonial Black political, cultural and intellectual project and "to challenge Eurocentric mimicry and the seduction to become White in the imperialist Western academy and global trajectories" (p. 171). He joins a range of African/Black and Indigenous scholars in arguing for Indigenous epistemologies that recognize the interconnectedness of the individual, community, natural and spiritual worlds as a means of grounding the political and maintaining hope, courage and a sense

of one's wholeness and humanity in the face of overwhelming oppressions (Bobb-Smith, 2007; Coulthard, 2014; L. Simpson, 2004, 2011, 2014a; Spencer, 2006; Dei, 2006, 2014; Wane, 2006, 2007; Wane & Neegan, 2007). The goal, as Sandy Grande (2013) writes, is to "imagine political/pedagogical strategies that go beyond simply resisting settler relations of power and work instead to redefine the epistemological underpinnings through which the colonial world order is conceived" (p. 376) and to engage with and develop Indigenous knowledges that can facilitate social and political change.

I conclude my overview of theoretical influences and commitments shaping this study with a critical discussion of the conditions with which anticolonial critical race scholars are contending in neoliberal universities. On the one hand, the recognition and inclusion of critical race and Indigenous scholarship within the academy since the late twentieth century, however marginal and sporadic, has arguably opened up space for more racialized scholars to pursue critical areas of knowledge production. Simultaneously, access to postsecondary education was expanded through the embedded liberalism (i.e. the increased government funding of post secondary education) of the second half of the twentieth century, increasing the number of racialized students in the academy. Yet on the other hand, in the absence of significant structural changes in academia, these scholars and students remain precarious outsiders within (Collins, 1986), the alienating effects of which often manifest on their personal wellbeing (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012; Henry & Tator, 2009; M.S. Smith, 2014). Moreover, neoliberal government policies and restructuring in universities has led to increased tuition and fees and increased precariousness for racialized scholars and newer departments of critical (race, Indigenous, gender) studies, as well as the increased surveillance of knowledge production and a heightened "war on scholarly dissent" (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 6. See also Jeppeson &

Nazar, 2012; Newson & Polster, 2010; Simone de Beauvoir Institute, 2012). While the overall role of higher education remains consistent in relation to the settler colonial capitalist nation state, neoliberalism modifies the conditions under which universities function and consequently, the terms and conditions of resistance.

Neoliberalism & diversity discourses.

The university's role in the production of knowledge and power that naturalizes and furthers the interests of settler colonial capitalism is supported through processes of compartmentalizing and disciplining knowledge production and thus ordering what is and can be known (L.T. Smith, 1999). The construction and maintenance of self-contained disciplines reflects and supports the notion of the social as divided into distinct economic, political, and cultural spheres that upholds the dominant social order through decontextualizing aspects of the social from the social relations and historical material conditions that produce them (Bannerji, 2005). Academic disciplining and containment is also achieved through the strategic use of the language of liberalism, particularly the identification of the university with liberal ideals such as merit, equality, free speech and civility that serve to define the parameters of "'proper' subjects and 'proper' politics" (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 7). In addition to broader discourses of globalization, technology, capital and entrepreneurship, neoliberal restructuring in the university is thus cloaked in the institutional discourses emphasizing "diversity, [consultation and] dialogue, and, often, academic freedom itself" (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p.37. See also Jeppeson & Nazar, 2012).

As noted in Chapter One, institutional diversity has become an increasingly popular discourse of the neoliberal university, drawing on liberal values and ideals to suggest equal opportunity for all while promoting White middle-class cultural norms, preserving White

domination and shifting attention away from the institutional production of social inequality. While multiculturalism and-interculturalism code race as culture, diversity dissolves race and culture into a field of potentially endless variations of interpersonal difference. Diversity serves to signify all forms of difference without recognizing the specificity of racial hierarchy and institutional racism. Diversity discourses have become a prominent feature of university management, an example of how "in effect, the neoliberal structuring of the university is also a racial strategy of management of an increasingly diverse student population, as increasing numbers of minority and immigrant students have entered public higher education" (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 25)

Universities can use the notion of diversity to erase "race" as an issue. As a word that can act as a container for any and all forms of difference, diversity is understood to represent an inclusive working model based on shared liberal values. For example, McGill defines the term as being "reflected not only in race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability, but also in language, sexual orientation, gender identity, community, politics, culture, way of life, economic status, and interests" (Masi, 2012, p. 6). Rather than invoking politics, critique, or criticism, "diversity" shifts attention away from racism and the systemic (re)production of inequality and does not necessarily entail institutional change. As Sara Ahmed (2012) writes,

> Perhaps the promise of diversity is that it can be both attached to those bodies that "look different" and detached from those bodies as a sign of inclusion (if they are included by diversity, then we are all included). The promise of diversity could then be described as a problem: the sign of inclusion makes the signs of exclusion disappear (p. 65).

Well suited to neoliberal goals of marketing and internationalization, "diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only of marketing the university but of making the university into a marketplace" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 53). Through institutional texts and discourses, the university advertises itself to a global marketplace as "diverse" without necessarily transforming its organizational values or structure.

Rather than antiracism, diversity discourses assert a neoliberal form of "non-racialism which hinders thinking about or acting against the biopolitics of global capitalism" (Melamed 2006 p. 3)–more specifically, "diversity" need not deal with racism because the neoliberal context is assumed to be *postracial* (Choi, 2008, P.S.S. Howard, 2014). Whereas liberalism promotes equality-through-colourblindness in the face of institutional racism, the issue of racial diversity is deemed passé in the neoliberal academy. As Hilla Dayan (2015) argues,

> [Racial equity initiatives are thus viewed as] unnecessary because the university is sufficiently diverse (attracting enough international students and scholars) and irrelevant because academia valorizes objective, fair competitions. Under the current regime of quantification, standardization and objectification, it matters not who, but how much. [Racial] diversity is irrelevant because academia rewards whoever is good at generating output and monetary value (para. 2).

Thus a new-old form of meritocracy emerges. While wealth and elite pedigree once determined access to higher education, this explicit exclusivity was replaced in the mid-20th century by merit based admissions—assumed to be based on "objective, narrowly defined, and consistent" standards as a means of identifying the "most qualified and talented" students (Park & Liu, 2006, p. 42). This conception of merit, assumed to be fair and to provide equal opportunity, is not

objective, but rather serves to preserve and reproduce White middle class interests. Under

neoliberalism however, the notion of merit—and its accompanying language of institutional

"excellence"—returns to a more explicit economic focus: "the most qualified and talented"

becomes more about the production of capital than the production of knowledge.

An anticolonial critical race praxis calls for racially literate analyses that can deconstruct

the layers and complexity of racial neoliberalism. Park and Liu's (2006) critical race examination

of "merit" and "critical mass" in relation to Asian American university students is instructive

here. As Black people form a relatively small proportion of the Canadian population, it is often

assumed that achieving a numerical critical mass will help Black Canadians to more successfully

make demands on the state and its institutions (e.g. see Luther, Whitmore & Moreau, 2001, pp.

21-23). However, Park and Liu's study suggests caution. Considering a numerical critical

mass—indeed an increasing overrepresentation—of Asian American students in universities, the

researchers show that this has not significantly changed institutional cultures. Asian students

continue to experience alienation, discrimination and racial microaggressions, as illustrated by a

2010 article published in Maclean's magazine reporting middle class White students' concerns

about Canadian universities becoming "too Asian" (Findlay & Köhler, 2010. See Maclean's,

2010 for the magazine's mobilization of merit as a Canadian educational value in response to

criticism re. the Findlay & Köhler article). Admitting numerical critical masses of East and

South Asian students who perform well on standardized tests is used to discredit claims of

persistent institutional racism, "a form of damage control for institutions wanting to mask their

low URM [under represented minority] enrolments" (Park & Liu, p. 50). Moreover, simplistic

conceptions of racial diversity that rely on numeric representation serve to erase the significant

under-representation of Southeast Asians, and reduces the notion of diversity to its "easily

quantifiable and measurable" aspects (Park & Liu, 2006, p. 53).

Deficit and disposability.

Liberal discourses of the twentieth century pathologized racialized communities by attributing social inequality to an assumed lack within disenfranchised communities, to be fixed by benevolent (almost always White middle-class) educators and researchers. As more racialized scholars gained access to the academy in the later twentieth century, they have had to remain ever vigilant that their work with/in the communities with which they identify not be coopted into this pathologizing project of (re)constructing knowledge of racialized peoples as *inherently* lacking. As late Mohawk legal scholar Patricia Monture (1986) critically asserted, "we are only disadvantaged if you are using a White, middle-class yardstick… a yardstick of materialism" that determines "how valued you are by the size of your bank account or the number of degrees you can write after your name" (p. 161). When racialized scholars internalize, (re)produce and act on such deficit discourses it protects White hegemony by shifting focus away from ruling relations and the production of structural inequity while satiating a liberal demand for damage-centred narratives that both reify notions of identity and reduce marginalized individuals and communities to their/our pain (hooks, 1990; A. Simpson, 2007; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014a, 2014b).

Part and parcel of this academic practice of managing racialized Others and what can be known about them/us, the heightened competitive individualism that characterizes neoliberalism encourages a politics of disposability that posits individuals as the source of these assumed community deficits and as such, individual problems to be disposed of. A blog circulated by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence following widespread attacks directed at activist-scholar Andrea Smith regarding the validity of her identification as Cherokee (and by extension

her extensive activist and scholarly work on Indigenous feminism), describes disposability as "a

political practice that authorizes one person or a select group of people to choose who is

disposable and who is not" (Against a Politics of Disposability, 2015, n.p.). This definition itself

describes the self-ascribed (White European) authority at the heart of colonialism, capitalism and

slavery. Disposability thus replaces necessarily long-term, critical processes of community

building, accountability and transformation with consumable performances of public shaming

and expulsion from activist/academic circles. As government austerity measures mobilize

colonial capitalist assumptions of a destructive struggle for limited space and resources, 'survival

of the fittest' and meritocracy secure institutional settings in which interdependence and

communality are "constructed as weakness and weakness is viewed as something to be

exploited" (AbdelRahim, 2013, p. 86).

Neoliberal universities need the visible "diversity" of racialized Others to compete in a

global market as well as to 'sell' racialized populations and developing nations on the potential

of neoliberal ideology and global capitalism. Subsequently particular racialized people gain

access to post secondary education and potential (albeit increasingly precarious) social-economic

and geographic mobility. Critical race feminist theorist Sherene Razack (2000) describes how,

for example, middle and upper class South Asian women may be particularly well equipped to

access universities of the global North due having received education in their home countries that

privileges Western knowledge and ways of knowing. Razack describes how the Western

academy's "demand for exotic voices of difference" places demands on (especially immigrant)

women of colour to act as native informants (Razack, 2001) and unspecified Third World "stand

ins for the South" in the service of academia and a global feminism that enables Western women

to see themselves as the saviours of women in the Third World (2000, p. 44). The hiring of

racialized women primarily as native informants is intended to create the impression that the academy "has dealt with and mastered difference" (Razack, 2001, p. 54). Not every racialized body is deemed eligible to serve in such a role. "Only the unspoiled African, Asian, or Native American" who does not commit any more than "a little bit" of their work to addressing "issues of hegemony, racism, feminism and social change" is deemed "authentic" (Razack, 2001, p. 55). Black women who lack "exotic appeal," and do not offer international access to the university's imperial projects are particularly unlikely to gain access in this way as they/we are often seen as threatening (Razack 2000, 2001). And "you can't have any working class attributes or be politically and openly 'out', since this raises suspicions that you might not play the Native informant role well" (Razack, 2001, p.56). Razack reveals how the patriarchal, racialized class hierarchy of the academy makes space for White women who will assist White men in managing difference, but that this position is "just one step up from the Native informant. …The hierarchical relation is what maintains the category" and the categories support the production and reproduction of the hierarchy. The "women of colour who play the Native informant role get to be a little better than those women of colour who do not" (Razack, 2001, p. 57). In the context of the neoliberal university, questions concerning disposability are all the more pressing. In an era characterized by cuts to public funding for education who is deemed disposable to the university? More specifically, are Black Canadians who lack the exotic appeal that Razack describes disposable to the Canadian university? Have we ever been seen otherwise? Razack's critical race feminist analysis highlights the complex and multifaceted ways that interlocking relations of oppression function in the academy and in the broader society. It provides a salient example of how anticolonial, transnational feminisms can account for the specificity of the local in relation to other cultural, social and political contexts (Boyce Davies, 2008). Such analyses

are invaluable in determining what racialized identities, both claimed and imposed, mean to different people in different contexts and how race functions in relation to settler nationalism, capitalism and globalization.

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the critical race and anticolonial theoretical influences that shape this work, emphasizing the importance of racial literacy in education. In Chapter Three I discuss my methods of inquiry for this study. Rather than two separate aspects of the study, the critical theoretical influences and methods shaping this research are mutually constitutive and overlapping. As methods of inquiry grounded in Marxist feminism, institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography share important commitments with anticolonial and critical race thought, most notably an emphasis on theorizing from the basis of embodied lived experience, on critiquing systemic and structural power relations and on producing research geared toward social change.

Chapter Three: Methods of Inquiry

This study uses a critical ethnographic approach to qualitative research that draws on methods of institutional ethnography and a form of institutional ethnography called political activist ethnography. Critical ethnography rejects the presumption in dominant approaches to research of an unbiased, detached researcher who through objective observations can collect empirical data and reveal the "truth" about other peoples and cultures. Instead, critical ethnographers argue that research is always a political act and should be relevant to understanding and changing the world (Madison, 2005). They understand the social as constructed and pursue research that exposes how social injustice is created and functions, looking beyond common assumptions "to reveal the hidden depths of exploitation, power, and disadvantage" (O'Reilly, 2009, "Methods"). In sum, critical ethnography is a historically, socially and politically contextualized, interpretive approach to research influenced by critical social theory and geared toward raising social consciousness and creating the conditions for social change (G. Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996; Jim Thomas, 1993; Madison, 2005).

In the context of education, critical ethnographic research examines "how social values and organization get reproduced in schools and other educational institutions" and how educational institutions "sort, select, favour, disenfranchise, silence or privilege particular groups" as well as how people navigate, negotiate and resist these reproductive structures and processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2010, p. 31). As a multidisciplinary "pedagogical/political project" (Simon & Dippo, 1986, p. 198), critical ethnography is a well-established research practice among critical educators studying the ways in which racialization and racism shape the

experiences of Black learners in Canada (e.g. Dei et al., 1997; Ibrahim, 2014; James, 2012a; James & Taylor, 2008; Kelly, 1998a, 1998b).

Critical ethnographers vary in the specific perspectives and theories they work from and in the extent to which they gear their efforts towards reforming or overthrowing and replacing existing social systems (O'Reilly, 2009). Some, but not all, are informed by neo-Marxist and feminist theories that were developing concurrently with the ethnographic movement in education. Especially given this range of potential theoretical influences and politics, critical ethnographers need to be explicit and self-reflexive about their own beliefs and location in relation to the research questions, analysis and interpretation of data, and the determination of action. As discussed in Chapter Two, this research draws on anticolonial, critical race/Black radical theories and politics. It is further shaped by Marxist feminist methods of institutional ethnography / political activist ethnography, which I explain below.

Defining a Critical Institutional Activist Ethnography

Institutional ethnography/ political activist ethnography are "tools for pursuing critical qualitative research and activist sociology to examine social organization, explicate social relations, and produce knowledge for activism and social movement purposes" (Bisaillon, 2012, p. 608). The underlying assumption of these methods is that "social life is not chaotic but is instead organized to happen as it does. …It is the interplay of social relations, of people's ordinary activities being concerted and coordinated purposely, that constitutes 'social organization'" (Campbell & Gregor, 2008, p. 27). First developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987, 1999, 2005, 2006), institutional ethnography (IE) is a method of inquiry that allows researchers to examine how institutions—in accordance with the ideologies of the

political regimes of which they are a part—use various textual forms and practices to produce objectified knowledge (ideology) that regulate people's activities and shape their experiences. 'Objectified knowledge' in this sense refers to knowledge that becomes fixed as a 'thing,' severed from the specific contexts and social relations through which it is produced. People assimilate this knowledge to varying degrees; it becomes "a form of social consciousness that develops as an everyday feature in their lives" (G. Smith, 1990, p. 632). This process allows for dominant ideologies to organize social relations and regulate activities and events across time and space. Hence institutional ethnography is concerned with how knowledge is both socially organized and organizes the social (M.L. Campbell, 1998, Walby, 2007). Critically examining what we know, how we know it, and how that knowledge shapes our everyday lives highlights the potential for knowing and being otherwise, in ways that do not uphold a capitalist, colonial social order but reveal possibilities for replacing it.

The terms of Institutional Ethnography /Political Activist Ethnography.

Institutional ethnographers examine social relations organized around a particular institution from the standpoint of people participating in those relations; the research is grounded in the experiences of people. These people are not the objects of study, but rather, their lived experiences serve to establish and maintain a research standpoint, or the perspective from which the social relations of an institutional order are studied. In political activist ethnography (PAE) (G. Smith, 1990, 1998), this perspective is that of social movements and is aimed at analyzing the institutional relations that social activists and movements confront with the goal of developing more effective forms of activism (Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson, Tilleczek, 2006).

Grasping this particular understanding of the social requires an explicit commitment to rejecting abstract and speculative ways of knowing, that is, "making an ontological shift"

(Deveau, 2008; Hussey, 2012; Mykhalovskiy & Church, 2006; G. Smith, 1990). This "ontological shift" refers to the process of reconnecting knowing (epistemology) and being (ontology) through replacing abstract and objective ways of knowing with those that are embodied and reflexive (Hussey, 2012; G. Smith, 1990). Part of this process involves the use of a particular vocabulary and reconceiving of particular terms whose meaning has been objectified in common parlance, a challenge reflected in the numerous glossaries published in IE/PAE books and as stand alone articles (Bisaillon, 2012; Deveau, 2008; Frampton et al, 2006; D.E. Smith, 2005). Rather than repeating the "challenging inventory of language" associated with these methods (Bisaillon, 2012, p. 607—and I refer readers to Bisaillon's extensive analytic glossary for such an inventory), in the section that follows I explain some key terms of IE/PAE in the particular contexts of their relevance to this study.

Institutions.

The notion of "institution" as used in institutional ethnography is an expanded one that, rather than referring to one organization, refers to a complex of coordinated and intersecting practices that occur in multiple sites around an overall social function such as education, health care, or community organizing (D.E. Smith, 2005). Institutional ethnographers do not seek to examine an entire institution, but rather they "explore particular corners or strands within a specific institutional complex in ways that make visible their points of connection with other sites and course of action" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 17). In this study, the institution under examination is that of the university in Canada, while the primary site, or "particular corner" of my investigation is McGill University. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, universities are "involved in a web of relations through which ruling is achieved" (Bisaillon, 2012, p. 618). They generate particular forms of knowledge and systems of organizing knowledge according to class,

gender and racial power relations that create and naturalize social boundaries, exclusions and

positions (Bannerji et al. 1991; D.E. Smith, 1999)

Ruling relations.

The term "ruling relations" refers to the complex of activities by which our society is

organized, governed and controlled (D.E. Smith, 1990, 1999). It includes the organization of the

social into many spheres, professions and institutions as well as the institutional texts, discourses

and practices that mediate them across multiple sites (D.E. Smith, 1990, 1999). Ruling relations

is a way of organizing society that became prominent "in the latter part of the nineteenth century

in Europe and North America" and is associated with the development of capitalism (D.E. Smith,

2005, pp.13-14). Associated with capitalism and especially the expansion of corporate capitalism

is the development of forms of consciousness and agency that are not directly connected to

individual people. Instead, ruling relations produce "forms of consciousness and organization

that are objectified in the sense that they are constituted externally to particular people and

places" (D.E. Smith, 2005, p. 13).

A Marxist feminist theory of knowledge understands knowledge as a class-based

"historical project arising through gendered and racialized divisions of labour" and serving the

needs and interests of the ruling classes (Carpenter & Mojab, 2011b, p. 10; D.E. Smith, 1999, p.

16). Wahneema Lubiano (1996) describes the ways that such ruling relations seem to

mysteriously impact our lives as "like being mugged by a metaphor":

> Some mystifications can kill or maim us. "Like being mugged by a metaphor" is a way
>
> to describe what it means to be at the mercy of racist, sexist, heterosexist, and global
>
> capitalist constructions of the meaning of skin color on a daily basis. Whether or not I
>
> am a card-carrying believer in distinctions of racial biology, I am nonetheless attacked by

the hegemonic social formation's notions of racial being and the way those notions position me in the world. Like a mugging, this attack involves an exchange of assets: some aspect of the social order is enriched domestically and internationally by virtue of material inequities stabilized and narrativized by race oppression and I lose symbolically and monetarily. Further, I am physically traumatized and psychologically assaulted by an operation that is mystified. It goes on in the dark, so to speak—in the dark of a power that never admits to its own existence. (Lubiano, 1996, p. 64).

Institutional ethnography seeks to demystify these ruling relations by making them visible, in order to reorganize knowledge of the social. In the context of antiracist struggle this means refusing to attribute agency to a fixed notion of race, and instead examining the ideas and institutional practices that assign and maintain divisions of racial superiority and inferiority. It requires mapping the social relations through which groups of people are racialized and analyzing how those relations structure material conditions that uphold hegemonic Whiteness and capitalist expansion (Bakan, 2014; Carpenter & Mojab, 2011a; Carty, 1991).

Black people's work.

This study examines social relations around the University to reveal how they construct and (re-) inscribe racialized means of knowing and belonging in Québec and Canadian society. The standpoint, or perspective guiding this examination is that of self-identifying Black students and faculty members whose collective experiences of McGill University span several decades. I do not seek to posit a universal "Black experience" of Canadian universities or of McGill University. Rather, the work of a heterogeneous group of students and faculty members who self-identify and are racialized as "Black" reveals how ruling relations of the university operate.

In IE, the concept of work is expanded to include "anything or everything people do that is intended, involves time and effort, and is done in a particular time and place and under definite local conditions" (D. Smith, 2006, p.10). This includes the everyday work of being socially inscribed and located in particular ways, and of coping with and organizing around particular circumstances (D. Smith, 2005, 2006; DeVault & McCoy, 2006). The work of Black people in this context then, is understood to include the paid and unpaid labour involved in being a student and/or faculty member as well as the unpaid and often unrecognized work of coping and organizing in the context of self-identifying and being racialized as Black. As one Black student put it, "being a Black student at McGill is not a job for the faint-hearted" (Richardson, 2000). Through examining this work and how institutional texts and discourses shape and define it, I show how Black racial difference is constructed and functions within the university in relation to the production of knowledge and power.

Texts.

Institutional texts shape social relations through coordinating people's activities to (re)produce particular forms of social consciousness and organization that reflect the ideologies of the regimes of which they are a part. People read and assimilate the content of various institutional texts, often absorbing an unquestioned form of social consciousness that shapes how we understand everyday experiences. In this way institutional texts and discourses do much more than reflect or represent information about a particular organization or institution; they also "mediate, regulate and authorize people's activities" (D. E. Smith, 2001, p. 160).

Institutional and political activist ethnographers analyze various texts to reveal how particular politico-administrative regimes (G. Smith, 1990) use them to reproduce particular ideologies and regulate activities and events across time and space. This is not limited to written

texts and spoken discourses. As with other textual matter, people activate visual texts through

reading and contemplating them and becoming scripted into their narratives such that even

subsequent "resistance, repudiation, disagreement, and rejection work with and from the text's

agenda" (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 111). University campus visual texts and display practices are

powerful tools in constructing, commemorating, and erasing institutional histories and in

maintaining dominant ideologies (Hampton, 2015). In this dissertation I offer analyses of such

visual texts and display practices (see Chapter Four in particular) as well as written texts such as

official policies, public relations statements and histories and origin stories. I also draw on the

McGill Daily student newspaper, particularly in recalling histories of student organizing and

activism (Chapter Seven). I thus treat the *Daily* as an alternative institutional archive that is both

of the university and often in opposition the university's official institutional narratives and

discourses.

Activism and social change.

Social movement life is not separate from research, although this is often the way it is

posed in academic circles and mirrored in movement circles. This position replicates

theory/research, theory/practice and research/activism divides without acknowledging

that there is already grassroots research taking place (Kinsman, 2006, p. 134).

As reflected in my own experiences of social-political organizing and activism around the

university, involvement in political confrontation can generate new insight into ruling relations

and how they are organized (see Chapter Seven). Activist ethnographies document and learn

from this organizing and activist work, while maintaining focus on social relations and the ruling

social forces that movements confront (Choudry, 2011, 2013, 2015; Choudry & Kuyek, 2012;

Frampton et al. 2006; G.W. Smith 1990, 1998). This study proceeds from the recognition of the

university as a site of struggle and of the historical and ongoing necessity of Black community and antiracist educational organizing, activism and scholarship in Canada (e.g. see Austin, 2007, 2009; Bayne & Bayne, 1995; J. Bertley, 1982; Dei, 1996, 1997, 2006, 2008, 2014; Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery, 2004; Gordon & Zinga, 2012; Hampton, 2010; Hampton & Rochat, forthcoming; A. Henry, 1992, 1993, 1998, 2015; P.S.S. Howard, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015a; C.E. James, 1997, 2012a, 2012b; James & Taylor, 2008; Kelly, 1998a, 1998b; Nelson, 2011; Nelson & Nelson, 2004; Stewart, 2009). Consistent with the CRT goal of community-relevant scholarship and of "doing" academia as a critical race activist scholar, this research aims to produce what Bevington and Dixon (2005) refer to as "movement-relevant theory" (p. 189), that draws from a variety of sources to produce knowledge that is useful to and helps to further Black educational struggle in Québec and Canada.

Naming (and) tensions.

The people I interviewed do not necessarily refer to themselves as activists or to their work as part of a social movement per se. However, all of them self-identify as Black and most understand their racialized experiences and antiracist organizing as part and parcel of the "everyday life work" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 25) of "being Black" in the context of the academy. This identification is complex and unstable, and not taking for granted the meaning of "being Black" reveals processes of racialization, how they function and to what ends. This racial identification and the mobilizing of Blackness that runs through this work is at times in tension with the Marxist critique of ideology that forms such a significant aspect of IE/PAE. Race has been the primary lens through which many Black people in North America have historically understood their/our experiences, including those of economic oppression (hooks, 2000; Dumas, 2013). Some Marxists have found this centring of race rather than class to be problematic,

arguing that it reinforces racial ideology and essentialist notions of racial identity and obscures

dominant class interests at the heart of capitalist oppression. As Zeus Leonardo (2009) notes,

"orthodox Marxist studies…covers racism, not as a field of contestation among racial groups for

power, but as an ideological distraction from the inner workings of capitalism" (p. 46). Hence

while the Black Radical tradition is and has always been anti-capitalist and some of its

intellectuals and activists openly communist (Boyce Davies, 2008, 2011; Davis, 1983; Foner,

1970/2008; Kelley, 2002; McDuffie, 2011; Robinson, 2000), many critical race theorists have

taken issue with (most often White) Marxists' reduction of race to ideology and especially the

suggestion that racialized identity represents a form of "false consciousness" (Delgado, 1987;

Omi & Winant 1993; Roediger, 1991/ 2007).[23]

As Michael Dumas (2013) asserts, this tension "is not a matter of choosing between race

and class but of how to best explain the relationship between race and class, and how to situate

and engage race and racism within a critical social critique and political praxis" (p. 115).

Contemporary critical theorists thus continue to elaborate "critical *raceclass* theory" (Leonardo,

2013, p. 74) that draws the strengths of critical race and Marxist theories to formulate "material

antiracist analysis" (Dumas, 2015) that can effectively address the totalizing effects of White

hegemony under neoliberal capitalism (Bakan & Dua, 2014; Galabuzi, 2006; J. James, 2013;

Leonardo, 2009, 2012, 2013). It is my contention that critical institutional activist ethnographic

research, accountable to anticolonial critical race feminist theories while using methods of

inquiry that do not seek to pose and answer questions but rather to examine "problems, tensions,

and contradictions that arise in the relations between people and how society is organized"

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[23] Novels such as Chester Himes' (1947) *Lonely Crusade* and Ralph Ellison's (1952) *Invisible Man* offer layered analyses of these sorts of race-class tensions through their main characters' experiences with the Communist Party during the Cold War era in the U.S.

(Bisaillon, 2012, p. 617), is particularly well suited to this project.

Modifying IE to explicitly engage anticolonial and critical race theories is not unique to my research; this has become increasingly common practice in institutional ethnographies examining racial social relations. For example, Jessica Janet Ranero (2011) constructs a "critical race institutional ethnography," using methods of institutional ethnography informed by critical race theory to examine multicultural student services at a predominantly White institution, while Sobia Shaheen Shaikh (2013) examines the "everyday social organization of antiracist feminism" through a research design informed by "critical, interpretive, feminist, antiracist and anti-oppressive traditions of qualitative research (p. 65). Woo Jin Edward Lee (2015) studies the Canadian immigration system from the standpoint of queer and trans migrants with precarious status, applying an "adapted institutional ethnography methodology" informed by critical race, Marxist feminist, anticolonial and queer diasporic theories. Rajesh Patel (2015) draws on institutional ethnography and critical race theory to examine reflective practice in education as it relates to issues of race and identity. Mahtab Nazemi's (2011) mapping of ruling relations in a Canadian university from the standpoint of racialized women students is informed by anticolonial, feminist and critical antiracist theories and practice, while Naved Bakali's (2015) research examining Islamophobia in Québec secondary schools from the standpoint of Muslim youth uses combined methods of critical ethnography and institutional ethnography informed by critical race theory. Prior to these more recent studies, institutional ethnography was well established as a method of inquiry suited for examining how social relations are organized through race, gender, sexuality, and class (Brotman, 2000; Grahame, 1998; Kinsman, 1996; Kirkham, 2003; Naples, 1999; Ng, 1996; Otis, 2001; Pence, 2001; G.W. Smith, 1988, 1990, 1998).

In the following section of this chapter, I address my own location in this research and the particular process I have followed in conducting this study.

Data Collection / Mapping Strategies

As Marjorie DeVault and Liza McCoy (2006) assert, "there is no 'one way' to conduct an institutional ethnographic investigation; rather, there is an analytic project that can be realized in diverse ways" (p.20). The method of research generally begins from people's experiences and proceeds from this perspective as the researcher identifies various institutional processes involved in shaping those experiences and analyzes how those processes work (Campbell, 1998; Campbell & Gregor, 2008). Techniques for the collection of data to examine experiences typically include (as they do in other forms of qualitative research) "interviews and focus groups, participant observation, and the researcher's reflection on her or his own experience" (DeVault & McCoy, p. 20). These are also strategies that I have used, in addition to the analysis of institutional texts and discourses. As a critical ethnography informed by Marxist feminist methods, the study involved a dialectical process among the theoretical concepts described in Chapter Two, the participants' perceptions and interpretations of their activities and experiences in the institution, my perceptions and beliefs, the data collected (participants' narratives, institutional texts), and an analysis of "the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study" (G. Anderson, 1989, pp. 254-255).

    Researcher positionality.

While my experience of a racialized problem of knowing upon entering McGill University provides an entrance point to this research (see Chapter One), this study is also informed by my much longer-term engagements as a learner, educator, and community worker in

Montreal and within Montreal's Black communities. A critical "ethnographic positionality" requires researchers to attend to how our subjectivity informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of others (Madison, 2005, p. 9). I understand this as all the more significant in this context in which I am so clearly implicated as someone who identifies and is identified as Black. Reflexivity is necessary to foreground my presence in conducting and writing up this research "as a means to disrupt and undermine notions of objectivity" (Haggerty, 2003, p. 155) and maintain transparency regarding my own political and pedagogical commitments. Thus, when my experiences are narrated and analyzed in this study it is a practice that situates me in relation to and in relation with the other participants. I agree with Nancy Taber (2010) that as an institutional ethnographer it is important to share my experiences as they relate to the social relations under investigation, rather than keeping them "at a safe distance in the background" (p.8). I consider this aspect of the work to also represent my participation in a collective process of critical race (counter)storytelling (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2009) that forms a significant aspect of this study, a point to which I return below.

Research participants.

This dissertation draws on twenty-one interviews with former and current students and faculty members of McGill, recruited through a written call for participants shared in local Black community, student, and academic networks (Appendix A) and through word of mouth. Interviews were conducted in person, in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto between the spring of 2014 and the spring of 2015. They were audio recorded and generally lasted approximately 90 minutes. I later transcribed each interview, clarifying points with participants as necessary. For the purposes of this dissertation I have preserved the anonymity of all participants, assigning each a two-letter pseudonym. In order to further protect their identities, in some cases I have

attributed a quote to a student or professor without using their pseudonym or identifying their

gender. This is particularly the case for professors, given the small number of Black professors at

McGill.

Collectively, participants' experiences of McGill University span half a century, from the

late 1950s to today, coinciding with two major and ongoing transformations in Canadian

universities: the expansion of higher education creating more postsecondary institutions and

greater access to a wider representation of the population in the mid-20th century, followed since

the late 1970s by rising corporatization, privatization and the withdrawal of decision making

power from faculty, staff and students (Newson & Polster, 2010). Participants include former

and current faculty members and students at all levels of study; they represent all age ranges

from 18-24years to 55years and older. Participants include those who have studied and/ or taught

in the faculties of Arts, Law, Education and Agriculture and Environmental Studies; have held

elected positions in student governance and labour unions; have participated in various

committees and working groups; and have been involved in a range of associations, clubs and

activist initiatives.

Approach to interviews.

As is typical in critical and institutional ethnographies, interviews for this study were

open-ended and conversational in tone (Bisaillon & Rankin, 2013; DeVault & McCoy, 2006;

Madison, 2005). I used a guiding set of questions drawn from my own experiences (Appendix

D), which I adapted and expanded upon as I learned more about and from the experiences and

perspectives of the people whom I interviewed. The participants and I thus co-constructed

knowledge about their experiences and about the university (Choudry & Kuyek, 2012; DeVault

& McCoy, 2006; Madison, 2005). I began developing my analysis from the beginning, in an

ongoing way that changed and transformed from one conversation to the next (Bisaillon &

Rankin, 2013). This collaborative process generated more information than a solely researcher-

driven study would have, and kept me connected and accountable to the participants and broader

community with whom I am working (Choudry & Kuyek, 2012). All interviews were transcribed

and read in conjunction with institutional texts such as reports, policy documents, press releases

and public discourses, as well as visual texts and campus display practices.

In conducting and engaging with the interviews, I understood participants as experts on

their own lives and invited them to share the meanings they attributed to their experiences and to

consider the role of institutional texts and discourses in shaping them. I chose not to focus the

dialogue during interviews specifically on the material conditions of participants' lives (as

discussed for example, in Bisaillon & Rankin, 2013). Most interviews were quite casual in tone

and I wished to remain open to whatever belief systems and knowledge that participants brought

to this study.

