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The Medicalization of Workplace Sexual Violence on Canadian University Campuses in the #MeToo Era

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Abstract: The #MeToo movement has met institutional barriers to addressing workplace sexual violence in practice. Structural barriers to reporting workplace sexual harassment at Canadian universities are maintained through sexual violence policies that reduce sexual violence to physical assault. Institutional focus on physical forms of sexual violence can be considered the product of medicalization, which allows sexual violence to be conceptualised solely around assault of the body proper. This has limited the legal, criminal and medical responses available to survivors by minimising forms of sexual violence that do not involve physical contact – like sexual harassment and stalking – but have significant impacts on survivors' lives. In this vein, workplace sexual violence policies put focus on physical assault and limit the scope of the continuum of sexual violence in practice, solidifying barriers to the reporting, investigation and redress of workplace harassment. This article examines the effects of sexual violence medicalization in practice through an ethnographic exploration of reporting workplace harassment.

Keywords: sexual violence, medicalization, #MeToo, complaint, Canadian universities, workplace sexual harassment

Resumé : Le mouvement #MeToo a rencontré des obstacles institutionnels à la lutte concrète contre la violence sexuelle au travail. Les obstacles structurels au signalement du harcèlement sexuel au travail dans les universités canadiennes persistent du fait des politiques en matière de violence sexuelle qui réduisent, en pratique, la violence sexuelle aux agressions physiques. L'accent mis par les institutions sur les formes physiques de violence sexuelle peut être considéré comme le produit d'une médicalisation qui permet de conceptualiser la violence sexuelle comme étant limitée à l'agression du corps proprement dit. En minimisant les formes de violence sexuelle qui n'impliquent pas de contact physique – tels le harcèlement sexuel et la traque – mais qui ont des impacts significatifs sur la vie des survivantes, cela limite effectivement les réponses juridiques, pénales et médicales qui peuvent leur être apportées. A cet égard, les politiques de lutte contre la violence sexuelle au travail mettent l'accent sur les agressions physiques, et réduisent effectivement, en pratique, l'étendue du continuum de la violence sexuelle, renforçant ainsi les obstacles qui empêchent de signaler le harcèlement au travail, d'enquêter sur ce dernier et d'y remédier. Cet article examine les effets pratiques de la médicalisation de la violence sexuelle à travers une enquête ethnographique sur le signalement du harcèlement au travail.

Mots clés : violence sexuelle, médicalisation, #MeToo, plainte, universités canadiennes, harcèlement sexuel au travail

> I don't know when this changed, when I began realizing that all encounters people have with sexual violence are, indeed, that bad. I didn't have a grand epiphany. I finally reconciled my own past enough to realize that what I had endured was that bad, that what anyone has suffered is that bad. I finally met enough people, mostly women, who also believed that the terrible things they endured weren't that bad when clearly those experiences were indeed that bad.
>
> Roxane Gay (2018, x–xi)

In the fall of 2017, #MeToo went viral on social media, igniting global conversations around workplace sexual misconduct. The media frenzy surrounding #MeToo stories, the resultant invigoration of political and community organising against sexual violence, and the first #MeToo criminal trials suggest that the political climate and affective moral landscapes around sexual violence are changing at an unprecedented rate. However, the #MeToo movement has met institutional barriers to addressing workplace sexual violence in practice. This article examines structural barriers to reporting workplace sexual harassment in academia, which I suggest are actively maintained through the offices and institutions that make up Canadian university campuses. I propose that Canadian universities employ sexual violence policies and processes that put institutional focus on assaulted bodies, which in practice limits the scope of what behaviour constitutes sexual violence.

Institutional focus on physical forms of sexual violence can be theorised as the product of the medicalization of sexual violence. Medicalization redefines a social problem in medical terms, usually as an illness or pathology, that can be treated with a standardised

treatment protocol. I argue that this framework has become increasingly dominant in how university sexual violence policies conceptualise sexual violence, placing institutional focus solely on wounded bodies (Baxi 2014; Kleinman 1997; Summerfield 2004; Ticktin 2008, 2011; Young 1982). In effect, medicalization limits institutional responses available to survivors by minimising forms of sexual violence that do not map onto a biomedical model of injury, but that have significant impacts on survivors' lives and livelihoods – including sexual harassment, stalking, exploitation and professional retaliation (Durazo 2006; Ticktin 2011). Through autoethnographic reflections on reporting workplace sexual violence in academia and an analysis of the growing interdisciplinary literature on workplace sexual violence and structural violence in the academy, I will outline how sexual violence policies employed by academic institutions put focus on wounded bodies and effectively limit the scope of what constitutes workplace sexual violence, solidifying barriers to the reporting, investigation and redress of harassment and exploitation.

