Who is responsible for justice here? Centering the contributions of anti-racist student organizers to address white accountability in the Canadian university.

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ABSTRACT.

Who is responsible for justice here? Centering the contributions of anti-racist student organizers to address white accountability in the Canadian university.

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This thesis is premised upon the well-established understanding that universities across Canada and North America have been constructed through and are embedded in white supremacy — a historical and colonial system of power which privileges white, Euro-centric knowledges, bodies, and cultural norms and values. Examining the challenges of achieving racial justice in Canadian universities, many scholars have concluded that cultures of whiteness shape the university and pose fundamental barriers to racial justice. This results in a predominately white institutional environment resistant to the inclusion of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities. And this not only privileges white, Euro-centric ideologies, epistemologies, pedagogies, and bodies, it dually restricts BIPOC access to and belonging in the university. Using the notion of the 'culture of whiteness' as a point of departure, this work examines manifestations of, and resistance to, white supremacy in the Canadian university through a detailed case study centering the contributions of anti-racist student organizers. This thesis offers a close-up examination of how white supremacy is established, reproduced, and resisted in one contemporary urban university setting: Concordia University in Montreal. Drawing from interviews with eleven anti-racist student organizers and supplemented by reflections grounded in auto-ethnography, institutional ethnography, and participant observation, I examine manifestations of white supremacy and the conditions of student anti-racist work in the university. Centrally, on the basis of this research I argue that the responsibility for racial justice is unfairly assigned, and these assignments perpetuate rather than interrupt structural and cultural white supremacy in the Canadian university.

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To those everywhere working towards justice in the university, thank you.

And to those resisting justice and denying access to those who promise it; know that it is on its way, and that it's here — this work is for you.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

Interventions in responsibility.

This thesis is premised upon the well-established understanding that universities across Canada and North America have been constructed through and are embedded in white supremacy — a historical and colonial system of power which privileges white, Euro-centric knowledges, bodies, and cultural norms and values. Examining the challenges of achieving racial justice in Canadian universities, Henry et al (2017a) conclude that the "culture of whiteness" (309) poses a fundamental barrier to racial justice. This results in a predominately white institutional environment resistant to the inclusion of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities. And this not only privileges white, Euro-centric ideologies, epistemologies, pedagogies, and bodies, it dually restricts BIPOC access to and belonging in the university. Using the notion of the 'culture of whiteness' as a point of departure, this work examines manifestations of, and resistance to, white supremacy in the Canadian university through a detailed case study centering the contributions of anti-racist student organizers. This thesis offers a close-up examination of how white supremacy is established, reproduced, and resisted in one contemporary urban university setting: Concordia University in Montreal. Drawing from interviews with eleven anti-racist student organizers and supplemented by reflections grounded in auto-ethnography, institutional ethnography, and participant observation, I examine manifestations of white supremacy and the conditions of student anti-racist work in the university. Centrally, on the basis of this research I argue that the responsibility for racial justice is unfairly assigned, and these assignments perpetuate rather than interrupt structural and cultural white supremacy in the Canadian university.

Concordia University is a relatively young (founded in 1974) public university in Montreal, Canada and describes itself as "a dynamic, forward-looking comprehensive university. Currently Québec's fourth-largest university in student numbers, Concordia has one of the most culturally diverse graduate and undergraduate student populations in Canada" (Concordia University *Strategic Research Plan* 2013-18). I chose Concordia as my field site for this specific research project because it is my home institution, and I became primarily interested in the conditions of student anti-racist work here as a (paid) coordinator to an anti-racist, anti-oppressive equity project on campus throughout the two and half years of this master's degree. But beyond being my 'home institution' Concordia University offers this project a dynamic field site as it has a rich

history of student activism through which I contextualize the on-campus work of recent anti-racist student organizers. This history includes most notably the 'Sir George Williams Affair' of 1969 in which anti-racist student organizers occupied the ninth floor computer labs of the Concordia Hall Building to protest systemic racism on campus to the 2012 province wide anti-capitalist/anti-austerity mobilization of student protesters against tuition hikes in which Concordia students were actively engaged.

Conceptual framework.

This research project is grounded primarily in critical race theory (CRT), a theoretical framework which attends to how "interactions between people and within organizations are situated in power relationships rooted in white supremacy" (Bondi and Patton 2015, 491). In the context of the university specifically, Henry et al engage critical race theory as

> it explores how the taken-for-granted notions based on Whiteness as a universal norm fuel the discourses, stereotypes, assumptions, and biases that develop in the collective psyche of members of institutions, become embedded in institutional cultures, reinforce unconscious biases, and justify the exclusion of racialized minorities from full participation in society and its institutions (2017b, 14).

Where Henry et al use 'whiteness', I use 'white supremacy' to describe the systems and cultures operating in the Canadian university. I make this choice intentionally, drawing on the work of critical race scholars summarized by Patton and Bondi in their 2015 paper examining race and white allyship in the university. Patton and Bondi engage with bell hooks who uses 'white supremacy' in conversations with "liberal whites" especially who "fail to understand how they can and/or do embody white supremacist values and beliefs even though they may not embrace racism" and "cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure or racist domination and oppression that they wish to see eradicated" (hooks 1989, 113). Patton and Bondi describe this same shift in language as demonstrated by other critical race scholars who also "emphasize the concept of white supremacy to accurately describe the social realities of racism, oppression, and power [Gillborn 2005; Leonardo 2004; Perez Huber et al. 2008; Wildman and Grillo 1991]" (Bondi and Patton 2015, 491).

Unless engaging with others' words I use the term white supremacy "to accurately describe the social realities of racism, oppression, and power" (Bondi and Patton 2015, 491) in the Canadian university. To use 'whiteness' to describe these interlocking systems at work in the university would be to distance this project's subjects and themes from the violence of white supremacy, as if the university is simply a 'white' institution and not one wholly invested in supremacy. More importantly, as this project is primarily concerned with how the responsibility for racial justice is assigned and denied by white actors and systems in the university, I call white supremacy by name in an effort to acknowledge that as white scholars we[1] all embody and benefit from white supremacy though we may not "embrace racism" and even while we work for racial justice.

This project also engages with fear and hope as orientations, drawing primarily from Sara Ahmed's work on affect in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2015). Ahmed's work on affect casts attention to the relational, bodily scale, where affect is, as described by Nat O'Grady in *Geographies of Affect* (2018), "the set of ever-changing processes human and non-human bodies undergo as they experience, encounter, and perform life among other bodies within material space" (introduction). This project investigates the distorted fear of racial justice as an organizing affective structure in the university — examining how distorted fears justify and facilitate the action and inaction of actors and systems invested in white supremacy concerning racial justice in the university. I am particularly interested in how the distorted fear of racial justice stalls and denies accountability processes for those invested in and embodying white supremacy and assigns the responsibility for racial justice to anti-racist student organizers, and BIPOC student organizers in particular. In contrast, I examine how racial justice becomes the responsibility of student organizers who are acting out of the opposite of fear — hope. But theirs is a hope that is not naïve, and not even necessarily optimistic. I use affect theory also to conceive of hope as rather an intelligence at work in the university, taken up by anti-racist student organizers in the navigating, interrupting, and even dismantling of white supremacy. In this research project, anti-racist student organizers working for racial justice demonstrate that hope is a "radical refusal to reckon possibilities" (Marcel 1965, 86), in that their work refuses the parameters of what is deemed possible in universities embedded in cultures and systems of white supremacy.

[1] And throughout this work when I use 'we' I am speaking about myself, as a white woman, and other white actors (scholars, students, staff, members of the university).

The work.

In this thesis, literatures surrounding race in the university are put in conversation with empirical research conducted over 2.5 years. This research has two main components, which I detail in Chapter III: interviews conducted with eleven anti-racist student organizers, and auto-ethnography (AE), institutional ethnography (IE), and participant-observation. The following interview questions (from the original interview guide[i]) emerged as central to this project:

> How do you conceptualize whiteness in your work? (2) And how do you experience and navigate whiteness as a student organizer (2b)? What is your work responding to (1a) and what is your work aiming for (1b)?

I set out to analyze my research participants' answers to these questions by integrating their knowledge with what is already known concerning whiteness and racism in the university (the literature review – see Chapter II) and by supplementing my own experiences and what I have witnessed (via AE, IE, and participant observation). Each of the thesis chapters is then oriented around its own specific set of research questions which emerged in the primary analysis of my interview data. As a preface to each of the chapter descriptions below I include these questions (italicized), which ultimately define the central concerns of each chapter.

Chapter II, Embodied exclusion: interrogating white supremacy in the institution (literature review), asks: *What is known about how white supremacy and racism manifest in universities in North America (and, as much as possible, in Canada specifically)?*

Through the literature review I situate this thesis within the wider literature which contextualizes the failure of Canadian universities to foster representational equity and I summarize scholarship that suggests this is a manifestation of systemic racism and white supremacy. I also gather the records of BIPOC women scholars disrupting, negotiating, and resisting white supremacist systems and cultures in the university to indicate where the expertise of anti-racist student organizers' can and should be integrated. Through the literature review I find that anti-racist student organizers' contributions and expertise in fostering racial justice and negotiating and dismantling white supremacy have been overlooked in the scholarship concerning race and justice in the university.

Chapter III, Intimate institutions: a methodological praxis for institutional transformation (methodology), asks: *How do methodological choices and design allow us to 'see' white supremacy at work in the university? What kinds of methodologies can make sense of intimate and relational data generated in our institutional relationships, experiences, and engagements in the university?*

The methodology weaves autoethnography, institutional ethnography, and participant observation into a flexible methodological praxis. I demonstrate how this particular set of methodologies can supplement my in-depth interviews with anti-racist student organizers to make sense of white supremacy in the university. I also demonstrate the ways these methodologies can analyze forms of knowledge and data grounded in relationships while also potentially enacting the goals of this project, which are to produce more just forms of relating and knowledge production in our universities. These methods also facilitate an exploration of the ways both my work and my selfhood have been reconstituted through experiences and relationships emerging out of anti-racist organizing on campus, as a form of knowledge of its own. This chapter ultimately makes the case that methodological choices can remake and reshape our feminist work in transforming the university and that autoethnography, institutional ethnography, and participant observation can supplement interview analysis to facilitate an intimate, close up examination of white supremacy in the Canadian university.

The following **three chapters of analysis** interrogate, with the goal of interrupting, how actors and systems invested in white supremacy in the university 'fear' racial justice, deny the responsibility for racial justice, and reinvest in white supremacy. In parallel and equally, these three chapters document the subversive work of anti-racist student organizers who counter and intervene in white supremacy through work grounded in the hope for racial justice in the university.

Chapter IV, (Counter)Claims: understanding, negotiating and resisting white supremacy's claim to the space of the university, asks: *How does white supremacy manifest in the Canadian university? How do systems, cultures, and actors in the university invest in white supremacy? How are these manifestations and investments contested?*

This chapter investigates competing claims to the space of Concordia university by discussing how actors and systems invested in white supremacy stake claims to the space of the university, and then how these claims are challenged by anti-racist student organizers.

I argue that white claims to the space of the university are both prompted and perpetuated by distorted fears of racial justice, and discuss how these distorted fears manifest through 1) surveillance and 2) reinvestments in Eurocentric curriculum and meritocracy. In parallel and counter to these manifestations, I provide an overview of anti-racist student 'counterclaims' to the space of the university which are staked through student work addressing and filling formal institutional gaps in services and fostering spaces which accommodate and serve BIPOC communities within the university. Counter-institutions include collectives, online and community-based platforms for engagement, and student-led social justice initiatives, and are grounded in the hope for racial justice — in that they necessarily challenge white supremacy's claim to the space of our university. Specifically, I demonstrate the ways student organizers' counter-institutions contribute to the university by providing 1) informal 'equity offices', 2) crucial institutional knowledge and research around justice, and 3) consultative work concerning institutional barriers and failures to racial justice.

Chapter V, Who is made responsible for racial justice? asks: *Who is made responsible for racial justice in the Canadian university? How is this responsibility differently assigned to members of the university? How do these assignments manifest in the university?*

This chapter examines and intervenes in the taken-for-granted assignments of the responsibility for racial justice in the university by complicating the narrative that students can and should take on anti-racist work for their institutions. I examine how this dominant (and I argue carefully crafted) narrative is unfairly assigned to students and is facilitated through the alignment of student work with neoliberal working conditions. Furthermore, I define and describe these neoliberal conditions as they relate to student work in the university and explore how these conditions are fundamentally invested in white supremacy in that they protect its claim to the space of university.

I demonstrate that not only is this neoliberal alignment anchored in fear responses to scarcity but it also works to assign the responsibility for racial justice work unfairly and solely to BIPOC student organizers specifically. I then examine how this responsibility is assigned to BIPOC

student organizers as 1) a responsibility of vulnerability, 2) the responsibility to foster racial justice not only on campus, but within scholarship, and 3) through a shirking of responsibility by white actors in the university.

Chapter VI, Resistance and intractability in the university: a reckoning, asks: *How is the responsibility for racial justice denied in the university? How do anti-racist actors navigate resistance and distorted fears of racial justice expressed by those invested in white supremacy in the university?*

This final chapter of analysis attends to the experiences of anti-racist student organizers working to foster racial justice and having this work resisted, interrupted, and stalled by systems and actors invested in white supremacy in the university. Specifically, this chapter demonstrates how anti-racist student organizers experience and negotiate the intractability of the university as expressed by white resistance to and anxiety surrounding racial justice.

First, I demonstrate how white anxiety manifests as defensiveness on the part of white actors in the university and further expresses itself through a collective unwillingness to leverage (and ultimately and necessarily jeopardize) the power and access granted by white supremacy. I then explore how this resistance to and dismissal of anti-racist student work and demands creates (what feels like) an intractable university for anti-racist student organizers, who then negotiate and navigate this intractability with *hopefulness.*

Chapter VII, *Hopeful orientations: beyond distorted fears and towards white accountability* (conclusion), asks: *How can white actors in the university begin to engage in individual and collective processes of accountability for white supremacy in the university? And how do the contributions of anti-racist student organizers offer direction for these accountability processes?*

Finally, the conclusion prompts white actors in the university to confront individual and collective investments into white supremacy and move into an accountability process to foster a more justly shared responsibility for racial justice across Canadian universities. I demonstrate the potential of anti-racist student organizers' work to orient a flexible accountability process grounded in coalition and the hopefulness that student organizers bring into racial justice work in the university.

The **overall goal** of this project is to better understand how our current conceptions of and relationships to white supremacy inform how systems and actors in the university differently conceive of, resist, enact, and stall racial justice in the Canadian university. My intention is that this work will encourage white members of the university to rethink and reconstitute our own commitments to white supremacist systems and cultures, and divest from our distorted fears of racial justice. This project is grounded in the belief — in the hope — that in understanding how white supremacy is perpetuated, reproduced, and enacted by systems and actors, and is also interrupted and dismantled by anti-racist student work, we as white colleagues can begin to share the responsibility for racial justice in the Canadian university.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Embodied exclusion: interrogating white supremacy in the institution.

For decades, scholars (and BIPOC women scholars especially) have been describing the effects of white supremacy in the university. This includes Linda Carty's prolific text "Black women in academia" (1991) to recently published *The Equity Myth, Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities,* Henry et al's largest, long-term, cross-Canada, examination of race and Indigeneity in the Canadian university. This literature review will summarize the work of BIPOC scholars documenting racial injustice and white supremacy to contextualize what is known about race in the university, and to indicate where the expertise of anti-racist student organizers' can and should be integrated in the literature. To facilitate this contextualization, I focus on faculty experiences and scholarly contributions surrounding race in the university with the goal of ultimately situating the expertise of student anti-racist organizers within this literature to address their absence as knowledge producers concerning race in the Canadian university.

The robust documentation of racial injustice in the university by BIPOC scholars demonstrates the severe underrepresentation of BIPOC faculty, especially women faculty, in the academy. While this problem has been rigorously documented, little has shifted; BIPOC women still account for less than 2% of full-time Canadian faculty positions (Henry et. al 2017a), a marginal percentage that has remained statistically insignificant for 30 years (Kobayashi 2002) despite nationwide efforts to respond to systemic inequities (such as the 2014 establishment of the Canadian Association of University Teachers Equity Committee and Network).

This collective failure to produce equity must be situated within systemic white supremacy at work in the Canadian university. In their earlier paper "Race, racialization and Indigeneity in Canadian universities" (Henry et al, 2017a), authors of *The Equity Myth* (2017b) conclude that Canadian equity frameworks are ineffective because "the 'culture of whiteness' makes it difficult not only to remedy incidents of racism, but also to shift the culture of academia so that such incidents [of racism] would not occur" (309). And so, in thinking critically about the stark underrepresentation of BIPOC scholars in the Canadian university, Henry et al make it clear that it is more than simply a problem of numbers, though the numbers do certainly demonstrate the problem. It becomes a cultural problem. In their paper, the authors (Henry et al 2017a) use Sara Ahmed's concept of 'non-performativity' (2004, 2012) to demonstrate that the administrative

failure to achieve more equitable representation “is not a failure but a very successful discursive act” (309). In her book *On Being Included,* Ahmed argues that equity initiatives are non-performatives in that “they do not bring into effect that which they name” (2012, 119), but rather mask white supremacy to facilitate its reproduction. Echoing Ahmed, Henry et al (2017a) demonstrate that not only do equitable hiring policies “serve to mask discrimination, they offer a discursive non-performative process of naming ‘not to effect’” (309). How we understand and define white supremacy effects how we respond to this masking of discrimination and perpetuation of exclusion and racism in the university more broadly. Our understandings of white supremacy also inform how we are able to imagine and work towards institutional transformation towards racial justice. And here, the foundational thinking by Black scholars Audre Lorde and bell hooks have been essential to understanding how white supremacy operates in both our public institutions and private lives.

In *Sister Outsider* (1984)*,* Audre Lorde positions the study of white supremacy as a historical and fundamental tactic of survival for BIPOC communities, and Black women specifically: “For in order to survive, those of us for whom the oppressor is as american as apple pie have always had to be watchers, to be familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection” (114). Ahmed extends this ‘illusion of protection’ to the university using the concept of ‘institutional passing’ which “can thus refer to the political and emotional labour of being the right kind of minority — the ones who do not even think of themselves in these terms, as minorities” (2012, 158). Strategically taking up whiteness in this way requires the experiential knowledge discussed by bell hooks in her work “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination” (1997) in which she argues that assembling and sharing “details, facts, observations, psychoanalytic readings of the white ‘Other’” has been necessary to “help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society” (165). The critical study of whiteness then, is not new to contemporary scholarship, and understanding white supremacy has been crucial to making sense of how the world here — ‘our multicultural Canada’ is historically enmeshed in violent, colonial, racial hierarchies that inform how we measure, respond to, take up, and reject difference. The Canadian university especially is not exempt from (and may rather depend on) the influences of white supremacy that Patricia Monture (2009) describes as dually gendered in her argument that “Whiteness as experienced in the university is always a gendered term. Implicit in its use is maleness and the power with which being male privileges you” (78). That is not to suggest, though, that white women have demonstrated or enact a commitment to dismantling white supremacy in academic institutions

— rather the opposite, as white women we have yet to answer calls to coalition in anti-racist work in the university. Carty (1991) argues that there are “still far too” few feminists inside the university “prepared to risk the power accorded them by virtue of their race and class” (41).

Understanding how white supremacy and racism manifest in our contemporary, fraught relationships with one another and between spaces is crucial, and Sara Ahmed has done important work applying the intellectual work of Lorde and hooks to her own studies of whiteness. In “A Phenomenology of Whiteness” (2007) she grapples with the threat of ‘reifying whiteness’ when thinking about whiteness critically (149). This is a significant and difficult risk to negotiate: how to talk about and interrogate white supremacy without consistently re-centering it, and thus imbuing it with more power. Ahmed warns us to be careful not to “make whiteness into something substantive, as if whiteness has an ontological force of its own” (159). Ahmed prompts attention to the behaviours and attitudes that perpetuate white supremacy by thinking about whiteness as “a bad habit” (165). Keeping this in mind, this project is concerned with the actors and systems which habitually, as much as violently, reinvest in white supremacy in the university. Ahmed goes on to suggest that scholars de-center whiteness by building work around questions that “do not re-center on the agency of white bodies” (165), questions like what kind of resistance is happening, has happened? She stresses the importance of the work of describing white supremacy and racism, (a project that is incomplete), alongside these possibilities for resistance, because just as troubling, “If we want to know how things can be different too quickly, then we might not hear anything at all” (165). This work’s analysis chapters are organized around Ahmed’s cautions against centering whiteness exclusively; each chapter dually documents the resistance that is happening and has happened, alongside the descriptive task of naming and describing the systems and cultures at work in Concordia and beyond. It is crucial that in our attempts to better understand and strategize around dismantling white supremacy in the university we also commit to recording the resistance stories that accompany and have informed this knowledge.

Building on this awareness, prompted by Ahmed, I want to be conscious also of the ways I ‘speak’ here about white supremacy — because how we talk about it (and who talks about it) is a potential space to disrupt its power. Commenting on the 1993 work of white scholar Ruth Frankenberg (often touted as the first critical study of whiteness, overlooking the work of Black critical race theorists who came before her), Ahmed argues that whiteness is not ‘unmarked’ as Frankenberg describes, quite the contrary, it is “only invisible for those who inhabit it” or those

who do not but are “so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it” (2007, 157). And so while Frankenberg’s study might be considered ‘foundational’ within the social sciences (which are dominated by white scholars), the method of seeing, conceptualizing and interrogating white supremacy is not new — although it might seem so for those who fit into whiteness. Ahmed is building on a legacy of Black critical theorists' understandings of whiteness to conceptualize whiteness as an ‘orientation’, one that “puts certain things in reach”, things like “styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, habits” (154). This orientation is perpetuated through habits which are enacted by bodies, and habits not only dictate what a body does, they also dictate what a body *can* do (156). Spaces, like habits, orient around bodies and these spaces take shape around *certain* bodies. Institutions like the university become their own orientating devices — they take the shape of what and who is within them thus perpetuating themselves as white, masculine spaces (157). But Ahmed concludes by reminding us that these institutions are not a given, rather they are enacted, and so can also be interrupted:

> The institutionalization of whiteness involves work: the institution comes to have a body as an effect of this work. It is important that we do not reify institutions, by presuming they are simply given and that they decide what we do. Rather, institutions become given, as an effect of the repetition of decisions made over time, which shapes the surface of institutional spaces (157).