Critical race counterstorytelling.

While IE works from an assumption that "each person is unique; each has a biography

and experience that is her or his own; each is positioned differently from others; each therefore

sees things from a different perspective, feels things differently, has different needs and desires,

different interests" (D.E. Smith, 2005, p. 61). I contend that the failure to consider the individual

as she is situated within and constitutive of her community is a manifestation of individualism.

This individualism contrasts with collectivist orientations that emphasize "the importance of

social networks, symbols of identity, and transnational ties" in maintaining collective cultural

grounding (Chioneso, 2008, p. 70). Therefore, in recognizing the importance of moving beyond

the notion of "race" and refusing to attribute agency to "race" and "racism" as sole determinants

of experience, I simultaneously recognize the salience of collective experiences of racialization, antiracist resistance and "the quest for freedom as community" (Birt, 2002). These shared experiences and sensibilities were particularly apparent in the context of interviews and the nature of my conversations with participants. I thus came to understand the narrative accounts of this research—those shared by people I interviewed as well as my own—as a form of critical race (counter)storytelling. This style of interview reflects what critical race theorist Tara J. Yosso (2005) describes as linguistic and familial forms of community cultural wealth that people of colour bring to learning situations: the multiple language and communication skills nurtured by traditions of storytelling, oral history and the sharing of parables and proverbs as well as artistic forms of communication; and a sense of *familia* (or extended family) among racialized people that extends beyond immediate family and nurtures "a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79).

Some of the participants, including several who I had not known or met prior to the study, seemed to approach the interview with this sense of familiarity grounded in an assumed-to-be shared experience of both Blackness and of academia. Some spoke creatively, making use of metaphors, similes, slang, and various cultural references to convey meaning. Some were careful to limit their comments to direct responses to the questions I asked them, while others took the opportunity to lose themselves in their recollections ("Lord Jesus, I don't even remember your question!" [*laughing*]). Several interviewees controlled their voices to achieve particular effects—almost yelling at times, laughing raucously, whispering in moments (especially when speaking about White supremacy), manipulating their tone for emphasis and so on. At times interviewees acknowledged their awareness of being audio recorded suggesting that it was causing them to self-censor or choose their words carefully: "There are certain things that

I couldn't really get into in the way I wanted to, because I don't want it recorded, you know? But I think I've made my points." Others seemed to speak freely while trusting me to protect their identity (which I have), occasionally making comments such as "maybe you'll have to edit this part out or people will know who I am [*laughing*]". While the scope of this dissertation does not permit me to fully examine these interviews/stories in all of their complexity, creativity and nuance, they form the core of this work and have much to contribute toward building community and institutional memory in the future.

Critical race counterstorytelling works from the premise that knowledge "is never neutral, which means it is always a story of some kind, produced by a situated knower" (Baszile, 2014, p.1). It involves the intentional and strategic use of stories to challenge the assumptions and logic of "racial domination at the epistemic, spiritual and material dimensions of dehumanization" (Baszile, 2014, p. 2). As argued by Denise Taliaferro Baszile (2014), Black abolitionists "understood radical change required first and foremost a rhetorical revolution" (p.9), and Black counterstorytelling has been an astute political project grounded in a demand for self representation and the assertion of counter-discourses, not only challenging racist representations of Black people but challenging the very "rationality of Rational man" (p. 4).

This understanding of the narratives of the people I interviewed allowed me to value and understand the relevance of their experiences and analyses, including when these fell outside of the theoretical influences and methodological emphases of my research design. It is through listening not only to how participants chose to respond to my questions but also to what they sought to share regardless of my questions that some of the most interesting and unexpected insights have emerged. Documenting these narratives is an important project in and of itself, especially given dominant Euro-Canadian histories of the university in which the presence and

activities of Black students and professors have generally not been highlighted. Before moving

on to these narratives, in Chapter Four I examine McGill's origin stories and history, further

setting the institutional context that shapes the work of Black people that I discuss in Chapters

Five through Seven.

Chapter Four: Colonial legacies and Canadian Ivy

"[The University is] corrupt, they're criminals, and they have to leave. We never

surrendered our lands, never. McGill is squatting on our land."

- Kahentinetha Horn of the Bear Clan, Mohawk Nation (Ertekin, 2015)

McGill University is located on traditional Kanien'kehá:ka land. As woman title holder

Kahentinetha Horn explained in September 2015 after serving the university a Notice of Seizure

(http://mohawknationnews.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/mcgill-seizure-1.jpeg), the

land was taken through the colonial invasion of Kanien'kehá:ka territories and has since been

occupied in contravention of the law of the land and Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee:

"We have never seen a document from McGill that they actually got our permission to build that

university on our land and that we ever relinquished any title to our land" (Ertekin, 2015).[24]

While in this chapter I examine the university's histories as negotiated and recorded by settlers, it

is important to remember that the land upon which these stories take place is that of the

Indigenous Peoples and was never ceded.

Through colonial dispossession the land became recognized by settlers as the property of

James McGill, who in his will bequeathed his 18 hectare Burnside Estate and £10,000 to The

Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning in order to establish a college in his name.

James McGill died in 1813 and in 1821 McGill University was established after receiving Royal

Charter from King George IV. In 1829, the Montreal Medical Institution was accepted as the

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[24] The audio recording of an interview with Kahentinetha conducted by Victoria Xie for CKUT
News is available at: https://ckutnews.wordpress.com/2015/09/23/mcgill-university-receives-
notice-of-seizure-by-kahentinetha-horn-regarding-stolen-land/

Faculty of Medicine of McGill College, and following a series of delays largely caused by

litigation concerning McGill's will, the McGill College Faculty of Arts opened for teaching in

1843.

In this chapter, I discuss McGill's origin stories and histories, situating the university

within a network of White settler colonial families and institutions that have played enormous

roles in shaping the economies, politics and cultures of Montreal, Quèbec, and Canada. I

consider the university and its celebrated founder historically, within the context of New France

and British North America. In doing so, I draw on institutional documents, newspaper articles

and a range of literature published about and by the university, particularly those written by the

official historian of McGill, Stanley Brice Frost (1979, 1980, 1984, 1995). That Frost was

employed by the University for half a century as a professor, administrator, founding Director of

the History of McGill Project and McGill's official historian (McGill Reporter Staff, 2013)—and

described by some students as an "authoritarian," "true blue old reactionary who doesn't hide in

liberal clothing" and who was vehemently "opposed to frenchification of McGill in any form"

("The best man", 1970, p.4)—suggest both his personal investments and the institutional

interests that shaped the histories he constructed. On behalf of the university, Frost played a key

role in the construction of the contemporary identity of *James McGill* and history of the

university. To my critical engagement with these institutional histories, which were written from

the perspective of the dominant group, I add discussion of the anticolonial resistance by radical

Black student activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Meeting James McGill

When I began studying at McGill in 2011, the principal's welcome message, as it had for several years, introduced James McGill and called attention to "just how much our past shapes our present":

> When James McGill left Scotland to build a new life on the edge of the Quebec wilderness, he came equipped with his University of Glasgow education. He brought with him the values of the Scottish Enlightenment: an openness to different views, a commitment to hard work, and a belief that knowledge betters the world. Communicating in French, English and some aboriginal languages, McGill flourished where others floundered. His values not only led to the creation of McGill University, but continue to profoundly shape us today (Munroe-Blum, 2011).

The four paragraph long statement mentioned James McGill in every paragraph. The message went on to posit students as inheritors of this colonial legacy, suggesting the potential to become like James McGill through entering onto his former estate:

> Just as James McGill himself did, people come to Montreal with ambition and optimism. They come, from all over the world, to embrace potential where others balk at obstacles. I invite you to join them. Bring your dreams to McGill. Come stroll our downtown campus, set against the same mountain slope that inspired James McGill so many years ago (Munroe-Blum, 2011).

This sort of celebration of James McGill is typical of McGill's institutional discourse, available in several places on the university's website at the time of this writing and mobilized by

administrators representing the university (e.g. Canada NewsWire, 2011; Munroe-Blum, 2007;

Reiter & Aalamian, 2013). Moreover, the celebration of McGill and the university's colonial

institutional roots is reinforced by display practices on the downtown campus featuring various

portraits and tributes to the university's "founding father". Reinforcing the notion of a European

colonial inheritance passed on to students and faculty, alumni of the university are referred to as

"McGillians" carrying forward a McGill (simultaneously man and institution) legacy into and

across the contemporary world.

A prominent example of the display practices I am referring to is a tapestry that hangs

near the entrance to the McLennan Library (Figure 1).[25] The left hand side of the tapestry offers

a larger than life representation of James McGill, his gaze directing the reading of his legacy. A

ship, signifying his journey from Scotland to Québec, and three stacked images on the right

illustrating events highlighted in written text: "JAMES MCGILL; BORN 1744 GLASGOW; BEGAN

FURTRADING 1767; FOUGHT IN WAR OF 1812; MARRIED MADAME DESRIVIERES 1776; BOUGHT

BURNSIDE FARM 46 ACRES 1778; DIED 1813." A young McGill clutches his will in one hand, and

with his other, clutches to his breast the university founded after his death.

The top image on the right features a scene reminiscent of voyageurs and *coureurs des*

bois ("wood runners" in English), unlicensed fur traders in New France who bypassed the French

authorities and went into the woods to trade directly with the Indigenous Peoples.

The second frame representing the war of 1812, shows what appear to be two British

soldiers in red and white uniforms and what appears to signify an Indigenous (Mohawk) man

with brown skin, a strip of dark hair down the middle of his head. He wears sandals on his feet

while the soldier wears closed black shoes. The image is somewhat ambivalent about the

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[25] The tapestry was designed by Kelvin McAvoy and woven in Scotland in 1969. See
http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/fontanus/pdfs/Fontanus2010_back_cover.pdf

relationship between the soldier and the

Indigenous warrior. The soldier's rifle is

aimed at the head of the darker skinned

man, while the latter also carries a

tomahawk, suggesting he is both captive

and ally. The bottom frame depicts

Burnside farm, completing a celebratory

narrative of adventure, discovery,

conquest and cultivation that, like the

principal's message, scripts students,

Figure 1. Tapestry outside of McLennan Library. Photo by the author.

faculty and staff of the university into a colonial inheritance.

Far from simply being a matter of a harmless nod to history, the embedding of the

persona of James McGill within the master-narratives of the university provide constant

(sub)textual messages about who is and who is not meant to belong within the "McGill

community." Understanding the tapestry as an active institutional text (rather than merely as a

fixed object) allows us to consider how it appears to function descriptively (recalling particular

selected highlights of James McGill's life), while also performing prescriptively, identifying

"categories of persons and events that are not specified in terms of individuals" (D. E. Smith,

2005, p. 112). In this way the tapestry enunciates and reconstructs a celebrated category of

(White, European) conquering colonizer, which relies on an ambivalent, incidental sub-category

of (Brown) Indigenous Peoples. It reflects how the Canadian White settler colonial self and

nation are bound up with and rely on identification with both the European 'old world'

(particularly the British Empire) and with signifiers of indigenousness unique to this part of

Turtle Island and appropriated as Canadian. As a Black woman raised and educated in Montreal this began to explain my initial sense of alienation at McGill. Where were Black people in this narrative? *What* were Black people in this narrative?

Slavery and the transatlantic slave economy.

Having spent time in the American Colonies after leaving Scotland prior to moving to Montreal upon joining the fur trade, James McGill would have been well prepared to navigate trade relations between Europe, Québec and Indigenous Peoples. As Frost (1995) points out:

> This kind of business arrangement was one of the things with which he had become familiar during his stay in the Carolinas: capital and manufactured goods flowing from Britain, raw materials and produce flowing back from the colonies (p.12).

The British became "the absolute masters of the fur trade" (Myers, 1914, p. 53), aided significantly by their access to rum—produced out of molasses, first on the (British) island of Barbados and later in New England—that they traded with and used to exploit the Indigenous Peoples with whom they did business (Myers, 1914). James McGill quickly established himself as a member of an elite group of "merchant princes" of Montreal, many of them Scottish born (Abbott, 1982, p.26).

The group of elite merchants to which James McGill belonged formed the leading class of slave owners in what is now Québec, during both the French and English regimes. "Merchants had ready cash, they traded with Amerindians, or they maintained commercial relations (sometimes secretly) with the Thirteen Colonies: they were thus the best-placed people to acquire slaves" (Trudel, 2013, p. 106). James McGill personally owned at least four slaves, two Panis (Indigenous) and two Black, between the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Trudel,

2013, p. 238). His close long-term friend and business associate John Askin was the owner of

twenty-three slaves, the most of all the English merchants (Trudel, 2013, p. 117). Of the 1574

slave owners identified by Trudel (2013), Askin's slave holdings were exceeded only by the

French Jesuits who owned forty-six slaves, the Séminaire de Québec that owned thirty-one, and

former Governor General of New France Charles Beauharnois, who owned twenty-seven slaves

(p. 117). J.I. Cooper (2003) claims that "throughout James McGill's career few persons were of

greater significance than John Askin" (p. 29), with whom McGill's firms did extensive business

over decades. The two men were part of an extensive trade network between Montreal and

Michigan, particularly around Detroit and Michilimackinac, where Askin lived. Askin's daughter

Madeleine—the youngest of his children, born to an Indigenous slave—also lived with James

McGill and his wife in Montreal for some time (J.I. Cooper, 2003, p. 122).

  In his biography of James McGill, Frost (1995) first mentions McGill's involvement in

slave trading as a matter of business transactions explaining that "as a merchant, McGill was

obviously ready to accept 'any commission for a commission'" (p. 63):

> In 1787, [McGill] was reimbursed by the Department of Indian Affairs for various
>
> expenditures he had made in the government's interests, including a payment to a Jacques
>
> Lefrenier [sic] for the cost of four slaves, presumably Indians, whom Lefrenier had
>
> purchased to hand over to other Indians as replacements for those lost by the tribe in a
>
> battle, while fighting on the British side in the late war (Frost, 1995, p. 63).

Frost adds that the transaction represented the fulfillment of "a promise made by a local British

commander." Negotiating national mythologies of Canadian exceptionalism that deny and

diminish histories of slavery and the historical presence of non-White people, he adds that:

This item from McGill's accounts reminds us that slavery, although not a prominent institution in Canada, nevertheless was not formally illegal in the province, and *existed widely among the Indians*. In the southern United States and in the West Indies, of course, enslavement of Africans and the use of indentured labour of men and women shipped from England were both recognized formally (Frost, 1995, p. 63, emphasis added).

When Frost does then situate Black slaves in Canada and more directly implicate McGill in the practice of slavery, he does so in negotiation with this mythology. Frost (1995) acknowledges McGill's 1788 purchase of a "negress," while at the same time asserts the idea of a kinder, gentler form of enslavement and absolves McGill as someone merely reflective of the era in which he lived:

> With regard to the institution of slavery, McGill must have been very familiar with it during his Indian trading years, and if he spent some years in the Carolinas, he lived in a society where slavery was very much part of the social fabric. When we hear that in 1788 he purchased from Jean Cavilhe at a cost of fifty-six pounds a negress named Sarah, aged about twenty-five, to be a servant in his household, it must be remembered that McGill was conforming to the mores of his time. He was generously ready to administer the city's care of foundlings and those adjudged insane, and he would, as we shall see, personally care for the widow and the orphan, but he was not a social reformer. No doubt Sarah was well treated in the McGill household, but the fact remains that she was purchased and owned as a slave. James McGill was a man of the eighteenth century, not of the twentieth. (Frost, 1995, p. 64)

Frost's is emblematic of narratives that minimize the severity of slavery in what today is Canada, trivialize and downplay the lived experiences of slaves and further dehumanize Black and Indigenous Peoples (Austin, 2013; A. Cooper, 2006). Stories of the 'niceness' of Canadian slavery ignore that enslaved people were exploited daily, risked their lives to run away; committed suicide; were raped and whipped and cut and burned; were bought and sold, imprisoned, imported and deported at the whims and to serve the interests of the people who owned them (A. Cooper, 2006).

Picking up the theme of the relatively good treatment of Canadian slaves, Frank Mackey (2010), author of *Done with slavery: the Black fact in Montreal, 1760-1840,* is concerned with a phenomenon he refers to as "pseudo slavery," whereby slaves "who had come to feel like part of their master's family refused to leave" (p. 72) once they were no longer legally enslaved. Mackey identifies one of James McGill's slaves, Jacques, in this way: "His attachment to prominent merchant and Executive Councillor James McGill and his family was such that he remained with them for twenty-five years after his master's death." Mackey adds that an "apocryphal story"—which he chooses not to cite—identifies this same Jacques as possibly having been the last slave in the province, belonging to McGill's stepson François Desrivières as late as 1820, and acknowledges that James McGill's wife and Desrivières' mother did identify Jacques as "Jack, mon Domestique" in her will, leaving instructions for her son "take 'Jack' under his wing and keep him in his service until his death" (F. Mackey, 2010, p. 74). Mackey concludes this passage by noting that at the time of Jacques' death in 1838, "he was identified ambiguously as 'negro of the late Honorable James McGill,' but no one would suggest that he was a slave at that late date (p. 74). Mackey's failure to consider slavery beyond its legal definition (Austin 2013) is striking. As a matter of law Black "freedom" has always been a

matter of "relative freedom within unfreedom" (Sharpe, 2010, p. 83), particularly the "freedom" to be a worker. Indeed the *Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies* that officially ended slavery in Canada in 1834 ordered that slaves older than six years "*become and be* apprenticed Labourers" (An Act for the Abolition of Slavery, 1833, article I, emphasis added), continuing to work for their previous owners until 1840. Slaves were bound to this arrangement unless able to buy their way out of the apprenticeship earlier, essentially purchasing themselves (An Act, 1833, article VIII). In return for their work, employers were required to provide apprenticed labourers with "food, clothing, lodging, medicine, medical attendance, and such other maintenance and allowances" consistent with what the labourer would have received as a slave. The Act is directed at the owner-employers and their rights: they remained entitled to the labourers' services with the right to transfer possession of said labourers "by bargain and sale, contract, deed, conveyance, will, or descent" as long as such transactions did not result in the separation of labourers from their immediate family members (An Act, 1833, article X). Those who were "entitled to the services of slaves" who were "set free" by the Act were entitled to be paid for their losses (An Act, 1833, article XXIV); essentially bought out in a shifting market economy. These legal conditions under which former slaves were "freed" do not even begin to speak to the complex impacts and reverberations of slavery on the enslaved and their descendants.

The reduction of James McGill's participation in slavery to a matter of his personal holdings of slaves and how they may or may not have been treated in his household directs attention away from the transatlantic slave trade and slave economy in which he was a critical participant and from which he benefited immensely. It also ignores potential slave holdings and trading activities of his firms. For example, we know that the North West Company that McGill

co-founded and in which he held shares until 1784 owned slaves (Mackey, 2010). Returning to

Frost's (1995) description of McGill's transaction with Jacques Lefrenier regarding four

"presumably Indian" slaves, further research challenges Frost's account. Likely referring to the

same transaction, Trudel (2013) acknowledges the purchase by a Jacques *Lafrenière* in 1787 of

"four *blacks* on behalf of the 'Département des Sauvages' or 'Indian Department,'" noting that

"these slaves were destined to serve Amerindian masters" (p.93, my emphasis). From J.I.

Cooper (2003) we learn further, that "McGill was one of the most trusted advisers and suppliers

of the Indian Department" (p. 17). Moreover, the Indian Department relied on McGill for

"assistance in securing specialized supplies" such as tobacco, and "to provide Negro slaves to

replace slaves that the Indians had lost" (J.I. Cooper, 2003, p.38). Rather than an example of how

slavery "existed widely among the Indians" as Frost claims then, the Lafrenière example

provides one record of a common practice of the fur traders. This points to the greater

significance of McGill's and other merchants' uses of slaves and slave labour as they competed

with and built upon one another's networks and businesses; increased their wealth, expanded the

reach of the British Empire and developed the economic, social and political foundations of

several major Canadian institutions.

Into the 19th century, James McGill and his business partners traded in a variety of

merchandise acquired and produced through the transatlantic slave economy such as rum,

tobacco, molasses and cotton (Abbott, 1982; J.I. Cooper, 2003). As was typical of colonial

merchants of the time, McGill also functioned as a banker, using reserves of capital to make

loans and accept mortgages (J.I. Cooper, 2003). Such loans and mortgages enabled the

purchasing of (among other "things") slaves by "prospective buyers with neither the cash nor

goods to barter" (Trudel, 2013, p. 98). This permitted the extension of slave ownership to all

levels of Québec society as "a form of public extravagance which conferred prestige on to

members of high society but also to all levels of society indulging in it" (Trudel, 2013, p. 118).

Deeply loyal to the British crown, McGill also served as a Colonel in the Montreal

Militia and held powerful political positions in what in 1791 became Lower Canada, serving as

Justice of the Peace, and a member of the Legislative Assembly. Given the ways in which their

fortunes were dependent on the slave economy, it is perhaps hardly surprising that McGill and

his associates used their power to oppose attempts to introduce abolition legislation at the end of

the eighteenth century. In April 1793 the House of Assembly killed a bill proposing abolition,

with "a large majority of members" favouring that the institution of slavery be maintained

(Trudel, 2013, p. 237). McGill was among twelve highly influential men in the fifty-member

House of Assembly of Lower Canada who "were, or would become slave owners" (Trudel,

2013, p. 238). Hence slavery in Canada was abolished slowly, with great concern for the

"ownership rights" and satisfaction of the slave owners (Trudel, 2013, p. 239).

Following the establishment of McGill College at the beginning of the nineteenth

century, it would not have survived were it not for the mobilization of the settler colonial

networks and collective power that James McGill helped to build. James McGill had arguably

been the most notable of the merchants and professionals who owned estates on the side of

Mount Royal. These men were known as "gentlemen farmers" whose expansive properties

served "as summer residences, where they could enjoy the fine views and fresh air and harvest

crops without any pretence of making a living of it" (MacLeod, 1997, p. 32). Following McGill's

generation, the college on his former estate and the image of the "gentleman farmer" continued

to play a crucial role in attracting the wealthy Anglophone class into the area that would become

known as the Golden Square Mile during the transition to industrial capitalism (MacLeod, 1997).

McGill College first reached out to Montreal's private citizens for support in 1856 and as

Frost describes, "the responses were ready and generous…[as] English-speaking Montreal began

to take a proprietary pride in developing the institution. McGill became very much 'our

university'" (Frost, 1979, p. 7). To be clear, Frost's "our" referred to British (especially Scottish)

Anglophone elite businessmen and their families from whose philanthropy and service as

Chancellors and other members of the Board of Governors benefited the university enormously.

It is important to note before addressing these benefactors, that in the mid-19th century the

university was granted a $40,000 loan from the Province of Canada, $8,000 of which was

"borrowed" from the Six Nations Trust Fund held by the colonial government (Rosenfeld and

Lukacs, 2006; Saul, 2014). The fund had been established through the sale of land[26] and was "to

be accounted for and invested by the Indian Department and a Crown-appointed trustee for the

benefit of Six Nations" (Windspeaker Staff, 2006, n.p.). Six Nations' research suggests that

McGill University was but one of several national institutions that received funding from Six

Nations accounts without permission or repayment (Windspeaker Staff, 2006).

The presence and development of the property of McGill College (as it was then known)

was critical to the creation of the Golden Square Mile[27] in the later 1850s and 1860s. In addition

to its landscaping enhancing the surrounding community, the institution helped to secure the area

as almost exclusively Anglophone-owned and predominantly Protestant. These landowners

typically owned estates that stretched from the summit of the mountain all the way down to the

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[26] This should not be mistaken for an equitable exchange of land for money; the initial land grant
was compensation for millions of acres of lost homeland (Windspeaker Staff, 2006). See also
Audra Simpson (2014), pp. 37-65.

[27] In today's terms the Golden Square Mile is roughly the central downtown area between Côte
des Neiges and Aylmer streets, the base of Mount Royal and Boulevard René Lévesque.

escarpment[28] (MacLeod, 1997) that separated the haves from have nots, or "the city above the

hill" and "the city below the hill" (Ames, 1897/1972; Westley, 1990; Williams, 1997,1999).

Below the hill was where the masses lived, for the most part in poverty. It was home to the Irish

working class (particularly the area now known as Griffintown) and was where, in the St.

Antoine District (now Little Burgundy), Montreal's first Black community developed (Williams,

1989; 1997). The language of "two cities" is important; it underscores the interlocking relations

of race, class and gender that characterized this geographic division. The only members of the

working class that ventured into the Golden Square Mile were the servants of the Anglo

Protestant elite (MacLeod, 1972), particularly women domestic workers (Williams, 1997). As

Ames (1897/1972) described it at the end of the nineteenth century,

> Most of the residents of the upper city know little—and at times seem to care less—
>
> regarding their fellow men in the city below. To many of the former the condition of the
>
> latter is as little known as that of natives in Central Africa (p. 4).

During the late nineteenth century, McGill Principal John William Dawson secured

several key members of this 'above the hill' community as the major benefactors of the

university and thereafter much of the land, buildings, collections, and millions of the dollars that

built up the university came from families such as the Molsons and Redpaths, as well as Sir

Donald A. Smith (Lord Strathcona), and Sir William Macdonald. These families and other

members of the Anglophone elite would thus carry the institution into the middle of the twentieth

century, beginning with William Molson, at the time a McGill governor, who funded the

restoration of the Arts Building and construction of its west wing and corridors (Frost, 1980;

MacLeod, 1997).

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[28] Where the escarpment was is now the Ville Marie Expressway/ Autoroute 720.

Both the Redpath and Macdonald fortunes, accumulated through the sugar and tobacco industries respectively, were directly based on the Southern slave plantation economies. As sole owner of Macdonald Tobacco Company, Macdonald also benefitted from exploitative labour conditions in Québec. His factory employed roughly a thousand urban, Catholic, French-speaking workers (including children under the legal age to work at the time) for whom Macdonald had little concern (Frost and Michel, 1998). When "asked if he had considered schemes to share profits with his workers, Macdonald replied: 'I have really been very desirous to do it, but cannot see how it is going to be brought about with any degree of safety to the capitalist'" (Frost and Michel, 1998, para. 8). McGill University was the primary recipient of Macdonald's philanthropy; in all "Macdonald's gifts and bequests to McGill exceeded $13,000,000" (Frost and Michel, 1998, para. 15).

The Redpaths were not the only sugar barons who were major supporters of the university. Most notably, John Wilson McConnell was Vice President and a majority shareholder of St. Lawrence Sugar refinery, as well as owner and publisher of the *Montreal Star.* Beginning in 1911, McConnell was "an extremely effective fundraiser for McGill" and was "the greatest individual benefactor to McGill from 1920 onwards" (Fong, 2013, p. 82)[29].

McGill Lineage and the University

From the very conditions of its establishment, McGill University can be understood as having been an institutional signifier of British victory over the French and a site of the competing White settler nationalisms that continue to characterize Québécois-Canadian politics.

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[29] The McConnell Foundation, established in 1937, had made more than 120 million dollars in donations to McGill University by 2008 (http://www.mcgill.ca/channels/news/mcconnell-foundation-continues-its-legacy-supporting-mcgill-students-102268)

James McGill did not have any biological children and the endowment for a university that would bear his family name reflected his concern about ensuring the continuity of the McGill family name (J.I. Cooper, 2003). The conditions of McGill's bequest required the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning to establish the college within ten years of his death, and failure to do so within this time would result in the money and property being given to his French Québécoise widow's son, François Desrivières. Desrivières, who had been one of McGill's business partners, contested the bequest for the college claiming the £10,000 was rightfully his, and refused to vacate the property for several years (Frost, 1980; Kalbfleisch, 2006; MacLeod, n.d.; MacLennan, 1960). In the extensive litigation that ensued, Desrivières became "a symbol of French Catholic opposition" to the powerful Anglo-Protestant establishment at the time. When eventually he lost the legal battle with the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, Desrivières was left in financial ruins (MacLeod, n.d.).

The extended period of litigation surrounding the execution of James McGill's will and the establishment of the university meant that the school did not begin to hold classes until thirty years after McGill's death. The first two principals of the University—George Jehoshaphat Mountain from 1824-1835 and John Bethune from 1835-1846—were Anglican clergymen associated with the Church of England. In 1852 the trustees of the Royal Institute became the Board of Governors of McGill University,[30] facilitating a shift in control of the University from Anglican clergymen to "merchants and professional men" (Frost, 1979, p. 4). After the Royal Institution became a corporation, the Statutes of the University from 1864-1934 dictated that, "all members of the Board of Governors of McGill College must be lay members of one or the other of the Protestant denominations in the Province of Lower Canada" (Frost, 1979, p. 6).

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[30] Today the "Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning McGill University" is the charitable organization of the University (#119128981RR0001).

These changes set the conditions for an era of significant foundation building, growth and expansion that would solidify the university's (self-) perception as the "greatest educational achievement of Scotchmen in the American hemisphere" by the end of the century ("McGill University in the Past," 1898, p. 26).

For the sixty-four years from 1855 until 1919, McGill University had two principals: Sir John William Dawson (1855-1893) and Sir William Peterson (1895-1919). Both Dawson and Peterson were of Scottish origin and both had studied at Edinburgh University in Scotland. Dawson has been described as "the man who made McGill" (Collard, 1960, p. 49) during his nearly four decades as principal of the university and as the founder and first principal of McGill's Normal School (later the Faculty of Education) for teacher training. As "the colonial principal of a colonial university" (Collard, 1960, p. 53), Dawson's views on education were highly influenced by his close friend Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada, to the extent that Ryerson has been described as Dawson's "mentor" (Frost 1980, p. 192). Dawson visited with Ryerson to study the Upper Canada Normal School in 1850 (Frost, 1980) and subsequently introduced many of Ryerson's ideas into teacher training at McGill (Frost, 1984). Ryerson was a Methodist minister who believed in the separation of church and state, except in the case of Indigenous children, whose character and condition he believed could only be improved through religious instruction and sentiment. As noted in Chapter One, Ryerson's suggestions regarding a separate school system for Indigenous children contributed to the development of Canada's Residential School System (Haig-Brown, 2002; Ryerson University, 2010).

Following Dawson, Peterson's strong imperialist loyalties (Frost 1979, p. 8) ensured that the university continued to expand and entrench itself "as a microcosm of which Montreal,

Canada and the Empire were the progressively larger manifestations" (Frost, 1979, p. 8).

Peterson guided McGill University into the twentieth century, ensuring its place within "an

imperial academic community that straddled the distances of empire" and understood academia

in the United Kingdom and the settlement colonies as one extended, though by no means

homogenous, British sphere (Pietsch, 2010, p. 379). Peterson represented McGill at the 1903

Allied Colonial Universities' Conference in London, the goal of which was to institutionalize

what was seen as "already existing imperial ties and to 'make [them] effective for practical

purposes'" (Pietsch, 2010, p. 377). By then, the settler colonial universities were understood as

forming "a community of shared culture, shared race, shared values and shared interest" (Pietsch,

2010, p. 379). In sum, they were an extension of the British Empire and of the racialized,

gendered and class cultures of British academia (Pietsch, 2013).

By the twentieth century James McGill's wishes had been realized and the University

was well established. As if to 'seal the deal' in 1875, what remained of the man himself was

returned to what had been his Burnside estate. Following his death in 1813, James McGill's

body had been buried in the St. Laurence Burial Ground, a Protestant cemetery south of

Dorchester between Chenneville and St. Urbain Streets (where Complexe Guy Favreau now

stands). In 1875 the City of Montreal decided to turn the cemetery into a public square, and

encouraged family members of the deceased buried there to relocate their family members'

remains to Mount Royal Cemetery. However, the university had the skull and remaining bones

of James McGill's body exhumed and relocated to the university campus along with the

monument that had marked his grave.   The Anglican Bishop of Montreal consecrated the patch

of land outside of the Arts building where McGill was laid to rest once more (Collard, 1965a,

1965b, 1971, 1983; MacLeod, n.d.). Soon after the burial, "official McGill songs emerged to

express the pride alumni felt for their founder" (MacLeod, n.d.):

> James McGill, James, McGill,
>
> Peacefully he slumbers there,
>
> Blissful, though we're on the tear.
>
> James McGill, James McGill,
>
> He's our father, oh yes, rather,
>
> James McGill!

The power to write history.

From 1931 to 1961, while Montreal's Anglophone elite continued to dominate Québec economically, migration from the rural areas of the province doubled the city's French population, increasing the number of unilingual French-speakers and decreasing the rate of bilingualism (Levine, 1990). By the late 1950s, a new French middle class "had emerged from three main quarters: the social and physical sciences departments of Université Laval and Université de Montréal, the burgeoning cultural industries of Montreal, and the growing bureaucracy of the Catholic Church in the city" (Levine, 1990, p. 44). From the new urban French middle class came a movement to 're-conquer' Montreal; "Francophones could never be 'maîtres chez nous'" if Montreal, the urban centre of French-speaking Quebec remained dominated by the Anglophone-Protestant elite (Levine, 1990, p. 40).

Particularly with Duplessis, Premier of Quebec from 1936-1939 and 1944-1959, English-speaking businessmen enjoyed a "pattern of elite accommodation" with Francophone politicians that entailed "certain deference toward English and an acceptance of Montreal as a bilingual city in which French was a subordinate language" (Levine, 1990, p. 33). McGill University was one

of the visible symbols of ongoing Anglo-Protestant economic and political power, and J. W. McConnell—McGill Governor for thirty years from 1928-1958—enjoyed a "particularly close" relationship with Duplessis (Levine, 1990, p. 31).

As the 1960s began, these arrangements of Anglophone-Francophone elite accommodation came under threat by the displacement of the traditional Francophone elite and a burgeoning movement promoting the cultural and economic interests of the broader French Québécois population. In a context of social, cultural, economic and political upheaval and transition that threatened Anglo-Protestant dominance, McGill University's Board of Governors called for the promotion of bilingualism, asserting that "in fact, the Western world is one, troubled but simultaneously enriched by linguistic differences. Our universities have a common heritage, to which they owe a common allegiance" (McGill University, 1961, p 84). In making their case, the Board drew on the writings of McGill professor of English and celebrated Canadian novelist, Hugh MacLennan, specifically a book about McGill that he published in 1960. MacLennan argued that the University had been too quiet about "her" past, particularly about the "great men who were associated with her. She hardly takes any credit for them" (MacLennan, 1960, p. 17).

Today, MacLennan, who taught in the English department at McGill from 1951-1980, is listed on the university's website as one of the University's twelve "pioneers," noted for helping "to develop a literature that was distinctively Canadian." The entry concludes by noting that:

> Shortly after MacLennan's death in 1990 author and journalist Philip Marchard, acknowledged MacLennan's impact on the coming-of-age of Canadian literature when he wrote in the *Toronto Star* that MacLennan "showed how the writer of fiction can help to define a country in the imagination of its citizens." ("Hugh MacLennan," n.d.)