#MeToo

I entered my doctoral program in fall 2017 as the Weinstein sex abuse stories broke, as #MeToo and Tarana Burke's movement went viral, and as the union representing teaching assistants at my university prepared to go on strike. One of our central bargaining issues – and certainly the one that got me onto the picket line on bleak Toronto winter mornings – was the establishment of a fund for survivors of sexual violence. Ironically enough, it was during that strike and its aftermath that I experienced workplace sexual violence. As I have recovered from how deeply traumatising those experiences were, #MeTooPhD and survey data on sexual harassment in academia (The Professor Is In 2018) have made it clear that my experiences are strikingly common. For many women – particularly queer women – our graduate school training and research careers are intertwined with, marred by and sometimes derailed by violence. Stacy Holman Jones's writing on autoethnography asks us to consider every moment of the research process as "experiences worth writing about deeply, analytically, and creatively" (Jones, Adams and Ellis 2016, 18). I cannot separate experience of sexual violence from my research process – it permeates crucial moments, it blocked certain paths, it closed doors, and it changed my trajectory. I have come to see sexual violence as a series of moments in my own research process that radically altered my relationship with writing, ethnography and academia.

The MeToo movement was started by Tarana Burke in 2006 to help girls and women of colour who had experienced sexual abuse access resources and build community (https://metoomvmt.org/). In late 2017, that movement and the associated social media hashtag went viral when a number of powerful male celebrities were publicly accused of sexual misconduct and became the subjects of extensive investigative reporting. These developments in Hollywood quickly spread to other industries as social media enabled and encouraged survivors to tell their stories online. The common thread among many #MeToo stories has been what Michael Taussig (1999) calls "public secrets" – that industries affected by sexual abuse allegations were characterised by whispers of this misconduct and concerted efforts to minimise fallout, silence victims and enable this behaviour to continue quietly. The effect of the MeToo movement has been that that which has always generally been known – that workplace sexual violence and cultures of secrecy are prevalent in every industry – but never spoken about has now become a matter of public record and discussion.

At the heart of this article is an intense and deeply personal fascination with the modes of silence and violence that surround and prevent sexual violence complaints in the workplace. This article has been written in the tradition of activist anthropology; solidarity with survivors, victims and complainants in academia is at its core. This solidarity is not solely theoretical; this article is about survival in the face of the very real consequences of experiencing, surviving and reporting sexual violence in academia. More than theoretical implications are at stake when we reflect on experiences of violence (Hale 2006; Smith 2015). My alignment with complainants and survivors is not a voluntary stance: I am a survivor of sexual violence and a sexual harassment complainant in my academic workplace. I, too, lived out a public #MeToo story, complete with legal proceedings and public humiliation. As a complainant, a junior academic, an activist and an anthropologist, the space I occupy is both generative and politically compromised (Hale 2006). Being both within and without the space of survivor/complainant and graduate student/anthropologist offers a basis for critical analysis and feminist storytelling that locates the personal within the political contexts of my research and writing.

In the tradition of other anthropologists who have written about their own experiences of sexual violence in the field, on campus or in their homes (see Berry et al. 2017; di Leonardo 1997; Moreno 1995; Pandey 2009; Winkler 2002; Winkler and Hanke 1995), I engage anthropological theory through autoethnographic reflections on reporting sexual violence. Autoethnography privileges the subjective, the personal and the emotional; in that right, it can contribute to the chipping away of

structural silences surrounding modes of structural violence that underlie the academy (Jones, Adams and Ellis 2016). As a feminist practice, using our own personal experiences as an entry point to critique unsettles the notion of the objective anthropologist who is removed from the "field" and can produce knowledge about others (Abu-Lughod 1990, 1991). It is neither feasible nor helpful to separate my experiences of violence in academia from this article, and so I engage autoethnography as a generative way of navigating these entanglements.

