“Wrong Problem, Wrong Solutions”: Sexual Violence, Neoliberal Universities, and the Affects of Institutional Betrayal

by

Paige Gorsak

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University of Alberta

Abstract

This thesis explores the affective and political currents of campus rape culture. Paying particular attention to neoliberalism's transformation of Canadian higher education in recent decades, the author describes a "marketized" campus environment in which school reputation is frequently prioritized above student well-being, as disclosures of sexual violence impact university's standing and enrolment. The author additionally describes how neoliberal discourses of risk and responsibility serve to download the responsibility for social harms from institutions to individuals. Thus, in the case of campus sexual assault, students bear the burden of preventing and managing the aftermath of violence, in a setting where their disclosures may be denied or ignored. Drawing on the lived experiences of student victims/ survivors who sought support from their universities, the project examines how *institutional betrayal* comes to bear on their lives and bodies. Institutional betrayal refers to the harm a trusted institution causes to the student, over and above their initial experiences of violence. This project's participants describe campus cultures in which sexual violence was normalized or ignored; school staff and services that blamed or punished whistleblowers; and institutional policies and practices that caused lasting emotional harm. The author argues that Canadian higher educational institutions offer harmful "solutions" to victim/survivors, in part because of their ahistorical and apolitical conception of the problem of sexual violence, and in part because of the market orientation of the higher education "industry." Bringing survivor testimony into conversation with feminist political theory and theories of affect, the author argues that institutional betrayal and neoliberal rape culture are affective phenomena, with social, psychic, and embodied components.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Paige Gorsak. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Investigating Campus Sexual Assault: Survivor Experiences of University Policies and Reporting Procedures," No. 00074439, 20 Apr. 2018.

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"Oppression leaves its traces not just in people's minds
but in their muscles and skeletons as well."

— Brian Fay, *Critical Social Science*

Chapter 1: Introduction

Feminism often begins with intensity: you are aroused by what you come up against. You register something in the sharpness of an impression. Something can be sharp without it being clear what the point is… Things don't seem right.
—Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*

My thesis began with a sense that there was something *heavy* about campus sexual assault. Sexual violence in general is always a weighted topic, saturated with fear, despair, and cruelty, informed by media representations, legal trials, police reports, and whispered disclosures. But this wasn't what I was noticing. Instead, I was attempting to tune in to what was at work in the world when a survivor told me she felt "dead" after going through her university's processes for reporting, investigating and adjudicating a sexual assault. What, I wondered, was acting on her body and mind in this way, to induce a corpse-like heaviness?

Sara Ahmed talks about feminist gut feelings and their "intelligence," their ability to tell when something is amiss. In *Living a Feminist Life,* Ahmed says that "[feminists] have to get closer to the feeling" (Ahmed 27). My own "gut feelings" about this topic emerged during my three-year term as a volunteer intake support worker at my campus sexual assault centre: the numbness of grief in realizing the scale and scope of sexual violence in my own communities; the choking indignation of giving a public presentation to rape apologists; the lightness of solidarity with a community aligned against violence. My own curiosity about the embodied sensations of rape culture led me to graduate school where I might "get closer." As I did, these sensations became more powerful: I felt an ache in my chest as I followed the University of British Columbia's "Can Lit" saga, in which multiple women spoke out about abuse by a faculty member and several literary heroes of mine signed an open letter

dismissing their accusations. I felt a churning in my stomach as I watched videos of fraternity members at St. Mary's university chant about raping underage girls at frosh week.

In this thesis, I move beyond my own emotional and embodied experience of campus rape culture, seeking to lift up and critically engage with the stories and experiences of students who have experienced sexual violence across Canadian campuses. This project builds upon the long history of feminist scholarship that has engaged with emotions and emphasized embodied experiences. However, it also draws on social, cultural, and political theorists who take up emotion and affect, and whose work in the past few decades has created a vocabulary and framework to examine things "flighty and hardwired, shifty and unsteady but palpable too" (Stewart 3). It also draws on political theorists and philosophers who help contextualize this historical moment: one of "increased interest in, and awareness of, campus sexual assault" (Wooten and Mitchell 1); but also, one shaped irrevocably by neoliberalism. Not merely an economic doctrine, neoliberalism "takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life" (Brown 20; 30). This includes institutional practices, campus culture, justice processes, and socio-cultural understandings of harm, responsibility, and how to make change. It is therefore impossible to map the affective and embodied life of rape culture without also examining the political conditions that structure it, conditions which generate their own additional affective currents. In turn, I am not sure we can effectively study political conditions without considering the impacts they have on our bodies. As Ann Cvetkovich puts it: "accounts of sensory experience are important for understanding the present" (Depression 11).

Framed by these diverse bodies of scholarship, the central questions guiding my research include: How are university practices and policies regarding sexual violence informed and constrained by neoliberalism? What are the affective valences of university policies and institutional practices, and how do these impact the lives and bodies of survivors on campuses, whether or not they choose to make a formal report? What can an analysis of survivors' feelings, emotions, and affective experiences reveal about institutional violence? What can they reveal about the change that needs to take place? How do survivors disrupt and resist the discourses and affective pressures of neoliberalism and campus rape culture, even as they are constrained by them? How do they respond to and resist the weight of institutional betrayal?

Engaging with these questions, this thesis develops three interrelated arguments: (1) Campus sexual violence must be understood within the context of a broader rape culture, which constrains how the problem and its solutions are understood. Moreover, campus rape culture must be understood as not only a political concept, but also as an affective force, with emotional, psychic, and embodied implications for both victim/survivors and the wider community. Political and policy-based discussions that separate sexual violence from the social-political climate, and detach institutional responses from the embodied subjects they concern, cannot adequately address the stakes of this issue. (2) Similarly, neoliberalism and its related discourses must be understood as affective forces, compelling action, constraining thought, and shaping subjects. Neoliberalism's influence on both higher education and the social construction of sexual violence cannot be understated. The responsibilization of victims of crime, individualization of systemic harm, and economization of university culture

and practice have transformed the landscape in which institutions and survivors must respond to sexual violence, leading to institutional betrayal and long-lasting harm. (3) While these forces — campus rape culture, institutional betrayal, and neoliberalism — affectively and politically constrain the capacities of victims, they are not totalizing forces. Survivors remain agentic subjects with political desires, who both imagine and produce change in the world. Their collective action has its own affective power and resonance, which in turn pushes back against institutions and rape culture more broadly. Thus, higher educational campuses remain a site of ongoing struggle as survivors work to both heal and make change in the world for themselves, other survivors, and all students who come after them.

1.1 Theorizing Affect

A relatively new body of scholarship, affect theory emerged in the 1990s from humanities scholars who were dissatisfied with post-structuralism and its "deficit in discourses about the bodily experience of subjectivity" (Cetinić and Diamanti 301-02). Today, it is a rich resource for attending to questions of feelings and embodied experience. Diverse definitions and applications can be found across disciplines, including neuroscience, psychoanalysis, and literary, cultural and political theory. As Ben Anderson explains, affect appears to "morph and mutate as [it] is drawn into connection with different theorists, issues, sites, concerns and problems" ("Affect and Biopower" 30). All of its acolytes, however, "desire forms of research that take embodiment seriously"; they emphasize "the entangled nature of events and the ways in which multiple figurations interact to produce the sites, scenes and episodes of social life" (Wetherell 358). Marija Cetinić and Jeff Diamanti refer to

affect as “some substance that saturates the space between subjects, like a mood, the weather, or some other relational force” (301). Teresa Brennan frames it as energies transmitted between bodily encounters, giving the example of walking into a room and sensing a particular mood in the air: “the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another” (1, 3). Above all, affect theory tunes in on the “sensual, haptic, corporeal and kinaesthetic,” recognizing that “elements of meaning flow directly from the lived, sensual body” (Cromby 96).

Affect theory is often linked back to Gilles Deleuze, with his foundational understanding of affects as the “intensities” of life, impacting bodies in moments of encounter. Deleuze’s writing on affect emerges from his own study of Baruch Spinoza, for whom “a body is simply a capacity, both in what it can do and in its openness to be both affected and affecting” (Diamanti and Cetinić 304). Following Spinoza, Deleuze talks about affect through the language of passions: passions which diminish or increase one’s power of acting. However, these passions are not “personal feeling[s]” — they are “prepersonal intensit[ies] corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation of diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (Massumi xvii). In more literal terms, Deleuze provides the example of two people, who impact his capacity in different ways:

> When I see Pierre who displeases me, an idea, the idea of Pierre, is given to me; when I see Paul who pleases me, the idea of Paul is given to me. Each one of these ideas in relation to me has a certain degree of reality or perfection. I would say that the idea of Paul, in relation to me, has more intrinsic perfection than the idea of Pierre since the idea of Paul contents me and the idea of Pierre upsets me ... When I pass from the idea of Pierre to the idea of Paul, I say that my power of acting is increased; when I pass from the idea of Paul to the idea of Pierre, I say that my power of acting is

> diminished. Which comes down to saying that when I see Pierre, I am affected with sadness; when I see Paul, I am affected with joy. (“Lecture Transcripts” n.p.)

This example from Deleuze identifies affects in — or determined by— “ideas,” with each Pierre and Paul existing in his mind as ideas, though of course they also exist as humans. The affects themselves are “mode[s] of thought which ha[ve] no representational character”; they are constituted in the body’s passage between levels of capacity (“Lecture Transcripts" n.p.). Pierre and Paul — and other bodies, both human and not, alive and not — bring and induce different affects, apprehended by bodies in singular ways.

As described above, a Deleuzian approach to affect involves distinguishing affects from feelings and emotions. As Blackman and Cromby articulate: “Where feeling is often used to refer to phenomenological or subjective experiences, affect is often taken to refer to a force or intensity” (5). The term might be used to refer to “the feeling of existence,” a room’s “charged atmosphere,” the “climate” of this historical moment, or the “aspirational” character of a non-living object such as a policy (Anderson, “Neoliberal Affects” 735). Many scholars thereby distinguish affect as something “before, beyond, or past discourse” (Wetherell 350). This impression, which is linked to “non-representationalist” affect scholars, removes affect from its social situation, and imagines it as a free-radical, an autonomous something “that perhaps escapes or remains in excess of the practices of the speaking subject” (Blackman and Venn 9; Wetherell 355).

Emotion, in contrast, is applied to stable referents which are culturally recognizable, and which are contained or containable in language: “what of affect — what of the potential of bodily intensities — gets actualized or concretized in the flow of living” (Gould 20).

However, not all theorists separate affect completely from emotion, nor from language and discourse. These scholars, whom Cetinić and Diamanti call "realists," take up affect in order to reckon with the historical present, and with bodies that arrive "socially coded" (305). In short, they recognize that affective experiences "are anchored to history like every other experience" (305). These theorists also note the methodological complexities of something that is beyond/below discourse, and not capturable in thought. I draw on these scholars — including Ahmed, Clare Hemmings, Margaret Wetherell, and Divya Tolia-Kelly — in order to conceptualize affect as something that exists in close relation to emotions and feelings, and is intertwined inextricably with power, politics, and history. Everywhere, but not random, affects are, as Kathleen Stewart explains, things that happen: "They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like something" (2). This approach recognizes that the political, cultural, and discursive impinge on bodies, and our own affective thresholds, patterns, and triggers are shaped as such. In this way, affects remain inextricable from social norms and states of inequality, even if they go beyond "cognitive concepts and constructions" (Cvetkovich, Depression 4), and even if we cannot always fully explain them or put them into neat categories.

Ultimately though, my approach is informed most by Cvetkovich, who uses affect "in the generic sense … as a category that encompasses affect, emotion, and feeling, and that includes impulses, desires, and feeling that get historically constructed in a range of ways

(whether as distinct specific emotions or as a generic category often contrasted with reason)" (Depression 4). This collectivizing approach acknowledges "the somatic or sensory nature of feelings as experiences that aren't just cognitive concepts or constructions" (4). While some might see this as a cop-out — or an escape from the important distinctions some bodies of scholarship live by — this imprecision is intentional, retaining the ambiguity that is true to life: feelings are both "embodied sensations and … psychic or cognitive experiences" (4). This approach also felt particularly important given that I am analyzing other people's lived experiences; parsing out what exactly is or is not affect felt needlessly theoretical and potentially ethically problematic.

What follows then is a contextualized approach to affect, which engages with both affect and discourse, "assum[ing] these are entangled in the sense that embodied action (on a scale of intensity) tends to be bound up with talk at some point in a flow of activity" (Wetherell 360). I take up this formula for attending to survivor experiences, in order to critically engage with the textures and layers of pressure, weight, and possibility that survivors identify in writing, speaking about and conceptualizing their experiences on campus. I draw upon their testimony about "chilly climates" at their universities, and acts of emotional and physical "retreat" from campus life (Turner n.p.). I centre the voices and experiences of students who find it "difficult to find words" about campus processes, or who were "cracked in half" as they were questioned about their experiences. In this way, my thesis resides on a larger foundational argument that survivors' bodies — fleshy, bony, vulnerable — carry the weight of rape culture, beyond their individual experiences of trauma. In this conceptualization, social and political realities are not just external, intellectually

experienced, and rationalized. Instead, they act on their bodies with affective intensity, impacting our bodies and our bodies' capacities. Thereby, this thesis proceeds by understanding the parts of the world traditionally imagined as above our bodies, including campus policies, rape myths, and justice processes, as actually existing on the same level — within and through us. They have their own affective power, a "fucked up-ness," which diminishes the capacity of survivors as they move beyond their experiences of assault.

1.2 Theorizing Neoliberalism

This project explores the affective life of institutional betrayal and campus sexual violence in the context of neoliberalism. Like affect, neoliberalism is a "loose and shifting signifier" that scholars across the social sciences and humanities use to describe diverse but interconnected social and political phenomena (Brown 20). Most often, it is associated with state forms, or with a state's economic policies directed toward affirming the free market, such as interventions to deregulate industry; liberalize trade; privatize public goods and services; cut taxes; and eliminate state welfare programs (Brown 28; Spade 16).

In contrast, Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism is not just a "set of economic policies," but rather, it is a political rationality that "configures all aspects of existence in economic terms" (Brown 10, 17, 118). In Undoing the Demos, she traces how neoliberalism and its discourses have "economized" political life and other spheres and activities — especially those that were not previously economic, including intimate relationships, health and wellness, and education (17, 31). As such, it is not merely an economic doctrine, but "a comprehensive framework for understanding ourselves and the political reality we live in

today" (Oksala, "Neoliberalism and Biopolitical Governmentality" 54). Brown highlights its "soft power" approach, through which it bores in "capillary fashion into the trunks and branches of workplaces, schools, public agencies, social and political discourse, and above all, the subject" (35-36). In each of these sites — and indeed, every realm of social life — neoliberalism brings with it a normative impetus to organize oneself toward the goal of maximizing capital value, whether "one" refers to a human being, an organization, a state, or a corporation. As such, everyone from students and families to non-profit organizations and social services "are construed on the model of the contemporary firm," and thereby expected to take part in practices of "entrepreneurialism, self-investment, and/or attracting investors" (22).

Lise Gotell emphasizes that this is not a suggestion for success, but an imperative; the individualized subject is "defined by their capacity for self-care and bear[s] full responsibility for the consequences of their actions" (Gotell, "Rethinking Affirmative Consent" 874). Feminist political theorists have traced how neoliberalism's ascendancy in Canada has correlated with the transformation of social policy from serving "disadvantaged citizen[s] and bearer[s] of social entitlements" to upholding the rights of self-sufficient and self-sustaining market actors who require no state interference (Brodie 154). The result is a delegitimization of the claims-making abilities of people experiencing systemic marginalization, including racism and gender-based violence. But the needs of disadvantaged citizens have not disappeared in Canada; these individuals are just no longer under the government's purview (154).

The "responsibilization" of individuals for their own well-being is a dominant discourse under neoliberalism. But more than downloading responsibility to individuals, neoliberal rationality pathologizes individual failure. Scholars and activists point out the radical reverberations this has had on issues of social justice, as collective conditions become risks belonging to individuals — "*homo oeconomicus*" — and their choices (Brown 35). The rhetoric of choice is a key feature of neoliberal discourse, and indeed, part of its power. As Johanna Oksala explains, the idea of individual choice "masks the systemic aspects of power — domination, social hierarchies, economic exploitation — by relegating to subjects the freedom to choose between different options whilst denying them any real possibility for defining or shaping those options" (*Feminist Experiences* 117). She offers the example of feminism under neoliberalism, wherein women can choose to "become executives or prostitutes, to have white weddings or to buy pornography" (117). The material conditions of a person's life, and the structural features of the world around them are invisibilized. Power, privilege and a good life are options one can choose. Indeed "constant self-improvement is linked to appreciating one's value in the free market" (Byron 121). Those too exhausted to compete, too worn down to succeed, *those who* cannot *pull themselves up by their bootstraps*, are framed as personal failures. The subsequent experience of shame is key to neoliberalism, too. As Hemmings and Amal Treacher Kabesh explain,

> To feel helpless, overwhelmed, or dependent is doubly wrong in that we have it good and thus have no reason not to be affectively more appropriate to our wonderful conditions. When we feel bad, we must have brought this on ourselves, and this makes us ill-equipped for being able to address the difficulties of how change needs to occur. (40)

From afar, the impression of Western neoliberal society is one of limitless freedom. As neoliberal values, such as individualism, choice, and reason, wind their way into the personal outlook of individuals, calls for structural transformation are lost; communities struggle to keep their heads above water, while straining to draw breath against suffocating shame. In the next chapter, I explore how these bodily impacts and the broader neoliberal discourses of agency and responsibility take a specifically gendered form, influencing how sexual violence is understood and managed.

These material changes to everyday life inform, and are informed by, the specific affective resonances of neoliberalism; in other words, how it conditions "the feeling of existence" (Anderson, "Neoliberal Affects" 736). Anderson argues that neoliberalism "happens in and through" collective affects (739). His affective analysis focuses on the ephemeral: the *atmospheres* "that envelope and animate neoliberal reason," and the *structures of feeling* that "accompany the translation of neoliberal reason to policies and projects" (736). These collective affects emerge at the everyday level, in "enclosed" interactions, and at the broader social environment, as sensations of "affective belonging and attachment" (745). They act on and through people as well as objects. For example, he discusses how policy can have a neoliberal affective bearing, wherein "a cluster of more-or-less vague affective impressions accompany a policy — such as a punitive penal policy which is legitimized by the reference to the underclass as the cause of a widespread sense of insecurity" (744). The larger impact of such collective affects is the disappearance of neoliberalism's inherent contradictions: it feels "coherent" and becomes "intuitive" that individual precarity will increase while state responsibility decreases (745).

For Lauren Berlant, attuning oneself to the neoliberal present and its affects means noticing how it "increasingly imposes itself on consciousness as a moment in extended crisis, with one happening piling on another" (*Cruel Optimism* 11). In an everyday world structured by upheaval and precarity we (are forced to) develop new ways of being in and navigating the world. Berlant's analysis is particularly interesting, as she adapts theories of trauma in order to think about everyday life. Whereas traditional definitions of trauma imagine it as exceptional to ordinary experience, Berlant describes a social environment of ongoing upheaval and trauma-like conditions.

Understanding neoliberalism is necessary for this thesis, given its emotional and embodied impacts on subjects, and its practical impacts on how laws are made and understood, how universities are structured and the role they play in society, and even the ways that people relate to one another. Above all, this thesis engages with lived experiences: both the everyday crisis-like political conditions in which we are presently immersed; and so-called "exceptional" trauma, like sexual violence. It centres on the lived experiences of rape survivors on campus, and how institutional practices and procedures *feel.* In short, it examines the politics of rape culture from the vantage of everyday life. Throughout, I continue to engage with the neoliberal governmentality, analyzing its influence on higher education and justice after sexual violence.

But first, I describe my own process for transforming these theoretical foundations into a methodology for analyzing the testimony of survivors of sexual violence. The next section details how I gathered and analyzed survivor testimony, including how I conducted interviews; as well as the methodological struggles and complexities of this project, which

involved navigating the messy waters of documenting affect and the ethical complexities of delving into trauma.

1.3 Research Methodology: Affect, Interviews, and Grounded Theory

> *The participants in our scientific investigations must be understood as "subjects in their own right," instead of being made "into mere bearers of unexplained categories" who have no existence outside those categories. They must not be violently abstracted into categories that presume a universal, ahistorical reality. Instead, women must be acknowledged as agents actively located in history—as makers of the worlds around them rather than mere victims of an overarching patriarchy.*
> — DeVault and Gross, "Feminist Interviewing"

This thesis draws on the long history of feminist methodology that "begins with the everyday experiences of people's lives to examine complex social structures" (Gray and Pin 88). It culminates years spent working through the layers of intensity, the "sticking" sensations, and the disparate pressures that I've encountered around campus sexual assault and university culture, and which I've archived from the written and oral testimony of survivors. Throughout, it has involved taking seriously the question of *feelings*, even when I've felt pressured to return to something more serious, like policy or politics. In these moments of uncertainty, I've turned to champions of affective/political scholarship, including Cvetkovich and the Chicago "Public Feelings" think tank. In *Depression: A Public Feeling*, her memoir and critical political analysis of mental health, Cvetkovich writes: "Public Feelings takes seriously questions like 'How do I feel?' and 'How does capitalism feel?' as starting points for something that might be a theory but could also be a description, an investigation, or a process" (4-5). I've followed this outline for using survivor's articulated feelings as points of departure to describe and explore campus rape culture. I also read

closely Stewart's text, a work of creative non-fiction and theoretical reflection, in which she outlines the contours of "ordinary affects" through an "assemblage of disparate scenes" (7). Stewart describes her experience of writing the book as "a continuous, often maddening, effort to approach the intensities of the ordinary through a close ethnographic attention to pressure points and forms of attention and attachment" (5). This thesis draws upon a similar, albeit much shorter, series of scenes — survivor experiences and testimonies — to map, or outline the affects circulating around and within campus rape culture.

Cvetkovich's approach to writing about depression as a personal and political concept involved drawing on feelings as both "subject *and* method" (Cvetkovich, *Depression* 5; emphasis added). Other theorists similarly describe "experimenting" with methodology in order to effectively research affect (Clough, Afterward 228). My own experimentation involved reflecting upon, cataloguing and analyzing affect and feelings in a number of different sites, including survivor written testimony, from sources such as tweets and blog posts; survivor oral testimony, gathered from both my own interviews and interviews published in news media; university commentary, pulled from policy documents, official websites, and press releases; wider discursive and social commentary, gathered from a variety of sources; as well as my own autoethnographic experience, drawn from writing and reflection I've done over the past several years. Each part of this process was attentive to the interplay between the social world and embodied experience.

My primary data source is my own interview transcripts, for which I conducted in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with four individuals who had experienced a sexual assault at, or related to, their university (variously referred to as "survivors," "victims"

and "students who have experienced assault"). In addition to disclosing an experience of sexual violence, most of my participants were actively involved in activism or change-making around campus sexual assault, which in turn became a rich resource for thinking about how "negative" affects might also "[offer] productive possibilities for political practice and social transformation" (Blackman 25).

I recruited my participants first by contacting survivors of sexual violence who were active on social media around the issue of sexual assault, disclosing their own experiences of reporting to their university, or discussing why they chose not to report. Next, I recruited from these initial contacts, asking if they knew others who might be interested in sharing their experiences with me. The final group of participants were all students at the time of their assault, though some were additionally employed by their universities as teaching or research assistants, course instructors, or in student affairs/politics. While this project predominantly focuses on the student-institution relationship, it is important to note that *non-students* (i.e., staff and faculty) frequently report experiences of sexual violence on campus, with specific social and political implications related to their positions. For all of the interviews, I spoke to the participant first by email or phone, discussing any questions or concerns they had about the purpose and requirements of participation. From there, I conducted in-person or phone interviews, which ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours in duration. After transcribing each interview, I sent a copy to the participant for approval, confirming their consent to use quotes and themes in my writing.

In addition to the four "survivor" interviews, I also spoke with two individuals I refer to as "key informants," as they did not disclose any experiences of sexual violence on

campus, but were involved in survivor support, advocacy and solidarity activism to create change on campus. One informant had worked in university settings as a support worker and survivor advocate, and the other was a fellow student who engaged with university processes in order to create change at their university. These interviews were each 1 hour long. All six interviews included in this thesis were transcribed word-for-word, but cleaned up for grammatical coherence.

Before and throughout the interview process, I struggled to weigh the risks and benefits of asking survivors to speak with a stranger about their assault and their experiences of betrayal and mistreatment by their university. University ethics boards deal with risks of harm in a given study, rather than the larger question of whether interview-based research is ethical in general. Survivors of sexual assault continue to articulate their dissatisfaction with being hounded by journalists, researchers, and strangers. Others point out the lasting traumatic impact of invasive questions and being forced to relive one's experience. In one Twitter thread, in which a survivor documents her decision to make a formal complaint to her university, she discusses the difficulty of having her name and story made public after making a formal complaint, and, in particular, the harm done by relentless contact by strangers. As she writes:

> I — and pretty much anyone else who had ever written about Concordia, talked about Concordia, been to Concordia, or walked past Concordia — spent over a month fielding and ignoring media requests, opening up old wounds, telling the same stories over and over and over [...] I have a lot to say about this time, but for now I'll just say I was surprised by how retraumatizing it was, how I only started feeling really free from it maybe a month ago. How it made me feel like I had zero control over my own life. I know I was not alone in this. (@emmafromtoronto)

These tweets narrate the double bind within which survivors exist. Speaking out means the opportunity for oft-silenced stories to be *heard*, and on the person's own terms. However, it also means opening oneself up to the masses, who clamour to shut down "false" reports, or just get close to the ugliness of rape, like spectators drawn to a road-side car crash. As a researcher, I found myself in an ethical quandary and moral uncertainty as I set out on my project. I felt certain that survivor testimony regarding institutional betrayal was of central relevance to the "crisis of campus sexual violence" and the change that is needed. However, I knew there was a risk of harm, as well as questions about my right to theorize another person's experiences.

In order to manage these conflicting responsibilities, I began with the assumption that "participants' comfort level [had] higher priority than obtaining juicy data" (Charmaz 30). I also developed my ethics documents and interview questions over a long period of time — much longer, for example, than my supervisor might have hoped. I took months to ensure that interviews were necessary, and that I was proceeding with a data-gathering process that minimized harm and centred survivor well-being. I reflected on my plans and welcomed feedback from others — including fellow graduate students, fellow former volunteers from the sexual assault centre (SAC), and friends who had survived a sexual assault. I wanted to feel confident and comfortable in moving forward, particularly before I asked a stranger to talk to me about their own trauma. The interviews themselves drew on my experience as a sexual violence support worker, but also on my past as a journalist, creating (what I hope was) a sensitive but curious demeanour, seeking "to listen, to observe with sensitivity, and to encourage the person to respond" (Charmaz 26).

I also sought answers from feminist theorists and researchers before me, recognizing that my own concerns were not novel. In particular, I utilized grounded theory, with its foundational views that human beings are "active agents in their lives and in their worlds rather than as passive recipients of larger social forces" (7). As such, my project takes survivors of sexual violence as experts of their own lives, and experts on what successful and supportive campus procedures can and should look like. Because my sample size is small, I did not and do not expect that my research will be able to speak to a full view of what all sexual assault survivors experience during campus reporting procedures, or what all survivors would understand justice to be. While I might have sought more participants, I also acknowledge that gathering participants was one of the more difficult parts of my research. My interviews were "rooted in trauma, and that affected who was able to participate" (McGregor et al. 14). Recruitment is generally difficult for interview research, but given my topic, I was especially attentive to any hesitation on the part of potential participants, choosing to honour their boundaries. This meant accepting that some booked interviews would be no-shows, and some emails would go unanswered. Instead of focusing my energies on ever-increasing recruitment, I sought to do justice to the stories that were given to me — and as grounded theory recommends, make "[a] concerted [effort] to learn about [*those* survivors'] views and actions and to try to understand their lives from their perspectives" (Charmaz 19).