MacLennan was born in Pictou, Nova Scota of Scottish ancestry, and pursued his university

degrees at Dalhousie, Oxford and Princeton. He thought of himself as "a partial outsider" to

McGill (MacLennan, 1960, p. 17). However, the university seems to have captured his

imagination and filled him with Scottish-Canadian pride:

> If Quebec is the enduring French Fact in America, this university, first in the
>
> Commonwealth to be granted a charter outside of the home islands, is the most valuable
>
> enduring product of the Scottish Fact embedded in the core of Quebec since Wolfe's
>
> Highlanders stormed the citadel (MacLennan, 1960, p. 21).

For MacLennan (1960), the "original Canadians—French, Scots and United Empire Loyalists"

(p. 27) had heroically come together to build the economy and civic institutions of Montreal,

however, "if it had not been for the astounding energy of a small group of great men," including

James McGill, "the Canadian nation would never have existed" (MacLennan, 1960, p. 29). His

timely book about the university marked the beginning of a contemporary institutional project of

constructing / documenting McGill's formal institutional history, notably around the identity of

James McGill.

A "Brief to The Royal Commission on Education of the Province of Quebec, submitted

under the authority of the McGill Board of Governors, with the approval of Senate, November

29th, 1961" demonstrates MacLennan's direct contribution to institutional discourses and

political strategizing. The brief draws on MacLennan's claim that largely due to having to cope

with the tensions produced by the English and French "races" living in the same city, "what

Montrealers know best about one another they never say in public" (MacLennan, 1960, p. 7).

Mobilizing "the romantic mytho-historical narrative of Canada" to which MacLennan's writing

had significantly contributed (Austin, 2013, p.38), the Board describes the French and English as

the "two greatest cultural inheritances in the West, […] two cultures who precisely complement

one another and who exhibit a common origin transcending the English Channel" (McGill

University, 1961, p. 84). The brief describes McGill and Université de Montréal as generally

isolated from one another and asserts the need for "far greater degree of contact between the two

groups of universities" (McGill University, 1961, p. 85). The Board asserts that the need for this

increased contact is underscored by "the Communist Revolution that still bedevils the world, and

threatens our Western Christian society" (McGill University, 1961, p. 88) as well as a

responsibility to "help the underdeveloped countries," particularly through providing them with

access to Western education:

> It is no good pouring money into a country that lacks the institutions, the educated class,
>
> and even the plain personal honesty necessary to spend it well. The paramount need is
>
> for education, for a class of men within each country willing and able to drag their fellow
>
> nationals into the modern age. (McGill University, 1961, p. 88)

The tone of the document exemplifies an approach to and perspective on "underdeveloped

countries" characterized by notions of Western superiority, benevolence, charity and a 'White

man's burden' to help 'Others,' elsewhere, to become 'civilized.' Moreover, this perspective and

approach remain common today, an issue I return to at several points in this dissertation.

Anticolonial Resistance and Black Power

As noted in Chapter One, the 1960s was an era of social political uprising in Québec as it

was elsewhere in Canada and across the world (Dubinsky, Krull, Lord, Mills & Rutherford,

2009; Lexier, 2007, Mills, 2010). McGill was deeply implicated in Québécois resistance to Anglophone hegemony and affected by changes to the postsecondary education system (Edwards, 1990; Frost, 1984; McGill University, 1961, Mills, 2010) and by 1968, was a volatile political environment with a Radical Student Alliance (RSA) of several leftist groups creating regular and escalating disruptions on campus (Mills, 2010. See also ongoing coverage of this activism and the university's attempt to purge radical students and lecturer Stanley Gray throughout the 1968-69 issues of the *McGill Daily*). Black students at McGill and SGWU were also organizing and mobilizing during this time around anticolonial, antiracist, Marxist analyses and by the time some of them organized a Congress of Black Writers at McGill in October 1968, their work was gaining attention at the universities.

Initially the plan for the Congress had been to have Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael, Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver, H. Rap Brown from SNCC, and artist-activist Leroi Jones to speak. Hardly downplaying the militancy of these men, the front page of the September 27th issue of the *McGill Daily* announced that "Black Power is coming" and described the problem of getting Carmichael, Jones, Brown and Cleaver to the event given all four were "under prosecution and persecution" by various state agencies ("Black power," 1968, p.1). Cleaver was in the midst of a highly publicized battle with the University of California-Berkeley and then Governor Ronald Reagan over his right to teach there, a case that was followed closely in the *Daily*. Carmichael would be the only of these four to speak at Congress, explaining the absence of the other invitees when he gave his keynote speech: "one thing the Americans don't want is the black man making international ties" (Boone, 1968, p. 6). Indeed such international ties were being made, and were most certainly a concern of both the United States and Canadian governments. The student organizers as well as the Congress itself were closely surveilled by

government agents (Austin, 2013). On the Monday following the Congress a picture of

Carmichael with Nova Scotian Black activist Rocky Jones shielding him from photographers

appeared on the front page of the *Daily* with the headline "Stokely preaches violent revolution"

(Boone, 1968).

The radically pro-Black politics and tone of the Congress further inspired and informed

the analysis of students waiting for the SGWU administration to act in response to their

allegations regarding the racist practices of one of their instructors. Students (and no doubt senior

administrators and professors) at McGill followed the unfolding events at SGWU closely, and

Black students continued to organize across the two universities as what began as a complaint

about one professor grew to expose and confront the systemic racism of the institution. The

situation came to a head on January 29th 1969, when over two hundred students took over the

SGWU computer centre and later, the faculty club. (While I discuss these events in relation to

McGill students below and further in Chapter Four, for a more thorough examination of the Sir

George Williams Affair and its aftermath, see Affan, 2013; Austin, 2013; Forsythe, 1971; and

Jacob & Shum, 2015).

For the duration of the 13-day stand off between the activists (including several McGill

students) and the SGWU administration, rallies in support of the students were organized on

McGill campus and McGill students marched from their downtown campus to SGWU in

solidarity. The McGill West Indian Students' Society brought and passed motions at the

Students' Society at McGill condemning the behaviour of SGWU's administration and

requesting $660 from the Students' Society be given to the Debating Union to initiate an

"informal Black Studies program" ("Council hits SGWU", 1969, p.1). Student associations at the

Université Laval and Université de Montréal also issued official statements of support for the

SGWU students ("At Sir George…", 1969). Rocky Jones, who had spoken at Congress and had

close ties to the Black Power movement in the U.S., spoke at a rally in the hallway outside of the

SGWU computer centre a week into the action, calling for national and international support for

the students and pledging "to drum up outside support for the occupation including '200

busloads of people' if necessary'" ("Anderson Hearings," 1969, p. 3).

For two weeks the *McGill Daily* featured front-page stories about what was happening at

Sir George. While direct links were not always explicitly made between the struggles taking

place at SGWU and those of White student activists at McGill, in several cases the reporting

suggested or revealed how university administrations were themselves organizing and

collaborating with police, government agents and at times with conservative student groups to

suppress leftist student activism. The takeover[31] of the computer centre finally ended when riot

police entered the building to evict the students on February 11th. During the eviction a fire was

set, the computer centre was destroyed and 97 students (42 of who were Black) were arrested.

The *Daily* continued to print updates on the subsequent trials of activists who faced criminal

charges, several of whom were enrolled students at McGill, as well as letters from various

students and community members expressing their thoughts about what had happened. Referring

to the events of February 11th as a "tragedy" (S. Horn, 1969, p.1), the tone of the coverage was

considerably more cautious than in previous weeks, a point not lost on a Black student named

Marguerite J. Alfred. Alfred wrote back to the paper, reminding everyone that: "This 'tragedy'

occurred because a weak and incompetent Administration panicked and mishandled" the

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[31] I am intentionally refusing the common use of the term "occupation" to describe this tactic of taking institutional space from those in power and refusing to leave, in recognition that Canada is located on occupied Indigenous land. See Jessica Yee Danforth (2011, October 1). Occupy Wall Street: The game of colonialism and the left, at http://rabble.ca/columnists/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-game-colonialism-and-left

situation and that the events had "lifted the façade—the myth—of Canadian justice and racial harmony" (M. Alfred, 1969, p. 4).

The confrontation with riot police and property destruction at SGWU—not to mention the RCMP taking control of the SGWU building and one of the Concordia student newspapers—seems to have crossed a line for the majority of McGill's student body. The Students' Society passed a motion "deploring the excessive violence on the part of the students who participated in the occupation" and urging "students to attempt to use the existing constitutional channels in seeking to bring about changes in the university" ("Council comes out…", 1969, p.3.). Nevertheless, McGill would not be spared its own escalation involving riot police and multiple arrests within just a few weeks. On March 28th Stanley Gray—by then fired from the university—and Québec nationalist Raymond Lemieux led ten thousand protesters including students and labour union activists in Opération McGill Français, marching on McGill's downtown campus and demanding that the university become a pro-worker, francophone Québécois institution (Bédard et al., 2001; Mills, 2010; Warren, n.d.).

Black student activists continued their work and in the fall 1969, began a campaign of pressuring McGill to establish a Black Studies program. The University had just established an African Studies program, said to be the first such program in Canada, which McGill's historian describes as having resulted from "a confluence of academic interests from anthropology, history, political science, and other social science disciplines" (Frost, 1984, p. 284). Frost—also a longstanding member of the professoriate and academic administration—cloaks his brief mention of the program in commentary that suggests his disdain: "Studies in the culture of African nations, which were in general without strong representation in Montreal and lacked effective governments to promote their interests, developed more slowly" at McGill. He added

that "it is somewhat ironic that a similar Canadian Studies program was not established until

1972" (Frost, 1984, p. 284).

Several professors and students from McGill participated in a conference of the American

African Studies Association (ASA) was held in Montreal from 15-18 October 1969.

The international conference held at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, was repeatedly disrupted by a

group calling itself the Black Caucus. The Caucus included students and faculty from several

American universities (Cohen, 1969) as well as several students who had been involved in the

Congress of Black Writers and SGWU Affair (Austin, 2013). Members of the caucus interrupted

the plenary session on the second day, asserting that the conference was being run by Western

interests and shaped by "pro-colonialist and neo-colonialist ideological bias" (Cohen, 1969, p. 7).

Referring to the aftermath of the events at SGWU, the Caucus argued that the conference did not

relate to "the serious problems" confronting Black students and the Montreal Black community

in general (Black Caucus, quoted in Cohen, 1969, p. 7). Members of the Caucus returned on the

third day and disrupted "almost every session," demanding the conference be suspended until the

Board of Governors met to discuss their demands: that the all-White ASA Board of Trustees be

reconstituted with equal representation of Africans, that changes be made in the ASA to facilitate

greater participation of African scholars, and that the ASA provide financial support to the

SGWU students facing criminal charges, who the activists described as "political prisoners of a

colonialist government" (Kassam, 1969, p. 1). The position and demands of caucus members

relied on their use of "African" in referring to all Black people, hence the ASA's responsibility

to address and be accountable to issues and members of the African Diaspora. However, this

conception of the relation between Black and African was not readily accepted by all and the

activists were challenged to explain this by some of the conference attendees (Cohen, 1969;

Kassam, 1969). According to one report, the activists were confronted in this way by the

Ambassador of Senegal and were asked by some African students whether they had ever been to

Africa (Kassam, 1969). The Black Caucus ultimately shifted the content and tone of the

conference, exposing sharp divisions along racial lines within the ASA. The Fellows of the ASA,

described in one report as "the upper layers of a white-dominated academic elite" (Cohen, 1969,

p. 8), voted against equal Black and White (African and European) representation on the Board,

while agreeing to provide support to the SGWU activists (Cohen, 1969).

The following week, McGill graduate student members of the Black Caucus Rosie

Douglas and Carl Parris published a full-page article in the *Daily* defending "disruption as a

means of self-determination for Black people" (Douglas & Parris, 1969, p. 6). While the article

does not explicitly address their use of the term "Africans" to refer to all Black people, Douglas

and Parris' anticolonial analysis suggests that they understood Black peoples as colonized

Africans. They defended their position against the ASA, arguing that "the development of new

methods of control" required particular attention to "those neo-colonialist agencies (ASA)

financed by imperial interests, whose goal has always been and still is the continued colonization

and dehumanization of African people" (Douglas & Parris, 1969, 1969, p. 6). Asserting that

"there is no longer a middle ground," they called on Black people to stand against "organized

violence" be it from "the State department or the ASA" and called on White allies to tend to

rooting out racism within their own communities (1969, p. 6).

Black students at McGill that fall had also begun pressuring the university for a Black

Studies program (Williams, 1997). By February 1970, Black student activist Dennis Forsythe

described "a movement to institute a Black Studies Program at McGill" that had been underway

for "some months" (Forsythe, 1970, p. 4) and echoed some of the same arguments of the Black

Caucus months earlier. Forsythe asserted that "Whites are still committed to the principle of

Whites speaking for blacks" and that ongoing resistance to Black Studies at McGill reflected the

desire to maintain the "convenient cover-up" of being able to claim ignorance about Black

peoples and histories (Forsythe, 1970, p. 4). Forsythe identified himself as one of several student

members of a "subcommittee of the Academic subcommittee" set up by the university's Vice

Principal "to look into the matter of Black Studies" (1970, p. 4). Carl Parris was also a member

of the subcommittee, and two weeks later in another article expressed frustration that the process

was already taking too long ("Senate deliberates," 1970, p. 3). By March 5th, the chairman of the

subcommittee and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science made it clear that a Black Studies

program was not a priority at McGill, clarifying that "setting up the committee does not mean we

give the program priority" (Apouchtine, 1970, p. 3). The Dean asserted that the subcommittee

had been set up upon the request of a group of staff and students and one of its roles was to

consider whether Black Studies or a Canadian Affairs Program that would include study of

"Indian, Eskimo and Métis Affairs" should have priority. Finally, the Dean felt that a Black

Studies program was "not justified at the moment" and vaguely referred to the existing African

Studies program, noting that: "parts of African Studies are included in the concept of Black

Studies" (Apouchtine, 1970, p. 3).

Radical Black student-activists maintained an anti-racist, anticolonial critique of the

manner in which the university was buying time and deflecting their demands for a Black

Studies program and that the drastic underrepresentation of Black Canadians at McGill be

addressed. They continued to organize, forming the Black Students Association (precursor to

McGill's Black Student Network) in September 1970. These students described "being fucked

around left, right and centre at McGill" by institutional bureaucracy and racism and vowed to

work with Black student groups across Canada (Sally Cools, quoted in Beck, 1970, p.1).

Moreover, while McGill had funded a summer remedial program for local Black students and

accepted some of those who had completed it, Carl Parris was clear in his analysis: "the remedial

program was an attempt by McGill to pacify [the previous] year's Black Studies group without

installing a Black Studies program" (quoted in Beck, 1970, p. 1).

This struggle by Black students at McGill for a Black/ Africana Studies program would

continue for several decades (I discuss contemporary manifestations of this work in Chapter

Seven). Reflecting the resentment that some members of the English-speaking White

professoriate and administration at McGill likely felt regarding radical movements of the late

1960s (e.g. see Frost, 1984; Taylor-Munro, 1969), in a 1972 television interview Hugh

MacLennan described being shocked by the uprisings of the late '60s because "no matter how

disreputable" Montreal had been in the past, it had always been "a very amiable place" until "the

last two or three years." He referred to "swimming in the broth of students" who didn't

appreciate and indeed were "absolutely hostile" toward the capitalist society that they were set to

inherit (Soodor, 1972). The British colonial nostalgia that MacLennan communicates in the

interview is quite remarkable, perhaps no better captured than when he ventures to address the

issue of racism:

> This question of racism, I think we'd agree, in some aspects it can be merely humorous,
>
> but when it gets like what we've seen in this century it's about as bad as you can get
>
> anywhere. I mean, you don't have to go into it; look at Hitler. But that is different again
>
> from what we overlook in American history, which was *chattel* slavery. Based on colour,
>
> slavery was—this is going to shock anybody who's listening, but if anybody asks me

what was the greatest institutional invention ever made to advance civilization I would

have to say slavery (MacLennan, in Soodor, 1972).

For MacLennan to have made such a claim as a McGill professor speaking on CBC television

speaks to his profound sense of White supremacy and entitlement, but also to his sense that such

privilege was under threat.

Toward a New Millennium

Apparently heeding MacLennan's critique that the university had been too modest and

quiet about its origins, McGill University paid much greater attention to documenting and

promoting institutional history starting in the mid-1970s. The History of McGill Project was

established in 1975, and Frost was appointed its founding Director. Frost co-founded the James

McGill society that same year, a group dedicated to fostering interest in and appreciation for the

University's histories and personalities. He authored at least six books and several articles

documenting the University's history, with particular attention to celebrating the "great men" (to

use MacLennan's term) who were its founder, principals, and primary benefactors. In 1995,

Frost published the biography of James McGill, *James McGill of Montreal,* which is arguably

still the dominant source of information about James McGill's life. The biography was part of a

campaign that revived James McGill—or at least the *spectre* of the man—and re-established a

sense of his presence at the university, two hundred years following his death.

The following year on June 6th, 1996, an article published in Montreal's *Gazette*, drew on

Frost's biography to describe McGill as "a shrewd, fiercely ambitious Scot," "tough and

unremitting" (McBride, 1996) as it announced the unveiling that day of the statue of James

McGill that now stands on the lower field of the university's campus:

> You might catch a glimpse today of James McGill leaving Burnside, his summer estate
>
> just under Mount Royal. A ghost? No, he's alive - not living - but alive as in spirited,
>
> palpable. He is in purposeful motion, as he was in life, right hand aggressively
>
> outstretched, firmly grasping a walking stick. A blustery Montreal wind forces his open
>
> coat high behind him.
>
> His left hand gracefully touches his tricorne hat. He might be keeping it on his head. Or
>
> he might be in the act of doffing it to a friend, because on his face is an expression of
>
> greeting. The famous corkscrew lips reveal the beginnings of a smile. The eyes have a
>
> subtle twinkle.
>
> He is a solid man, standing - idealistically larger than life - at about 6 feet. His long
>
> waistcoat reveals some immoderation where it pulls gently down over a rounded belly.
>
> His soft, knotted neckerchief is that of a gentleman. (McBride, 1996)

The McGill Associates, a group of non-alumni, business people in Montreal and long-

term supporters of the University, had commissioned the statue as a gift to the McGill Twenty-

First Century Fund. The Associates selected the project proposal of sculptor David Roper-

Curzon from the several they solicited; the selected artist is identified as British, and described

"an amiable redhead of offhand wit and ambushing intelligence." The statue is personified

throughout the article, from the title "James McGill strides by the Roddick Gates today" to its

concluding sentence: "He'll be unveiled today between 5 and 7 p.m. by the Roddick Gates,

forever to stride among the students whose school was his great legacy" (McBride, 1996).

The unveiling of the statue on June 6th, 1996 took place on lower campus during a combined Town and Gown reception for convocation and McGill's 175th anniversary garden party. "The theme for the day was intended to recreate the spirit of James McGill's era," according to an article documenting the event that appeared in the administration newspaper (*McGill Reporter*) of the university:

> Dignitaries were dressed in costumes from the 1820s, arriving on campus in horse-drawn carriages and led by members of the Grenadier Guards and pipers from the Black Watch. The theme for the day was intended to recreate the spirit of James McGill's era. The weather was beautiful and the atmosphere was lighthearted as thousands of staff, graduates and alumni, along with their friends and families, roamed the campus taking in the cricket match, the croquet competitions, and entertainment both traditional and contemporary in the forms of juggling and jazz. ("The Founder Returns", 1996).

Photographs accompanying the article show Principal Bernard Shapiro and Chancellor Gretta Chambers arriving at the event in horse drawn carriage, in full costume and with broad smiles. Another image features "Education professor Phyllis Shapiro and Kate Williams, director of the University Relations Office" looking down at the camera from the steps of the Faculty Club— former home of "wealthy German sugar tycoon" Baron Alfred Baumgarten[32]—wearing floor length powder blue gowns and hats and holding lacey umbrellas. Stanley Frost is quoted as having referred to the sculpture's installation as a "splendid resurrection" of James McGill ("The Founder Returns", 1996).

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[32] https://www.mcgill.ca/facultyclub/history/alfred

No matter how many times I have looked at the images in this article over the past couple of years, I never cease to be amazed by how joyous those pictured appear; by how authentically the lower campus of the university was transformed back in time. I never cease to be amazed when I think of the Black people who I know personally and/ or who participated in this research who were students or professors at the university in 1996. I think about the Black student-led campaign for an Africana Studies Program at the university that had been ongoing for at least five consecutive years in 1996 (See Chapter Seven). How were Black students and faculty expected to position themselves in relation to this all-out institutional celebration of a time in which they were legally considered chattel? Were they and their families expected to attend the event? To borrow the words of anticolonial writer Suzanne Césaire (1945/2002, p. 138),

> It is well understood that "metropolitans" don't know racial prejudice. But their colored descendants fill them with dread, despite the exchange of smiles. […] Perhaps they didn't want to answer to the […] heir who does and does not cry out "my father." However, these unexpected sons, these charming daughters must be reckoned with.

While no one I interviewed referred to the garden party, some of the students did describe profound responses to the celebration of James McGill and campus display practices, with particular attention to the statue that continues to maintain a visual presence of the man on lower campus (See Chapter Five). Over the past decade since its installation, the statue has served its purpose of constructing a palpable sense of James McGill's immortal presence, and visitors to the campus and graduates often pose and interact with the statue for photographs.

The statue can be understood as working dialectically with Hochelaga Rock, located on the other side of the university's main entrance. Hochelaga Rock is not a McGill monument per

se, but rather, it was established on the university campus in 1925 by the Commission des Sites et des Monuments Historiques du Canada. In its entirety, the plaque attached to the rock reads: "Near here was the site of the fortified town of Hochelaga visited by Jacques Cartier in 1535, abandoned before 1600. It contained fifty large houses, each lodging several families who subsisted by cultivation and fishing." I was surprised, the first time I read it, to find it does not even mention the Kanien'kehá:ka or any Indigenous *Peoples* directly.

Hochelaga Rock remains easy to overlook in its location to the left of the Roddick Gates, despite repeated assertions by Indigenous groups and students that its discreet location compromises the rock's educational and commemorative purposes, a Move the Rock campaign since 2012 (https://www.facebook.com/MovetheRock), and persistent motions by student associations calling for the Rock to be relocated to a more prominent position on campus (CBC News, 2015, April 23; Kaur, 2015; Newburgh, 2012; Stewart-Kanigan, 2014). The persistent refusal of the university administration to relocate the Rock or to fly the Hiawatha Belt flag (of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy) points to the significance of the role of the visual in the (re)production of colonial social relations and institutional power. As Annie Coombes (2006) has argued, White settler identities are made distinct from one another—Canadian for example, as culturally distinct from New Zealander, South African or Australian—through their perceptions and appropriations of the various Indigenous Peoples and practices they encountered in the so-called New World. In other words, the Canadian White settler colonial national identity is bound up with and relies on both identification with the European 'old world' (particularly the British Empire) and signifiers of Indigenousness unique to Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island and appropriated as "Canadian."

National institutions like the university are hence tasked with maintaining both European

political and cultural supremacy, and the distinctions that define 'Canadian' from other settler

colonial nations. Canada's "recognition" of Indigenous Peoples (echoed in the discourse around

'recognizing' Indigenous histories on campus) is consequently constantly negated by denials of

colonialism and land rights (Coulthard, 2014; Fontaine, 2016; Henderson & Wakeham, 2009; A.

Simpson; L.B. Simpson, 2016). The most favourable forms of recognition are those that locate

Indigenous nations in the past, as with Hochelaga Rock. When it is argued that to move the Rock

to the area where the James McGill statue is installed would be "too prominent" a location

(Kaur, 2014), my sense is that this prominence is tied to presence and present-ness: the function

of the Rock is to quietly acknowledge a place that once existed in the past, remnants of an

abandoned town. The James McGill statue on the other hand, is intended to resurrect and

maintain the past; it celebrates and situates the founder of the university and his legacy in the

present. [33]

Conclusion: On a Critical Engagement with History

The historical overview I have provided in this chapter reveals how a critical

understanding of history and how it is constructed can force dominant assumptions about the

university and about Canada into question. In addition to exposing fundamental illusions and

falsehoods embedded in Canadian national myths—such as the absence of colonialism and

slavery—understanding the conditions under which universities were founded in Canada reveals

their intended roles in society and provides a baseline for understanding how they have and have

not changed, and are and are not changing now. More than the treatment of history solely as

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[33] Following the initial submission of this dissertation and in the post-TRC context, the University moved Hochelaga Rock to a more prominent location on September 22, 2016. An article published in the *Eastern Door* newspaper quotes Provost and Vice Principal Christopher Manfredi: "I think we really need to build that relationship [with Indigenous Peoples] and make it stronger. I think McGill has the opportunity to really be a leading university in that field." (http://www.easterndoor.com/2016/09/26/hochelaga-rock-honoured-in-prominent-spot/)

series of events that happened in the past, this requires a historiographical project that examines

the role of institutions in the construction of history itself. In this study, attending to the

historiography of McGill University beyond the institution's colonial roots highlighted the

contemporary construction of a partial (both incomplete and not-impartial) historical narrative. I

find Eric Hobsbawm's (2004) notion of "invented tradition" helpful, particularly in analyzing the

function of the 'legacy of James McGill'. Hobsbawm (2004) defines invented tradition as:

> a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or
>
> symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by
>
> repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible,
>
> they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (p.1).

Invented traditions function as though they represent the continuity of a historic past, however

this continuity is "largely factitious" (Hobsbawm, 2004, p.2). Such traditions draw from and

mobilize the past to misrepresent the ever-changing modern world as fixed and static. They are

most likely to be constructed when "a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the

social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed" (Hobsbawm, 2004, p. 4). Hence

particularly dynamic periods of social political pressure on the university (e.g. in the 1960s and

in response to neoliberalism since the 1990s) seem to coincide with institutional constructions

and re-assertions of tradition.

A critical approach to historiography allows us to see how those who govern the

university construct and mobilize the past and notions of tradition in its institutional texts and

discourses in order to (re)establish parameters of membership and belonging, legitimize its status

and authority, and to promote particular (e.g. British/ Anglo-Canadian, middle class) "beliefs,

value systems and conventions of behavior" (Hobsbawm, 2004, p. 9). In legitimating the social

order of which it is a part, the university's investment in its founding myths expose it as a

national instrument of racialized class hegemony (Robinson, 2000). In other words, while the

colonial foundations of the institution may be of the distant past and as such beyond the control

of university administrators today, the unabashed celebration of these foundations, contemporary

construction of invented traditions and persistent anchoring in the 'old ways' represent active,

organized ongoing processes of exclusion and institutional resistance to change.

The "perception of historical continuity is particularly important to [maintaining] the

power of the elite in the context of a capitalist society" (Sears & Cairns, 2010, p. 150), because

such a perception suggests that not only is a social order just the way things are, it represents the

way things always have been. In addition to inventing traditions and anchoring them in particular

historical narratives, the production of this continuity requires the erasure of histories that might

interrupt through contradictions and challenges. Such erasures are intended to eliminate

Indigenous knowledges that suggest and can inform alternatives to capitalism and European

humanism (A. Césaire, 2000). They are part of what Gary Kinsman and Patricia Gentile (2010)

so aptly term "the 'social organization of forgetting,' which is based on the annihilation of our

social and historical memories" (p. 21).. It is not accidental that the presence and contributions of

Black people (and especially their resistance) are minimized and erased in Canada—these

histories must be forgotten in order to maintain Canadian mythologies of Whiteness.

As I show here, the colonial histories of McGill continue to echo into the present, not by

accident, but rather through the ongoing construction and maintenance of ruling relations that

uphold settler colonialism and capitalism. Indeed at the end of the 2011-2012 school year,

McGill celebrated its "Scottish antecedents" through awarding honorary degrees to the Principals

and Vice Chancellors of the University of Glasgow and University of Edinburgh and had a new

monument installed on the downtown campus. In James Square— dubbed "Community Square"

by activists and the site of many protests that academic year—three benches made of Scottish

granite were installed "to commemorate" according to the accompanying plaque, "the

longstanding bonds that link McGill University with the University of Edinburgh and the

University of Glasgow." The three benches are intended to symbolize the "three universities,

each made of three pieces of the same stone, all three similar, like siblings, but each unique in

form and expression" (McGill Reporter Staff, 2012), and replicas made of Quebec granite were

planned for installation at Macdonald campus.[34]

In the following section of this dissertation, I recount and build analysis from my

interviews with Black people regarding their work at the university over the past several decades.

I divide this work into three large themes: Navigating the university environment (Chapter Five),

anticolonial identity work (Chapter Six), and finally, service work and non-formal teaching and

learning (Chapter Seven).

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[34] The following spring the gesture was returned when McGill Principal and Vice-Chancellor
Heather Munroe Blum was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Glasgow (McGill
Reporter Staff, 2013, June 12).

Chapter Five: Navigating the University Environment

When, as I recalled in Chapter One, I was asked why I wanted to go to "that White school," it reflected a common local perception of the university as a place that is not "for" Black people. As two interviewees who work with Black youth pointed out, Black students in Montreal often do not even consider applying to McGill and turn instead to the other Anglophone university in the city (Concordia) which is considered less elite. Writing about the experiences of Black people at the university both fills in these gaps in the histories of the university and challenges assumptions about who can and cannot study and/ or work there. Indeed many participants described thriving within the university's institutional structure, excelling in their studies, scholarship and / or research activities and receiving various promotions, honours and awards. At least three student-participants in this study were recipients of a highly competitive university award for leadership and excellence. Their experiences thus reveal what critical race scholar Tara Yosso (2005) describes as "navigational capital," the strategies and skills that allow people of colour to navigate what can be "racially-hostile university campuses" and "to 'sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions" (p. 80).

The Idealized 'Elite University'

My expectations for university were quite idealistic: I thought of university as sort of a hallowed place where you were going to have all these wonderful discussions—it was the idealized university. (GR)

McGill is well known as an elite, international university; it is ranked 38th in the Times

Higher Education World University Rankings at the time of this writing (McGill Reporter Staff,

2015, Sept. 30) and has ranked among the top 25 universities in the world for the past twelve

consecutive years according to the Quacquarelli Symonds World University rankings (McGill

Reporter Staff, 2015, Sept. 14). The vast majority of participants in this study reported knowing

about this reputation prior to deciding to study or work at the university. While the primary

reason professors reported that they were drawn to the university was the availability of a job in

their field, almost all of the students I interviewed had chosen McGill because of its excellent

reputation. Many students received advice from family members, peers and faculty members at

other institutions that if they had the chance attend McGill they should take it. As DN was told:

"if you get into McGill then go—for sure!" KB said that everyone he consulted, "from teachers

to parents to any family member" strongly encouraged him to "apply to the presumed best

university in Canada," based on the belief that the "elite university experience would give a

certain amount of prestige." Both international students and those from Canada referred

specifically to the global ranking and the renowned reputation of the university on an

international scale. One student appeared to feel trapped by the university's reputation, even as

they called it into question: "I just feel like, I don't know, I'm one of those people who despite

what I know about the world I still adhere to this meritocracy bullshit, so in my head I'm like I

have to go to the best schools."

Echoing data on determinants of university educational achievement (Abada et al., 2009;

McMullen, 2011), several participants had parents who had attended university. Two of the

interviewees' fathers had attended McGill, one of who explained "there was *McGill in the air*

since I was a kid" while the other described growing up aware of "an unsaid expectation that

we'd all end up going to McGill." Others' had one or more parent/s who had been teachers, and /

or had placed tremendous value on formal educational attainment. SB shared that when her

mother had been pregnant with her,

> My parents would walk around the campus together and they would talk about how I was
>
> going to go here. So it was always kind of drilled in my head that McGill was my destiny,
>
> because my parents used to walk around here pregnant and my mom used to work at the
>
> bookstore.

McGill's longstanding international reputation associates it with notions of what GR called and I

am referring to as the "idealized university." This idealized university has been shaped by

dominant ideas about knowledge production and enlightenment, and popular depictions of old

British institutions and the Ivy League in the United States. These 'ideals' are thus both

racialized and associated with class privilege and upward mobility. As VR described,

> McGill is the bastion of White power type looking institution… I know it sounds
>
> disturbing, but I kind of enjoyed that kind of, the old looking university […] y'know you
>
> see the movies, with the professors and the podiums, and the halls, and I think that I
>
> thought that was the university experience and I actually am glad I had an experience
>
> with a historical university.

Several people I interviewed similarly described the downtown campus as "traditional" and

"historic" and commented on the "old buildings" and "very British, perhaps Victorian

architecture" that reminded them of the United Kingdom. One student stated that he thought that

because his mother was British and he was very familiar with "British culture," he "felt at home,

in a way, architecturally." Another student expressed that they thought the British-ness of the environment communicated a particular tone and set of expectations:

> It's one of the things I've noticed about McGill, we have an old school style-I don't even know, I don't know the different architecture styles but I just know it's very old school. It's very British, it's not even American. It's very British and it sets the tone, it very much sets the tone. But I think that's what McGill's tradition is about, it's about setting the tone, and it's kind of like when you come into McGill, [it's] setting the tone of what they expect from us in a weird way (SB).

Some participants stated that the architecture of buildings on campus made them feel uncomfortable: "I'm certainly more uncomfortable in those [older buildings], that's for sure. I'd never say that I can be totally myself in those spaces." Buildings that were described as uncomfortable, tended to be former Golden Mile mansions associated with exclusivity: the Faculty of Law, Thomson House (exclusively for graduate students and faculty; see Luxion, 2012), and especially the Faculty Club, located in the elaborate former mansion of sugar magnate Baron Alfred Baumgarten. One student, KB, described conflicting feelings about the prominence of the Redpath family name on campus (i.e. Redpath Museum, Redpath Library) knowing that family's wealth was built through the sugar industry and plantations in the Caribbean:

> It's like on the one hand it almost feels, sometimes it makes me more paranoid, like I'm kind of walking around like, looking at these huge buildings and I want to know […] who's this, what this name represents, or what history this is implicated in. And it kind of, like it sometimes feels like it's engaging a sort of paranoia or sort of schizophrenia right?

But on the other hand, it's really more a kind of empowering, feeling to have that

knowledge.

A professor who described asserting their presence against a racialized sense of exclusion

seemed to embrace this sense of empowerment:

I think some people are like: "Let's not go to the Faculty Club, that place is a racist baron

sugar guy's house." I'm like: "Let's go *occupy* the friggin Faculty Club!" Like why aren't

we making that *our* space? There's two ways to go about it right? …You know what I'm

saying. I have a right to take up space in *this* [place], on this campus, built by this racist

slave owner. I bet he didn't think *I'd* be teaching here when he gave that money! [*laughs*]

You hear what I'm saying?