Ahmed describes how the university specifically embodies whiteness through the repetition of decisions, which includes the obvious repetitions, such as administrative policy, as well as more ordinary habits, like the ways we address each other as members of a shared academic community. Ahmed extends this site-specific analysis in her study of equity and diversity work in *On Being Included* (2012), in which she offers one of the most influential analysis of white supremacy and diversity as it relates to academia. She argues that is crucial to engage in and situate ourselves within the feminist critique of whiteness “if we are to learn *how not to reproduce what we inherit”* (182, emphasis in original). Here our inheritance is a university defined by and for white, able, heteronormative, masculine bodies and our task is to interrupt its reproduction. The words we use to describe institutional work here also matter. Sara Ahmed’s work in *On Being Included* (2012) challenges us in our using of the words ‘inclusion’ and diversity’; she politicizes these institutional buzzwords which through their institutionalization have come to function as markers for ‘progress’ in the neoliberal university. This institutionalization has rendered aspirations for ‘inclusion’ and ‘diversity’ meaningless at best; at

their worst, they actually work insidiously to maintain the status quo rather than interrupt it. Inclusion then becomes a “technology of governance” that may ‘bring strangers in’ but also turns these “strangers into subjects, those who in being included are also willing to consent to the terms of inclusion” (163). The ‘terms of inclusion’ are a required alignment with the university status quo, or academic standards. And the problem with ‘inclusion’ is it assumes that the issue is only that BIPOC communities are not present, which masks the real problem. What 'inclusion' does not account for is that not only are there systemic and structural barriers keeping BIPOC communities from participating fully in our institutions, but 'inclusion' encourages us to bring BIPOC communities into our institutions without addressing the systemic violence that perpetuates their exclusion in the first place and manifests within their experiences of ‘inclusion’. So 'inclusion' asks BIPOC communities to participate in institutions that have not been wholly restructured (what I call transformed) to meaningfully recognize and support their contributions, knowledges, and particular needs. Without this restructuring or ‘transformation’, BIPOC members of the university are expected to live and work in an institution that is alienating, even violent — Ahmed politicizes this superficial and violent inclusion, arguing that,

> To be included can thus be a way of sustaining and reproducing a politics of exclusion, where a life sentence for some is a death sentence for others (163).

Ahmed uses the imagery of the *life sentence* here to describe the effects that ‘exclusion’ masked as ‘inclusion’ have on BIPOC scholars in the university. Why does Ahmed describe inclusion as a life sentence and exclusion as a death sentence? Is she being hyperbolic here? Or is Ahmed’s observation a bold description of the ways in which inclusion (and its absence) within the academy manifests on a body, on a person, as an experience — a life sentence — of control and alignment with white supremacy. To begin, we can explore Ahmed’s argument that inclusion operates on BIPOC scholars as a “technology of governance” (2012, 163) in which through the granting of membership, BIPOC scholars must consent to the standards of the academy, enmeshed in white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. These standards effect not only the experiences but also dictate the lateral opportunities of BIPOC members of the university, as “Eurocentric frameworks, standards, and content are given not only more resources but also more status, especially when it comes to hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions” (Henry et al 2017b, 307).

Across Canadian universities, scholars are demanding an intervention into these Euro-centric 'academic standards'. Academic standards of assessment and evaluation are tools created and upheld by an academic institution embedded within structures of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. I complicate academic standards as the institutional 'tools' we are using to understand assessment in the university by drawing on Audre Lorde's influential critique: "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (1984, 112). The academic standards we are operating under are themselves tools of white supremacy which secure its own reproduction, and I situate this analysis within Lorde's critique of 'the master's tools' to understand what this means concretely for assessment. Lorde asks "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable" (110-111). And this question demonstrates the impossibility of an academic institution grounded in white supremacy to justly assess and include BIPOC knowledges.

In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks discusses the alignment of feminist theory with white standards as a push back on BIPOC feminist theory oriented towards liberation, arguing that the creation of 'critical standards' is a white supremacist tactic of (dis)placing theory as outside of and apart from the 'unconventional' (ie. not white) practitioners who generate theory:

> the assault on white supremacy made manifest in alliances between white women academics and white male peers seems to have been formed and nurtured around common efforts to formulate and impose standards of critical evaluation that would be used to define what is theoretical and what is not (63).

Like Carty (1991), hooks points us again to the phenomenon of white women aligning and allying with, rather than interrupting, white supremacist standards in the university. And what these "restrictive critical standards" actually do is "set up unnecessary and competing hierarchies of thought which reinscribe the politics of domination by designating work as either inferior, superior, or more or less worthy of attention" (hooks 1994, 64). Because these standards reinvest in domination, it is crucial to rethink our measurements and interrogate our approaches to assessment which make certain bodies 'oriented towards' (Ahmed, 2007) or more qualified than others, we must think about how this is embodied at every level of higher education, affecting equally students and faculty who are often in turn granted administrative

leadership roles through these standards. Because as much as academic standards punish BIPOC scholars, (and BIPOC women scholars especially), they have long heaped rewards on others — white men especially, but white women as well, and even white scholars whose work attends to injustices as "Whites stand to "benefit from Whiteness even as they act against it" [Leonardo and Broderick 2011]" (Henry et al 2017b, 90). In the case of the university, these benefits can include awards, promotion, research funding, security such as tenure, the resource of time through course releases, prestige, mentorship, as well as social and intellectual capital.

Euro-centric or white standards of the academy dictate who is included and how those included are expected, and even required to perform. This is demonstrated by Gonzalez and Harris who through their *Presumed Incompetent* project (2014) use personal narratives to document the enduring effects of exclusion and white supremacy in the university by bringing BIPOC scholars together to workshop their experiences. The two authors make a case for conceptualizing the injustices faced by BIPOC women scholars in the neoliberal academy as demonstrations of what is to come for white academics. They argue that "In this sense, women academics of color may be the canaries in the academic coal mine" (186), that the neoliberal stressors inflicted on BIPOC women scholars will eventually come to affect their white colleagues. Gonzalez and Harris describe these stressors as the pressure to "adopt a corporate model in which education is defined by the production of quantifiable "deliverables"… as teaching is increasingly done by faculty who lack job security, benefits, and a living wage—yet are held responsible for "adding value" to their students" (186). Unfortunately, and tellingly, the authors suggest that white academics might only be moved to respond to institutional injustices in the university if they themselves feel threatened (2014, 187). And while we should all feel threatened by how toxic academic standards increasingly manifest in our work, capacities, and health in an increasingly neoliberal academy, for BIPOC scholars, the violent manifestations of academic standard are not brewing but rather have been present all along.

Patricia Monture's work in "Doing Academia Differently: Confronting Whiteness in the University" is concerned with how this governing through academic standard and assessment uniquely affects Indigenous scholars in Canada. She argues that colonial racism is invoked through colonial assessment and tenure practices as well as systemic failures to provide mentorship for Indigenous scholars from their time as students into their careers (2009). When Indigenous professors are hired into departments, they are often expected to produce new courses in addition to meeting the requirements for tenure and introducing anti-colonial material

as a new (and racialized) staff member. This is a fraught and political process in which Indigenous scholars are forced into “an unconscionable choice between ethical chaos and peace in the department” (Monture 2009, 84). Challenging the status quo makes Indigenous scholars vulnerable, and, according to Monture, ambiguity in the disciplines “creates the potential to victimize and isolate those of us (usually but not always the traditional First Nations scholars) who refuse to toe the conventional line” (85). And so measuring Indigenous scholarship in this context, in which Euro-centric standards can neither grasp nor assess these knowledges, holds the scholar “individually responsible for the structural shortcomings in the academy because of the historic exclusion of Aboriginal persons” (86-87).

It is clear then through these discussions that ‘inclusion’ does not rectify the challenges of working within academic standards of white supremacy, as BIPOC women scholars face distinct challenges and violence even once they are granted, or take up, membership in the university. An example of this is demonstrated in a case at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in which Dr. Lorna June McCue filed a human rights violation against the University of British Columbia (UBC) after administration “effectively discriminated against her “race, colour, ancestry, place of origin … and sex” (*National Post*, January 24, 2016). Dr. Lorna June McCue, an Indigenous scholar in First Nations Legal Studies at UBC, was denied tenure and dismissed from the university after eleven years of employment for failure to achieve adequate peer-reviewed publications, an informal requirement for tenure. Dr. McCue argues that this requirement is inappropriate for an Indigenous scholar who is working in and for her community, a community which disseminates knowledge traditionally through oral history. This colonial assessment does not capture the particular needs, traditions and approaches of Indigenous epistemologies — and using this measurement to deny access, membership and resources to Indigenous scholars demonstrates the colonial and racial violence that has established the Canadian university. Dr. McCue’s case was ultimately dismissed by the Human Rights Tribunal in 2018 on the grounds that McCue did not seek ‘accommodation’ early enough in the tenure process[2].

When assessment and academic standards go unquestioned, our work with existing employment equity policies, or the creation of new anti-racist policy that ascribes to the current institutional framework cannot foster racial justice. And Ahmed (2012), taking up Lorde’s ‘master’s tools’ this way, describes the results of this approach as ‘doing the document’ and

[2] As discussed by in Canadian Lawyer Mag; “Law prof fighting for tenure track loses legal battle”, written by Gabrielle Giroday and published March 12 2018.

‘performing diversity’ which can ultimately “participate in concealing inequalities” rather than addressing them (110). Institutional policy work does not get us any closer to equity and “the results do not achieve representation because attitudes concerning who represents the most meritorious candidate are influenced by a corporate culture that values white males” (Kobayashi 2006, 34). And part of the work ahead of us is expanding our perimeters of change which will require an interrogation into the pillars of our institution and the cultures of white supremacy which cultivate it. To this end, in confronting white supremacy in “Policies and Practices for an Antiracist Geography”, Peake and Kobayashi (2002) call for “fundamental refashioning of the discipline” of geography, and that “an understanding of “race” needs to be incorporated at all levels and in all themes of geographical practice” (50). We can extend this demand to the academic institution at large, beyond geography, to advocate for a complete and collective transformation of the university in which white supremacy is continuously recognized, questioned, decentered, and destabilized.

This fundamental refashioning of the way we relate and work here is crucial to foster an institution in which BIPOC scholars and their knowledges thrive, as exclusion is an embodied experience. For decades now, BIPOC scholars and BIPOC women scholars specifically have been documenting the embodied effects white supremacy has on members of the Canadian university. Most recently, and in keeping with scholarship written nearly 30 years ago, Henry et al (2017a) summarize that, among other things, BIPOC scholars are subjected to:

> a precarious work situation where they constantly struggle against marginalization, racialization, tokenization, ghettoization, and alienation expressed in the demands that they conform, fit in, be star scholars, and meet an ‘academic standard’ that devalues the critical and transformative knowledge they bring to scholarship and the institution (311).

Within these conditions, white supremacy in the university also manifests both physically and psychologically on BIPOC women academics. In Gonzalez and Harris (2014), health and wellness emerged as the overarching themes of the discussion, and BIPOC women in the academy detailed the extent to which white supremacy becomes embodied and impedes wellness. The authors argue that “At stake for individual female academics of color who find themselves “presumed incompetent” is not just their professional success, but also their physical and mental health” (185). And this manifests in a variety of ways, such as: the development of physical ailments and mental unwellnesses, debilitating strokes, heart attacks,

breakdowns triggered (in part) by workplaces abuses (185) workaholicism and perfectionism (186). In “Challenging White Hegemony in University Classrooms” (2000), Dua and Lawrence describe similar findings in respect to exclusion and health including “long intervals of generalized ill-health, depression, strong feelings of self-doubt and at times a severe alienation within academic environments” (106). This exclusion comes to affect mental and physical wellness while also manifesting in social and interpersonal relationships with one another as members of an academy entrenched in hierarchy.

Gonzalez and Harris (2014) expand on wellness to capture the psychological effects of social isolation at the periphery, noting that the participants of their study, BIPOC women scholars, find themselves isolated and weary of finding community that share their experiences and challenges out of ‘fear’ of being associated with the ‘losers’ (186) and are affected by this social sickness which is incited by the pressures of academic culture and social subordination (188). Here, we can think again of Sara Ahmed’s ‘institutional passing’ in which BIPOC scholars are socially isolated by the demands of white supremacy to be ‘the right kind of minority’ (2012, 158) and to avoid association with scholars who do not fit into whiteness this way. And this is still a reality for BIPOC scholars in Canada. It is what Henry et al (2017a) have described as ‘playing the game’, in which BIPOC professors recognize that their isolation comes from the requirement to operate within a ‘playing field’ that is not level and while “some racialized faculty successfully navigate the system” it is “through a solitude of experiences that their colleagues fail to see” (307).

Dua and Lawrence (2000) describe this same failure of colleagues to recognize institutional violence as a form of ignorance which makes the “workplace a site of extreme alienation” (116) and argue that furthermore “the lack of public and official recognition of racism” perpetuates a “cycle of self-castigation/ anger and resentment/ fear… which isolated these instructors in profound ways” (117). The participants of their roundtable discussion and the authors alike conclude that “It is the lack of support from colleagues and administrators, combined with the hegemony of whiteness, which makes university workplaces sites of extreme alienation” (118). The university then becomes its own particular and violent site of social isolation, and participation becomes a *life sentence of isolation.* BIPOC women in the university may achieve membership, but the literature demonstrates that this is without the consideration and resources to thrive socially, mentally and physically.

However, at the same time that academics describe feelings and experiences of isolation and alienation in these institutional spaces, this literature review itself is a testament to the work of BIPOC scholars who not only navigate institutional injustice but are simultaneously developing and sharing strategies for addressing this same injustice. Carty advocates for this recognition of Black women's resilience alongside their oppression inside the academy because:

> To focus only on Black women's subordination and oppression is to undervalue their collective strength and resilience which have given rise to the alternative perspectives they have developed as most suitable for their reality. But to focus only on their historical strength as agents of change in their own world is to ignore the organized state and systemic oppression which impose severe limitations on their lives (17).

Recognizing this, how does the brilliant work of BIPOC women in the academy challenge our conceptions of white supremacy to better respond to institutional exclusions and racial injustice in the Canadian university? For decades now, the same BIPOC scholars featured in this chapter have been documenting, making sense of, and offering ways to tackle the cultures of white supremacy that make up the university. It is important to acknowledge the expertise of these scholars who have been producing work that is both essential and uncompromising within an institution which consistently undermines their excellence. BIPOC women in the academy consistently produce knowledge that is crucial to our collective remaking of the world alongside institutional and systemic discrimination and marginalization. And this institutional transformation has implications for the worlds we are living in beyond it; as Carty (1991) reminds us that our universities reflect our social worlds:

> the marginalization Black women experience in academia is created and shows that the social relations of the academic world reflect the social world. Hence the relations of race, class and gender which work to keep Black women subordinated in the economy, for example, also keep them on the periphery in academia (16).

The decades' worth of literature summarized in this chapter documents the ways in which BIPOC scholars face discrimination and injustice. Although underrepresented however, BIPOC women in the academy resist marginalization and evoke the kind of institutional transformation the literature is thinking about, however these shifts should not be solely the responsibility of the marginalized in the academy. In 1991 Carty spoke to the challenges of feminist work in the

university where BIPOC women academics face not only institutional injustice but dually experience racism from white 'feminist' peers who believe that gender should be at the center of the work. She describes this reality as

> exhausting. It is a daily occurrence whether we are merely walking down the street while racial epithets are hurled at us or whether we are travelling the seemingly sterilized halls of academia where, though such actions may be muted, the message is nevertheless the same. In academia, of course, it means being on the periphery though supposedly being on the inside (33).

White supremacy relegates members of our community to the periphery, and Carty suggests that working ourselves out of this culture — of de/recentering ourselves outside of white, masculine hegemonies and beyond white feminism — is a task that can only be undertaken in coalition. And healthy coalition requires accountability. Gonzalez and Harris (2014) make a case for accountability, explicitly holding administrators and colleagues accountable for interrupting and dismantling white supremacy and heteropatriarchy in the academy while Kobayashi (2009) urges academics (and white academics especially) to reckon with their complicity in racism. Kobayashi concludes that ultimately, shifting the culture will require

> that academics take on anti-racism as a personal project, addressing not only the 'system' but their own actions. It will require that they look beyond the systemic to the personal, that they reach out to others, that they talk to one another, that they engage in the very educational process that it is our job to provide. It will require that they give up whiteness (73).

As I work through this project, Kobayashi's call to 'give up whiteness' follows me — it is a demand for our individual and collective accountability for systemic white supremacy, for moving out of and beyond distorted fears of racial justice. Monture (2009) echoes this demand to focus on both the individual's and collective's role in institutional white supremacy, as both a way of being complicit and a way to resist, urging us to think about and complicate the ways that "marginalization and isolation, as well as power, are individual, collective and overlapping experiences" (98). And while it is crucial to recognize our individual investments into white supremacy, this intersection with collective accountability is essential. Henry et al (2017a) argue that nation-wide, university administration must adopt an institutional commitment to equity for

the sake of the future generation of the university. This commitment will be part of the shift to create educational spaces that are capable of providing burgeoning academics with the tools they need “to grapple with colonial history, its relationship to power and the hegemony of imperial and colonial narratives that have established the terms of, and tools for, conversation in the westernized university” (311-312).

This chapter has been attentive to the work of BIPOC women scholars in navigating and dismantling white supremacy in the university — I have attempted here to work through their many directions laid out for us in the rich body of literature concerning barriers to, and strategies for, racial justice in the university. This research project is however concerned primarily with student work and expertise in the university — I live, work, learn, create, and resist the university alongside my student peers. I have experienced firsthand the institutional knowledge and transformative expertise my own peer group brings to these conversations and actions around institutional racial justice. And yet, the knowledge and expertise of Canadian university students rarely appear in the literature surrounding the state of racial (in)justice in the university and strategies for institutional transformation. The literature surrounding student organizing in Canada, and our specific context in Quebec in particular, focuses on individual student movements and the subsequent administrative, municipal, provincial and federal responses to political pressure exerted by student protestors. This is the case for scholarship exploring student intervention and mobilization in the Sir George Williams affair of 1969 (Martel 2012) and the 2012 protest against proposed provincial tuition hikes across Quebec (Bégin-Caouette and Jones 2014). But this scholarship does not explore how the political power of students and experiential expertise demonstrated in these particular, definitive moments might be taken up to guide ongoing administrative and cultural efforts to address institutional injustice framed explicitly within an anti-racist framework.

Because we know that BIPOC students, especially BIPOC women and non-binary[3] students, face discrimination, exclusion, and injustice in parallel with the experiences of those further in their careers — in fact, scholars who make up this chapter describe how the marginalization they faced as students has carried through into their careers from students to professors and researchers (see Penny [2017]; Carty [1991]). Scholars have also documented the experiences and challenges of BIPOC students navigating white supremacy and racism in the university (see

[3] I use non-binary to describe students whose gender identities do not align within the normative and restrictive gender "binary" (male and female, man and woman).

Samuel and Burney [2003], Mahtani [2004], Samuel [2004], Henry and Tator [2009], Bailey [2016]). While it is clear that Canadian students are experiencing institutional racism imbedded in our universities' culture of white supremacy, we have yet to fully explore the grounded expertise of these same students for understanding, resisting, and remaking the university within our scholarship. In *On Being Included,* Ahmed (2012) describes an interview with a diversity practitioner who highlighted the role of this kind of grounded knowledge in institutional transformation:

> It was noteworthy that some practitioners spoke explicitly about how to get commitment to spread from the top to the bottom of the organization by setting up champion groups at lower ranks who are more in touch with the "grassroots" networks:
>
> > [middle to senior managers] don't have the spare capacity and the grassroots knowledge, the sort of networking at grassroots level to champion things like consultations and feedback…" (133).

Students at the 'lower ranks' of the university are well positioned to describe and provide solutions for navigating and attending to racial injustice in the academy and their 'grassroots' anti-racist knowledge should inform the direction of racial justice work here and beyond. Compiling and sharing the strategies and expertise of anti-racist student organizers who navigate and work to dismantle white supremacy will be crucial for moving out of cultures of white supremacy in the university and into new ways of relating and working which acknowledge, represent, and answer to the realities and knowledges of BIPOC scholars and students across the country.

CHAPTER III: Methodology

Intimate institutions: a methodological praxis for institutional transformation.

When I began this degree hoping to understand institutional white supremacy and make sense of the efforts made at Concordia university to foster racial justice, I found myself faced with barriers to access in researching my own institution. In my original research design, I had hoped to interview staff and administrators to make sense of how anti-racist work gets stalled. Over the course of four months of email exchange with Concordia University's Research Ethics Unit in the Office of Research (OOR), it became clear that our university would not give me permission to investigate the institution as intended. In the back-and-forth with the OOR I was told that my interviews with Concordia staff would have to first be approved by their office supervisors before contact was even made, that my research participants must then agree not to speak from their position/or as a representative of the university and that we could meet only off-campus and outside of working hours to conduct the interview. Paradoxically, in hoping to interrogate how justice work in the university gets stalled by actors, I found myself stalled from conducting research around justice, feeling that these conditions posed serious problems for my access to my research site (the university) and my intended research subjects (faculty and administrators).