Grounded theory was also helpful in its focus on "discovery" — which refers to its core tenet of iterative research, with each subsequent data point expanding the scope, range, themes, topics and ideas considered. This contrasts with traditional methodologies which

require a solid hypothesis before gathering data. For my project, this meant allowing earlier interviews to inform the questions I asked and themes I explored in later interviews. Grounded theory also offers a helpful framing for research and writing. As Cathy Charmaz puts it: "any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (10). As someone who did not experience a sexual assault while a university student, I knew from the start that I risked misinterpreting accounts and applying too much of my own perspective onto the lived experiences of others. Grounded theory pushes researchers to be open to points of interest emerging from the data, and to test their own assumptions about the world being studied, rather than reproducing them (19). While I entered this research with ideas about survivor experiences of reporting procedures, guided by own experience volunteering in a campus sexual assault centre, I worked to limit my own expectations for survivors' stories to fit into a narrative of my own design. In this process, I spent a great deal of time designing and practicing open-ended, non-judgemental questions.

My final interview guide contained themes and ideas about sexual assault, campus rape culture, university processes, and institutional betrayal, helping to ensure I did not miss out on important topics and questions. But ultimately, it served as inspiration; in the interviews themselves, I sought to have an open and relaxed conversation so we could focus on elements of each participants' story that they felt were central and relevant. Grounded theory gives power to interview participants, in upholding their choice of "what to tell and how to tell it," and to decide what is significant to their story and how a researcher should interpret it (Charmaz 27). In analysis, I maintained this methodology, using open and comparative coding to locate shared themes — collective affects — across interviews.

However, I also sought to uphold each interview as a person's life and story, rather than just a data point. In my own experience, listening to people's stories of trauma, and making space for their feelings is (and should be) a humbling experience.

Ultimately, though, this thesis "does not find magical closure or even seek it, perhaps only because it's too busy just trying to imagine what's going on" (Stewart 5). I set out to explore the forces at play on Canadian campuses that leave survivors feeling worse than they did in the immediate aftermath of their assault, and that is what you will find. This does not mean there are no lessons, insights, or arguments made. Only that, instead of an outcome or a blueprint for change, what we might think of as end, I sought to create a beginning: the opening of a conversation that centres the ways that rape culture *feels*, and what that might tell us about the change the world needs.

1.4 Position

As an undergraduate student at the University of Alberta, I volunteered for three years (and more than 600 hours) as an intake support worker and peer educator at my campus sexual assault centre. In this position, I went through 180 hours of crisis intervention training and facilitated education presentations to more than 1000 students. As a result of time spent in this role, I am well-acquainted with the barriers student survivors face in moving forward after an experience of sexual violence. While I will not be analyzing the experiences of survivors I met through this work, nor my own experiences in offering support, I do acknowledge and recognize that my background as a support worker and peer educator frames my project in specific ways. For example, my research was motivated in-part by my

support work and role as a witness in university investigations and appeals. I've seen firsthand the struggle survivors face to be heard, as well as the rape myths and sexism levied against them in both their communities and campus processes. I've lived my own experiences of sexual violence. And as a student, I've witnessed and felt the harmful culture of competition and domination that breeds in university spaces, making space for violence. Alison Phipps and Isabel Young point out that this combative social environment is not an accident, but that it is scaffolded by neoliberalism. They argue that higher education is plagued by "an individualistic and adversarial culture amongst young people that interacts with perceived threats to men's privilege and intensifies attempts to put women in their place through misogyny and sexual harassment" (Phipps and Young 305).

My own experiences compelled me to graduate study where I could think more deeply and research, from a critical feminist perspective, campus procedures and the politics that inform them. While I have met kind, passionate and dedicated staff members at my university and others, and seen many cases result positively, I remain committed to making change around this issue, knowing that structural inequalities will not be met nor changed by well-intentioned individuals. That said, I also recognize that my motivations and interests have been shaped by my position as a white settler and cis-woman from a middle class background. According to Brown, neoliberalism varies in its application, converging with and being taken up by site-specific discourses and developments (21). In Canada, neoliberal governmentality moves with and through white supremacy, heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism. My own view of what is central to campus rape culture is thereby influenced by my own privilege; put differently, my privilege constrains my objectivity. As others have

noted, our misconceptions are often only apparent when pointed out by another. For example, I can reflect on my own experience in anti-violence work, unaware and unattuned to the fact that most of the faces around me were white, and that conversations around race (and how it might impact the issue) were localized to individual experiences. This tendency is not random: within the North American anti-sexual violence movement, there is a long history of subsuming diverse survivor experiences into a homogenous victimhood, which is based on the needs and desires of white women. There is also history of mainstream feminist strategies for responding to rape not adequately accounting for the experiences of queer, trans, racialized and disabled individuals, including a focus on carceral solutions and state recognition. This thesis only partially engages with these realities, and therefore is incomplete in its analysis of affect and campus rape culture. Future feminist research exploring this subject — whether by me or others — must engage more deeply with how institutional betrayal, neoliberalism and campus rape culture disproportionately harm Indigenous students, students of colour, queer students, trans students, and disabled students.

1.5 Research Participant Descriptions

1.5.1 Chandra

Chandra (she/her) was sexually assaulted in a campus dormitory in her first year of university. Her participation in my project came after a nearly decade-long journey through labyrinthine campus and legal processes. Facing thousands of dollars of debt from therapy and legal fees, Chandra spoke to me about her exhaustion — an exhaustion shared by my

other participants, and that I imagine to be part of the experiences of survivors of violence across Canadian university campuses when seeking help or accommodation after assault.

Days after it happened, Chandra reached out to her residence advisor, asking that he "take her knives" as she was worried about self-harming. Her disclosure initiated a series of referrals, which ultimately led Chandra off campus to a local non-profit for victims of crime (that helped her file a police report). For *years* afterward, Chandra continued to take classes with her rapist, unaware that her university had policies and procedures in place to assist students who were harmed on campus. By the time Chandra found out about her university's policies, her health had been severely impacted: she'd lost nearly 30 pounds, was self-harming, and had begun contemplating suicide. However, Chandra's experience didn't improve once she pursued a report through campus security. Her university's investigation process was opaque and irresponsibly managed. From a hearing that would leave the decision to a panel of more than a dozen students, to not having any right to hear the result of the investigation, Chandra felt betrayed by every step of the university's process. In the end, the man who harmed her was found not responsible, and he later graduated without a mark on his record. As a result of the harm she has experienced, Chandra is outspoken advocate for survivors and continues her fight to see policies and practices amended at Canadian universities.

1.5.2 Robyn

Robyn (she/her) was in her final year of her degree when she was assaulted. During her program, she'd begun working on campus in student services. One night, another student

working in student affairs asked her to meet, and while she didn't want to go — she didn't particularly like this person — she agreed. She felt it was unprofessional to decline. That night, her colleague drugged and assaulted her. Stumbling home in the middle of the night with her things still in his apartment, she was disoriented and afraid. The next morning, she had only fragmented memories of what had happened, but she immediately knew that it had been wrong.

In the weeks that followed, she talked about what happened with her friends, and the women's centre on her campus. While the volunteers at the centre cautioned her against reporting, she was determined to see this person held accountable by her university. In our conversation, she told me that she felt like going through her university's reporting process was the way it could be "undone." Over the next several months, the university investigated the incident. Robyn has few memories of that term — what classes she took or whether she even attended them. But what she does remember is feeling unsafe and afraid; walking around the far edges of campus to avoid running into the person who had harmed her. At the end of the investigation, Robyn got a "good result" — her attacker was found to have violated the student code of behaviour. He was removed from campus, and his transcript was updated to reflect the sanction. However, her attacker appealed the sanction, and Robyn was compelled to a hearing where his lawyer questioned her memories and shamed her behaviour. The lawyer submitted to the "panel" that Robyn was trying to ruin a good man's life. Ultimately, the man's record was cleared and he graduated from medical school. Looking back now, Robyn says that what happened can't be undone.

1.5.3 Katie

Months before she was sexually assaulted, Katie (she/her) rebuffed an acquaintance who'd expressed an interest in her romantically. The interaction was friendly, and passed by without tension; the pair went forward as friends. On the night it happened, Katie was out with that man and several others friends, drinking casually. Lucky to live close by to the group's favourite pub, Katie often let friends sleep on her living room futon. And that night when the bars closed, Katie welcomed that friend to crash on her couch. It was a night like all the others, in that Katie offered him a glass of water before heading upstairs to her own room alone. But unlike all the others, the "friend" she welcomed in chose to not only take advantage of her kindness, but also to sexually assault her.

In the months that followed, Katie reported to her university and to local police, and after having a terrible experience with both, eventually connected with other women who'd gone through similar ordeals. In sharing stories, they shared resources, helping prepare for and cope with the victim-blaming, inaction, and even punishment they came to expect. Katie, more than my other participants, expressed an energy of anger at her university. Her life was irrevocably changed not because she was assaulted, but because of the way her university engaged with her. Becoming active in advocating for change on her campus has built Katie a community of fellow survivors, a reality that is at once comforting and wrenching. She described how they can hold one another through the difficulty of healing, and through the challenge of confronting their universities; but it also means their relationships are grounded in what they've all lost, whether it's friends and mentors or trust in the system.

1.5.4 Anna

While Anna (she/her) shared the other participants' experience of sexual violence in university, she was first assaulted in junior high school. Though she reported to a teacher, nothing happened: the teacher neither passed on her complaint, nor offered Anna support or resources. This insufficient response framed Anna's understanding that reporting isn't worth it, and that individual and personal strategies of managing an unsafe environment (such as telling friends that another student was violent), are the only "viable or necessary" things to do. Thus, when she was in university and experienced violence, she avoided formal reporting mechanisms, choosing instead to rely on her own community for support. She occasionally accessed services for emotional support, such as her campus sexual assault centre and mental health services. Her one interaction with the university's formal mechanisms was after a counsellor encouraged her to report a stalking incident to security, as the counsellor didn't have any resources for her. Security dismissed the seriousness of her case, and gave her a whistle.

These "infinitely disappointing" responses and roadblocks led Anna to get involved in community-based activism to change to the university's policies and practices. She is passionate about nuanced and critical understandings of rape culture, survivorship, and social change, and articulated a deep sense of frustration with the shallow public discourse about trauma and justice. She described feeling angry, jaded and burnt out by the effort and the environment, in which survivors are either dismissed, stereotyped as hysterical and damaged, or punished. We spoke at length about the betrayal of both student victims of violence and advocates, both of whom reach out to the university in good-faith, and put their time, energy

and emotional well-being into these efforts, but are left with little to show — or in many cases, left worse off than before.

1.5.5 Kennedy

Kennedy (she/her) moved across the country to complete her studies in a well-regarded program; however, much of her time there was taken up by her involvement in a sexual violence reporting process. Instead of offering a personal experience of sexual violence, Kennedy joined my project as an informant: she shared her story of advocating with and for a friend whose report of a sexual assault was ignored and later covered up by the university. Kennedy herself became involved because the survivor asked for her help and support; she stayed involved after realizing the university intended to let the perpetrator off the hook. We spoke across borders and time zones about the years-long campaign she and the survivor took to get justice.

Kennedy and her friend's attempt to hold the man accountable was marred by receiving incompatible and even wrong information from different campus offices; being accused of "spreading rumours" and "undermining the authority" of staff; having the requests and boundaries set by the survivor ignored; and having legal standards such as due process mobilized in ways to intimidate the two women into silence. Kennedy's sense of betrayal is acute, deeply tied to what she sees as attempts to make the problem go away without a scandal; more specifically, misinformation and deception by administrators. Much of our conversation circled around the tactics survivors and advocates can use to put pressure on a

university balking at its responsibility; however, we also discussed the impact of this experience on Kennedy as a person, or what I deem the *stakes* of institutional betrayal.

1.5.6 Alex

Alex (they/them) is an anti-sexual violence advocate who has worked in both campus and community settings to support survivors of sexual violence. They also agreed to participate in my research as an informant, offering their own observations of how universities enact harm when responding to sexual violence, as well as a critical lens through which to view the utility of campus reporting procedures. At the time of our conversation, Alex was pursuing work in a different field, but offered reflections on a decade of involvement in front-line anti-sexual violence work. Having spent several of those years in academic settings, Alex was well-acquainted with the landscape of sexual violence policy and practice across Canada. They contended that few universities are intentionally malicious to the survivors who approach them with stories of harm, but concurred that there are few interactions that don't result in revictimization. In their words: because the university holds the greater share of power in any given situation, "the odds are in its favour."

This framing became crucial to Alex's work as an advocate. In particular, they saw their role to be helping survivors to see this larger picture. This would not lessen the harm or let the university off the hook, but it could help provide a frame for how the university operates; in turn, this could make space for individuals to decide *how* and *to what extent* they wanted to engage with the university's processes. In later chapters, I return to Alex's idea of a

strategic approach to engagement; and their belief that certain things are just "not possible" when seeking justice from academic institutions.

1.6 Chapter Summaries

Participant narratives are woven into the following four chapters. Chapter 2 draws on relevant literature in the study of neoliberalism and rape culture, seeking to place my thesis research into its larger historical moment. I provide a detailed analysis of the *site* of campus sexual violence, looking at it spatially, politically and culturally. I pay particular attention to the influence of neoliberal discourse on the campus atmosphere as it serves to encourage and excuse both sexual violence and harmful institutional practices. Chapter 3 focuses on the everyday experiences of individuals who have experienced campus sexual violence, examining how "betrayal" emerges in their narratives. I both define and critically analyze the concept of institutional betrayal, drawing on participant narratives to illustrate the affective harm weighing down on survivors who reach out to their universities expecting support, but experiencing harm instead. In Chapter 4, I shift my focus to institutional practices, exploring the political influences and impulses that guide higher education's response to the crisis of campus sexual violence. I provide critiques of common tactics, including so-called "trauma-informed" practices, policy creation, and practices inspired by the criminal legal system. Additionally, I share how my participants reflected on these practices, and their opinions on whether there is value to participating in university practices at all. Chapter 5 brings the project to a close, moving from an analysis of the harm of negative affects to one that understands their productive possibilities. I explore how hope, social change and optimism

are negotiated within affective alienation, and provide my own reflections on the question of "what comes next."

Chapter 2: The Economization of Campus Sexual Violence

Remembering daily that "uplifting the whole people" is the University of Alberta's raison d'être binds our community in a united desire to improve livability, sustainability, and hope for all citizens of our local and global community.
— University of Alberta

There's a tension between what the university is, which is inherently a community of people that is sort of isolated from the broader demographic for lots of various reasons. And like, the tension between what it aspires to be — or what those with power kind of hold as the central tenets of the institution.
— Alex (Participant)

Reflecting on Aristotle, Brown differentiates *mere life* and the *good life*, with the latter requiring the cultivation of "the higher human faculties for thoughtful civic engagement" (189). She connects this romantic articulation of human purpose to the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, when Liberal philosophers like Adam Smith, John Rawls and John Stuart Mills concurred: "raw economic interest [is] too thin a reed and too crude a principle on which to build either an individual or a democracy; cultivation of mind and character through education is one crucial counter" (qtd. in Brown 187). This philosophy sets the foundation for post-war American extension of liberal arts from the elite to the many, "tacitly destining them for intelligent engagement with the world, rather than economic servitude or mere survival" (185). In this era, higher education's value was grounded in the dominant conceit that a "well educated public ... has the knowledge and understanding to participate thoughtfully in public concerns and problems" (182). Thus, education across history, and particularly in the last two centuries, has been understood as providing citizens with the tools

to live “creative” and “intellectual” lives, and “govern [their] own affairs” (190). This history informs the modern cultural narrative that positions universities as ideal places that contribute to both a healthy democracy and social progress. It also connects to everyday narratives that frame post-secondary education as a rite of passage into adulthood and a place of intellectual exploration and self-definition. Unfortunately, as Brown points out, “[We] can no longer speak this way about public universities, and the university no longer speaks this way about itself” (187).

2.1 Neoliberal Universities

Yeah, and it's really hard because I feel like a lot of people are like, “Sexual assault isn’t something for the university to deal with, it’s a criminal matter.” And I’m like... Yes, the university is a business, but it’s also a community.
— Anna (Participant)

Indeed, over the last 40 years, universities and colleges have been “radically transformed and revalued,” shifting from a site of cultural good in themselves, to being “valued and desired almost exclusively for their contribution to capital enhancement” (Brown 177). As the market has ascended in cultural and social importance, neoliberal orthodoxy has put down roots both outside and *inside* the ivory tower. Traditional values of education — such as “how education can help build the imagination, social responsibility, and critical capacities for active citizenship” — stand in contrast to the normative style of governance in universities today, which “prioritizes fiscal imperatives” (Quinlan, “Institutional Betrayal” 63). The reverberations can be traced across campuses: from “corporate sponsorship of buildings to ever-rising tuition fees, and skewed

research priorities" (63). Education and even knowledge itself have been privatized, measured by its economic return rather than public good. Brown points out how students are encouraged to make economically rational purchases of education, judging colleges by their "return on investment"; while universities focus on student enrolment in relation to the revenue each "investor" will generate (23).

While universities should still be understood as sites of struggle, with (some) students, faculty and staff resisting economization, the introduction of the corporate world's "best practices," "lean management" and "continuous improvement" have transformed the institution (Brown 325). Furthermore, they have transformed the "purpose and character of each sphere, as well as relations among them" (Brown 335). In particular, the spirit of competition has been embedded across all levels of higher education: faculty members compete for limited grant funding, departments compete for budget allocations and student enrolment, and institutions compete amongst each other for rankings, tuition dollars and research funding (325). The result is a higher education system whose top priority is the market, with each individual school operating according to a market ethos. The time and energy once spent on public good has been diverted to questions of how to maximize ratings and rankings in order to maximize profit (36). But what does this mean for how higher education institutions respond to sexual violence?

Historically, the work done by universities and colleges to respond to and prevent sexual violence was carried out in a reactionary manner (Wooten and Mitchell 4). Today, the types of responses employed by Canadian universities are similarly reactionary, influenced by provincial legislation, local advocacy, and the individual administrators employed at a

given university who have the power to draft and implement policies and practices. However, they are additionally — and powerfully — influenced by society's re-orientation towards the market. Elizabeth Quinlan describes corporatization's impact on universities as contradictory, though, in that it "simultaneously suppress[es] and motivat[es] initiatives to address sexual violence on campuses" ("Institutional Betrayal" 61). This disjuncture is related to another facet of their market ethos: universities are increasingly concerned with their comparative standing and perception in the public eye. Sara Carrigan Wooten and Roland W. Mitchell note that the last decade has seen "increased interest in, and awareness of, campus sexual assault" amongst the public, requiring universities to more carefully manage their reputations (1).

This surge in attention can be linked to a variety of factors: Wooten and Mitchell describe how technological advances have "enabled survivor stories to spread swiftly through the media" (1); Mandi Gray and Laura Pin point to the influence of media investigations, security audits, and independent reports (89); and Quinlan nods to a "new generation" of feminist activists asking questions, calling for change and pressuring universities to make campuses safe (Introduction 7). These students are mounting public campaigns, lobbying government, and launching lawsuits (8). This increased public attention has an important influence on neoliberal universities:

> As the commodification of education takes further hold, media stories covering various aspects of university life gain a heightened importance to administrators. Unfavourable reports, such as incidents of campus sexual violence, are blemishes on universities' images as good corporate citizens. (Quinlan, "Institutional Betrayal" 64)

Thus, universities are compelled to manage sexual violence as quickly and as quietly as possible, lest they expose universities — and their stakeholders — to negative attention. Wooten and Mitchell emphasize that higher education institutions "benefit from deterring complaints in a number of ways, including preventing damage to their institutional reputation if too many incidents of sexual violence are reported… and preventing civil suits from being brought by students who are determined by the institution to have committed an act or acts of sexual violence" (4-5). Research about both Canadian and American universities has reveals that suppression is a common tactic; for example, David L. Stader and Jodi L. Williams-Cunningham report that universities have "discouraged reporting, made reporting difficult, delayed adjudication when high profile athletes are involved, and worked to cover up allegations" (198). Other researchers have documented how survivors avoid reporting, citing concerns about confidentiality, retaliation, or worries that they will be blamed (Holland and Cortina 59).

These results suggest that some university administrators believe it is in their best interested to construct or uphold a system that obscures the frequency and details of sexual violence on campus. But as Quinlan points out, a market orientation can also serve to motivate universities to respond well to the issue of violence ("Institutional Betrayal" 64). Indeed, scandals can be transformed into "opportunit[ies] to demonstrate … that sexual violence is taken seriously, and to reassure the anxious public of their ability to protect [students]" (Bumiller 10). This phenomenon has been apparent across Canada in recent years. For example, days after the Toronto Star revealed that only 10 percent of Canadian universities had specific sexual assault policies, two Canadian institutions promised to create

policy, and publicly apologized for past incidents (Mathieu and Poisson). Meanwhile, the Council of Ontario Universities announced plans to immediately review policies and practices at the province's universities (Mathieu and Poisson). After CBC contacted Brock University about sexual harassment complaints, the university similarly apologized and promised to change their procedures (Sawa and Ward). When a CBC documentary uncovered years of inaction by University of British Columbia administrators after more than six women reported assaults by a single student, senior officials apologized and pledged to review and improve practices (CBC News).

Throughout this thesis, I provide examples and analysis of the tactics chosen by Canadian universities to respond to violence. In some cases, my critiques align with public discourse — particularly the narratives put forth by feminist theorists, survivors, and activists. But in others, my opinions are at extreme odds: a quick look at the literature about institutional responses reveals multiplying and refracting opinions and tensions. For example, market perspectives view the university as a business, and therefore, avoiding responsibility for sexual violence is necessary because of the cost. Sexual assault is expensive, whether one looks at legal fees or the loss of reputation and ability to recruit new students. According to acolytes of a traditional, detached and idealized ivory tower, sexual violence is a criminal cause and universities should neither accept nor be obligated to take responsibility for it (Rubenfeld). From post-feminist critics, the issue is nothing more than "officially sanctioned hysteria" that universities should steer clear of entirely (Kipnis). From a human rights perspective, universities have a responsibility to provide equal access to all students, and the

risk of sexual violence is a barrier to people of specific genders accessing an education (Hutcheson and Lewington; Sheehy and Gilbert).

Regardless of how the university's role in society is conceptualized, and regardless of who is responsible for responding to the issue, the reality is that sexual violence is happening on university campuses. Research shows that as many as 33 percent of Canadian women in university will experience sexual violence, including a study at the University of Alberta, which found that 1 in 5 students had already experienced a sexual assault (LoVerso; Newton-Taylor et al.; DeKeseredy and Kelly). Campus sexual violence first entered the data set in the 1980s, when feminist activists and academics broke the silence regarding incidences of violence against women students, and pushed for the issue to be recognized as systemic harm, not just a normal part of the campus experience. In her influential "Sexual Experiences Survey," Mary Koss found that more than one-quarter of female students disclosed experiences of rape or attempted rape, and more than one-half disclosed some form of sexual victimization (Koss et al. 166, 168). This prevalence rate was later replicated in Canada, where it has remained consistent over the last several decades, despite a great deal of advocacy (DeKeseredy and Kelly; Senn et al.). These numbers confer with data about sexual violence in a broader context, which suggests that one in three women and one in eight men in Canada will experience a sexual assault at some point in their lives (H. Johnson, "Measuring"; S. Brennan). These shared rates point to the reality that sexual violence on campus is related to and part of the broader societal issue of sexual violence. Universities are their own unique site, which I will explore; but they are not vacuums.

As Wooten and Mitchell point out, universities reflect the "dominant social norms of our culture" (3). They identify this culture as "patriarchal, whereby violence against women by men is responded to generally in a manner that either blames women for the violence done to them or focuses on prevention strategies that identify how women can better protect themselves" (3). The name most often used to tie patriarchy to systemic sexual violence is "rape culture," a phrase first coined in the 1970s by feminist activists who resisted assumptions about the inevitability and naturalness of rape (Keller et al. 23). They sought to identify and critique social norms and practices in which perpetrators are excused and victims are blamed. Over the last 40 to 50 years, the term has been used to describe a variety of practices, including "rape jokes, sexual harassment, catcalling, sexualized 'banter'; the routine policing of women's bodies, dress, appearance, and code of conduct; the redirection of blame from the perpetrator in an assault to the victim; and impunity for perpetrators, despite their conduct or crimes" (Keller et al. 24). It is also used to highlight how the common understanding of sexual violence is socially constructed, or part of a dominant discourse. In the next two sections, I outline the discursive contours of rape culture, connecting it to political formations like neoliberalism, and social institutions, such as higher education.

2.2 Neoliberal Rape Culture

I was interested in the discourse around rape culture because the phrase is used often, but rarely do people engage with what it actually means. What is it like to live in a culture where it often seems like it is a question of when, not if, a women will encounter some kind of sexual violence? What is it like for men to navigate this culture whether they are indifferent to rape culture or working to end it or contributing to it in ways significant or

small?
— Roxane Gay, *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture*

Discourse refers to "any coherent shared understanding, narrative, or storyline about a given reality, phenomenon, or issue" (Ford et al. 430). These "ways of thinking" are highly political, "giving some realities meaning while silencing others, influencing how people perceive and understand specific problems, defining appropriate solutions to address them, and structuring spaces of interaction" (431). Susan V. Iverson reminds us that discourses are neither neutral nor equal, with some discourses being inhabited and absorbed more readily. These "dominant discourses" are "reaffirmed through their institutionalization and can be identified most easily by the way in which they have become taken for granted" (17). In Brown's words, dominant discourses "circulate a truth and become a kind of common sense" (117). Unfortunately, the dominant discourses around sexual violence frequently reproduce and re-inscribe rape myths, such as the idea that women enjoy being raped, that rape is caused by some sort of miscommunication, or that women provoke rape by dressing provocatively, staying out late, flirting or drinking (Phipps et al. 1). Additionally, these discourses reinforce the common understanding that sexual violence is "something that a woman experiences, rather than something that a man does" (Iverson 18); and is a harm experienced by "individuals, rather than a systemic problem" (Iverson 18).

A discursive analysis helps identify where and how rape culture manifests in everyday life. For example, Iverson describes how the dominant discourse around sexual violence serves to construct and constrain identities, framing women as weak, vulnerable, submissive and powerless to men (18); while Victoria E. Collins and Molly Dunn point out

how these narratives reinforce heterosexist stereotypes of male dominance over women, obscuring experiences of harm in queer communities (373). In *Just Sex*, Nicola Gavey argues that certain normative discourses of sex and gender operate as "a cultural scaffolding for rape" (3). This includes "taken-for-granted normative forms of heterosexuality," such as "women's passive, acquiescing (a)sexuality and men's forthright, urgent pursuit of sexual 'release'" (3). These inform individual attitudes, inscribe (onto) bodies and desires, and influence behaviour, constructing the preconditions for rape, and breeding support for its normalization after the fact (3; Marcus 391; Rodemeyer 47). These discourses are "not simply prescribed ... nor fully inscribed before the rape occurs," but as Sharon Marcus points out, they are scripted anew with every act of sexual violence (391). Kaitlynn Mendes in turn describes how these discourses extend outward from everyday life into "images, advertisements, jokes," as well as institutions and services, including those designed to protect and support victims of crime, such as policing, criminal law and health care (9).

Debra L. Delaet and Elizabeth Mills discuss silence as another common discourse around sexual violence. In some ways, this silence is natural; Judith Herman, the noted trauma theorist and clinical psychiatrist, notes that "the ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word unspeakable" (*Trauma and Recovery* 1). However, Delaet and Mills describe the long history of silence serving to reinforce and perpetuate sexual violence (497). This includes victims remaining silent as a form of self-protection against the multitude of risks that accompany speaking out, such as "being re-traumatized during adversarial legal processes, the fear of not being believed, cultural stigma,

negative consequences in the workplace, and damage to interpersonal relationships" (497). It also includes bystanders and witnesses who keep quiet in response to "social pressures, cultural norms, and political constraints"; and institutions whose complaint procedures compel silence from participants, or invalidate survivors into silence by relying on outdated definitions of sexual violence (499).