The idea of recording my own experiences of reporting sexual violence always seems a daunting task. I know that I ought to, but I routinely find myself unable to put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. I write as a form of witnessing, as a labour of love and solidarity and, as Sara Ahmed (2018) suggests, as a way of recording an alternate history of my university. This article is not a confessional trauma narrative of experiences of sexual violence; rather, it is a recounting of the structural violence that follows making a complaint about sexual violence. This is the case for two primary reasons. First, the value of speaking about sexual violence from a personal position – in this case – lies in the demystifying of structural and institutional silences rather than the confessions of the event(s) of sexual violence themselves (Feldman 1993). Second, the testimony or public recounting of survivors' stories are often captured and reproduced as spectacle for consumption (Smart 1989). As a researcher and as a survivor, I am committed to not reproducing my own trauma narrative in a state of apprehension for public consumption. My autoethnographic testimony is "a coming to voice, an insistence on speaking and not being silenced or spoken for" (Feldman 1993, 17). In telling a story about my own lived experiences, I am not claiming that my account is universal. Rather, I hope to contribute these reflections to a larger conversation around sexual violence and the academy (Ronai 1995).

In 2017, I entered my doctoral program in social anthropology at a large public research university in Toronto, Ontario. The university is well known for its strong tradition of student activism and frequent labour disputes. Graduate student funding at this university is attached to employment; doctoral students are expected to hold a teaching assistantship, and the majority of our funding package is delivered through renumeration for that work. In 2018, the union representing teaching assistants and contract faculty at our university went on strike for 21 weeks, becoming the longest post-secondary workers' strike in Canadian history. Over the course of this strike and after our return to work, I was sexually harassed by another doctoral student while we worked together in union organising. This sexually abusive behaviour escalated to the point that campus security became involved and I was advised to avoid campus whenever possible. As this harassment went on, other graduate students and faculty members who witnessed this abuse proceeded to engage in a sustained campaign of victim-blaming and additional harassment. My sexual orientation, my relationships with male friends and colleagues, my clothes and body, and my perceived relationship to my abuser were actively discussed across my workplace. The situation eventually became so unsafe, untenable and impossible to navigate that I stopped going to campus, nearly left my program, and became suicidal and eventually hospitalised. After lodging a number of informal complaints with my union and the university, I eventually launched a formal complaint with the university in late 2018. The university's designated sexual violence office assured me that my complaint would be resolved within 60 days as per the university's policy but that it was unlikely the university would act because I had not alleged sexual assault. The university eventually dismissed my complaint after a 15-month-long investigation.

Structural Violence and the Academy

We cannot discuss sexual violence in academia without also addressing the structures that make up the academy. By *violence*, I am not referring solely to physical force but to the social and cultural dimensions that have given violence its power and meaning (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). This article is concerned primarily with the exertion of structural violence or harm exerted indirectly or systematically through social structures and institutions (Farmer 2004). Structural violence can be exerted through any social institution, and the academy is far from immune (Farmer 1996, 2004; Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016). The ivory tower of academia does not exist outside or apart from structures of violence; academic training and campus and department organisational structures are hierarchies built on patriarchal power structures, dependent on gatekeeping, self-censorship, precarity and dispossession (Quinlan 2017b). The academy is a hierarchical, bureaucratic and conservative institution designed at every level to keep out those who challenge that order (McDowell 1990).

Ahmed (2018) theorises the university as a network of connections; this frame is particularly useful in thinking about how structural violence is enacted in academia. Institutions and scholars invest in connections with each other, with institutions and with funding bodies; the more a scholar is connected – that is, the higher a scholar moves up the ranks in their department or faculty – the more their colleagues and their institution become invested in that scholar. Power is dispersed unequally

throughout this network and becomes concentrated in the hands of administrators and those faculty members who bring in prestige, resources, external funding and opportunities. Those prestigious faculty members become "important men" (Ahmed 2018) or "project barons" (Shore 2016); resources, letters of recommendation, fellowships and teaching opportunities come to flow through them because they have already captured resources in the form of grants and/or accolades. When we factor the increasing precarity of the academic labour market and the nature of graduate training into this network of connections, junior academics become dependent to varying degrees on references, goodwill and opportunities from "important men" in their departments or programs (Ahmed 2018; Hamer and Lang 2015; Shore 2016). This is particularly true for graduate students, whose educational progress, training and subsequent career prospects are deeply influenced by and dependent on senior academics (Cortina et al. 1998).