The rigid ethics policies (which no one from the university could seem to direct me to) kept coming up, drawing a significant barrier around my project. I needed to restructure my project and my methodology in particular to attend to my own institutional barriers and to account for the ways my understanding of the work was transformed by this process. As a result, I adjusted my research methodologies. Instead of focusing on the stories of staff and administration, I shifted my focus to my own peer group — student organizers across the university who are engaged in racial justice work in its various forms. I was able to make this adjustment because the university, as expressed by the OOR, appeared much less concerned about my choice to engage students concerning their experiences navigating the university; I faced no further delays in my ethics approval once this change of research subject was made. To this end, I formally interviewed ten student organizers asking them five three-part questions, and wrote about, with their permission, one student organizer's experience without a formal interview but through a series of ongoing conversations over the two and a half years of this work.

In shifting research subjects, my methodology also necessarily shifted to move between autoethnography (AE) and an institutional ethnography (IE), which includes participant observation, to make sense of what I have experienced and witnessed in the university. In choosing my own peer group as my research subjects, I had implicated myself and my own relationships in this research project, and found myself engaging in a much more intimate process than I had anticipated. As a result, I chose this particular set of methodologies; AE, IE, and participant observation to supplement my in-depth interviews with anti-racist student organizers as the only way to attend to this intimacy while analyzing white supremacy — a system and culture I myself embody — in the university. In this chapter, I demonstrate how these methodologies allow me to analyze forms of knowledge and data grounded in relationships and also facilitate an exploration of the ways both my work and my selfhood have been reconstituted through experiences and relationships emerging out of anti-racist organizing on campus, as a form of knowledge of its own. This chapter dually illustrates how methodological choices can remake and reshape our feminist work in transforming the university and that autoethnography, institutional ethnography, and participant observation can supplement other forms of data collection to facilitate an intimate, close up examination of white supremacy in the Canadian university. I have woven these methodological designs into a flexible methodological praxis, or what I call 'intimate methodologies', which can account for various forms of knowledge and data while also potentially enacting the more just forms of relating and knowledge production that this research project is aiming for. Throughout this work I use intimacy as both data and methodology, building on feminist geographers Moss and Donovan (2017) who use 'muddling' to write intimacy into our geographies:

> Writing intimacy into feminist geography via muddling requires a shift in understanding how intimacy is part of and actually constitutes research itself. A conceptualization of intimacy that is relational, generative and power-laden may facilitate a more nuanced discussion of key issues in feminist methodology in geography as well as enhance the presentation of the complexity of what feminist geographers are finding in their research (Moss and Donovan 2017, 15).

Through this conceptualization of intimacy, I am able to work through the 'complexity' of what I find in my research — the intimate relationships that are personal, generative, and are themselves a rich source of knowledge. And I can think about who I am in this process through Massaro and Cuomo's work "Navigating intimate insider status" (2017) which engages with

Taylor's "The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research" (2011). Massaro and Cuomo describe the intimate insider:

> Borrowing from queer theorist Taylor (2011), we identify as intimate insiders, distinguished from 'insider research' on the basis that 'the researcher is working at the deepest level, within their own "backyard"' [2011, 9]. Taylor designates researchers who have preexisting friendships — 'close, distant, casual or otherwise' — that evolve into informant relationships as 'intimate insiders' [2011, 8] (2017, 60).

This work is close to home and is made up of the contributions of friends and collaborators, and my relationships deepened through the research process. This project requires that as researcher I understand my role as intimate insider, engaging with my experiences, my relationships, my own life, because "Accessing intimacy through research as both a topic and as an affective process means drawing out some of the innermost and possibly the most intensely well-guarded aspects of someone's life (Moss and Donovan 2017, 15)". And I facilitate and communicate this engagement through autoethnography as a central component of my methodology.

Autoethnography.

Autoethnography (AE) is a method which allows us to make sense of the places and phenomena in which we ourselves are embedded, to interrogate our own experiences in order to better understand a cultural and social experience (Ellis and Bochner 2000). In her attempts to research members of her own military community, Nancy Taber (2010) found her access questioned and held-up by her military superiors who wanted her to be "amenable to changing" aspects of her research proposal to "meet the defence force's requirements" (8). Taber goes on to say about her project's original aims: "It may have been possible, through giving over control of my research to military superiors and institutional requirements, to eventually gain access, but I did not want my research to be co-opted" (8). Taber's experience of being held-up from her own institution mirrors my experience with the academy — neither institution would allow us to do the work we intended and neither of us were willing to align our projects with the requirements of our institutions for 'access'. Faced with my own barriers, autoethnography has offered me, as it did for Taber, a way forward using "the power that [AE] has for a 'rewriting of the self and the social'" (Taber, 13). Through 'rewriting' we create opportunities for challenging,

complicating, and better understanding ourselves, our relationships, and our roles within the spaces we occupy. 'Rewriting' as inherent to AE allows us the flexibility required to redirect and even reconstitute these understandings of ourselves and our social environments as we (re)encounter our research sites and navigate the obstacles that arise in our research projects. And in my research on white supremacy and racism in the Canadian university, I am employing AE through both of the 'double senses' laid out by Reed-Danahay. In her work *Auto/Ethnography* (1997) Reed-Danahay describes the 'double sense' as "referring to one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest" (Taber, 13). In this sense, I am employing AE to work through my complicity with white supremacy as a member of this university as much as I use it to explore my role in addressing racial injustice here. This method also provides me the opportunity to reflect and produce knowledge out of the relationships that I have built through racial justice work at Concordia.

My project is grounded in autoethnography to make sense of my particular intimacy with this institution — by the time I finish this degree I will have spent nearly eight years as an undergraduate and then graduate student at Concordia University. As much as I have produced knowledge about Concordia University I have also found my capacity and willingness to understand myself transformed, and I have been thoroughly reconstituted through partnerships built in the common goal of racial justice — my working relationships with X and P in particular. When I met and starting working with X and P, **P** was a former undergraduate student working full-time as coordinator to a university-wide project addressing inequities in gender and sexualities. And **X** was a master's student and we were working together as paid student co-coordinators on an anti-racist, anti-oppressive equity project on campus throughout the two and half years of this degree.

Intimacy as methodology: hope as practice.

Throughout my research process it has been important to explore my own relationships which have evolved out of anti-racist work on campus (and since moved beyond the university) as a way of shifting into a methodology which disrupts rather than perpetuates neoliberal individualism (Henry et al 2017b, 68). This work acknowledges my relationships, experiences and observations as viable and essential sources knowledge. In their writing using affect theory at work, Kenny and Fotaki (2014) present their method of 'research affectivity', which is useful in the context of this project as its focus "lies in exploring the affective, intersubjective experiences

that mark ethnographic settings" (167). The university as an ethnographic setting lends itself well to this work, as this place is a dynamic and interconnected site which brings itself into being through relationships. And I am grounding the following reflections on hope and intimacy specifically in the relationships I have cultivated with X and P.

In "Becoming and being hopeful: towards a theory of affect", geographer Ben Anderson (2006) engages with Marcel (1965) to reflect on the "implications of thinking from hope for both a theory of affect and an affective cultural politics" (733). Anderson's *thinking from* hope has, in many ways, acted as an 'orienting device' (Ahmed, 2014) for this work, and I include two descriptions from his work which ground much of my thinking and feeling throughout this research project.

Firstly, "the presence of hope has long been thought to herald a more-to-come, an excessive overspilling of life, that draws bodies into an intensified connection with an absent… because being and becoming hopeful embody a "radical refusal to reckon possibilities" [Marcel 1965, 86]" (Anderson 2006, 742). I hold onto this conceptualization of hope to remind me of what anti-racist student organizers are working for here at Concordia and beyond — a place that is different from what we know, fundamentally shifted and transformed towards racial justice. This imagining of a transformed university does, as Marcel argues, demand an embodiment of the *"radical refusal to reckon possibilities"*, to refuse the parameters of what is deemed possible in the institution. Those of us reckoning with this 'more-to-come' are drawn into '*an intensified connection*' — the *becoming* hopeful is partly how we enact that which we are aiming for, justice which is still on the horizon, on its way.

Secondly, "There is, therefore, a point of danger, or hazard, folded into becoming hopeful that indicates that a good way of being has 'still not become': in the sense that the present is haunted by the fact that the something good that exceeds it has yet to take place" (Anderson 2006, 743). Here, Anderson describes the skepticism that I believe is crucial to work inside universities embedded in structures and cultures of white supremacy — being hopeful is not naïve, hope is rather an intelligence. As much as hope indicates the possibility of 'a good' *or better* 'way of being' it is also naming a lack — anti-racist student organizers hope for racial justice in the university because it is not here. Hope then, becomes an 'orienting device' with which I am able to move through my work and my life at Concordia.

Intimacy as methodology: relationships as knowledge.

I met and began working alongside P when we were both in the beginning stages of developing projects aimed at fostering social justice in the university. It was during one of our very first meetings that P and I decided we were going to be accomplices and strategize together, at first partly out of necessity — it is impossible to do effective justice work in isolation, which we would come to learn first-hand. A year later, P shared their reflections with me:

> This follows up on a bizarre rant that I went on to M [Meghan], encouraging her to take full advantage of her privileged access to collegiality to gain and leverage power for the sake of good work. I feel this way, or suggest this, because I encounter a lot of difficulty in deciphering the unwritten codes of white collegiality, in addition to just being read as different for the way I look, speak, and think. Attempting to fit the ask is a survival strategy, but there's only so much agency for those with personhood marked as different and other (P 'journal entry', July 2016).

P's description here of what I could and should contribute to the work as a white woman changed the way I understood myself and my role in the university. P is speaking to the ways in which their knowledges and approaches to work do not align with 'white collegiality' — entrenched in white supremacy, and thus have been brought into question and made out-of-place by white actors in the university.

P and I were speaking often and working closely when X applied for and was offered the position of co-coordinator to the equity project I was working on. X's contribution to the work is deeply embedded in their identity as a Black parent; it has shaped their priorities within their role and has grounded our project's mandate as fundamentally anti-racist. X introduced to our work and to our relationship a commitment to dismantling white supremacy that is so integral to the way they move through the world — they strive for process just as much as reinvention, for responses to the needs of those excluded and marginalized, for the centering of elders and historicized legacies, for the acknowledgement of all types of intelligence. This makes it impossible to claim my research project as my own when so much of my thinking has become so fully entangled with our collaborative work. In contextualizing this collaboration, I am thinking of Bondi's explanation of her collective intellectual practice in *Subjectivities, Knowledges and Feminist Geographies* (2002): "we did not write as isolated individual authors; rather our writing

emerged in what might be thought of as in between time and spaces" (Bondi 2002, 5). Over two and a half years with X and P our partnerships have deepened beyond the institution, 'in between time and space' and while P would later have to leave their project (detailed in Chapter V), our partnerships remained. There were now three of us building a transformative framework together and each of us committed to the time and process it takes to produce work that feels both meaningful and effective.

I share these intimate methodologies in part as a response to bell hook's 1994 call to counter "the racist assumption that we can never overcome the barrier separating white women and black women" by documenting the "ways barriers are broken down, coalitions are formed, and solidarity shared" (109-10). X and I are doing the work, which requires constant, transparent conversation about how we do it. After a year of working together, X and I discussed how we would present our partnership in relation to a specific project and X said *"I want to call you my ally but also be clear that allyship is a verb, not a noun. Our relationship will not be projected on anyone else and it only works as long as it works".* My intimate, working partnership with X has required that I (re)constitute myself in relation to our collaborative work — to remake myself and my role in the university. This reconstitution is Sandoval's "*technical effect* where the activist *becomes* in the moment of acting, is "made"" (2000, 155) and while I am not an activist, it is true that my purpose in the university has formed and reforms around the action of coalition with X and P. And the emotional work that we take on to be in our partnerships is an institutional disruption, as "Notwithstanding exhortations to "collaborate" in the development of research, the academy operates in ways that intensify processes of personalization and individuation" (Bondi 2002, 3). The way we work, create, and think together is itself a disruption to the individuation of our institution. I use Anderson (2006) again to understand the ways in which "the emergence and movement of affect" through our partnerships "is expressed and qualified as it performs, and disrupts, space — times of experience" (736). This conceptualization of our relationship as *active,* disruptive and generative compliments P's encouragement to repurpose my privilege "to gain and leverage power for the sake of good work", it demands me to think through how to enact my alliances, how could they, and should they, manifest? Autoethnography has been crucial here in thinking through how to leverage my access, and seeing and recording what I witness and what I learn here is part of the work.

For example, during my time working on the equity project with X, administrators at Concordia have felt comfortable enough in my presence to share their concerns about 'radical' students

interrupting day-to-day university operations in their organizing for racial justice. Shared whiteness fosters the comfort required to engage in racist assumptions about the 'troublemakers' (hooks 1994, 179) on campus, and in these private moments I am witnessing my peers rendered as threats. We can imagine that part of this fear is tied to Concordia's particular legacy of student activism in the face of racism throughout the 1969 Sir George Williams Affair, but much of it is simply a symptom of the Canadian university's 'everyday racism' (Kobayashi 2009, 67) and increasing concerns about "the consuming student, the censoring student, the over-sensitive student and the complaining student" (Ahmed, 'Against Students' blogpost, June 2015). For the most part, I am not read as a potential instigator and I am certain that these kinds of anxieties about my peers are shared with me because I am a white student and my BIPOC collaborators are read as more threatening, more radical and more disruptive by the same administration who reads me as 'one of them'. This speculation is partly informed by the reality that general fears of students are compounded by this racist and classist fear of the 'troublemaker student' (hooks 1994, 179), and the bodies of BIPOC students are read in our institution as out-of-place, as potential points of disruption, as the 'strange and embodied' others (Ahmed, 2000) whose very presence poses a threat.

My body is not 'in question' (Ahmed 2017, 115) and no matter how out of place I may have at times felt here, I am read as belonging here. If administration often reads me as 'one of them' it is because I too am complicit in institutional racism and benefit from white supremacy in the academy in a multitude of ways, and like P said, part of my work is to leverage these privileges and to engage my white colleagues and peers in anti-racist organizing and restructuring. As a white woman I experience less resistance and mistrust from university staff and faculty than my BIPOC peers while questioning the same values and standards which have granted access and power to myself and my superiors. The university is built on and depends on hierarchies and power dynamics which parallel and reproduce the ones students confront through their social justice activism and engagement (hooks, 1994), and as students who question institutional standards, systems, norms and cultures, BIPOC students are met with a particular suspicion.

But if the legacies of student activism here can tell us anything it is that students can leverage their disruptive power when faced with injustice. A recent example is the 2012 Quebec-wide student strike (see Bégin-Caouette and Jones 2014) but at Concordia, the work is decades in the making, demonstrated by the work of anti-racist student organizers who came before (Martel 2012), namely the international Caribbean students and their allies whose racial justice work in

1969 set a precedent for what can be achieved through collective resistance (Kobayashi 2009, 63). But bringing this work into the present also demands a critical questioning that is at the heart of this project; how does justice work become the work of students? How is this responsibility assigned, who assigns it? And making sense of anti-racist work in the university today demands a methodology which can extend beyond my own experiences and reckon with our histories, individual and collective complicities, and account for the knowledges and expertise of each person who makes up our community. Here, institutional ethnography is an essential tool for making sense of the academic community in which we ourselves are embedded.

Institutional ethnography.

To make sense of the everyday experiences which make up structural injustice here, I am complementing my autoenthography with Dorothy E. Smith's (2005) methodology of institutional ethnography (IE) which uses an embodied experience (which I have translated through autoethnography) as a point of entry through which we are able to interrogate social organizations and "explore the puzzles of peoples' everyday lives" (Xenitidou and Gilbert 2009, 32). And IE appeals to this work as it is fundamentally oriented towards social justice "by seeking to demystify relations of ruling, and pointing to possible interventions in ruling relations" (Xenitidou and Gilbert 2009, 32). IE is particularly useful in the context of the neoliberal university we are a part of, as this method of inquiry has emerged as a tool for intervening in an "expansive, historically specific apparatus of management and control that arose with the development of corporate capitalism and supports its operation" (Devault 2006, 295) and so I use it here to understand the neoliberal values of our university expressed through competiveness, individuality, and hyper productivity (Henry et al 2017b, 13) and resulting in explicit and implicit forms of racism. IE allows me to attend to the power dynamics and hierarchies which dictate how our university operates and *who it operates for* — it is a method "grounded in a commitment to look for people at work doing ruling and an understanding that we are investigating a historically specific, material complex of activity" (Devault 2006, 296). Conceptualizing the university as a material complex of activity also allows me to make sense of the work that is recognized as equity work (but which rather perpetuates institutional white supremacy), understanding that "institutional ideologies typically acknowledge some kinds of work and not others" (Devault 2006, 294). Beyond engaging only with 'equity activists' (Henry et al 2017b) or those working to foster racial justice in the university, it is equally important to

engage with the work which stalls, and the actors who impede, racial justice. This complicity is worth examining, and the work that goes into reconstituting white supremacy and racist norms in the university is as active and performative as the work to destabilize it.

When I started out, I was primarily interested in taking up IE to investigate Concordia University's administrative failure to tackle (and rather commitment to maintaining) white supremacy. I have been grappling with how to ethically employ participant observation to collect and analyze data observed in administrative meetings and day-to-day university operations, interactions, and discourses. And while participant observation has the potential to capture important data, the ethics of this approach is complicated. Attending to the ethical complications of my work has required an engagement with the work of the feminist ethnographers who came before me.

Decoding institutional silences.

In *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (1994), Kamala Visweswaran thinks about how a research subject comes to participate in her project through the subject's refusal to participate, so then those who have refused to participate in my project will still be found here — by way of their refusal. For Visweswaran, this refusal becomes "the story of how I make her subject refusal itself a subject; of asking what new forms of subject constitution are forced upon her by now inscribing her silence in speech" (60). I use participant observation to inscribe the silences I encounter, and if "'Lies, secrets and silence' are frequently strategies of resistance" (Visweswaran 1994, 60) and the resistance here is to racial justice, participant observation can make sense of the "lies, secrets and silence" so integral to perpetuating institutional white supremacy in the university. I must then find ways of engaging with "Lies, secrets and silence" as forms of knowledge even (and especially) if it is difficult — because if they are part of what maintains injustice then understanding them, naming them, is key to bringing about justice. While I cannot (or rather I choose not to) share what is disclosed to me in official meetings, I will engage with what it means to be constantly reminded by administration that our conversations are strictly confidential when speaking about justice and racism here. When someone remains silent I can read their silence and their suspicion. When I am left out of a meeting the meeting becomes a secret, when I am told that data sets tracking gender and race in the university are

not accessible or do not exist I can imagine[4] what the data describes and what its withholding signifies and conceals.

I come back to hope to orient what I am able to imagine. Though what I imagine here may seem hope-*less*, to imagine an institutional norm (lack of data) as purposeful means that the norm is *pliable*, that there is a possibility for it to be a different way. And my assumption is that the data either does not exist because administration fears that it might demonstrate racism, or that it does exist and is not shared because it does, in fact, demonstrate racism. These assumptions are grounded in the reality that across Canada, the quantitative data which has been painstakingly culled from disparate locations by dedicated researchers demonstrates that equity efforts have not been effective (Henry et al 2017b, 303). And in universities like Concordia, where equity information is housed in human resources, "equity-seeking groups reported difficulties in getting access to the data" (Henry et al 2017b, 189). Lack of useable data is a fundamental barrier to equity work cross the country, with federal bodies no longer collecting reports, "universities either do not keep the information or refuse to make it public" (Henry et al 2017b, 304). I hear that someone working on a potential equity office out of the Provost Office has access to data concerning representation at Concordia, and so I track this person down. They agree to meet after corresponding for weeks but the correspondence suddenly goes silent. Later, I am told by someone else that the Provost Office decided it would not be wise to, at this point, speak to a student about the state of equity at Concordia. All of this is meant to be kept confidential — and the silence is an answer. Making sense of silence is inherent to work on racial injustice in the university and my experiential understanding of this reality has been documented by research teams across Canada, whose data "contain silences, omissions, euphemisms, and sometimes outright denials" (Henry et al 2017b, 21). The locked door to the Provost's Office is communicating when the people it protects inside will not speak to you, will not meet, a last minute change of heart about who should be allowed in the room describes a norm, anxieties whispered in confidence echo through the hallways of the university and produce a culture.

[4] Imagination and speculation are important aspects of my methodology and analysis, inductive and deductive reasoning are at work here in what I 'imagine'. I induce patterns in what is concealed, to reach conclusions about what the university hopes to keep silent. I start with feminist, anti-racist theories about the university and deduce whether they are valid by observing silences and concealments.

Orientating participant observation.

If ‘lies, secrets and silences’ perpetuate racism and white supremacy in the university, how do we legitimize these tactics as forms of knowledge in our research about the university? And how can we ethically take on participant observation to do this work? In order to start thinking about the implications of safely, ethically, and practically engaging in participant observation in contemporary geographies, this research method should be situated within its historical legacy of colonial knowledge production. Western geography’s earliest participant observers were the elite Europeans who depicted their observations as participants in ‘contact zones’ with ‘exotic others’ through the sharing of travel stories (Pratt, 2001). And while contemporary feminist geographies employ participant observation alongside other collaborative methods to produce feminist research designs that are meant to be subversive in that they blur the boundaries and hierarchies of researcher/observed participant (see Sangtin Writers Collective and Nagar 2006; Cameron 2015), this historical context is important. Ethnography, and participant observation in particular, remains fraught with the politics of disclosure, deception and access (Bernard 1994). We can consider Juanita Sundberg’s concerns about access to research sites in *Ethics, Entanglement and Political Ecology* to help us understand the politics of our methodological choices in the imagining of particular field sites as ‘more available for research’ than others (2015). We can extend Sundberg’s call to reimagine how sites are also ‘made available for research’ depending on the ease with which it is possible to safely, ethically, and practically apply the colonial practices of ‘seeing’ and ‘observation’ inherent in participant observation with minimal risk to ourselves as academics protected by the institution and its protocols.