Importantly, discourses are "plural not singular," meaning that we experience and inhabit multiple discourses concurrently, negotiating, resisting, and constructing them anew (Bacchi 141). In fact, Iverson points out that victims of violence often "interrup[t] and rewrit[e]" discourses, such as speaking out at Take Back the Night events, thereby disrupting expectations and obligations of silence (18). However, this also means that discourses interact and play off one another. Often, this manifests as dominant discourses reinforcing and bolstering one another. For example, rape culture discourses amplify (and are aggravated by) the discourses that neoliberalism animates. As introduced in chapter 1, the discourses animating neoliberalism include *risk*, whereby individuals are made responsible for their own well-being; *choice*, wherein the "individualized" subject in a global market is "free" to determine their own success; and *market rationality*, within which every aspect of life is configured in economic terms. Following Foucault, Brown emphasizes that discourses are about "norms and normalization"; subjects and objects are constituted through and against what is normal and what is deviant (117). The norms of neoliberal discourses include self-sufficiency, rational decision-making, and entrepreneurialism; while deviance is grounded in vulnerability and dependence.

Gotell describes how these watermarks of neoliberalism have come to bear upon sexual violence, "forging new normative sexual subjects who interact within a transactional sexual economy" ("Rethinking" 866). In particular, she focuses on how discourses of risk and responsibility "constitut[e] the ideal victim as the rape-preventing subject who exercises appropriate caution (yet fails) and the normative masculine sexual subject as he who avoids the risk of criminalization through securing consent" (866). These idealized subject positions serve as foils against which the average person — and their behaviour — is measured. Gotell emphasizes that these idealized subjects are gendered: it is women who *avoid* risk, keeping themselves safe from violence, while men *manage* their risk of criminalization (877). Thus, the traditional sexual discourse of passive women/active men is re-entrenched.

Gotell points out how these discourses transform perfectly normal social interactions into *potentially risky* situations, which women must foresee and avoid (879). Here, the connection to rape myths is obvious: women who *choose* to walk home alone or dress provocatively are *choosing* to put themselves at risk. Thus, victims of sexual violence are judged against the idealized feminine subject who "actively manages her behaviour to avoid the ever-present risk of sexual violence" (879). Elizabeth Comack and Tracey Peter contend that, in justice processes, the survivor must prove that she "lives up to the neoliberal ethos: she is reasonable, rational, responsible and demonstrates that she can make the 'right' choices in her own self-governance" (298). Those whose behaviour can be considered "risky" are deemed less credible, and therefore less worthy of justice (Gotell, "Rethinking" 882). Gotell additionally points out that an individual's social location, such as their race and their class, plays a role in determining "riskiness," and in turn, is used to normalize some people's

experiences of violence. She draws upon Sherene Razack's spatial analysis of crime and violence in Saskatchewan, wherein white middle class spaces are set apart from racialized spaces like the inner city and the reserve (882-83). Subjects from "zones of violence" — such as women of colour and women living in poverty — are constructed as living risky lifestyles by virtue of nothing except their "distance" from the idealized feminine subject (885). A critical feminist view of crime and violence recognizes how vulnerability is constructed by "gendered, raced and classed power relations"; but as Gotell explains, "through the responsibilized logic of neoliberal discourse, vulnerability is reconstructed as an individual problem and an effect of risk-taking" (883-84).

Gotell grounds her analysis in the work of critical criminologists like Pat O'Malley and David Garland, who emphasize how crime control under neoliberalism relies on technologies of individual "self-discipline," "shifting the problem of crime away from the state and onto would-be victims" (Gotell 878). Curiously, the perpetrators of harm, and their choices, are largely absent from these conversations. Gotell *does* outline specific norms of behaviour for the "idealized masculine subject," such as actively seeking consent (897). However, she notes that, as in traditional rape discourses, the actions of the victim are scrutinized more heavily than those of the perpetrators. By focusing attention on "risky" and "irrational" choices by complainants, "deviations from the standard of responsibilized masculine sexuality can be, and often are, excused and normalized" (885). She provides the example of an intoxicated woman being raped in front of witnesses, with her injuries documented by a medical professional. In court, however, the woman's "risky lifestyle" —

which included homelessness and "drinking and drug use" — constituted enough deviation from the "reasonable woman" to nullify the offender's act of violence (887).

2.3 Neoliberal Campus Rape Culture

The same neoliberal discourse of *risk* emerges on college and university campuses in relation to sexual violence, and the same tactics of victim-blaming are employed to discredit survivors in justice processes. For example, Collins and Dunn have noted that the choices of women students to, say, attend a party or drink alcohol, can and have been used to transform their vulnerability and victimization into "risky behaviour" and regrettable decision-making (380). They describe university campuses and "sub-systems" within them as sites of hegemonic masculinity:

> One example of this is the Greek system, which has been found to privilege masculinity, sexual aggression, excessive alcohol consumption, and the objectification of women… This normalization of rape culture within the fraternity system creates a metaphorical boundary whereby to enter — i.e. the fraternity party — nullifies normative social, moral and even legal codes of conduct. It carries with it risks for women entering the space that have come to be accepted. With regards to sexual assault the environment for women becomes lawless. (380)

In this space, violence can be perpetrated against women without rebuke, specifically because her actions can be retroactively leveraged against her: *she chose* to enter a zone of risk, to consume alcohol, to be alone with men. Here, Collins and Dunn's analysis recalls Gotell's (and Razack's) *spatial* analysis of rape culture and risk discourse, whereby inner cities and reserves become danger zones.

As Collins and Dunn point out, campuses are uniquely situated within "dual jurisdictions" of criminal law and university disciplinary action (378). One might assume this

would lead to greater protections for individuals experiencing sexual violence. Instead, it can lead to mishandled investigations, and as Collins and Dunn argue, it can enhance the discursive conditions for perpetrator excusal and victim-blaming. In "The invisible/visible claims to justice: sexual violence and the university camp(us)," they examine the now-notorious case of Brock Turner, a "middle-class white male attending an ivy-league school on an athletic scholarship," who sexually assaulted an unconscious woman in view of witnesses, and served only three months in jail (377). That Turner was declared guilty might suggest that justice was served; however, the case is iconic for how the public and judicial discourse emphasized "*his* career loss, *his* scholarship loss, and *his* social distress at being prosecuted and convicted" (382). The authors emphasize how the politically, spatially, and culturally unique site of the university structures an environment where "young women are vulnerable to sexual violence with little repercussions for men that engage in said acts of violence" (380). The conditions of emergence for sexual violence and victim blaming on campus include: the site of the fraternity house where violence "has historically been expected, minimized and normalized" (381); the neoliberal institutional focus on bad publicity and its impacts on "enrollments, fundraising, reputation" (380); and the reality that universities are "structured along gender lines, to lend authority not only to reigning classes and ethnic groups but specifically to men's linguistic practices" (Gal 197). Collins and Dunn additionally describe how Turner's "social positioning" as a white male athlete "situat[ed] him within the parameters of the active and legitimate citizen who holds significant political and economic value" (382).

Thus, campuses are inundated with the broader dominant discourses of rape culture and neoliberalism — but also have their own unique cultural and discursive elements that make the dismissal of sexual violence possible. I'm drawn in particular to Melissa Rae Horsman and Patricia Cormack's analysis of the Canadian university campus as a site of the "enactment of social class privilege, where students are encouraged to treat themselves as suspended from adult responsibilities and the coherent construction of self" (120). Their interviews with university students revealed that students ascribe to traditional "coming-of-age" narratives around their time at university, such as self-discovery and new experiences (121). However, students additionally see their university campus as "a morally suspended place and begin to treat themselves as morally suspended from their future selves" (123):

> Students described their university experience as "not counting," "just fun," or "no big deal" — what we have called a "meaningful meaninglessness." Their deflection of meaning is also highly meaning*ful* in that students were building a notion of self, rooted in having had a series of excessive experiences that would serve to mark off their undergraduate days as distinct from their "real" lives in the future. (124-25)

This perspective both enables and is enhanced by the broader rape culture discourse. As discussed previously, rape culture sanctions sexist attitudes toward women and normalized coercive sexual behaviour (120). The temporal and spatial distinction of the university, however, allows male students to "naturalise and excuse" their own misogyny and "slut"-shaming (128).

Andrew Bretz, an English professor in Ontario, describes how these cultural norms — as well as the statistical prevalence of sexual violence — complicates how he and other instructors can "teac[h] about sexual violence" (17). He describes his classroom reality based on prevalence research: a population of female students, "10 to 40 percent" of whom have

been raped, and male students, "up to 60 percent [of whom] would commit… sexual assault if they were certain they wouldn't get caught" (19). As faculty, he and others are:

> teaching those who have been assaulted, but we are also teaching those who do the assaulting. They come to our office hours. They sit in our lectures. Not all of them are monsters. They are misguided and they accept a system of gender relations that says what they have done is not only not wrong, it is the expected action of a man. (19)

An important caveat here is that faculty members do not all have the same understanding. Indeed as Elizabeth A. Sharp et al. point out, conversations about sexual violence between faculty members often end in disagreement, as many do not "approach the topic from a critical gendered perspective" (83-84). Furthermore, feminist content is typically limited to classes in gender studies programs or courses taught by feminist faculty members. Charlene Y. Senn contends that this is structural, and tied to the ascendance of neoliberalism. Describing the Canadian context, she outlines how campus sexual assault centres and sexual harassment offices, once staffed and operated by feminists, were evicted, had their funding cut, or were transformed into gender neutral "equity" offices (123). Health services and policy offices now operate without "input from those with expertise in sexual assault" (123). As a result, a majority of the dominant neoliberal and sexually violent discourse on campus goes uncontested — or is actively reinforced and endorsed by "parents, teachers, coaches … and the wider community" (Sharp et al. 78).

Nicole K. Jeffrey and Paula C. Barata report that these dominant discourses of heterosexuality and sexual violence are not "out there," but are actively used by Canadian university men to justify and minimize their own sexually violent behaviours. Their interviews with male university students revealed how these men used "violent and coercive

tactics ranging from verbal pressure and persistence to physical force" to engage in sexual activity; in some cases, they engaged in sex acts without consent, and in others, they engaged in them after their partner refused (90-91). The authors describe how these men explicitly linked their sexual violence to dominant discourses about men's biological/uncontrollable sexual urges and entitlement to sex; for example, linking their "expressions of frustration or ignoring signs of non-consent to male sexual needs and expectations of finishing sex (i.e., men reaching orgasm)" (92). This was constructed as normal, as an "assumed or expected part of heterosexual intimate relationships" (93).

These men additionally followed the neoliberal sexual scripts of "responsibility" described by Gotell, in that they understood they should be seeking consent. For example, participants were aware of sexual assault education campaigns at their universities and "recited messages heard on campus (e.g., 'only yes means yes')" (Jeffrey and Barata 101). They knew they *should* be asking, and even identified themselves as "very for talking and seeing how the other person feels" (99). However, this included asking repeatedly until their partner gave in or stopped responding, which, Jeffrey and Barata point out, is coerced sexual assault (99). Participants qualified this behaviour, using "just" statements to "minimiz[e] their behaviours and distanc[e] them from something more severe" (94). For example, one participant describes how he "was just like pushing it a bit [. . .] I wouldn't say physically [. . .] just asking her" (94). Thus, they were able to "position themselves as good men who obtain consent" (95). In addition to distancing their behaviours from "real" rape, the men also minimized or denied any negative impact on their partners (95-96). These incidents reveal

how the dominant discourses of neoliberal risk and traditional heterosexual discourse work in tandem to excuse sexual violence.

The connection between these discourses and university life can be found by returning to Horsman and Cormack's analysis of how students use the temporal and spatial site of the university to minimize and justify harmful behaviours. For example, Jeffrey and Barata's participants frequently noted their "worst" behaviours as *one-offs*, often caused because their girlfriend's *leading them on* (93, 95). Here, Gotell's argument that women are responsibilized for their own experiences of violence comes full circle: these college women have *chosen* to "lead on" their partners, which in turn excuses the violent choices the men make. While these perspectives are most often attributed to men participating in rape culture, Laina Y. Bay-Cheng and Rebecca K. Eliseo-Arras's research reveals that women also minimize and dismiss men's behaviour, as it serves to rationalize their experiences of unwanted and coercive sex. In the neoliberal context, "sexualization and objectification of girls and women is passed off as sexual empowerment" (387). As such, young women who buy into a neoliberal "individualist, antivictim, self-perception" may utilize the norms and narratives of rape culture to negotiate sexually violent encounters and to make sense of them afterward (387, 391). Jeremy S. Joseph et al. frame this behaviour through the framework of system justification theory, which posits that "disadvantaged individuals accept and often defend what appear to be objectively unjust circumstances because rationalizing existing social conditions as fair, legitimate, and sometimes even desirable tends to increase compensatory control, positive affect, and sense of satisfaction" (495). For example,

believing rape myths can be "functional," in that they allow victims of violence to maintain their belief that the world is generally good and safe.

It is worth noting the ways that market logic emerges in these victim-blaming narratives: sex becomes a "contractual" or "transactional" interaction; an orgasm is "owed"; there are "costs" women may have to pay for leading on their partner (Phipps and Young 307, 314; Gotell, "Rethinking" 897). Phipps and Young describe additional market-inspired sexual practices and interactions on university campuses, such as male students "charting sexual conquests … and giving women grades for their sexual appeal" (313). As the university is increasingly marketized, focused on "performance evaluation ... university ranking" and domination, sexual norms are increasingly seen through the same lens (316). Phipps and Young describe a new masculine sexual identity constituted through competition: measuring oneself and one's "shags" against his peers (313). As evidenced by the British slang, Phipps and Young centre their research in a UK context, but their research ultimately speaks to the global norms of neoliberalism: one of "cruelty and harsh competitiveness" (Giroux, qtd. in Phipps and Young 316).

The discourses of rape culture on neoliberal campuses have additional harmful impacts on the targets of violence: women and trans students, particularly those embodying marginalized subject positions (non-white, Indigenous, disabled, queer). This includes embodied and affective consequences, as well as constraints on how they understand their rights to justice and a safe campus environment. For example, feminist scholarship has shown that many students affected by sexual violence are led to doubt the validity of their experiences as a result of "sexual scripts," as well as the definitions and practices employed

by institutions like the legal system and higher education. However, scholars have also described how discourse serves to empower victims/survivors. My particular interest lies in the *counter-discourses* mobilized by survivors: the liberatory storytelling which places responsibility for harm on perpetrators, which I argue, includes both violent perpetrators and violent institutions (Rodemeyer 51, 19). I discuss these counter-discourses in the next three chapters.

Chapter 3: Institutional Betrayal

3.1 Betrayal

O rabble the most miscreate, who keep
Within that place hard to describe, on earth
Better had ye been only goats or sheep!
— Dante Aligiheri, *Inferno*

If our happiness depends on turning away from violence, our happiness is violence.
— Sara Ahmed, "Resignation is a Feminist Issue"

In Dante's *Inferno*, the final circle of hell is a large frozen lake: Cocytus, which from Greek, means "to lament" (Raffa 132). Sinners guilty of "treachery" are trapped in the perpetual ice — the frozen wasteland symbolizing the furthest one can get from God's presence. But while betrayal finds its origins in such religious texts, the concept has remained a potent storyline across human history, emerging in literature and history, in relationships and in politics. From scabs in the labour movement to military deserters, and from prison snitches to unfaithful spouses, there is no shortage of examples of betrayal. While betrayal is easily understood intuitively, there is no single description, and historical context shifts the focus.

In the *Inferno*, God has set aside the deepest circle of Hell for those who have committed "fraudulent acts" against others with whom they share "bonds of love and trust": Cain, who betrayed his brother; Trojan prince Antenor, who betrayed his country; the apostle Judas, who betrayed his master. In Robin Marie Kowalski's modern description, betrayal includes "any aversive event that involves violations of expectations, trust, and commitment" (174). She adds a "continuum" along which betrayals of varying severity can be plotted, with the caveat that betrayals can be accidental *or* intentional (174). A betrayal might be understood as justified, as with Brutus and Caesar; in other cases, what is expected of a person might feel excessive and overburdening to fulfill (Shklar 142). Furthermore, those accused of betrayal may feel their actions were neutral, or even the right thing to do (149). But regardless of whether a betrayer is forced to account for their actions, there is little question that such incidents have a profound impact on the betrayed:

> Betrayal… elicits more than strong feelings. Psychologists offer clinical evidence attesting to the devastating effects of betrayal. Betrayal acts as an assault on the integrity of individuals, affecting the capacity to trust, undermining confidence in judgment, and contracting the possibilities of the world by increasing distrust and scepticism. Betrayal changes not only our sense of the world, but our sensibility toward the world. (Jackson 72)

Betrayal's relation to sexual violence seems natural: the act of violating a person's boundaries is in itself a betrayal. However, early psychological descriptions of traumatic experience in the 1980s did not reference betrayal. Instead, trauma was attributed to the "intense fear and horror" and "flashpoints of danger in an otherwise safe world" (Smith and Freyd, "Institutional Betrayal" 576). Feminist interventions into the study of trauma disputed the "rarity" of traumatic events, noting how these experiences are some people's everyday

reality, as in cases of child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. For example, psychologist Laura Brown's 1991 feminist appraisal of trauma gave name to normalized and common experiences of harm as "insidious trauma" (130). This definition firmly placed traumatic experiences *inside* the range of human experience, against diagnostic stipulations that placed them *outside* (130). This created space for further feminist inquiries into the impact and emotional consequences of "chronic fear, stress, or mistreatment" and "find[ing] danger in a place where one … expected to find safety" (Smith and Freyd, "Institutional Betrayal" 577).

In the mid-1990s, American psychologist Jennifer J. Freyd began analyzing betrayal in relation to trauma, pointing out that while betrayal can be mundane, it can also be "a central threat to our well-being" or even "damag[e] the social fabric that creates the bonds for a healthy society" (Freyd and Birrell ix). She coined the term *betrayal trauma* in the mid-1990s to refer to situations in which "the people or institutions on which a person depends for survival significantly violate that person's trust or well-being" (Reyes et al. 147). Freyd's work focused on betrayal in relation to sexual abuse, advancing the feminist counter-discourse that sexual violence occurs in acquaintance and even close relationships, not just between strangers. However, her work pushed this conversation in new directions: her research indicated that betrayal trauma and violations of trust are associated with higher rates of psychological distress, including PTSD, dissociation, anxiety, and depression (Smith and Freyd, "Institutional Betrayal" 577).

Freyd's analysis, however, did not stop at an analysis of betrayal that attends acquaintance sexual violence. Instead, Freyd joined forces with fellow feminist psychologist

Carly Parnitzke Smith in the early 2000s, seeking to explore how betrayal manifests in other instances of sexual violence. The pair introduced the phenomenon of "institutional betrayal," which occurs when "trusted and powerful institutions … [act] in ways that visit harm upon those dependent on them for safety and wellbeing" ("Institutional Betrayal" 575). They focused on sexual violence within institutions like the military and the church, finding that there were devastating impacts on victims when these sites failed to prevent or responded "insufficiently" to harms that happened within the institutions themselves. Their work indicated that the additional impact from the betrayal is significant because it necessarily occurs apart from the sexual assault itself, either in events leading up to or following it ("Dangerous Safe Havens" 123).

Other research has examined trauma perpetrated in institutional settings, such as elder care facilities. Some of this work has considered how institutional factors can contribute to a person's existing traumatic stress, particularly in situations of systemic or ongoing trauma, such as "unchecked abuse in residential schools … systemic difficulties in service provision for veterans with chronic health issues, [and] insufficient legal protection and services following domestic violence" ("Institutional Betrayal" 577). But Smith and Freyd's work specifically notes the harm of the betrayal itself. Their work on institutional betrayal and sexual violence is particularly pertinent for my project: they found that individuals who experienced institutional betrayal in relation to a sexual assault experienced a variety of new symptoms, including elevated levels of anxiety, sexual dysfunction and dissociation, as compared to instances that did not involve a violation of trust ("Dangerous Safe Havens" 123).

While Smith and Freyd began their investigations in military settings, they later used this framework to look at campus sexual violence, finding that universities "often elicit similar relationships of trust and dependency from their members as is found in interpersonal relationships" (120). In "Institutional Betrayal," they share the story of Lizzy Seeberg, an American university student who died by suicide after reporting her assault to the university (575). Seeberg was 19 years old at the time, and was assaulted in a campus dormitory by a football player. She reported the incident to campus police, who stalled on referring the case to the county's police and on interviewing the accused (Lighty and Campbell). In the meantime, Seeberg began receiving intimidating text messages from other football players. Ten days after being assaulted, Lizzy overdosed on pills in her dorm room. When Lizzy's parents demanded answers, or even just acknowledgement from school officials, the university president refused to meet with them. He later admitted that he "intentionally kept himself free of any in-depth knowledge of the case" (Henneberger, "Why I Won't Be" n.p.). Over the following months, other parents reported being approached by school officials and trustees who slandered Lizzy, calling her a "troubled girl" who had "done this before" (Henneberger, "Reported Sexual Assault" n.p.). Months later, when an investigation finally proceeded, the football player was deemed "not responsible," while Lizzy's family was left to mourn.

Students like Lizzy go to university expecting to be safe, and in many cases, depend on the institutions for their survival. This includes individuals who live in campus residences, who work on campus, or whose status in the country is tied to their academic career. Betrayal, across these circumstances, occurs when victims feel that the university could have

done more to prevent their assault and when officials treat the experience as if it were "no big deal," respond poorly to disclosures, attempt to cover it up, or even punish them in some way (Smith and Freyd, "Dangerous Safe Havens" 122). Thus, both institutional *actions* and *inactions* can contribute to a person's experience of trauma and betrayal. The experience of betrayal is further exacerbated as the victim must continue to try and function in that environment, such as taking classes with one's perpetrator, or paying tuition to the university that silenced one's report (120); and because these same "institutions (e.g., workplaces, schools, religious organizations) have the potential … to become sources of justice, support, and healing" ("Institutional Betrayal" 576). Smith and Freyd's initial research into campus sexual violence found that nearly half of women who reported an unwanted sexual experience also reported experiencing institutional betrayal. Notably, betrayal was no more likely in any specific "type" of assault, with victims reporting betrayal in non-coercive, physically violent, and drug-facilitated incidents, which suggests that universities are failing to adequately respond to a variety of forms of sexual violence ("Dangerous Safe Havens" 121-22).

The power of institutional betrayal as a concept for analyzing campus sexual violence lies in how it recognizes how a person's experience of sexual violence and the aftermath as embedded in their environment. Indeed, in *Blind to Betrayal*, Freyd and Pamela Birrell specifically describe how analyzing betrayal forced them to "reevaluate the very idea of psychological trauma… com[ing] to understand … that an equally traumatizing aspect of the events is social betrayal" (56-57). The traumatic event in itself is only part of what impacts the person: trust, social relations, culture, and power are recognized as integral factors in a

person's experience. For Smith and Freyd and others in their field, this might indicate the concept's grounding in social psychology; but for me, it demonstrates its applicability outside of that field. Indeed, this chapter digs into how institutional betrayal manifested in the affective experiences of my participants, relying on their testimony to illuminate how rape culture operates on Canadian university campuses, and how Canadian universities are betraying their students. I explore the emotional, physical and affective reverberations of betrayal as described by my participants.

Importantly, my analysis is not psychological in nature. I am not here to psychoanalyze victims of sexual violence, nor to provide a medical diagnosis for their experiences. Instead, I draw on the work of Smith and Freyd to assist in building a conceptual framework for my affective and political analysis, and for their powerful quantitative evidence of patterns of harm in the lives of women and trans people. I mobilize their work to ground my own investigations, while being mindful of feminist critiques of psychological and medical discourses of trauma. As I have already emphasized, feminist researchers have illuminated the ways in which sexual trauma has been made invisible in psychological and medical discourses, because it "doesn't seem to measure up to that of collectively experienced historical events, such as war and genocide… because it is confined to the domestic or private sphere… [and] because it doesn't produce dead bodies or even, necessarily, damaged ones" (Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* 3). Others have emphasized how the medicalized "trauma model" has become a totalizing discourse that sets expectations and obligations of how a victim will behave. Kristin Bumiller argues that this has impacted multiple spheres, including: justice, wherein a specific definition of trauma is used to

"verify" an incident of sexual abuse (31); recovery, wherein women are "retrain[ed] ... to protect themselves from future violence," as well as to seek help from professionals who can guide them through (64); and survivor discourses, where narratives may "compet[e] with or [be] suppressed by professional assessment" (66).

Cultural theorists have similarly taken issue with the medical model, challenging its totalizing and pathologizing narratives in favour of analyses that are socially and politically situated. For example, Cvetkovich approaches trauma "as a social and cultural discourse that emerges in response to the demands of grappling with the psychic consequences of historical events" (*An Archive of Feelings* 18). This echoes Berlant, who argues that "crisis is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming"; the *what* that is overwhelming is the increasing and ongoing precarity of the neoliberal present (*Cruel Optimism* 10). These scholars expand the horizons of trauma and harm, acknowledging that political forces contribute to trauma, and that systemic forms of oppression, such as racism and heterosexism, serve as daily traumatic experiences in the lives of trans people and people of colour. Thus, while a person might also have an initial traumatic experience (such as sexual violence), this may intersect with other experiences of violence in their lives.

Phipps productively engages a critique of neoliberalism in her reflections on trauma and experience, arguing that neoliberal discourses of competition and market rationality have commodified even our experiences of personal pain. She contends that, in our present "narcissistic and therapeutic neoliberal moment," experience has become a form of "investment capital" that can be used to "generate feeling and create political gain" (304).

She describes how this is strategically used by the powerful and the privileged to secure their social positioning, and to "deflect critique by marginalized groups whose realities are invisibilised or dismissed, even as they are spoken for" (304). We might consider how this is typified in campus sexual assault, as when a university seeks to silence the voices of a "vengeful" survivor whose testimony might damage their reputation — even as they promote their own efforts to "solve" campus sexual violence.

Phipps focusses on how this phenomenon manifests in feminist politics, co-opting the feminist tradition of using first-person experiences to resist oppression. She offers the example of trans-exclusive radical feminists mobilizing their own experiences of rape to exclude trans women from women-only spaces, relying on the transphobic construction of trans women as "predatory, dangerous and essentially male" (311). These cisgender women mobilize fear and hatred as "defence[s] against injury … in this case, an imagined threat of injury from the trans woman is warded off by the mobilisation of another injury, the experience of being raped by a cisgender man" (311). In a culture where emotion and experience are capital, this *works* — even if it does not make any sense, feminist, logical or otherwise (i.e., given the extreme rates of violence against trans women and their overwhelming need for support services) (311). This neoliberal politic "abstract[s] experience from its social context and deploy[s] it in a competitive discursive arena in which historical dynamics, social contexts and structural power relations are obscured" (312). As such, Phipps seeks to remind us that even pain is political. This does not mean that we move away from sharing our experiences; but instead, that we "name and resist the

commodification of experience, with its associated polarisation and selective empathies" (314).

Fortunately, by (re)engaging with the social situatedness of trauma, we expand our understanding of its root causes — and thereby, solutions to the problem: "Once the causes of trauma become more diffuse, so too do the cures, opening up the need to change social structures more broadly rather than just fix individual people" (Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feelings* 32-33). As such, a solution to the trauma of sexual violence requires considerations of the social and political context in which women and trans people are at increased risk, and the culture in which perpetrators are let off the hook — as well as a deeper examination of whose testimonies we are upholding, and the politics that are enabling it. This contextualized approach to trauma and betrayal complements my intentions in a way that a medical or psychological approach alone could not. These diverse bodies of literature come together productively, supporting my argument that betrayal and trauma are culturally situated and embedded within the "textures of everyday experience" (Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feelings* 3). This approach is additionally useful, since I am not focused on the trauma (or betrayal) of the assault itself — though this too played an important role in the lives of my participants. Rather, this thesis is an affective and political analysis of what comes later. As Katie, one of my participants, put it: "*What happened afterward was far more defining than the rape*."