It has been well established that academia is characterised by an institutional "chilly climate" for women that may undermine educational progress and career success (Fitzgerald et al. 1988; Hall and Sandler 1982, 1984, 1986). A component of that chilly climate is campus rape culture, or the persistent institutional culture that minimises the severity of sexual violence and maintains the structures that produce it. Sexual violence poses a significant threat to graduate students; over half of heterosexual women in graduate school self-identify as having experienced a form of sexual violence on campus, and that likelihood increases significantly for queer, racialised and/or disabled students (Cortina et al. 1998; Fitzgerald et al. 1988; Rosenthal, Smidt and Freyd 2016). The prevalence of sexual violence during graduate school training is inseparable from the organisational structure of academia. Graduate students are dependent on faculty and colleagues who serve as gatekeepers of knowledge, educational progress, funding, letters of recommendation and associated career prospects. Within this structure, lodging a complaint is effectively self-destructive for graduate students as it identifies and isolates them as disruptive – as a problem or a threat. Regardless of the status of the accused perpetrator, being known as a complainant can cut graduate students off from the network of connections that make up the university. This structure of power and associated workplace culture leaves graduate students disproportionately vulnerable to abuse.

Defining Sexual Violence

Sexual violence can be broadly defined as a sexual act or acts targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression. Sexual violence can be physical and/or psychological and includes acts that are committed, threatened or attempted against a person without their consent or in a situation in which a person cannot give consent. *Consent*, for the purpose of this article, is defined as the freely given verbal agreement to engage in a sexual act. Consent cannot be implied or assumed, cannot be given under duress or coercion, and cannot be given by someone who is incapacitated. Sexual violence is a continuum that includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure and sexual exploitation – to name but a few examples. In academic settings, sexual violence often involves coercion or threat of reprisals in situations of power imbalance.

The conceptualisation of sexual violence as a continuum originates in Liz Kelly's (1988) *Surviving Sexual Violence*; thinking about different forms of sexual violence as a continuum allows us to establish connections between acts and to make clear broader patterns of structural violence. Continuum thinking also subverts the idea that a hierarchy of injury or seriousness exists among acts of sexual violence (Boyle 2019). This article holds that all forms of sexual violence constitute abuse. Moreover, this article also holds that the continuum of sexual violence is not hierarchical. Individual experiences of sexual violence vary, and what is traumatising to one person may be more or less so to another. In this sense, no form of sexual violence is inherently more damaging or worse than another (with the notable exception of sexual murder), despite how different forms of sexual violence are hierarchically codified in the legal system. This much is evident from the lived realities of survivors.

Sexual violence is, at its core, a violent enactment of power inequalities and of structural violence. Structural violence is key to this discussion – what we have learned since feminists took up the mantle of Brownmiller's (1975) *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* is that framing sexual violence solely as physically violent has reified rape myths that sexual violence must involve physical injury and overwhelming force. This conceptualisation of sexual violence is limited in that it downplays the more mundane and routine aspects of sexual violence that permeate women's everyday lives, and likewise makes it difficult for many victims or survivors to map their own experiences of sexual violence onto this model (Boyle 2019; Gavey 2005). While sexual violence may involve physical violence, it is not exclusively physically violent. Sexual violence should be understood as an enactment of gendered, raced and classed power relations.

By nature and by definition, sexual violence cannot be non-violent. Yet, focus around the physical wounds of the body proper has divided sexual violence into the

serious and the non-serious: there are those who are maimed and killed and those who are not. The latter instances are, presumably, not that bad. Sexual harassment and other forms of workplace sexual violence rarely meet this artificial threshold of "bad enough" to warrant institutional response. Workplace sexual harassment is broadly defined as unwanted sexual attention of a persistent or abusive nature. Individual sexual violence policies often have different thresholds for what behaviours constitute sexual harassment. The university where I reported harassment considers behaviour to be sexual harassment if it is sustained over a period of time, if the accused knew or ought reasonably to have known that their sexually oriented behaviour was unwanted, and if the sexually oriented behaviour created a negative environment for work or study. What constitutes the threshold for this negative environment is, of course, subjective and open to debate.

For the purposes of this discussion, I am not concerned with why complainants choose to report. Nor am I concerned with why survivors choose not to report. While such questions are crucially relevant to larger discussions around sexual violence, they fall outside the scope of this article (for such discussions, see Averill 1980; Brickwell 2006; Hlavka 2013, 2014; MacKinnon 1979; Nelson and Oliver 1988; Reavey and Gough 2000; Stein 1995; Tolman et al. 2003). Moreover, these questions too often lead to the reproduction of discourses of victim-blaming around reporting sexual violence, which are unhelpful, unwarranted and harmful. I am instead concerned with how cultures of sexual violence, particularly workplace sexual harassment, are (re)produced, maintained and normalised in the academy.