Who is vulnerable to being observed?

Throughout my undergraduate degree I thought a lot about the hierarchies of power operating in relations between geographers and the communities in which they conduct research, but in the context of studying the university as an institution powered and perpetuated by academic elites, I have become more concerned with how academic communities are differently (or less) vulnerable to being researched and observed. In her own reflections about the ethical and practical challenges of participant observation, Jacqueline Watts (2011) argues that “... even when all research participants in a certain setting are aware that the ethnographer is a researcher, it is doubtful whether they are all similarly (let alone identically) informed about the nature of the research” (305). Considering this challenge, working with academics and

administrators within the university *should* reduce ethical challenges, as people within the institution take up a privileged position in which is it more possible to both fully understand and consent to participation in the research process. In my own experience working in the institution however, this familiarity with the research process and academia in general rather halts data collection and keeps those within from sharing data that might be useful (or even essential) to understanding racial injustice in the university. When administrators and faculty familiar with the 'ethically' regimented research project feel that they have shared too much, (which is generally the richest data) they make sure to specify that this information is 'off the record'. With privileged understandings about research and process, university elites are able to carefully navigate the degree to which they participate in research concerned with race in ways that potential research subjects outside of the university are unable to.

The university employs me as a research coordinator to the equity project X and I co-coordinate at Concordia. It is my job to ask questions about services, support, plans, and policies. Yet often I am treated like a reporter. Throughout my research process administrators in my own and in other universities have asked, with suspicion, if I am a journalist before speaking to me, or have chosen not to speak to me at all. Like Gould in his own reflections on deception and anxiety in the field (2010), I find myself measuring my own words and actions against the threat of being 'found out' as a 'troublemaker' (hooks 1994, 179) or again fear being perceived as "the censoring student, the over-sensitive student" or "the complaining student" (Ahmed 2015). The fear is that if I am identified as a threat to university operations my access to not only my field site (the university), but dually the place that employs me might be denied (Gould 2010, 16). A large part of my research work has necessarily entailed navigating how to safely, ethically, and practically communicate the information that is shared with me in interviews. But even more I feel an ethical responsibility to share the valuable data that I have collected through participant observation — data that is overheard and observed in the field. Sharing informal knowledge which traditional academic channels would prefer not shared is a potential disruption in university operations and cultures, and as a white scholar I am less vulnerable to the potential repercussions of doing so — it feels urgent.

<u>'Brick Walls' and fixes.</u>

As I attempted to continue my research about white supremacy at Concordia, it became clear that the Office of Research acts as a 'brick wall' (Ahmed 2012, 22) impeding my work, and that I

would have to come up with a kind of 'fix' which could make participant observation a possible and viable method in my research design. I fundamentally believe that it is part of white people's work to speak candidly about what happens in the university to stall racial justice and maintain white supremacy, and so I turned to participant observation to conceptualize what I have come to think of and describe as two potential 'fixes' that geographers take up when access to a research site is stalled or barred entirely. The first, being a spatial fix:

> A 'spatial fix' is a method for observing elites. In employing a 'spatial fix' a researcher chooses the field site and the elite group who make up that site based on a comfortable distance — the elite group could be either (or both) socially and/or geographically 'far' from the researcher's life, community, workplace and (most importantly) career. Gould (2010) exemplifies this spatial fix in choosing to work with elite policy makers in Guatemala, a group that is both geographically distant from his workplace and who are privileged socially and politically so as not to feel threatened by academic observation. This lack of vulnerability was demonstrated by the group in their making jokes about Gould's 'spy identity' as a way of recognizing Gould's capacity and intent to 'observe' without feeling threatened (17).

For this research project, a spatial fix was not possible. I wanted to make an argument about the Canadian university at large, using my own university for a site-specific analysis of a wider phenomenon, and so my other option was a relational (or hierarchical) fix.

> A 'relational fix' is a potential redirection when you encounter an elite group's protective barrier (in the case of a university, the ethics review board). Faced with this scenario, a researcher can reroute the project to observe 'non-elite' groups; these communities, groups or individuals are often excluded or more apart-from academia and the formal protocols which dictate research. In these cases, the researcher is often the community's closest or most direct link to the university and is the person in the relationship with the most sophisticated understanding (and thus control) of the research process and ethics protocols. In Watt's (2011) example, she chose to work with the terminally ill, a vulnerable group who demonstrated very little interest, understanding, or engagement in her position or work as an academic and might not have been aware of the degree to which they were being observed (308).

My original research design centered administrators as my research subjects, but through my own experience, I recognized that in wanting to study the university, I was not able to 'fix' the academy at a comfortable distance. This is a site made up of the academics (our peers) who research and the administrators (dually our employers) who facilitate this process through administration of ethics protocols, funding, faculty hires, and access to students and colleagues. This particular group of university elites makes up our lives, workplaces, communities and careers. Put simply, we are too close for comfort. And observing how the university works, who it works for, and who it works against, is constantly further complicated by the close relationships we build with our research participants and those we are observing. My thesis project has been very much informed by what kind of work is made possible and impossible in the university. So I chose a relational fix; my semi-structured, in-depth interviews which aim to understand and compare the experiences of student organizers confronting and navigating white supremacy in the anti-racist work they are engaged in on campus. It is also through this process of navigating institutional barriers that I began engaging with AE as a student organizer myself — I depended on AE's flexibility and potential for 'rewriting' (Taber 13) my experience and my own relationship with the institution to adapt my project to the limitations of the university and its (in)capacity to hold critique from the inside.

Participant observation, feminist geographies, and the university.

But what does this redirection of my project, and the ethical and moral dilemmas which manifest in decoding "Lies, secrets and silence" (Visweswaran, 60) mean for participant observation as a methodological tool in contemporary feminist geographies, and in my own work inside the university? I believe that feminist geographies (and white feminist geographers especially) must grapple with the politics of our methodological choices to engage in participant observation. This might require in part, that we engage with our own administrators to demand new approaches to ethics review boards (Felices-Luna 2014, 210-11). This includes considering the implications of observation when not all communities are equally vulnerable to being 'observed' and acknowledging our complicities in upholding hierarchies of power between those who research and those who are *researched* through the methods we employ. We must reckon with the ways in which participant observation represents one methodological tool that positions the university, our institution, (and *us* within it), as particularly less vulnerable to observation because of our own privileged access to more complete understandings of the research process and ethics protocols.

And so then how can we engage in 'seeing' the university? The group of scholars behind the *Equity Myth*; Frances Henry, Enakshi Dua, Carl James, Audrey Kobayashi, Peter Li and Malinda Smith, describe their methodology as including: "census data, surveys, interviews, textual and policy analyses" (2017b), participant observation is not part of the research design. And while Sara Ahmed may have gotten closest to sharing her observations of the university in *On Being Included* (2012), her eventual resignation demonstrates her feelings that she could do more effective work addressing systemic oppressions and injustices in the academy by leaving it altogether (a spatial fix), giving herself the space to critique at a (perhaps not quite) comfortable distance, but a distance that makes critique more possible. Ahmed describes this falling-out with her field site, which was also her workplace in her personal blogpost *Resignation is a Feminist Issue*: "Without any question, what I learnt about what had been going on [in the university] changed my relation to my work environment for ever. The university would not be the same for me" (2016). Our work deconstructing and critiquing how the university works might transform our relationships to our workplaces and our communities, it might, as it did for Ahmed, prompt us to terminate our engagements with our universities. I wonder then, can engaging in participant observation in this workplace, however risky, however uncomfortable, provide us with ways of working towards institutional transformation while also keeping us here? While Smith's original design for (IE) centered the textual and discursive analysis of policies and documents, for the sake of my project the discursive extends to what is witnessed more than what is recorded. Considering that equity and diversity documents are non-performatives — meaning they do not bring into effect that which they name (Ahmed, 2004) — I am more interested in interrogating how the institution is (re)enacted by *actors*. This means finding ways to analyze the meetings I have attended, concerns I have heard (and overheard), micro-aggressions and confrontations I have witnessed, informal conversations, speculations, feelings, shared fears, shared hopes, and even gossip, all of which contribute to the discourses which make up the culture(s) of racism and white supremacy in the university.

Feminist geographies provide us a bit of hope and direction for the questions that unsettle us. If we can politicize how we are situated within our work, we can also politicize our methodologies by explicitly choosing to employ participant observation in our work on institutional injustice in the university. I am privileged to be part of a supportive community inside my institution that might be able to, in part and in many ways because of my whiteness, protect me from the risks that come with observing and writing about the university. I know that I am particularly situated

this way, I recognize that this work and these risks could have more serious and sinister consequences for other scholars, specifically other scholars who are further excluded, questioned, and surveilled based on racism, colonialism, homo/transphobia, and ableism. Recognizing this, I argue that by making the methodological choice to employ participant observation in my study of the university I can assert and demonstrate that it is not an institution beyond, exempted, nor protected from observation and thus, critique. Through participant observation then, feminist geographies might be able to begin to reflexively 'see' the university and our place and complicities within it the same ways we have begun to 'see' ourselves, our place, and our complicities in the work that we do outside of this institution.

Rebuilding intimate institutions, 'affinity and affection'.

Institutional justice work is hopeful, there is no model for what we are trying to create, so much of the work is waiting for what has been promised, what has been demanded, to arrive, intangible — and often the hope of something different is what we can hold in our hands. But, 'becoming hopeful is different from becoming optimistic' and it "involves a more attuned ability to affect and be affected by a processual world because it is called forth from the disruptions that coax space — times of change into being within that world" (Anderson 2006, 747). We allow ourselves and the work to affect and be affected, and the changes we strive for arrive in small ways by being *enacted*.

We build community from the disappointment, rage, and occasional joys that come out of anti-racist work in the university, we build relationships that reconstitute our very being, we wear the work on our bodies and between one another. The disruptions we create seem small, we foster intimacy, even love, in our universities as a kind of protest, in spite of difference and because of it. And I find myself transformed through and living within working partnerships in which "love is understood as affinity — alliance and affection across lines of difference that intersect both in and out of the body" (Sandoval 2000, 170). Alliance and affection, love as affinity, the experience of building a small world of possibility inside this institution, this is what we can hold in our hands.

Methodologies grounded in intimacy make space for the knowledge we produce in coalition, in alliance; the knowledge we generate in and between our relationships. And making space for this knowledge is how we might enact more just forms of relating in the university. I contribute

the intimate methodologies that I have taken up in this chapter as a method for making sense of the stories that have been shared with me and the moments I have witnessed to remake and reshape our work in transforming the university towards racial justice. Through this project I experienced the ways in which autoethnography, institutional ethnography, and participant observation can supplement other forms of data collection to examine the systems and cultures of white supremacy I myself embody. These methodologies have offered me ways forward in my work towards a fundamental shift in the university, towards one grounded in accountability — if nothing else they have allowed me to highlight the expertise and resistance strategies of anti-racist student organizers whose expertise in navigating and dismantling white supremacy is crucial to the project of fostering racial justice in the university.

Introduction to research participants.

The following analysis chapters (IV-VI) take up and move between these intimate methodologies, engaging equally with anecdote, testimony, and speculation[5] — all of which are essential to understanding the state of racial (in)justice at Concordia University and in the Canadian university more broadly. While my research participants opted for a variety of different levels of confidentiality I have assigned each of them a gender-neutral moniker and have included a summary of how each of my participants were in relationship with the university at the time of data collection. Our experiences in and of the university are impacted by the ways we are read here; along the intersections of race, Indigeneity, gender, ability, class, sexuality, citizenship. And I struggled with whether or not to explicitly describe these facets of my participants' identities, especially race and gender. BIPOC students (and women and non-binary students in particular) make up such a small percentage of the programs represented in this project, especially graduate programs, so much so that I risk my participants' anonymity by describing their race and gender as part of who they are to this project (which speaks also to the state of representation in the university). Although this has of course, impacted these interviews in no small part. However, I did not redact this information when it came up in the excerpts I engaged with and I also will say that both E and B are white students as I do not think that stating this jeopardizes their anonymity or makes either student more vulnerable.

[5] Or again, induction/deduction.

I have provided a short and *incomplete* description of each of my participants at the time of data collection (Spring — Winter 2017) to provide context for the stories which follow:

T was an undergraduate student and a member of a group organizing on campus for the establishment of a Black Studies program.

A was an undergraduate student and founder of an online platform working to foster positive representations of Black people in the media.

Z, M, and **N** were graduate students and organizers of a department-wide initiative encouraging equitable practices in hiring and in the classroom and within departments and advocating for course reform/restructuring to include both a wider range of literature and scholarship.

J was an undergraduate student and **H** had just completed a graduate diploma — both J and H served as editors to a student paper through which they together re-established an annual issue interrogating race in the university.

E was an undergraduate student and student association member in their department, and was organizing anti-racism workshops through this role.

B was an undergraduate student and student association member in their department.

And a reminder from their contributions to Chapter III;

P was a former undergraduate student working full-time as coordinator to a university-wide project addressing inequities in gender and sexualities.

X was a master's student and my co-coordinator on an anti-racist, anti-oppressive equity project on campus.

Contextualizing anti-racist student work.

I name the conditions of anti-racist student work based on what I have witnessed and experienced and what has been shared by my research participants; student justice work is

under-resourced, under and unpaid, surveilled — even policed, undervalued and even feared, it is work that keeps actors (and especially administrators) in the university concerned with equity, while racial justice itself never arrives. Students' anti-racist work at Concordia university includes the actual formal justice initiatives students coordinate (events, research, workshops, talks, consultations, conferences) as well as, and perhaps more interestingly, the less-tangible work of navigating white supremacy and reconstituting institutional cultures — the work that is at the heart of this research project.

This contextualization of student work is significant in its own right in that it should address the aforementioned crucial gap in the literature concerning racial justice in the university (Chapter II), but it will also create opportunities in the proceeding chapters to further question how this work is taken up (Chapter IV) — and to ask, who is *made* responsible for justice in the university and at what cost (Chapter V) in order to make sense of how racial justice is stalled and denied and how students then negotiate the intractability of this place (Chapter VI).

Each of the following analysis chapters is equally attentive to both the manifestations of white supremacy in the university and the resistance to these manifestations by focusing on student anti-racist organizers who act, create, labour, and disrupt out of hope. Each chapter takes up student expertise in navigating and dismantling white supremacy to interrogate, with the goal of interrupting, the distorted 'fears' that keep us committed to white supremacy. There is much at stake in documenting this student expertise — an expertise in navigating and undoing white supremacy and the distorted 'fears' in which it proliferates while simultaneously reconstituting our institutional cultures towards racial justice through hopefulness. And the hope of transforming the university towards racial justice depends on our capacity and willingness to understand and take up this student expertise.

CHAPTER IV: Analysis

(Counter)Claims: understanding, negotiating, and resisting white supremacy's claim to the space of the university.

This chapter investigates competing claims to the space of the university by asking, how do actors and systems invested in white supremacy stake claims to the university? And then how are these claims challenged by anti-racist student organizers in their work for racial justice? This chapter also introduces and describes the distorted 'fears' through which white supremacy justifies its claims to the space of the university and subsequent reproduction. Through my data I then examine how actors and systems invested in white supremacy stake claims to the space of the university which are grounded in these distorted 'fears' and manifest through surveillance and reinvestments into Euro-centric curriculum and meritocracy. In turn, I examine how these claims are contested by the counterclaims of anti-racist student organizers, and BIPOC organizers in particular. I explore how student organizers' counterclaims are grounded in the hope for racial justice — which necessarily challenge white supremacy's hold on the space of our university. I examine these claims and counter-claims to university in two parts:

Part I examines how white claims to the space of the university are both prompted and perpetuated by distorted fears of racial justice in the academy. I then document the ways in which these claims are manifested through 1) surveillance and 2) reinvestments into Euro-centric curriculum and meritocracy.

Part II then moves into an overview of student racial justice organizing on and off campus to highlight the work of anti-racist students as counterclaims to the university. Student counterclaims manifest as the establishing of counter-institutions to address and fill formal institutional gaps in services and foster spaces which accommodate and serve BIPOC communities within the university. Counter-institutions include collectives, online and community-based platforms for engagement, and student-led social justice initiatives.

PART I *White 'fear', control, and claims to the space of the university.*

This project's literature review examined how BIPOC scholars experience and navigate the university as a space dominated by white supremacy, using the scholarship of BIPOC women scholars specifically to understand how white supremacy manifests as an experience of

alienation, isolation, and unwellness in the academy (Gonzalez and Harris 2014; Dua and Lawrence 2000). This chapter now examines this dominance (and the resistance to this dominance) as expressed in the university through competing claims to the space of the university. I use one of my research participants' quotes here to illuminate white supremacy's claim to university space — what T describes as an 'entitlement to accessibility'. T's observation about this entitlement is grounded in their expertise navigating institutional white supremacy in the context of anti-racist organizing at Concordia. Here T defines how whiteness is performed on campus:

> *What whiteness actually means and how that's performed in these spaces: there's a certain entitlement to accessibility of space and people's space… And I think that's a way of life for certain people who identify as performing whiteness — not necessarily identifying with white but in performing that. And that is a big threat, because effectively if you disrupt that you're essentially taking away a person's culture. And if you take away a person's culture that's a schism — I don't know how you function with that. We all have certain untouchable rights, and I think one of the rights in performing whiteness is like, 'I can go where I want'. It's a punitive thing I think, whiteness — is that ability.*

T's analysis demonstrates how the university (re)constitutes itself spatially. T's words here prompt a crucial reflection into the affective nature of white supremacy in its entitlement or claiming of space, and orients my understanding of these claims as a fear response to the perceived *'threat'* of justice in the university. To unpack this, it is crucial to recognize how the white supremacist fear of justice is not only a 'distorted' fear, but itself has a distorting effect. In this chapter, this distorted fear manifests as a fear of relinquishing a claim and hold on a university that has historically excluded BIPOC communities and on the structures and systems which decide whose knowledges matter and whose ideas are validated and resourced.

Fears, distortions, and space.

In my arguments concerning fear in the university I draw from Ahmed's work on the affective power of emotion in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015) as she engages with Fanon's story of an encounter between a white boy and a Black man in his work in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). Fanon tells the story of the white boy responding in fear towards the man he believes to be "quivering with rage" (113) and therefore dangerous — in reality, the Black man is in fact

shivering in the cold, but his body is given back him “sprawled out, distorted, recolored” (Fanon 1986, 113) by the white boy. In the stories which follow, we see this same distortion in the fear of racial justice, and those who promise to foster it in the university; student organizers (often BIPOC student organizers specifically) who are “felt to be fearsome through a misreading, a misreading that is returned by the other through its response of fear” (Ahmed 2015, 63) by white actors in the university.

This insistent and purposeful misreading of the promise of racial justice, the distorted fears we have about this space and about what racial justice could mean produce a culture of fear, and these emotions “work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies” (Ahmed, 1). Collectively, those with a stake in white supremacy, the collective ‘white body’, cling to the manifestations of white supremacy across the university — we cling to white supremacy because it is what we know, and because frankly, it is working for us here. Our fear responses manifest as these reinvestments in white supremacy, because

> Discourses of fear are, in R.D. Laing’s terms, concerned with the preservation rather than gratification of the subject [Laing 1960: 44]. Fear might be concerned with the preservation not simply of ‘me’, but also ‘us’, or ‘what is’, or ‘life as we know it’, or even ‘life itself’ (Ahmed 2015, 64).

Our fears are fundamentally about preserving our cultural and structural norms. And the fear of racial justice — which is on its way — is anticipatory, it is not a response to our reality (which is unjust) but rather is “*being produced by an object’s approach*” (Ahmed 66). The approaching object is racial justice and the student organizer whose presence promises (or threatens) it. Students organizers’ action, ideas, and even their presence alone, threaten to displace the white academic through diversity and inclusion initiatives and discourses and disrupt ‘life as we know it’. For bell hooks these students are the ‘troublemakers’ who are often silenced, they are “Students who enter the academy unwilling to accept without question the assumptions and values held by privileged classes” (1994, 179). For Sara Ahmed this student is the “problem student” and “related figures: the consuming student, the censoring student, the over-sensitive student and the complaining student” (‘Against Students’ blogpost, June 2015). The logic of white fear depends on this ‘object’s’ approach, the student is threatening because they are nearby but apart from, and they are apart from the collective (white) body. But this apart-from depends on *stereotype*s. Ahmed works through this proximity, ‘apartness’ and stereotypes:

“Fear involves relationships of proximity, which are crucial to establishing the ‘apartness’ of white bodies. Such proximity involves the repetition of stereotypes” (63). So white actors and systems are responding to the stereotype of the ‘troublemaker’ student (hooks, 1994) which is “sprawled out, distorted, recolored” (Fanon 1986) by the white collective body. My interview participants shared experiences of being read as this ‘approaching object’; as the radical, disruptive BIPOC student who is imagined as demanding beyond reason. They described experiencing Fanon’s distortion or purposeful misreading by white actors in the university who stereotype the troublemaker student as also the ‘angry Black woman’ (A), students who ‘love playing the race card’ (M, Z) or the ‘threatening’ gathering of radical Black students (T).