"A plethora of knowledge"

For students, the idealized university is also imagined to be a site of knowledge and

enlightenment. CH for example, said she chose this university because she "knew it was the top

school in Canada" and because many of the politicians that she looked up to at the time had

graduated from McGill. She thought of it as an institution where she would find a "plethora of

knowledge," but was disappointed to find she had "to scramble" to put together a meaningful

academic experience (i.e. piece together a program of study through selecting courses across

departments and faculties, and seeking out professors to supervise independent study). In fact,

the majority of the students interviewed found that the elite university experience was not what

they had imagined it to be academically. RC described a lack of a "diverse offering" of courses

in her degree program: "I was like: '*Really*?! That's *it*?!' Um, you really have to make it your

own and you have to find your own rigour!" LB similarly shared that given the university's reputation she had expected "a very good education" that would be "very inspiring" and promote "lots of critical thinking." LB reported that not only did her experiences not meet these expectations, but that she encountered "a lot of administrative problems" and was "bullied" by her advisor, which made her academic experience "very negative." As I discuss in more depth below, the severe under representation of Black professors contributes to significant gaps in course offerings and curricula. Overall, students did not seem to have anticipated the role that race and racialization would play in shaping both the university environment itself and the way they were situated and treated within it.

While some participants mentioned being aware that McGill was "less racially diverse" (than the other Anglophone university in the city, for example), generally they seemed to believe in the meritocracy and excellence of the university and to assume that the good things that they had heard about McGill would extend to their experiences as well. In this way, for some participants, the idealized university was assumed to be an institution where knowledge is embraced and produced without regard for such crude matters as race and racism. Indeed two participants reported that they rarely experienced racism at the university. GR said that in the 1960s and '70s, the liberal values of the university generally mitigated racism such that any "under the surface" racist views "were well controlled" and "most senior people at the university were far too sophisticated for that." XX stated that his expectations had been relatively low, that he had not anticipated a "life changing intellectual experience going to McGill" and had found that in the late 1990s "there was a genuine sensitivity, and awareness" regarding race and racism among "most people" he encountered in the professoriate and student body, regardless of their ethno-racial background.

However, several participants described being disappointed by the feeling that being Black prevented them—due to institutional racial bias—from accessing the university experience they had imagined. Some students and professors had even left other universities to come to McGill hoping to find a more fulfilling—and often less racist and/ or less racially alienating— experience. One student in this situation was RL, who had transferred from his previous university anticipating an environment at McGill where critical discussions of "race and multiculturalism" would be more welcomed:

> But I soon noticed that it wasn't all I expected. I felt like the Other. I felt like the Other because I was Black, and that was really different from what my friends had told me. But then I realized that most of my friends who actually said these good things about McGill were not even Black themselves, they were White students. So their experiences, yes, I guess they were genuine experiences, but they didn't really apply to me and my case.

Another student who had held very high hopes for her experience at McGill (" when I got admitted I was ecstatic, I was over the moon and I knew I was going there") found herself socially and academically isolated:

> I never felt at home, it was like in and out, in and out; if I didn't have to be on campus, I wouldn't be on campus. And I don't know if that had to do with the history of the campus, or the lack of racialized people I would see, but there was nothing there for me. If I didn't need to get a book, I'm not going. If I don't need to be in class, I'm not going. I would rather just sit at home, and listen to my music and *wile out*. Yeh.

"Dealing with James McGill"

The most frequently and passionately expressed comments about the physical environment of the campus addressed the statue of James McGill and an awareness that McGill had been a slave owner. One professor said that they "don't look at the statue" and that they felt uncomfortable talking about the colonial history of the university, but was relieved when students did:

> The way it came up was by my White young student, who chastised me […] for not saying that he was a slave owner. Because someone had mentioned James McGill and I didn't want to get into it of course. If you know anything about me I'm like okay, let's move on, I just want to go home. But I was very pleased. I was very, very pleased. Because she obviously learned it somewhere.

Both MR and SB explained that they avoid entering campus from the front gates in order to avoid conjuring the traditional view of the path leading to McGill's Burnside house and especially in order to avoid seeing the statue of McGill. MR explained: "There's that *fucking* statue there, I *hate* that statue! I remember when I was an undergrad I was like 'what if we just broke it when no one was watching?'"

> rosalind*:* The statue of James McGill?
>
> MR: Yeh, I hate that thing. I hate it. It's disgusting.
>
> rosalind: What do you hate about it?
>
> MR: Like, this motherfucker was like *owning*—he was all up in the slave trade. It's just this celebration of this history of like, "we owned slaves (but no we didn't 'cause this is Canada, but actually we did and it's really well documented) and this wealth has been

bequeathed and has been exclusively preserved for White people including not even

certain White people, for generations, but oh, it's different now, because we're diverse"—

and it's just this narrative that makes no sense and it's like so screwed up and yeh, and it's

[the statue] just a symbol of that.

SB also described her avoidance of that part of campus as related to a "conflict" she had as an

undergraduate, "dealing with McGill, James McGill, as the founder of the school but being a

slave owner." SB's comments highlight the ways that the statue continues to stand in for James

McGill the man, 200 years following his death:

> I used to go up to the statue—I know this is weird, but I used to say "huh! I guess your
>
> slaves really turned it around!" Because I felt like, yeh, I just felt it was weird. I had these
>
> weird things in my head when I was younger. […]
>
> The thing with James McGill, I think I chalked it down to irony. I just didn't bother. But
>
> I did say some bad things to the statue, I did. I was kind of like "you're a loser, look what
>
> happened!" […]But there's something really strange. Like I never come through those
>
> gates. I have an issue. …Coming through the front gates, like, I don't like seeing him.
>
> …It's just, it's weird. It's a weird kind of—I have to be honest, I think about it every time
>
> I see the statue. But I guess I chalk it down to irony, and shake my head and think "Yeh, I
>
> guess you didn't do well."

Echoing other references to a sense of tension of being a Black person at a university founded by

a slave owner, KB shared:

Just the legacy of the place y'know, if you just learn a little bit, just learning that James

McGill was a slave owner, right, and he had both Black and Indigenous slaves, and this is

the name of the place that we're in; there's some sort of inherent contradiction in that, that

we're coming here. So just kind of like, whether you know it or not almost, your identity

as a Black person or a person of colour is under threat. Just right off the bat.

Comments about the James McGill statue and its ("his") visible presence speak to its prominent

location and confirm its function as I discussed in Chapter Four. In contrast, no one I interviewed

mentioned the tapestry in the library (Chapter Four, Figure 1) or even the James McGill

monument and actual remains located outside of the Arts Building (MacLeod, n.d.). I would

argue that this suggests that like Hochelaga Rock, the James McGill monument serves a

commemorative function, locating McGill the man in the past. The statue on the other hand,

relocates McGill in the present and inserts him into contemporary daily life on the university

campus. This reinforces the sense of the university's downtown campus as a separate (White,

colonial, elite) space from the rest of the city adding to the historical quality of what is popularly

referred to as "the McGill bubble" (Carleton, 2015; Tremblay, 2014).

Class Relations: Students "Climbing the Hill"

As a university founded and developed in order to serve and reproduce the interests of the

Anglo Protestant elite, over nearly two hundred years McGill has maintained strong connections

to some of the most economically wealthy and powerful families in Canada, while increasingly

expanding its transnational reputation and influence (Westley, 1990, Fong, 2013; Frost, 1980,

1984; MacLeod, 1997; MacLennan, 1960. See also Chapter Four). Today these histories

continue to play a role in determining expectations of the university and its reputation. Students' social class background and degree of economic status contribute significantly to shaping their experiences at the university. GR described the students at McGill in the 1960s as coming from "middle and upper-middle class families" adding that, "most working class kids—White or Black—didn't end up at McGill. So […] you would very rarely meet someone here whose father worked in a factory. If you went to French university you'd be more likely to find that." GR's comments called attention to "middle-class" as something that is not strictly dependent on income. He explained that among people from the Caribbean:

> Even though the *income* might not be middle *income*, the values you had: the importance of education, the importance of keeping your reputation—these things were always very strong in those families, those were things they brought with them from the Caribbean and [that] stayed with them.

GR believed that these values have often allowed Caribbean people in North America to navigate institutional spaces and to achieve greater social class mobility than American and Canadian Black people. This understanding of class and socio-cultural differences among Black people is well documented in the literature, with Caribbean/ middle-class values emphasizing education, hard work, discipline and respectability (Alllahar, 2010; K.S. Moore, 2008; Waters, 1999). Black lower and middle economic classes can be understood as further divided into social-class identities along behavioural differences and cultural values, with "the degree of acceptance of White middle-class ideology" perceived as a significant determinant of being "middle-class minded" (K.S. Moore, 2008, p. 504).

RC spoke about the downtown campus using particularly evocative language that suggests the layers of meaning—particularly around social class—embedded in and still communicated by the downtown campus location in the Golden Square Mile:

I feel sometimes, when I'm at McGill, like you're *there*, and to come out of McGill takes a huge amount of effort. Especially once you've climbed up that bloody hill. If you're going down, you're not coming back up. So if you're up that hill, you're going to stay there a good long time. You're not coming back up if you go down. And once you're up that hill, there's nothing around you that's not McGill. When you're on that campus, it's all y'know, *everything*. You can't buy food if it wasn't approved by McGill, you can't wipe your ass without it being McGill toilet paper, you can't step off and step back on. It's like a hard commitment to, like, be on or off. I feel like you drink the Kool-Aid or you don't. You really can't have a foot in both worlds.

RC's comments, albeit unwittingly, recall the separation between those above and those below the hill (see Chapter Four). For me, they recall how working class and Black people "belonged" below the hill and offer the salient metaphor of the experiences of someone who has, however precariously, 'made it up the hill' so to speak. Once up the hill on the university campus it can feel as though one is fully immersed in a different culture, a 'different city,' with little if any interest in the communities 'below'. As in the nineteenth century and arguably more so as the university property has expanded, the campus feels like "a place apart, a somewhat rarefied space" distinct from and yet part of the area that surrounds it (Ames, 1897/1972, p. 165). Whether interviewees wished to have "a foot in both worlds"—the elite and the masses, particularly local Black communities—seemed to be informed in part by their relationship to

Montreal. In contrast to students and faculty who see Montreal as their home or potential home,

international students who perceive themselves as visitors might be more inclined to remain 'in

the bubble' and may be unwilling or afraid, as one participant explained to me, "to step outside

of the comfort zone that the university affords [them]." More than one student expressed concern

specifically about the resistance of some Black students to spend time in Little Burgundy, the

location of Montreal's first Black community, literally and figuratively below the railroad tracks.

Given the co-constitutive socioeconomic and racial class stratification in Canada, it is not

surprising that Black Canadian students seem to be less likely to come from affluent

backgrounds than other Canadian students at McGill and more likely than other students,

including Black international students, to be challenged by financial issues and a sense of what

can be described as "class shock" in the elite university environment. Several Canadian students

I interviewed made comments to this effect. Several spoke about having to hold jobs throughout

their degree and/ or earn scholarships pay tuition and fees, and one stated that these demands

prevented her from becoming involved in confronting institutional racism: "I had four years, my

parents didn't have the money, I worked my *ass off* for scholarships and so I really didn't have

time to deal with McGill and their stupidness in that sense." RC noted that having begun her

degree program with a modest entrance scholarship she was caught off guard by the rapid and

steep decline in funding as she progressed through her program. While she "didn't expect to

come here and be balling from funding money" she wished that there had been more clarity

around financial commitments and to expect. As another student, LR stated:

> The university does not understand, or *pretends* not to understand that there's a financial
>
> strain on people who do not have access to jobs on campus, or there's assumptions that
>
> you come with a lot of money—which is not true—and there are a lot of people who are

suffering financially, and I'm also one of them […] There is this assumption that

everyone who comes here is rich, or has a lot of money, and if you have to say you don't

have a lot of money somehow that's a problem. And I think that has to change.

Class differences in relation to their *Black* peers were perhaps most shocking to Black Canadian

students:

Even the Africans who study here, the international students, a lot of them come from

really rich backgrounds. […] Especially if you buy into this media [narrative] that

Africans are poor people, that's really something that strikes you as a new impression.

That definitely—money's really *something*. Economic reasons are really something that

factor in at McGill. I feel like you kind of miss out when you're not that affluent. You

miss out on a lot of opportunities, like I have a friend who right now, went to do an

internship with the United Nations in New York. And this is a full time internship for the

whole summer. But it's with the UN and to go there, you have to have enough money to

live by your own [means] because it's not paid (RL).

Comments related to social class simultaneously pointed to the impact of financial status and to

how common assumptions of racial solidarity do not necessarily hold in the face of class

difference. Some of the Black students from Canada described feeling uncomfortable around

affluent African students and how this experience of significant social class difference within a

Black community was new to them:

I remember one time I was talking to this woman and we were talking about identities

and all these things and she was—it was very bizarre because on the one hand she was

quoting Frantz Fanon, […] and then she goes on to say, "I'm from Sudan, y'know, we

speak *this* kind of Arabic, versus the people from Algeria who, they're just the poor ones, we don't really respect their way of speaking." And I was just like—at first I thought she was joking right, especially since she was quoting *Frantz Fanon* y'know, who's like so connected to Algeria, right? And then, but then I realize she's *not* joking; she has this very, very class-privileged view of people from Algeria!

MR expressed resentment toward affluent African students who she described as "so ready to hustle for [the university]" and to use the "language of diversity…to their advantage," which she found alienating as "somebody who's actually experienced structural disadvantage." For MR, the willingness of affluent African students to "hustle" and avoid confrontation undermined attempts by other Black students to challenge racialized and classist norms and expectations. It seems clear that this is as much related to class background as to national cultural origins. As LG explained, it would have been far more difficult for her to navigate the university had she come from a "poor background" and not had access to some privileged experiences similar to those of her White peers: "I probably wouldn't have been able to be so involved and feel so like I belonged if it wasn't for at least one ground of commonality, which was class." She explained that in African countries there is a clearly demarcated divide between "rich and poor" and "if you're part of the rich it means you can sit with governors and go to their birthdays." As a consequence, LG stated,

> I've felt like I don't struggle […] and I'm not threatened by these wealthy men who like feel like they're the biggest gift to the world, and are so cocky. I'm able to sit, look at them eye to eye, [and] talk. Maybe because y'know, my dad is a banker, and I'm not afraid of these kinds of [settings and people].

The financial means necessary for African students to attend McGill as international students tends to create a confluence between Africanness and class privilege, a phenomenon that will likely continue as Québec tuition fees for international students are more than five times those for local students and most frequently and dramatically increased (http://www.univcan.ca/universities/facts-and-stats/tuition-fees-by-university/). This should not, however, be taken to suggest that African students are necessarily from affluent backgrounds or that their experiences are necessarily less alienating than those of Canadian students. As Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (1995) wrote of her experiences as a Cameroonian woman attending McGill in the late 1980s and early 1990s, despite strong familial and cultural grounding, a strong educational background including university, and the advantage of being fluent in both English and French, "though armed with the knowledge that McGill is the bastion of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, when I walk through the gates and halls of McGill, nothing prepares me for the reality of its *Whiteness*" (p. 256, emphasis in original).

The McGill Bubble: A "Sea of Whiteness"

Several participants said they were very accustomed to navigating predominantly White institutions prior to McGill and yet still found the racialization particularly striking at the university, reinforcing notions of a "McGill bubble" separated from the place (and arguably the time) within which it is located. References to the "bubble" commonly refer primarily to class and language—the distinct (wealthy Anglo) McGill society within the distinct French Québec with a long history of class struggle. However, regardless of when they attended or worked at the university and whether or not they identified the racialized environment as problematic, the vast

majority of people I interviewed characterized the environent within the bubble as the

"Whiteness" of McGill. Some used the metaphor of a "sea of White" in referring to the

overwhelming White majority:

> It's just a sea of White people. […] to see that and to feel that your life is going to be
>
> really determined on a daily basis by this absence of diversity, […] it really unnerves me
>
> and I don't like it. (MT)

> And in that room, in that lunch hour, basically it's a sea of White students. It's a bunch of
>
> White students, I'm usually the only one, or there's only one or two non-White students at
>
> the time. (RL)

> My first introduction to that field was frosh. And the kids just all over there, and it's just a
>
> sea of Whiteness and liquor. And I don't have a problem with drinking, not at all, but the
>
> extent to which everything just happened, where it was just—it just wasn't a place for me.
>
> […] I guess to just come to that setting where I didn't see me. I just wanted to see me on
>
> that field, and I didn't. (CH)

Part of the "Whiteness" of the university is achieved through the university's general lack

of acknowledgement of the presence and contributions of the Black people who have attended

and taught at McGill since the nineteenth century in the institution's visual texts (i.e.

commemorative images and objects) on campus:

I think there are a lot of portraits on the wall, and I don't see a lot of role models who would be of my particular ethnicity there, that's for sure. So that is definitely very noticeable. (DN)

I don't think there's a push to highlight [the presence and contributions of] other ethnicities. I think it seems like a very—It seems like a very *White* Canadian campus. There's significant numbers Black, Asian and other students of colour here; I'm not sure the university does a whole lot to represent their influence on the university. Maybe they do and I haven't seen it. But the campus just appears, you know, like a very White space, maybe, I could be wrong. (BR)

In this regard one professor in particular described their office as a space in which they could control the aesthetic and create alternatives to the 'Britishness' of the campus through displaying images of Black people and décor from African cultures.

Several interviewees used the common reference to "the bubble" to evoke the interlocking factors of race, class, and language that create the distinct McGill environment, as one student said: "the Anglo bubble aspect of [the university]; the English fortress in the centre of the city." KB shared:

I knew right off the bat … I would not be comfortable coming into the bubble. Because there *is* a bubble, even though McGill's integrated into Montreal as a whole, there is a bubble y'know. You have the McGill ghetto, you have the whole residence experience, and besides being way out of my budget, y'know, I could not afford to [live in] residence, but it was also [a matter of] what kind of environment is that gonna' be for me? […]

This idea of just being able to live all year round without a job, and just to be paid for by the parents and to kinda', I don't know [*laughs*] … I shouldn't necessarily make fun, but it's this whole idea of how people accentuate their first world problems. As an example: the "McGill ghetto" right? It's a fairly affluent neighbourhood to begin with [*laughter*] and the McGill students *love* to call it 'the ghetto,' because it's a cool word y'know and they like to be able to pretend they're poor y'know: 'ahh yeah, I'm living in the ghetto' – it's like *What are you talking about*?!

A professor similarly explained: "It's just a bit of this White fantasy land. Y'know, I'm kind of walking around thinking *where* are the Black people, where are the people who are not White? Where the hell are they?! […] It's scary." This person also mentioned the so-called McGill ghetto: "I hate the fact that it's called the 'ghetto' over there—McGill *Ghetto*?! When I first heard that I was like '*What?!*' ...But again that kind of goes to this idea of that *fantasy* land that people live in."

It is important to note that while the vast majority of interviewees commented on the distinctness of the university campus environment from the culture of Montreal overall, the nature and extent of this difference has changed over time. Specifically, Montreal's population has become more racially diverse, and social-political norms regarding explicit racism and Anglophone hegemony have shifted since the mid-twentieth century. For example, BT described how in the 1950s and '60s when he was a student at McGill, Black people regularly experienced racist discrimination when attempting to rent rooms and apartments near the university (in the so-called "ghetto") and to get into nightclubs downtown. In such a climate, the campus environment and belonging to a community of Black students and White allies affiliated with the

renowned McGill University could serve as sources of protection and support. GR, who came to

McGill as an international student from the Caribbean, echoed these sentiments and recalled that

in the 1960s his affiliation with the university and its reputation were valuable resources against

the anti-Black racism of the broader society. Relating this broader context to the space on

campus he explained:

> I think that the physical space of the university was quite welcoming. I think however it's
>
> that if you're Black on campus you didn't see yourself reflected in that space. But then
>
> you didn't see yourself reflected in *any* space outside of the campus either. We were just
>
> invisible, in a lot of ways. […] [The campus] was not a reflection of you, but then that
>
> was no different than anywhere else you went. But in some ways you probably felt more
>
> empowered on campus than off campus, because the circle of tolerance was bigger on
>
> campus, at the same time fully understanding that there were limitations to even that.

The poem "White Hallways," was written by Cora Lee Conway (2015) during her first

year at the university and captures many of the concerns as well as the senses of purpose and

agency that participants in this study expressed. Cora explained to me that she wrote the poem

(included below with her permission) as she was trying to work on a course paper but found

herself preoccupied with how her PhD program was turning out to be yet another educational

experience characterized by a "lack of Blackness":

> Obviously, the big thing was just the lack of Blackness at the university: Black students
>
> in the graduate program, Black faculty, Black administrators, Black faces on the walls. I
>
> mean, it's not like [another Canadian university] was any better. Y'know, walking through
>
> the hallways. And y'know, that's been my academic experience probably for my entire

life. … Because it was just y'know, not having any representation of who you are, is

really—it's a tricky thing to be in spaces where you don't see yourself. […] I want to say,

it's interesting, I don't know if you remember that poem I wrote, and I got it published

somewhere; it's always the way I feel (C.L. Conway, personal communication, 06 May

2014).

White Hallways (Conway, 2015)

white hallways,
and white floors.
white ceilings,
and white doors.
white clocks with black hands tellin' white time,
blackboards affixed to chalk white lines,
white teachers to tell white history,
Where are the teachers that look like me?
black janitor to clean White mess
black mothers to hear black girls' distress
They say I'm not pretty, they say I'm not clean,
They tell me I'm not smart, I know they're being mean"
white girls with long hair
white privilege does not care
black girls in white schools
'educated' to make smart a fool
color bound, twice removed
disavowed and unapproved
talking back is not condoned
silence deep like treasures owned
but kinships across time and space
insist that resistance is not to be replaced
at the site upon which you are truly embraced
race erased to make new place for that sweet face
laced like trebled notes over that low bass
spoken slow
you make no haste
deliberate and bold
there is no mistake
you take
white hallways
to burst through
white doors
crash through
white ceilings
glide over
white floors
black girls move like rag-time
rightfully inclined to redefine the line
take your spotlight, rise and shine.

The professoriate: "Where *are* the teachers that look like me?"

Black faculty members and students alike expressed being highly aware of the scarcity of Black professors at the university and the same (former and current) Black professors were repeatedly named in interviews by other professors and by students. One professor noted that more Black professors were hired in the seventies and eighties but that since then the university has been "going backwards."

Being members of such a small minority significantly shapes the experiences of the few Black faculty members who are present. All of the professors interviewed expressed a stark awareness of their racialized identity and the need to remain vigilant in anticipating and strategizing around the impacts of interpersonal and institutional racism. Several felt that they were required to do more work than their non-Black colleagues in order to obtain and maintain job security and that often these efforts went unacknowledged. Some professors felt disadvantaged by a racialized professional hierarchy and suggested the role socializing outside of work can play in shaping professional relations:

> Y'know, we're only so few Black professors, let's be very, very honest about it and understand that the Chairs of departments, that are usually appointed from on high, know exactly what they're doing. (MT)

> This is the kind of thing [the tenure process] where having your t's crossed and i's dotted doesn't mean anything for a Black person.
> […] Part of it is, for me, me not being close friends with the Chair at the time was because I'm a Black [person], and I don't necessarily want to socialize with [the Chair]

and I don't get invited […] to certain things and I wouldn't invite [the Chair] to certain

things, because I don't necessarily look to my White colleagues to be my friends. (ND)

Some professors had benefited from affirmative action policies as students in the United

States and were surprised by the lack of concern about and absence of policy to address the

underrepresentation of Black students at McGill. Those who had obtained tenure and/ or

promotions felt that the strength of their files and "credentials from the White establishment" had

made it difficult for their superiors to deny them. Some felt that they were, however, being

prevented from further advancement and commented, one lowering their voice to a whisper,

about the profound need to get a Black professor or at least a racially literate ally admitted into

the ranks of the senior administration. "The thing is…" the professor explained,

You know, people don't want to give up their power. And as ugly as it may seem it's

[that] people don't give it up easily or readily. That's, I think, what makes it so difficult.

That people benefit from this, the structure here, and so nobody wants to give it up—

individually *or* institutionally.

Some professors were accused by colleagues and superiors of "being exclusivist" when

they attempted to create academic events and activities that centred Black histories, politics and/

or scholarship. One professor shared that their "overachieving" had in fact caused their

colleagues to view them with suspicion. For example, this professor was criticized by the Chair

of their department when, following an event the professor had organized, the Chair received

letters from outside of the university saying that the professor "was a wonderful addition to

McGill" who they thought should be tenured:

And she immediately saw that as something that I must have orchestrated. […] So she kept probing me for 'What was so great? What was so special about your [event]?' kind of thing. 'Why do you think you're so great?' […]So that was really shocking for me because in my naiveté I didn't realize that people gun for you when you outperform them. And that should make a lot of sense, right? Because the whole history of Blackness, through the process of slavery, is that the Black person has to know their place. And their place is forever below the White person. […] But I don't know how you adjust for that, except by lowering your standards, which is something I'm not willing to do.

Professors reported feeling isolated from other racialized colleagues, and most were the only Black faculty member in their department and experienced both "intellectual and emotional costs" of "alienation and isolation." Several stated that they wished there were or had been more Black colleagues for them to work with: "I would like it to be so that it's [Black presence at McGill] not an anomaly; so I'm not the only one." Another professor spoke with emotion about holding on to their identification with their country of origin as a means of coping:

I always have this kind of defensive—now that you're asking me I'm thinking why didn't I think about it more closely—I think my safety valve […] has always been that consciously, I'm from- I'm in [country of origin]. My identity is [nationality of origin]. That is a source of comfort and sustenance, and it is also a source of defence. And so when I get up there, there's also though, even from the beginning I think I always have this kind of issue. Because I'm by myself. I don't see anyone around me. So when there are 300 students and they're predominantly White I just really tell myself that I am from this country that I really care about and that's what really matters to me, no matter what

happens in this class. That's where I get my dignity and reinforcement and […] I think

that is a source of real defence.

All professors and course lecturers I interviewed, without exception, expressed concern

for all of their students, particularly their racialized students and even more so, for their Black

students. Some had witnessed what they judged to be racist and classist decisions in student

admissions. For example, one professor shared their experience of debating colleagues about a

student candidate originally from a country in central-east Africa:

We got into this conversation about affirmative action and it was really gross, in that

there was just this equating affirmative action with hiring or admitting students who are

not as good as, just because they come from a particular group. And I was thinking 'Oh

my gosh,' I felt like, 'Is this, I don't know, *1950*?!' I was really, I was *really* upset. And

they were talking academics, and the standards of McGill, and I said—oh and *then* this

was what was so great—*she* said, "well, do you think that"—she was basically

insinuating that it would *cheapen* the university experience for others.

Professors all expressed awareness of the impacts on their students of anti-Black racism

at the university (and in academia in general), and were aware of the valuable role that they can,

have and do play as mentors for these students. One professor said, "seeing someone like you:

this is what Black mentoring is all about because [...] for every White student there are a million

mentors, and it happens automatically." Students echoed and confirmed this point:

Sometimes you just need someone to talk to about how you're feeling as a Black student

navigating the space. And unfortunately sometimes you can only do that with an

individual who understands your plight, because they share the same, being in the

position they are as a Black professor. […] McGill, contrary to belief, still has a practice

of the old boys club that inaugurates young White men into that club, if you will. So

young White men for example have [plenty] of professors that they can go to and talk to

and joke with and laugh with. (CH)

If I had at least one non-White professor at McGill then I would at least be able to see

someone who looked like myself that I can actually relate to as far as being different.

(RL)

All of the professors talked about helping Black students navigate the institution as Black

people in a predominantly White institution and system. They expressed the view that while

mentoring and working with Black students in addition to the students they are assigned creates

extra work for them, this work was/ is important and fulfilling for them. Some professors,

particularly the women, had faced significant challenges with White students at the university

who showed disrespect toward them and challenged their authority, while others described White

students as supportive and aware of the benefits of racial diversity in their educational

experiences:

My feeling is always—very, very confidently—that the presence of Black students in a

class is really, really beneficial to all the students. And I think that the younger White

students in large numbers believe that in their heart. They want to [be in a racially diverse

environment] for either deep intellectual reasons, or just [as] a younger generation that

wants to feel part of the world and prepared for the world. And so I get a lot of support

from the younger White students, absolutely. There's no question about it.

While (particularly undergraduate) students are less likely than professors to be the only

Black person among their peers and can work and socialize together in Black student

associations, they also described a heightened awareness of being racialized at the university.

Several students commented on the limited access to professors who had embodied knowledge

of racialization (that is, knowledge of what it feels like to be racialized as lived experience) and

could teach about and from Black historical, cultural and social-political perspectives. Most

students spoke about identifying Black professors in their area of study and seeking out contact

with and support from them. KB had been able to take a research seminar with a Black professor

and recalled how doing so inspired him to engage in the course and to work at an academic level

that he didn't know he was capable of. "I'd never really seen myself doing that or even kind of

imagined what that would be like," this student said, explaining how powerful an experience it

was to receive instruction from a Black professor who they felt they could "relate to on different

levels." Another student, LB, shared the following:

> rosalind: Have you had any Black professors at all at McGill?
>
> LB: I haven't, no. Which is kind of disappointing.
>
> rosalind: Do you think it's important to have Black professors?
>
> LB: Yes. I think it's *very* important. I think it's important because it shows students,
>
> Black students and also non-Black students, that Black people *are* intelligent and can
>
> have positions of power and authority. And I think they're role models. I think they're role
>
> models for Black students, but I also think they're role models for diversity in general. It

also shows that McGill is committed to diversity. It shows that McGill makes an effort to

find, I don't know, to find a diverse group of people that represent the students and that

represent intelligence, and that represent what McGill stands for. Because I think what

McGill stands for can be represented by people of many different colours. And I think

that by having a mostly Caucasian professorship and people in authoritative positions, it

doesn't really reflect Canadians.

rosalind: What *does* McGill stand for?

LB: Hmmm. Well I guess when I think of what McGill *should* stand for it's an

intellectual, academic community. Y'know, like leadership. […] I think there are a lot of

stereotypes in society. I remember talking to a former friend, and he genuinely believed

that Black people are not as smart as White people. I was super offended. And yeh, we're

not friends anymore. But I just think that stereotype is perpetuated every time you don't

see Black people in positions of power and authority. Yeh. So for that reason I think it's

really important.

Other students were less concerned about professors' racial identities than they were

about the absence of professors with expertise in non-Eurocentric histories, politics, theories and

epistemologies. LG described Black professors as "*human* resources" that are lacking at the

university, and attributed much of her academic success to her ability to seek out Black

professors for mentorship and support. For example, when she found the Master's thesis

supervisor she was assigned was not available to her or particularly knowledgeable about Africa,

she sought support for her work from a Black African professor in the department. She met

regularly with this professor, who kept her up to date on African politics, introduced her to

additional mentors, reviewed her writing and critiqued and challenged her thinking: "There was a

connection there and he took me under his wings." BR described a similar experience of

developing a strong working relationship with a professor from the Caribbean:

> He's originally from [nation] in the Caribbean, and so he became more of a mentor to me.
> I had a closer relationship to him than I did to my supervisor. Maybe being from the
> Islands, maybe we, I guess we hit it off immediately; being from the Islands I guess we
> could relate to each other. So I think we had a good rapport. He'd always give me very
> good and sound advice. And I guess in more ways than one he was more influential to me
> than my supervisor was or is.

> As LG explained: "the more someone looks like you, sounds like you, or has the same

experience as you, the more comfortable you feel approaching them…So I saw this professor

who looked like me, who had similar interests, and I got in touch."

One doctoral student commented that they had never had a Black professor in university,

and explained:

> Has it made an impact? Um, yes. Yes. I was going to say no, but the truth is *yes*. Because
> when I want to bring up subjects that are culturally related, I *think* about it. I think about
> how I'm going to word it, and I think about how to make it the least hostile or the least
> hostile *sounding*, as possible. [*lowers the volume of her voice*] And you can see the
> discomfort in their faces. It is very, very obvious.

This student went on to describe a professor who "squirms, she *squiiiirms*" at the mention of

Black people and culture, as an example of "the legitimacy problem" of non-Black professors

who teach content and/ or conduct research related to Black communities but are unable "to talk about it in the context of the culture from which it comes."

Students and professors also described feeling concerned about having White professors teach about and conduct research in Africa, particularly those who do so without addressing colonialism and racism at all. While some were careful to emphasize that these White professors were "supportive" "wonderful" people and "great" professors, concern was based on their recognition of the number of Black African scholars that could be hired in this area. One student emphasized how as a person of African descent they found it "so crazy!" that Africa is "de-racialized" and treated solely as "a developing region" with focus placed on "the socioeconomics, or the health issues or what have you." This has been an ongoing concern that I had heard from Black students I worked with in the community years prior to my admission to the university. In a scathing article published in 2009, then law student Annamaria Enenajor powerfully critiqued the conception of "global citizenship" among "McGill's socially conscious cosmopolitan elite" that:

> [Represents] a colour-blind approach to explaining development and legal work that normalizes power structures based in colonial history and grants permission to lack sensitivity, ignore politics, and tell the devastatingly incomplete story of Africa as a place of hopeless darkness and death (Enenajor, 2009, p. 3).

While the focus of Enenajor's critique is student internships, the issues she raises can as readily be applied to researchers who may also be "well-meaning pluralists who '[fall] in love with Africa' and are ignorant of their own paternalism" (Enenajor, 2009, p. 3). Exposing the ways in which such attitudes and engagements with Africa merely reproduce colonial power imbalances and are "steeped in assumptions of racial superiority", Enenajor (2009) argues that "Race

matters, history matters, wealth matters" and that without critical consciousness academics risk

becoming "yet another cog in the wheel of foreign exploitation that has marred Africa's history

for far too long" (p. 4.). The majority of McGill professors teaching about and conducting

research in Africa being White and not from African countries reinforces the idea that Africa and

Africans are in need of Western saviours and experts[35]. It leads some to conclude that, as one

professor noted, "if they're not going to hire the Black Africanist […], they're never going to

hire us." There are fields of study where there are more and less likely to be Black and other

people of colour working, so it's also a matter of what disciplines and specializations are valued

and of "fighting the [European] canonical tradition."

Students were acutely aware of the ways in which professors' identities and interests

influence what courses are offered. For example, CH stated "a lot of professors did not reflect

who I was, and what I was interested in studying, and so I didn't get the courses that I desired."

She had been seeking courses that explored Blackness in philosophy, particularly those that

explored the "great genre of philosophy called Black existentialism that McGill for some reason

is sleeping on, or doesn't want to wake up to." CH felt that the significant number of White

women teaching in her department led to the inclusion of some feminist scholarship, but that in

the absence of Black professors, there was no significant content concerning race and Black

philosophical perspectives. She found the feminist course material "amazing, but feminist

philosophy isn't only *White* feminist philosophy." CH added that had she had the opportunity to

study Black philosophers in addition to the European canon, she "would have been in academic

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[35] For more on Canada's relations with/in the African continent see Yves Engler (2015) *Canada in Africa: 300 Years of Aid and Exploitation.* See also Walter Rodney (1982) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.*

heaven [and] probably would have never left university. …We *could* have studied Fanon side by side with Hegel and Merleau-Ponty and had an *amazing* class, but we never did that."