An Anthropology of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence was initially theorised as a psychopathological problem in the 1940s and 1950s. The psychopathological model of sexual violence was concerned with rapists specifically, pathologising rapists as sexually abnormal and rape as an exceptional event (Albin 1977). This framework came to be challenged by Brownmiller's (1975) influential work, in which rape was theorised as a form of political violence that exerted larger patriarchal power against women rather than an expression of individual pathologies. Feminist work began emerging in the 1970s, particularly in response to Brownmiller's book, contending that rape is not isolated or pathological but rather a normative mode of exerting power against women (Baxi 2014; Boyle 2019). Some of the feminist anthropological scholarship that followed Brownmiller sought to define rape as a signifier of the universal

domination of women. This vein of analysis has been critiqued for essentialising rape by ignoring that violence is enacted and experienced differently across cultural and socio-economic lines and therefore cannot possibly be a universal experience. In the 1980s, anthropologists moved toward ethnographic work that highlighted the ways in which sexual violence is experienced differently, cautioning against universalising some women's experiences (Sanday 1981). Anthropologists began to theorise about the specific phenomenon of campus sexual violence in the United States in the 1990s (Sanday 1990), and such work continues today (Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney 2006; Hirsch et al. 2018; Quinlan et al. 2017; Raymond 2018).

Anthropological literature has also highlighted how sexual violence has been constructed around neoliberal discourses of risk and risk management. Neoliberal techniques of risk management and assessment have served to shift responsibility for sexual violence onto potential victims who ought to avoid the risk of victimisation, while simultaneously obfuscating the fact that economic, social and political differences place people at varying degrees of exposure to potential violence (Hall 2004). Emphasis on risk avoidance has reproduced certain rape scripts in which responsibility for violence is deflected from perpetrators and the structures of violence in which perpetrators enact forms of structural violence, dislocating the burden of responsibility for violence onto individual victims. Neoliberal discourses of risk enable the individualisation of responsibility for structural violence (Baxi 2014; Hall 2004). With regard to sexual violence specifically, neoliberal discourses of risk shape how many academic institutions and administrators conceptualise campus sexual violence and how administrators subsequently address sexual violence as separate individual incidents (Oliver 2016).

Building on the existing anthropological literature, I conceptualise sexual violence as a form of structural violence. Following from Ticktin (2008, 2011), I argue that sexual violence is wielded against those bodies deemed different or as potentially unsettling to dominant power structures – particularly those who are coded as feminine, racialised, queer, disabled, of lower socio-economic classes or otherwise outside the dominant demographic of academia – as an attempt to manage or control that difference. Sexual violence is a cultural and political act; it does not occur between individuals in the private sphere but rather "attempts to remove a person with agency, autonomy, and belonging from their community, to secrete them and separate them, to depoliticize their body by rendering it detachable, violable, nothing" (Mayer 2018, 140).

Medicalization

Medicalization is the process through which institutionalised medicine reconstitutes social problems in medical terms as a disorder or pathology that can be treated with medical intervention (Conrad 2005; Durazo 2006). This framework enables the creation of simple, straightforward policies for "treating" complex social problems. Medicalization reifies the view of sexual violence as physical injury, conceptualising sexual violence in simplified terms revolving around injury to the body proper. This conception of injury is receptive to technical solutions – such as medical care for physical wounds – which simplify, depoliticise and decontextualise the complex realities of sexual violence.

The biomedical paradigm is characterised by a narrative structure that synthesises complaints into culturally meaningful syndromes by converting symptoms into technical problems that can be physically addressed (Kleinman 1995, 1997; Summerfield 2004). In this paradigm, material evidence or pathology is privileged over the subjective and untrustworthy evidence presented in patient experiences (Kleinman 1995; Samson 1999). In order to map symptoms onto the body, the patient has to be subtracted from pathology and symptoms are removed from the context that produced them. Biomedicine is, in essence, desocialising. It produces patients as passive objects of the medical practitioner's clinical practices, reducing the patient's lived experiences to facts or evidence of pathology (Young 1982). Desocialisation both erases the patient and decontextualises the experiences of suffering that bring them to seek help. Biomedical models of social problems, like sexual violence, lead to pathologising, assessing individual risk factors and creating standardised treatment for experiences of violence. In effect, medicalization offers a "magic bullet" approach to social problems that obfuscates the political, economic and social structures and conditions that enable and produce structural violence (Kleinman 1995, 1997). Erasure of individual experiences enables policy-makers to dismiss the realities of sexual violence. This results in both the implementation of interventions that do not address the structural roots of violence and the creation of policies that disregard forms of violence not conforming to the biomedical model.