Decades of anti-violence advocacy and research have explored the multiple harms experienced by survivors of sexual violence *after* assault, such as re-victimization by law enforcement and judicial systems. In fact, these harms are so widespread and serious that terms like "second-rape" and "judicial rape" were coined to illustrate the victim-blaming that

happens in these settings (McGlynn; Madigan and Gamble; Lees). As Rebecca Campbell describes, “When victims reach out for help, they place a great deal of trust in the legal, medical, and mental health systems as they risk disbelief, blame, and refusals of help” (703). Countless experiences by women and other people have shown that survivors have good reason to expect betrayal from these systems: hashtags like #BeenRapedNeverReported are full of stories of individuals who chose not to report based on prior experience, and the stories of others who don’t see any value in taking that risk.

While the participants in my research did talk with me about the betrayal of being assaulted, our conversations focused on their universities’ responses to allegations of sexual violence, and the harm this caused them. In our conversation, Katie explained:

> **Katie:** The distinction that I think is important in this situation is… the dude that assaulted me? Fuck him. He’s nobody. He doesn’t matter. Who cares. He didn’t owe me anything. I felt the university had a responsibility to me that wasn’t fulfilled. And that process? It really fucked me up… in a different way. Because that was my employer. That was my sole site of a social life. I was really involved with my department student association, I was active on campus. And then, all of a sudden, that wasn’t my life anymore… And I realized the disposability of people.

Likewise, Robyn talked about a sense of being “owed” something by her university. The fact that she’d been assaulted within the context of her work — and in her view, assaulted by someone who had very likely done this before — was crucial to her sense of justice afterwards.

> **Robyn:** It’s one thing for your friends to believe you. But it was very important to me that this *institution* fucking acknowledges that this happened. And that they, in a way, enabled it. They enabled this person to have a role in student affairs. I felt like the whole reason I ended up with this person that night is because he asked me to meet to talk about things on a professional level. And I don’t know. I just felt like the university needed to acknowledge that this *happens.*

As I will discuss in more detail in this chapter, the resounding refrain across my interviews was "never again." Every one of my participants who'd experienced an assault and reported to their university looked back on their experience with deep skepticism about the value of that process — or any university process. Many expressed doubt when asked whether they would ever recommend a fellow student report to their university. More than this, their experience of betrayal was profound: for many, it overshadowed their entire experience of post-secondary education, and affected their lives for years afterward; physically, emotionally, and practically.

3.2 Affect and Betrayal

My language is so imprecise. I am thrashing in what I can't tell you.
— Claire Schwartz, "& the Truth is, I Have No Story"

I tried to push it out of my mind, but it was so heavy I didn't talk, I didn't eat, I didn't sleep, I didn't interact with anyone. After work, I would drive to a secluded place to scream.
— Anonymous, in Rebecca Solnit, "A Short History of Silence"

A tension in writing about the experiences of others is that I have never been "in their shoes." It is impossible to know what their embodied experience *feels* like for them. Instead, I am bringing my participant's own testimony into conversation with theory. Feminist literatures on affect, embodiment, and emotion offer powerful frameworks for understanding how politics and discourse *press* upon life. I engage with my participants' embodied experiences as "sensual authority," following Sherry Shapiro in valuing subjective knowledge. I acknowledge that I can't analyze with certainty which part of their embodied experience can be associated with a certain concept or idea — for example, trauma vs.

betrayal. But I believe it is crucial to engage in the struggle to “find language that questions, understands, and apprehends the unspoken knowledge of our bodies," even if we can only do so “imperfectly and provisionally” (Shapiro 23; Nixon 14).

Examining betrayal in the context of campus sexual violence requires attention to a number of affective forces, including the campus environment, rape culture, policy, institutional betrayal, and trauma. As I discussed earlier, contemporary discussions of trauma move it *away* from the idea of interruption of normal life, recognizing that it is part of the everyday and the mundane. However, this does not make it a normal or comfortable experience. Gail Adams-Hutcheson conceptualizes trauma as “a wave of feeling that threatens to spill-over into the everyday” (106). As a geographer studying trauma, she also brings trauma into a spatial matrix, suggesting that it “does not so much interrupt, but rather may be embedded into the skin” (Adams-Hutcheson 106). This embedded-ness offers an insight into the way it resonates and recurs in a person’s life: trauma, she says, is “sticky with affect” (109). It stays on bodies, sticking to one’s skin, playing across it (109). We might reflect on our affective situation as something that we carry with us; or, as Ahmed explains, “What we will receive as an impression will depend on the baggage that we bring with us” (*Promise of Happiness* 36). This suggests that an individual reaching out to their university to report will carry (on them) the trauma of their experience, influencing how they feel and respond to the affects of that new environment. It also suggests that those responding to the disclosure will also carry with them their own affective experiences and impressions, impacting how they receive and respond to the survivor’s disclosure.

Ahmed defines these merging and mixing impressions as an "affective economy," in which "affect operates rather like the creation of surplus value in Marxist theory, intensifying and accumulating as it moves and circulates between signs (objects and subjects)" (Tolia-Kelly 214). The adverb *between* is central for Ahmed, as she distinguishes her understanding of emotion from traditional models that see them as "private matter[s], that … simply belong to individuals, or that … come from within and *then* move outward toward others" ("Affective Economies" 117). They might seem to form a positive residence, but this is an effect of affective circulation: the more an emotion circulates between and around a sign or object, "the more they [will] appear to 'contain' affect" (120). She offers the example of "fear" sticking to a racialized body. A quote from Frantz Fanon forms the basis of her analysis, in which his body trembles due to the chill of the winter's day, while the little white boy trembles in fear of Fanon's black body:

> "[L]ook, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up." (qtd. in Ahmed, "Affective Economies" 126)

Ahmed explains how "fear" in this interaction is "felt as a coldness… envelop[ing] the bodies that feel it, as well as construct[ing] those bodies as enveloped" (126). Fear is not emanating off of the Black body, or building from inside the white one, "[r]ather, fear opens up past histories that stick to the present (in the very rehearsal of childhood fantasies about 'being eaten up' that 'take on' the value of social norms as 'truths' about the other) and allow the white body to be constructed as apart from the black body" (126). In this way, fear

circulates between their bodies — without even an interaction between them. It draws on histories, and it draws on discourses that form each person's understanding of the world. These emotions may be felt without recognition of the history that informs them. Moreover, they are dependent on "sticky" histories, particularly those that have come to be so natural as to be invisible (126). As I've discussed, the crux of affect is *capacity*: the capacity to affect and be affected. As Tolia-Kelly explains, circulating affects come to bear upon our capacities: "[a] body that is signified as a source of fear through its markedness cannot be free to affect and be affected similarly to one that is not" (215). In this way, affective economies reify power relations: the white child and his white mother have the power to influence what happens next, while Fanon becomes powerless, immobile, waiting, necessarily fearing what the white woman will choose to do (Ahmed 126).

Reading this literature, I began to wonder, what sticks to survivors of sexual violence? In what ways do they get "stuck" (i.e., have their capacity to affect and be affected limited or constrained in some way)? To begin, we must immediately recognize the impossibility of a singular survivor experience. Utilizing the theories of Ahmed and Tolia-Kelly demands this, as they specifically call for affective analyses that recognize "the context of power geometries that shape our social world … and… engag[e] with the political fact of different bodies having different affective capacities" (Tolia-Kelly 213). Affect — as with bodies, as with discourse, as with politics — must be understood within the larger social context, shaped by white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. In relation to sexual violence, we cannot overlook the "matrices of power" that already shape

survivor experiences differently, such as racism, heterosexism, anti-trans antagonism, and ableism.

However, if we accept the "the notion that various individual capacities are differently forged, restrained, trained and embodied" as foundational, what else might we find in an affective analysis of sexual violence and campus rape culture? (Tolia-Kelly 216). Consider, for example, the discourses of neoliberal rape culture: risk management, responsibilization, good victimhood. What are the affects and emotions at work here? Consider the gendered subjects shaped by these discourses: the promiscuous woman who regrets her night out; the vengeful woman seeking revenge against a powerful man; the foolish girl who didn't properly communicate her non-consent. These figures have an affective valence that "sticks" to the victim of sexual violence. It does not matter whether these affective constructions have any basis in reality, because as Tolia-Kelly explains, these affective economies "are defined and circulate through and within historical notions of the political, social and cultural capacities of various bodies as signified rather than those specifically encountered, felt, loved, loathed and sensed" (214). Additional affective impressions might emerge in less specific terms, such as an administrator's fleeting impression of a survivor as "uncertain" or "inconsistent" in their story; a cop's sense that a survivor is "too upset" or "not upset enough" to be believed. As with Fanon's story, the survivor's body itself might recall specific affective signs and figures: hair too long, skirt too short, breasts too large, gender too ambiguous. Thus, the victim seeking support and assistance has negative affective impressions stuck to their story and their body before they begin to speak.

This occurs in the midst of a dominant discursive context that denies, undermines, and erases the realities of this transmission, as with universities claiming that they take sexual violence "seriously." Thus, survivors are disbelieved, turned away, gaslit, and increasingly worn down, while at once having to carry the burden of these bad processes. Those who experience this type of violence and betrayal often carry this burden alone, at risk of being blamed or silenced if they speak out. And if they are not expected to carry it alone, survivors sometimes feel drawn to do so anyway. As Robyn explained, she didn't want to burden others with her experience:

> **Robyn:** I told my dad shortly after it happened because he knew something was up and he asked. But I never talked with my mom about it. I didn't feel like either of them could handle it. And I didn't want to spread that victimization further than it already had gone? I already felt like I was, in a way, burdening my friends by sharing it. And I was just like, "My parents can't handle this." There is a sense that you're trying to get things off your chest, but [you don't want] to dump it on people.

Here Robyn worries about her own disclosures being a burden. I am interested in how this impetus toward self-censorship is demanded by neoliberal discourse: the victim is not only held responsible for sexual violence, but also for managing its fallout. This coheres to neoliberalism's "self-care" rhetoric, which promotes individualized market-based strategies for managing one's well-being in the context of government abandonment (Brown 37; Spade 16). In the case of survivors, though, healing is also embroiled in the professionalization of trauma, which, as discussed earlier, medicalizes and pathologizes (and individualizes) trauma such that survivors require "expert" interpretation of their experiences (Bumiller; Cvetkovich *An Archive of Feelings*). This might explain Robyn's preference to not "spread that victimization" onto family and friends — sexual violence and trauma are not things that

communities can manage, or so says neoliberal logic. Unfortunately, feminist literature shows that "disclosures and subsequent social support are associated with improved mental health"; while not reaching out to formal or informal supports can have impacts on educational performance, lead to isolation, or leave students in dangerous environments (Sabina and Ho 201). Indeed, victims/survivors have frequently identified the "opportunity to tell their stories in their own way" as an important part of healing (Herman, "Justice" 574). That said, it must be acknowledged that negative responses to disclosures are also "associated with higher symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression, as well as self-blame for the victimization" (Sabina and Ho 201). In all cases, however, silence as a discourse of rape culture can be understood to "reinforc[e] dynamics that perpetuate the prevalence of sexual violence" (Delaet and Mills 497).

Through an affective lens, how does self-censorship and carrying grief alone impact the victim of sexual violence's "capacity to affect and be affected?" Randi Nixon contemplates how particular groups will be used as dumping grounds for negative affect (210-11). She draws upon Berlant's concept of "slow death," in which negative affects accumulate in the body, calcifying, "creating a state of dis-ease," and moving one's body toward death (211; Berlant, "Slow Death"). This accumulation reminds me of Shapiro's point that "No matter how distant, removed, and powerless human beings feel in relation to the complexity of contemporary social and economic life, they carry the mega- and microstructures of social life in the machinery of their flesh, in the pistons of their muscle, in the furnaces of their guts, and in the steely wires of their tendons" (viii). This was most apparent in my interviews in the potency of my participant's memories: they offered crystal-

clear memories of their interactions with police officers who dismissed them; investigators who told them their testimony was too emotion-laden for a rational due process proceeding; administrators who chided that their goals were out of line with what the university could offer. They remembered not only the words, but the gestures, the tone of voice, the intent. Shapiro talks about the body as that which "mediates and holds in memory the experiences of our lives" (30). Across the table from my participants, I could feel the force of these interactions, even though they had happened years prior. My participants' faces, bodies, tone of voice, and eyes shared with me the negative affects often loaded onto them by others. Chandra talked about the "smack in the face" of the police officer telling her the assault was an "unsatisfactory one-night stand"; Katie talked about the loneliness of the other activists she knew and organized with burning out and dropping out of her life.

But these aren't just affects that came and went; my participants also talked about those that persist. Robyn told me that even today, she's "just always a bit on edge, or in a state of hyper-vigilance." She explained that her experience has changed the way she is in the world, offering the example of being at a house party the year before when someone she didn't know touched her, and she "freaked out." The PTSD that had emerged as a result of her campus hearing had seeped into the "deep recesses of [her] brain." And this didn't just impact her social life; it also impacted her job. She had to disclose her experience of assault to her boss, because a work assignment had her attending meetings where the perpetrator's lawyer (who had cross-examined her at the hearing) would be present. She described the struggle of "trying to justify the seriousness of it, but while also not like, making them think

that I'm incapable of doing my job. I just feel like I'm always trying to deal with this balance of trying to protect myself without coming across as like, being a victim."

Here, Robyn's comments reflect how affective experiences can manifest in practical or material ways: burdens and roadblocks the individual must learn how to navigate, be it in their career, relationships or social life. Others just linger, shaping their memories, and their outlook. For example, Robyn talked about how her university's processes influenced how she looked back on her degree and university experience overall:

> **Robyn**: I felt very positively about the university when I was in my first three to four years there. I was proud to go to a university I thought was one of the top in Canada. And I generally had a good experience there. I mean, I thought my classes were fine, my profs were good for the most part, I met my best friends there. I had a really good time where I worked on campus. But now, looking back, I feel like a lot of that is just overshadowed by the experience I had with the university after I reported the assault. [Pause]. And I have to talk myself out of that sometimes. Sometimes, I'm like, "No, you still got a good education, you still had a good time in many ways." But I'm just very resentful.

Similarly, Kennedy described how her experience changed the way she looked back at her university experience. However, the emotion she emphasized wasn't just resentment, it was grief. As discussed in the introduction, Kennedy assisted a friend who had been assaulted with her report and subsequent appeals to the university to act. The misinformation and disrespect they received from administrators, as well as faculty in their department, changed how Kennedy saw her professors, her own judgement, and even the material she studied:

> **Kennedy:** I was grieving for quite a while because of my mentors. They all let me down. Except for one person who was very viciously punished… [Pause]. But you know he had tenure, so at least he didn't get fired.
> **Paige:** Wow.
> **Kennedy:** But he was… At least he chose. The other tenured professors? It was just hard. And it took me a long, long time to be… [Pause]. I just felt like, "How was my

> judgment so bad?" I believed these people. It was a bit of a going back and forth between being angry at them and being angry at myself for trusting them. For looking up to them. I think the main impact for me is that I'm very sour on higher education in general. I'm still interested in the things we talked about. But I can't read books that I used in my area anymore. I can only read things that are totally unrelated, and not even hard academic stuff. Stuff that's at most by journalists. It's just too painful.

Kennedy's comments are so powerful to me because they illustrate how betrayal is not just about the incident of sexual violence; it is about the social world — and a person's impression of and sense of place in that world. While some betrayals might be mundane, and easy to let go of, others can change a person's entire perspective. Robyn and Kennedy's stories of long-term negative impacts return me to Berlant, whose idea of "slow death" can help explain the negative affects that stick to a person, deteriorating their bodies and capacities ("Slow Death" 754). The affects of neoliberalism hang heavy on our flesh: self-blame, worthlessness, dread. Cvetkovich describes "pervading anxiety and numbness," a political depression that can be debilitating if not transformed in some way (*Depression* 1-2). Institutional betrayal then is another layer on top of that; or, if not another layer piling on top, then an intensification of those layers already weighing a person down.

In my interviews, my participants describe how their experiences of being "dragged through" cruel processes lingered *in their bodies*: for Kennedy, in grief so powerful she can't open the books she once loved; for Robyn, a painful cynicism about the goodness in the world; for Anna, a jadedness that prevents her from getting involved in anti-violence activism at her new university. In her words: "I mean I don't really know what's going on [here], and I'm sort of like, well maybe it's better not to know, maybe I don't want to know … It kind of feels like putting my head in the sand, but at the same time, it's just like, I can't go through

this with another university." This is not to say these negative affects were applied to passive subjects, nor that they settle into one's bones without resistance. I was particularly struck by the amount of affective labour my participants put into their attempts to get justice — and not only justice for themselves, but often, for others down the road. So many impossible negotiations, so many carefully thought through personal strategies. So much energy invested in fighting for what they knew they deserved. So much of one's self put into just surviving — that is, not following the impulse to literally give up and die.

Chandra talked, for example, about the email chains between herself and the staff member assigned to her case: the woman would email Chandra and the man who harmed her at the same time, asking for their witnesses, confirming details, and so on. Chandra emailed her repeatedly, pleading that her privacy be respected and their correspondences be kept separate — always without a response:

> **Chandra:** And the behaviour just continued. It would take me weeks to write these email responses to her because I'd be so traumatized. And I wanted to be more detailed than her. The energy that that required when I wasn't eating and stuff was just so immense… It just felt like, if only they could beat me down a little bit more, they would win.

Chandra talks here about winning and losing. Frequently, the neoliberal discourse around sexual violence turns to competition: the "rival" stories of he said/she said; accusations of lies to "gain" a social advantage; good young men who will "lose" out on opportunities if they're found responsible. In a neoliberal context, though, competition is about the market, and thereby about cost. In my interviews, this manifested as my participants attempting to find some way to quantify the harm they experienced, the practical and affective costs to their lives. Or, as in Anna's case, attempting to quantify the amount of time that she'd spent

doing labour to keep the university accountable. On the flip side, universities mobilize a cost-benefit analysis in their decisions about how to respond to sexual violence: the cost of implementing new policies and processes, the cost of a negative reputation. For my participants, the reduction of their right to justice after sexual violence to a dollar value was one of many factors that added up to institutional betrayal.

3.3 Indicators of Betrayal

To get at institutional betrayal, Smith and Freyd provided their research participants with a survey of seven "indicators" of institutional betrayal: the failure to prevent abuse; the normalization of, and apathy toward, abusive contexts; difficult reporting procedures; inadequate responses; cover ups and misinformation; and punishment of victims and whistleblowers ("Dangerous Safe Havens" 122). While I did not use Smith and Freyd's specific survey instrument to guide my interviews, the theme of betrayal emerged as a pattern in early interviews, and in subsequent interviews, I explicitly included questions that touched on their seven themes. Every one of these themes emerged in my interviews, even if each participant did not indicate all seven indicators. More often than not, the indicators collapsed into one another, revealing that betrayal does not always emerge from discrete categories; this makes sense, given that each participant had their own affective history, and attended a different university with its own policies and processes. However, taken together, their experiences support an understanding of institutional betrayal as informed by a collective history, and as circulating through affective economies. By this, I mean that the conditions for institutional betrayal are connected to the larger social and political context, what I have

described as neoliberal campus rape culture. This section will locate Smith and Freyd's seven indicators of betrayal in the testimony of my participants, drawing out how institutional betrayal is an individual and collective affective experience.

The authors' first three indicators of betrayal deal with the campus environment *prior* to any given incident of violence; namely, whether the institution took proactive steps to prevent abuse; created an environment in which this type of experience seemed common; or treated sexual violence as if it was no big deal. Smith and Freyd's 2013 survey of university students found this type of betrayal ("occurring in events leading up to sexual assault") was more common than betrayal related to insufficient responses, emphasizing the affective harm of believing that one's institution could have done something to prevent one's assault from occurring ("Dangerous Safe Havens" 123). I argue that these types of betrayal are intimately tied to campus rape culture, as described in chapter 2, wherein sexual violence is seen as inevitable or natural and perpetrators of violence are excused for their behaviour. The literature also suggests that a culture of apathy and acceptance is a common feature of Canadian higher education.

For example, Horsman and Cormack list eight different "scandals" that made news headlines in a five-year period, each involving "student misbehaviour," and the majority involving sexual harassment or violence (119). The stories detail rape chants shouted at school orientations, violent and sexist social media posts in school-related groups, and incidents of harassment and violence at others (119). Rather than one-off controversies, I argue that we should understand these as "a symptom of deeper problems" — particularly because each set off its own tidal wave of stories in the months and weeks afterward

(McGregor et al. 10). If increased media coverage is deemed unreliable, given critiques that mass media has a "stake in constructing sexual violence as a growing social problem" (Bumiller 8), one need only look to the litany of books (Krakauer; Lavigne and Schlabach) and documentaries (*The Hunting Ground)* about the crisis of campus sexual violence, as well as survivor-created content, which again includes books (Clark and Pino; Germain), documentaries (*Slut or Nut)*, and other media such as "poetry, journalism, tweets, open letters, and blog posts" (McGregor et al. 10). In our conversations, the participants of my research and I discussed their campus environments, and they offered lived experience and embodied knowledge of what it felt like to exist amid rape culture and apathetic administrators. For each, this manifested and was experienced differently.

For Chandra, the seeds of this betrayal were present from the very start. Enrolled in a program dominated by men, her program was competitive and unwelcoming from first-year orientation, which involved a presenter saying "the stereotypical thing" about her program:

> **Chandra:** The "Look to your left, look to your right, one of you is going to fail before the year is over, so I hope it's not like the person on your left" kind of thing. Yeah. That was day one.
> **Paige:** That program sounds very cutthroat.
> **Chandra:** It was. We had an over 50 percent female dropout rate by first semester.
> **Paige:** 50 percent?
> **Chandra:** Yep. I'm pretty sure it was due to all the harassment that happened in the first semester. They had all those sexist chants too, and stuff like that. [And at] the parties that I went to guys were always trying to take my pants off, so I just stopped going [Laughs].
> **Paige:** Wow, yeah, that makes it probably hard to build connections in your program and feel like you're a part of it.
> **Chandra**: And feel respected, and like you're worth your brain.

Chandra's reflections here conjure Phipps and Young's descriptions of economistic "lad cultures" (306). In particular, Chandra's description of an educational environment in which

the failure of students was not only accepted but expected, and in which men felt and behaved as though they were entitled to women's bodies, suggests a deep rooting of competitive individualism into the social and political culture (313-14). This impacted Chandra's life after the assault in that she felt obliged to accept her perpetrator's presence in her classes, even working with him in course group projects. The cutthroat classroom environment made requesting accommodations from faculty seem preposterous, and made fellow classmates into unlikely confidantes, especially since many were friends with the man who had harmed her. Here, she describes her conversations with a campus therapist, in which she disclosed how hard it was to have to work with him:

> **Chandra:** [S]he said that if I had any problems I should ask my professor to switch groups. And I didn't like the professor that was in charge of that class [Laughs]. So I was like, "I'm not going to tell him that." Because I knew if I [said], "Oh, I want to be traded out of his group," he'd be like, "Why? You don't have any reason," kind of thing. And I wasn't going to [say], "I was raped," because I felt like it was going to be one more person who said no, and I just wasn't willing to hear it at that point in time. And I also didn't want… We had mutual friends in the group, and so I didn't want any of them to know what had happened between us. So I pretended to be his friend, basically for the rest of my time on campus… And it was very, very hard.
> **Paige**: Wow, I can imagine. Did it have an impact on you to have to keep, yeah, remaining in contact?
> **Chandra:** Oh totally, seeing him in class all the time, whether or not I wanted to be aware of it. I… I would sit there, and just know "He's exactly two rows and 7 seats to the right," kind of thing. I'm not focusing on integrals when that's all going through my mind… [Laughs].
> **Paige:** Right, calculating the distance, and calculating how far…
> **Chandra**: Yeah. How far would I need to run? Are there chairs in the way?

Her comments illustrate how an adversarial and competitive culture on campus seeps into individual departments, and then into interpersonal relationships, both between students, and between students and staff. However, these comments illustrate how this culture impacts the psychic and physical well-being of students who've experienced violence — Chandra's

capacity to thrive in her coursework was diminished not just by the initial experience of violence, but by the faulty procedures on campus that left her in classes with the student who had harmed her for years after.

From a neoliberal perspective, a competitive culture could be a selling point for a university program, indicating high-calibre cohorts and greater opportunity for market-based success upon graduation. In this frame, the repercussions for the campus community are neither acknowledged nor mitigated. Indeed, as Anna pointed out in our conversation, universities rarely acknowledge the risk of violence on their campuses. Or when they do, they hide it out of the public eye, as when her university buried their acknowledgement of sexual violence in a strategic planning document. She connected this to the priorities of the neoliberal university, like "needing money from alumni." But she also noted that, as a student and as a survivor, it felt like a betrayal:

> **Anna:** I kind of just wish they would say, "We know that sexual assault happens here. We're just admitting that it happens here. We're not special. We're not different from any other part of society. And it happens because when we admit people into these universities, we're not doing criminal background checks." And even then, it probably wouldn't show anything, right? [Laughs].
> **Paige:** Yeah.
> **Anna:** So maybe, instead of seeing victims as a liability, being like, "We're really sorry that it happened here." I mean, people are still individually responsible for assaulting other people, unless it becomes a pattern of behaviour and people report and this person isn't disciplined. Then, yes, the university is responsible. But I just don't know why [they can't admit it happens]. And again, maybe it's because I'm not an administrator. But just to say, "Yep, it happens here." And "We're, we're acknowledging that." And then from there they can try to deal with it the best that they can.

In reality, universities are often aware of the issue of sexual violence. However, as Anna points out, administrators may choose to cover it up in order to appease a wider public. For

Anna though, this was another frustration, given the persistent, systemic risks women and trans folks face on an everyday basis:

> **Anna:** We're like, "Oh no, don't send your children to college or university." But it's happening at their junior high and high schools. Like, it's *already happening*. And I mean, I don't even have a good sense of how many first-year university students, undergrads, graduate students, have already had an experience of sexual assault before coming to whatever institution they're at now.

Crucially, for institutional betrayal, it doesn't matter if the public is convinced: betrayal is subjective, and thereby based on the survivor's impression of their campus. Thus, an administrator's efforts to brand a university campus as "safe" might lead a student to believe it; but the student might also find, based on their own experiences, that a campus is in fact the site of a great deal of violence. This in turn might influence their view of how seriously the university treats sexual violence: if they claim their campus is safe, but Anna hears through the whisper network of friends being assaulted, it would indicate that the university is not preventing sexual violence.

Anna's impression that violence is already happening was informed by her own experience of sexual violence in junior high school and her report to a teacher that "went nowhere." She describes realizing from a young age "that a lot of times people are just left on their own to navigate the situation and keep themselves safe as best as they can." As a result, Anna entered university with no illusion that her post-secondary school environment would be free of violence, and no trust that empathetic help would be available if she was assaulted and reported. Thus, when she was assaulted in her first semester by a fellow student, she chose not to report — in part because she had previously found "the process of reporting [to] be infinitely disappointing," but also because information on the university's processes was

not readily accessible. According to Kathryn J. Holland and Lilia M. Cortina, logistical issues, like lacking time and knowledge about reporting options; and doubt about the helpfulness or usefulness of a report are common reasons that students impacted by sexual violence will choose not to report (50).