CH's point was echoed and developed further by JN, who in the 1970s had the opportunity to take a Caribbean literature class with Professor Lorris Elliot (1931-1999). Elliot was born in Trinidad and Tobago and migrated to Canada in the late 1950s to attend university. He was a writer, actor and educator, and worked as a lecturer and professor at McGill for twenty-one years from 1969 to 1990. As JN recalled:

> I was very privileged, I had Lorris Eliott. He was the *only* Black professor in the department at the time and Lorris was an expert on Caribbean literature. […] What made Lorris Elliott *so* important, for so many levels—he was a *magnificent* person, kind, generous, *brilliant*. What you get with a Black professor and *can* have as an opportunity, and I would say obviously this attaches to other racialized professors, is someone who can excavate or bring in forms of knowledge that only they can do. The most well intentioned person tossing in a Caribbean author is not the same as someone who says, 'I'm not only going to teach Caribbean literature through the lens of the West, but I'm going to say it *has* something, a resonance, a form, unique to itself and I see that.' I would argue that you see to the spirit, to the structure of the knowledge. There is something about the experiential expertise we bring—and I say 'we' because I've now become a professor—that we bring to our work. We legitimize the work by teaching it whole.

Some students, particularly those from Canada, had a somewhat fatalistic view regarding the near-absence of Black professors at the university and formed their expectations accordingly:

Y'know how Frantz Fanon talks about the internalization of an inferiority? I'm not saying

I've internalized inferiority, but I've definitely, there's been an internalization of

circumstance. […] I'm used to the circumstances in which I have to thrive, and for me, I

do think there are more ideal circumstances, but I guess that I've internalized that the

environment can be as such. And for me that doesn't imply inferiority, it means that I

need to do more. So for me I'm internalizing that I need to do better, because of the

environment around me. I guess I need to persevere *despite* not having [a Black

academic] role model. Even though I think that in ideal circumstances you *would* have

that.

DT noted that throughout her schooling, she "always wrote about some perspective of

either the Black community in Montreal, being Black in Canada, the African diaspora, something

that related to who I was. And I also knew, even in university, that I was schooling them. […]

And that was often the comments I got, you know, "Oh, A+, great content!" "Very interesting

read!" And I thought, 'yeh, because you didn't know anything before you read my paper.'"

When I asked DT if she had sought and received any mentorship from her professors at McGill,

she laughed:

Nahhh! [*laughs*] you mean *from them*?! Why would I want mentorship from White

people who hadn't a clue who I am? What would they be mentoring me about? What is it

that they could tell me about myself that I didn't already know, which I got from my

mum, and my aunts and my grandmothers and the women in my life and my other aunts

and uncles and you know, the collective [Black] *community*?!

XX responded similarly:

> I was a bit arrogant. So mentorship? Not necessarily mentorship per se. I was very determined, I was very driven, I knew what I wanted, I knew what I knew. And I can remember even challenging one professor in philosophy […] I wasn't necessarily looking for mentorship per se, and I think I'd already received it, when I was younger, with the McGill students because we'd set up a reading group and I was sufficiently grounded, at least from my perspective. So mentorship no, but I wasn't necessarily looking for it.

Some students described instances in which they had challenged a professor's lack of knowledge or had defended themselves against a professor who they believed underestimated their intelligence and/ or undervalued their academic work. XX described "traumatizing" a philosophy professor by challenging his reading of Plato—first by daring to challenge him to begin with and second "by being right":

> So yes, it was kind of comical, but again, it was part of my radical approach to academia I guess. And my understanding of what the role of the student is and scholarship kind of gave me that sense of empowerment to challenge. And [that knowledge and empowerment] grew from my experience of meeting with the McGill [BSN] students when I was fourteen, but also my understanding of my history as a Haitian.

Issues of race and racialization in the context of student-professor interactions manifested in a number of ways in addition to curriculum and grades, and at times students expressed uncertainty as to whether or not negative treatment by professors was a matter of racism directed

at them personally or a matter of the professor exploiting their power that was itself racialized and in most cases, male (Monture, 2009).

MR described a professor for whom she had worked as an undergraduate student in the 2000s, with whom there was an "element of bonding" that she felt was in part because the professor was a person of colour from a working class background and: "I think he just felt he could talk to me about that in ways that he couldn't talk about it in front of his other colleagues and students." MR explained how the professor abused his power over her, highlighting the interlocking power relations that shaped their relationship:

> He was kind of fucked up and sexual harassing a little bit, like I was too young to understand what was going on but I look back and there were definitely moments where I was like 'no, I could get you fired right now if I was wearing a recording device.' And I had an email where he was like, 'If you get this to me by tonight you can have my second child.' I don't know, if someone wrote that to me now, with what I know, are you kidding me? … So, yeh, that was an issue. *And* he never paid me on time!

Reversing the more common male professor-female student gender dynamic, BT described one of the very few professors from whom he received mentorship in the late 1950s, as a woman named Dr. [R.]: "She wasn't typical at all, but she took a *real* interest in me."

> BT: I'm still looking for Dr. [R]. That was my sweetheart. She was an older lady; she had a thing about Blacks and Indians.
>
> rosalind: She was a White woman?
>
> BT: Yeh! [*imitating a woman's voice*:] "I don't know why I have this skin, it's not nice. I wish I was like *you*"—She'd say it in class; a class of White Canadians and middle

classes! That was a little kind of embarrassing for me [but] she didn't care, y'know? She

had this thing and she used to spend all her time and all her holidays in India"

Thus both MR and BT were subjected to fetishizing comments by professors in positions of

power over them. While such experiences are not exclusive to Black students, when they do

involve Black students they are racialized by longstanding stereotypes about Black sexuality (i.e.

fertility, virility and availability). Notably in both of these instances the professors involved—

one racialized, the other a woman—were arguably disadvantaged in relation to the dominant

White, patriarchal culture of the university. Relations between professors and students thus often

reflect the top-down, racialized and gendered power hierarchy that shapes the culture of the

university and can leave students, particularly young racialized students, feeling vulnerable and

powerless.

     While BT had fond memories of Dr. [R.] and the attention she gave him, several students

felt ignored by their professors. As one stated:

> I had the impression that they didn't even care to acknowledge the experiences of non-
> White students in their own class, because for them it was not an important topic. So they
> really didn't care. It's not to care; for me it's just as bad as discriminating. [...] I felt like
> they didn't really care about whether or not our experiences were heard or acknowledged,
> it wasn't what they valued, they didn't really give it a thought; that's what I felt.

Another student told me about being in a class in recent years with a White male professor who

was arguing a point about free speech and asserted that "the idea that racism is a form of

violence is just ridiculous" and that "it's gotten to the point that if I tell somebody I don't like

their hair, they call me a racist." The student explained:

> And I'm sitting beside my friend […], the only other Black person in the class and she's
>
> got these beautiful Bantu knots tied up on her head, and I'm sitting here with my locs and
>
> everything and I just started to laugh! I just started to laugh, y'know, […] it got to the
>
> point where it's just like, I'm not gonna' engage anymore y'know?

Cumulative experiences of being made to feel invisible at some times, and being subjected to

racialized (and gendered and sexualized) attention and racist microaggressions at others, led

some students to feel devalued overall. Professors were seen as particularly powerful in this

respect, able to set the tone of classroom interactions and subtly reach out to racialized students.

RL explained that all of his professors were White and that he had felt ignored and devalued

until a woman professor "used her privilege to turn it around":

> I always made sure to sit in the back of the class […] That was on purpose, because, I did
>
> that, because I didn't feel valued enough to speak up and say how and what I feel and
>
> speak my own mind, in general in the university setting, and especially here at McGill.
>
> So I just said, might as well, if you're invisible, in general at McGill, you might as well
>
> stay invisible. So that's what I did. I always used to sit in the back of the class because I
>
> felt like other people, whether they be White students or professors, they wouldn't care to
>
> hear about what I think [or] how I feel.

He then took a class taught by a woman professor who was "conscious of the non-White experiences of students" and spoke about racism and systemic oppression in her lectures. "She really made me feel like I actually belonged at McGill for the first time in my life."

> She actually encouraged me to speak up in that class. And once I raised my hand once, she wouldn't let me go! And she'd ask me all these questions and so I feel that she was, kind of a mentor to me. Someone I could really relate to and I could trust that she wouldn't just dismiss me because I'm not like her.

Other students also described White women professors, usually identified as feminists, who reached out to them and provided much needed support. As one of these students recalled about a teacher of postcolonial literature and theory, "her being a feminist and her and I sharing similar ideologies […] I could talk to her about anything, I adore her."

Conclusion: Expectations Meet Experience

In this chapter I have begun to demonstrate how institutionalized colonial legacies I described in Chapter Four continue to impact Black people at the university. Most participants had idealized expectations of the university largely based on its extensive history and reputation as an elite institution. However, once within the university environment this institutional history and elite status is revealed as deeply racialized, causing some Black students and faculty members to feel marginalized and excluded. Several participants described being disturbed by the university's celebration of its colonial origins and glorification of James McGill. This was particularly troubling to students who were raised and schooled in Canada, where histories of colonialism and slavery are typically erased and denied. Black Canadian students were also more

likely to be coming from working class backgrounds than international students, and thus were

more likely to struggle with interlocking racialized and class-based disadvantages. On the other

hand, people from middle and upper class backgrounds and those who had previous lived

experiences of British colonial cultural norms tended to find the culture of the university more

familiar and as such, somewhat less destabilizing.

The comments of participants in this study highlight and lend further support to a body of

research confirming the unpaid and unrecognized labour that Black, Indigenous and other

scholars of colour perform in the Canadian academy (Henry, Choi & Kobayashi, 2012; Monture,

2009). Black professors should not be hired in order to serve as role models for Black students,

to serve as 'race informants,' or to meet "diversity" quotas at otherwise White universities.

Rather, more Black professors should be hired to contribute to the range of teaching and research

perspectives and methodologies; to expand the breadth and depth of knowledge production

whatever their fields of interest and expertise. While thinking of Black professors as 'role

models' can promote tokenism and narrow conceptions of success, Black professors can and do

provide essential *mentoring* for Black students. As Adelle Blackett (2001) argues, drawing on

writing by fellow critical race legal theorists Richard Delgado (1992) and Lani Guinier (1997),

mentoring is a form of friendship. It is "very much about building relationships across

differentials in age, experience, power with the explicit purpose of expanding the life options or

advancing the career of the mentee" (Blackett, 2001, p. 277). As Blackett observes, spotlighting

the important role that mentorship has always played in academic success further exposes the

myth of meritocracy (see Chapter Two). While my argument is not that Black students cannot

receive effective mentorship from non-Black professors, comments from interviewees

demonstrate their desire for these sorts of relationships with Black professors and their understanding of how such relationships will aid them in their careers.

The ongoing devaluing and exclusion of non-European knowledge and non-White professors and scholarship in university courses and curricula (see also Warner, 2005) sends students the message that what they think, say and write will not be valued either. This creates pressure on and in some cases motivates Black and other racialized scholars in the academy to focus their teaching and research on matters related to racialization and on revaluing non-European peoples and their experiences, only to then risk being characterized as preoccupied with race. As one professor described: "we're [perceived as] hysterically identity-obsessed and all these White scholars who do everything on Whiteness and never name it are somehow just working neutrally." It is the pervasive Whiteness of the university that re-inscribes race and creates a heightened awareness of one's Blackness; as African American writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston wrote in 1928: "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp White background" (Hurston, 1979).

In the next chapter, I discuss how participants encounter and interpret the dominant culture of the university in relation to the expectations it places on them and work it requires of them. In so doing I continue to unpack the nature of the perceived "Whiteness" of the university as it relates to settler colonialism, racialization, class, gender and nation.

Chapter Six: Socialization and Anticolonial Identity Work

You're socialized in such a way, that for some, that socialization looks like preparation

for the real world. And I guess that's essentially, scarily, what McGill did. It prepared you

such that, for me, socialization looked like never fitting in. And it looked like difference.

Looked like having to accept what was. Accept it or change it. But knowing that if you're

seeking to change it, it's gonna' be a long road; it's gonna' be a difficult road and

probably a very lonely road. But you make the choice. And so I feel like that's the

socialization that I experienced. In terms of what a McGill graduate was supposed to look

like, as in *be*? I don't know. That's a good question. I have no clue, but whatever a McGill

student is, I guess I just don't feel like that student. So whatever they are, I feel like there

are some people who went to McGill and can claim McGill, like: 'that was my alma

mater, that's my school.' I can't do that. I don't have anything, I don't have any McGill

memorabilia, my diploma is sitting in the same envelope that I received it in, in my

suitcase, that I packed, when I left Montreal. Me and McGill—there's nothing. There's no

love. Because I just don't feel that I am a reflection of what McGill is. At all. I feel like I

am it's anti-thesis. I feel like I am its, its *darkness*. And I like that. (CH).

Socialization refers to the formal and informal processes through which the culture of the

university is communicated to individuals; how people become aware of the values, norms, and

knowledge required for success within the institutional culture (Boden, Borrego & Newswander,

2011; Mendoza, 2008). As the student quoted above describes, the messages that some people

receive seem to be preparing them for social marginalization—"never fitting in". The student's

comments suggest how this sense of exclusion prevents the connection to the university as *hers*,

she feels she cannot *claim* it—"my alma mater," "my school." While CH describes having "no clue" what a McGill graduate is supposed to "look like, as in *be,*" her choice of words suggest her awareness of significant connections between who can claim McGill, what one looks like and who one is. Moreover, she identifies this imagined graduate as a "reflection of what McGill is." The student's comments reveal coming to terms with social exclusion and recognizing a choice to accept or to challenge and try to change it, the latter representing a "difficult and probably very lonely" struggle. The student describes her refusal to aspire to the dominant culture of the university (Whiteness) or to associate herself with it—she rejects the signifier of her "successful" engagement with the university by leaving her diploma in the envelope. Ultimately this student embraces a description of herself as the university's *antithesis*; it's *darkness*.

> As William Tierney (1997) reminds us,
>
> Insofar as socialization is a cultural act, […] it is an interpretive process involved in the creation—rather than the transmittal—of meaning. Culture is not discovered by unchanging recruits. Rather, socialization involves a give-and-take where new individuals make sense of an organization through their unique backgrounds and the current contexts in which the organization resides (p. 7).

While Tierney's position fails to take into account the ways in which power works to shape socialization, his critique of a modernist understanding of socialization is important: "socialization is not simply a planned sequence of learning activities" through which people are either assimilated and become "effective members of society" or not. Such a belief relies on "a unitary view of what it means to be effective" (Tierney, 1997, p. 7) and suggests that our only

options are those of the dominant group. Certainly all participants in this study were aware of a dominant culture at the university and experienced pressure to assimilate norms and values, which in addition to White, they described as upper-middle class, Eurocentric/ British, hierarchical, competitive and individualistic. However, their stories demonstrate how while negotiating racialization and hegemonic Whiteness, students and faculty members variously integrate into, resist and refuse the dominant culture of the university depending on other aspects of their identities and backgrounds. Attending to these differences highlights that there is no essential "Black experience" of the university; what participants share is the common experience of social relations that racialize us and are organized through institutional texts, discourses and practices to (re)produce particular, historically developed social arrangements that include racialized, gendered and class-based hierarchy (D. Smith, 1987).

I turn now to a closer examination of how participants described being *and becoming* "Black" as a form of labour within the context of the "culture, ideology and mythology of Whiteness" (Bakan, 2014, p. 107) at the university. I refer to both "being" and "becoming" because several participants had not identified as Black prior to coming to McGill/ Canada, in contrast to people from Canada and the U.S. who were born into a society in which they were already deemed Black. Thus highlighting the function and necessarily ongoing construction and denigration of 'Black' peoples within White colonial ideology, I use the term "anticolonial identity work" to describe how the people I interviewed engaged, resisted and refused Black racialization (being inscribed and defined as 'Black' according to colonial notions of race) and racialized socialization (into a culture characterized by Eurocentrism and the assumption of White supremacy).

The Denigrated 'Other'

As I have discussed, dominant discourses of the 1960s represented Canada's French and English populations as two competing "races" to whom—power relations between them notwithstanding—the nation rightfully belonged. It was within this social-political context along with that of Black civil rights organizing in the U.S. and emerging colonial independence movements elsewhere that GR and BT entered the university as international students from the Caribbean. Reflecting on their experiences, both were notably less likely to explicitly name Whiteness and racism than other participants. Comments by GR reveal that for him, it was a conscious strategy in navigating race and racialization that he learned at McGill:

> What I learned in that period is […] that you have to observe the world around you, and you have to—there are things you respond to, verbally, and things you don't. And you have to read people and you have to try to understand what are their motivations. In other words, if a professor treats you in a particular way, you have to be careful about attributing motives to him or her before you understand it. One of the things I still very strongly say to people within the Black community, outside the Black community, is be very careful about labeling someone as a racist or bigot. Because it's the end of the discussion. There's nothing you can do. […] I think what I learned at McGill is that people do things for many different reasons, and you should be, as a Black person or a minority, you have to be very careful to try to really understand where they're coming from before you label them. […] Because there were people here who were very good to me, and there were people I suspected, you know, of being not so good- I couldn't prove it, and I had to sort of figure out how do I handle it, and I learned how to handle it.

In recalling his years at McGill, GR often used the term "Canadian students" to refer to *White* Canadians. Having simultaneously entered McGill and Canada as an international student, he understood himself and most of the other Black people he knew as foreigners:

> Being Black in university politics was not an issue. Part of that I think was that we were in an international university, and so people, even Canadian students after being here for a year were used to seeing foreigners, they were used to seeing Blacks.

GR connected his success in navigating the university with his familiarity with living under British colonial rule in the Caribbean, recalling another student's suggestion quoted previously about the British architectural aesthetic "setting the tone of what they expect from us in a weird way":

> McGill was very British in a lot of senses, and I guess those of us who came from British colonies—a lot of the Africans and Blacks that came here had come from some form of British colony—were actually quite used to that form of dealing with things: very non-confrontational, if you had a problem there were ways to deal with it, and you tended to avoid confrontation. (GR)

BT seems to have found the McGill environment less 'accommodating' during this era than GR had, while he too seemed to avoid the language of "race." BT described the university as "extremely conservative," adding: "when I came here at first it was a big *culture clash* for me man…" When I asked for an example of how he experienced this culture clash, BT described the

lack of value the university placed on track and field, his sport of choice. He described other students and athletes laughing at him:

> They were laughing if you took a soccer ball and went trying to do some dribbling and they'd start laughing. It was really weird. The only thing here was hockey […] So I found it in everything you wanted to try; it was very conservative, a very conservative approach to everything.

In discussing the professoriate, BT repeatedly cut himself off mid-sentence, creating breaks in his narrative within which I perceived unspoken (but clearly present) references to interlocking relations of race and class:

> Some [professors] were very, very, very obviously anti—I mean, they had this—McGill had a really fantastic reputation eh? At that time, the school was one of the international bodies you could find […] But some of the teachers were very—that's what I mean by *conservative*. Like if you didn't fit a certain pattern and you didn't have a thing they could go and check and see how you did in high school and how you did in this, and if you didn't conform to all that stuff; they would *never* […] spot talent from an unorthodox standpoint. If you were a guy that was coming up from the ghetto or some guy—but brilliant, they would never know.

Professors' inability to recognize the 'unorthodox standpoints' of racialized students—'unorthodox' in that they do not necessarily centre or privilege European perspectives, academic canons and ways of knowing—reflects colonial logic that assumes the universal nature of these perspectives and ongoingly constructs White Western civilization in opposition to African/

Black/ Indigenous savagery. In another example, JN recalled an incident in an English literature

class taught by Hugh MacLennan in the early 1970s:

> I still remember, …he talked about being at some kind of dinner gathering, which
>
> included Julius Nyerere I believe, and a number who we'd see as prominent African
>
> government leaders who had led liberation struggles. So I'm sitting at the back of the
>
> room and you can appreciate that I'm thrilled to hear this, *until* his next words were "and I
>
> found them so civilized!" I *remember* what he said! I was *beside myself* with temper! I
>
> picked up all my things and I walked out of the classroom. Then I realized, this is not
>
> gonna' go. This is *not* gonna' go. And I went and I told him.

Laughing, JN described wondering "who the freakin' hell" MacLennan thought he was

"referring to some of the greatest leaders from the African continent as *civilized,*" and referred to

this as one of those moments at McGill when her "head was on fire." But JN also added more

solemnly that the incident made her feel "terribly diminished:"

> It wasn't just the statement; it was my disappointment. I was in that class with *Hugh*
>
> *MacLennan* because he'd written *Two Solitudes* and I was interested in it. So I'd gone in,
>
> because I had this respect for the man. I'd gone in because I felt so privileged to be in this
>
> English Lit program that had these amazing people, only to realize that in saying this he
>
> didn't understand anything about me as a Black person. And I knew I wasn't in an African
>
> or a Caribbean literature course. But I expected fundamental respect and it wasn't
>
> forthcoming.

JN said that her father had prepared her to deal with incidents of racism:

I'd seen my father—every time he had to deal with something having to do with racism and me, my father always took me. So I was always present when my father was dealing with another adult. Because, he said, "you need to learn how to do these things." He was highly conscious. So there I was, not because I was arrogant, but because my dad had told me, when he sent me off to university, that I was capable.

Different personalities, emphases and gaps in memory, and storytelling styles among my interviewees notwithstanding, I note that JN's narrative involves a clear and contextualized naming of racism. Her time at McGill followed the SGWU Affair and anticolonial and Black Power activism of the late 60s. By the early 70s it certainly would be much more difficult to assert "being Black in university politics was not an issue."

People I interviewed with experiences of McGill since the late twentieth century were considerably more explicit in naming racism and critiquing White supremacy. RL for example, was very clear in identifying "Whiteness" and its value at the university as he described his recent experiences:

I really noticed that I felt like I was the Other, but people weren't doing it, like people around me here at McGill, people were not doing it on purpose to make you feel like you were different. It's just the way it's set up; the way McGill's set up, and the way the environment is, and the students, and the life at McGill, just makes you feel if you're not part of Whiteness or if you don't value Whiteness—'cause that's one odd thing though, a lot of non-White people, whether they be students or professors, anyone at McGill, even if they're not White, I feel like if you can value Whiteness and kind of put Whiteness on a pedestal, then you can fit in. That what I've noticed. But it's not me. I'm a really pro-

Black person, pro-Black and […] I like to see my people succeed, and not just be ignored

and made to feel irrelevant. So I didn't feel comfortable doing that, but I noticed some

other Black students, and other non-White students have no problem fitting in here

because they value Whiteness above themselves.

When asked if he could explain this point further RL offered the example of Black students who

he felt, due to internalizing "White supremacy," will not engage with their Black classmates,

"they just ignore other Black students":

So this one guy would acknowledge everyone else, but not me. Which I thought was

really, not self-hatred, but close to that. Okay? Because I guess I reminded him that he

looks like me, and he didn't want to see this mirror reflection by looking at me, or

acknowledging me. So it's like running away from yourself.

RL's comments suggest that in order to integrate and succeed in the university culture Black

people need to demonstrate their willingness to value Whiteness, and that for some students this

may mean a form of self-effacement that requires the avoidance of other Black people. At the

same time, they also speak to his perception of race as a determining factor in whether not only

White students, but also Black students would acknowledge and interact with him. In his

research examining Blackface performances at Canadian universities, Philip Howard (2015a,

2015b, 2016) similarly found that for some Black students, proximity to Whiteness entails

distancing from Blackness. Supporting and lending nuance to RL's analysis, Howard identifies

this as a "colonially motivated rejection" that reflects efforts by Black students "to be accepted

as fully human by being one of the boys, who are normatively White" necessitating both

"distance from Blackness" as well as overlooking its derision (P.S.S. Howard, 2016, n.p.).

Being and Becoming "Black"

The complex ways in which perceptions and experiences of Black racialization are

shaped by culture, nationhood, class and gender clearly emerged as I interviewed people from

various backgrounds. KB commented that he had heard many Black—particularly

international—students claim: "I didn't know I was Black 'til I came to McGill!" Generally

students from countries in which Black people form the majority said they had not thought of

themselves as "Black" until they came to Canada. Expressing sentiments I heard from several

students raised in Africa, LG explained: "I was born in Africa, in [country], and race wasn't—

well everyone looks the same, so race isn't a—it's not something I was ever aware of to be

honest." This student said that studying law had made her more critical and aware "of the role of

race in this society." People raised in the Caribbean shared a similar perspective. When I asked

BR if he'd thought of himself as Black when he was at home in the Caribbean, he laughed and

said "No, no, no! Of course not!" adding that being part of a racial minority in Canada or the UK

(where he had studied previously) "you really feel the difference."

> I think it can be a bit unsettling. I think initially, especially in my experience, I mean it
>
> can be a bit unsettling. I guess it's not only the colour thing, but I guess it's also the other
>
> cultural norms. […] When I did my undergrad back home, I mean again, [in a]
>
> predominantly Black [environment], I mean the issue of race doesn't even come up. But
>
> here, I think it's often spoken about.

Two students who had been raised in Caribbean and African countries reported that it had taken a couple of years in Canada before they began to recognize racialization and how they were perceived as Black people. LR, originally from a Caribbean country, clearly stated that she "became a racialized woman at McGill" when she began teaching and faced racism from White students. After receiving comments about her Blackness on course evaluations, LR "began to feel as if somehow the [university] was not welcoming to me anymore." However, rather than confirming her subordination as a Black person in this society, because this was not her usual understanding of herself or her place in the world, LR's experience was an anomaly that she set out to understand:

> Because I figured this couldn't just be about *me*, it had to be something *bigger* than me, and so now I've done all this research and I understand, *of course* it's not about me. So now I kind of feel, I could say, back into my skin [laughs], back into my self; that yes, these are spaces that do belong to me.

This approach allowed LR to empathize with her students, given that she had grown up in a relatively homogenous environment herself: "So I understand how it is for them to see somebody who they don't expect to see in the position of authority representing the university. That is a big contrast to what they expect." Critically, this approach permitted LR to re-channel her feelings of hurt and anger into a critique of the university and the lack of preparation her degree program provided for her. For LR, the silence around issues of race—"Nobody talks about the experience that you as a Black person are likely to have in a predominantly White institution"—and the lack of professors whose lived experiences would have made them able to anticipate this issue, were responsible for "the most *painful* experience" she had at the university. Her experiences highight

the difficult work of depersonalizing and naming racism while focusing ones critical and analytical gaze on institutional practices and systemic critique. Moreover, her ability to do this work relied in part on her understanding that "this couldn't just be about *me.*" This refusal to be identified with and by a colonial definition of Blackness in the service of White supremacy reflected an understanding of herself grounded in self awareness and rootedness in the history and culture of her country of birth in the Caribbean and supported by her ability to research the gendered and racialized nature of course evaluations (e.g. see Bunjun, 2014; Lazos, 2012).

Several participants asserted that the erasure of Black histories and presence from Canadian school curricula, mainstream social-political discourses disadvantages Canadian Black youth and students. LG, who grew up in an African country, expressed empathy for her North American colleagues who she described as having had "more bitter experiences about race" and consequently in their "formative years" had developed "hostile relations with this dominant group," making them highly perceptive of and sensitive to racism:

> That's in contrast to me, who grew up without even thinking about race, and […] I'm only now realizing my race is important. Maybe people do treat me differently, but even when people treat me differently race isn't the first thing that comes to my mind.

Black Canadian "identity problems."

Participants who had been at McGill in the 1960s and current students alike observed these dynamics. GR described Black Canadian youth of the early 1970s as having "real identity problems," explaining they had "no respect for their own history as Black people, and frankly in some ways had no respect for themselves as Black people. Because they didn't know their own

history." RL, a student at the time of our interview, offered a similar comparison in relation to

his interactions with other Black students at the university:

> I was born in Africa, I came here when I was ten years old, […] so I have this link, this
>
> attachment to Africa in my roots. I'm Black, but non-White students who were born here
>
> and were raised in this White supremacist country—and when I say White supremacy I
>
> don't mean in a racist or bad way, just the Whiteness thing, White is valued. So if you're
>
> born like that and raised like that and you see that in the media everywhere you go, it's
>
> easy for you to just fall into the trap, and just believe that okay well, maybe White people
>
> *are* better than me, so let me also try to cater to them, or cater to this idea of Whiteness to
>
> fit in in this country.

Even SB, born and raised in Canada, invoked these dynamics in describing herself as an

undergraduate student in the 2000s:

> I was very clear of my heritage and very proud so I didn't come in like other Black
>
> students who might have been confused, from Canada. I very much identified with the
>
> Caribbean and African students at McGill who were very proud of their heritage and
>
> knew who they were.

Such comments reflect longstanding stereotypes, perceptions and tensions in Montreal Black

communities regarding national, cultural and political differences, particularly between

Canadian-born and Caribbean-born Black people (Israel, 1928; Potter, 1949; Handleman, 1964).

Moreover, these differences have been promoted and exploited by the Canadian state (Affan,

2013; Austin, 2013) in ways that reinforce stereotypes about Black people, support national

myths about Canada and undermine Black anti-racist organizing and resistance across ethno-cultural and class differences. These comments also suggest, however, that Black Canadian students continue to be disadvantaged by the historical and ongoing erasure of Black people's perspectives and experiences from dominant Canadian histories and social discourses.

A strong sense of belonging and of cultural and/ or national identity can provide Black students with an important foundation from which to navigate the university. Several first generation Black Canadians said they grew up in "Caribbean homes" with a strong sense of self and of belonging to their parents' country of origin and to a Caribbean disapora community. DT, who can trace her family's history in Montreal back several generations, attributed her confidence and resilience to her upbringing and the opportunities for mentorship she had accessed within the Little Burgundy Black community. This grounding helped to mitigate the potentially destabilizing nature of experiences of racialization in the university environment. As DT put it:

> I think it's so critical that we ground our youth. I cannot tell you how helpful that has been for me—or maybe this is what I've been saying—it's *sooo* critical to be grounded, and the younger the better. I think the community has done itself a disservice by not—by making the assumption that—I don't want to sound elitist, but the Eurocentric kinds of education that we have in our schools does not ground our children. What it does is create a mis-education of our youth. And some kids can ride over that, but that's a small minority. The rest really, really need to understand who they are, which Eurocentric education is just not going to give them. How do you create confident, well-structured adults? You ground them in who they are.

Managing Interlocking Stereotype Threats

Some participants responded to the dominant culture of the university by emphasizing and asserting their Black identities, cultures and politics while others put a lot effort into minimizing their differences from the dominant. However, most described some concern about how their White peers, colleagues and professors might read their bodies and behaviour through the lens of negative stereotypes, and several talked about navigating tensions between racialized visibility, invisibility and hyper-visibility. In this way especially students seem to be impacted by what researchers have described as stereotype threat (Steele, 1997, 2010; Inzlicht & Schmader, 2012): the threat that their behaviour will confirm a negative stereotype about them and the group with which they are identified. While stereotype threats are complex phenomena beyond the scope of this research, what is significant here is that these threats can be experienced in relation to one's self-concept, one's perception of the group to which they belong, one's reputation and the reputation or perception of the group with which one identifies (Shapiro, 2012). Such threats can compromise Black students' sense of belonging and ability to succeed academically whether they respond by reinforcing or attempting to mask their difference.

Comments by several of the students I interviewed suggest the significant work that can go into minimizing the visibility of difference and compensating for racial stereotype threats. Canadian students were particularly concerned about interlocking race and class differences as they tended to be from less affluent backgrounds. One recent student in particular spoke extensively about how anticipating the perception of others had shaped his behaviour at the university. He described how he tried to avoid being identified as an athlete because of stereotypic assumptions about Black people and athletes being less intelligent. He said he was "wary of saying I like rap or R&B all the time, because I think that brings with it certain

stereotypes as well [… and] I don't want to lead them down paths that they might conclude

things." Although this student enjoyed the free vegan meals provided on campus by the *Midnight*

Kitchen collective, he did not like for his peers to know this. If they were to find out, the student

would declare he was "cheap," which he described as putting a "disclaimer on it…so that people

don't frown upon it, so people can laugh about it":

> I think [I'm concerned about] the assumption that I come from a poorer background, that
>
> I'm not *as* wealthy, and if not that assumption, then I think it's the assumption that maybe
>
> they do see me as coming from privilege and maybe I'm taking advantage [of the free
>
> food]—I guess I don't want them to have that dialogue, or to think about that, so I just put
>
> it out there immediately that I'm sort of a cheap person so that's all they can think about.
>
> So I don't want them having a dilemma [about] how to position me in their minds.

For this student, managing stereotype threats did not always mean avoiding them. He stated that

sometimes he chose "to play up a stereotype, as opposed to fight against it" as a protective

strategy, "almost like a shield":

> If you act, sometimes, the way people expect you to be, they'll leave it at that. So it's
>
> almost like a shield to use as well. If you accept the way people perceive you, and you
>
> know that's not who you are but you play it up so that they stop their commentary. I've
>
> done that in many circumstances as well.

The comments of another Canadian student, CH, reveal how interlocking stereotype threats

associated with Black womanhood kept her constantly aware of "the littlest things" she'd do:

I think that one thing that's really interesting is that for me, the experience of double consciousness in terms of my race—well, I guess even a triple or quadruple consciousness—of being Black, a woman, and also from a low income neighbourhood. It would be the littlest things, […] like I would always feel displaced if I was talking with my hands, or if I used slang, or if I got loud. That I couldn't do that at McGill [meant] that I couldn't *be me* at McGill.

The impact of such self-conscious, self-policing in order to 'fit in' to the university environment should not be undermined. As a Black young woman from a "low income neighbourhood," CH described moving through the university with a sharp awareness of how these aspects of her identity combined to call into question her 'right' to be in the university. Moreover, her Blackness challenged dominant notions of ideal womanhood (see discussion in Chapter Two) and her class background caused people, including Black students from more affluent backgrounds, to question her intelligence. As she explained:

I think that one thing that was very difficult in terms of being a Black woman who did come from a lower socio-economic status was the way in which I always felt like my intelligence was being questioned. […] So I always felt like I had to *perform* a certain Blackness that was not my own, in order to…be seen as an intelligent individual. And that can do a lot to an individual who goes to the same school as everyone else, but feels like her intelligence is constantly being questioned because she doesn't perform Blackness in the way that is acceptable I guess, for the wider McGill community.

Describing her experiences with international Black students at the university as being most

strongly impacted by issues of class, CH noted that they often corrected the way she spoke when

she used "Black American vernacular" and they said things to her like "You're not Black like *us*,

you're like, *Black*-Black!"