Within this frame, suffering bodies exist outside of time and place and are without history and politics (Ticktin 2011). This medical conceptualisation of sexual violence alters how sexual violence is understood, constructing violence as an emergent condition and erasing larger histories of gendered power relations and structural inequities. This process narrows survivors or victims into suffering bodies and sexual violence into a treatable but emergent condition that can be mapped onto specific parts of the body. The erasure of structural contexts and histories allows victims to exist out of place and time as suffering bodies in a state of emergent crisis. If suffering bodies exist only in the immediate present, they are without a perpetrator and without social structures (Durazo 2006; Redfield 2005; Ticktin 2011). Framing sexual violence as a medical pathology to treat codifies sexual violence as an offence against the body (Das 1996). Despite shifts toward recognising the psychological trauma of sexual violence and the structural ramifications of violence more broadly (Bourke 2012), medical discourses of sexual violence inform and produce institutional frameworks for conceptualising sexual violence. In a Foucauldian sense, the discursive field of the biomedical model of sexual violence defines and produces how sexual violence will be recognised and addressed, if at all. In workplace sexual violence policies, Medicalization puts the focus of policy intervention on assaulted bodies, (re)producing and (re)codifying a conceptualisation of sexual violence as solely consisting of assault of the body proper (Baxi 2014; Kleinman 1997; Summerfield 2004; Ticktin 2008, 2011; Young 1982). As a result, incidents of sexual violence that do not map onto the biomedical model of sexual violence, like sexual harassment and stalking, come to be constituted as lesser violences within this framework, and resultant harm is thus minimised.

Medicalization and the Neoliberal University

The medicalization of sexual violence and neoliberal techniques of risk management combine at Canadian universities. As an ideology, neoliberalism emphasises individual responsibility for one's own well-being or lack thereof and denies structural effects on that well-being. Neoliberal techniques of risk management shift responsibility for violence prevention and response onto potential victims who ought to avoid risk (Baxi 2014; Hall 2004). The neoliberal construction of sexual violence as risk is organised around notions of risk avoidance and responsibility for risk taking; this risk management apparatus "produces repetitive and performative citations of sexual violence statistics that elide the fact that economic and political differences between women put women at varying degrees of risk" (Baxi 2014, 146). University sexual violence policies combine a focus on assault of the body proper with neoliberal discourses of risk and responsibility, effectively minimising complaints of pervasive forms of workplace sexual violence – like sexual harassment, stalking, quid pro quo harassment, sexual exploitation of subordinates

or reprisals for refusing sexually oriented requests – that do not involve allegations of physical assault.

My own university is a prime example. A series of high-profile sexual assaults on campus in 2007 led to the formation of a coalition of campus activist groups to advocate for structural changes to the way the administration dealt with sexual violence. The administration was focused solely on the physical aspects of campus security, was unwilling to collaborate with students and put institutional focus on suspected individual perpetrators (Mackay, Wolfe and Rutherford 2017). Despite the administration's pushback, an audit of campus-wide safety was released in 2010, and the university's first sexual assault policy was approved in 2015 (Mackay, Wolfe and Rutherford 2017). In 2016, a new sexual violence policy was adopted in response to provincial legislation requiring stand-alone sexual assault policies at publicly funded universities. The policy purported to be the product of a lengthy student consultation process. In actuality, as has been argued by Gray, Pin and Cooper (2018), the administration engaged only a select group of students in performative consultations designed to strategically shut out the anti-violence activist community. The resultant policy appears progressive in its language but in reality has large gaps, including failures to outline institutional procedures for disclosure, reporting, investigation or resolution. In my own experience navigating the reporting mechanisms of this policy, procedure was often unclear, it changed from office to office. Ultimately the procedural aspects set out in the policy were not followed.

The development and implementation of this sexual violence policy reflects larger neoliberal discourses of responsibilisation and individualisation. As Mackay, Wolfe and Rutherford (2017) note, this university's administration has consistently approached sexual violence as an issue of individual perpetrators rather than a systemic issue. That attitude is still evident in the current policy, which was promoted through a campus-wide safety campaign urging students to "do their part" to protect themselves against sexual violence (Gray, Pin and Cooper 2018). Moreover, the rhetoric of consultation paired with the actual dismissal and minimising of complaints forms a contradiction consistent with the neoliberal corporatisation of Canadian universities (Colpitts 2019; Gray, Pin and Cooper 2018; Quinlan 2017b). Just as a focus on a biomedical model of sexual violence individualises violence, neoliberal discourses individualise and deflect responsibility for violence onto potential victims and individual perpetrators and away from the structures that enable and produce campus sexual violence.