The representation of BIPOC communities is perceived as a threat to white supremacy in the institution; if racial justice work is an opening up of the university in that it hopes to foster access and belonging for those who are and have been excluded it is feared by the white collective body because “openness itself is read as a site of potential danger, and as demanding evasive action” (Ahmed, 69). Why do we imagine openness as dangerous? What are we afraid of? Opening up this space would mean sharing the space, which necessarily requires a relinquishing of dominance and releasing our exclusive claims here, and we fear this because dominance over this space affords us nothing short of every kind of privilege. The resistance to ‘openness’ is an evasive action, and this evasive action is *spatial* — in clinging to the claimed space here, we restrict or confine those who threaten white supremacy to facilitate the access and belonging of those invested in white supremacy. But even more specifically, *responses* to the threat of openness are spatial; because if “fear works to contain some bodies such that they take up less space” then *“fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others”* (Ahmed 69, emphasis in original).

For the white collective body, an opening up of the university to include BIPOC communities is perceived as a threat or limitation of our own established claim to the space and to the movement and expansion of white bodies, ideologies, epistemologies; white fear responses aim to restrict this openness by restricting access and belonging. To return to T’s description of whiteness’ entitlement to space; we are working in a space (and perpetuating a culture) in which white bodies are permitted uninhibited access in and to the university in ways that BIPOC bodies are not. The white response to the threat of racial justice in the university is to cling tighter to the space currently occupied and dominated, our “fear works to align bodily and social

space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained" (Ahmed 2015, 70).
So more specifically, the evasive action of white fear is to limit BIPOC communities' access to the space of the university, and then if and when access is granted or taken, to limit BIPOC engagement and belonging within the space through surveillance in order to claim the space and let white actors inhabit the university more freely.

Surveillance.

In "Notes on Surveillance Studies" (2015) Simone Browne looks to "black feminist theorizing of surveillance… as a way to situate surveillance as both a discursive and material practice" (33). I use 'surveillance' in the university in much the same way; to describe the ways that "social control operates on certain bodies and in certain spaces" and even "comes to be internalized by some" (Browne 2015, 38). Browne engages with scholars Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks specifically to describe surveillance as not only a mode of social control but as also a racialized and racializing process, that is enacted on black women especially and violently. For Hill Collins, surveillance "highlights individuality by making the individual hypervisible and on display" (1998, 20) and for hooks surveillance demands that black women make themselves less visible (1992, 168) so as to appear "manageable and non-threatening" (Browne 2015, 57). Surveillance in the university is invested in maintaining hierarchy and protecting power. And according to both Hill Collins and hooks, surveillance dually forces BIPOC bodies into hypervisibility as out-of-place while also demanding that BIPOC members of the university make themselves less visible by appearing and performing as less threatening. Building on their conceptualization of whiteness as punitive, T goes on to identify the material modes through which white supremacy's claim to the university manifests as a form of surveillance. In this example, T situates the institutional resistance to the establishment of a Black studies program as a demonstration of this surveillance:

> *One thing I have noticed is issues of surveillance, and I feel that a lot of the issues and rejections to something like bringing forth Black studies is that if you have Black professors or you have an all-Black department, who supervises that? And so to have an all-Black space, sharing information that could be perceived as 'radical' — because I mean anything that is related to Black studies is political and radical by virtue of its function — is terrifying to [administration]. So that's where I think we're hitting walls.*

And T's thinking here is not hyperbolic; they are interpolating from the experience of participating in a closed networking lunch for Black students as part of Juliana Huxtable's 2017 visit to Concordia University. And as we imagine the future of a Black Studies department at Concordia, this particular event offers us insight to how a small scale, all-Black space would (not) be accepted at the university. This particular networking lunch was born out of resistance to reserved BIPOC space at Huxtable's talk (January 20 2017) earlier in the week — a resistance which would then be replicated when Angela Davis presented at Concordia in conversation with Robyn Maynard (September 12 2018). In both cases Concordia Student Union (CSU) organizers had attempted to reserve BIPOC space in the first few rows of Huxtable's and Davis' presentations, and in response white members of the public rallied online claiming 'reverse racism' and threatening legal action against the CSU. In both cases, the university intervened to encourage (or pressure) the CSU to respond to the racist threats by cancelling the closed space. These stories are demonstrative of both the university and the public prioritizing white distorted fears over BIPOC rights to the space. Huxtable's closed lunch was meant to be a response to the violence of community policing against reserved space but T describes how this meeting instead became another embodiment of on-campus surveillance:

> *That was really interesting because the luncheon was, I think at most there was 15 people there and there was a security guard walking outside of the room. It was just a classroom, and there was a security guard just walking back and forth peeking in once in a while, obviously not protecting [the people inside]. But I think this actually goes back, this point of surveillance — you had a space entirely comprised of people of colour having a discussion. And because this discussion could not be surveilled it was a massive threat. So mechanisms of surveillance are put in there. I think to me it seemed like a tactic of intimidation. But it was rather ridiculous.*

Security had been sent (by *someone*) to patrol the room where a group of Black artists, organizers, and students were participating in a closed meeting. T says that the guard is 'obviously not protecting' the people inside, so this mechanism of surveillance is not about safety — but is rather about restricting and monitoring the movement and very existence of Black members of the university. So fear is spatial, white fear of an opening of the university to include and accommodate those it has historically denied is about maintaining dominance and

claim over the space specifically. And white claims to the space of the university manifest via surveillance, a response to the distorted fear of racial justice or of 'openness'.

The explicit surveillance demonstrated by the security guard in T's account is not the only way control manifests at Concordia, it also manifests as an implicit form of social control operating in and on our interpersonal relationships. In our interviews, anti-racist student organizers describe the effects of surveillance internalized in efforts to avoid *"being regarded as a troublemaker"* (Z) because "*there's so much self-monitoring that you have to do when you're involved in questioning your superiors"* (M). This instinct that students feel to self-monitor as described by M is both a response to, and manifestation of, surveillance or social control across our academic communities and demonstrates the way this social control "comes to be internalized by some" (Browne 2015, 38). Like M said, the urge and necessity to self-monitor emerges from the real vulnerability of questioning the systems and hierarchies students are living and working within. And a crucial and overarching theme amongst the anti-racist student organizers I interviewed is the need to question and disrupt Euro-centric curriculum and meritocracy as reinvestments into white supremacy.

Reinvesting in Euro-centric curriculum and meritocracy.

The Euro-centric disciplining of curriculum is a crucial method through which white supremacy stakes claim to the university. Many of my research participants were responding to anti-racist and anti-colonial content being included only as a special topic, or covered in one week of the course work rather than integrated throughout curriculum and pedagogy. Curriculum reform to include BIPOC knowledges is at the heart of many of my research participants' work to address the problem of representation and course content solely centering white epistemologies and ideologies, across the university generally, and specifically within the social sciences and humanities. Curriculum is significant site where questions of representation are facilitated, because:

> Intimately tied to questions of representation, both under- and over-representation, are questions of curriculum, which is often not Indigenous, international, or inclusive [Cannon and Sunseri 2011; Dei and McDermott 2014]. The narrowness of many, although by no means all, university curricula presents several challenges that disproportionately affect racialized and Indigenous scholars and scholarship (Henry et al 2017b, 6).

This narrowness and the marginalization of BIPOC voices and knowledges in curriculum is a way of limiting the space these communities can occupy in the academy, and this exclusion plays out in very tangible, direct, and violent ways for BIPOC students who feel that not only are their identities erased or ignored, but their education lacks the intellectual rigor that diversity provides:

> *There was maybe two or three Black people in my entire program and we were like 200 people, you know? And even the way that we speak about health was really white-centric and the whole pedigree, everything was centered on this white reality. What's exercise, what's the human body? Everything was the white body. And I came out of there with a lot of problematic ways of thinking that I didn't really challenge until I left the program and I was actually practicing.*
>
> — X.

> *We skirt the surface of so many interesting issues in this department particularly, and I think that's done for a reason. I think it's once again part of Concordia's strategy to appear progressive and it's always at the end of something — it's always a footnote, it's always at the tail-end it's always the last thing but effectively also has the least impression.*
>
> — T.

It is through this centering of white, Euro-centric content that the university restricts BIPOC knowledges — and then superficial 'inclusion' of BIPOC epistemologies in the form of special topics courses or assigned weeks guarantees that while BIPOC content may be present, it is not integrated into the structure of courses and departments, it cannot move unrestricted in the academy.

This is further perpetuated by the justifying of majority white departments in humanities and social sciences (who then make choices around curriculum) through conceptions of 'meritocracy' which M aptly describes as essentially *"reverse racism bullshit cloaked in merit"*. M's assessment here aligns with current interventions in normative conceptions of 'academic excellence' which demand attention to the ways in which in "We use excellence and prestige and quality to mask subtle prejudices" (Henry et al 2017, 99b) and argue that "attitudes

concerning who represents the most meritorious candidate are influenced by a corporate culture that values white males" (Kobayashi 2006, 34). And while I have demonstrated how academic standards are used as tools for reinvesting in white supremacy (Chapter II), questioning meritocracy remains a challenge because its logic is so entangled with the personal constitutions of a white professorship who depend on it to justify their dominance in and claim to their departments. M describes this entanglement:

> *It's such a weird thing and I don't think this is particular to the English department; there are all of these delusions about one's prejudices and biases and no one wants to admit that they have them first of all. And second of all, they all went through this system where it's merit-based and so they kind of believe in it because it's the system that brought them up.*

Part of the challenge of questioning meritocracy is that it demands an interrogation into how whiteness is, and depends on, its perception as a default or norm. In meritocracy and in the make-up of departments, whiteness is not considered a racial identity; it is the marker to which all other racial identities are compared. In university hiring, whiteness acts as a guarantee that your identity will be considered unimportant or unremarkable to a hiring committee, whiteness guarantees that you will be assessed solely on 'merit' (a white construct) — in this way departmental hiring committees can argue it is actually more equitable to choose a white candidate over a BIPOC candidate. As a tool, meritocracy does not recognize BIPOC expertise and Z describes its role in resisting or denying (but absolutely limiting) the capacity of hiring committees to account for experiential expertise in hiring:

> *It's frustrating because I think that faculty members who are very resistant to the idea that you know someone might have something extra to offer by being you know, of the culture they're discussing — so a lot of resistance to that — it almost encourages them to go with a white candidate in the end, just to establish that they're all the same and can do just as good a job. I'm not saying this is a conscious and active choice but I definitely get the sense from the way that people discuss so called 'diversity hires' that they want to distance themselves from that at all costs.*
>
> *I mean it's crazy because something I heard very often was 'you can't hire based on identity, you can't hire based on identity, it's illegal', right? And the idea that you aren't*

hiring based on identity by picking this white scholar over this Indigenous scholar is ludicrous. [M: Because whiteness isn't real?] It's not an attribute it's just normal.

— Z.

Here Z breaks down how whiteness is normalized so as to be invisibilized in hiring processes, describing meritocracy as a tactic of white supremacy to claim the space of the university through departmental and administrative constitutions and cultural norms. Z also introduces the character of the 'diversity hire' who is feared in the university. Here, meritocracy is used to legitimize a distorted fear of the 'diversity hire'; the 'diversity hire' is the candidate who is perceived to have been chosen because of their race, and thus has displaced a white candidate in the academy, rather than having 'earned' their place like their white peers. Another way to say this is that BIPOC scholars "are not seen as adding something to the university; they are seen as taking something away from the homogenization of faculty" (Henry et al 2017, 96b). In the same way that academic standards are operationalized to maintain white supremacy's dominance in the university as demonstrated in the literature (Chapter II), the university depends on a constructed standard of 'excellence' that is fixed to reproduce itself. There is no denying that "Standards must always be high. Excellence must be valued, but standards cannot be absolute and fixed" (hooks 1994, 157). And this intentional fixing of excellence within a white, Euro-centric framework guarantees that only white scholars can be considered excellent.

The university depends on this fixed 'excellence' to position merit and diversity as an 'either-or', and merit as obviously and undeniably more important. This either-or approach delegitimizes those who would be deemed 'diverse' (BIPOC scholars) and masks this delegitimization as obvious, necessary, and neutral: "The message that they receive is that "excellence" — narrowly defined in conventional terms — is not to be sacrificed for the supposedly nebulous benefits of equity, inclusivity, and diversity" (Henry et al 2017b, 112). To legitimize this fear of the 'diversity hire', those invested in white supremacy lean on meritocracy to express the racist fear of an 'academic decline' that will occur if and when those with experiential expertise take or are granted space. And 'what is' or 'life as we know it' (Ahmed 2015, 64) is threatened by those who are perceived to be 'diversity hires', as: "the fear of degeneration, decline and disintegration as mechanisms for preserving 'what is', becomes associated more with some bodies than others" (Ahmed 2015, 78). We could just as easily fear the possibility of academia becoming irrelevant because of ideological stagnation but we do not; instead, we cling tighter to the space we have already claimed — and we fear the distorted consequences of shifting and expanding

schools of thought to include those it historically has not. This conception of meritocracy depends on the devaluing of experiential expertise — for it to work, meritocracy as a white supremacist claim to the space of the university must believe that the university has nothing to gain, and in fact, more to lose, by intentionally integrating BIPOC knowledges, expertise, and pedagogies. Alongside surveillance, Euro-centric curriculum and constructed meritocracy are operationalized by actors and systems in the university to reinvest into white supremacy and claim the space of the university.

PART II *(Re)Claiming space: staking counter-claims to the university.*

Equally important however is to recognize that paralleling the work of those invested in white supremacy are anti-racist student organizers working to disrupt and dismantle it. Students respond to and counter white supremacy's claims to the space of the university in two ways specifically: 1) by building transformative counter-institutions which also work to not only contest but also supplement university content and cultures, and then by using these counter-institutions to 2) engage in informal, student-led work filling institutional gaps in formal services and structures.

Counter-institutions.

Anti-racist student organizers supplement their education and build sophisticated counter-institutions which make the university a more accessible and livable place for BIPOC students and scholars. These counter-institutions include collectives (T), online and community-based platforms (A), student-led equity initiatives (N, Z, M, X, P, E), and even the closed BIPOC-only event spaces which were targets of surveillance as discussed in Part I (T). Anti-racist student organizing spaces and initiatives become for students their own spaces of possibility and disruption which counter white supremacy. These counter-claims manifests firstly in the form of supplementing content by way of building community. In creating their online and community platform highlighting Black representation in the media, A demonstrates this necessity; of building a counter-institution which both engages in knowledge that speaks to their experience while fostering a community in which they feel acknowledged and understood:

> *I wouldn't say [the platform] was so much a response to what I was dealing with at Concordia, but it was very much to do with Concordia in the sense that I was not being*

> *challenged enough, both practically and intellectually as well. Because again the classes were very basic. And I remember at some point we were talking about this Black singer in class and the professor asked something about Blackness and there were only two Black people in that class — there's only four Black people in my whole year, and so this white girl was like 'oh you should have so much to say about this' and I was just like, is this a micro-aggression? Do I feel attacked?*

Faced with a lack of representation in their own program, in curriculum as much as within their peer group, A established an online community alongside their degree which enabled them to connect with students and peers with shared backgrounds and perspectives. Within this space, A creates the possibility to push back on forms of interpersonal micro-aggressions within their own peer group. And in parallel, in the context of their work, T speaks to the important role (one that becomes an obligation) of building community as a way of filling in the academic and cultural gaps of the university:

> *[Working with the collective] was great, and I connected with a lot of brilliant people and some amazing allies, and it's really reconfigured my relationship with the post-academic world completely. It's changed the way I think critically and it's also shed light on how the institution really operates when you actually get an opportunity to kind of look behind the curtain which — I think is what any small collective does and I think that's also why it's met with so much resistance from the university — is there's suspicion.*

But while these platforms, and collectives — these counter-institutions — facilitate essential counter-claims, T reminds us that counter-institutions are met with resistance and suspicion from the outside, a resistance grounded in distorted fear. While student organizers take up racial justice work to reconfigure their own relationships with the university, their work has a dual effect — it 'sheds light on how the institution really operates' in order not only to disrupt these operations but also to remedy them. This shedding light is a threat to white supremacy's claim to the university, a claim that depends on the normalization, neutralization, and murkiness of the systems and cultures at work.

Unlike the resistance to student organizers' counter-institutions, the emergence of these collectives, online and community-based platforms, student-led equity initiatives, and closed BIPOC spaces, is not grounded in distorted fears — student organizers build counter-institutions

rather out of hopefulness. But again, this hopefulness comes out of necessity, it is a recognition that for BIPOC students the university is not a livable place, and that others are not taking on the responsibility of addressing this reality. While the next chapter complicates how student organizers come to take on (or are rather assigned) this responsibility, it is necessary first to understand how this responsibility manifests. Emerging from these counter-institutions are crucial student-led contributions which foster racial justice on campus and stake counter-claims to the space of the university. And through their counter-institutions student organizers foster the capacity of the university to work towards racial justice, by providing the university with 1) informal 'equity offices', 2) crucial institutional knowledge and research around justice, and 3) consultative work concerning institutional barriers and failures to racial justice.

Informal 'equity offices'.

Anti-racist student organizers at Concordia have been, and are always informally taking up the work of filling institutional gaps in services and structures — work which should (and in other universities does) come out of a defined, resourced, institutional space[6]. And student-led initiatives attempting to address specific injustices are expected to become all-encompassing projects. In the case of the student-led initiative that Z, M, and N were working on for example, the group emerged to address lacking representation in curriculum and in new faculty hires and was expected to adjust their mandate responding to the insidious and deeply-rooted issue of sexual harassment in their department — an issue that required (and would finally, in 2018, receive) the attention of the Provost Office. M speaks to this phenomenon, of their student collective being approached as if they have the capacity and resources to address a range of institutional failures and how this work is consistently unpaid (or at best is underpaid):

> *And the other thing that happened is by the second year of [the project] people were bringing us all sorts of things saying, 'oh [the project] has to do this, [the project] has to do this, [the project] has to do this' and it started to turn into this catch-all. There are tons*

[6] For example, the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office at McGill whose "mission is to address barriers to education by celebrating and integrating diverse perspectives into campus culture, and fostering research and mentorship opportunities to support more equitable, inclusive outreach and research at McGill" (SEDE Webpage as of December 2018). At the time of writing (December 2018) McGill announced it would dissolve SEDE and its initiatives would be reshuffled and relocated to other offices across campus — suggesting that the university is actually moving away from, instead of towards, institutional commitments to resourced equity services.

> *of problems with sexual harassment in the department and everybody had a thing, they were like 'oh this is [your project's] thing to do' because it's the equity committee. I got super overwhelmed and the amount of talking to faculty that needed to be done to deal with all these problems was like, why? Why are we putting in all this free labour?*

Institutional knowledge.

And if it is not enough that students are expected to coordinate and direct the equity projects they establish, anti-racist student organizers are required to take on the labour of justifying their projects, demands, and initiatives with research, as if this research does not already exist and speak to the structural issues in the Canadian university at large (Chapter II). Z, M, and N's project was expected to conduct rigorous research into the state of equity in the Canadian university to build a database of information and resources which should be made accessible to all members of the university by formalized offices. If the research already exists then we can imagine these demands as stalling tactics themselves — and even when indulged, there is no guarantee that faculty and administration will validate, trust, (or even read) the research work that students undertake and compile. This was certainly the case for Z's project:

> *And especially work with the hiring policies left me very despairing, because I mean part of [the project's] work was to put together research and then distribute that research among the faculty. Hindsight is 20/20, now it seems so obvious to me that of course they wouldn't even look at that but, you know that's something that was discussed pretty thoroughly in the research; how these hiring policies really keep academics of colour out of university departments and the focus on publishing, there's discrimination. So it was annoying for me to hear these things and be like 'no, but we addressed that, it's in your booklet!'.*

Furthermore, students are expected to translate this research into research projects that take on specific university- and departmental- wide audits of syllabi, reports, surveys. Half of the participants I interviewed had undertaken research projects of this kind to lend institutional legitimacy to their work (including J, X and myself, P, Z, M and N). N describes the labour required to relate this work to Concordia specifically:

We started to come up with a plan for a report that would say what the statistics are currently for the syllabi in terms of representation, why we think it's important for the school to have representation. So then we also tied it in with Concordia's new directions goal, the strategic directions report[7] *so it would be like 'this is the way the university's heading, this will get more funding, the research will be better, these are all really good reasons that representation is important, this is how we'll help students, these are the goals that we think we should set'…*

We were trying to do research on what other schools had done in our reports and to show how it could be done at Concordia.

— N.

Consultative work.

And finally, students are being tasked with addressing even formal institutional initiatives emerging out of 'professional', administrative offices. For example, A was told by an administrator in their department to address the lack of racial representation on the *Standing Committee on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence*[8] which was struck by the Provost Office in response to sexual assault allegations out of the English department which had been informally circulating for years.[9] A recalled an advising meeting in their own department in which,

I mentioned to [my administrator] that the [committee] for the English department was all white people and she was like 'there you go, I didn't even think about that, write to them and complain about it'. She said 'write to this person' and I think she gave me an email and I just didn't write to them because a) I'm not in the English department, b) I have 5 other classes, this is not my fight.

[7] The *9 Strategic Directions*, Concordia University's official 'strategic plan' was approved by the Board of Governors on June 11, 2015 — the directions "are not objectives so much as orientations that are necessary for our success. At the heart of these orientations is a commitment to be a place that combines intensive knowledge-making, deeply connected learning, and high-impact public engagement" (Concordia Communications, 2015).

[8] Which "is a permanent university committee of students, faculty and staff convened to revise and implement the University's Policy on Sexual Violence and coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to university sexual violence and sexual misconduct" (Concordia University website, as of December 2018).