Participants identified Black women's hair as a remarkably persistent and consistent site

of the "social devaluing" of Black women's aesthetics (Collison, 2012), racialized othering and

fetishism. As KB observed,

> Definitely there's sexual elements to [it], y'know, talking to my Black friends who are
>
> women here, they're always having issues with people touching their hair, y'know,
>
> getting right up in there y'know, very *touchy feely* sort of thing…

Another student commented that they noticed how many of the Black women in their faculty had

changed their hairstyles since their first year at the university, "to incorporate the weave, in order

to have their hair look more like what has been normalized: the flowing hair." Supporting this

student's suggestion that such hairstyle decisions might be shaped by the dominant culture of the

university, Annette Henry (2015) has written about how "Black women's unstraightened hair"

continues to be a powerful racial signifier in the Canadian academy and how hers is regularly

seen as "transgressive and unruly" (p. 598). As a professor, Henry (2015) has received comments

such as "Isn't there something you can do with your hair? You know, to press it down a bit?" (p.

598). Many students I interviewed commented on their White peers' preoccupation with their

hair, reporting being asked what their hair felt like and whether it was "real." One student noted

that Black "hair is a point of reference" distinguishing Black people from one another in the eyes

of White people and that changing her hairstyle had caused some White people at the university not to recognize her.

KB linked the obsession with Black hair to that of students dressing in blackface—as had happened at an undergraduate Halloween party on campus in 2012 (Corbeil, 2012)—and further to regular occurrences of blackface performance in Québec and Canada (Dauphin, 2013; Howard, 2015a, 2015b; Nelson, 2013):

It's almost as if *because* [the university is] an extra-White space, it's like those sort of things become even more popular—because they don't see Black people? I don't know, I'm still trying to work through it, in my own head, but absolutely, and what a disturbing thing to have happen, especially it's almost like it's a blackface renaissance that we're living through. […] Charmaine Nelson [2013] writes about it as, there's a reason why blackface emerged after abolition y'know, it has to do with a way of asserting power over the Black body, saying, 'okay you're not technically enslaved anymore but we can still lynch you, we can still make fun of you,' right? And so I'm curious, as to why now it seems to be emerging anew. But then again maybe that's just my perception that it's emerging anew, maybe it's just been going on the whole time and I just wasn't aware or noticing it, but because I'm here now, I'm noticing it.

KB's emerging analysis suggests the broader project of locating, labeling, categorizing, controlling and containing Black people. The construction of Whiteness requires the presence of the racialized Other to define itself against. The ongoing denigration, devaluing and domination of Blackness is thus necessary material in the construction of White hegemony. Racialization highlights skin colour and hair as reliable dominant signifiers of Blackness, marking the racial

Other. However, anxiety around this presence evokes behaviours by members of dominant groups that seek to fetishize and contain it, to remind Black people of our assigned social location at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. As those subjected to what Claudia Jones (1949/2011) called the "super exploitation" of interlocking relations of racism, patriarchy and capitalism, Black and Indigenous women are arguably the bodies most out of place as knowledge producers within the patriarchal White settler intellectual environment (Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald & McKenna, 1991; Carty, 1994; A. Henry, forthcoming; Mogandine, 2002; Monture, 1986, 1995, 2001; 2009, 2010; Ng, 1993; Samuel & Wane, 2005; M.S. Smith, 2010; St. Lewis, 2001; Wagner, Acker & Mayuzumi, 2008; Wane, 2002). Indeed, several Black women working as professors, course lecturers and teaching assistants said that their knowledge and authority had been questioned by their students, especially by White male students (see also, Douglas, 2012; Nelson, 2011). In some cases these women felt that their racialized, gendered bodies in and of themselves had been disruptive to their teaching. As one explained:

> I think the stereotypes of Black femaleness are very much operative in the university. So I've gotten from students and from colleagues, either through direct statements or it's been implied, that I am the angry Black woman. And I could be whispering in front of the class, I could be crying up there, and I'll have students say "she was yelling at us". […] Y'know what? My *body* is yelling at you. You see me, and you have an experience of what you *think* I am, through stereotypes from things like TV […] And so my body to you, is alarming, or discomforting, or something, in a way that makes you to fall back into the safe space for you, of seeing me as always already angry.

I, like countless other Black women educators, have also faced this phenomenon of an apparently

'yelling body' while teaching at the university (see also Bunjun, 2014; Douglas, 2012; Lazos,

2012). On their evaluation of a course I recently taught on critical social theory a student stated

that they would have like a more varied selection of assigned readings as the majority I assigned

were from a Black feminist perspective. Reviewing the assigned readings in response to this

feedback I realized that just two of the twenty-five readings I had assigned had been about Black

feminism and/ or written by Black feminists, if anything representing an *underrepresentation* of

Black feminist thought given its profound contributions to critical social theory. As a professor

described:

> You end up performing this colonial surveillance on your*self,* to be so sure that you
>
> *never,* y'know, do *anything* out of line, because you're so hyper-aware of the ways that
>
> they're going to come back and bite you. But again, that doesn't even work. Because a lot
>
> of times the perceptions are so false and so racist and they're not based on anything in
>
> terms of reality, in terms of what your actions actually are.

Most interviewees were more concerned with politics than with identities per se; that is,

they understand their experiences as having been organized by racialized social relations

interlocking with heteropatriarchy[36] and class hierarchy rather than inherently predetermined by

their identities as Black people. However, while Black people may understand the heterogeneity

and fluidity of our various identities, racialization as Black within the university context is based

on White settler colonial ideology—hence the need for anticolonial identity work and, as I

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[36] Heteropatriarchy refers to the power relations that create and maintain a gender binary that
privileges heterosexual men whose performances of gender identity match their biological sex
and conform to normative patriarchal expectations. See also A. Smith (2006).

discuss below, imagining and building new possibilities. The daily activities of Black people at the university can involve navigating a maze of racial stereotypes related to how they dress, what they eat, the music they listen to, how they speak, their physical strength, their intellect, and how much money they have. Not only do Black students and faculty members engage in and manage an environment shaped and characterized by White hegemony, they also participate in a range of interpersonal and institutional work to promote change and construct alternatives.

Antiracist Construction Work

Navigating the highly racialized institutional environment not only requires constant self-examination and self-censorship, it also takes the form of rigorous compensatory social work and what I am referring to here as antiracist construction work. This work involves developing strategies to minimize racial tensions and barriers, reaching across lines of racial difference to build interpersonal and collective working relationships, particularly with White people. While none of the participants suggested that Black people should be solely or even primarily responsible for initiating and maintaining such work, given racialized power dynamics it is not without self-interest. For example, LG described her determination and strategies to overcome what her father explained would be her "handicap" in law school:

> Being Black, trying to get a position in big law firms or in the government, you need to do something extra—my dad told me that. 'You have a handicap so don't just do what your peers are doing; go beyond. Because you need to go beyond to even be equal to them.'

Hence LG committed a great deal of time to serving in leadership positions, sitting on committees, playing on sports teams; participating in "easily over ten extra-curricular [activities] every year," for which she was recognized with awards and further opportunities. "Law school is like high school," she explained, "it's like cliques." For LG, the "old boys' club" represented little more than a White patriarchal clique that she navigated as such—socially and through academic/professional networking. Hence she emphasized both academic and social involvement ("I go to every party, I *plan* all the parties, I live with them, y'know?") as a way of conditioning her peers to "see beyond color […] and then they don't feel, for lack of a better word: guilt-tripped." LG thus used her outgoing personality to become socially popular with her peers in addition to being an actively engaged colleague. From her perspective, her flurry of activity jarred her White peers into recognizing her as 'one of them' and thus permitted them to transcend their perceptions of Blackness. Illustrating this point, LG explained how she had taken one of her best friends, a White man from her faculty, to a National Black Law Association event. Following the event:

> He said to me, […] 'I've known you for three years, and I've never thought of you as belonging to this community of Black people. Like I always just saw you as [LG], one of us, like, but you actually belong to *this* community!' He said that to me. After a whole weekend of Black empowerment, and Black! Black! Black! Black! He's like, 'Wow, I did not know this kind of community existed. And that you're a *part of it*. Y'know I always just saw you as *one of us*.'

The normative Whiteness of some universities creates an environment in which Black bodies *as* Black bodies appear out of place and hence often cause discomfort. As Sara Ahmed (2012)

demonstrates in her study of racism and diversity in universities in the UK and Australia, it is

subsequently the one who inhabits this body "who must work hard to make others comfortable":

> You have to pass by passing your way through Whiteness, by being seamless or
>
> minimizing the signs of difference. If Whiteness is what the institution is oriented
>
> around, then even bodies that do not appear White still have to inhabit Whiteness
>
> (Ahmed, 2012, p. 41).

Thus the sense that KB described, that there is an "inherent contradiction" in our being here as

Black people. For some, this threat to our identities further roots us in 'Blackness' and pushes us

to (re)define it for ourselves, part of what I have called anticolonial identity work. For these

people, the palpable Whiteness of the university can make tangible and identifiable social

relations that may have been more difficult to understand and confront outside of the university

(G.-E. Galabuzi, personal communication, March 13, 2014). The powerful potential of this

process is in how assertions of Blackness at the university and in Canada in general can unsettle

White settler possession of the nation, opening space for different understandings of nationhood

and what it means to be Canadian (Razack, 2002; Walcott, 2000).

The stories of law students pointed to this dialectical relationship between Blackness and

White settler nationalism as it relates to and informs the law in Canada. Several referred to the

importance of both Black representation and critical race legal theory in combating systemic

racism in Canada, and several described collaborating with White colleagues in this regard. All

had been or were involved with the Black Law Students' Association (BLSAM). MK described

his participation in the BLSAM, emphasizing the importance of a range of Black organizing and

activist pursuits:

The Black Law Students Association […], I mean we looked at things like how to increase the Black population on campus in the faculty, where is outreach done, organizing high school visits and to particular high schools when we do that- it was focused on those kind of things. […]

People are in law school for all different kinds of reasons, no matter where you're from and what background. So, you won't find a whole crew of people who want to change that system. They want to learn how to *succeed* in that system. How do I benefit, right? So part of the push [of BLSAM], which is also a valid push, is how do we increase representation in law firms, in corporate law firms! How do we get more Blacks in corporate law firms?! Right? Which is a valid point y'know? Is it where I'm going to, *personally*? No! [But] do I push and do I agree with that analysis? Yes, because the root of that analysis is racism. And y'know? How does the school deal with that and how the firms deal with that? […]

And you would hear stories about people going in to interviews—I remember in particular, a person who was a year older than me, going in […] to hand in their CV a couple of weeks [before their interview] and the reception desk being- "*Oh,* good, the *messenger boy's* here, the messenger boy's here." And he was like "I'm *not* the messenger boy. This is my application!" Do you know what I mean? *That* was the focus in law school, and having other Black law students also who had gone through the law school experience and also the firm experience (so they had the application experience) come talk to us and tell us what it was like and strategies that helped them. And all that stuff which some people would say, that's not political—it *is* political! That's very

political; it's challenging racism. At different levels, but at the root of it it's challenging racism.

LG found that when it came to antiracism many of her White colleagues in law "not like they're afraid, but they just don't understand how they would contribute." She found she could play a significant role as a member of both BLSAM and the Law Students' Association (LSA) in promoting and generating support for Black students' concerns and initiatives. She said that when she brought up issues related to racial equity in this way, her colleagues were eager to support what she proposed. Her goal in this work was to make herself as a Black woman and the issues she cared about as visible and audible as possible. While in so doing she provided service for the university and arguably took responsibility for work that White students could have been doing to inform themselves, LG understood her actions as career networking and as service to the law profession: her visibility and 'bridge work' as a Black woman in McGill Law could encourage and pave the way for others.

> At the admissions event this year, I'm a student ambassador. […] Which means that now I've stood there with two White people to these newly admitted people, who have been given offers and are trying to make a decision. And now they've seen me. I remember there were two Black girls in the room. And now they know that there's someone who looks like me at this faculty. Now if I wasn't on the LSA, I wouldn't have been chosen to go and stand and represent and be the ambassador for [potential] students to try to get them to come to McGill. But now those two girls have seen me. So Black, people of colour need to be involved in, again for lack of a better word *more mainstream* opportunities, because otherwise, it's still going to be us versus them. And you're not

getting more allies, and you won't be sought out for opportunities that, opportunities to

make change, like this example.

Affinity Groups, Allies and Political Coalitions

Many students I interviewed were involved in organizing with non-discipline specific

groups such as McGill's Black Student Network (BSN), the McGill African Students' Society

(MASS), and Community-University Talks (C-Uni-T). These groups were described as

providing much-needed opportunities for Black students to meet and engage with one another

and to pursue social, cultural and political organizing from a collective base. While my

discussion in this section focuses on students' experiences, in some cases professors described

organizing events with and supporting the efforts of these groups as well.

The Black Students Network.

Students who were at McGill in the 1990s and early 2000s talked about what a powerful

organizing base the BSN had been for them. The BSN was formed with the support of the

McGill Students' Society in the mid-1980s, and from its origins was involved in a campaign

opposing McGill's support for and investments in Apartheid South Africa (deGannes,

Flemmings & Warner, 1985)[37]. BSN members maintained a strong presence in the campaign,

and by the early 1990s had formed their own Southern Africa Committee to organize popular

education about the apartheid regime (Hudson, 2014). Continuing in the tradition of Black

student activists of the late 1960s, the BSN mission included attending to the interests and

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[37] An anti-Apartheid divest campaign was well under way at McGill by this time and received
regular coverage in the *McGill Daily*. The *Daily*'s representative on student council was also the
first chairman of the Students' Council Committee on McGill's Investment Policies in South
Africa formed in 1979. See Sheppard, M. (1979, October 10). South African investments
questioned. *McGill Daily 69*(20), p.5.

concerns of "Black students at McGill *and in the greater Montreal community*" (deGannes et al, 1985, p. 5. Emphasis added).

The BSN of the 1990s and early 2000s was primarily a political and educational group. As one interviewee explained, "The Caribbean Students Society were the ones who had all the dances, they had the parties, and we were doing more like education and activism stuff." The effectiveness of the organizing and activism of the BSN during this era reveals how historical and Black community-based grounding allowed for ongoing learning from one generation of students to the next. BSN members of the early 1990s were in contact with former student-activists of the SGWU era (Austin, 2009; Hudson, 2014) and subsequently mentored incoming students. Hence with the support of a network of former students as well as activists outside of the university, the BSN became known for its political and educational initiatives, including hosting speaker events with Black intellectuals as well as community service with Black youth, particularly in the local Little Burgundy community. The group established an annual Children's Day, inviting Black youth onto the McGill campus to encourage them to pursue higher education, an annual BSN Black History Month event that continues at the time of this writing. Beyond this, VR had been involved in the 1990s and reported that "a lot" of BSN members also served as tutors for children at Tyndale Community Centre [http://www.tyndalestgeorges.com], "so there was kind of, like a piece that felt *very BSN*, where we'd all be volunteering at Tyndale in the afternoons and stuff like that and [we'd] take people who were not from Montreal down into the [Little Burgundy] community, so that was pretty special I think."

A participant in this study, XX, was one of the Black youth who benefited from BSN outreach in the 1990s; it offered him access to popular education as an adolescent that would not

only encourage him to pursue university but would shape his expectations of and experiences at McGill. As he recalls:

> My expectation [of McGill] was very much based on my experience when I was fourteen and older with the BSN. [I expected] that there would be a strong and activist student life that I would be able to immerse myself in and become an agent of change, both within the confines of the university but also beyond, within the broader Montreal community and perhaps even beyond that.

XX expressed a strong sense of gratitude toward the members of the BSN, not only for helping lay critical foundations that prepared him for university, but also for their attention to creating "accepting and pro-LGBT Black" learning spaces that were "particularly important and impactful" for him as someone who identifies as "gay or queer, depending on the day." Having previously been silenced when he tried to raise the issue of "discrimination faced by Black LGBTs" at a Black community centre, XX recalled how:

> To be in this space where there was this understanding of how homophobia intersects with racism and the importance of validating all of our experiences, that was very powerful for me, even if I had not even or did not identify at that time or realize that I was a queer person. So that was important. So very positive and an intellectually edifying experience with the McGill Black Student Network.

When XX became a student at McGill himself, he made the Black Student Network (BSN)—as a queer-inclusive, Black centred space—his base of organizing:

It was very vibrant; we were the movers and shakers and we were recognized. BSN was

recognized at that point throughout the university student community and even by the

Senate and the President, as being a force to be reckoned with [and] that needed to be

taken seriously.

The sense of empowerment produced through developing critical consciousness and becoming a

political "force to be reckoned with" was very striking in students' descriptions of their political

work with the BSN. VR, who was not from Montreal, recalled how she became more active in

the BSN in the mid to late 1990s after friends visited her from out of town and were denied entry

into a local nightclub:

We were looking for what to do about it, and I met [a member of BSN] and he was like:

'Here's the office, here's the fax machine.' He was telling me about human rights

complaints and it was kind of like somebody gave you the keys to a whole new situation.

I think that's when I got more involved, versus just going to meetings and stuff like that.

The community and political orientations of the BSN during these years reflect both a rejection

of individualism and containment within McGill's "bubble" and the daily broader social

injustices faced by its members. For example, a local student from Little Burgundy described

being surprised to learn in the late 1990s that their affiliation with the prestigous university did

not serve to protect them from racism in the community:

[Student]: I was very proud to wear my McGill [faculty] jacket and I lived in [Little]

Burgundy, but I often would get stopped when I wore that jacket, and I used to think to

myself—

rosalind: Sorry, *stopped*?

[Student]: Stopped by police. I used to think it was really strange. Because I thought that now that I went to McGill, the police would leave me alone. We often got stopped in Burgundy because they could. That's just the way it was. […] I always thought that when I wore my McGill jacket I felt like I had this cape, and that they wouldn't talk to me because I'm a McGill student and what do you *mean* Black people can't go to McGill, right? So I used to get highly offended by being stopped by the police when I was wearing these McGill items. I was that very proud McGillian; I used to wear my sweater, my McGill sweats, and I used to get extremely offended when I got stopped. […]But then I came to the realization that when it comes to police brutality it doesn't really matter what country you're from or what island—it's the colour of your skin. It didn't matter what station I was in life, if they wanted to stop me they were going to stop me. [This realization] didn't decrease my power in McGill it just increased [my awareness of] the reality that I was always going to be in the battle of being a Black person. No matter what I was doing in my life, they were still going to look down on me.

As did others, this student saw the BSN as a collective site from which to develop analysis and act on such political issues. Echoing this feeling, VR described her involvement in the BSN as "the positive side of how race impacted [her] experience" at McGill:

I feel kind of more blessed than some [students from] communities that didn't have a place like the BSN to go to. I know a lot of people went to school and it was just going to school, they had some friends and that was it. But I came out with a lot more because of [the BSN]. […] I had the BSN to go to, I had a community.

MK similarly described his organizing and activism outside of his formal studies as "almost like a lifesaver being thrown to me":

> And when I talk about that I'm talking about Black Student Network, it ended up being my lifesaver. That's where we were *questioning* the system, and we were questioning the system we were *actually experiencing*—we were questioning *McGill University*.

The BSN was and is also distinguishable as a group for all Black students regardless of national origins. For SB, who was a member as an undergraduate and again when she returned as a graduate student, this made the BSN the best fit for a Black Canadian woman:

> I chose BSN because they were the umbrella group. I didn't want to be part of the Caribbean student society because I felt it only dealt with Caribbeans and I didn't want to deal with MASS, which is McGill African Students' Society, because I felt that only dealt with African needs. But I felt like BSN was kinda' like the umbrella organization that was friends with everybody, so I preferred that. I've always been like that. I prefer an organization that can deal with everybody's needs as opposed to specific. Not that specific needs don't need to be addressed but I preferred being in the commonality as opposed to the differences.

RL shared SB's assessment of these groups from his perspective as African:

> Because I was really shocked to see this White crowd everywhere, it also led me to […] join two student organizations here at McGill: the first is MASS, McGill African Students' Society, and BSN, Black Students Network. […] Most Black people in MASS,

I mean the people who are really involved in MASS, are Africans. And everything that

we do is just really African. Even if we're not from the same country in Africa, we still

understand each other—the ways, the ways of speaking sometimes, the conversations that

we have sometimes, it's really just *African*, globally, like in general. Which is really

different from the Black Student Network.

These comments and others, by students who were members of MASS and/or the BSN recall

distinctions between African and Canadian Black students' experiences and perspectives overall,

as I discussed earlier. While there is always an implied (ancestral) link between 'African' and

'Black' and some people do use the two terms interchangeably, "African" is tied to a particular

land base and particular sociocultural and political conditions, perspectives and practices.

"Black" on the other hand, is a diasporic political identity, incorporating a range of cultures,

social and political positions and experiences.

With just one exception, everyone I interviewed talked about the importance of being

involved in and maintaining links to local Black communities and community organizations.

Underscoring Patricia Monture's (2009) assertion that academic assimilation "pressures us to

stand outside of our communities" (p. 95), several people—myself included—find that academic

norms of competitive individualism heighten the need to remain connected to and grounded

within our non-academic communities. KB described being prepared to "resist being assimilated

into the McGill bubble" based on earlier experiences of attending private school: "it's like it only

takes [*snaps his fingers*] a couple years before you become totally alienated from your

community, or at least distanced from your identity." My own destabilizing first semester at

McGill left me with this strong need for community, and led me to be involved in several

overlapping affinity groups and coalitions which I discuss in what follows.

GSMC, SOCM and C-Uni-T.

Between my first and second semesters at McGill (2011-2012), I was involved in

discussions with other students that led to the co-founding of three groups. Two of these were

affinity groups directly related to student activism and the Québec student movement: the

Graduate Student Mobilization Convergence (GSMC) and Students of Colour Montreal

(SOCM). The third, Community-University Talks (C-Uni-T) was a response to what another

Black doctoral student in Education, Cora-Lee Conway and I described as a "lack of Blackness"

at McGill and in our schooling experiences overall. We envisioned C-Uni-T (pronounced "see

unity") as a collective of people committed to accessible education informed by anti-colonial and

critical race thought centred on Black people's knowledge and experiences. Initially drawing

heavily on my pre-existing relationships in Montreal Black communities, C-Uni-T has grown to

involve students from McGill and Concordia, professors, artists, community-based youth and

community workers both French and English speaking. As the name suggests, our primary aim

was and remains to create spaces within which students, academics and local Black community

members can be in conversation with and learning from one another. In this way, the collective

has been a bridge keeping me and other (particularly local) Black students connected to people

outside of academia.

GSMC and SOCM were more directly related to the events of November 10th (see

Chapter One)—the enormous student demonstration all day, followed by the police storming of

McGill's downtown campus. Both of these groups addressed significant gaps in previous Québec

student strikes. Graduate students were underrepresented in campus activist groups overall,

which were largely organized around an undergraduate "mobsquad." Over the winter break that

year, another graduate student, Sunci Avlijas and I initiated the GSMC to organize with and

mobilize other graduate students at McGill in preparation for and during the upcoming strike.[38]

Members of the GSMC worked closely with some of the activists in mobsquad, and several of us

attended a weekend-long "winter camp" at the beginning of January 2012 that had been

organized by and for students and activists. The winter camp consisted of presentations,

workshops and training in preparation for the student strike. I met more activists and learned

about the history of the Québec student movement and about street tactics and participating in

demonstrations and direct action. SOCM was formed based on the experience and foresight of

another student-activist, Myriam Zaidi, who had been involved in the predominantly White,

predominantly francophone movement for several years. Myriam anticipated the need for

racialized student-activists to form a collective base from which to support one another and make

ourselves and our concerns visible and audible. Members of SOCM attended demonstrations and

conferences together, co-authored publications regarding our experiences, and worked with allies

to pass a motion at the May 2012 congress of striking student associations holding movement

spokespeople to a formal position supporting anti-racism and anticolonialism in education

(Ferrer, Hussain, Lee & Palacios, 2014; Palacios, Hampton, Ferrer, Moses & Lee, 2013).

Reflecting on the establishment of and my involvement in these groups calls my attention

to how together they formed a net(work) of support and comradeship that addressed the

alienation I felt as a Black student at McGill, as a graduate student involved in campus activism

and as a racialized student in the latest iteration of the Québec student movement.[39] Membership

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[38] For more information see "2012 PGSS Strike" at http://discovermcgill.ca/tiki-index.php?page=2012+PGSS+Strike

[39] C-Uni-T's website is at http://c-uni-t.org/

in these groups and others was overlapping, which facilitated solidarity across differences. Cora and I were both members of GSMC, hence several other members of GSMC were aware of and supported C-Uni-T activities. Members of GSMC also went on to work together in faculty level associations and for the teaching assistants labour union (see AGSEM, 2013). Through our work, most of us became involved to varying degrees with the established activist campus-community around the *McGill Daily,* CKUT and QPIRG (see below). Moreover, as activist students and faculty had organized to support striking workers at McGill throughout the fall, some of those workers (and many of the same faculty members) supported student activism throughout the spring. Hence, as was the case for several others in these groups collective organizing and activism provided me with a multifaceted learning community within which my experiences and knowledge as a Black woman, a community worker and artist were recognized and valued (Hampton, Luxion & Swain, 2014).

The alternative campus community.

Highlighting the interconnectedness of the university and the communities within which it is located and to whom it is accountable, an alternative campus community geared toward students exists, consisting of groups that facilitate and support community organizing and social justice activism on and off campus. Of these, the *McGill Daily* student newspaper, CKUT radio station and QPIRG McGill were mentioned most often by interviewees and have been most significant in my own organizing and activism. As a volunteer-run independent student newspaper, a non-profit campus-community radio station and an autonomous public interest research group with an environmental and social justice mandate, these three organizations

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For a more on the work of GSMC, see Reflections: PGSS Strike, 2012 at http://discovermcgill.ca

receive funding through McGill student fees but are not under the direct control of the

university's senior administration.

     McGill Daily.

     The *McGill Daily* has often been a media outlet used by Black students to raise

awareness of issues concerning them and their communities, and since the beginning of the

1990s has published a Black History Month Special Issue or Supplement. Several students I

interviewed had published in the paper, and two had held positions, although overall it was

consistently described as generally dominated by White students. Speaking about the 1960s and

1970s, GR recalled:

> The *McGill Daily* was an institution in itself and an important institution. And it was a
>
> *good* newspaper, it was very good. But there were no Black people on [the staff]. I don't
>
> know of any minorities who were on it. I don't think this really had to do with an
>
> exclusionary policy on the part of the *Daily*, I think it was, again, to some degree a lot of
>
> minorities didn't see themselves participating in it, and in some ways, it's a little bit of
>
> this question when you look at the CBC for example, you don't see a lot of Black people
>
> on the CBC [either].

     The *Daily*, as an alternative institutional archive dating back to 1911, awaits further study

beyond the scope of this dissertation, in relation to the histories of Black students and

communities in and around McGill (on the activist journalism of the *Daily* see also Mills, 2010,

pp. 144-46; and Mowbray, 2010). Reading through back issues of the paper as part of this

research, I was struck by how the content of several articles from the 1990s (particularly those

regarding student activism in Québec) could have been written on the days I was reading them

with very few amendments. This highlighted the tremendous importance of community organizers and activists documenting and having access to histories that enable them to critically interrogate "the sense of newness one often experiences about new campaigns and actions" (Choudry, 2015, p. 25, see also pp. 66-80). Articles in the *Daily* documenting Black student presence and activism against institutional racism at McGill and within broader society are sparsely distributed throughout the issues overall, but offer invaluable critical insights into particular historical moments. Especially given the erasure of such histories in mainstream media and institutional histories, a searchable archive of *McGill Daily* articles written by and about Black students and communities could be invaluable to Black communities within and outside of the university. When I shared these thoughts with a participant who had recently been a columnist for the paper she responded: "I think it would have been *beautiful* to have read articles by these individuals and seen that like, I'm not—I'm *not crazy*, for lack of a better term."

CKUT.

CKUT was founded in 1987, replacing campus-based Radio McGill with a licensed campus-community broadcaster. This status requires the station to provide programming that reflects and engages local and underrepresented communities—not only those of the university, but of Montreal and Québec. The station provides programming alternatives to mainstream, corporate funded and controlled media. It is important to add that campus-community broadcaster licenses "do not exist in many countries and came to being in Canada after a long struggle and largely thanks to a long history of community radio broadcasting by and for First Peoples" (Marouf, 2014). The creation of CKUT had an enormous impact on me as a Black Montrealer in the 1990s. For the first time my friends and I had access to a local radio station that played a significant amount and range of Black music and had local hosts—several who we knew—who

discussed Black community and political issues. The station also began collaborating with the

BSN for Black History Month programming in the early 1990s and was broadly promoted as

accessible to minority groups (Kakonge, 2012).

Several students I interviewed described CKUT as a space of Black community building

and gathering and some had been interviewed by hosts about their academic and community

work. In the late 1990s, BSN member Adrian Harewood worked as the Station Manager (1996-

1999) (Kakonge, 2012), and it was interviewees from this era at McGill who mentioned CKUT

as one of the hubs for Black students. Harewood's initial involvement at CKUT was in

programming, and part of what appears to have been a larger social, cultural and political project

throughout the 1990s of Black students working from the collective base of a politically engaged

and highly visible BSN (see also Hudson, 2014).

Highlighting links between the representation of Black people in campus media and in

national media as GR suggested, at the time of this writing Harewood is a CBC journalist based

in Ottawa. Due to restructuring however, Harewood was CKUT's last Station Manager. And

while CKUT continues to have a strong representation of Black radio hosts and Black

community listenership, it has also been criticized for a persistent racial hierarchy wherein the

vast majority of paid staff have consistently been White (Khan, 2009). As Gretchen King

explained to me based on her extensive work at the station as a volunteer, a staff member (News

and Production Coordinator from 2001-2011) and member of the Board (2011-2015), "Over the

years, CKUT has become more White and not like the days during Adrian's time when CKUT,

as described to me, was mostly a Black-run station." Having eliminated the role of station

manager, the station is now "collectively managed by a board working with a programming and

steering committee." While there are "many long running, popular shows on air hosted by

people of colour," racialized volunteers are much less represented in collective management as paid staff and on the Board. As King has long argued, the chronic underrepresentation of racialized people among the staff and Board members is inexcusable given such a "vibrant community of colour participating at CKUT" and given that Black people host the two shows on air that "bring in the most money and listenership (West Indian Rhythms and Samedi Midi bring in 50% of ad and on-air fundraising revenues)." After years in the 2000s during which the staff was exclusively White, at least two people of colour have been hired in recent years (including a Black woman), and after two years of persistent pressure and much resistance from several White staff members, an Equity Hiring Policy has been passed at the station (G. King, personal communication, May 2016).

The shift in organizational culture and the resistance that King describes might be associated with the increasing sense of precariousness associated with neoliberal capitalism, particularly cuts to funding and attacks on community and social justice oriented organizations. In the spring of 2007, the university demanded that "CKUT Radio McGill" cease the use of the university's name, and pending the change the senior administration withheld the station's funding from student fees. This was at least the third time that the administration had withheld fees in order to pressure the radio station into signing a memorandum of agreement with the university (Block, 2012). Hence CKUT complied and changed its name only to be faced in the fall of that year with the administration's imposition of an online opt-out system whereby students could much more easily opt-out of paying fees to CKUT, QPIRG-McGill, and several other social justice oriented student communities. Since this system was imposed, the station has lost increasing amounts of potential funding—$14,000 in 2007-2008; in the 2011-2012 school year, approximately $27,000—leading to the station having to cut paid hours and two full-time

positions (Block, 2012). When such economic instability and threats generate a sense of crisis, as discussed in Chapter One, racialized, gendered and class-based discrimination increases and structural inequities become further entrenched. Moreover, the defunding attacks on CKUT should be understood as part of a widespread organized tactic predominantly targeting PIRGs across North America as I discuss below (Block & Li, 2011; Frank, 2008 [pp. 89-91]; O'Connor & Stacey, 2012).

QPIRG McGill.

Public Research Interest Groups (PIRGs) were the inspiration of United States consumer rights and environmental activist Ralph Nader who in the 1970s envisioned a network of "independent consumer groups" across North America that would all contribute to a central body of activist research (Cameron & Farbridge, 1998, para. 3). Inspired by Nader's idea, students at University of Waterloo started the first Canadian PIRG in 1973, at which point there were already PIRGs on 135 college and university campuses in the United States (http://qpirgmcgill.org/about-us/history/). In Quebec, PIRGs were established as clubs at Concordia and McGill in 1980. QPIRG McGill became the first student-funded autonomous PIRG in Québec in 1988, followed by QPIRG-Concordia in 1989, Université de Montréal in 1991, and at UQAM in 1993 (http://qpirgmcgill.org/about-us/history/). The PIRGs organize and support a range of social justice initiatives and events, organize popular education and provide resources and funding for environmental and social justice working groups. As noted above, C-Uni-T is a working group, and past students in this study mentioned various involvements with QPIRG. One had been part of a student-worker solidarity group and another had participated in a woman-centred research project for credit (see QPIRG's Community-University Research Exchange at http://www.curemontreal.org/). QPIRG also organizes an alternative frosh event

each September, *Rad Frosh*, to welcome new students and introduce them to their work. MK remembered this event well:

In CEGEP a group of us started this paper, *The New Socialist Climate*, so I was looking for things and people that I could connect with on a political level. That's where my mind was, so […] I did the QPIRG frosh, the Rad Frosh. […] And I can remember people making fun of that- like, 'so what do you guys do, talk about the earth and stuff?' … [*laughs*] And I was like 'No, it's frosh; a lot of us like to drink and smoke and do that stuff but we also like to understand the context in which we're living and particularly the city that we're living in. So, that aspect was good, and also meeting people immediately, who were like-minded, and were there and saw that option and picked that option: I want to do *that* frosh. And having that option there, I was like this is cool, y'know, this is cool. […] It existed, *and* it existed in an actual structured way and like formal way [laughing]: 'I will participate in this anti-institutional thing'—as funny as it sounds, that's what it was. And that was very cool.

The fact that the PIRGs provide hundreds of young university students like MK an established space for progressive political learning and activism is certainly not lost on the university or the political right. In the past decade PIRGs in Canada have been increasingly targeted by organized campaigns by conservative students and university administrations (Block & Li, 2011; O'Connor & Stacey, 2012). QPIRG McGill has faced a sustained attack since the university administration moved the opt-out system online in 2007, the year following which members of Conservative McGill and other conservative students began organizing aggressive

opt-out campaigns to encourage students to opt out of fees supporting QPIRG (Block & Li, 2011. See also Chapter Seven).