The individualisation of responsibility is enacted institutionally. For example, university sexual violence policies tend to separate out the alleged act(s) and perpetrator(s) from the conditions and structures that produced and enabled them. In my own case, my sexual harassment complaint was edited and redacted by the complaint procedure, reduced to a string of decontextualised incidents in which the respondent allegedly engaged in unwelcome sexually oriented behaviours. The university officials responsible for taking my original complaint purposefully separated out witnesses who saw this behaviour over an extended period and did not intervene. It further removed the respondent from the power structures that put them in a position of power and enabled that behaviour to take place. It separated out a university-wide workplace culture that dismisses informal and formal complaints about sexual misconduct and individual departmental cultures that enable misconduct and dismiss complainants. While my experience as a complainant is specific to me, the design of this policy is not; university sexual violence policies are designed to separate the structural conditions of the university from incidents of violence so that each complaint is individualised and each respondent acts in a vacuum.

The pairing of a biomedical model of sexual violence and neoliberal discourses further individualises sexual violence. When sexual violence policies focus solely on the imagined suffering body of a victim or survivor, that body is held in a state of crisis apart from the people and structures that injured them. Focusing on that suffering body enables an institution to shift the focus onto the victim through the offering of support services and away from the perpetrator. Perpetrators are rarely focused on in institutional responses to sexual violence (Durazo 2006; Ticktin 2011). If a formal investigative or disciplinary procedure is invoked against an accused perpetrator, that perpetrator comes to assume individualised responsibility for acts of sexual violence. Perpetrators, too, are held outside of time and space. They exist, like the suffering body of the victim, outside of the structures of the academy that enabled and articulated the conditions for predation. The individualisation of responsibility for structural violence is an inherently neoliberal practice embedded into academic sexual violence policies. They are designed to insulate the institution from responsibility for (re)producing and maintaining conditions of structural violence.

Complaint and Minimization

University sexual violence policies typically define *complaint* as a formal report of sexual violence filed with the institution's designated sexual violence office. Sara Ahmed (2018) understands complaint more broadly as a political act that brings a complainant up against the

institution they are complaining to and, arguably, about. In practical terms, complaint is how we identify problems and how we record experiences of harm (Ahmed 2014, 2017). In her ongoing work on sexual violence complaints at universities in the United Kingdom, Ahmed (2018) argues that complaint serves to record that which we do not want to reproduce at the structural level while also serving as a way of vocalising and recording individual objections. Complaint offers a window through which we codify alternate histories of our institutions in recording the most insidious parts of that institution and through which we may envision possible futures in which sexual violence is not reproduced within our institution (Ahmed 2017, 2018).

A complaint identifies individual acts of violence as well as a culture within an institution that enables and reproduces this violence. It is an attempt to stop an individual perpetrator from enacting further violence and to stop a culture from being reproduced. A complaint has a transformational potential: In reporting violence within our institutions, we may implicate or directly identify structural issues, and restitution may necessarily then entail an unravelling or reshaping of those structures (Ahmed 2018, 2019). Academic institutions are traditionally unkind toward attempts to transform them (Ahmed 2018; McDowell 1990). Institutional responses to sexual violence complaints are typically marred by delays and stoppages, confidentiality policies meant to prevent complainants from speaking about their experiences, and the minimization of the severity of complaints. My own experiences as a complainant were characterised by delay and stoppage and, ultimately, the outright dismissal and discrediting of my complaint. Ahmed (2018) refers to these delays and stoppages as strategic inefficiencies designed to wear down complainants. The strategic drawing out of complaints contributes to the affective economy of minimization, and the obvious lack of urgency to redress sexual violence complaints sends a clear message that these complaints are not a priority to the institution.