[9] Marked most notably by Emma Healey's 2014 article "Stories like Passwords", published in the Hairpin.

The responsibility of auditing and then consulting on committees organized by the Provost Office should (obviously) not become the responsibility of unpaid student organizers, yet work like this constantly falls to them. E speaks to the challenging obligation of organizing sensitivity training for administration and faculty while navigating not only a toxic environment in their department surrounding race but while also working within the existing hierarchy of the university. The work is particularly fraught when those student organizers aim to train and educate are the educators themselves; their own administration and faculty:

> *So we felt like it was important to do anti-racism workshops as well but that was a lot more complicated of a process I think because there isn't a body at school that gives or trains people to give anti-racism workshops. And we also felt there was a lot more sensitive, and I think damaged, history of racism and contemporary reality of racism in the [department] that needed to be navigated while we organized these workshops in a responsible way.*
>
> — E.

It is clear then that the work being undertaken by Concordia students out of counter-institutions is not simply (though it is never simple) 'student work', but is rather a sophisticated approach to making counterclaims to the space of the university and supplementing systems and cultures with invaluable and necessary anti-racist work. And as actors and systems invested in white supremacy claim the space of the university through surveillance, Euro-centric curriculum, and meritocracy; in turn, BIPOC student organizers make counterclaims to space through the building of counter-institutions towards racial justice. It is through these counter-institutions students address institutional failures and take up so much of the work that is required to foster racial justice in the institution. This labour becomes part of the fabric of the university, and in turn racial justice becomes perceived as naturally the responsibility of student organizers. And it is this conceptualization — that students are and should be responsible for fostering and demanding justice on campus — that I interrogate and intervene in in the proceeding chapter.

CHAPTER V: Analysis

Who is made responsible for racial justice?

This chapter interrogates an argument that has been following me around in the university: *that it is the students themselves (more than staff or faculty) who have the power to demand and foster racial justice in the university.* This is an argument I have heard from faculty and administrators alike, from scholars and experts invested in racial justice in universities across campus, and one that I continue to grapple with myself. I call it 'the empowered student' narrative. The 'empowered student narrative' believes that if and when students encounter racism in the university they can and should address it, in the form of confrontation at the individual level and in the form of student organizing at the structural level. The empowered student narrative imagines that students have the capacity to demand racial justice and that white supremacy in the university can be remedied by student action. I would not say that this argument is necessarily wrong; this research project was prompted entirely by the legacy of effective anti-racist student organizing and this work itself is a testament to the truth of this narrative — that students have always, and continue to, exert their power in the face of racial injustice on campus. The following reflections are not to deny the power of anti-racist student organizers, but rather to examine the costs and obligations of this work — and how this responsibility for racial justice is unfairly and strategically assigned. There is a clear and unexplored tension here, between what students are *made* responsible for and what they *should* be responsible for. This chapter asks what does the 'empowered student narrative' mean for anti-racist student organizers on campus? What does this argument mean for BIPOC students organizers in a white supremacist university specifically? And also, what does it mean for white actors here?

As someone who has negotiated this narrative throughout their time inside the institution, A breaks down 'the empowered student' expertly:

> *I went to a CSU meeting about race intervention and oppression on campus and this whole narrative came up again, they asked 'What could students do? What do students have to do?'. And they were like 'some students are too scared to approach their professors that's why they don't say anything' and I'm just like no, that's not why. And the thing is, I know students who are like 'I'm just not going to talk to my professor, I'm just going to get my grade and get out, I don't have the energy to talk with a racist professor'.*

> *Which is true — you're getting paid to teach me racist ideologies that you believe in as well — I'm not going to waste my time. So it's not that students are shy, stop that narrative. So with CSU I feel like they're not going to accomplish much of anything when they just keep circulating that same narrative.*

A demonstrates here how this narrative is flawed in its assumption that students have the energy and capacity to address interpersonal and systemic forms of racism on campus, and only choose not to. Yet the empowered student is widespread and possibly proliferating. Concordia University has a rich history of transformative student activism and the empowered student narrative is part of its campus culture. It is present in the ideology of the student union, the highest student representative on campus — as part of its mission statement, the Concordia Student Union (CSU) explicitly engages the empowered student narrative:

> Contrary to mainstream discourse, students as a social group have proven to be not only **a powerful force to be reckoned with**, but a group that has historically been engaged in inspiring many social changes. This is important for us to remember, as the remarkable acts of student defiance and risk-taking forged many of the rights we take for granted as students today (CSU webpage as of December 2018, emphasis in original).

There is no doubt that students are powerful agents of social change on campuses across North America and even beyond our academic institutions, but this chapter is primarily concerned with the conditions, systems, and cultures that foster the necessity for student 'defiance' and engagement in the work of social change. I examine how the dominant (and I argue carefully crafted) empowered student narrative is unfairly assigned to students and is facilitated through the alignment of student work with neoliberal working conditions. Furthermore, these neoliberal conditions are fundamentally invested in white supremacy in that they protect its claim to the space of university; neoliberal alignments restrict the transformative capacity of anti-racist student organizing.

I work through these claims in two parts. In Part I, I argue that the empowered student narrative is used by the university to align student racial justice work with neoliberalism, and that this alignment is anchored in fear responses to *scarcity*. In Part II I examine how the empowered student narrative's alignment with neoliberalism is a reinvestment into white supremacy in that it

makes anti-racist justice work unfairly the responsibility of BIPOC student organizers specifically, whose work in turn becomes a labour of *love* out of necessity.

PART I *A neoliberal logic: unpacking the empowered student narrative.*

Negotiating the effects of neoliberalism has become a requirement of racial justice work in our white supremacist universities, as we are living and working within an academic system in which "neoliberalism and the politics of austerity inextricably shape the horizon of the possible" (Henry et al 2017b, 11). Not only are possibilities within the university shaped by neoliberalism, certain possibilities are limited completely, such as the possibility for resourced anti-oppression work — one of neoliberalism's effects being: "the withdrawal of governmental support for most forms of anti-oppression, including anti-racism, social research, and community engagement" (Henry et al 2017b, 12). But there is a dual and sinister effect of neoliberal ideology: while it justifies this divestment from anti-racism work, it "functions to conceal "the effects of power, politics and racial injustice" [Giroux 2006, 161]" (Henry et al 2017b, 14). These effects of neoliberal ideologies are present and proliferating in the Canadian university, in that our universities "are increasingly driven by neoliberal policies, built around the ethos of individualism, colour blindness, metric, competition, and entrepreneurship [see also Kurasawa 2002; Mahtani 2004; Griffin, Bennett, and Harris 2013; Giroux 2014]" (Henry et al 2017b, 68). And I argue that the empowered student narrative is taken up by the university to perpetuate and align with neoliberal ideology. This alignment is facilitated by what I call the 'unstructuring' of anti-racist student work to foster burn-out and project failure. And equally important, this unstructuring is justified through the distorted neoliberal fear of scarcity which legitimizes the precariousness (and therefore limits the capacity/potential) of anti-racist student work.

<u>Neoliberal alignments: the (un)structuring of student projects.</u>

It is a manifestation of neoliberal scarcity that the responsibility for fostering racial justice should be assigned solely to anti-racist student organizers in the first place — it is rather work that should be financed and embedded into the structure of the university. We see neoliberal scarcity manifested through the allocation (or lack thereof) of resources to student anti-racist projects and even more to institutional commitments. This is part of the broader neoliberal orientation towards devolution of responsibility, in which the neoliberal state devolves responsibility "for most forms of anti-oppression" (Henry et al 2017b, 11) away from itself and

towards lower levels of government, to corporations, to communities. This is happening at the university level, and the logic of scarcity becomes a cultural justification in our institution; there is simply not enough wealth, resources, people power, information, or *time,* to foster racial justice. In my own work and in witnessing the work of my peers, I have seen scarcity thinking operationalized by actors and systems in the university; student organizers are expected to accept and work around the a seemingly endemic lack of resources. Concretely, I use 'unstructuring' to describe the alignment of the conditions of student justice work with neoliberal working conditions — conditions all members of the academy are encouraged, (and even 'incentivized') to live and work within:

> Within universities, academics are expected to comport themselves according to market logic, which privileges individual competitiveness, business and audit culture, performance indicators, and metrics. Universities, faculty members, and students alike are "incentivized" to focus on hyperproductivity and high returns on investment, and to minimize risk (Henry et al 2017b, 13).

Scarcity thinking demands that students design their anti-racist work around this 'lack of resources', while simultaneously demanding hyperproductivity despite this lack. This perpetuates conditions of neoliberalism which consistently burn-out student organizers, no matter the terms of compensation. In turn, white supremacy depends on the unstructuring of transformative student projects to foster this burn-out and project failure, and then leans on the distorted neoliberal fear of scarcity to justify the precariousness of anti-racist student work. This logic dually works to justify the university's dependence on student-led efforts to address racial injustice and exclusion in lieu of formal initiatives and services; students must do the work because the university lacks resources to take on this work institutionally. And while Concordia stakes much of its reputation on being a university invested in social justice[10], this reputation depends on the university's claiming of student organizing as part of the university. In our conversation, X calls out this co-opting of student labour, in which the university stakes its reputation on student efforts without formal commitments to supporting student work:

[10] Demonstrated in 'SHIFT' mandate: "Concordia University is known for its innovative projects, engaged student body, and faculty leading action-oriented work in the movements of social justice, environmental resilience, the social economy, and social transformation" (Concordia University webpage, December 2018).

> *I think Concordia needs to stop counting on things that happen within its university and claiming it as part of the university, because that's what I feel Concordia does and it's one of those things that because it is a university that is grounded in community in the sense that even its location — literally there is a metro exit that people who may have never even gone to university can pass through — physically it's part of the city. And that's really powerful. But at the same time, I think that Concordia kind of banks on that, where since a lot of things happen literally within our establishment we don't necessarily have to make certain things happen from the framework of it.*

Concordia relies on student projects to foster racial justice in lieu of formal institutional efforts; it depends on student labour to address systemic institutional racial injustices. This chapter is more concerned with the actual, lived conditions of these student projects. In Chapter III, I briefly introduced the story of P leaving the on-campus equity project they were coordinating, I share P's story because it exemplifies my understanding of neoliberal 'unstructuring' and has informed these arguments around student labour under neoliberalism. P was hired to coordinate a project that had been selected from a pool of special project proposals and awarded funding by the university to address inequities at Concordia. The project proposal outlined expected deliverables within one calendar year. Concerning student labour specifically, P describes the project they were working on as dependent on uncompensated labour from the outset:

> *From conception the project was going to use unpaid student labour, part of the job description was recruiting and coordinating unpaid student labour and also to recruit a steering committee that would be unpaid.*

About half-way through their one-year contract it became clear that the workload of the project had expanded beyond P's capacity. The project supervisors became concerned with the project deliverables which were originally promised to the internal funder of the project (the university) by the end of the grant year. P proposed the option to split the role into two positions based on the scale of the project. This proposal was denied. With no choice but to leave the organization with their preference, which was to have one coordinator do the work on their own, P left the project. P wants to be clear about the structural issues that informed this experience, they clarify:

This is less a condemnation of the small organizations funded by student fee-levies[11] and grants and basically bloated with the work of trying to make the university a more equitable place, and more a condemnation of the structural issue of the university outsourcing vital equity work to unpaid, underpaid, and precarious labour contracts.

As an example, even to split the contract into two positions would require the organization to go before the granting body and so there are also bureaucratic constraints that come from one-time, lump sum projects. Unlike longer-term paid positions, the contract worker is unsupported, confined by objectives set before there is a clear understanding of the backlog of issues, and then not given the breadth or trust to respond according to what arises. Things have been festering, that's the rush. But it's an unwise approach and there is a crisis of people burning out in these positions as a result.

In our interview X suggests that P's experience with the project demonstrates the neoliberal conditions of student-led equity work. P's experience speaks so much to the reality of the work for students on campus. I name the neoliberal conditions of the project P was hired onto and ultimately had to leave because they speak so deeply to the state of student work in the university in general. The following is a set of neoliberal conditions of work that I have observed repeatedly in anti-racist student work on campus — conditions I have worked within, and conditions I have watched my friends, peers, and collaborators work through. The following emerges from a conversation between X and I, in which we compared the conditions of P's project with our own to think through how these neoliberal conditions manifest in student work:

(1) inflexible deadlines determined without a conceptualization of the scope of the work, and based on the project's precarious funding structure, (2) the prioritizing of individualized work and writing over collaboration, (3) lack of project sustainability in that one person is expected to design and complete the project on a tight time-line, (4) unrealistic expectations of coordinator skill set in that this one person is expected to be a visionary, a supervisor, a financial coordinator, a facilitator, a consultant, (5) prioritizing

[11] Fee-levies fund student groups through a per-credit fee. Many of the on-campus initiatives addressing structural inequities at the university that I am familiar with are led by fee-levy groups (so are essentially paid for by students themselves).

> ‘innovation’ and results over grounded relationship building and finally, (6) lack of investment in process or longevity, or, a dependency on truncated temporality.

This final condition, temporality, is particularly interesting in the context of student work, T even describes this temporality as strategic:

> *And I think one of the things the university really banks upon is temporality — where often they'll kind of indulge these initiatives knowing that most of these people are going to graduate in two or three years. So, it's very easy for them to be confident that this will wear out.*

And P observed strategic temporality in their own work, arguing that *“To create such a far-reaching project to be exercised within a timeline of one calendar year, you generate superficial results without structural change”.* Students are impermanent, and the university can wait out the anti-racist work that students engage in (versus the work that faculty or staff engage in). Anti-racist student projects wear out because they are unstructured in ways that almost guarantee that the students leading them wear out. These conditions are reinvestments into white supremacy, in that this neoliberal unstructuring is a fear response — responding to the distorted fear of student power and the fear of the space students could claim if their anti-racist work were resourced. The university unstructures student projects because students are powerful, and this unstructuring is justified through neoliberal scarcity — a specific and distorted fear which effectively limits the capacity of student projects, thus limiting the capacity for BIPOC students to (re)claim space while also restricting the space they presently occupy in the university. If projects addressing systemic inequity in the university are expected to begin and end within a year, the resources this work demands are hard (impossible) to justify under scarcity thinking. Resourcing anti-racist work requires an intentional divestment from this logic — it would require us to believe that resources are not wasted if immediate results are not generated.

I have argued here that the empowered student narrative is used by the university to align student justice work with neoliberalism, and that this alignment is anchored in fear responses to *scarcity*. But there is a dual effect; the empowered student narrative is also working to distribute this responsibility for transformation unequally and unfairly.

PART II *The empowered student narrative: assigning the responsibility of racial justice.*

My interviews with student organizers have provided crucial insight into the ways students experience the empowered student narrative. The following section focuses on how this affects students differently, building on my argument that the university's unstructuring of student justice projects limits the capacity of anti-racist student organizers to reclaim the space of the university, and that this unstructuring is justified through scarcity thinking. I argue that the empowered student narrative's alignment with neoliberalism and white supremacy makes racial justice work unfairly and solely the responsibility of BIPOC student organizers specifically. I will explore how this responsibility is assigned to BIPOC student organizers as 1) a responsibility of vulnerability, 2) the responsibility to foster racial justice not only on campus, but also within scholarship, and 3) through a shirking of responsibility by white actors in the university. By working through these assignments of responsibility, I conclude that this creates the conditions in which BIPOC students' work in turn becomes a labour of love out of necessity.

Vulnerability as obligation.

Instead of placing responsibility on the internal institutional structures of the university to address systemic racial injustice, the empowered student narrative places responsibility on individual students to engage in one-on-one confrontation with faculty and staff, and this unfairly requires that BIPOC students enter into vulnerable engagements in the university. Under white supremacy this requirement has particular consequences for BIPOC students and BIPOC women and non-binary students especially. At best, these confrontations can be uncomfortable — at worst confrontation becomes hostile and even violent for BIPOC students. This unequal expectation for vulnerability is both a result and manifestation of white supremacy. And I present some of the more explicit and pointed accounts of my research participants describing the vulnerability and violence inherent to individualized and informal confrontation between members of the academy who relate with one another across hierarchies already fraught with inequity (student-professor, student-administrator). Firstly, Z describes the real hostility that can result from speaking out against racial injustice as a Black woman, and how what is already a vulnerable confrontation for students is compounded by racial prejudices circulating both within and beyond the university:

I just wanted to tear my hair out because I'm the only Black woman in that program, I'm very used to people interpreting my resting face as angry and hostile and interpreting my shy behaviour in certain ways and I'm very much cognizant of how I come off to people as far as attitude goes — or what is perceived as my attitude. Especially in an academic context. So to have faculty be like 'well just stand up for yourself' it's like, really? I'm just going to start a confrontation? When I mean it's pretty much a known known that confrontation does not come off well for the student, even if you don't initiate the confrontation. You know you write something that someone doesn't like you may find yourself in a really bad relationship with that person.

Z's account describes the vulnerability BIPOC students are expected to embrace in engaging in confrontation. A parallels this account by illustrating the tangible risks of speaking out against racial injustice — either concerning or amongst faculty who have power over students' grades, and thus, their academic futures:

You have power over failing me, you can literally fail me if you feel like it. And the idea of putting all the power on me as a student to keep speaking up — I'm just like, do you understand the actual labour? I just need Concordia to be held accountable and hold themselves accountable. Stop with this whole narrative of 'you have power'. I don't, I literally do not. And my GPA is so important to me and the idea that for instance, I could submit all of those [accounts of racism in the classroom] to The Link[12] *and then get failed.*

— A.

A is describing the potential risk of addressing racial injustice in the university while cognizant of their own institutional legitimacy (in this case their grades) which needs protecting for their future access to the university — their grades can come to affect their graduate opportunities, funding potential, even future job prospects. M expands on these realities of BIPOC student work on campus as dually embedded in neoliberal conditions which already valorize burn-out and delegitimize institutional racial injustice as simply part of the experience of academia:

[12] The Link is an on-campus student newspaper, and A is referencing the publishing of their account of a series of racist aggressions experienced as a student, and then bracing for or fearing, the consequences that might come from that form of advocacy/resistance.

And then if you have any concerns they're like, okay you deal with it yourself. It's this idea that if you want anything you have to do it yourself and I think it's again coming from these cycles of people saying, 'Oh it was hard but now I'm a tenured professor and I deserve it because I worked so hard and if you want to be a tenured professor you have to work so hard and you have to basically hurt yourself to get here'. And then [our project] is just on top of that, it's like, 'Okay well you also do that for free', even though ultimately any work or anything that [the project] achieved is so good for the department. This happened with the Sexual Assault Resource Centre [SARC] — it was campaigning and campaigning, the president and all these people were like 'Fuck you', and then they establish it and they're like 'Look at us! Look at Concordia we have the SARC and it's amazing'. And it's like, 'You were so rude to us for so many years about how you didn't want to fund it and now you did it and you're so proud of yourself'. We do all this work and there's all this resistance and it's only for Concordia — we leave.

— M.

And M describes many of the conditions of unstructured student justice work here; the unpaid labour, the superficial support and co-opting of the work that accompanies project success after so much resistance (and even violence) from the institution, the frustration in response to the temporality of hard work that is done by students but for the university. N too calls out the power hierarchies which remain in addition to the time and energy required to engage in unpaid racial justice work while balancing academia:

We're already dealing with stuff that's emotionally draining and trying to do grad school and trying to make some kind of change, and I feel like you're assuming that besides the fact we're not getting paid we're all on a level ground kind of thing, you know?

M and N are not only speaking to the challenges of working without compensation and under neoliberal conditions as anti-racist student organizers, they are contextualizing the work as embedded within a university culture which makes them already vulnerable as racialized students. So balancing academia with unpaid institutional anti-racist work is no small feat especially considering the already-established reality that under neoliberalism, as expanded on by M;

> *The environment is already the kind where you're expected to work yourself to death, it feels like there's this idea that the people who deserve to succeed are those who sacrifice their life so they want you to be doing excellent research, and going above and beyond what's asked of you.*

Anti-racist student organizers then negotiate these manifestations of violence. Z adds their crucial insight and describes the seriousness of this institutional violence, illustrating how this violence makes BIPOC students unwell, and how it is imbedded into the fabric of the university:

> *It's exhausting and I don't know, it gets to this point where I want to make these people understand what being there is like for me, but I've actually realized it's far too much work to get that done and it was really making me unwell. I really fell off my school work and I don't know, toxicity of academia was something that I had thought about before but I felt like I went through a period where I was like, 'right, it makes perfect sense why academics commit suicide, I totally understand it'. And it was just a sad realization that what I was experiencing was par for the course and realizing — well okay now knowing what I know and in interacting with these people and trying to have these conversations — how could I ever expect anything else? I became very pessimistic. It's like 'this is useless', and I kind of just, I don't know, checked out eventually.*

Z's generous account here draws an important parallel between the data and the literature: that there are paralleling experiences of marginalization between BIPOC student organizers, specifically women, and BIPOC women further in their careers — scholars who themselves experience higher instances of mental and physical illness in the academy (Gonzalez and Harris, 2014, as discussed in Chapter II). Because even when engaging in anti-racist work in a white supremacist institution necessarily requires encountering violence, it is always still incredibly urgent and necessary work to many BIPOC members of the academy. BIPOC anti-racist student organizers respond to racial injustice in the university through their work and in doing so necessarily navigate structural and interpersonal violence, and in spite of legitimate fears of retaliation, hostility, even violence. But while the empowered student narrative demands this vulnerability to interpersonal and structural violence from BIPOC students, it is also expressed in students' expected commitments to justice in scholarship.

Bringing racial justice into scholarship.