Smith and Freyd call for universities to focus their attention and programming on "the events leading up to sexual assault," rather than just their responses to reported assaults ("Dangerous Safe Havens" 123). But as Miglena S. Todorvosa points out, many universities *are* implementing prevention programs (6). Unfortunately, these programs frequently rely on rape myths, "overwhelmingly fail[ing] to address structural forces causing violence, focusing instead on changing the attitudes and behaviours of individuals" (6-7). This includes programming like self-defence classes, which train women to expect violence, and responsibilize them to resist the pursuits of men, thereby normalizing violence as part of sexual relationships (6). Other "prevention" strategies include technological implements such as outdoor lighting and safe-walk programs, both of which rely on the myth that sexual violence is perpetrated by strangers in the dark. This is not to say it is an easy task to develop effective and ideologically sound prevention programming. However, it does become clear how and why a student could reflect on her university experiences and feel that sexual violence seemed common and acceptable, and why she may not see or reflect positively on the efforts of the university to prevent it. I discuss the implicit and explicit harm of these forms of "prevention" in Chapter 4.

Smith and Freyd's third indicator — treating sexual violence as if it was no big deal — was a predominant part of Kennedy's experience. However, our conversation was marked

by her anger and disbelief at the behaviour of administrators, which indicates that betrayal is not clear cut. As Kennedy's comments illustrate, the behaviour of her university's administrators could be described as both treating the issue like no big deal and responding inadequately:

> **Kennedy:** There's also the issue of the administrators — at my university, and the administrators in general. Because when I follow the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and [public statements from] other major Canadian universities, what they're really doing, or what you see is that they're annoyed. They're like, "Look at these stupid women who are trying to make us be judge, jury, and executioner of these dudes and their disciplinary issue." [Or they say], "This is just a personal problem that you're trying to drag the university into."

Kennedy's comments also serve to illustrate how universities — or at least, their staff — are mobilizing the discourses of neoliberal risk to limit their liability for sexual violence. In framing sexual violence as a "personal" issue, they invoke the victim-blaming narrative that downloads the responsibility for preventing and dealing with sexual assault onto individuals.

Other participants echoed Kennedy's anger and indignation, as well as her sense that faculty and administrators at her universities acted with deliberate malice. However, to my surprise, my interview with Alex resisted this frame. When I remarked that university processes are made "invisible" to outsiders, while those on the inside, such as staff, have a sense of how things will go, Alex disagreed. They explained that ideas about internal transparency are not actually accurate:

> **Alex:** I think there can sometimes be this perception on behalf of students that there is somebody who *knows*, and they're just being kept separate from that knowledge-holder. Or [they think] that things are being done intentionally or with foresight. But I think often, that's just not the case. A lot of things are very reactionary, and happening sort of… *Banally*. I don't think that's a word [Laughs].
> **Paige:** [Laughs], I like it.

> **Alex:** But... it's not with any intention. And then the impacts tend to be very negative, which I think comes off as being malicious. Or [as though] there's some ulterior motive. Or the institution is looking just to protect itself [...] But I think on an individual level, a unit-level, it's not happening in a really suave, organized way to have some outcome that benefits the institution. The institution itself just has a lot of power.

The idea that a banal bureaucracy is responsible for the harm Kennedy and others describe is disturbing, given that it negates hope that a simple solution exists for the problem of sexual violence. Unfortunately, this tracks with other scholarly interpretations of the harm universities cause. Vincente Berdayes and John W. Murphy point out, "[T]he damage [universities] inflict in the normal course of their operation is often overlooked … and [they] are not usually identified as contributing to the onset of social problems such as violence" (3). When the authors use the term violence, they are not necessarily referring to things like "muggings, robberies, or even shootings" (Choi 27). Instead, they are conceiving of a type of detached violence — though detachment does not lessen the severity. In general, this is the type of violence attributed to neoliberalism. Jung Min Choi, in the same anthology, connects neoliberalism to a widespread violence against citizens: "the violence of forcing people, especially children, to go perpetually hungry in a society of great abundance; the violence of having people sleep on the streets unprotected from the harsh elements when millions of homes are vacant across the country; and the violence of paying people such low wages that they are unable to secure basic human needs such as clean water, healthy food, dental and medical care, a decent home, affordable transportation, and quality education" (27). Thus, we might reflect on how higher education administration, boards and stakeholders act, not with malicious intent, but without recognition of the devastating impacts

"banal" decisions can have on the lives of students reaching out for support after a sexual assault. And indeed, this reflects Alex's larger point:

> **Alex:** I think the university is absolutely, 100 percent an inherently violent place. And [it] does lots of harm. But a lot of that harm is through its ignorance. And its lack of care? It's often things that happen really passively. So it's not this direct maliciousness to perpetuate itself, although that is the end impact of that, or the result of that inaction, that passivity.
> **Paige:** Right, yeah.
> **Alex:** So yeah, absolutely, I think it's doing lots of harm. Even in an institution that is well-resourced or an institution that is well-staffed and has existed for years, there are lots of situations that happen. And when you look at it now — or especially from the perspective of someone who was personally impacted by the situation — what you see is an institution protecting itself at all costs. [One that] doesn't really have any care for its students.
> **Paige:** Mm hmm.
> **Alex:** So I mean, if somebody feels [an individual or university was malicious], and that was their experience going through it, then I think that's real. And it's valid. But I do think that there is something helpful in containing that, and putting it in a context for people. To not… to try and help them not take that on themselves. Because that's a huge additional burden to carry, right? That this is somehow about my situation or me, or the threat I pose to the institution.

I read these comments from Alex as contributing to a counter-discourse around harm and responsibilization; they are making clear that individual survivors do not need to carry the burden of responsibility for the harmful actions of bureaucratic actors. This counter-narrative is part of the larger feminist anti-violence discourse, which seeks to place the responsibility for harm on structural forces enabling harm, such as white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism — as well as the individual actors who choose to perpetrate it (i.e., the people who perpetrate sexual violence).

Meanwhile, it is important to give credence to Kennedy's view that individual campus actors acted in bad faith during her attempts to get justice, precisely because this is the same narrative brought forward by other participants, and countless other survivors. It

also relates to Smith and Freyd's next two indicators which are concerned with institutions that make it difficult for survivors to report, and those that respond inadequately to disclosures. These measures of betrayal were the most common among my participants, who described both short- and long-term impacts on their lives as a result of the procedures of their universities and actions of staff.

Chandra's experience of remaining in classes with her perpetrator for years afterward was an indicator that her campus treated rape like no big deal, but it also spoke to the inaccessible pathways to report and inadequate (or arguably negligent) responses of staff. In particular, I was struck by the number of university employees Chandra spoke to in her attempts to get help. She disclosed first to a staff member in her campus residence, who referred her upward to his supervisor; to another residence staff member, who in turn referred Chandra to campus health and wellness; and to a nurse who told her that campus wouldn't have what she needed and recommended that she access a local non-profit for victims of crime. Thus, Chandra disclosed her experience of violence to three *student services* employees of the university without being provided correct information on the university's existing policies for reporting violence and/or receiving accommodations. I felt sick when Chandra described this chain of events, imagining the courage it took to report even once, as well as the exhaustion of being repeatedly re-routed — particularly since "poor treatment from legal, medical, and mental health systems [can] be so damaging to victims that some regard the treatment as a second victimization" (Sabina and Ho 301).

One conceptual hurdle to eradicating the betrayal caused by "inadequate responses" is the struggle to imagine what a good (or even just adequate) response would look like. I do

not mean that feminist solutions to the issue of sexual violence — such as transformed gender relations and community accountability models of justice — would not create meaningful change. Rather, I argue that the types of solutions emerging from the dominant discourse around campus sexual violence are wholly insufficient. For example, both Katie and Robyn explained how the outcomes of their processes were deemed "good," and could be construed as ideal according to outsiders. And yet, both described (explicitly or implicitly) experiencing this form of institutional betrayal:

> **Katie:** I have the same lawyer as another survivor I know, and I had a really interesting conversation with her, because she's like, "At face value, both of you got really good resolutions from the university." For me, he's not on campus anymore. For her, he got fired. So, "Great, that's what you wanted, right?" But then if you actually talk to us, we're so fucked. And it *hasn't* been great, and it *hasn't* been good. We've both lost friends. She's lost more professionally than I have at this juncture. But the consequences of even a "good response" are so high.

Despite getting a "good resolution," Katie describes "consequences" for herself. In general, sexual violence is known to have negative impacts on victims, which Tashel Bordere describes as cumulative and multi-layered forms of "loss"; the primary loss is the "loss of one's pre-assault life and worldview"; secondary losses include a loss of trust in people and the world, a loss of control over one's experience, loss of friends and community, and loss of one's perceived and real safety (30). For those whose experience of sexual violence was related to their university, there can be additional consequences. This includes the more commonly discussed consequences, such as being blamed and shamed by university staff or being forced to remain in the same classes or residences as the perpetrator (which can be traumatizing or put them at risk of further violence). But it also includes academic consequences, like being penalized for missing class or assignments; in Robyn's case, she

found herself running into the man who'd assaulted her while walking to class, and as a result, began taking long winding loops around campus to avoid him. The university's security staff told her to make a report if he tried to speak to her — but this felt like yet another circumstance in which Robyn had to remain personally vigilant, instead of the university imposing conditions on *his* movements and behaviours:

> **Robyn:** I was like, "Why the fuck is this on me?" That is *not* what is going to go through my head. What went through my head every time I'd run into him was to literally run away. I just ran and left campus for the day, which is very difficult too, because I was working full time on campus. And obviously I'm not telling people at work what's going on. I think people thought I was slowly unraveling. [Laughs]. So I'm trying to stay cool, and act normal, but things are *not* normal.

As Robyn indicates, the consequences of an assault impact the student's course work as well as the rest of their lives: their jobs, their relationships, and their future. Alexandra Brodsky points out that survivors frequently end up extending their programs, or even dropping out as a result of campus violence, which in turn impacts their financial security and future career prospects (Brodsky 146-7). When I interviewed Chandra, she was working a minimum wage job that could not adequately cover her mounting therapy fees; this was the only job she could get after her campus experiences led to her dropping out.

While Robyn didn't specifically use the term "betrayal" in our conversation, I found her story of mental health consequences relevant to Smith and Freyd's fourth indicator — inadequate responses. She talked with me about her university's "hearing" process, which took place after the offender was found "responsible" but appealed his sanctions. She emphasized the negative impact the trial-like process had on her mental health:

> **Robyn:** I've talked with my therapist a lot after this. And we think that that was the day that triggered my PTSD. Because it was… [Pause]. When the assault happened, I

> was drugged, so I can't remember every detail of it. I can remember what happened to me, but I don't remember every single thing. But the hearing was… [Pause]. I was so sober for it. I was so *there* for all of it. And it was just… It was the first time in my life, I guess, where I felt like, "It doesn't matter."

Like Robyn, Katie referenced being sober during her university process. Katie, though, referred to this as her gallows humour. Her joke was that, "At least when [she] was assaulted, [she] was drunk the entire time and dissociated."

For Robyn, her "trial" is still not over, even though years have passed. While he was initially barred from campus, her attacker eventually received his medical degree. Just a few months before we spoke, Robyn heard that he's completing his residency at a nearby hospital. Reflecting on this, she described how her perspective on campus processes has changed:

> **Robyn:** I always thought this is what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to report this when it happens to you. And that was the day where I was like, "I get why people wouldn't want to do this. I don't want to be here, I don't want to do this. If I'd known it was going to be like this, I wouldn't have done this." Now that I know what it is, if someone asked me honestly, "Should I report?" I would say no… I mean, yeah, he was still found to be responsible. But the penalty was a blip in his life. And I'm the one serving a life sentence — no matter whether I reported it or not. So it's like, what is the point? That's what it feels like: "What was the point of that?"

In this way, Robyn describes an additional consequence for survivors: regret that they'd bothered at all. To me, this is the most damning testimony a survivor can offer about a system or process designed to help them. And yet, it is a near-constant refrain from victims of campus sexual violence. It's also one of the reasons that Anna gave when we discussed her reasons for not reporting her experiences to her university:

> **Anna:** I don't even know. It might've just been that there weren't resources available. But it also might have been that I was really afraid that things were going to repeat themselves. And I feel very lucky. I mean, I look at the kinds of cases you see at some

> universities in Canada, and I feel... It's weird to feel *grateful* that I didn't end up going through these awful processes and disciplinary hearings and all this kind of stuff. I feel very fortunate that I didn't have to be dragged through that.

Here Anna describes her gratitude for not having to "go through that," with *that* referring to intensive investigatory and adjudication procedures. But like Robyn and Katie, and the others I interviewed, she did have to put up with an environment that made sexual violence possible.

Furthermore, all of my participants faced circumstances like those outlined in Smith and Freyd's final three indicators, which implicate universities that cover up instances of violence, misinform students, and/or punish students who make reports. Anna and I discussed how one response to this pervasive silencing and misinformation would be for sexual assault support services and resources to exist *separate* from the institution. A sexual assault centre or resource office could then engage in independent reporting on rates of violence, and offer unbiased information to students. Furthermore, this could protect survivors from having their own stories used against them. As Anna insisted, this is relevant, given the movement toward consolidated resource offices, which would both support survivors *and* investigate their reports:

> **Anna:** I think the most important thing for me is having places that have a little bit of autonomy.
> **Paige:** Mmm, can you say more?
> **Anna:** [For example], you can go to the sexual assault centre at my university, and say, "I don't know what to do, what are my options?" And you know the person there isn't going to be fishing for stuff to put in your file… [pause]. And because they have the familiarity, because they know what housing options are available and what academic accommodations exist, [they can help] people who don't want to report. I think that a lot of people, well, maybe not a lot, but I think there might be an assumption that in order to get accommodations you need to report.
> **Paige:** Right, yeah.

> **Anna:** And I know that at the university I was at, we've been very clear to have the language of a report versus a disclosure. But then, there still isn't really a lot of information about [what those processes] look like.
> **Paige:** Mm hmm.
> **Anna:** Because that's the thing that frustrates me to no end, even now. I've been bitching at the university for not getting its stuff together, but I go on the website, and it doesn't tell me what happens. There's no [page saying], "You report, and then this happens, and within x number of days, a case file will be started." And just walking people through the process. And I can imagine if I had just experienced a sexual assault and I really wanted to report it, I [would] need to know what's ahead of me. Because it's just too frightening otherwise.

Unfortunately, opaque processes are a common experience. Kennedy described how this worked in tandem with misinformation in her experience as a supporter and advocate. She describes how the only reason the university ever took action is because there were two of them, and later more, who advocated for accountability. This forced the university's hand, and also allowed Kennedy and her friend to share the load between them. In Kennedy's words, they "could kind of shift the burden around, like, 'Yeah, we're not alone against this.' Because this… This is a ridiculous time suck."

This narrative reads as incredibly powerful to me: here, Kennedy outlines multiple forms of resistance that interrupt neoliberal discourses of responsibility and risk. Instead of managing their (so-called) failures alone, these women banded together; instead of accepting the information and assurances of the "banal bureaucracy" at face value, they asked questions of staff and one another; and instead of accepting that "this is just how it goes," they called out the ways the university was wasting their time. Here, students reporting violence reclaimed power by engaging in resistant discourses and practices. However, as feminists have long noted, women's attempts to reclaim power taken away from them by masculinist systems often results in backlash.

In Kennedy's case, the backlash looked like attempts to intimidate them into silence, accusations of lying by staff; and various forms of social and even employment-based retaliation against those who spoke out. In Anna's case, it looked like emails between school officials about whether "there [was] anything online to discredit her." These incidents are shocking and could easily lead a student to decide that a campus is too broken to be fixed. But in other cases, backlash and negative affect can also be motivators, even as they are punishing. As Chandra explained:

> **Chandra:** I had pulled out of school and I told myself, basically, "If you're not going to kill yourself, Chandra, you're going to stay and you're going to fight this." And so that's when I jumped into it with both feet, because I wanted to live.

So for Chandra, the affective experience of institutional betrayal was so toxic that she was compelled toward death; however, she found a way to release these affects. Other participants described ways in which they transformed the "slow death" accumulating in their bodies: developing a consciousness that what happened to them was wrong; reclamations of power; building community when you're expected to manage your trauma alone. Even when this wasn't explicit, they described this in actions and choices that wrangled up the bad and transformed it anew. For Chandra, who described her suicidality as a tipping point, the release of these affects occurred in an ultimatum about resistance. The choice not to die was a choice to fight her university's betrayal, to fight for justice. In choosing to fight, she chose life.

Chandra's reflections on the weight of betrayal and the strength of her own convictions are indicative of the powerful role that affect plays in our lives. At its most basic, affect is a "way to understand the body and its immersion in the world" (Seigworth and

Gregg 2). But as this chapter seeks to show, affective analysis also helps make sense of how the world exists and acts upon us. Looking at how these students witnessed and *felt* betrayal provides access to a more concrete analysis of larger structural and political forces (Stern 388). Looking at betrayal and neoliberalism from this everyday, embodied vantage point reveals how its discourses are not just evocative language, but a central part of the sensory world. With an understanding of how student victims of sexual violence are affected by institutional responses, I turn now to look at this issue from the other side: how universities are engaging with sexual violence and constructing so-called solutions to the problem.

Chapter 4: Wrong Problem, Wrong Solutions

It was really hard when I realized that it wasn't so much that the ball was dropped, but [that it was] intentionally shoved through the cracks. I felt at every point that I was just gathering more and more of these balls and chains. And it felt like I was carrying all of them for the school. And every time I had something, they were dropping another one. And I was having to find and carry them all.

— Chandra (Participant)

In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick engages with "paranoia" — or more specifically, paranoid strategies for seeking, finding and organizing knowledge (128). She is not discussing the psychiatric state of paranoia; but rather, the methodology of "paranoid" thought in philosophy (126). Integral to a paranoid practice is suspicion; a paranoid reader is watching for the bad that is to come, believing that the revelation of the bad can and will lead to change. Paranoia, she says, "[A]cts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known" (138). Sedgwick is critical of this position because paranoia comes with no guarantees: there is no certainty that knowing will

change anything. Furthermore, there is a historicity to paranoid practices: they emerged in an era where "violence would be deprecated and hence hidden in the first place" — making the revelation of the "bad" crucial for change to happen (139). But today, forms of violence are already hyper-visible, naturalized, and common — which leads Sedgwick to wonder whether they are still relevant or useful for driving change (140). She offers the example of cuts to health care in the neoliberal present: the state, she says, is "positively rushing to divest itself of answerability for care to its charges," even though there are no replacements lined up for the services they are eager to cut (141). Furthermore, revealing this to citizens doesn't spur outrage leading to change; in fact, austerity is frequently seen as economically responsible. In other words, if we already know the violence is happening and, crucially, accept it as a normal feature of social life, having more evidence will not change minds, nor the conditions under which it is happening,

Regarding campus sexual violence, I found myself wondering at several points during writing this thesis whether the issue of campus sexual violence has reached its own complacent plateau: the rates have been known for decades; the same solutions tried again and again; and the population made sufficiently "aware" of the problem. Is there anything productive in repeatedly revealing these problems again for a new audience, when they may or may not care? This question is relevant for this very project. Looking back, I can see that I was compelled toward this subject from my own "paranoia," and a belief that a paranoid project could create change. I felt certain that *if only people knew* how terrible these processes were, they would feel compelled to support survivors and hold universities to

account. I hoped that by investigating the various failed solutions, the *real* solution might reveal itself.

Sedgwick's concern with paranoid practice is related to what it shuts down; in other words, the ways in which the ascendency of paranoid framing has led to the "disarticulation, disavowal, and misrecognition of other ways of knowing" (144). Her piece is a call to action for herself and other scholars to embrace "reparative" modes of practice. As she explains:

> ... [T]o read from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror, however apparently unthinkable, shall ever come to the reader *as new*; to a reparatively positioned reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise. Because there can be terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones. Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates. Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently than the way it actually did. (146)

A reparative position believes that pleasure is possible. It is rooted in desire, even if (or when) desire is painful. Where paranoia can be "cruel and contemptuous," reparation has a softer and more loving approach to its subject of analysis.

While I am intellectually and emotionally drawn toward reparative practice, I can't say my own project accomplishes it: I have not come to read higher education's responses to campus violence in a loving way. My research as a whole has not inclined me to give administrations the benefit of the doubt. As I will explore in this chapter, the resounding refrain from my participants was *never again:* never again would they subject themselves to a process like the one offered by their university; never again would they recommend another victim of violence to report. That said, I do take Sedgwick's caution against critical

scholarship to heart, and I want to honour and hold space for those folks advocating for change at their universities; for those people employed by universities who share these critiques and still labour to make them safer for students accessing them. Moreover, my analysis of neoliberal campus rape culture revealed that many of the problems are structural: banal bureaucracies, dominant discourses, affects and histories that stick. Robyn and Katie both gestured to this in talking about how kind staff couldn't make up for overall toxic environments and processes. In Katie's case, she described "really trusting" certain staff, and building relationships with them; but now, looking back at how she was betrayed, she wouldn't place any meaningful trust in any staff member. In short: "They're up against the institution, too." In Robyn's case, the individual staff she encountered were kind and professional, but the process was not redeemable:

> **Robyn:** I don't feel like the university was ever trying to be malicious to me. I was actually, at the time, very impressed with how professional the investigator at the university was. I thought the women's centre was the world's greatest resource… And the lawyer that the university hired was amazing as well. So I don't feel like the university like, set out to make this difficult on me or fuck anything up… But I do think that they are working within a system that is broken. Like, they are working within, you know, the confines of how they think sex assaults need to be investigated.

This chapter explores those confines, even as I acknowledge for myself and readers that revealing the horrors of institutional betrayal will not alone spark change. Moreover, if this project has taught me anything, it's that there is no one ideal response to systemic interpersonal harm on campus. However, there *have* been incredibly harmful responses, and these have emerged as a result of cultural understandings and discursive constructions of the problem of sexual violence and how it can be solved.

4.1 Policy and Discourse

To begin to see differently requires … that people come together and explore what the culture continually presents to them as their individual choices … as instead culturally situated and culturally shared.
— Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*

There are many ways to victimize people. One way is to convince them that they are victims.
— Karen Hwang, *The Humanist*

Over the last two decades, policy has emerged as a solution to campus sexual violence (Iverson 15). South of our borders in the United States, this shift took place much earlier, in response to federal legislation requiring action on campus sexual violence. One example is Title IX, introduced as part of the 1972 Education Amendments. This policy requires universities receiving federal funding to ensure that students are not "discriminated against" on the basis of sex, and that no such incidents impact their ability to learn (Brodsky 133-34). As Brodsky explains, "Where the police might respond to violence as a matter of public safety, schools are called upon to respond as a matter of sex equality: in the wake of violence, survivors must be able to learn" (134). Since the early days of Title IX, the US Department of Education has set out additional regulations and guidelines for compliance, particularly in response to public revelations of non-compliance. For example, the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter instructed colleges and universities to "take immediate and effective steps to end sexual violence, provide adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of complaints, afford complaints prompt and equitable resolution, disseminate a notice of nondiscrimination, adopt and publish grievance procedures, and designate a Title IX on-campus coordinator to process complaints and implement Title IX" (Lopes-Baker et al. 160).

The 2013 Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act requires schools to: detail how reporting options work, including the process to report, the types of disciplinary processes, the potential outcomes (sanctions), and even timelines; to report statistics related to rates of sexual violence including how many were "unfounded"; and to provide prevention and awareness programming that "provide the definition of 'consent' in relation to sexual activity, describe options for bystander intervention, offer information on risk reduction, and provide information on the institution's sexual assault complaint policies and procedures" (Lopes-Baker et al. 160). Notably, these changes were implemented by Obama's administration, while the current Trump administration has since changed the landscape again, rescinding the Dear Colleague letter and thereby repealing protections and accommodations for students who have been assaulted (Cyphert 1; Bolger and Brodsky n.p.).

In Canada, it was only relatively recently that campus sexual assault was constructed as a serious problem, "largely due to media investigations, feminist activism, independent reports and position papers and, the emergence of campus security audits" (Gray and Pin 89). However, higher education institutions are not under federal jurisdiction, and therefore, there are no national legislative requirements. Instead, such requirements can be set at the provincial level or by institutions themselves (Lopes-Baker et al. 156). The former has been uncommon in Canada, with only a few provinces passing bills devoted to reducing sexual violence, all of which emerged in the last five years (157). However, legislation alone is not necessarily sufficient measure to ensure that policies exist, or that they are properly implemented. As we have seen in the US context, hundreds of students have filed reports to the Department of Education in the last decade, reporting that schools have not adhered to

legislation, “overwhelmingly fail[ing] to protect them from gender violence and to respond appropriately when victims have filed reports” (Brodsky 136).

Chelsey Lee and Jennifer S. Wong’s review of sexual assault policies across public universities in Canada found that more than 90 percent of institutions have a relevant policy despite legislation only existing in a select few provinces (441). They also found that provincial legislation was not a key indicator of a region’s likelihood to have sexual assault-specific policies, nor for those policies to be comprehensive (441). In fact, Prairie post-secondary institutions had the highest proportion of policies, though Ontario and British Columbia have introduced legislation; and British Columbia ranked only third on comprehensiveness (441). Overall, Lee and Wong’s study did not reveal a positive policy environment across Canada: only 27 of 119 policies at higher education institutions in Canada were specific to sexual violence, and only one-third of policies defined consent in clear language or offered information on support services in their policies (437). And yet, policy is one of the most discussed “solutions” to campus sexual violence.

According to Kristen Jozkowski, a comprehensive policy can serve to demonstrate a university’s awareness of the issue, and commitment to respond to it (21). Quinlan et al. point out that a good policy can also offer clarity: clear definitions of consent and of sexual violence; clear steps to take after an experience of violence; and clear protocols for staff to follow (Quinlan et al. 49). Some survivors are excited about the possibilities inherent in policy changes. SAFER, a student-led organization working to reform to college sexual assault policies in the US, along with V-Day, an activist network, contends that, “Policy represents a powerful, sustainable tool for eliminating sexual violence and responding to the

needs of survivors… It can institutionalize social and procedural norms that support survivors, uphold due process, and counteract rape culture" (iv). Where students, faculty members, and staff will eventually leave campus, the "policy endures" (iv). Unfortunately, there are also a number of concerns related to the creation and implementation of policy, and concerns about how policy can contribute to a rape culture on campus.

Where traditional conceptions of policy view them as "authoritative decisions written in documents," critical and feminist scholars acknowledge policies as sites of power (Winton 159; Iverson 17). Sue Winton describes policy as "complex, inherently political, and infused with values" (Winton 159). Critical scholars frequently draw upon Foucauldian styles of analysis, contending that policies emerge as regimes of truth: "restructuring, redistribut[ing] and disrupt[ing] … power relations, so that different people can and cannot do different things" (Ball 1993, qtd. in Iverson 17). This view applies not only to how policies operate in the world, but also how they are created. Charmaz describes how texts rely on particular discourses within their specific social, cultural and political contexts (35). Discourse refers to "any coherent shared understanding, narrative, or storyline about a given reality, phenomenon, or issue" (Ford et al. 430). These "ways of thinking" are socially constructed and highly political, "giving some realities meaning while silencing others, influencing how people perceive and understand specific problems, defining appropriate solutions to address them, and structuring spaces of interaction" (431).

Iverson takes the connection between policy and discourse further, employing a *policy-as-discourse* approach to examine campus sexual violence policies. This methodology involves recognizing how policy documents can reaffirm dominant discourses; shape the

identities and subjectivities that are available for people to inhabit; and constrain what can be thought or said (17-18). As described in Chapter 2, the dominant discourses around sexual violence reinforce rape myths and integrate with neoliberal value systems, such as individual responsibility, hands-off governance, reduced social services, and the obfuscation of systemic power relations. Moreover, it described how these values are additionally embedded in university operations and the campus environment. Iverson's analysis of US campus sexual violence policies revealed how these discourses are repeated and reinvigorated directly within the documents designed to protect survivors and prevent violence. In particular, she found that the policies framed women as *at-risk*: "physically and emotionally vulnerable," and thereby in need of "university personnel, to mediate their experience, support them, and keep them safe" (24). Notably, the university's role as protector is prominent only *after* assault occurs, though policies do not acknowledge the irony of survivors being dependent on "protection" from the same institution failed to keep them safe in the first place (24-25). Ultimately, women are "reduced to a state of passivity," while the institution is framed as rational, reasonable, and expertly able to support survivors (24-25).