At first glance, the nature of complaint and bureaucracy may seem tangential to the medicalization of sexual violence policies. However, the nature of complaints and institutional hostility to them are inseparable from the neoliberalization of universities and are intertwined with the increasingly medicalized frame through which universities conceptualise sexual violence. Institutional chilly climates – both toward women and queer people in general and toward complaint and speaking about sexual violence specifically – create an affective environment in which sexual violence is always already minimised within the workplace culture. In the United States, where

statistics and research on campus sexual violence is more readily available, the minimization of sexual violence has been shown to lead to nondisclosure (Sabina and Ho 2014; Wood and Stichman 2016). While the heightened focus on sexual violence in the #MeToo era has led more university administrators to speak about campus sexual violence and to employ the rhetoric of survivor-centric justice, equity and support in a performative way (see Ahmed 2014), many campuses still lack stand-alone or comprehensive sexual violence policies. Among those universities that do have policies, many fail to define sexual violence and/or outline internal disciplinary options, mention legal options to complainants or protect complainants' anonymity (Quinlan 2017a, 2017b). Even on Canadian campuses with the most comprehensive sexual violence policies, students have overwhelmingly found these policies to be inadequate and their respective institutions' responses to sexual violence complaints to be poor (CASA-UofS 2016; Quinlan 2017b).

Studies of reporting sexual violence on college campuses in the United States have found that where rates of reporting sexual violence are low, students who self-identify as having experienced sexual violence on campus but did not report it indicate that they did not think their experiences were "serious enough" for their institution to address (Sabina and Ho 2014). That students identify their experiences of sexual violence as "not serious enough" is indicative of an affective economy of minimization. This article opened with a quote from Roxane Gay's (2018) anthology *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* that resonates with this discussion. The structural minimization of sexual violence invades the lived experiences of survivors and conditions them to categorise their own experiences as "not that bad" or "not serious enough" to warrant complaint. As I have outlined above, the intertwining of neoliberal discourses of risk management and the medicalization of sexual violence has culminated in institutional policies and responses to sexual violence that systemically minimise reports and experiences of sexual violence. The imperative to render workplace sexual violence complaints insignificant is the result of hierarchically encoding types of sexual violence experiences as more or less harmful in relation to the biomedical model of sexual violence. Moreover, minimising workplace sexual violence complaints serves as an effective strategy to minimise institutional responsibility and/or liability for sexual violence.

Academic institutions stand to benefit from the minimization of sexual violence complaints because to acknowledge the severity of sexual violence on campus is both to acknowledge an institutional liability for an

individual perpetrators' actions and, more importantly, to acknowledge that the structures of the academy produce, enable and maintain the conditions for rampant sexual violence (Oliver 2016). In short, minimization protects institutions from the repercussions of liability, works to absolve institutions of a responsibility to appropriately respond to or investigate a complaint, and leaves the structures of the institution unchallenged and unchanged.

Conclusion

In discussing the barriers to reporting specific forms of sexual violence, I do not mean to suggest that there are not institutional barriers to reporting other forms of sexual violence. Nor do I mean to suggest that Canadian universities respond appropriately, if at all, to complaints of sexual violence that do map onto the biomedical model of sexual violence. In many cases, the same process of minimization is used to hierarchise complaints of sexual assault and rape at differing levels of severity based on biomedical assessments of injury and to subsequently dismiss many cases of assault and rape as not violent or injurious enough to be serious. Rather, I am arguing that it is easier for universities to justify their lack of institutional response to sexual harassment complaints through sexual violence policies that increasingly codify severity hierarchically in relation to physical injury.

Medicalization is an understandably appealing framework for increasingly neoliberal universities to redefine sexual violence and formulate accordant institutional policies. Sexual violence occurs within relations of power and structures of inequality that devalue the bodily autonomy of women and femme-presenting persons. This frame reduces an experience of violence to a decontextualised, dehistoricised suffering body that exists in the immediate present, without history, without perpetrator and outside of the structural processes that produced it. When academic institutions create, implement and enforce workplace sexual violence policies that focus on a biomedical model of injury, they are effectively limiting the scope of the continuum of sexual violence and further solidifying barriers to the reporting, investigation and redress of workplace sexual harassment. What becomes evident in delving into the complexities of reporting sexual violence within Canadian universities is that medicalization begets the minimization of certain forms of violence. Focus on physical harm enables institutions to provide more easily standardised responses to sexual misconduct complaints: These responses individualise incidents of violence and separate them from overarching structures that enable

and reproduce rape culture in academia. It is clear that the creeping neoliberalization of university campuses lends itself to policies that focus on insulating the institution from liability and challenge while simultaneously maintaining conditions of structural violence. In practice, these policies and their prescribed responses result in nondisclosure and the withdrawal of formal complaints when barriers to pursuing redress become demoralising, dehumanising and violent in their own right.

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