The very presence of an established alternative campus-community within (and often against) the university—notably, "alternative" in its overall left-leaning political commitments and community orientation toward social justice—reflects the contentious nature of the university as an institution. One does not have to choose between being either an academic or an activist, a conservative normative "McGillian" or rebellious anarchist outsider. Rather, people take up their identities, social-political positions, and scholarly interests in a range of diverse and contradictory ways. Most significantly to participants in this study, "community" and "university" are not fixed, distinct and separate realms, just as "activism" is not separate and distinguishable from "community work." To view "community" and "university" as binary oppositions is to normalize the racial-class hierarchy in which universities are deeply invested (Orr, 2002) and for Black people it reinforces the notion of having to "transcend" one's Blackness in order to be an academic and/ or to gain economic stability (hooks, 2000). Popular education does not necessarily require the involvement of academics, and when students and academics are involved, they do not necessarily need to be in roles of authority and understood as experts. As critical scholars and activists have long argued, it is crucial that we recognize the academy as part of the "real world" (Orr, 2002). It is also important that Black academics can still be understood as members of Black communities (Kitossa, 2015). While this is central to personal wellbeing and academic survival for many Black people, it is also a critical foundation for challenging the competitive, possessive individualism that characterizes the "academic marketplace" (Hudson & Kamugisha, 2014). Dolores Sandoval, a Black community elder who taught at McGill in 2003 and who I had the opportunity to interview just months prior to her

death, spoke of the university's obligation to provide the conditions and environment for knowledge production that advances society and *challenges* rather than reinforces social inequity. She compared her own identity and responsibility as a "public intellectual" to that of the university as a public institution: a "moral and ethical role" of helping to explain and improve society at local and global levels, "an obligation to *enhance* understanding".

Conclusion: Navigating and Resisting Racialization and Colonial Ideology

In situating themselves in relation to the dominant culture of the university, participants described pressure to assimilate Eurocentric (particularly British), middle class values and behavioural norms. Some put much effort into minimizing their difference/s from constructed norms, while others insisted upon and worked to highlight those differences. As VR put it, "I think also as a community we're kind of resisting some of what was the socialization that maybe we were supposed to be participating in, so I don't think it was ever something that we were trying to do, to be socialized by McGill."

Several people made comments describing the university as a microcosm of the broader Canadian society and felt that it functions to prepare people to take up particular positions and roles in the social order. Elite universities are not where Black people are expected to be situated, and several participants reported that White people at the university often asked them to locate themselves in relation to their ethno-racial and national backgrounds. While such questions might not seem unusual in the context of a university with a significant international student population, constantly being asked where we are from is a very common experience of Black people throughout Canada (Ash, 2004; Pabst, 2006; Stewart, 2009, 2014; Taylor, James & Saul, 2007). Such questions serve to delineate who does and does not belong through objectifying and

categorizing people according to social relations of race and class. Such questions contain the historically grounded subtext of the much less innocent sounding inquiries such as *what are you* (as the non-White person's humanity is called into question); *how White/ human are you* (when a 'mixed race' ancestry is claimed or assumed); and *how and why have you come to be here* (in this "naturally" White space)? As I discussed in Chapter Two, the colonial construction of the human posits the European bourgeois man as the ideal civilized subject in contrast to the uncivilized, not-human Indigenous/ African, requiring what I have called anticolonial identity work.

Participants described a racialized and racializing environment at the university, within which Blackness is preconceived and denigrated as the antithesis to Whiteness. Their comments not only highlight differences between African, Caribbean and Canadian racial discourses and sensibilities but raise the distinction between identifying with an African or Caribbean nation/nationality and identifying as *Black* at the university. Moreover, differences in their experiences highlight the ways in which racialization interlocks with gender, sexuality and class. In the academic environment that privileges Whiteness, capital and patriarchy, several Black Canadian women described feeling alienated and devalued. This is not unique to McGill. Rather, it is representative of how Black women, along with Indigenous women, continue to be situated at the bottom of a racialized, gendered capitalist hierarchy throughout academia and in Canada overall (Carty, 1991, 2014; Crawford, 2007; Dua & Bhanji, 2012; A. Henry, 2015, 2016, forthcoming; Lawson, 2002; Nelson, 2011; Opini & Wane, 2007; Simms, 1992; M.S. Smith, 2003).

Organizing with student groups and working within the alternative campus community provided many participants with a vital sense of social, cultural and political belonging and

purpose, and was understood to have compensated for racialized and political gaps in formal education at the university. Important to note, the alternative campus community was not found to be free of racialized and other oppressive power relations. Rather, the political commitments of some activists cause them to be willing to be critically self-reflexive and to build learning communities and political coalitions across differences. I continue to address how non-formal teaching and learning contributes to the development of critical consciousness and political engagement in Chapter Seven. I begin by looking at how students and faculty members work within the formal structures of the university to challenge and change institutional policies and practices, particularly through service on committees. I analyze how institutional texts and practices organize these committees and the parameters of their work. When students and faculty reach the limits of what ruling relations deem acceptable and 'possible' they can and have also relied on a range of activist practices both within and beyond the university's formal structures. I conclude the chapter by returning attention to the Québec student movement of 2012 to highlight the potential and conditions of learning through political activism.

Chapter Seven: Service work and non-formal teaching and learning

Professors and students described working on a range of institutional committees as service to the university, often associated with building one's CV and/ or dossier for tenure or promotion. Such service is often considered part of the job of a professor or elected student or labour union representative, and can entail a form of service learning. For example, as a grievance officer for the teaching assistants' union, I sat on a committee to review and revise the university's Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination policy, through which I learned a great deal not only about that particular policy and how it functions, but about policy making and the function of policy documents at the university in general; significant in relation to this study. Likewise, students that I interviewed who had held executive positions in student associations and unions had also held positions on Senate and other bodies and committees that brought them into closer contact with the middle and senior administrators and taught them about institutional social relations and bureaucracy. While organizing and activism tends to be a collective endeavour, service work for the university is usually assigned as an individual role— being elected to a position or given a seat on a committee.

Almost all students and professors I interviewed had also been involved in organizing conferences, events and projects to promote Black scholarship, build a sense of community and to connect with Black people outside of the university. While students usually pursued this work through joining and/ or establishing Black student groups and associations, given their low numbers and dispersal throughout the university, professors often organized in collaboration with their students. By referring to service, organizing and activism in this dissertation I do not mean to suggest that these are three distinct and separate spheres and sets of activities; they are in fact

inextricably linked. At the same time, I find it helpful to think about these activities in terms of how they function in the context of the university: who is expected to serve and whose interests and needs are served? Who organizes and who and what are being organized through such work? What is framed as and accomplished through activism? The importance of attending to these questions is highlighted by neoliberal trends in university governance: increasing demands on professors to provide administrative service to compensate for staffing cuts attributed to losses in government funding and on students to complete their degree programs within less and less time, as well as increasing measures to monitor and discipline activist students and professors (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Downs & Manion, 2004; Hurley, 2014; Kloet & Aspenlieder, 2013; Lamarre, 2012; Smeltzer & Hearn, 2015).

Serving the University

The form of service that I discuss here primarily entails students and faculty members serving in positions on committees, often without monetary compensation (rather than higher administrative appointments such as Chairs, Directors, and Deans). Participating in executive positions in student associations provides students with experience in representational politics; serving on institutional committees and initiatives can be understood to teach students skills that prepare them for engagement in society at large and particularly for positions of policy-making and governance. The latter also provides administrative (student and professorial) labour for the university and is valued as indicative of a professor's or future academic's willingness and preparation to complete administrative work in addition to teaching and research. Indeed,

Without academics agreeing to help with administration, universities would grind to a halt. By default, we all must take a turn and step up to the plate (at least occasionally).

There's a lot of karma in academia, and helping out with administration now and then

certain can lead to good things and it's good to be tagged as a "team player." (Buddle,

2014, "It's part of the job").

Thus in many cases, service may be more accurately described as service to the university (the

particular corporation for which one works) than the broader notion of service to one's

profession (the field of work to which one has dedicated their career). This is increasingly the

case as lower level administrative positions in the university are eliminated in response to cuts to

government funding (CBC News, 2015, March 10; Wilton, 2015). It is also important to note

that not all forms of service are valued equally and that access to higher administrative positions

is gendered and racialized, with women, Indigenous and racialized academics underrepresented

in senior positions (DiversityLeads, 2012-2013; McGill University, 2010; Misra, Lundquist,

Holmes & Agiomavritis, 2011). At least two professors I interviewed felt that they had been

blocked from serving in senior positions (by White colleagues), one of whom was subsequently

denied a promotion based on not having served in one of those same positions. Moreover, as one

professor explained, while "service" is supposed to mean "service to the broader community,

academic communities, or anywhere inside of McGill," the service that is most valued by the

institution is that which meets its predetermined internal needs and priorities and the most

important positions are understood as those associated with power and money. As this professor

pointed out, this disadvantages and marginalizes professors and graduate students who wish for

their work serving communities outside of the university to be recognized by the institution as

part of their professional engagement. In what follows I examine the most common forms of

university committee work that Black students and faculty were involved in—diversity and equity work and hiring committees—and how such work serves various interests.

"Diversity and equity" work.

Most students and professors talked about their service for the university as an attempt to understand and challenge institutional racism. Some resented that because of their racialized identities colleagues often assumed that they were responsible for serving on initiatives related to equity and diversity—"I got a little bit tired of that: 'Oh we need to form, y'know, the kind of equity committee on blahblah' and y'know, everyone looks to me." But all of the professors and several of the students I interviewed had nevertheless engaged in this work. The consequences of not doing so could mean (and at times has meant) that "equity and diversity" positions remain vacant and/ or that such committees become dormant. As one student commented:

> I think it's unfortunate that the onus has to be on us to make that change, but if I had just kept quiet and gone away when they said these stupid things […] there would be no change. Coming from the oppressed side, we want it to change, so we *have* to make the effort to change, nobody's going to say 'hey, here, take this!' It doesn't work that way, and that's just the way it is. And I have no problem being the one to kind of, push on that door to make that change, because I believe that the change is necessary, and again, I have a child. My son says he wants to be the mayor of Montreal, you know? What do I tell him? You can't be the mayor of Montreal because—*No*!

Many of us thus end up serving on committees and committing much time and energy to discussion, research and generating policy recommendations that may or may not be implemented or effect change. More specifically, and as I discuss below, the ways in which

committees function in and for the university, particularly when it comes to racial diversity and

addressing institutional racism, has meant that committees are cyclically formed and reformed,

claiming to address the same issues and demands for change. In the institutional context of

various departments and faculties going through cycles of complaints, committee formation,

research, reports and recommendations, very little changes overall. One of the professors I

interviewed argued that this decentralized approach actually works against change at the

institutional level:

> Do you know how long that would take for change though? If every department has to
>
> change on their own, this will never happen. Because who's the Chair that year? Who are
>
> the colleagues that year? Is there diversity that year? Who changes their mind next year?
>
> Department by department is department by department.

This professor argued that the only way to effect structural change "is either from the very top, or

from the very bottom;" that is, if "thousands of undergrads" organized to pressure the institution

the senior administrators would have to respond (lest the university suffer negative press

coverage and a subsequent decline in enrolment for example). The other option according to this

professor is for the principal to insist on the rigorous implementation of existing policies which

this participant felt could genuinely "shift things overnight."

Based on her extensive research in colleges and universities in Australia and the UK,

Sara Ahmed has written about the "non-performativity" that often characterizes institutional

diversity and equity work. Non-performative speech fails to bring about the effects that it names;

in Ahmed's model of the non-performative, this failure of the speech act is understood not to be

"a failure of intent or even circumstance but is actually what the speech act is doing" (Ahmed,

2005, para. 3 and 2012, p. 117). In other words, the function of non-performative institutional

discourse is to (mis)represent naming as doing. Institutional declarations of commitment to

diversity and equity often work in this manner, for example when having a racial equality policy

declares an institutional commitment to racial equality that subsequently stands in for actually

practicing racial equality (Ahmed, 2005). Ahmed (2012) reminds us that "the term 'committee'

derives from 'commitment'" (p. 121) and that it is through committees that organizations

"distribute" institutional commitments (p. 123). The considerable work of forming, preparing for

and managing tensions within committees and committee meetings can become the work; the

work becomes the committee and the committee becomes a routine, an "institutional habit"

(Ahmed, 2012, p. 122). In this way, "institutions can 'do committees' as a way of *not* being

committed, of not following through" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 124). In recent years it has become clear

to me how institutional consultations can function in this way as well: senior administrators

arrange "consultations" that stall demands for some changes (such as those related to diversity

and equity) and deflect resistance to others (such as those associated with neoliberal

restructuring). The planning and scheduling of the consultation becomes the response to the

demand and when the "consultation" takes place, it often seems to represent the final stage of

implementing a policy or decision rather than part of shaping one. As one professor I interviewed

commented,

> Of course [consultation] is the catch phrase of the upper administration! When it comes
>
> to anything to do with racism it's "we're going to consult." And then they pray that you
>
> will go away. […] So that's the institutional bullshit that I've learned is a part of McGill's
>
> upper administration, who have no training and no desire to deal with issues of race and
>
> racism and just are wilfully blind to it.

The non-performativity of institutional discourse supports this wilful blindness—"the self-perception of being good blocks the recognition of racism" and in this way, the declared commitment to antiracism on its own "can function as a perverse performance of racism" through which peoples' lived experiences of racism are denied (Ahmed, 2005, para. 11).

Not only can committees serve to block action by becoming the action themselves, they also signify the border between dominant/centred and marginal groups' concerns and interests. While speaking about her work for a campus labour union, LR made comments that could apply to a range of committees considered to represent the interests of particular groups, arguing that committees can reify and/ or re-establish the marginality of certain groups:

> What I see happening now and it's sad, within say, the union, is that it's become this patriarchal organization. So much so that one of the people called me to say "we need to have a women's committee." I'm like: "we don't need any *women's committee*, we had a woman *president*—we had *two* women presidents! We just need people who are strong enough to tell those males to get out! And until you do that, no amount of having a women's committee to counteract people who are doing foolishness will help. Because you're bringing us in, in a subordinate position! Not in a position of power. And there's no way I'm going to be part of any *women's committee*—are you crazy?! No! I'm sorry. A women's committee in today's day?! No.

For LR, the solution to the organizational culture becoming too patriarchal was the stronger representation of women, requiring pushing out some "males" from executive and representative positions. Forming a women's committee in her assessment would cede space to the dominant

group, men. It would contain "women" as an issue and women as committee members in a subordinate position.

Other students and professors also described being critically selective about committee work according to their personal political assessments as well as based on time constraints and other commitments and priorities such as paid work and parenting. The personal and emotional investments involved in this work, of continuously running up against institutional "brick walls" (Ahmed, 2012, 2014), particularly for racialized women, should not be underestimated (Gutiérrez y Muhs, et al., 2012; Vakalahi & Starks, 2011). As one of the Black women I interviewed explained:

> There's a lack of analysis just about race, just about what does it do when this face walks through the door, to sit at a senate committee meeting, what does it do? What does my presence there mean when there's nobody else that looks like me? And you can sit in a meeting full of faculty and administrators and there's not *one single Black person*. Like what the hell?! *Right?!* And what does it do for and to me as a student to walk into those spaces when I am the only person of colour? Like really.

When I asked her what it did do, this student explained that such experiences generated a "hypersensitivity of who you are, and the perception of you in that space. Especially if you're there to deliver a message that you know is contrary to the running business of the day." She continued:

> These were spaces that I, of my own volition, put myself in because I thought it was important to do so for various reasons. […] These were spaces reserved for student representation, and then you get there and you realize that your face always belies you.

You're never just a student, but you're a student and you're a Black student, and you're a woman. And you carry all of who you are. And obviously there are certain points where some of those aspects of your identity are more salient than others, y'know? So, definitely being in those areas and sitting on those committees and whatever—they didn't feel like safe spaces. *At all*. […]

That was mean, putting myself in those spaces. And why I felt the need to do that [was being] wrapped up in what was going on at the moment but also me, I think, making a very active attempt to put myself in those spaces because I *knew* there would not be anybody else like me in those spaces. So I get there and there isn't. It wasn't like I was surprised, it was like: *well here we go again*. And I think it's important to try. It felt important to me anyway, to try to trouble those waters a little bit.

The question of how to racially diversify universities and achieve more equitable practices is in no way unique to McGill. It bears repeating that the achievement of racial diversity and equality in academia, especially in relation to Black professors, is an issue across Canada (Eisenkraft, 2010; A. Henry, 2016; F. Henry, 2004; Henry, Choi & Kobayashi, 2012; Henry & Tator, 2009; Li, 2012; Ramos, 2012; M.S. Smith, 2014), in the UK (Grove, 2014; Hunt, 2016; UCLTV, 2014), in the United States (Flaherty, 2015; Foster, 2005; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González & Harris, 2012; Wilder, Betrand, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013) and elsewhere. Hence, I now turn to participants' experiences on hiring committees and examine institutional texts and discourses related to hiring and employment equity. Looking at how these texts function in relation to the work of hiring committee members is geared toward

understanding how best to assess the concrete conditions and actions necessary for this sort of committee work to lead to specific structural changes.

Hiring committees.

As noted in Chapter Five, the underrepresentation of Black professors has been a pervasive long-term concern of Black students and professors at McGill. One professor I interviewed described the ongoing struggle to racially integrate the university as "a very pitiful scenario," adding that to their knowledge there were at least two *fewer* Black professors in the faculty they worked in than when they had started in their position more than a decade earlier. Several students and professors described sitting on hiring committees with this issue in mind. They found that these committees do achieve the "hiring" function they claim, however non-performativity is revealed once again when it comes to institutional commitments to diversity and equity in the selection process.

LG described how through sitting on hiring committees in hopes of effecting the appointment of a person of colour, she learned that "when they say it's *structural racism* they mean it. Like *structural*- that's the key word. And it's hard to fight against the structure." She explained that structural advantages embedded in institutional criteria construct a "best" candidate as one that best reflects the institution's values and existing profile back to itself. As other students and professors also described to me, LG observed how not only do the hiring criteria privilege candidates from the dominant group (White, middle-class, Anglophone) but also how the candidate who represents that which is most familiar and comfortable to the committee members will be perceived as the "best" match. Thus, as Anthony Stewart (2014) observes, such hiring practices entail preferential decision making that does not *look* preferential to the majority: "These decisions look 'fair,' while diversity questions and diversity questions

alone look like they (and only they) will somehow unlevel the proverbial playing field and wage

an assault on the standards of merit that are otherwise so important" (p. 80). Several of the

professors I interviewed spoke to this, for example:

> So when it comes to hiring, do I even get *let* on hiring committees? Not lately. Because if
>
> you're seen as threatening, they don't want your voice at the table. Because *you* might try
>
> to replicate yourself, instead of them replicating *themselves*, right?" (ND)

> Really in no faculty meeting have people talked openly about looking at files that are
>
> Black professors. And then on one search committee that I was in—and they don't put me
>
> in a lot for a reason—they made sure to put weaker African scholars and Black scholars. I
>
> was there! I saw all the files. And the ones that they didn't choose got jobs at Harvard and
>
> Yale. [And] by weaker, I don't believe in this merit kind of discourse, by weaker I mean
>
> the [fluency in] English is not there, that kind of thing. (MT)

While those who had sat on hiring committees had not personally seen the shortlisting of Black

candidates, all agreed that hiring committees remain strategic sites for students and professors to

disrupt decision-making based on "common sense" assumptions about who is and is not the

"best" candidate for a position. This strategy can be aided by shifting the idea of merit, as

Anthony Stewart (2009) proposes, from an implicitly universal definition to one that is explicit

and contextualized: "the best candidate available under the circumstances at this time" (p. 54).

Stewart's (2009) critical analysis of employment equity policies is also helpful here, after which

I will briefly turn to McGill's Employment Equity Policy.

In his analysis of employment equity at Dalhousie University, Stewart observes how the employment equity policy functions to shift "all responsibility for actively pursuing candidates out of the hands of the department doing the hiring" and to make candidates from "designated groups" responsible for self-identification when they apply. He contrasts this with affirmative action "in which the onus is on the organization that is trying to change its composition to act affirmatively—recruiting candidates from 'designated groups' and setting timelines for the achievement of its goals" (2009, p. 35).

As Stewart (2009) argues,

> Under the guise of "helping" the candidate, rather than improving the profession by actively integrating it, the equity policy holds the candidate to a restrictive standard to which non-designated-group candidates are not held. The "designated group member" must fill out an additional form in order for the university to "help" him or her. […] [T]here is nothing stopping the university from being proactive and taking on the responsibility of integration itself. (pp. 37-38).

McGill's Employment Equity Policy (McGill University, 2007) includes a preamble that states the mission of the university, followed by a series of declarations of commitment, a list of objectives and a list of actions through which "the University will ensure the implementation of this Policy" (p. 2). "Designated groups" are identified as "historically disadvantaged groups in Canada": "indigenous peoples, visible minorities, ethnic minorities whose mother tongue is neither English nor French, persons with disabilities, women, and persons of minority sexual orientations and gender identities" (p. 1)

The document is steeped in liberal language of embracing "diversity," while "retaining individual merit and achievement as the prime criterion for all staffing decisions," and at the same time positioning the institution as tolerant and accommodating. Echoing Canada's Employment Equity Act, it states: "employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences" (McGill University, 2007, p.1). The emphasis on accommodation, tolerance and "same" treatment can be understood to foreclose the possibility of a corrective or reparative response to "historical disadvantage," thus reproducing rather than deconstructing social hierarchy. As in other Canadian and Québec state narratives (see Chapter Two), we must ask who is being asked to accommodate and tolerate? Who is assumed to need accommodation? If we recognize that some groups are disadvantaged and yet aim to treat disadvantaged and advantaged groups in the same manner, these structural positions are maintained. Hence competitive individualism and myths of meritocracy are retained and asserted as guarantees against the change—employment equity— that the document names.

Notably, the actions identified to "ensure the implementation of this Policy" focus almost exclusively on the development of further policy, raising awareness of policy, and reporting on policy. Not only does the policy fail to name and require concrete practices that are likely to lead to the greater representation and "full participation and advancement" of members of designated groups "by eliminating direct, indirect and systemic discrimination" (p.1). McGill's Employment Equity policy goes further, to the extent of making its non-performativity explicit: "However, in its pursuit of employment equity it is understood that the University will not: Engage in **Reverse Discrimination** [… or] Impose **Quotas**" (p.2, bold text in original). From the "However," that begins the first sentence, the final paragraph of the document functions to stabilize and re-centre

the power of the dominant, non-designated groups. Having emphasized "individual merit and achievement" in the university's commitment statements and twice in the stated objectives, there is still a perceived need to assert that the University will not "engage in reverse discrimination" which is defined as "when a less qualified candidate is hired over a better qualified one" (McGill University, 2007, p.2). The decision to insert the words "reverse discrimination" and "quotas" in bold text seems to contradict or at least establish the limits of an institutional commitment to "special measures and the accommodation of differences," suggesting the university's concern with reassuring alumni and others from dominant groups. Such concerns are not exactly without cause. When McGill's Medical School began to emphasize increasing the diversity of its pool of student applicants in order to comply with altered accreditation standards in 2013, there was immediate public outcry about diversity "trumping excellence," and alumni threatened to withhold donations in response to the university's attempt (Reiter & Aalamian, 2013; Seidman, 2013, 2014).

In 2010, after being required by the Federal Contractors Program to submit a workforce analysis, the university acknowledged "some under-representation in certain groups" and developed and submitted an employment equity plan to the FCP Compliance Management Board (McGill University, July 2010). The new Employment Equity Guidelines (McGill University, 2013-2014) require departmental hiring committees to "take steps to attract" applications from members of designated groups, specifically through sharing the university's diversity and equity commitment statement, and to send applicants a four question Diversity and Equity Survey. Departments are required to interview at least one "top ranked" designated group applicant, and to complete and submit an Employment Equity Data Report to the Academic Personnel Office, reporting how many members of designated groups applied for and were interviewed for a

position, and a statement of "the reasons for which those members of a designated group who

were interviewed were not recommended for the position"

(http://www.mcgill.ca/apo/files/apo/eedr_09.pdf). In other words, the policy functions to ensure

that at least one "designated group" member, not necessarily someone who is racialized, is

interviewed.

As diversity workers interviewed in Ahmed's study shared, such policies can be useful to

the extent that they can be quoted when challenging decisions and actions that contradict these

institutional commitments and objectives (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 119-121). However, it is clear that

policies alone do not ensure or bring about employment equity. My experiences and those of the

people I interviewed suggest that hiring and other committees are most effective in supporting or

bringing about significant change when they are taken up as organizing and/ or activist

endeavours, with collective planning toward meeting clearly defined goals. I spoke to a professor

who is not Black but who told me they have "given a lot of thought to how to hire more Black

profs at McGill." This person described their work on hiring committees and how they had seen

racism, manifested in "thinly veiled questions" about a candidate's accent or the merits of their

curriculum vitae, prevent Black people from being hired. They also described an experience that

did lead to the hiring of a Black professor, shared here for the valuable lessons it offers.

> I anticipated resistance and worked very carefully and strategically with colleagues. This
>
> experience taught me that being strategic can pay off, but it is a lot of work and needs to
>
> be thought about in a lot of detail and carefully. A good knowledge of the kinds of openly
>
> and subtly racist cues and comments of colleagues should be anticipated and countered
>
> from the writing of the job advertisement. In this case, I also worked from the moment
>
> the committee was struck with colleagues who were good allies to subtly bring them over

to thinking about race and hiring, pointing out statistics about faculty of colour at McGill first, for example, and then moving to the specific situation of Black profs and the specific situation of the faculty. Only then did I move to the department level. I worked to emphasize how positive it would be for students to have a Black prof in the department and how this would bring in more and different students potentially—and not just Black students. This was all done outside the meeting and slowly. The strategies around the committee and the meetings were all very carefully planned, largely alone, some with the sympathetic members of the committee at every level from drawing up short and long lists to the day of the interviews and so on. All of the usual counterarguments were expected and planned for and the candidate/s who we brought and argued for were all ones who in different ways were able to challenge these typical roadblocks. We did experience different kinds of resistance but in the end a strong short list of all candidates of colour made the hire of a Black prof possible and, because of this, the ways in which arguments for and against candidates were mobilized looked different.

My experience shows that it is worth it not to be discouraged however frustrating hiring committees are—and to me they are! The work is extensive and I probably spent about 4 to 5 times more time than others did working on reading every single file in great detail for all of its aspects, with for and against arguments for all of the candidates as well as thinking about how all of these issues fit in with the specific question of race and the goal of hiring Black profs. Then the practical and emotional work of having long talks with White colleagues that they do not really want to have and that make them deeply uncomfortable because they don't know how to have them, both in private and in meetings. I am convinced though that all of this work is what led to the successful hire.

This professor's experiences suggest the amount of work necessary to interrupt the processes through which the dominant majority is reproduced. This work is extensive and takes time, energy and careful planning; as Sherene Razack (2001) puts it, academic "hiring is not just hiring but a political movement" with high political stakes that extends beyond the university (p. 58). Strategizing for hiring requires knowledge of the institution, racial literacy and the ability to read the verbal and non-verbal cues of other committee members and identify allies. It is also possible that White/ non-Black professors may be best placed to do this work, as Black professors noted contending with assumptions about their racial bias. Moreover, it seems to me that while students can be supportive of such a process, they do not hold significant power to coordinate such efforts.

Making informed decisions about which committees, groups and struggles to take on is always a matter of personal and political strategy. Students are at the university temporarily with the specific goal of completing their degree and some interviewees shared feeling trapped between a sense of responsibility to work for institutional change and an increasing awareness of the ongoing, extensive nature of such work. I move now to discuss a committee formed by students in the 1990s to lobby and renew pressure on the university to establish a Black/ Africana Studies program.

The Africana Studies Committee.

In the 1991-92 school year members of the BSN began pressuring the university for Black/Africana Studies and submitted an extensive proposal with letters of support to the History Department, asking for a Black history course that would serve as a "forerunner of the Africana Studies program" (Golding, 1991, p.1). The history department refused to approve the proposal, claiming budgetary restraints (Black Students' Network, 1992; Golding, 1991). An Africana

Studies Committee (ASC) formed by students in the BSN and the African Studies Program was subsequently launched in 1994 and sustained an active campaign through the turn of the century. The campaign built on and continued a struggle that stretched over three decades and "numerous attempts" to "pull the plug" on the African Studies program (Perelle, 1995, p. 4) and eliminate the African Studies major (Cook, 1999; Pyne, 1999).

Several students I interviewed were at McGill during this period and referred to their involvement in extensive lobbying efforts, fundraising, press conferences and meetings with administrators. Over the five years between 1994 and 1999, the vision of the committee had grown from sustaining the African Studies major to expanding the program to include the African Diaspora and to "reconsidering the notion of 'education'" in ways that would "surpass the teaching of ideas" and "extend beyond the campus" (Cook, 1999, p.1). While the university claimed that a lack of funds was the issue, the extent of institutional resistance to Black Studies historically (see Chapter Four) suggests what Aziz Fall, a professor in the African Studies program at the time, asserted: a "lack of political will" on the part of the university (quoted in Cook, 1999, p.12). The BSN and ASC put at least another six to seven years into the campaign, including the organizing of a congress held at McGill in February 2000, *Africana 2000*, where students and community members discussed the proposed program and how to create the conditions under which it could finally be realized (Gordon & Jones, 2000, p.5). The event included workshops and presentations by Black community members and educators including Esmeralda Thornhill, by then a Professor of Law and the first James Robinson Johnson Chair at Dalhousie University, who spoke on the topic of 'The Double Challenge of Dismantling Privilege and Opening up the Academy' (see Dean, 2000, p. 5).

Discussing the Africana Studies campaign with one student who was involved in the early 2000s, I asked how the story ended, if the university ever officially and finally said "no." The person responded **"**At least when I was on the front, there was never a no. It was never declined." The student explained that they had "passed on the file to [their] successors" at the BSN and realized in hindsight that:

It's not just Black community organizing [it's] the mentorship piece: the need to mentor the future leaders. That's something I did not do and I think [the campaign] may have suffered as a result of the fact that my successors did not necessarily have the fully developed skillset and leadership skills to really to bring that file forward, because it really required quite a lot of experience, and strategic know-how.

I asked if the student thought that the University had "waited out" the activist campaign. They replied:

Yeh, [the BSN] started leading [the campaign], and then I got on the file ten years later when I attended. So I think when I was there, there was a lot of, well there seemed to be a lot of receptivity to it, both at the level of the Dean and to a certain extent at the higher level, but again, there was development work that needed to be done, fundraising work. Developing a fundraising plan. And for that we almost needed to hire a professional development director and so obviously that wasn't done. But again, I wasn't obviously physically there with the McGill administration, I don't know what their machinations were, but I do know where we had come to at that point.

When I shared that it seemed to me as though the university never took up the Africana/Black

Studies as their responsibility, this student agreed, adding that for them personally, "there was

never an expectation that they [the university administration] would take it on as a priority at the

institutional level." The student concluded that this is why "from a pragmatic perspective,"

"whether or not that's ethical…you need sustained engagement otherwise it's going to be off the

table."

At what point does such a sustained engagement no longer serve the interests of activists?

I appreciate the organizing experiences and learning the campaign provided for those involved

(and I return to this aspect of activism below). I admire the sustained efforts for Black/ Africana

Studies at McGill and it seems clear that student activism has made it difficult for the university

to abandon the African Studies program. However, it does seem that the BSN/ASC and its

negotiations / stand-off with the university over roughly a decade became a matter of 'doing' the

negotiations /standoff. As I suggested in Chapter Four, having created the African Studies

program in 1969, McGill had positioned itself as having (already) been responsive to the Black

activism through the "raising of consciousness vis-à-vis the developing countries" of the time

(Hinkson, 2010, p.20). As an international university, being home to the country's first African

Studies program is valuable in hailing international students from African countries without

disrupting Canadian national narratives that posit Black people and racism as foreign. Finally, in

keeping the BSN/ASC in an ongoing cycle of creating and submitting proposals, running

campaigns, and searching for funding, the university administration maintained the appearance

that Black/ Africana Studies was being given serious consideration. I cannot help but recall the

plight of Ralph Ellison's invisible man, who discovers that the president of his former college

has sent him on a pointless mission in order to keep him away from the college from which

unbeknown to him, he has already been expelled—"hope him to death, and keep him running" (Ellison, 1995, p. 194).

The process of "mapping power" and realizing how various forms of oppression are interrelated and mutually constitutive is a critical one that can reveal how capitalist relations work through institutions (Choudry, 2015, p. 23). What becomes crucial may be how to strategically pursue this work such that it is experienced as "mapping" and not frantically "chasing" power. I have found myself engaged in both of these relations with power and understand that they can overlap. That said, chasing power in the university is how I describe activism that relies on the university's good faith and formal structures for change to occur. In this work, as one student explained: "There just always seemed to be another fight. Something else. And I grew weary of it. Because it just felt like it was never ending." Chasing something, one cannot necessarily see it clearly and assess how it is moving. In contrast, mapping power to learn how to more effectively challenge domination and oppression is a pedagogical practice, teaching and learning different ways of thinking and analysis through dialogue, research, action and reflection. Such a project can create a sense of individual and collective empowerment that allows people to work in solidarity to strategically challenge oppressive relations. I conclude this chapter by returning my focus to non-formal teaching and learning through conferences and activism directed toward building knowledge and collective power *with* others, in contrast to the use of knowledge to dominate and power *over* others (Choudry, 2015; Guinier & Torres, 2003).

Conferences and Congresses as Community-based Learning

In my first semester at McGill when I challenged a professor by questioning the importance of considering academic journal rankings as a determining factor in publishing she

responded by expressing her doubt that I really wanted to be an academic. At the time I found the comment hurtful and elitist and it added to a mounting collection of experiences that told me I did not belong at McGill. I now believe that the professor's shortsightedness simply did not allow her to see other ways of being an "academic" than those representing dominant ways of knowing and doing within the context of academia. But there are other ways if we choose them—almost as old as the universities themselves are the histories of people working within and against them, resisting and refusing the pressure to accept limited and limiting assumptions about the world, about education and about who and what we can become. Most of what I have learned about these possibilities has been through organizing, attending and participating in "academic" gatherings that work to refuse dominant norms of academia and create ethno-racially diverse, community involved, culturally rich and intellectually stimulating events.

Black students and professors who I interviewed described organizing conferences and other gatherings to maintain and continue to build community relationships as well as to fill the void—or Black hole—in the curriculum and university experience. One participant described organizing several conferences "about Black people that appealed to people that did not have anything to do with the university" because of a personal sense of responsibility to the non-academic Black community:

> For me, the way I was raised, is that education is this privilege that opens certain doors for you, but I know where I came from and I know where my parents came from. So, I'm totally aware […] of the little shifts in someone's trajectory, that can make the difference between them accessing education and not. […]

I come from that understanding of how polluted and bankrupt Western education is. So what is the point of me being here [teaching at McGill] if I'm not trying to undo some of that damage?

All participants who had organized conferences, congresses and/ or similar events described a conscious effort to involve members of Black communities outside of the university. Several sought to decentre professional academic "expert" knowledge and foreground the knowledge of various folks who do not work or study in a university. Others sought to highlight the academic work of Black scholars. Most integrated the arts and some form of performance within the event, and were concerned with providing space for dialogue and debate in both French and English.