Iverson points out the idea of "an objective standard against [which] the victim's report can be held" is common among sexual assault processes, including the criminal legal system (25). The standard of the "reasonable person" serves to "offset the affective realities of sexual violence… bring[ing] reason and logical, cognitive analysis to a subjective experience" (26). She describes how policies that construct the survivor's experience as subjective and university interpretation as objective can serve to uphold neoliberal victim-blaming and perpetrator excusal: "if (when) the subjective (complainant's) experience is

misaligned with the objective (Reasonable) view, the 'unreasonable conduct' may be reconstructed as consensual sex, or the complainant may be reconstructed as unreasonable, risky, or irresponsible" (27).

Above all, Iverson argues that such policies can serve to maintain the status quo. In diverting attention "away from understanding the complexity of campus sexual assault" — such as by reinforcing traditional ideas of women as weak and vulnerable — these policies create an institutional environment where staff can respond to and investigate violence through the lens of rape culture (16). In turn, it becomes natural to dismiss survivor reports and to accept the violence of other students as part of normal heterosexuality. Ashley Hartmann similarly contends that administrators *must* have a "realistic understanding of how sexual assault occurs on university campuses" if they wish to support and empower students (291). Critics may argue that Iverson's research only examined the policies of 22 universities, leaving a significant possibility that other universities could be mobilizing contrasting discourses in their policy documents. However, as Susan Ehrlich pointed out in 1999, sexual violence policies ultimately "represent the university's interests as opposed to any particular individual's interest" (qtd. in Hartmann 251). As I have already discussed, contemporary universities prioritize their own market position above other factors; this appears to include the well-being of the students on their campuses. This is not to say that individual policy-writers and collegial governance bodies will consciously draft policies that disadvantage survivors. However, the neoliberal rape myth discourse is "so enmeshed in our cultural attitudes toward rape and sexual assault that the manner in which campus leadership and

administrators structure institutional policy may reflect a socio-culturally hostile attitude toward victims" (Wooten and Mitchell 4).

According to Tara N. Richards et al., universities responding to sexual violence tend to reflect one of three major models in their ideology, policy, structure, and working relationships: feminist gender-based, patriarchal gender-based, or gender-neutral (105). Feminist gender-based models "focus on survivor-empowered action and active participation by survivors" (105). They seek to return control and agency to survivors, whether in the disclosure process, in seeking services afterward, or in reporting (105-06). Richards et al. find that these patriarchal gender-based approaches treat survivors as "passive, dependent, and in need of male protection," often providing only a few limited options to those coming forward; these services "mimic the loss of control inherent in victimization and may lead to survivors receiving services that they do not want" (106). Gender-neutral models "[rely] on the assumption that men and women are the same and fail to consider differences in the experiences of victims on the basis of gender and sexual orientation" (106). "Neutrality" is often recognized as a technique of neoliberal political rationality, in which systemic power dynamics are invisibilized. With regard to sexual violence, gendered histories and inequities are obfuscated — and previous governance models that dealt will sexual violence differently are portrayed as illogical and bloated.

Policies which leave out power and gender dynamics are often the same ones that obscure the agent of the misconduct (Iverson 27). Iverson offers the example of one university policy that defines sexual assault as "an actual or attempted sexual contact with another person without that person's consent" (27). In this case, the person on whom the

reader is focused is the victim, situating *them* as the problem. As Iverson explains, "[c]onsequently, in subtle and insidious ways, the victim becomes the focus of the policy and is the (sexual) subject whose behaviours are evaluated. Did s/he consent or not? Did s/he resist or not? Was s/he incapacitated? Was the sexual contact 'unwelcome' or was 'pressure' for sex 'unreasonable'?" (27). In some ways, these consent-based policies might seem like a win for feminist survivor-advocates, as they delineate a need for consent to be part of sexual interactions. This is evident when compared with the former force-based standards that rested on an understanding of sexual assault as necessarily violent. However, by focusing attention on the subjective consent of the victim alone, they reify the neoliberal discourse of risk management and its responsibilization of women to prevent their own victimization, as well as its absolution of men.

Unfortunately, patriarchal and gender-neutral models are the most common employed by universities across North America. More unfortunate are the research results indicating that survivors who make reports through such policies are left feeling "more frustrated by their experiences and [are] ultimately less safe" (Richards et al. 106). Thus, feminist policies require feminist perspectives and frameworks to be employed from the start. They also require the individuals involved in policy creation to be apprised of the harms of dominant discourses about sexual violence — *and* for these individuals to resist such approaches, even if they are more generously received by the public. Brodsky puts this well:

> When asked to take gender violence seriously, a policymaker is asked to demonstrate indignation publicly and loudly, which often does not require consideration of what policy change would actually best serve victims' needs or prevent future violence. Indeed, when it comes to violence, thoughtful nuanced policy proposals may too

easily read on the public stage as a lack of grave concern. (162)

As such, creating policy is a tricky business. And beyond content, there are also concerns regarding implementation and practice. Shayoni Mitra, a scholar and survivor involved in activism as Columbia University describes how "rallying for policy change is always tinged with the recognition that any directive, however well intentioned, has slippages between its articulation and implementation" (391). She further points out that students/survivors must also face-off against "administrative opacity, ineffective bureaucracy, and a disconnect between the resources supposedly offered and those actually available" (390). The concerns around opacity are frequently echoed, with some critics pointing out the "culture of impunity" it offers to campus officials, and the mistrust and suspicion it breeds among students who may need their services in the future (Ridolfi-Starr 2159, 2161). Indeed, a major nation-wide climate survey on sexual assault in the US revealed that less than half of surveyed students believed that a fair investigation would occur after a report of sexual violence; even fewer believed that campus officials would take action against the perpetrator, and fewer still believed that the university would address factors which made the violence possible (Cantor et al. xxii).

For my participants — particularly those involved in activism around sexual violence on their campuses — policy was a source of frustration:

> **Katie:** The question that frustrates me is the, "What policy do we need?" We *have* a fucking policy. There was a policy when I reported. Guess what? Policy doesn't fix the problem.
> **Paige:** Right, yeah.
> **Katie:** I watched what happened at another university because they wouldn't put "rape culture" in the preamble. But does it really matter? Does it result in any

> tangible, material benefits for those of us who need to use these policies? I don't know.

Gray and Pin calls this the "disjuncture between official institutional discourses and what is actually happening 'on the ground'" (88). Richards et al. elaborate here, describing years of research showing that policies are "not always enforced as they are written" (112). This includes instances where a policy's outlined procedure is not followed, such as inadequately trained staff missing a step. It also includes situations where a policy is meant to inform other processes, as when the policy's definition of consent is not used in investigations or disciplinary hearings, or when a political policy that accounts for rape culture is implemented by someone who ascribes to rape myths (Hartmann 255). A policy may also fail to improve the campus culture if the university does not adequately resource its implementation; for example, a policy that outlines how students can report to any staff member requires that all staff be trained to expect and receive disclosures. An additional concern about policy arises in dissemination; namely, how these policies are communicated to students, staff and faculty, if at all. As I've discussed previously, many students do not report violence because they did not know that there was a process to do so (112). Thus, even though policies offering clear definitions of violence "have been found to help students identify sexual violence in their own and others' lives," they cannot create change if students are not exposed to them (Graham et al. 244).

One solution put forward to solve some of these concerns about policy is to integrate norms of behaviour into the policies themselves. In recent years, students affected by violence, advocates and even administrators have been championing and demanding

"survivor-centric" and "trauma-informed" service-philosophies. However, as I will discuss in the next section, it is unclear whether such practices entail what Katie described as "tangible, material benefits" — or if they are lip-service once again.

4.2 Trauma-Informed Practice and Social Justice Framings

Who, if I cried out, would hear me?
—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegy*

At their most basic, "trauma-informed" practices are those that acknowledge "the impact of interpersonal violence and victimization on an individual's life" (Elliott et al. 462). As Denise Elliott et al. describe, "The effects of trauma can be seen in both problems directly related to trauma and problems that initially appear to be unrelated"; for example, there is a correlation between experiences of partner abuse and seeking treatment for drug and alcohol abuse (463). The core premise behind services "informed" about trauma is to recognize how a history of trauma may influence a person's behaviour, and to recognize how the environment and behaviour of staff may "retrigger trauma reactions" or "inadvertently create an invalidating environment" (463). Most often, calls for its implementation emerge in relation to trauma-specific services, such as crisis intervention, substance abuse services, counselling centres, and other clinicians (Yoshimura et al.; Elliott et al.). However, in recent years, calls have resounded for "trauma-informed" sexual assault policies and practices on university campuses.

When I first started this project, I fully subscribed to the calls for trauma-informed practice in campus services. I was influenced by my own experience of university procedures, and the stories of others I knew, in which universities intentionally avoided

"informing" themselves and the individuals involved in justice processes about trauma and sexual violence. By my own metric, this created an environment in which rape myths would be accepted as truths: for example, the common myth that women often lie about rape could lead an investigator or administrator to misjudge a survivor's non-linear description of events. However, fragmented memories are *known* to be a common occurrence after sexual violence, given the way that brains store data during trauma events. On those campuses, administrators deemed any form of training on the impacts of sexual violence or the social environment (rape culture) to be "biased" or subjective knowledge. From my perspective, it seemed negligent (if not actively harmful) to leave the staff and students involved in adjudication untrained on the ways that invasive questions could trigger trauma-related responses. I felt angry that the first responders to a disclosure may have no expertise in sexual violence at all, making the disclosures of survivors sound unreliable or untrustworthy when viewed through the lens of rape culture's discourse of the credible victimhood. My anger was not based in personal experience alone: Eryn Nicole O'Neal points out that when police officers ascribe to ideas about *real rape* or *good victims*, they have been found to "decrease perpetrator blame while simultaneously increasing blame placed on victims," and even denying protection to victims they deem non-credible (130). This can have a devastating impact on the individual making a disclosure, as studies have found that negative reactions can having a "silencing function," leading some survivors to stop talking about their experiences at all (Ahrens 264). Courtney E. Ahrens has documented how such reactions can increase self-blame, make survivors question the validity of their experiences, and impact whether they will disclose future experiences of harm (263).

By this metric, the common use of the terms "trauma-informed" and "survivor-centric" across policies, scholarly articles, and op-eds should be heartening. However, over the course of this project, and through my interviews, I've come to realize that these refrains are not indicative of substantial action, nor of a feminist understanding of sexual violence. Rather, I argue that they often amount to empty rhetoric on university campuses; institutions are capitalizing on the intuitive appeal of processes that are "survivor-centred" in order to bolster public opinion, while failing to adequately resource campus services and practices in a way that would meet the needs (and demands) of students reporting violence. Moreover, my own and others' discursive analysis of how "trauma-informed" is used in the campus sexual assault discourse reveal a reliance on a neoliberal and neurobiological model of trauma that, instead of acknowledging the social and embodied harm of sexual violence and returning agency to victims, makes those impacted by sexual violence seem hysterical and incapable of making logical decisions about what should happen next. In this section, I explore how weak implementation and neoliberal discourse impacted my participants, contributing to their experiences of institutional betrayal.

According to Elliott et al., implementing a trauma-informed service philosophy frequently involves a "paradigm shift" by the organization seeking to implement it (462). Understanding the impacts of trauma, and ensuring an environment and behaviours that avoid re-traumatization can be a significant change to how organizations operate. The authors provide a comprehensive list of delivery practices, which they argue must be integrated across an organization: everyone from "the receptionist to the direct care workers to the board of directors must understand how violence impacts the lives of the people being

served, so that every interaction is consistent with the recovery process and reduces the possibility of retraumatization" (462). Their list of ten principles for trauma-informed practice includes: making "recovery from trauma a primary goal" (465); "employing an empowerment model… [which] facilitates the client's ability to take charge of her life, specifically, to have conscious choice and control over her actions" (465); and engaging in "relational collaboration," which involves training staff to "be aware of the inherent power imbalance in the helper-helped relationship and do their best to flatten the hierarchy" (466). As well, they contend that agencies must involve women (or those accessing services) in designing and evaluating the services, using "nothing about us without us" as a guiding principle (469). What stands out for me from their list is the significant investment required from the institution seeking to become "trauma-informed": all staff must be trained and must buy-in to its importance.

As discussed in chapter 3, my participants rarely experienced institutional responses committed to the more robust values of trauma-informed philosophy, like giving "clear information," being "consistent and predictable" or giving the complainant "as much control and choice over her experience as possible, including her right to set limits and modify the process" (467). It seems unlikely that a university would even be able to commit to a robust trauma-informed practice, since their primary focus is not (and never will be) healing trauma. Most often, their implementations are what I would deem "weak" or "thin" trauma-informed practice, where the attention to trauma and its social context is in name only. This manifests as universities claiming to offer survivor-centred processes, while investing no time or resources into its implementation. Gray et al. recorded this in practice at York University,

where the administration put out a policy, which, "[o]n paper … appeared progressive, explicitly defining consent and rape culture and also using the language of 'survivor-centric' to describe its approach to sexual assault. In practice, the policy had several gaps, including a failure to outline institutional procedure for disclosures or reports of sexual assault" (1). The authors describe this as a neoliberal tactic, through which educational institutions can build a reputation of being attentive to survivor needs and responsive to public discourse (3). They can seem feminist or justice-oriented, even when there is no obvious plan to shift the paradigm of their services or invest in extensive training for all staff. Katie describes how this impacted her experience:

> **Katie:** The term institutional betrayal is just… so fitting [Laughs]. Especially for those of us at universities that have this "social justice branding," and a lot of professors that are seemingly progressive, and where that is part of the identity of the school. There's this contradiction. For me, I'd see posters about consent, and all these resources everywhere, all over my campus. All of it created this false safety net that I anticipated existed because, how would I know it didn't? I never needed those services... Until I needed them! And they weren't actually there.
> **Paige**: Right, absolutely.
> **Katie**: And then it's the gaslighting of being like, "This happened." And them saying, "No, you're wrong, that's not what happened." Or, "You misunderstood." You really start to feel that you're crazy, or that you're asking too much when you're just saying, "Hey, I don't know if this person should be teaching right now." You're just made to feel like you're asking for the impossible… It's lost me a lot of trust in the university knowing what I know now.

On Anna's campus, the weak investment in survivor-centred practice was revealed when staff remained untrained on updated policies and services *years after* a new policy was introduced. An American senate report found that more than 20 percent of universities provided no sexual assault training at all to their faculty and staff (US Senate), suggesting that Anna's experience was not uncommon. However, it left Anna indignant and angry. While a student,

she had been involved in activism pushing for the university to develop a sexual violence policy, and many of her professors knew of this involvement. Close to the end of her degree, the university released a new "survivor-centric" policy and engaged in an extensive marketing campaign about its implementation. She left hoping (though not necessarily trusting) that this new trauma-informed policy would improve the odds of students receiving the support they needed. And yet, years later, Anna herself was contacted by one of her former professors to support a survivor who had disclosed:

> **Anna:** [She] was like, "Hey, a student of mine has been sexually assaulted, where are the resources?" And I was like, "Okay…" [Laughs].
> **Paige:** Whaaaat? [Laughs].
> **Anna:** I get that I've been very public, but I am literally not a resource person. How do you not know the resources? Part of me is like, what if I hadn't been there? What if I hadn't [said], "Sure, and if they need to talk to me, please pass on my information." I'm totally fine to talk to whoever. But I'm just… I'm not really on-call for professors who can't google what to do.
> **Paige:** Or like, professors whose departments should be telling them, whose deans should be telling them, you know…
> **Anna:** Yeah! It's literally their job. I'm sure there's somebody in the university they can call if they just don't know.

In addition to poorly training staff, weak trauma-informed practice is also evident when examining the wide range of duties universities are responsible for regarding campus sexual violence. Namely, universities are positioned to both support survivors and investigate/ adjudicate incidents of sexual misconduct. The former is an environment where a robust trauma-informed philosophy is, arguably, necessary and productive. But in adjudication, the current standards and methods practiced by universities require significant changes to align with a trauma-informed philosophy. For example, Elliott et al. call for staff members to "understan[d] that women may be uncomfortable answering questions because of ... fear that

the information could be used against them" (471). This lived reality for victims is well-documented. In Chelsea Spencer et al.'s research, more than a third of students chose not to report because they were afraid, ashamed, thought they would be blamed, or worried that some part of their narrative (such as being drunk) would be used against them (174-75). This was especially true for LGBTQ students (176). Sabino and Ho additionally report that newly independent students "may feel a sexual assault is a failure in their efforts to protect themselves," suggesting that neoliberal discourses of responsibility and self-sufficiency influence whether students make reports at all. In these scenarios, services that blame victims or uphold rape myths would have an additional negative impact (216; see also Karjane et al.; Krebs et al.).

The literature reveals that students' fears are well grounded. As Quinlan reports, universities have a documented habit of "inhuman responses to disclosures of sexual violence —ranging from behavioural contracts that silence reporting survivors to pressure on survivors by administrators to pursue restorative justice resolutions rather than formal investigations and adjudications" ("Institutional Betrayal" 64). This is not to say that it is impossible for higher-education institutions to implement trauma-informed principles into their responses, including investigations and adjudications. For example, a university process could incorporate an "empowerment model" when responding to a student's disclosure. As Elliott et al. explain, this approach gives the victim control over the steps that are taken and involves forming goals in collaboration (466-67). In a reporting process, this might involve the university outlining the student's options, exploring potential outcomes, and allowing them to make an informed choice about whether to proceed. This would not preclude the

university from taking the steps they deem necessary to maintain a safe environment, such as continuing to investigate (without the survivor's involvement); however, it could avoid forcing the reporting student to submit to a retraumatizing process, such as being cross-examined in front of the perpetrator (Robyn) or being asked for the perpetrator's class schedule by the investigator (Chandra).

Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, most of my participants talked dismissively about their university's use of "trauma-informed" and "survivor-centred" rhetoric, even going so far as to call it a co-optation of feminist language. Rather than actually intending to uphold feminist values, Katie felt that staff members at her university were "lying through their teeth":

> **Katie:** Especially with survivor-centric, because it's like, "Whatever the survivor wants" — which is code for, "You don't know what your options are, you don't know what your rights are, so we're going to do nothing because you're not telling us what you want." Or, what is available to you is so narrow, that you're making a quote-unquote *choice* about how to proceed, when really, it's not a choice at all.
> **Paige:** Right, yeah.
> **Katie:** More often than not, what I see is that people are dissuaded from proceeding, because, "It's going to be so hard for you," or, "You're not going to be able to handle it," or, "How will you manage?" I really don't understand what survivor-centric means, even when women's organizations utilize it. Because within the confines of the law, nothing can be survivor-centric. It's just not a reality.

In Katie's situation, clarity of process and intention were absent. The process was far from collaborative and far from recognizing that as someone impacted by sexual violence, Katie might have expert input on how a justice process might best serve herself and other victims. Instead, the narrative of care for the survivor was employed to dissuade her and other students from moving forward. In addition, the neoliberal discourse of agency was employed

to responsibilize her and others to secure justice for themselves, while erasing the university's responsibility for designing and seeking feedback on adequate processes.

Anna felt conflicted about the rhetoric around trauma on university campuses, noting how it was sometimes meaningless, and other times, actively harmful. Instead of being used in her and other students' interest, she saw how trauma-informed approaches were being used *against* survivors:

> **Anna:** There's been so much important work to say, "Hey, people who are traumatized might not remember or might have fragmented memories! Or might not tell their story in a linear fashion! Or they might be very emotional!" And then [other people's] affect might be very different. Just depending on if they're neurodivergent, or, if they're just, yeah.
> **Paige:** Right, absolutely.
> **Anna:** I worry a lot about how trauma, of how this idea of trauma-informed gets used as well. Because it feels like, then it still has become only one kind of trauma. And then it kind of throws everyone under the bus. Because nobody, nobody's a good enough victim. No one's the right kind of victim.

Anna's comments suggest that the university's conceptual framing for trauma and trauma-informed is distinct from that described in the literature. This resembles Ahmed and Jackie Stacey's critiques of "testimonial culture," in which one's testimony can inadvertently support particular neoliberal political agendas that capitalize on emotion and affect (4). For example, a survivor describing their journey to healing could conjure up a narrative of heroic neoliberal self-sufficiency instead of the counter-discourse of feminist resistance (4).

Returning to Anna's quote above, she describes (in the first half) a feminist understanding of trauma, which, if implemented, would make space for diverse victimhoods, reflecting the nuanced ways trauma can affect a person's life. In the latter half, she identifies how the rhetoric of "trauma-informed" practice is deployed in ways that constrain and

essentialize trauma. This dichotomy reflects my earlier discussion of the varying models for understanding trauma. In Chapter 3, I emphasized how feminist scholarly work on trauma recognizes the social and political context in which trauma occurs, as well as the dominant discourses that make violence and victim-blaming possible. Being "informed" about this kind of trauma would lead an organization to recognize the other life experiences that might influence a person's affect. It would also move away from treating victims as inherently and individually wounded, and thereby in need of expert assistance in order to "get better." The feminist approach does not ignore the potential impacts of trauma on a person's neurobiology, such as an impact on memory and how they might speak about the event; however, it avoids what Katie joked about as the "trauma-rama," wherein survivors are positioned as "so traumatized [they] can't do anything."

In contrast, the "one kind of trauma" Anna talks about correlates with the hyper-medicalized model of trauma critiqued by Bumiller and Cvetkovich. This paradigm relies on a "diagnostic classification of post-traumatic stress disorder," which Bumiller argues can invalidate survivors' experiences (92). Namely, when women fail to perform their experience of sexual violence in the paradigmatic way, "their reactions are often seen as either especially dysfunctional or evidence that they were not sexually violated" (92). Anna described her frustration with the ways that narrow definitions of trauma push us back towards ideas of "ideal victims" against which students making disclosures will be measured.

> **Anna:** This is why we need a more nuanced discussion of trauma! 'Cause nobody really knows what it is anymore. Or they think that there's one kind of trauma. And sometimes it's... I don't know, I don't even know if it's necessarily trauma. It's just wasting people's time. It's stalling people's degrees, because they get caught up in

having to rearrange their schedules so that they don't see their rapist.

Here Anna asks for nuance: an acknowledgement that some individuals will experience a great deal of trauma from an assault and reporting process, while others won't. Moreover, one person's affective expression of their experience might look different from another. If universities subscribe to singular understandings of trauma — and particularly those enshrined in neoliberal policy discourses of "at-risk" and damaged subjects requiring protection — they will make it impossible for survivors' diverse reactions to be legible (Iverson 25).

In employing a singular "trauma-rama" understanding of victimhood, I argue that universities are embedding the issue of sexual violence in what Rachel Hall calls a context of "increasingly hyperbolic victimization" (14). This is a discursive environment in which women are at a constant risk of sexual violence, must constantly be afraid of sexual violence, and if victimized, suffer a "fate worse than death" (14). This view of trauma isolates and separates the victim from her social circumstances and other members of the community. Moreover, the "spectacle of [her] suffering … eclipse[s] the cultural factors at work that make rape thinkable and doable by some men" (13). This environment is inherently neoliberal, as it erases systemic power dynamics. Thus, this paradigm constructs both the reasons for sexual violence and trauma ("risk" choices by the victim) and what a legitimate response can look like. When universities draw on ahistorical and overly scientific trauma models in their "trauma-informed" practice, they are increasing their odds of responding to disclosures in ways that dismiss, or blame and responsibilize victims. In addition, this aligns with specific (neoliberal) ideas of what recovery looks like. As Bumiller explains, this trauma

paradigm ascended alongside neoliberal political rationality through and within the increasing privatization and de-politicization of health and social services (72). In this setting, sexual violence services still "encourage women to become independent and return to jobs, relationships, and the community," as feminist services once did; however, they increasingly individualize the crime of sexual violence (72).

Instead of a collective social issue, sexual violence is reprivatized as an individual issue requiring individual efforts to get better (read: get back to neoliberal competition and consumption). This "trauma-rama" model rejects efforts by women to politicize their experiences of violence, and instead feeds them into a neoliberal framework for healing. As Katie Byron contends:

> For the neoliberal subject, constant self-improvement is linked to appreciating one's value in the free market. In narratives around sexual violence, trauma is a thing that one overcomes to better oneself. Self-help books describe "resurrection" after sexual violence and encourage the transformation "from victim to survivor" through journaling exercises and reflection ... It is through this process of resurrection that one leaves the shameful state of victim, regains agency, and becomes an acceptable survivor. (121-22)

Insofar as healing is transformed into a problem of individualized neoliberal subjects, the idea of collective harm is erased. By that, I mean that the trauma of sexual violence is narrowly located in the body and experience of the person who experienced the assault, rather than recognizing the collective harm cause by rape. This is particularly apparent in campus environments, where sexual violence policies treat conduct violations as individualized events, with "alleged" harms strictly contained within the relationship between a respondent and a complainant. This ignores the fact that many within a student's circle will be affected by the sexual violence that s/he experienced. A majority of survivors

will disclose their experiences to friends, family, partners, or roommates; and research has shown that these friends are often deeply affected, experiencing similar emotions as the survivor, such as "anger, fear, and a loss of a sense of security and safety" (Richards 1986). This illustrates how institutional betrayal may spread within the campus population.

In order to begin to respond to this dispersal of harm, a more holistic and feminist understanding of campus sexual violence is needed, one that recognizes how acts of violence — as well as cultural understandings of that violence — are social. But while some universities will do this in their policy documents, or perhaps practically in their educational programming, few will operationalize it in their direct responses to disclosures. A true trauma-informed practice would recognize that any given student could be a trauma-survivor, and thereby need and deserve consideration in responding to sexual violence. But on Katie's campus, "survivor-centred" and "trauma-informed" rhetoric rarely applied to the community. In particular, she pointed out how colleagues, friends and classmates of students who have been harmed may have to share offices or residences with perpetrators. When her own colleague expressed concerns about this, the university responded that they "weren't the victim in that case," and therefore had no grounds to make a complaint.

Ultimately, elements of robust and feminist trauma-informed practice are difficult to reconcile with the current policies and practices employed by universities, and their discursive environments. While trauma-informed practice is grounded in feminist values of recognizing sexist and misogynistic histories that ignored the impacts of violence on victims, weak approximations of these concepts contribute to the perpetuation of rape culture. This does not mean that universities should stop seeking to centre survivors or train their staff on

the impacts of trauma, or that activists should stop pushing for these types of change. However, these transformations and "paradigm shifts" must involve an acknowledgment of the historical and social dimensions of rape culture. Moreover, they need to actually centre the needs of students, going beyond those measures that serve the university brand alone.

4.3 Criminal Justice-Inspired Approaches

Every spring the best universities graduate a new crop of unpunished rapists. They remind us that this deadness is at the heart of things, not the margins, that failure of empathy and respect are central, not marginal.
— Rebecca Solnit, "A Short History of Silence"

Pretty girls, especially
Innocent of all life's dangers,
Shouldn't stop and chat with strangers.
If this simple advice beats them,
It's no surprise if a wolf eats them.
—Charles Perrault, *Little Red Riding Hood*

In Canada, there is "no uniform national strategy to deal with campus sexual assault" (Lopes-Baker 157). Some provinces have enacted legislation setting out certain requirements, such as Bill 132 in Ontario, which specifies that universities and colleges receiving government funding must have a stand-alone sexual assault policy, and that these policies must identify the processes an administration will follow (Lopes-Baker et al. 157). However, there is no federal oversight on responses, policies or content. As Collins and Dunn explain, "This gives university administrators broad leeway over how an investigation should be implemented and conducted, as well as the punishments that should be administered" (378). Moreover, the lack of government regulation leaves decisions about how to communicate such processes to the student body at the discretion of each university.