This onus on BIPOC student organizers to produce racial justice manifests also within intellectual spaces, as student organizers are (or at least should be able to be) first and foremost *students*. The responsibility on BIPOC students to produce racial justice is just as prevalent in research expectations, which intensify at the graduate level. Because BIPOC communities and knowledges are so un- and under- represented in the academy, BIPOC students experience the responsibility of representing their identities and knowledges through research. This simultaneously frees up white students to work and research as they like, as white students are not assigned this same responsibility — because we are represented we do not find ourselves unfairly responsible for representing our entire communities. X speaks to this responsibility and necessity to produce knowledge that represents their entire community as specific to the BIPOC student experience, which is compounded by scholarly hierarchies and epistemological dominance:

> *I am constantly in a framework where, not only do I think that there's always this student-professor dynamic where you feel smaller than anyway, right? So there's that but then there's also that my community is not represented in the space so I'm constantly feeling like I'm trying to sneak in people that wouldn't normally be talked about or cared about, you know? It's like, 'oh like let me just see if I can maneuver them' you know? And then that I'm trying to create new knowledges that have not been acknowledged and then on top of that, and this is a real thing — is that they're asking me to justify these knowledges via people who don't acknowledge these people in the first place. So it's like, 'go and find this white male scholar who supports what you're saying' when as a Black woman you know that they've never supported.*

But while BIPOC students experience this pressure to not only navigate but also intervene in an academy in which their knowledges and histories are marginalized, white students' access to scholarship opens up. White supremacy reproduces itself in the academy by freeing up white people to engage with research that is not fundamentally and necessarily related to identity or representation because "*If you don't feel like your identity is being attacked it's not very central to your life, you can do projects on whatever because you're not constantly being questioned as a human being"* (X). X goes on to describe the weight of this responsibility on BIPOC students:

> *But when you're a racialized person I think you're coming at it from a very different perspective, an experience of: I need this theory to work, I don't need this theory to just be theory, it needs to function tomorrow, today, it has to be grounded in something. I can't keep this in my head. I'm constantly thinking about audience; I can't make something that 10 people are going to read, it just doesn't work. Because I come from a community who needs me in the sense that, I am extremely privileged to be where I am and I am the only person out of 25 people in this program who is thinking about Black communities in Montreal.*

X's observations here are crucial; X's work must be grounded in their community because their community needs them — their work is a labour of love in that it must provide for a community who has been marginalized, whose access has been limited by the institution. And in producing knowledge about their community, X's research creates space for their community in the academy; which in and of itself is a crucial form of labour addressing the systemic racial injustice towards, and underrepresentation of, BIPOC knowledge in scholarship. On the other hand, scholars whose identities, knowledges, and communities are represented — white scholars — are not assigned this responsibility and are rather made available to research and create 'on whatever'. White scholars are then also not expected nor required to even engage in, let alone produce, knowledges which address systemic racial injustice in the university.

A white shirking of responsibility.

So while the empowered student narrative assigns the responsibility for racial justice on BIPOC students, the narrative does something altogether different for white students and actors in the university; it manifests as a shirking of responsibility for racial justice. First of all, for racial justice work to exist in a white supremacist institution, it must necessarily align with neoliberal ideology as demonstrated in Part I. In this alignment, anti-racist work's capacity to disrupt white supremacy is compromised. Concretely, this manifests in the university as necessarily engaging in work which addresses or promotes 'diversity' versus institutional transformation towards racial justice. If diversity is a "non-performative" in that "it does not bring into effect that which it names" (Ahmed 2012, 119), it is also a way that white actors deny the responsibility of racial justice in the university. Diversity as understood in our universities is not a threat to anyone (read the white status quo) and is rather a benefit to everyone (by promoting diversity you promote equality for white communities just as much as for BIPOC communities). But anti-racist

work will not be resourced by the institution or taken up by actors if it is perceived as a threat to white supremacy so we use the language of diversity, which is fundamentally *not about* white people; so cannot address white supremacy. Diversity is about *adding-in,* not taking-away or transforming the university fundamentally. So then if diversity is not about white people, and diversity does not require action from white people or any form of 'taking-away', then diversity and institutional justice becomes the responsibility only of anyone who is not white. M describes the limits of these assignments of responsibility:

> *And then the department is so white that there's this problem where it's like you can either have a committee of all white people working on diversity and using the word diversity or you can put the labour on like the very few people of colour in the department.*

Institutional equity efforts take the form of ad-hoc, unpaid 'diversity' initiatives and recruit the few professors and BIPOC students in the department for this work, expecting them to transform their departments without the participation of their white peers. And BIPOC professors are also made responsible and are expected to work on these diversity and inclusion projects often uncompensated — essentially, BIPOC professors' labour, like the labour of student organizers, is taken up in similarly unjust ways. BIPOC faculty are often recruited into racial justice work, informally by students themselves looking for allies or mentorship or formally by administration striking committees or seeking consultation. In this way, BIPOC scholars' work parallels the unpaid labour of student organizers in white supremacist institutions which refuse to adequately support and compensate BIPOC scholars and organizers. Where systems and actors in the university respond to the 'threat' of justice in by pulling away, BIPOC student organizers (and even faculty) are expected to commit themselves, their time, and their labour to racial justice work here.

If our diversity narrative around institutional racial justice claims that all that is missing BIPOC representation, then logically it is the responsibility of white actors to make space for BIPOC scholars, and then the responsibility of white actors is fulfilled by BIPOC presence and representation. Diversifying faculty without addressing white supremacy results in isolation and violence for BIPOC scholars (and especially women scholars) in the university (as discussed in Chapter II). And yet, calls for diversity persists because they facilitate the shirking of responsibility for white members of the academy and the reproduction of white supremacy. For

white actors in the university, engaging in anti-racist organizing is made an option, and is not necessitated as white actors are already recognized and protected by academic systems and structures. We can pull back from the work and slow down when the work no longer benefits us or feels too difficult — I have myself done this, and it is a phenomenon observed in the literature: “Even more telling is that when dominant group members get involved [in anti-racism] at the institutional level, they can simply walk away, particularly when their own interests are threatened” (Patton and Bondi 2015, 507). T describes the inconsistency that is inherent to white people in anti-racist solidarity work in university:

> *And I think it confuses a lot of people, particularly that performed whiteness, because I think there's a fungibility or a malleability to that term where you can come in and go — you can be an ally but sometimes you don't have to be. And I think you know like when you don't want to wait at the back of a line, or you want a better view, it's like, ‘well I can do that’.*

The inconsistency describe here by T is possible only because the responsibility for racial justice is not assigned to white actors in the university, but is rather an option. E, a white anti-racist organizer on campus shares a useful account of how whiteness allows this ability to come and go in racial justice work through procrastination and stepping back when a more engaged effort is required:

> *I think procrastination was one of the ways that [white guilt] showed up… I did have a tendency to kind of try to put, maybe not more work, but more responsibility of project direction on the people of colour I was working with. So being like, 'you just make all the decisions and tell me what to do and I'll just do it' because I was afraid to make decisions and not confident in my capacity to make decisions. I think I saw it written somewhere today ‘when to speak and when to shut up’, you know? And so I was just trying to shut up all the time which I don't think was effective or useful, you know? I think that my whiteness was a really bizarre — is and was, continues to be, a really bizarre factor in all of the work that I was doing.*
>
> *I think I was pushing people in the school to do things that they didn't want do and that was maybe helpful for the dynamics of it not having to be a racialized person pushing all*

the time — but then again, at some points when I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing I would just back off and not push at all and then leave that for other people to do.

Here, whiteness is the option not to push. I have included E's contributions because they parallel my own experiences in solidary work and demonstrate the limits of coalition without processes of accountability. In the case of working with two projects addressing anti-Black racism and Black representation in Montreal over the last year, I found myself in moments of internal conflict within each and pulled away. I was not accountable for the conflict in either case and justified this denial of accountability by imagining that I was not responsible for the conflict because I was not taking a leadership role in either project. I expressed my solidarity work as 'behind-the scenes', and told myself that I was simply enacting the wishes of leadership and any conflict would be addressed by those working in a leadership capacity. The problems with this thinking and subsequent behaviour — to step away, to pull back, are obvious; it means that I am present in anti-racist work but not responsible for it. And while I argue that it should be a constant negotiation — that we should be committed to reflexivity in our justice work — as white people we should also own our contributions, good and bad, to the anti-racist solidarity work we engage in. What I read in E's reflections is my own distorted fear of accountability and a denial of responsibility.

Addressing racial injustice in the university will require fair assignments of the responsibility for racial justice, refusing these just assignments guarantees that existing structures are maintained and white supremacy is reproduced in the academy. Our collective unwillingness to be accountable for white supremacy facilitates this shirking of responsibility, and it is this unwillingness that I explore, with the goal of interrupting, in the proceeding and final chapter of analysis.

CHAPTER VI: Analysis

Resistance and intractability in the university: a reckoning.

This final chapter of analysis attends to the experiences of anti-racist student organizers working to foster racial justice and having this work resisted, interrupted, and stalled by systems and actors in the university. Specifically, this chapter is organized in two parts to demonstrate how anti-racist student organizers experience and negotiate the intractability of the university as expressed by white resistance to racial justice. This chapter asks: how is racial justice resisted by those in the university who feel threatened by it, and why do we feel threatened? And then how do anti-racist student organizers negotiate this resistance?

In Part I, I examine how white actors' anxieties around and distorted fears of racial justice manifest in defensiveness which stalls and halts anti-racist student work. In Part II, I then explore how this resistance to and dismissal of student work creates (what feels like) an intractable university for anti-racist student organizers, who then negotiate and navigate this intractability with *hopefulness*.

PART I *Against racial justice: manifestations of resistance.*

We know that systems and actors invested in white supremacy here deny anti-racist work, dismiss student demands, recommendations, and expertise, and restrict the potential of student led projects through surveillance, Euro-centric curriculum and meritocracy (Chapter IV), and neoliberal unstructuring (Chapter V). In this section I examine how white actors' resistance to racial justice efforts in the university manifests through defensiveness and the (mis)perception of institutional critique as personal. I then work through 1) how this defensiveness is itself a manifestation of white anxiety in response to the 'opening up' of the university and 2) how it is expressed by white actors as a collective unwillingness to leverage (and ultimately and necessarily jeopardize) the power and access granted by white supremacy.

Defensiveness.

One of the greatest barriers to racial justice in the university is defensiveness on the part of white actors — this defensiveness is a manifestation of fear towards the opening up of the university. And this defensiveness acts as an insidious manifestation of white supremacy; it

demands that those working to foster racial justice in the university continually navigate, protect, and placate white feelings and distorted fears at the expense of BIPOC realities. I argue that white defensiveness is a fear response and that it produces and perpetuates a culture in which anything that can be perceived as 'threatening' to white supremacy's claim of the institutional space is misunderstood, misrepresented, and responded to as 'violent'. In my own on-campus equity work with X I have witnessed white 'allies' using respectability politics[13] to shape (and limit) anti-racist work — I have placated these distorted fears myself in trying to amicably deflect or diffuse concerns grounded in racial stereotypes and shared with me by well-intentioned white actors in the university. And when I soothe rather than challenge white anxieties around processes or ideas coming out of BIPOC organizing and perceived as 'radical', I demonstrate this white denial of the responsibility for racial justice. On more than one occasion I witnessed defensiveness expressed by faculty who claimed that advocating for diversity in faculty hires is a form of 'reverse racism' as a way to close conversations around fostering racial representation through reformed hiring policies and norms. I have been asked by administration to guarantee that our equity work would not inspire student 'troublemakers' to protest the university in response to the university's inaction around demands for racial justice. These are examples of the distorted fear of racial justice which direct white actors in both their action and inaction, a form of fear which Ahmed describes as 'anxiety'[14]. For Ahmed, "anxiety becomes *an approach to objects* [emphasis in the original]*"* (66), meaning that "anxiety generates an object, but that the object itself is absent" (Ahmed 2014, 80). Where fear is an approach to the 'troublemaker student', anxiety is the anticipation of what that student might represent or bring in, like protest — in anxiety there is no object, because racial justice is not here, rather, there is only the threat of it. White actors' anxiety generates an approach to institutional racial justice and transformation, the approach is to stall and deny, to defend against, and to distort as personal attack rather than systemic critique. This 'white' approach grounded in anxiety, manifests as a kind of 'enveloping', as "Fear envelopes the bodies that feel it, as well as constructs such bodies as enveloped, as contained by it, as if it comes from outside and moves inward. And yet fear

[13] I use 'respectability politics' here in the context of the university to describe the misguided (and racist) belief that if BIPOC members of the university uphold normative, or socially acceptable (ie. white) standards of speech, behaviour, ideology, or appearance, they will be protected from racial injustice in the academy and will be granted 'inclusion' which would be contingent on their maintaining these standards.
[14] As I engage with Ahmed's 'anxiety' I am not suggesting that racism is a mental illness or disorder. I do not conceive of white supremacy or racism as mental illnesses, or even comparable to mental illness — an argument I find to be not only ableist but very irresponsible, as it reinscribes white supremacy as something unavoidable and beyond our control, rather than a habit we choose and a system we buy into and reproduce (Ahmed 2007, 168). I use anxiety to describe a feeling or uneasiness fostered by distorted threats and misrepresentations of racial justice — not as a disorder.

does not bring the bodies together…" (2014, 63). This enveloping or enclosing parallels a contribution made by E who described their whiteness as impeding their anti-racist work on campus: "*I think that mostly my whiteness was like a really weird kind of cloth draped around me while I was working all the time*". This word choice is crucial; the draped cloth of whiteness, like the enveloping of fear, makes those who are fearful feel *contained* or limited in their capacity to even accept, let alone foster, racial justice.

In Chapter V I argued that the assignment of racial justice on BIPOC student organizers manifests as an expectation to personally invest in the work of fostering justice. Meanwhile, white actors in the university decry institutional and structural critique as personal attack as a way to stall and delegitimize a radical, anti-racist mandate or demands to dismantle existing and oppressive power structures. This is a purposeful double-standard: while the university not only expects but guarantees through unstructuring that racial justice work be the *personal* labour of BIPOC students as argued in Chapter V, BIPOC students must be careful that their demands for racial justice are not perceived as *personal* attack by white actors in the university. In addition to the actual (and intense) work of fostering racial justice on campus, student organizers are then required to exert their energy on navigating the fears of white actors. These responses manifest in distorted, and frankly racist, anxieties which perceive these structural critiques as personal and student organizers as violent or aggressive.

In our own work, X and I were confronted by the reality of Concordia's prioritization of white anxiety in a meeting with Concordia's communications team. In 2017 X and I were working to collaborate with Concordia's communications to create a short video describing what 'inclusion' means on our campus. Later in our interview, X used this meeting to demonstrate how the university, represented in this case by the communications team, outlined the limits of what could be included in the video and whose feelings should be prioritized:

> *Okay, this is an example of university bureaucracy interrupting and invading the space of social justice work. Where there were moments of 'well we can't say that because we're going to get people commenting on the video, and we can't stay this because of that' and all of these things where their reach and what they're able to do is so limited. And it's real, in no way do I feel like [the Concordia communications team] was exaggerating, I feel like it's super real. But it just kind of shows you how behind the university is. Not Concordia, in particular but universities — as this structure that has to be still accessible*

> *to people who are biased, still accessible for people who are not happy with it being a university that's open for all people of colour. You make this video but you can't make angry white men mad, and its implicit right? Because it's not like [Concordia communications] was saying 'no you can't have POC [people of colour] in your video', or 'you can't say certain things', but you don't want to say certain things too extreme so that the white man who doesn't like hearing that kind of thing is disgruntled and then that's an issue because we're excluding him — and that's not okay, right? So then implicitly you're saying that we can't address these issues, we can't break these boundaries you know? These are things that are problematic and we're not really addressing them because we don't want to make [the white audience] mad.*

Here X describes the university's commitment to bracing for, and accommodating white defensiveness, and catering to *"the white man who doesn't like hearing that kind of thing"* as impeding racial justice work. And these accommodations are anticipatory or anxious, actors in the university respond in anticipation of defensiveness that has yet-to-come rather than responding to racial injustices that are present. The anti-racist student organizer is then expected to strategize around and negotiate the limits of communicating with those who are not interested in (and rather are invested in resisting) racial justice in the university. Student organizers exert an incredible amount of energy navigating the feelings of white actors in the university while encountering this double-standard: that their demands not be personal but that their labour be a personal commitment and investment.

J and H demonstrate the expectation that justice work be personal (and thus individual versus structural) when discussing the intent behind re-establishing the race issue at Concordia's independent paper to provide a student space explicitly for documenting and engaging with students' *personal* experiences with race at Concordia. H says: "*I think it was very personal for us, I think working on this race issue it was a personal project in that it also allowed us to think how the school interacts with race".* J went on to express the complications that come with navigating the personal nature of the stories, essays, and articles included in the BIPOC issue against a media and cultural landscape in which BIPOC communities are constantly demanded to be vulnerable and to expose their personal lives and stories to achieve representation:

> *BIPOC people have — especially as writers and in the media — they have to write about their personal lives to have any type of success and you can't just be like any other person you have to talk about your issues with race and how it affects you.*

And this demand for intimacy, vulnerability, and personal disclosure affects not only journalists and students in journalism, but manifests in the university on BIPOC student organizers like J and H who make personal investments to do anti-racist work.

A concrete example of how this double-standard manifests concerning who is made to personally invest in anti-racist work emerges in student organizers' conversations around curriculum with faculty. While white faculty lean on academic standards and meritocracy to claim their epistemological and pedagogical choices are 'scholarly' or 'neutral' and therefore are not personal (and so are inflexible) as discussed, they feel *personally* attacked when students question their curriculum. In delivering a report on racial representation on syllabi in their department, N, Z and M spoke about navigating their white faculty's feelings and adjusting their work to accommodate their defensiveness. N's description of this process demonstrates this double-standard while capturing the experience of negotiating anti-racist work that gets stalled, and even potentially derailed, by white defensiveness:

> *[Our faculty mentor] got us to tone it down to not make the professors defensive. That's the thing too — we did so much work to basically tone it down so the professors wouldn't get upset. It was just really slow going, we wanted [the report] to be really good before we took it to the profs and that was the thing too — we knew they would be defensive and that's never a good feeling — trying to make this as positive as possible, couch everything in positive terms and what the school's going to get out of it and what the department's going to get out of it.*
>
> *And we met with the [department] chair and administrator, and the chair is super defensive all the time when we talk about race or anything to do with representation. And he was like, 'oh well we can't specify that we want [representation] because legal or something like that' which I don't think it is.*
>
> — N.

Conversations and demands around diversifying syllabi specifically — which are central to many of my research participants' work — should be simple enough, and yet: "*There's so much defensiveness over very simple questions"* (A). These conversations and critiques demanding curriculum reform and restructuring should be received as structural, but instead are often perceived as individual and personal attacks on the very identities of scholars. Z and T both speak to the phenomenon of trying to engage faculty in adjusting syllabi to be more racially representative only to confront this defensiveness grounded in faculty's constitutions of their very identities:

> *The insistence that [curriculum] has to be this way seems very obviously racist to me, but I've kind of bent myself out of shape trying to figure out how to communicate that in a way that is going to be received well, But I think it's just like you were saying; [their syllabi are] so foundational to their idea of themselves — I am not a psychologist and I cannot break through those walls.*
>
> — Z.

> *There's almost a demographic particularly of white males... it's almost unevolved, like they're literally trapped in time. And I think you encounter these individuals and they more or less — the way they instruct and the way they teach, and also their refusal — they have an outright refusal to really listen to their students. And I don't understand why but you can't engage these people.*
>
> — T.

Both Z and T engage here with what is at stake in diversifying curriculum; the very identities of a professorship whose anxieties are expressed in their resistance and even refusal to consider that structural changes are required (and are possible) to address racial representation and that these changes can be enacted both collectively and individually. Recognizing that Euro-centric curriculum can and does invest in maintaining and perpetuating white supremacy (Chapter II, IV), then it becomes clear that the work is more complicated than curriculum reform — the work requires engaging professors who constitute themselves through their curriculum. Because faculty's identities as scholars (and perhaps even beyond scholarship) are themselves constituted by their curriculum, reforming their syllabi would then mean admitting their own complicity in perpetuating white supremacy. N observed this resistance to be perceived as complicit:

> *It was kind of like, people wanted change, but they seemed hesitant about it and they wanted it on their own terms. And they didn't want to be thought of as responsible in any way for having a syllabus that wasn't representative.*

But while keeping BIPOC epistemologies out of curriculum allows white faculty the denial of complicity and then accountability, it also has a dual restricting effect: if BIPOC content is refused space in curriculum, BIPOC ideologies, epistemologies, and pedagogies cannot claim space in the classroom. X explains that BIPOC representation on the syllabi can actually facilitate conversations around race, racial justice, even white supremacy:

> *In the communications building there's all these theories that they are pulling from, a lot of which are from Black scholars anyway, and that they're using as their framework. So it was a lot easier to have discussions with my professors [around race] because they're pulling from that kind of theory in the first place, you know?*

Syllabi are and can be political sites in the university where claims of belonging and supremacy are both staked and contested. But even more, syllabi are also manifestations of white constitutions, white faculty attach their identities to their syllabi and subsequently respond in defensiveness when curriculum is questioned. And this defensiveness is grounded in the fear of appearing complicit in white supremacy by acknowledging that curriculum reform is even necessary to address racial injustice.