In the fall of 2013, members of C-Uni-T organized and hosted a Congress of Black Writers and Artists at McGill, marking the 45th anniversary of the 1968 Congress (see Chapter One). The international Congress was titled *Create Dangerously* (after Haitian author Edwidge Danticat's [2010] book *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist At Work*) and was structured according to the sort of community-oriented model described above, with additional concern for non-hierarchical organizing and the representation and foregrounding of Black women as organizers and presenters. There were no "keynote" or otherwise singled-out guests, rather transportation and accommodations were paid for all presenters and all were offered the same modest honorarium. The event was supported by numerous volunteers, many of who were activist students at and around McGill, and we received in-kind donations and discounts from campus and community based groups and businesses. We encouraged and facilitated the donation of presenters' honorariums to campus and community groups, including DESTA Black Youth Network in Little Burgundy for which we thus raised $625. Following the event, we

produced a detailed summary report, sent out to all presenting participants and publicly available

on our website. The report makes transparent how the event was organized and realized,

including fundraising and expenses, for the purposes of community accountability and in hopes

of providing information others will find helpful for future organizing.[40]

In addition to the *Create Dangerously* Congress, annual talk forums and events featuring

Black scholars organized by C-Uni-T, I have been fortunate to be able to travel to a number of

conferences, including the EduFactory Conference in Toronto that I attended with a group of

Québec student movement activists in the spring of 2012 (see Brophy, 2012), a Black Power

conference in South Carolina in the fall of 2012[41] and annual and bi-annual conferences of the

Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) Critical Ethnic Studies Association (CESA), the

Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equality/Equity (RACE) network. My ability to travel

and attend these and other conferences was directly related to having been awarded a doctoral

scholarship (and departmental travel awards), thus having access to funds. Moreover, coming

from a working class local background, such travel was also deeply influenced by being in an

environment at McGill where extensive travel is normalized and expected. Going to the Black

Power conference in 2012, I boarded an airplane for the first time in my adult life. It is no

exaggeration to say that the learning and experiences through traveling to this conference and to

those of the BCSA, CESA and RACE since are what have held and inspired me as an emerging

academic when the dominant culture at McGill and within academia would have me believe

there is no place for me as a scholar. These experiences helped me to see the bigger picture of

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[40] A complete Congress Event Summary including this report is available at: http://c-uni-t.org/2013/11/30/sommaire-de-levenement-event-summary/

[41] *The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power Across the 20th Century and Beyond.* (21-22 September 2012). Charleston, South Carolina. (A description of the conference is available at: http://www.historicalmaterialism.org/news/distributed/the-fire-every-time-reframing-black-power-across-the-twentieth-century-and-beyond-charleston-sc-21-22-september)

academia, to realize how the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized scholars

differ and converge across institutions and nations. At the same time, were it not for my

affiliation with McGill and immersion within its culture I would not likely have had the

resources and impulses to pursue those opportunities. Attending these particular conferences

provided valuable opportunities to meet and learn from Black and other scholars and activists

and to participate in national and international network building. Moreover, travelling with other

students and activists added an invaluable layer of collective engagement and mutual support to

these experiences.

       ***Shoulda' Said* for Students of Colour Montreal.**

In the fall of 2013 members of SOCM traveled to Chicago to attend the CESA

conference.[42] I had been accepted as the presenter of a presentation/workshop titled *Shoulda'*

said: Using forum theatre to role-play for anti-oppression. The workshop took up the

improvisational comedy game wherein players improvise a scene until an audience member calls

out "should have said," at which point the player must rephrase or replace what they have just

said. My presentation/ workshop drew on ideas of forum theatre (or Theatre of the Oppressed,

see Boal, 2008) in using *Shoulda' said* to examine and experiment with various options for

responding to oppressive experiences. It also aimed to help participants think critically about

why and in what ways it can be such a struggle to find 'the right words at the right time' in

response to oppressive talk and behaviour.

The only people who attended my presentation were fellow members of SOCM. This in

itself is reason why traveling together and supporting one another is important, particularly in the

context of enormous international conferences. With their encouragement, I went ahead with my

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[42] *Decolonizing Future Intellectual Legacies and Activist Practices*. Critical Ethnic Studies
Association Conference (19-21 September 2013). University of Illinois, Chicago.

presentation and workshop, and we playfully explored various scenarios and possibilities for intervention. We were struck by how emotionally intense the exercise became at times. While I had anticipated workshop participants would be strangers, players commented on how knowing and trusting one another allowed them to abandon themselves in the role playing such that the situations we explored felt real. This experience led me to think critically about conference presentations and educational workshops in academia, why we do them and for whom. It was my luck that my conference presentation, initially conceived as part of my studies and career ambitions and intended for strangers, became an important anti-oppression community building activity grounded in caring relationships and trust. I have thought of this often, as I organize with C-Uni-T and make ongoing critical decisions about what gets documented and written about (including in this dissertation). The dominant culture of academia encourages the appropriation of everything into its realm—everything seems to become something to get funding for or to publish about. I have found that resisting this impulse is extremely important in maintaining a sense of integrity and a genuine, meaningful engagement with/in the communities I identify with and the work that we do.

A little later in the conference, several of us attended a session in which one presenter, a White man, used "the n-word" several times in the context of his presentation. We were stunned and although we exchanged non-verbal gestures of disbelief, no one said anything in the question and answer session following the presentation to call attention to his use of the word and how made us feel. (I even asked another question, challenging him on the limits of an argument he made in his presentation without mentioning his n-bombs!). However, that night members of SOCM discussed the issue. I was particularly struck by how deeply the incident had affected those who were not Black. I was moved and inspired by these activists, some of them half my

age, who expressed such a strong sense of responsibility to have spoken out. We revisited our *Shoulda' Said* workshop, noting how the environment of the panel presentation and authority of the presenter as a White male academic had intimidated us and prevented us from acting. We talked about what we could have said and done differently.

The next day, I encountered the man who had given the presentation in the hallway, and asked to speak with him. I explained why his use of the word was hurtful to several of us in the audience and why it was inappropriate for him to have used it, even when quoting others. The man listened and after we had spoken for several minutes, he apologized and asked for my contact information. To my SOCM comrades and I, the opportunity to hold him accountable felt like an unburdening of the responsibility for carrying what had happened; it was now his to wrestle with. Months after the conference, the man contacted me by email and apologized again, more extensively. He thanked me for my critique and we subsequently continued to engage with one another's work.

Academia is ripe with everyday incidents that leave people silenced by the shock and pain of racial hostility, wondering and thinking about what we/they *shoulda' said* or, as we came to prefer, *coulda' said*. Practicing strategies and intervention skills from the basis of supportive affinity groups and through role-playing exercises that deepen learning through embodied, emotional experience can be very empowering when geared toward collective organizing for change (Choudry, 2015, p. 92). Such skills help us to maintain our integrity through becoming unashamed and less intimidated to openly act on what we believe is right and wrong and in defence of ourselves. Certainly this does not always proceed as it did with the scholar at the CESA conference, often requires several rounds of strategizing and discussion, and may end without any sense of resolution. My point however, is the critical importance of having affinity

groups and collectives from which to pursue this necessary work and within which to build

allyship across differences that facilitates such experiences. In order for our educational

experiences to be in any way emancipatory, we must find ways to maintain our dignity and to

assert our knowledge and ideas. While I am not asserting that it is the inherent responsibility of

racialized people to educate White people about race, some universities and academic networks

do provide opportunities for people to come together, mindfully exchange and learn from one

another in these ways. Thus, contrary to "getting" the imagined "plethora of knowledge" within

the classrooms of the idealized university, several people I interviewed had co-constructed

knowledge across disciplinary interests and engaged in non-formal critical education in the

offices of various student groups, in the radio station, in cafés, conferences, hotel rooms, in one

another's homes and in the streets.

As XX described, the most important education he received in university was his "ability

to critique society and the world [and] more conceptual tools to do that important work. To

challenge received ideas." More specifically, he said:

> I learned how to write grant proposals, I learned how to organize press conferences, I
>
> learned how to do outreach to the media, I learned how to create a movement of sorts; I
>
> learned how to advocate effectively. So I learned how to be a more effective activist.

Furthermore, this is what he expects from the university:

> [To contribute] to strengthening democracy in a society and globally, by creating aware
>
> citizens who are capable of reading through the lines, deconstructing and reconstructing,
>
> and challenging multiple forms of oppression, corruption, whether it happens at an

institutional or state level or even interpersonally, because as people say, the personal is

political. So really creating that heightened aware citizen.

Learning In and From the 2012 Québec Student Movement

Organizing and activism entail opportunities for both non-formal learning through

popular education, such as in workshops and through the creation of informative materials and

informal, incidental learning through embodied experiences of activities such as negotiations,

general assemblies, rallies, demonstrations and various forms of direct action (Choudry, 2015).

During the 2012 student movement for example, my fluency in French increased significantly.

This was the result of informal learning in general assemblies and in action with Francophone

students as well as through following the Francophone news media, which offered more

extensive and generally less hostile coverage of the movement than the English news. My

knowledge of the history of the Québec student movement prior to 2011 was enhanced through

non-formal learning at the 2012 winter camp, through organizing and facilitating workshops and

presentations, and through producing information materials. Furthermore, for several months my

non-formal, informal and formal learning overlapped: while deeply engaged in social-political

organizing and protest action I was also taking a course, *Organizing Non-Formal Learning[43]*,

that required me to reflect, in relation to course readings and discussions, on my participation in

the GSMC as field work.

Of the students and professors I interviewed for this study who were present at McGill

during the 2011-2012 worker and student strikes, few were directly involved in the protests. One

student I interviewed was initially among the students in the lobby during the first twenty-four

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[43] Professor Aziz Choudry (2012, winter). Organizing Non-Formal Learning (EDEM 676), Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University.

hours of "6party," the events surrounding a five-day takeover of the sixth floor of McGill's

James Administration building. This direct action was a response to an attempt by McGill's

senior administration to defund QPIRG-McGill and CKUT through invalidating the results of

"existence" referenda through which students had voted to continue funding the groups and to

reinstate the in-person opt-out system (Arsem-O'Malley & Gass, 2011; Arsem-O'Malley, 2012).

The action was framed as a "surprise resignation party" for the Deputy Provost of Student Life

and Learning and involved the takeover of his offices, a 24 hour sit-in in the lobby of the

administration building, an outdoor solidarity camp adjacent the building, and two campus

rallies. 6party was an explicit refusal of the "proper" channels—i.e. non-performative

committees and consultations. As one of those involved put it, "we're here for a party, not to talk

to administrators" (student-activist Amber Gross, quoted in Arsem-O'Malley & Hudson, 2012).

The student I interviewed, KB, explained his experience and that his main reason for not

remaining involved was that a family member who works at the university saw him, pressured

him to think twice about his involvement and called his mother. The student recalled:

> I was pretty keen to stay, more just because it was a good time [*laughing*] to be honest. It
>
> was like we were there, we had professors up there giving lectures in the hall, it was
>
> y'know, I was *learning* and still very much learning about everything and who this is
>
> affecting and why these people care, why these people don't care, and I was kind of in the
>
> groove there.

As a young Black student navigating the university in the context of an emerging militant student

strike, KB described himself as a cautious observer-participant both in 6party and the student

movement more broadly. Speaking to him and other Black students I was reminded of how un-

self-conscious I had become at the time, once immersed in a collective 'student activist' identity

that neither erased nor foregrounded my Blackness. Throughout the movement members of

Black and racialized communities had expressed similar concerns about the Whiteness of the

movement (Dwivedi, 2012; Morgan, 2012; Way, 2012), a situation that members of SOCM were

very much aware of and trying to address even at the time (Ferrer et al., 2014; Hampton, 2012,

July 8; Hampton, 2012, July 17; Palacios et al., 2013). Despite the work of Anglophones and

racialized students, the movement was dominated by a large White francophone majority and

drew largely on student-syndicalist and settler nationalist political sensibilities. Without reason to

believe otherwise, many Black people assumed that they and their concerns had been excluded.

As this student tried to learn about the movement, he "didn't get a sense that there was any

sincere commitment to access for other groups, you know, for racialized groups for example."

He felt that White Québécois student activists were centred and mobilizing a tradition of

militancy in which he did not see Black people represented.

Another student I interviewed, MR, had an even more critical perspective, shaped by her

belief that "Québécois people are generally more racist" than other Canadians:

> With the Québec student movement, when it was really at the height I was very sick so I
>
> was following it but I wasn't present. It's hard because I have sympathy and of course I
>
> agree with the premise that education should be free, that the debt levels that people are
>
> expected to take on are not commensurate with the value of education. The neoliberal
>
> project has definitely taken the quality of learning away and just emphasizes metrics. But
>
> I'm sorry. Québécois politics—any time something is filtered through this kind of
>
> Québécois identity politics, it just goes to shit. And I just found that the rallies that I saw
>
> were like a lot of White people fighting for a cut back, pseudo-separatist project, and a lot

of the student associations, […] they were just like funnelled into these PQ or in some

cases Québec Solidaire, political [parties]—so it's training ground and it feels a little

gross. And the PQ sold them out anyways! So, it's just, I don't know.

Taking the differences between these and my own experiences and perceptions of the 2012

student movement seriously is important for future community organizing, popular education

and movement building. No one perspective of a mass mobilization is the "truth" and collapsing

the complexity and contradictions that existed prevents critical learning (Choudry, 2015; Reece,

2007). It is particularly important to listen to those like KB, who were interested but could not

see their way in. Living Black racialization and racism as I have all my life, how do I explain the

empowerment I felt locking arms with other students and activists, most of them White, and

defiantly standing up to the power of university administrators, the government and even to

police? Indeed in some ways it defied my "common sense," which of course—serious risks

notwithstanding—is precisely the point.

Ultimately, some of the goals of 6party and the broader student movement were met,

while others were not. CKUT and QPIRG were not defunded and continue their important work

at the time of this writing. Most activists involved in disruptions and direct action at McGill

faced disciplinary consequences and were subjected to ongoing surveillance by security on

campus, a situation mirrored at universities and CEGEPs throughout the province as well as in

the streets with police and in the courts. And as MR suggests, the Parti Québécois exploited the

energy, nationalist nostalgia and anti-Liberal sentiment of the student movement and general

population to win the fall 2012 election, a process arguably aided by funnelling the then 20 year

old President of the Féderation étudiante collégiale du Québec (FEUQ) Leo Bureau-Blouin

directly into the PQ as an electoral candidate. But collective organizing, community work and political protest reveal emancipatory possibilities that remind us that another world is possible and make such work meaningful "*in excess* of political declarations or demands" (S. Moore, 2013, p.11). Experiences of collective organizing, community work and social-political struggle can remind us that other ways of relating to one another are possible. Most importantly, they can further prepare us to work towards realizing those possibilities. When the excitement of a campaign or mobilization is over, a large part of "what sticks" to and with us and resonates is the action itself, the emotional and embodied experiences that propelled learning *in spite of* what we knew (about White people, about cops, about power, about ourselves) and despite the outcome of stated goals and demands (Choudry, 2015; S. Moore, 2013). Those feelings of hope are essential to long-term struggles within which we are involved.

Conclusion: Working for Change

Many of the student participants in this study shared that they had learned more through organizing and activism than they had in their formal classes at the university. This is partly the result of the Eurocentric curricula that push Black students to pursue self-directed learning, and in many cases is driven by political commitments that place students and faculty in direct opposition to policies and practices of university administrators. Formal structures exist within the university to address issues of concern and demands for change and many participants had worked within such structures. I have also shown in this chapter how these structures can be non-performative, specifically how it can appear as though there is movement toward structural change, when in actuality this 'movement' is limited to generating committees, meetings and reports. I contend that the work of the student-organized Africana Studies Committee at McGill

demonstrates how institutional power can be used in this way to prevent the potential for deep structural change.

In addition to working with student and activist groups toward progressive social change, several participants described the need to initiate alternative academic experiences. Many had been involved in organizing and/ or attending congresses and conferences that challenge dominant academic norms of competitive individualism and the centring of exalted experts. This has been a consistent strategy of resistance for building counter-narratives and critical alternative scholarly practice. Notably, across their wide range of experiences of and struggles within the university, participants generally did not regret having studied and/ or worked at McGill. Typical of the sentiment that several people shared, when I asked RL what he would tell Black youth about attending McGill he replied:

> I would tell my brother or my sister: "be strong and resilient and don't too much care about how you might be perceived. Because at the end of the day it's just that, a perception—you can't get kicked out of McGill because you're Black. They don't have that power over you." I wouldn't go so far as telling them not to go there, because that's also preventing yourself from growing—academically, career wise—just because of other people's bias and prejudice. That's too far; I wouldn't do that. Because at the end of the day we can still [claim] the space even though we're Black.

Finally, I have revisited the 2012 Québec student movement based on the perspectives of participants in this study, calling attention to how and why they differed significantly from my own. While several participants described being inspired by experiences of allyship and coalition building across racial difference at McGill and within the activist community around

the university, it is also crucial to remember that these spaces are not free from racialized ruling

relations. Ongoing anticolonial critical race analyses and commitments are thus necessary and

crucial to all organizing and activist efforts.

   The next chapter concludes this dissertation. I highlight the original contributions of this

research and provide a summary of my findings, emphasizing the importance of community-

university relationships and Black Canadian Studies.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have demonstrated how the activities and experiences of former and current Black students and faculty members at McGill University are shaped and organized by settler colonial and capitalist power relations. Through critical examination of a selection of institutional policy documents, reports, statements, visual texts, display practices and official histories, I have shown the active construction and reconstruction of a "culture of Whiteness" at the university based on British middle-class values and Anglo-Canadian White settler nationalism. I have documented the accounts of Black people whose collective experiences of the university span over fifty years and who have worked to navigate this institutional environment, resist colonial racial ideology and racialization, and worked for change through non-formal teaching and learning in various contexts including those of political activism. As a researcher who is implicated and personally invested in the social relations that I have studied, I have not attempted to provide a 'neutral' or 'objective' account of social relations. Rather, I have critically reflected and drawn upon some of my own experiences as part of this critical institutional activist ethnography informed by anticolonial critical race (including Black radical/ feminist) theoretical and political commitments.

Examining these relations from the standpoint of Black people in Québec higher education fills a gap in educational scholarship that has been largely based on the Ontario, particularly Toronto contexts. McGill is a unique and generative environment from which to examine ruling relations in Canadian higher education. First, the university was founded prior to Canadian Confederation and its founding and early development was supported by a network of White British / Scottish settlers who were among the most wealthy and powerful people in the

developing settler nation. McGill is thus a founding institution of Canada and particularly of Canadian higher education. Second, McGill's colonial origins and especially James McGill's having owned and traded slaves are a glaring contradiction of national myths that deny Canadian histories of colonialism and slavery. For Black Canadians in particular who are accustomed to this denial, coming to McGill can involve a disconcerting confrontation with these histories and their legacies. Third, McGill is a site and symbol of unique tensions as a wealthy, Anglophone institution within the context of a majority Francophone province of Québec and its dynamic history of class oppression and competing settler nationalisms. Finally, while McGill's student and faculty populations have always been predominantly White, Black people have attended and worked at the university for well over a century. As in Canada more broadly, this presence and the contributions of these people have largely been erased from institutional histories. This research contributes to correcting this erasure.

My research has shown that while the hegemonic Whiteness of the university can be tremendously alienating for Black students, for some the university environment also makes oppressive relations more visible and provides a site within and from which to study and learn to confront and resist them. This potential of the university environment is of most interest to me, as I see within this capacity the potential for changing conditions within the universities and the broader society. This is a radical Black philosophy of education, one that attends to a community-in-struggle and recognizes that, as Vincent Harding observed in describing the work of the Black scholar in 1974, we seek to know systems of White supremacy not to buy into them, but to know them in order to move towards new acts of building. In such a vocation, "all work is a pathway to the next stages of the struggle" (Harding, 1974, p. 17).

Despite its power and investment in White settler nationalisms and capitalism, then, the university is not merely a 'Whiteness machine' that automatically reproduces certain classes and ideologies. The university can be a critical site from which people identify, prepare to fight and do fight various forms of systemic oppression and to produce knowledge that reveals and constructs alternatives. It is a space of racialization in which Black people often experience our identity as a social "problem" (DuBois, 1903/1989)—as if the presence of Black people is what causes racism. An alternative to attempting to 'solve' this problem through erasing racialized differences and embracing (or at least mirroring) Eurocentric ideals exists in the conscious decision to 'remain problematic' (Tecle, 2014) and insist on disrupting and refusing the dominant culture of the university.

Summary

The experiences of participants in this study span over fifty years, offering insight into the university as it has shaped and been shaped by broader social-political circumstances over time. A consistent culture of Whiteness has been maintained through the mid-twentieth century era of expanding access to Canadian universities and into the neoliberal era of corporatization and decreasing access since the late 1970s. In the everyday activities of Black people at the university this 'Whiteness' is most notably experienced as a large White majority student population, a near absence of Black professors and of racially literate mentors, Eurocentric curricula, institutional colonial nostalgia, racial microaggressions, stereotyping, general insensitivity to the racialized experiences of Black and other non-White people and as the often passionate denial of the significance of race and persistence of racism. Consistencies in these experiences speak to an enduring dominant institutional culture of Whiteness, and to how

Blackness is constructed as the antithesis to this Whiteness. However, gender as well as national, cultural and class backgrounds mediate being racialized as Black. Differences in how the university culture affects Black people and shapes their activities confirm the ways in which the social construction of race is bound up with settler colonial nationalism, patriarchy and capitalism.

Black Canadian Studies.

This research supports the argument that "Black Canadian" is a particularly contentious subject position in the university context because it poses specific challenges to the Canadian settler nationalism in which the university is invested (Stewart, 2004, 2009, 2014; Walcott, 1997, 2000, 2014). Canada has been constructed as a White, and more specifically as a *not-Black* nation (M. S. Smith, 2003), hence Black Canadians at the university are situated in a space of contradiction and opposition that can be frightening, debilitating and/ or empowering.

Students and professors from African and Caribbean countries felt that their cultural grounding and prior lived experiences as part of a Black majority population had given them confidence in navigating the university. Several of these participants identified themselves nationally with their home countries and experienced a process of "becoming Black" in relation to others within the university and Canadian contexts, the longer they were in Canada. Most subsequently embraced "Black" as a socio-political identity grafted onto their prior national and cultural groundings. Black people born and/ or raised in Canada or the United States were generally more likely to understand themselves as "Black" in a more encompassing sense—socially, politically and culturally—and to have experienced Blackness economically as the bottom of a normalized racial social order. My research thus contributes to the anticolonial

project of unsettling and complicating notions of "Blackness" and its relation to "Canadian-ness."

Despite pervasive institutional hostility toward Black thought in Canadian academia (Hudson & Kamugisha, 2014), Black Canadian scholarship and educational organizing and activism persist. Many participants in this study compensated for the institutional Whiteness of the university by gearing their own work towards Black Studies and Black communities when possible, and through anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-capitalist and feminist organizing and activism at the university and with/in local communities. Through building political alliances and working with others across racial and cultural differences, some Black people at the university take up Blackness as a political identity and position in opposition to Whiteness—systemic racial hierarchy and White domination, the accumulation of resources by White people at the expense of Indigenous peoples and people of colour, and the devaluing and denigration of racialized people and non-European knowledges—as well as to "Whiteliness," a judgemental, self-righteous way of being in the world informed by the notion of White superiority (Fox, 2002; Frye, 1992). Racialization and domination are always ongoing processes and as such remain contested and incomplete. In universities, these processes take place alongside and in tension with the potential for developing critical analyses and radical politics, for accessing institutional resources, coalition building across differences and for the use of institutional power despite itself to amplify oppositional politics and extend their impact.

Community-University relationships.

Community-university relationships are a crucial area of focus for several reasons. For Black students and professors, building and maintaining relationships with community members and organizations can provide grounding and support that mitigates the alienation they might

experience in the university. Such relationships can provide access to opportunities for learning from elders, creating networks and opportunities for mentorship. Organizing spaces and events that bring academic and non-academic community members into contact and conversation across a range of differences is also of great importance in sharing skills and knowledge that further racial literacy and create spaces for questioning and co-theorizing challenging ideas and experiences. When such opportunities centre Black peoples' experiences and knowledge they are generative and edifying for all participants. Finally, community-university relationships have redistributive potential. As the organizing efforts of Black students discussed in this dissertation have demonstrated, opportunities and resources afforded by affiliation with the university can be used for community-based grassroots educational organizing.

This research demonstrates that community-university relationships provide opportunities for non-formal and informal learning, and can—and I contend should—be built into formal learning. This can be as simple as requiring students to complete fieldwork and/ or to pursue community-based projects as in the course I mentioned above. These relationships have also taken the form of formal partnerships informed by anticolonial and anti-racist politics, particularly in the field of education. This requires ongoing re-visioning and in some cases re-structuring of community-university partnerships in relation to shifting social political contexts, from those involving individual researchers and research projects to those that support various forms of service learning and internship. How can we better ensure that the beliefs, values, material needs and interests of communities and community organizations are prioritized in such partnerships? What might be the potential of educational partnerships that require the university to support partnering communities on broader issues related to education (Hampton, 2014)?

Closing Remarks

I am writing in the aftermath of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (http://www.trc.ca) and within the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent (http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/background.shtml) and recommendations by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "that Canada undertake systemic measures to better protect and promote the economic, social and cultural rights of African Canadians in the areas of unemployment, child welfare the right to health, the right to education and the enjoyment of cultural rights" (http://c-uni-t.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Canada-Criticized-by-UN-Committee-for-Rights-Violations-of-African-Canadians.pdf). As Canadian universities assert commitments to such popular notions as "reconciliation," "diversity" and "decolonization" they should be pressured beyond lip service to ensure that these stated commitments are enacted and geared toward structural change. Gestures of inclusion can and, as I have shown in this research, often have been a case of interest convergence, used to suggest a 'settling of accounts' and move on, without actually producing structural change. We should expect social-economic and political opportunities for the representation of Black individuals, as racial tokenism is key to misrepresenting and promoting neoliberal capitalism as an equal opportunity program that cuts across former social differences. To be clear however, my struggle as a Black person in Canada is not for the equal right to participate in the ongoing dispossession and destruction of Indigenous Peoples' lands and ways of life (see also L.B. Simpson, 2016). It is to participate in anticolonial, critical race feminist education, organizing and activism that ultimately seeks to re-envision and rebuild communities and institutions in ways that reject relations of domination and subordination and promote wellbeing and continued life.

Black Canadian Studies as emancipatory education.

Through the work of many dedicated Black learners, teachers and their allies, universities have played a significant role in the development of Black Canadian Studies despite their resistance. These institutions have served as spaces within and from which students and professors have pursued critical race research, organized conferences, built activist-scholar networks and created and supported popular educational initiatives with/in local communities. My research contributes to this field specifically and to a broader, transnational body of scholarship documenting how many Black people have worked and studied within and against the academy for critical emancipatory educational praxis in the face of ongoing racial and capitalist domination (Kelley, 2000; Robinson, 2000). This is certainly not to imply that one necessarily has to attend university or become an academic in order to develop Black radical thought and imagination. As I have argued throughout this research, quite the contrary can be argued given the ways in which universities reward possessive individualism and encourage distances between Black communities and Black intelligentsia. Many Black academics have recognized and insisted upon the importance of remaining connected to grassroots communities—not only based on notions of a responsibility to "uplift the race" but because these are our communities and they hold important collective memories and knowledge. For many of us, it is members of these communities who ultimately determine the value of their/our work, because it is with/in these communities that the shape of struggles for social change and social justice need be determined.

The participants in this study, myself included, continue to believe in the emancipatory potential of education. Furthermore, Black people experience racial discrimination and oppression as part of our daily lives and under such conditions, as several people noted, the

potential socio-economic benefits of a university education or career are not quickly dismissed. I emphasize informed, willful decisions in this regard and hope that this research has provided and continues to generate analysis and tools that assist people in "becoming accountable to themselves…rather than to the ruling apparatus of which institutions are part" (D.E. Smith, 1987, p. 178). I conclude then, by adding my voice to a collective call that has been reverberating for generations and traverses institutional and nation-state boundaries. It is a demand for education that affirms humanity and dignity; that encourages people to imagine and seek out roles that the colonial-capitalist social order would prevent them from playing, and to seek transformation through shattering the imagined parameters of what is possible.

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Appendix A: Call for Participants

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEWS: EXAMINING SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BLACK PEOPLE AND THE UNIVERSITY

Greetings,

My name is Rosalind Hampton, and I am currently inviting participants to partake in a study examining the structural and systemic relations between Black people and the institution of higher education in Canada, from site of McGill University in Montreal. I am a PhD Candidate in Educational Studies at McGill, and am pursuing this study for my dissertation research in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education. This work is funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec - Société et Culture, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at McGill University and my PhD advisor, Dr. Aziz Choudry.

I am currently seeking the participation of Black people who are willing to contribute to this project by discussing their experiences of McGill in an interview with me. Interviews will be audio recorded in their entirety. In addition to discussing their experiences, each participant will be asked to provide basic demographic information about themselves and their relationship to McGill (such as the amount of time they were/ have been in Québec and their past/ current status at McGill). Each participant will have the option of using their own name or remaining anonymous and to choose a pseudonym by which to be identified during interviews and in the dissemination of the research.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time up until the writing of the research. Only I, as the principal investigator, will have knowledge of all participants' names. The identities of participants who wish to remain anonymous will not be revealed in my dissertation, or in any written or oral presentation of this work. The recordings of interviews will be kept on a password protected flash drive in a secure location.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at rosalind.hampton@mail.mcgill.ca or at rosalind.hampton@gmail.com.

Please also feel free to forward this letter to people in your network who you think may be interested in participating.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Title of research project:
EXAMINING SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BLACK PEOPLE AND THE UNIVERSITY

Researcher:
Rosalind Hampton
PhD Student, Educational Studies
Dept. of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
rosalind.hampton@mail.mcgill.ca

PhD Advisor: Dr. Aziz Choudry (aziz.choudry@mcgill.ca)
Funding: This research is funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec - Société et Culture

You are invited to participate in the above named research project examining the structural and systemic relations between Black people and the institution of higher education in Canada, from the primary site of McGill University in Montréal. The study will collect and examine histories and narratives of former and current Black students, faculty and community members in relation to McGill, and examine various texts and discourses of the University that affect the lives of Black people.

Questions guiding this research project include:

a) How have Black people and communities historically engaged with and functioned within the University?
b) How do Black people describe and analyze their educational experiences at the University?
c) How have / do the University's institutional texts and discourses shape these relations? How, if at all, is the current context of neoliberalism altering these relations?

PARTICIPATION

What is involved: Participants in this study will be asked to take part in at least one interview and /or focus group discussion. Interviews will be up to two hours long, loosely structured and conversational in nature, and will be audio recorded in their entirety. Each participant will be asked to provide basic demographic information about themselves and their relationship to McGill (such as the amount of time they were/ have been in Québec and their past/ current status at McGill), and to discuss their experiences of the University.

Confidentiality and use of data: Each participant will have the option of using their own name, or remaining anonymous and choosing a pseudonym by which to be identified during interviews and in the dissemination of the research. Recordings of interviews will be saved as password protected files and stored on a USB flash drive in a secure (locked) location. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the audio-recordings, and she will be responsible for all transcription.

In the case of focus groups, please note that what you say in a focus group will be heard, and read after transcription, by the other research participants present at the focus group.

Participants will be provided with the written transcription of their interview/s to review prior to its use. The data collected through interviews will be used in the researcher's PhD dissertation, articles, book chapters, and oral presentations (e.g. classroom teaching, conferences, community forums, workshops).

Voluntary participation: Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can choose to decline to answer any question or even to withdraw at any point from the project.

Withdrawal from the study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not affect your relationship with the researcher or with McGill University. There are no expected discomforts and/or potential risks of harm from your participation in this study.

You will receive a copy of this form to keep for your records. If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher at rosalind.hampton@mail.mcgill.ca or rosalind.hampton@gmail.com
If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831.

Informed Consent:

1. I agree to participate in the research project *Examining Social Relations between Black people and the University* as described above: □**YES**   □**NO**

2. *Please indicate how you would like to be identified in throughout the interview and in the dissemination of the research:*

□ I wish to be identified by my name: _____
□ I wish to be identified by a pseudonym:_____
□ I wish to be identified by as "an anonymous participant"

3. I agree to the audio recording of interview/s and/ or focus group/s in which I participate as part of this research: □**YES**   □**NO**

I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in this study. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature_____ Date _____

Researcher's signature_____ Date _____

Appendix C: Pre-interview Questionnaire

*Please note that this information will not be presented in the study in a manner that reveals the identity of any participant wishing to remain anonymous

1. Status vis-à-vis McGill

Currently at McGill: UG student   grad student   course /faculty lecturer   prof

> *Other:* _____

Formerly at McGill: UG student   grad student   course /faculty lecturer   prof

> *Other:* _____

> *Era at McGill: 1960s   1970s   1980s   1990s   2000-2010   since 2011*

2. Age while at McGill*:   18-24yrs   25-34yrs   35-44yrs   45-54yrs   55+ yrs.*

3. Faculty *(if applicable):* _____

4. Number of years spent at McGill*:   less than 1year   1-4   5-7   7-9   10+ yrs.*

5. Status in Québec *when at McGill**:**
   lifetime/ longterm resident   resident less than ten years   temporarily in Québec (i.e. for school)*

6. Were/are you involved in any groups, clubs or extra curricular activities on campus?

> *Departmental student association   SSMU/ PGSS   McGill Daily   CKUT*

> *Black/ racialized student group/s:* _____

> *Other:* _____

7. Were/are your actively involved in a labour union while at McGill? If so which one/s?

_____

8. Did you participate/ are you participating in any University committees, or hold any official positions related to issues of equity, diversity, anti-oppression work? If so which one/s*:* _____

_____

Was/ is this work paid   -or- volunteer ? Duration of participation/ position: _____

Appendix D: Guiding Questions for Interviews

1. What did you know about McGill prior to coming to study/ work here? What were your expectations of the university? What were your first impressions?

2. Please talk about your experiences and impressions of McGill in relation to (a) your peers and/ or colleagues; (b) students/ and/ or professors; (c) course offerings and curriculum; (d) the campus environment; (e) your involvement in service, organizing and activism.

3. Were there parts of the campus that you found/ find to be more or less comfortable? If so what specifically do you think made/ makes you feel this way?

4. Did you find that your experiences were shaped by race/ being Black? If so, in what ways?

5. What if any other aspects of your identity and/ or background (e.g. class, gender, sexuality, ability, etcetera) did you find impacted your experiences and activities and how?

6. Did you feel as though you were being socialized while at the university? If so, in what ways?

7. What do you think is the function of the University in society?

8. If a Black youth who you care about, such as a child or younger sibling, asked you if you would recommend that they attend McGill, what would you say?

9. Is there anything that you would like to talk about or think that I should know that I haven't asked you?