So whether or not an institution chooses to respond to sexual violence in a "survivor-centric" fashion, decisions about process and dissemination are made by institutional leaders and bureaucrats, under the gaze of key stakeholders which may include "students, alumni, faculty, donors, parents, staff, elected officials, and community members," all of whom may have a different perspective on what constitutes an effective or appropriate response (Clay et al. 683). As a result, a university's chosen response is subject to the scrutiny of diverse individuals.

However, these diverse perspectives do not necessarily entail a broader structure of accountability. As introduced in Chapter 2, the contemporary neoliberal university is generally understood to be "colonized by the market" (Kurusawa 324). Thus, those with overall control will weigh the views and preferences of stakeholders against the market. As Gray and Pin point out, universities and colleges are thus seeking to project a public image of being "responsive and proactive in addressing sexual violence" (100). A common refrain around decisive responses to sexual violence is to *take it seriously.* Unfortunately, the rhetoric of seriousness carries its own connotations. As Brodsky argues,

> [W]hen asked to take gender violence seriously, a policymaker is asked to demonstrate indignation publicly and loudly, which often does not require consideration of what policy change would actually best serve victims' needs or prevent future violence. Indeed, when it comes to violence, thoughtful nuanced policy proposals may too easily read on the public stage as a lack of grave concern. What better way to demonstrate personal outrage than calling for harsher punishments? After all, the criminal law is the method by which the state expresses its official, sanctioned outrage, sidelining the victim as no more than a special witness. (162-63)

Here, Brodsky recalls the early history of the anti-violence movement in North America, in which feminists sought state recognition of the harm of sexual violence. This strategy

implored government, social services, and the legal system to take rape seriously, "rather than treat it as simply a minor domestic spat" or a women's issue (161). Feminist organizing in the latter half of the twentieth century led to societal recognition of the issue of sexual violence, the formation of grassroots anti-violence collectives and support services, public demonstrations, and broader legal recognition of and repercussions for sexual violence. However, this work also took place in the era of ascending neoliberalism and increasing government austerity, which slashed funding to social supports on both national and provincial levels (Beres et al. 141). Canadian feminist organizers additionally had to resist the federal government's "steady rhetorical attack on the women's movement, delegitimizing feminist voices and dismantling programs designed to enhance women's equality" (141). As the political landscape shifted around them, feminist organizers and organizations were compelled to limit any radical social activism in favour of promoting the state's preferred models: degendered victims' services and "tough on crime" legal mandates (Beres et al. 145). Invitations to the "table" transformed from opportunities to direct government policy in a feminist direction to joining police, prosecutors and legislators at a table where sexual violence was increasingly framed as a crime and not a social problem, and justice as a criminal conviction rather than a transformation of women's lived conditions.

As a result, the later decades of the twentieth century saw feminist anti-violence rhetoric inadvertently (though sometimes intentionally) aligning with the broader neoliberal push toward crime control. Sarah Jane Brubaker notes in particular how neoliberal "tough on crime" mandates have redirected government funding and resources from victim services and toward crime control projects, such as police and courts (312). Moreover, grassroots feminist

collectives that once emphasized direct-action, and "saw the provision of support to survivors as a means of creating empowerment and political resistance," were pushed to "professionalize" into apolitical, non-profit organizations (Beres et al. 138). Melanie A. Beres et al. emphasize that the women working in these spaces resisted these changes in large and small ways, such as maintaining their feminist ethos and participating in activist projects despite funding crunches and pressure to stop. However, it's important to recognize that these women and centres exist within a larger social environment constrained by the "neutrality" of neoliberal reason and governance, and which serves to "undermine many of the basic goals and ideals of feminism, including the autonomy and agency of the victim to make decisions regarding her case based on her own subjective experience" (Brubaker 311-12).

Today, feminist theorists and communities continue to struggle with questions about justice after violence, given that it "has come to be so closely associated with punitive, carceral punishment that other means of securing justice have been almost completely obscured" (McGlynn 826). Many people can only believe that violence happened, or was real, if state justice has been served. We might say that the criminal legal approach has "stuck" to sexual violence. Thus, if the formal system deems a perpetrator innocent, or a rape unfounded, then many people will believe that the victim was lying. Others believe that a victim can only find healing and closure when the perpetrator is jailed, rather than rehabilitated or reintegrated into the community. And yet, the criminal legal system is notoriously ineffective in processing sexual assault charges. Melanie Randall describes how countless survivors have their cases unfounded when reporting to police, while others make it past the police investigation but are overturned through "prosecutorial discretion," in which

crowns do not believe the case can be proved beyond a reasonable doubt (468). In addition, the criminal legal system is "tilted towards protecting the rights of the accused and victim-witnesses have few formal rights, as evidenced by discriminatory evidentiary requirements" (468). Criminal trials are often "retraumatizing" as defence lawyers — and sometimes judges — are trained to discredit and humiliate survivors taking the stand (469).

Randall notes that some survivors experience positive responses from the criminal legal system, but these are "the exception not the rule" (469). Ultimately, meeting the needs of victims of crime is not the purpose of the criminal "justice" system. Its purpose is to punish. Crimes are not offences against a person, but "wrongs perpetrated by citizens against the state" (Randall 473). Moreover, many perpetrators are protected by power and privilege, and by the "biases and myths about women, men and rape … formally and informally entrenched into the administration of the law" (H. Johnson, "Limits" 624). Because of these issues, and because conviction rates are so low, justice remains elusive for many survivors, and victim blaming remains a constant (McGlynn 826). The ineffectiveness of the justice system both to recognize rape as a serious issue, and ultimately serve justice, has been a central concern for the mainstream anti-violence movement. Thus, feminists have worked for legal reform to broaden the legal and social understanding of what exactly is sexually violent and violating, and to protect survivors from traumatizing legal trials. For example, feminists influenced the change to consent laws, and the legislation preventing defence lawyers from prying into a victim's prior sexual history (Gotell, "A Critique" 59). But as Clare McGlynn points out, the criminal legal system offers "little evidence of any reduction in the prevalence

of sexual violence, few convictions of perpetrators and a system which affords victims little justice" (836).

Dianne Martin, a feminist law professor and former lawyer, suggests that feminist proposals for reform have been co-opted by "governments desperate to be seen to be controlling crime and addressing insecurity" (qtd. in McGlynn 837). Thus, in an era of neoliberal punitive attitudes, feminist organizing has resulted in unintended consequences, including the "privatization" and individualization of sexual violence, and an emboldening of state power and control over marginalized and vulnerable communities (Collins and Dunn 386; McGlynn 837). Women of colour in particular point to the disproportionate harm this has caused to communities of colour, queer communities, poor folks, and other marginalized groups who are targeted and discriminated against by police, the so-called criminal "justice" system, and the government (Critical Resistance, and Incite!). Moreover, victims themselves describe the system to be "ineffective at deterrence or providing safety at best, and harmful to women at worst" (Brubaker 311).

Given these critiques, one might assume that the popularity of so-called "serious" responses to sexual violence would be on the decline, and that they would be sidelined in university politics. And yet, the rhetoric of "serious" strategies continues to ascend in the fight against sexual violence both on and off campus (Brodsky 132). Gray and Pin contend that such responses appeal to university administrators "because they are highly visible and provide a tangible way for universities to create a perception that they are taking action to prevent and respond to sexual assault" (90). As for the public: punitive justice remains popular because myths of rape and rapists as "abnormal, sick, and/or mentally disturbed"

remain popular (Collins and Dunn 383). Our social context framed by "expressive justice and [the] public branding of sex criminals … has hardened the view of perpetrators as deserving of severe punishment and as being incapable of rehabilitation" or community care and intervention (Bumiller 64). But what do survivors want? As McGlynn explains:

> [P]unishment, as traditionally conceived and practised by the criminal justice system, was not a key priority for victims. The goal most commonly sought was exposure of the offender as an offender. It was more important to "deprive the perpetrator of undeserved honour and status than to deprive them of either liberty or fortune." Furthermore, victims sought validation from the community, by "denunciation of the crime," which "transferred the burden of disgrace" to the offender. ("Feminism, Rape and the Search for Justice" 838)

Thus, in a context guided by neoliberal reason, survivors' legitimate demands for voice, vindication and offender accountability are "sidelined as policymakers debate how best to avenge them" (Brodsky 133). But what about campus survivors? Interviews with individuals impacted by sexual violence on campus reveal similar goals to those reported by Herman. These include practical support to manage the aftermath of trauma, such as accommodations around coursework; emotional validation from staff they disclose to; access to *informed* resources (i.e., staff who are adequately trained in a school's policies and procedures); and public or visible support for survivors of violence (Linder and Myers 6-9). As a result, it is questionable whether "serious" approaches to campus sexual violence will meet their justice needs. Indeed, answering this question requires an examination of what such "serious" responses entail. Given that universities do not operate courts, nor do they have the power to charge and convict students of crimes, "serious" responses look different than those employed by the state. In this section, I will explore three common practices: entanglement

with the state criminal legal system, increasingly "judicial" or "adversarial" procedures, and "security-centred" approaches to violence prevention.

Security-centred approaches are primarily focused on rape prevention, and are intimately tied to the neoliberal logic of risk-management (Gray and Pin 90). As I have argued, this logic responsibilizes individuals for their own well-being; around sexual violence, it enfolds the risk of violence into women's physical bodies, which they must take steps to protect; rather than offenders being held to account for their actions (S. Walsh 125). In Gray and Pin's tally of "security-centred" measures on one Canadian campus, they encountered technologies like "lighting, smartphone safety apps and safe walk programs" (104). These were accompanied by an implicit and explicit discourse of individual "hyper-vigilance," such as a campus media release that read:

> We encourage *you* to utilize our services to address *your safety needs* including goSAFE to *assist you* with safe travel in the evening, safety audits, and personal safety planning to support physical and *personal safety needs*. ("Safer Together"; emphasis added)

On that campus, the individual community member is made responsible for their own safety needs; the university simply acts as a support, providing resources that person can use. Interestingly, a university might consider this to be a "survivor-centred" practice, in that it leaves the "choice" with the student (read: potential victim). Seen through a critical lens, however, these so-called supports do little to ensure a person's safety; they mainly consist of tools to reflect upon and modify one's own behaviour to avoid harm. For example, using a safe walk service requires that a woman leave at a predetermined time and follow a predetermined route so that a volunteer can accompany her along the way. Moreover, these

supports construct public space as "unsafe" for women, perpetuating ideas of women's "place" being in the home where they are supposedly safe from male violence (Collins and Dunn 374). That securitization focuses on prevention — and specifically, prevention of sexual violence in public spaces — reinforces the myth of so-called "real rape," that sexual violence is perpetrated by strangers. Feminists have spent decades proving that the majority of victims know their offenders as friends or acquaintances, and that assaults rarely happen in shadowy back allies (H. Johnson, "Limits" 625). Studies of student-on-student sexual assaults reveal that they overwhelmingly occur "behind closed doors, in the privacy of an apartment or bedroom … present[ing] evidentiary challenges for university officials and law enforcement investigating allegations and creat[ing] opportunities for victim blaming or rationalizing the perpetrator's behaviour" (Hartmann 290).

Studies have also pointed out how rape myths lead to decreased rates of reporting because survivors don't believe their experiences are serious enough, and thereby, fewer perpetrators are held accountable for the harm they've caused (Spencer et al.; Clay et al.). Thus, securitization of campuses neither helps prevent actual cases of sexual violence, nor improves the community's understanding of sexual violence. Gray and Pin point out that this contradiction is in line with neoliberal logic: what matters is how the university is perceived to be dealing with sexual violence. Perceptions and rhetoric matter more than how well the institution is actually doing to support survivors (100). Indeed, Gray and Pin's research at York University found "no indication that there has been a reduction in the number of sexual assaults on campus" since that university implemented security-centred technologies (100). However, this policy framework has worked strategically for the university, downloading

responsibility for safety onto individuals, and "drawing attention away from the lack of procedural infrastructure and support services" available for survivors (88).

Adversarial practices refer to those processes on campus that mimic criminal law proceedings. Primarily, these quasi-judicial practices centre on the use of "tribunals" to adjudicate incidents of sexual violence. These typically involve the complainant, the respondent, and a combination of faculty and students who "hear" the case. In practice, they "rely on discrediting the complainant through aggressive cross-examination tactics"; they most often take place with or without legal representation for complainants; and they frequently "require the victim to share space with their assailant" (Gray and Pin 101). As Brodsky contends, most students report violence to their schools "not to pursue sanctions against an assailant but rather to gain access to … services," such as "mental health care, academic support, extended deadlines, flexibility dropping or changing classes, dorm changes, and informal measures to keep accused students and reporting students apart" (135-36). However, Gray and Pin point out that "many students are forced into the tribunal adjudication process, as it is the primary mechanism through which they can appeal for safety measures to separate themselves from their assailant on campus" (101).

For Chandra, a police process was the result of reaching out to her university; despite disclosing to a staff member in her residence, and then to a nurse in the campus health centre, she was routed to an external victim services organization connected to the police and legal system. While her only goal was to "[feel] safe on campus," she instead had her experience invalidated by a police officer who compared her assault (by a friend) to "being force fed your favourite chocolate bar." With her case declared unfounded (no-crimed), and no

knowledge of additional options, she returned to regular student life, sharing a classroom and even group projects with the man who had assaulted her. When, years later, she finally learned about her university's policy, she was again met with disappointment: the tribunal process would have involved not only being in the same room with her perpetrator, but also sharing her story with a massive audience:

> **Chandra:** They called it quorum and there was a minimum of 3, but normally 18 students. And I was like, "I'm not talking in front of 18 random students." I said, "I'm going to have to see them on campus."
> **Paige:** Oh my god, 18 students?
> **Chandra:** Yep, 18 students [and] a panel of staff, and they had to decide if it was real. 50 percent… no, 51 percent real or not, and then um, then that was it… So I said "Hell no!" to that. I was like, "I'm doing this in front of students, I'm going to tell them that story, and [then] I'm going to see them on campus afterwards! They're going to know shit about me that they have no right to know."
> **Paige:** Yeah, wow.
> **Chandra:** So I said, "I don't feel comfortable with that, I'm going to be further alienated and I'm not comfortable." And so they said, for me, they'd do me a favour and make it minimum quorum— which was 3 students. So they scheduled the trial, but then the day before I got an email saying quorum wasn't met and the trial was cancelled again.

By this point, Chandra had spent years feeling unsafe on campus: her hopes of being protected, or at least supported by her university were dashed again.

Reflecting on a decade working in sexual violence support and advocacy on university campuses, Alex told me that the "most harm [they've] seen done by institutions is when they start to more closely resemble systems of retributive justice… or when they get the sense that they should be more objective and authoritarian, and more like, more formalized." They explained that this form of justice was not what students wanted or envisioned when they first reached out for support; they were also concerning from the perspective of staff:

> **Alex:** We also don't *want* the institution to have a lot of power either. That's a scary thought. When folks really want institutions to be able to expel folks without due process. And all of these sorts of things we often go to or hear in the media. I think that's an unnecessary amount of power, with no checks and balances, that we don't *want* an institution to have.
> **Paige:** Yeah, right.
> **Alex:** To me, that's a scarier thought. That we [would] have folks on campuses doing investigations that are more… the burden of proof is higher, the questions they need to ask are more invasive, and the decisions that they make are more harmful to the people involved. [Instead], I think it needs to be a controlled environment in lots of ways, because of the messiness of how it's all set up. And the potential for harm to happen because of those hierarchies and the bureaucracy of it all.

In general, administrative tribunal processes and decisions undergo judicial review in order to ensure they do not violate the principles of natural justice and reasonableness. However, norms of justice and what is "reasonable" are ultimately guided by cultural values. Like Alex, other participants voiced concerns about processes that increasingly mimic criminal trials. Many of them had experienced intensely judicial processes themselves, while others saw how a university's turn toward "serious" responses resulted in the students filing reports being punished. In our hour-long conversation, Robyn explained how she specifically chose to report to the university because she didn't want to go through the police and legal justice Having spent time in courtrooms for work, she was familiar with the *in*justice of the criminal justice system. However, her expectations about a different experience at the university were not met:

> **Robyn:** I thought that it would be easier in a way, going through the university. I knew it would still be hard. I remember I went to the women's centre at the university within days after it happened, and the girl there tried to discourage me from reporting. And I was very upset at that initially. I was like, "Why would you…" I mean, I didn't say this to her, but like, "Why would you tell me not to do this?" And now, I get it.
> **Paige:** Mmm, yeah. Can you say more about that?
> **Robyn:** [Pause]. I felt like I was on trial, and like, I didn't expect that. And I don't know why I wasn't prepared in that way. I mean, I reported to the university because I

> thought that… Because I didn't want to go to trial. Because I didn't want this to last years. And I wanted the burden of proof be lower, because I knew that through the criminal system… You know, I didn't have six people standing in the room watching it happen. So how am I going to prove it? Other than that I've been paying for a therapist for years now [Laughs].

Here she describes being "on trial," a common experience of survivors who reach out to police or courts hoping for support and validation after experiencing harm themselves. Holly Johnson observes that "much of the decision making around sexual assault — from the initial decisions by the woman to tell anyone about the assault, to the decisions of police, courts, prosecutors, juries, and judges — are influenced by long-standing, deeply entrenched biases" ("Limits" 624). A former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada reported a wide variety of myths entrenched in our Supreme Court, including the idea that women "are less reliable and credible as witnesses if they have had prior sexual relations; [that] women are more likely to have consented to sexual advances if they have had prior sexual relations; … [that] women are 'more emotional' than men so unless they become 'hysterical,' nothing must have happened; [that] women mean 'yes' even when they say 'no'; [that] women who are raped deserve it because of their conduct, dress, and demeanour'; [and that] women fantasize about rape and therefore fabricate reports of sexual activity even though nothing happened" (qtd. in H. Johnson, "Limits" 625). When seeking justice, survivors of sexual violence must thereby prove their stories against deeply rooted sexist beliefs held by (most often) men in power. And these "trials" do not only happen once; instead, victims face this skepticism at every step of the process: in reporting their assault to police, in having their case investigated by police; in the prosecutor determining the likelihood of conviction; from the judge, opposing lawyers

and jury if the case proceeds to trial; and from their community before, during, and after this long process.

University processes typically involve fewer steps, and lower burdens of proof (a "balance of probabilities" rather than criminal law's "beyond a reasonable doubt"). However, their quasi-judicial processes appear to replicate the same forms of harm, including putting the students — who, it bears repeating, are reaching out for help — through processes that question their judgement, character and memory. Dan Jones brings up an additional important point about the harm catalyzed by these processes: "their ripple effects and … collateral damage within the campus community" (174):

> Staff with varied roles—Title IX coordinators, vice presidents for student affairs, deans, conduct officers, advocates for the victim and accused, campus police, judicial hearing board members, counselors, coaches, even presidents—often report that the demands of rape case hearings and [Office of Civil Rights/Title IX] reports cause physical illness, damaged relationships, and impact on family life, such as missing important family functions or periods of absence from their children. Some students go to counseling as a result of the trauma of serving on hearing boards. A staff member at one university described her time working with a rape case as the "darkest period" in her life. (175)

He reminds us that the individuals involved in sitting on tribunals, hearing survivor testimony, and making decisions about harm are "amateurs, who are not trained in judicial processes" (175). That these processes cause them significant pain does not take away from that experienced by survivors. Rather, this fact exacerbates it: staff and students who are untrained on issues of sexual violence and unprepared to hear and respond to trauma should not be tasked with determining responsibility or the survivor's right to accommodations. In recent years, some Canadian universities have (partially) responded to these concerns, creating "interim measures": policies that provide access to accommodations, such as

extensions on assignments, retro-active withdrawals, and even interim measures before or during a formal investigation, including removing alleged perpetrators from a residence or even the entire campus. However, as Spencer et al. point out, these processes tend to be under-utilized as many survivors believe that the "sole purpose of reporting [formally or informally] is to punish perpetrators," rather than to provide options (175). In other cases, such as Chandra's, staff may not be adequately trained on the university's policies; or as in Katie's experience, the university and its staff are trained, and even promise accommodations, but fail to deliver.

The harm catalyzed by models that mirror criminal law is not limited to adjudication procedures like tribunals and hearings. According to Katie, the retributive frame has seeped into the university's entire view of sexual violence and influenced how students making reports are viewed. As previously mentioned, Katie reported to her university expecting "survivor-centric" processes, given the posters and pamphlets that covered her campus. Instead, she felt gaslit by the university. She later found out that her needs were *never* the priority of university staff:

> **Katie:** I don't think people realize the extent of it… For example, I ended up filing a Freedom of Information request [at my university]. And guess what? There was not a single email talking about how I was doing or what I needed. Every single email between administrators was how to *deal* with me.
> **Paige:** Oh my god.
> **Katie:** I had a full security profile with campus security services, outlining all of my activism, with a link to my facebook page, my twitter, my photo. So, I mean, that was their response to me disclosing. I became the problem.

Here, Katie's story ties into Alex's contention that increasingly punitive discourses are cause for concern. The other women I interviewed echoed this concern, questioning how

approaches that rely on retributive forms of justice flatten the conversation. Kennedy pinpointed the need for nuanced readings of sexual violence:

> **Kennedy:** I mean I'm not really for throwing people in prison… that's not why I'm doing this. I think there need to be more societal responses to sexual violence than either "Everything is A-OK, and nobody's a problem." Or, you know, "You're a monster who should be forced to live 50 feet away from schools at all times." All these punitive things we do to sex offenders. That is really over the top.

Kennedy's comments tie into broader feminist critiques of the criminal legal system and the failure to meet the justice needs of survivors, in that it seeks justice without actually interrogating the type of justice that would serve survivors. Anna similarly expressed concerns about the material impacts these discourses have on our communities.

> **Anna:** You know, they're still human beings! I don't want to dehumanize people. So the criminal justice system is garbage, but when we're like, "Let's kick this person out of an institution!", they just go and enroll somewhere else. Or they end up back in our communities.
> **Paige**: Yeah, absolutely.
> **Anna:** And you can't throw all of these perpetrators into the sea, or put them on an island. So what are we going to do about that?

Ultimately, the testimony of the participants of my research indicated a need for a nuanced response to campus sexual violence; one that resists the harmful punitive rhetoric employed in the criminal legal system and enmeshed in neoliberal discourse about rape.

By relying on models that mimic criminal legal processes, institutions do little to help survivors with the fallouts of sexual violence. Research shows that victims of campus sexual violence may experience "post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse," which in turn can lead to "diminished professional prospects, … debt, and even [dropping] out of school" (Brodsky 146-47). It is well-documented that criminal legal processes lead to *re-traumatization* as victims are discredited, disqualified and berated; they also involve costly

legal fees, schedules that are out of one's control, as well as fear and stress. It seems clear that increasingly punitive processes would only exacerbate the harms that survivors experience. Following interviews with survivors and survivor-advocates, Michelle L. Munro-Kramer et al. outlined five themes that encompassed what survivors *actually wanted* when they reached out for support. Rather than retribution, survivors are seeking: a *culture of caring*, in which, students, faculty, and staff "are aware of the prevalence and severity of sexual assault in the college population and … have the resources and knowledge to help survivors"; a *one-stop shop* that could provide all information, resources and referrals to other sites, instead of having to cobble together resources themselves; *validation* of their emotions and reactions through non-judgemental and inclusive services; *control and agency* in making decisions about their own experiences; and *confidentiality* when accessing services (300-02).

It is worth noting that these responses do not address offender accountability, but instead deal with the *support* needs of survivors reaching out. For some individuals, justice and support might mean the same thing, or be intertwined; for others, accountability for the perpetrator might differ from what they need for themselves. However, neither support nor justice is predicated on invasive quasi-judicial processes. Instead, they require universities to prioritize the needs of survivors, and to invest in the infrastructure required to make these interventions successful. But as Gray and Pin point out, processes like securitization and tribunals serve to improve public image *and* they can "minimize the cost of responding to sexual violence for the university, by piggy-backing on existing administrative offices and mechanisms of conflict resolution" (101). Again, we return to the question of institutional

priorities in an era of market-based decision-making, and the market-driven bind in which the well-being of students can be (intentionally or unintentionally) prioritized below the reputation of the university (Lee and Wong 434).

The final mechanism by which universities employ a "serious" approach to sexual violence is by strengthening ties with existing criminal legal mechanisms for managing violence. In some cases, the decision to do so is internal. Universities may prefer to offload the costs and responsibility to structures that already exist; they may also seek to appease critics who argue that the university has no place doing this work. In other cases, the directive comes from above. For example, some Trump-era American legislators have proposed referring school reports of sexual violence to local law enforcement (Brodsky 128). In the best-case scenario, a university working collaboratively with criminal legal responses can serve to bolster the agency of students who have been harmed. For example, a university staff member might provide information about filing a police report; or a campus police officer might offer to initiate a police investigation (i.e., have police come directly to campus to take their statement). In the worst-case scenario, a survivor's agency may be entirely removed from the equation. American Title IX legislation enshrines "mandatory reporting" measures, through which university staff members have a legal duty to report to police upon receiving a student disclosure — although universities can choose how to interpret this (i.e., whether it means all staff or just those in specific roles) (138). However, this ultimately means that some American students who open up to their professors about an experience of violence would immediately initiate a criminal investigation, with or without giving their consent. Long term data collection has proven that very few survivors *ever* contact law

enforcement, with studies in both the US and Canada finding that near or fewer than 5 percent of completed and attempted sexual assaults are reported to law enforcement (Brodsky 144; Conroy and Cotter 17). According to Brodsky, women tend to associate the police and courts with numerous personal risks, such as victim-blaming, re-traumatization, and even violence or arrest (145). The reporting rates are even lower for women of colour, undocumented students, and LGBTQ survivors, who are "particularly at risk for police abuse and skepticism" (145). Advocates have warned that mandatory reporting mechanisms will make survivors even less likely to report to anyone (144).

To conclude, I turn to Laurie M. Graham et al., who provide a measure for effective institutional responses. They contend that the most effective processes "both relate to the types of victimization experienced and are culturally specific to victims and student populations" (689). In short, they acknowledge that both sexual violence and campuses communities are complex, and require a nuanced approach. While this increases the time and resources required, it also offers opportunity. As Alex explained, "[The university is] a unique community that has the potential to do things very uniquely and different from a criminal or judicial process." But until this is taken seriously, Alex is not optimistic. They described their "model" for engaging with institutions as an advocate for survivors as one of "harm-reduction":

> **Alex:** To me, there is no potential for the system to not do harm in the way things are currently structured. So I think I kind of, um, choose not to accept that this is our perfect process. It's not one that won't cause harm and have people be perfectly happy with how it turns out. I just think that's not possible, so I start from the presumption that it is harmful.

4.4 A Reason to Engage

The real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions that appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize and attack them in such a manner that political violence that has always exercised itself through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them.
— Michel Foucault, "The Chomsky-Foucault Debate"

Liberation is always in part a storytelling process: breaking stories, breaking silences, making new stories. A free person tells her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which her story has a place.
—Rebecca Solnit, "A Short History of Silence"

Chapter 4 has described how universities are utilizing the wrong paradigm to prevent and respond to sexual violence. As Katie put it, "These are legal solutions to a social problem." The result is an increased risk of harm for survivors who choose to report, and for some students, experiences of institutional betrayal. I bring this chapter to a close by exploring what the individuals who participated in my research actually wanted from their universities, and the strategies they proposed for engaging with universities in a way that could lessen the harms of institutional betrayal. I've briefly discussed what other research has outlined to be the needs and desires of sexual assault victims, but the specific goals of my participants are crucial to why their universities' responses felt like betrayal. In short, the disjuncture between what they sought and what actually happened was painful, and in turn was compounded by actively harmful practices, such as victim-blaming hearings, lies and misinformation, untrained staff, and painful justice processes that stretched over years.