<u>White unwillingness to leverage power and access.</u>

And the resistance to racial justice expresses itself beyond curriculum; white actors' unwillingness to leverage (and ultimately jeopardize) the institutional power and access granted by white supremacy is another expression of this resistance. This unwillingness too is grounded in anxiety; white actors in the university are wary of aligning themselves with anti-racist organizing on campus for fear of jeopardizing their own privileges. Through their experience campaigning for a Black studies program, T came to understand that convincing professors and administration to ally with the campaign would require an alignment with Blackness — what T calls a 'specter' which threatens the privilege of having claim to the space of the university:

> *And so I think everyone wants to avoid being under that specter of Blackness — whatever that may be. So I would say the biggest challenge — a lot of the people that we would like to get on board are often reluctant.*

E also describes observing this hesitancy among faculty in their own department as they worked to justify anti-racist faculty training:

> *But I found hesitant, and slow, and very partially giving was how I would categorize [faculty]. Some teachers were like, 'yeah let's do this, let's like jump on this'... and then everyone else was kind of like, 'ooooh', we kind of had to hold their hands and walk them through it.*

E's description of faculty as 'partially giving' is significant; while intellectually white actors in the university may express interest in engaging in or supporting anti-racist efforts on campus, anti-racist student organizers observe a widespread lack of meaningful commitment and follow-through from white faculty and administrators. To give partially is to appear invested while shirking the responsibility of racial justice, a phenomenon also observed by B in witnessing their peer's anti-racist efforts on campus:

> *And they did anti-racism and consent-training workshops with the professors and one thing that my friend said happened a lot was that they'd be talking about their ideas and professors would be like, 'yeah that's really great, cool cool' and they're like 'you should come' and then as soon as they invite that professor, they're like, 'oh I think I know this stuff already' kind of thing, you know? They were all excited about it, it was like, 'that's a great idea' but without the self-reflection I guess to notice that it was also for them not just for other people. And it was meant to be for all professors but I guess that they felt like they didn't need it — a few of the professors anyway.*

Superficial 'commitments' to racial justice from the majority of (white) faculty and administration in the university without 'self-reflection' is itself a form of defensiveness; it is another demonstration of the fear of appearing complicit in white supremacy by acknowledging the necessity to address it. However, while acknowledging complicity and moving into accountability may offer individual ways out of the distorted fears which keeps racial justice stalled, it is crucial to recognize that even with structural changes within the university anti-racist student organizers

describe a fundamental issue of culture. Recognizing the more insidious manifestations of white supremacy propagates skepticism, pessimism — how can anti-racist student organizers expect their projects to succeed if the environment itself is toxic and in the face of so much resistance? While white supremacy manifests in white actors' defensiveness and unwillingness to leverage power and access, collective investments into racial justice in the university would require individual, collective, and cultural divestments from white supremacy. And would require white actors to address complicity in white supremacy and respond by leveraging power and access. But the collective unwillingness of white actors to engage as described by anti-racist student organizers in the accounts included in this section is then necessarily negotiated and navigated in their racial justice work in the university.

PART II *Intractable institutions: negotiating the impossibility of racial justice in the white supremacist university.*

> *To become revolutionary would seem to require a belief in the possibility of revolution. To become revolutionary would also seem to require a belief that a revolution is necessary. In other words, you would agree that what exists is something against which we should revolt. The revolutionary might have pessimism about the present but optimism about the future.*
>
> — Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (172).

Each of my research participants discussed, in some capacity, their doubts concerning the possibility of racial justice in the university and the impossibility of racial justice in a white supremacist university without complete institutional transformation. Reckoning with this hopelessness and the intractability of the university is inherent to anti-racist student work; and it is complex, fraught, draining, and yet, essential, even generative. If "Pessimism becomes here a way of preparing for disappointment" (Ahmed 2010, 178) then for anti-racist student organizers pessimism is a strategy, a way to both prepare and negotiate institutional and interpersonal resistance to racial justice in the university. Dually pessimism is a coping mechanism for surviving the white supremacist institution as it exists while imagining one that is more just — because pessimism is also "about the possibility that a future exists, about the possibility of possibility" (Ahmed 2010, 178). This final section of analysis highlights student organizers' experiences navigating the intractability of the university through expressions of pessimism; because pessimism recognizes that the state of racial (in)justice in the university is

unacceptable, and so is also *pliable*. And the hopefulness anti-racist student organizers demonstrate through their pessimism is not naïve, it is knowledgeable; it embodies a "radical refusal to reckon possibilities" (Marcel 1965, 86).

I preface Part II of this final analysis chapter with Ahmed's quote describing the role of pessimism and optimism in revolutionary work, because responding to the necessity to exist and work in both states requires us to honour and understand both states as crucial to anti-racist work in the university. Feelings of hopelessness emerge in anti-racist student organizers' engagements with the university, an institution claimed and dominated by white supremacy as demonstrated by student organizers' contributions to this project. To see their efforts stalled and questioned when there is so much at stake in dismantling white supremacy is frustrating for student organizers, as expressed by M:

> *And like part of it for me is like, fuck universities. People need to start their own schools; a different educational system needs to be put in place — because I find when I think of what Concordia could do or what even the English department could do, it feels so limited. And it still feels like you're working within a system that's just never going to let up.*

M's reflections echo the revolutionary aspects of student pessimism expressed by so many at the heart of this project; that BIPOC communities need and deserve a different educational system wholly apart from white supremacy. Similarly, T prefaced their expressions of doubt by recalling Angela Davis' closing remarks at her September 2017 talk at Concordia, when she promised: "First we abolish prisons and then the university*".* T's pessimism parallels M's while also demonstrating how pessimism is itself fraught with uncertainty:

> *Or is it a question of, you know — is the university a white space and do other people just need to start creating other spaces? Thinking about Davis; is that what it is? Is it a waste of time to really engage with these things? Is Black studies and imposing it in university a waste of time? I don't know. I hope not, because I don't think it is — I do believe because there are other institutions where these things thrive.*

This concern, that anti-racist work in the university might be a waste of time is a response to the recognition that much of what keeps the systems and actors in the university invested in white

supremacy is foundational to this educational system, and cannot be adequately addressed by responses that are necessarily individualized and compromised through ascribed alignments with neoliberalism. White supremacist cultures in the university are insidious and they are *normalized* and *neutralized.* X describes how the university was created specifically with white people in mind, meaning the ways it also works to exclude BIPOC communities and reinvest in white supremacy are not usually (or ever) explicit, but rather are implicit, insidious — meaning also harder to address and respond to:

> *When we think about who was [the university] made for, who was it not made for — implicitly as well as explicitly, breaking that bound is just, is almost impossible you know? And it's realizing that to this day that implicit work especially — not so much the explicit work but that implicit work — is still in the framework, right?*

So much of the work is then directed at illuminating racial injustices (to prove them to those who do not experience them, those who are dually in positions of power) rather than addressing and interrupting them. And when the work of white supremacy is the framework itself of the institution, anti-racist student organizers experience confronting the intractability of this place. So when N says *I don't know if [the university] would ever be equitable completely*, I hear the impossibility of imagining institutional transformation towards racial justice. A expresses this same inability to conceive of racial justice in the university:

> *I can't even think of it.*
> *I can't actually imagine it.*

The challenge of confronting this impossibility is compounded for BIPOC student organizers who are made both vulnerable and responsible for racial justice and who are read as the radical 'troublemaker' just by virtue of their presence in the university. Z reminds us that pushing back against this intractability can actually be dangerous, as BIPOC students carry the additional obligation of vulnerability:

> *I feel like it still like amounts to you're in a vulnerable position of lesser power and standing up for yourself can be, can really work against you — that still really hasn't been dealt with. We haven't found a way around that and I don't even know what that would look like.*

And when Z cannot imagine an institution in which they are able to demand racial justice without risk, they describe a hostile university in which anti-racist work cannot be embraced let alone accepted or even let to circulate or move. Student organizers demonstrate a sophisticated hopefulness then in choosing to continue anti-racist work while negotiating and navigating the pessimism that emerges out of confronting the intractability of the university. And this hopefulness demonstrated by anti-racist student organizers, this “radical refusal to reckon possibilities” (Marcel 1965, 86), is an intelligence; and it offers possibilities beyond distorted fears of racial justice in the university and of those ‘troublemakers’ who promise it.

CHAPTER VII: Conclusions

Hopeful orientations: beyond distorted fears and towards white accountability.

In this thesis I have been attentive to and critical of the structural limits of the university to embrace (or even allow) racial justice. I hope I have also been generous about my belief in anti-racist student work — I hope I have negotiated both the frustration and the joy of witnessing my peers' transformative work. The work of anti-racist student organizers offers us (as white members of the university) direction as we begin to process and intervene in our own distorted and empty fears and defensiveness around racial justice and as we work towards accountability for the systems and cultures of white supremacy in our universities.

Anti-racist student organizers offer us hopefulness as a "radical refusal to reckon possibilities" (Marcel 1965, 86), as a sophisticated intelligence and expertise in disrupting and dismantling white supremacy. And I have used this research project as an opportunity to demonstrate a simple, but meaningful observation about the much more complex process of dismantling white supremacy and fostering racial justice in the university: *that student organizers, and BIPOC student organizers in particular, tend towards hope out of necessity in their anti-racist work; while systems and actors invested in, and committed to perpetuating white supremacy within the university are fixed (or rather fix themselves) in states of distorted fear.* This fear is a distorted fear of the 'threat' of racial justice, which ultimately results in the shirking of responsibility for the work of anti-racist justice and cultural and structural reinvestments in white supremacy. And I have made these claims through the stories, knowledges, and contributions of my research participants — anti-racist student organizers who are engaged in essential and overlooked anti-racist work here.

If distorted fears of the threat of racial justice enclose and contain, then white fear restricts possibility: "Anxiety is then an effect of the impossibility of love, an impossibility that returns in the diminishment of what it is possible to be" (Ahmed 2015, 67). Hope is what connects the contributions of anti-racist student organizers which make up this project, and I have drawn these arcs between fear and hope throughout this work because both are concerned with possibility — that racial justice is not here, but that it could be, and that it might be on its way.

A note on audience and intention.

Throughout this work I have had a particular audience in mind. I do not believe nor expect that my BIPOC peers, friends, and collaborators working in the university would read this work and be surprised or prompted by the stories and knowledges it contains. While this project highlights the crucial work of anti-racist student organizers, and BIPOC student organizers especially, my subject is first and foremost white supremacy and my intended audience is my own white peers. The goal of this work is to encourage white accountability for racial (in)justice in the university, as a white woman, this is where my contributions feel appropriate and urgent. Partly, this work grapples with the countless times my friends and collaborators have expressed to me their justified exhaustion around talking to white people about injustice, racism, and white supremacy in the university, and in the world more broadly — scholars and writers are sharing the same sentiment (Eddo-Logde, 2017). So while this work has been informed almost entirely by my research participants and those I have spent this degree working alongside — incredibly hard working anti-racist organizers — it is directed at my white peers, white students, faculty, and administrators in universities across Canada.

As a first-generation university student from a working class family this place did not always feel possible for me and I have felt isolation living, working, and studying in an institution in which class privilege is assumed everyday by presence. Nearly twenty-four years since bell hooks called for an engagement with classism in the university (1994, 177) I still find myself navigating, with difficulty, the implicit (and oftentimes explicit) elitism upon which the academy was founded. But my whiteness does important work of affirming my belonging, safety, and legitimacy in the university, and my whiteness grants me access and legibility within university cultures and processes. Working on anti-racism in an academic institution as a white woman makes relationship building with administration more possible and makes my position less precarious. Part of my investment in this work, in this project, is reckoning with the ways in which the university has granted me opportunity, security, and mobility (social and literal), while denying and limiting access to so many — this reality is a kind of data of its own at the core of my analysis. Recognizing this, it is deeply important to me to use my access, resources, and privilege here to advocate for and enact an opening up of this place for those whose access and belonging is restricted, contested, continually questioned, and even outright denied. This work has demonstrated that opening up this place will necessarily require white members of the university to relinquish claim over the space of this institution — a claim that is staked by fear

responses and grounded in distortions invested in maintaining white supremacy. This process will require accountability.

Engaging with this project, and with the work that has informed it, has required that I engage in an ongoing process of accountability with myself and with those I am in coalition with — this process has been confusing, challenging, painful, beautiful, messy. This process is ongoing; I have fumbled, misunderstood, messed it up. And also this process of accountability has been scary, I am myself afraid a lot of the time; not only of getting it wrong but also of getting it right — would I give up the privileges afforded to me by white supremacy in the name of justice? What would that look like? Am I really committed?

So while I cannot offer a comprehensive accountability process for white supremacy here, what I can say is that it is needed; it is crucial. And I have only the beginning of an idea of how we might establish collective and individual accountability processes for white supremacy in the Canadian university — this project is that beginning.

White accountability in the university.

White members of the university must acknowledge how enduring conceptions of, relationships with, and dependencies to white supremacy inform and impede how actors and systems in the university respond to racial justice. If we can better understand how white supremacy manifests, operates, and *is sustained* by systems7 and by us, actors in the Canadian university, we can better understand our role as individuals to strategize against it collectively. We miss the mark when we conceptualize the problem as one of diversity rather than a problem with white supremacy. Ultimately, we must recognize our investments and complicities with white supremacy in order to work towards transforming the institution into a space and community in which none of its members are confined to standards that threaten their intellectual, social, mental, and physical wellness. And where all bodies, minds, capacities, and knowledges are supported, acknowledged, and meant to thrive.

Anti-racist student organizers' hopeful orientations offer us direction. There is thus more at stake here than a missing archive of student work; without recognizing this student expertise we keep ourselves from understanding institutional white supremacy and our role in it. And without collective and individual processes for accountability we limit our own capacities to remake our

space, our relationships, the toxic and violent aspects of our own constitutions. But hopefulness, as demonstrated through the work of anti-racist organizers — hopefulness that is not naïve, that is grounded in the recognition that what is here is unacceptable, and so can be a different way — is our way out and through.

I orient some final thoughts around an observation and then a question posed by adrienne maree brown in *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017):

> *When we feel scared, we destroy each other instead of working to get to the root of our fear. How do we shift into a culture in which conflict and difference is generative? (132).*

Concretely, accountability processes for white supremacy grounded in distorted fears would then necessarily require us to take up the opposite — the hopefulness demonstrated by anti-racist student organizers as an orientation. And shifting into this culture or orientation will require us to not only align our work in coalition with student organizers, but to trust them too.

<u>On trust.</u>

To think about how we might begin to do this work in coalition we first *"need to talk about, what does co-creating look like?"* (X). How do we imagine co-creation as a method for pushing back against tenements of white supremacy and neoliberalism; individualism and competitiveness? Co-creation as method requires us to trust those leading anti-racist justice work here, racial justice in the institution depends on our willingness to trust those who promise it. And here, I am drawing on the thinking of Brittney C. Cooper in *Beyond Respectability, the Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (2017). Cooper calls on us to take Black women's intellectual contributions seriously — and she uses *trust* to make this demand:

> … in order to take these Black women seriously as intellectuals, we must be willing to trust them. Dare I say trust? By *trust* I don't always mean agree. I mean acknowledge, appreciate, struggle with, disagree with, sit with, and question (2, emphasis in original).

I extend this also to anti-racist student organizers, we must "acknowledge, appreciate, struggle with, disagree with, sit with, and question" them to take them "seriously as intellectuals" (Cooper 2017, 2). Because as much as anti-racist student organizers make significant and sophisticated

demands for institutional justice, and take on and perform this labour, they also demand that their knowledge about the institution be valued. P extends this *"to include knowledge generated from bodies also marginalized on the basis of disability[15], gender, and sexuality".* P asserts that the critique of institutional injustice is also dually significant in the university: it's not only about *"marginalized students facing bias and inaccess"* (P) it is also that:

> *We want to experience equity, we want to be part of equitable institutions where we are just as human.*
>
> *However, in the academic institution, we are also production-identities: we perform intellectual labour, which ideally enters circulation and then accrues value based on a system of lended credibility via disciplinary gatekeepers.*
>
> *It is not just that we want to be loved, but that our work have value — value accorded not merely to correct historical scorn against bodies like ours but because thought born from bodies like ours is just as credible or important.*

I want to extend Cooper's call to trust to the knowledge and expertise of anti-racist student organizers working for racial justice in universities across Canada. Instead of assigning the responsibility for racial justice solely to the 'empowered student' I want white actors in the university to trust the 'troublemaker' (hooks 1994, 179), "the censoring student, the over-sensitive student" and "the complaining student" (Ahmed 2015). Beyond acknowledgement and appreciation, I want us to learn (which will require first to unlearn) how to take their contributions and their work seriously, to struggle with and sit with their demands and knowledges. It will also require, like P demanded, that we recognize their expertise, their knowledge for what it is — an essential intellectual contribution — a scholarly contribution to the literature concerned with racial justice in the Canadian university. And I want the work and anti-racist student organizers, the work contained in this project, to call us into accountability.

[15] Which includes mental health.

Beginning a process for white accountability.

We should imagine accountability as a reckoning with our collective fears around the 'opening up' of the university — because student organizers should not be solely *empowered* or responsible for justice — it is the work of each of us, and in particular, the work of white members of the university who have been shirking this responsibility. There is a crucial need for us to establish processes of accountability for white supremacy as described by E:

> *I think we need more time dedicated, I think that to really have self-reflective processes for white students, there needs to be a lot of time dedicated to that. Collective guidance, peer-to-peer guidance.*

E's suggestion here to establish self-reflective processes for white students should be extended to the white community at large in the university. E's suggestion here aligns with Carl E. James 'Questions for Reflection' in his chapter "Who Can/Should do this Work? The Colour of Critique" in *Revisiting the Great White North? Reframing Whiteness, Privilege, and Identity in Education* (2015). In addition to one question posed in-text; "In what ways does my Whiteness mediate the possibilities of my participation in advocacy work?" (149), James' closes his chapter with a series of 5 questions and discussion points, two of which I include here.

The first concerns our academic standards explicitly, asking us to complicate how we understand our achievements as 'earned' and not informed by the way we are read and supported by actors and systems invested in white supremacy in the university:

> What are some of the mechanisms that are at White people's disposal in their denial of race privilege? How are the respective strategies or mechanisms related to attempts to justify and rationalize their beliefs that their achievements are a result of their individual efforts? (James 2015, 151).

And the second concerns our conceptions of white privilege, how we imagine committing to challenging white supremacy and how we plan to navigate the conflict that will necessarily emerge from that commitment (both personal and interpersonal):

> Ultimately, if racism is to be addressed, and indeed eliminated, the consistent, concerted

> and sustained efforts and actions of White people are necessary. It means recognizing (i.e., admitting to) “White privilege,” dealing with the resulting personal or internal discomfort, tensions and conflicts, and challenging the very system or structures that contribute to the privilege. Discuss how best this state of being might be attained without developing the urge to give up or back down in the face of personal and interpersonal conflicts that could undermine the social, economic and political success for which everyone strives (James 2015, 151).

James’ questions challenge and urge us to imagine being in different forms of relationship with our peers, our space, and ourselves. His questions bring us into accountability and act as an opportunity for application. These questions prompt us to imagine, a task which requires engaging the possibility demonstrated by anti-racist student organizers throughout this work. My intention in closing with my own set of reflective questions is inspired by James, with the intention of leaving you with an opportunity to reflect on the scholarly contributions shared by student organizers throughout this project. Dually I ask these questions to begin the collective process of accountability for white supremacy in the university *together*. I ground this reflection in possibility, in hopefulness. In addition to James’, I leave you with these questions for reflection to urge you to carry this conversation with you, into the classroom, the office, into your private spaces, your relationships, and into your own work:

What do I know about white supremacy and racism in the university?
Who taught me?
Do I take student organizers on campus seriously?
When do I tend to speak up about injustice and to whom?
When am I quiet?
How do I imagine racial justice here?
Who and what has informed this understanding?
How do I honour the knowledges and visions that are shared with me?
What about the university is unlivable for the people I work with and share this space with?
What about this place is unlivable for me?
What kinds of resources, relationships, access, and information could I leverage to foster racial justice in our systems, cultures, and ways of relating here?
What is keeping me from leveraging my privileges and resources?
What are my commitments and investments to white supremacy?

What emotions come up?

What justifications and excuses am I using and need to reckon with?

What am I afraid of?

Whose justice work needs support, resources, institutional legitimacy?

Who has come to me for support in their work?

How am I supporting them?

What are anti-racist student organizers and faculty asking for and working towards on campus?

Whose work gets support and recognition and whose does not?

What is my own work invested in?

What is important to me?

What about my own work can be shifted or reprioritized to make time and free up resources to support anti-racist work on campus?

What feels urgent?

What is urgent?

How do I understand and respond to urgency?

Can I imagine another way to work and to be in relationships here?

Who is responsible for racial justice here?

What are my responsibilities to this place, to myself, to anti-racist work, and to my relationships?

Am I really committed to racial justice?

What is keeping me from committing?

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[i] Original Interview Guide:

1. Describe what you are working on at Concordia.
    a. what is your work responding to?
    b. what is your work aiming for?
    c. what are the priorities or demands of your project?
    d. how central is anti-racism to your project's mandate and direction?

2. How do you conceptualize whiteness in your work?
    a. how do you think about your university's relationship with whiteness?
    b. how do you experience and navigate whiteness as a student organizer/service provider?

3. Do you have important collaborators/allies in your work?
    a. and who has acted as a barrier or obstacle in this work?
    b. describe your relationships with (1) staff, (2) administration and (3) faculty in doing this work.
    c. how important are institutional relationships to your project? how much time/energy do you spend on maintaining/building institutional relationships?

4. What does the university need to address and/or introduce in order to achieve racial justice on campus?
    a. what would be different about our campus if it were inclusive?
    b. how would you direct a university-wide equity project, what would you target?
    c. based on present and past experiences, what do you realistically expect from equity work at Concordia?

5. What do you need to move your project's mandate forward?
    a. what do you need specifically from: (1) other students, (2) faculty, (3) staff, (4) administration?
    b. what kinds of (1) sponsorships, (2) relationships, (3) resources and (4) opportunities do you need?