According to critics, the students reporting sexual violence on campus are manipulative and power-hungry, and far from needing or deserving justice, are out for themselves. For example, in *Unwanted Advances,* Laura Kipnis describes victimized students

as part of a "coddled" generation armed with "ambiguous motives," such as "taking down" kindly profs and boys who "laugh too much"; "shredding" the lives of those who question their experiences; and hunting down exorbitant payouts from universities that are too scared of them to enforce due process (n.p.). She describes being raped as a form of "cultural capital" that these students (who, apparently, are also wily and ambitious future-university administrators) are ready and able to wield against America's helpless men and boys (n.p.). By contrast, the students I spoke with sought recognition, emotional and practical support, and accountability from staff and the student body. But instead of respect, support, validation and justice, they were disappointed and betrayed. Alex described how, in their work at a campus sexual assault centre, they predominantly met students looking to their universities for support, but "that's not what these systems are set up for."

In Chandra's case, she described a goal of "just wanting to feel okay on campus again." She was in her first year when she was assaulted, and had arrived on campus holding the university in high-esteem. Her father had gone there before her, and spoke highly of his experience. During that first year, she loved it:

> **Chandra:** I think back to that first semester and I felt like I was blossoming. I had never been away from home before, kind of thing, and I was very excited to be out on my own. I loved the city and was definitely having a lot of fun. And then, of course, after that my university experience was a complete 180.

As previously described, Chandra reported to police after being routed off campus by a chain of university staff members. Unfortunately, law enforcement had little to offer her in terms of providing needed accommodations, such as being in the same classroom as her perpetrator, and meeting her embodied and practical need to "feel safe" — especially because they

unfounded her case. And ultimately, her university also utterly failed to meet these legitimate needs. Looking back now, Chanda says that she has "lost faith in almost the entire post-secondary institution." While she wants to complete her bachelor's degree one day, recognizing the impact it could have on her life financially, she was having trouble finding an institution that met her criteria. And more than this, she described a suffocating sense of worry about other students not being informed of the risk they were in at campuses like hers.

> **Chandra:** I've got a cousin that was applying to universities, you know, the past year, and she really wanted to go to my university. And I told my mom, "I want to talk to her, to everybody who is considering and tell them they need to research policy. They need to make sure that their rights are going to be fought for." And I said, "I don't think that university is going to be the university that's going to do that." I really didn't want my cousin to go there.
> **Paige**: Yeah, it's hard to not feel, I don't know, like she's…
> **Chandra:** She's at risk!

Here, neoliberal responsibilization frames higher-education, and Chandra's own "choice" to participate in the market, through its risk management discourse. Chandra feels compelled to change her own and her family's behaviours, in order to avoid the potential harms of an irresponsible and negligent university. However, I would argue that stories like Chandra's can also serve to shift relations of power. In disclosing her experiences of harm to friends, family, or even the public, a student like Chandra can apply pressure to an institution and its stakeholders. "Voting with your dollar" will not shift the tide alone, but it has proven to be an important tactic of resistance for victimized students.

Robyn had a sense that reporting was something "you were supposed to do." This feeling played a role in her experience once it began, propelling her through the several month-long process. But when we talked about what initially pushed her to report, she

articulated a more powerful need — one less about the social conception of justice or righting a wrong, and more about what *she* needed:

> **Robyn:** The goal for me wasn't to, you know, punish him. The goal for me going into that was for… [Pause]. I was so desperate to be believed. I was so desperate for… [Pause]. It's one thing for your friends to believe you. But it was very important to me that this *institution* fucking acknowledges that this happened. [...] That this *happens*. That it's not just someone jumping out of the bushes at you. It's people on campus.

Here, Robyn's comments gesture to an anger and sense of indignation about her experience of violence, what Smith and Freyd would refer to as an indicator of betrayal; namely, that her university tolerated and condoned an environment in which her assault could have happened. Moreover, Robyn is pinpointing how her institution needed to play a role in resisting the myths about "real rape" (i.e., only perpetrated by strangers). Her feeling of betrayal was informed by the reputation of that university as "supposedly cutting edge," but also academia in general: "[Y]ou always think of universities as being these kind of progressive places that are leading in academia and thought and ideas and change. But *that* [process] was fucking archaic." This social and cultural framing of the university — an "aura of exceptionalism" came up in several interviews, indicating yet another way in which university branding exercises serve to draw students into a relationship of trust that deepens the later sense of betrayal (Turner n.p.). Alex described how this is often dismissed as melodramatic, but is actually a larger part of the framing of sexual violence and institutional responses.

> **Alex:** I think we often think of those things as, "Ahh, it's just a slogan, we all have branding or visions." But literally people come to universities like, "This is my chance for things to be better." Or you know, "I felt listened to or encapsulated in this vision and it spoke to me." And, "I'm told this is a place to be safe."
> **Paige**: Yeah.
> **Alex:** It's very real, you hear these things all the time. And then, to be like, "So, why is this happening?" or "I *should* be able to tell anyone what happened," or, "Why

> wouldn't I be supported?" Because that's what this institution is built on […] You're actually talking about somebody's value system and something really intrinsic to them […] So I think there's an element that's unique to this issue in a post-secondary institution that is really hard to unpack, because it is… [Pause]. People buy into the fact that this is a noble pursuit, or means something about themselves or other people. That this is somehow better than everything else. But it's not.
> **Paige:** Totally. And it's a place that they're coming to, I think, often times for lots of reasons, like, "This is where my parents went," or "This is the city I've always wanted to live in." And also this is a place that we very much idealize — "the university experience" and culture and stuff. That these will be the best years of your life.
> **Alex:** Yeah [...] The uniquely personal way that this entire institution is marketed, and then the simultaneous disavowal of that personal responsibility and relationship. It's hard and it makes a very personal boundary violation feel even more personal because it suddenly doesn't just seem like the person that engaged in the sexual violence took something away, or violated a boundary — but now the whole institution is complicit with that individual.

For Robyn, her impression of the university led to a "desperate" sense that if she could just get the university to acknowledge it, and just get through their process, what had happened could be undone. Looking back now, neither the assault nor her university's role in re-traumatizing her can be changed or forgotten, and her university experience as a whole was tarnished. However, the passing time has made Robyn more certain that the change that is needed is fundamental:

> **Robyn:** I don't know what the solution is. I just feel like this is not how they should be involving survivors in this process. In hindsight, I don't know what they could have done differently. They were very communicative with me, and they were very upfront about the process. But when you sit someone down in a hearing room until the [middle of the night]… [Pause]. I got driven home that night in a cop car. Like, *what*? [Laughs].

Kennedy's story began as bad vibes from a fellow student. More specifically, she saw her friend being made uncomfortable by another student:

> **Kennedy:** I saw him touch her at a couple events, you know, in a way that you would touch somebody you were dating. Not overly sexual but… definitely suggestive. You

> know, a shoulder, or grabbing her. And her body language was uncomfortable. And then she told me later that he touched her *every day.* And that she couldn't escape it. She lived with him.
> **Paige:** Mm hmm.
> **Kennedy:** And I suggested, "Well, why don't you tell our advisor?" This was our RA advisor, who happened to be in a relationship with the perpetrator's advisor. She didn't want to do that, and that was the one suggestion I had. So I... I didn't know what else I could offer. I just knew that he was going over a line.

In a cultural and discursive context where "blurred lines" are normalized in film and popular music, it can be hard for the individuals targeted or bearing witness to harm to call for change, and harder still to be heard (Robin Thicke). Victims of violence experience wide-scale disbelief and gaslighting, as misogynistic and harassing behaviours are entrenched as a normal part of heterosexual sexual relations. Research additionally shows that women will allow toxic patterns to go unchecked out of politeness or a desire to keep things on an even keel — or because they have internalized a neoliberal subjectivity, in which being "rational, self-determining, and freely choosing agent" is desirable (Bay-Cheng and Eliseo-Arras 387). As Bay-Cheng and Eliseo-Arras point out, being a victim of a perpetrator's actions or of circumstance closes off the ability to internalize one's victimization and healing through "self-improvement" narratives that dominate neoliberal society (387).

As a bystander, Kennedy was upset to see the harmful behaviours of the student, and when her friend eventually reported to the university and was dismissed, Kennedy stepped up to support her again. This was the beginning of the pair's lengthy and turbulent fight for accountability, action, and respect from a university determined to avoid them. Again, Kennedy's story points to indicators of betrayal: an environment in which sexual violence was normalized, treated as no big deal, where the university could have stepped in to prevent

the violence from happening, and where the student received an inadequate response. Unfortunately, these instances of betrayal are often invisibilized in the larger public discourse around universities, particularly one framed by rape culture's tendency to excuse predatory behaviour.

Institutions capitalize on this with quick and strategic marketing campaigns that draw attention away from scandal and onto new, survivor-centred initiatives. For Kennedy, this emotion-laden advertising copy was just lies:

> **Kennedy**: And then the greatest lies of all were, "We take this very seriously."
> **Paige:** [Laughs]. Right, yeah.
> **Kennedy:** And, "We apologize." And,"We're reaching out to the women to do better." And, "We're getting feedback from students about what they want." Their follow-up stuff is all a lie. And it's just so... It's [done] in a way that's designed to insult us. And you know, [in a way] that outsiders — who weren't following this process, who are like, eyes glazed over with the bureaucracy of it — will say, "Why are you offended that they said that?" [Laughs].
> **Paige:** Totally. Yeah, "They're taking it seriously, what more would you want?" Yeah.
> **Kennedy:** Yeah. And, "Oh, and they said sorry." Or whatever it is. Those are the kinds of lies that are quite infuriating to me.

When I asked how Kennedy felt about her university now, and if the experience changed how she felt about the school overall, she cut to the point: "I am never going to go back there. [Pause]. The only time I'll ever talk about this university is to say, 'Stay away from them.'"

My interview with Katie didn't explicitly reveal her goals in making a report to campus. However, her desires were evident in how she described the parts of her experience felt like a betrayal and the types of demands that emerged through her activist work. For example, she described pushing for "tangible, material resources" for survivors, such as mental health supports that were not provided by a university staff member. Given the "security profile" about herself she discovered through a freedom-of-information request, she

felt it necessary that students have access to supports that couldn't later be used against them. Similarly, she talked about wanting to spread information and resources to other students who have experienced harm. Again, this was informed by the experience of harm and isolation that arose from engaging in her university's process without a sense of both the risks and options. This activism did not make up for the betrayal she experienced, and she still felt angry, particularly when the survivor whisper network revealed how many tenured professors had been accused of sexual violence and how many "feminist" professors had jumped to defend perpetrators of violence.

> **Katie:** It's really disheartening and frustrating… [Pause]. On the other hand, [there's] just like… desire. It creates this desire to create, and disseminate resources [Pause]. I've done some stuff, and obviously, I don't have the same marketing budget that the university does.
> **Paige:** Right.
> **Katie:** But what I often find, and what I so often hear this from people, is that the university knows the right words to say. So students often feel that they have their best interests in mind. But then the investigation never happens. Or the investigation is taking two years. Or they're not enforcing what was put in place for a safety plan.
> **Paige:** Yeah.
> **Katie:** So, it's like, *don't* trust them [Laughs]. But it doesn't mean that we don't report or don't do anything. Or that we just sit there and let them do whatever they want. It's the desire to provide folks with the skills to challenge when the university says, "We can't do this." Well, why not? Who says?

So while the scope of Katie's mistrust has grown, so has her sense that the status quo is unacceptable, and that betrayed students deserve to and can push back.

My interview with Anna revealed a set of goals that was somewhat different from other participants. In particular, Anna made conscious decisions during her university experience *not* to make formal reports, which meant she didn't have expectations about how her university would act. However, this did not mean she didn't want the same things that

other participants wanted, such as to feel safe on campus. It just meant that she went about attaining them differently. For example, when she assaulted during her first year, she disclosed informally to friends and community members, distributing knowledge about who was "unsafe" on campus and protecting herself and her friends — without having to worry about being dismissed or re-traumatized. That decision to forego her university's process was informed by her junior high school experience of betrayal and injustice, as well as the stories she heard from other students and what she herself witnessed as a student and an anti-violence organizer on campus. Administrators and critics might argue that in not reporting, Anna withheld important data about rates of violence, and precluded the opportunity for her university to make a safer campus for all students, not just those in her network. But, as Anna and others have pointed out, making a report offers no guarantees that a perpetrator will be sanctioned at all, let alone removed from the campus. Rather than subjecting herself to the risk of a terrible process, Anna chose to manage on her own, which is a common response. Indeed, Holland and Cortina describe how fewer than 5 percent of survivors participate in their university's formal grievance/reporting procedures, and less than 18 percent seek help from sexual assault centres on campuses (51). As Sabina and Ho report, between 40 and 100 percent of victims of sexual assault will disclosure informally, whether to friends or family, rather than reaching out to police or other formalized services to disclose (217).

Anna was also involved in activism and advocacy around sexual violence on her campus. This work had its own goals, such as seeing the voices and experiences of survivors and experts integrated into the university's responses to violence. Unfortunately, these goals were less successfully realized. Here she describes her participation, and the outcomes, of a

panel she and other students sat on, designed to offer insight and feedback to the university as they designed a new policy:

> **Anna:** Yeah, I had no idea what the point of our panel was. Actually I still don't. We weren't allowed to meet with the official committee.
> **Paige:** Huh.
> **Anna:** Yeah, we never got to sit and talk to them. It was ridiculous. And they were insistent that once we had submitted the report [it was done]. Like, "Your committee is dissolved, you are no longer allowed to exist. We will allow you to have that one meeting because there's a transition in leadership."
> **Paige:** But that's it.
> **Anna:** So what was the point of the recommendations we made? And it wasn't just that we sat around. I mean, we had a series of consultations with community members and students, and it was very expansive.
> **Paige:** Absolutely, yeah.
> **Anna:** And you just feel so awful. That we... That people trusted us. Because we were people who did the work and people who have been accountable to the community. And then it's just like, "Sorry for making you come out to this thing."

As Gray et al. argue, "[W]ithin neoliberalized institutions, consultation is often used along with discursive markers such as 'engagement' and 'collaboration' to appease stakeholders without substantively addressing their concerns" (1). They describe how one Canadian institution carried out brief consultations in the Fall of 2016, releasing their newly written, board-approved policy in December 2016 (3). Given the short timeline to actually reflect on and/or integrate feedback, the authors contend that "student consultation was carried out to legitimate rather than shape a sexual assault policy that in fact had been produced in advance" (2). As this played out on Anna's campus, it contributed to her sense of betrayal and wasted time. While on campus, she and others could protest such incidents, and in some cases, push the university to change. But ultimately, this left Anna feeling frustrated and worried: what would happen when she and the others were gone?

> **Anna:** I get worried a lot in terms of policy. Like, how is going to be reviewed? How

> often is it going to be reviewed? Who is going to be invited to the review? Are survivors going to be invited to say, "Hey, you went through this process, how was it for you?"
> **Paige:** Mm hmm.
> **Anna:** I just worry that there's a steady stream of students and survivors, and it's so hard to… [Pause]. I think it's really hard to have that stick.

The lack of what she called "institutional memory" contributed to a deeper sense of betrayal, knowing that a university might produce policy or press releases to save face, but cut corners in resourcing and implementing those changes. But when students and staff members involved in resistance graduate, move on, or burn out, who is left to hold the institution accountable?

Kennedy pointed out that most students only attend a university for a matter of years, and as a result, might just "white-knuckle it through" rather than push for change. In contrast, institutions have access to immense resources, and the banal bureaucracy is known move slowly; as Katie explains, institutions typically try to just "wait for you to graduate or drop out." This in itself is another cost loaded onto students who experience institutional betrayal:

> **Anna:** Yeah, I just keep thinking what a waste of time it is… This work needs to be done and it's important. But I'm just thinking of how much work we have to do because people are assaulting other people… How many hours of meetings and policies and this kind of stuff? And I just wish that we could be spending our time, I don't know, doing anything else.

Anna laughed as she said this: a wry laugh that was frequent across my interviews. But the question was serious: what else could be in the world if survivors weren't so busy trying to have rapists held accountable, and then have their universities actually responsibly deal with it? Every person I spoke with had given years of their life to managing the situation and the reverberations — whether just from the trauma of sexual violence, or from their struggle to

push back against broken systems. And as Anna describes here, the impact isn't limited to just one's own experience:

> **Anna:** That's one of the things that keeps me up at night sometimes. Thinking of the people who don't even have stories. Or, who drop out. Completely who just drop out.
> **Paige:** Yeah.
> **Anna:** Or they don't report and they drop out because they don't think they have any support. Or they go through the system and it's so awful, and they're like, "I'm getting the fuck out of here, because this is not… it's not worth it." Does someone need to die before it'll be taken seriously?

Just as there are immense costs of systemic sexual violence, so too are there social costs that arise from institutional betrayal.

Despite spending the last three years researching campus sexual violence, and three years before that engaged in survivor advocacy and support on a university campus, I still don't know what will catalyze the type of change that is needed. For some of the students I spoke with, they held faith that external forms of accountability could apply pressure that survivors alone cannot. For example, they pointed to the cases of students filing human rights cases against their universities in several provinces across the country.

> **Kennedy:** I think that the outside transparency of the courts is incredibly powerful. You know, discovery rules are incredibly valuable. [The courts] create this permanent public record of the shit they've done. So you could say, "Oh hey, look. Administrator X keeps coming up in all of these filings."

Chandra was particularly inspired by the stories of survivors who had gone public with their attempts to gain justice. When we met, she was exploring this option and had begun meeting with a lawyer who has supported other survivors in Canada. However, she quickly realized this wasn't necessarily a quick or all-encompassing solution. For example, she pointed out

that some pathways were already closed off to her, signalling that change is not only needed on campuses, but across social institutions:

> **Chandra:** The statute of limitations needs to change. There is none on rape in the criminal court in Canada, but there's a six-month timeline in the human rights complaint [process]. And I thought, six months? I didn't even know that my rights were being violated until three years later. So it's really frustrating to me how avenues are cut off if [you don't know about them] or you're not ready to report yet. I find that really frustrating. What if you're not ready then? If I had been super suicidal right off the bat, there is no way I would've been able to pursue a complaint initially, so I feel that's an unfair barrier to survivors.
> **Paige:** Yeah, I think that's really real, particularly because a lot of people don't have the knowledge of the avenues that are available to them.
> **Chandra:** For sure. I was 18! I didn't know what the world was. I think it's a bit ridiculous. Apparently, one survivor went through a human rights tribunal, and one of the tribunal members told her that ignorance is not an excuse. And he said that there's no excuse for her not knowing that she had rights at 18. And that was really hard to hear, because that's why a major part of my complaint might be rejected. Because ideally, my complaint would cover from when the rape happened to now. Like, as long as he's in good standing, it should continue. But apparently, learning about my rights and fighting for them are two different things. So I'm pretty sure they'll only count when I met campus security and forward. So every day I had with him in class will never be examined in court.

Time limits and other procedural barriers — and the subsequent victim-blaming that becomes possible — were major reasons that Anna was skeptical about formal legal solutions. She ran into this problem when she filed a grievance against the teacher who dismissed her disclosure of sexual violence when she was a teen.

> **Anna:** That was a really eye-opening experience. Because I hadn't realized that it's a union and it's a legal process. And the teacher had a lawyer and I did not. I did not even think of retaining legal representation.
> **Paige:** Yeah.
> **Anna:** But what was really interesting about the decision that was made — and it took two years for them to come up with a decision, which was really frustrating. It's not timely at all. But they said, "Why didn't you report this sooner?" And I was like, "Because what 16-year-old thinks of reporting their teacher for like, negligence?" [Laughs].
> **Paige:** No.

> **Anna:** How would I even know that you could file a complaint against a teacher? [I had no] clue. But what was also interesting is that one of the main things the commissioner said was, "Well you've told your story publicly on social media and at conferences, so maybe it's rehearsed." And I was like, "Wow".

With her own complaint dismissed — for a teacher's negligence, which she pointed out is far less serious than other cases where the teacher is the perpetrator of violence — Anna is not confident about the value of legal mechanisms, and the added time and energy it asks of victimized students:

> **Anna:** Even with the university now, I know there are human rights complaints that are going forward. And I'm like, "I'm just gonna back out of that" [Laughs]. Because I don't know. I just don't have faith in the bodies that are supposed to provide oversight of institutions.

Moreover, there is increasing evidence that courts and legal mechanisms are equally accessible to both victims and perpetrators, with some survivors finding themselves targeted by retaliatory lawsuits. Katie described how she's met survivors whose entire circle of friends are being sued for defamation, leaving the survivor increasingly isolated. This is evident in higher-profile cases both inside and outside the sphere of campus sexual violence.

For example, Moira Donegan, the writer who created the "Shitty Media Men" google spreadsheet (a list of accused perpetrators in magazines and publishing), was sued for "libel and emotional distress" — and damages of $1.5 million — by a man named in the document (Berman n.p.). Steven Galloway, the former chair of the University of British Columbia Creating Writing program who was fired after multiple students accused him of sexual harassment and violence, is suing his accuser and 24 others who spoke, wrote, and tweeted about the incident. The defendants include other UBC faculty, students, anti-violence activists, authors, and journalists, who Galloway's suit claims "recklessly repeated" "false

accusations" (Berman n.p.; Lederman "Steven" n.p; Lederman "Under" n.p.). Galloway has already won damages of $167,000 from UBC for violating his privacy and damaging his reputation (Gold n.p.). Whether or not judges eventually rule in favour of the alleged perpetrators, these student victims and community members are now shackled to stressful, expensive, and long-term legal processes.

Given these experiences of betrayal, how do we narrow the gap between expectations and reality? Or, rather than demanding students suppress their expectations, how do we improve the odds of universities responding in ways that meet, or even exceed their expectations? On more hopeful days, I'm heartened by the optimism of folks like Janet Napolitano, a former politician and lawyer who serves as the president of the University of California system (Berkeley, Davis, LA, Santa Cruz, etc.). She argues: "Universities and colleges, by virtue of their education and research missions and expertise, are well positioned to undertake the necessary education and research, and prevention and response actions, that leadership in this arena will require" (388). Alex similarly pointed out that universities are "unique communit[ies] that have the potential to do things very uniquely and different from a criminal or judicial process." But, at the same time, that was Alex's impression of what was *possible*, not what was actually happening or available to students seeking support.

In their support and advocacy work, Alex used a "harm-reduction" approach, grounded in providing full information about a student's options and the outcomes that are possible. If a student chose to engage with formal institutional processes, Alex and other advocates would help the survivor build a "strategy" for engaging that they might use to

attempt to minimize re-traumatization and harm. Alex noted that *strategy* makes it sound "gross and weird," but this was ultimately about mitigating harm:

> **Alex:** It's making clear the murkiness and giving that agency back. As opposed to feeling like you're being acted upon by these systems, that you're at the whims of a bureaucracy. Reframing that to, "Actually, you get to choose to use whatever you want, in whichever way you want." And the only way you can do that is by really clearly understanding what is possible. So, asking for [what you want] — but not making it all about, "This will give me closure," or "I need to do this to prevent things in the future." Not making it about those outcomes that we know are just not possible from these systems.

Alex described the desire for those types of "goal-oriented" outcomes as absolutely valid and worthy of "asking for" — but that ultimately, such outcomes cannot be expected from university complaints mechanisms. For example, a student could report hoping to stop an offending behaviour, but Alex pointed out that being found "responsible" is not inherently tied to behavioural change. A university should be involved and proactive about changing toxic campus rape culture, but engagement with formal complaints processes can lead to deeper betrayal if victims tie their self-worth and healing to a goal that is both difficult and unlikely. As such, Alex sought to help students connect to goals that were actually achievable through university processes, and more than that, goals that were about the person's well-being.

> **Alex:** I think what I'm always really clear about with folks who've had experiences is [you need to] find a reason for engaging in this process that you can always come back to. Because then no one can take that away from you. If it's to, you know, make sure you used your voice because that's important to you. Or [so] somebody somewhere knows. Or to pave the way for somebody else. Like all those things that are really about a *person*, and their well-being. Then I think no one can take that. Like, "You did that. You had the space to do that."

Alex explained how those goals give the survivor power and agency in a situation that can otherwise be disempowering or even retraumatizing. As a practitioner, they sought to give as much detail as possible about how things have gone in the past, what could happen, and the strategies to get what they wanted out of these systems:

> **Alex**: Right down to, "If you choose to talk about it this way, great. And there's power in that. This is how it may be interpreted, and what it may fall under. Versus, if you want to talk about it *this* way, this is how it might be interpreted, and what it might fall under, and what your options might be."
> **Paige:** Hmm, yeah.
> **Alex:** So it's kind of working the system… Like, "If that feels comfortable for you, and you want to use that language in this realm, then I think that makes a lot of sense." Or, "If you *are* going to share these details…" you know, asking why. What are you hoping to get out of that? What might be some potential ways that folks will interact with those details? [...] It's almost like, "What is the narrative you want to craft?" Which I think is again, giving agency back to people and power back to folks who've had experiences [of sexual violence]. Because I think it often feels like, "I need to share everything and bare my soul, otherwise I'm lying." And I think that's just not true.

Alex's description of a strategic approach, and giving full information, aligned with what the other participants described as their paths forward. Overall, our conversations indicated that, in this political context and cultural moment, institutional betrayal will likely be a part of survivors' lived experiences for the foreseeable future. But this does not preclude their efforts to build communities of care and support, to disseminate resources and information through their networks, and continue to fight for the change that all students deserve.

> **Anna:** And maybe one day I'll be pleasantly surprised, and someone will be like, "Oh I reported, and it went really well [...] and they believed me, and it was fine."

Chapter 5: Conclusion

To experience a disaster is to feel your world fracturing or tearing. But to respond to someone in need is also a kind of rendering or opening of your world.

— Nigel Clark, *Disaster and Generosity*

Find the cracks in the gates and wedge them open wider.
— Jaclyn Friedman, *Unscrewed*

We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experiences as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains.
— Ursula K. Le Guin, Commencement Address, 1986

This project is grounded in a critique of neoliberalism, and an argument that its affective atmospheres and structures of feeling weigh heavy on our bodies. Chapter 1 introduced Cvetkovich, a cultural theorist who argues that "feeling bad" constitutes the lived experience under neoliberal capitalism. This is frequently a psychic experience: our inner monologues repeat mantras of self-blame for our apparent failures as the gnarled branches of competitive and risk-management discourses wind their way into workplaces, our institutions, our communities, and even our homes. These discourses come to us detached from their systemic roots, their structural contexts obscured. But this does not mean they impact detached or abstracted subjects. Instead, our bodies are suffused with their affects: our stomachs fill with dread, our shoulders hunch, and our jaws tense — even as we're told (and compelled to feel) we are freer than ever.

My project examined how this larger political context impacts university campuses, and more specifically, how it influences and (re)produces sexual violence. Rather than one-off events, or exceptional traumas, the sexual violence perpetrated against women, non-binary individuals, gay men, and others is "insidious" — a part of everyday experience. This rape culture is baked into the competitive atmosphere of higher educational institutions, where it mirrors and accentuates neoliberalism's broader risk management discourse. As I've

illustrated throughout this thesis, risk management discourses download the responsibility for safety and well-being to individuals: good (feminized) neoliberal subjects are compelled to alter their own behaviour and mindsets to prevent violence to themselves. Their bodies are deemed rape-able; while those individuals choosing to perpetrate harm are constructed and reinforced as average, and even ideal citizens. Unfortunately, the harm does not end with violence or the dominant discourses that excuse violence. Instead, support and justice are similarly political. Informed by histories of sexism, misogyny, racism and colonialism, rape culture constructs sexual violence as a women's issue, a private problem. Moreover, neoliberal political rationality releases the state and institutions — including universities and colleges — from their (sense of) duty to prevent and respond to the problem. Instead, individuals are blamed for risky behaviour, risky bodies, risky lifestyles, risky friendships, risky choices, risky responses. And when they reach out for support, they are too often betrayed by the institutions that should be protecting them.

This project has explored the affective harm that institutional responses load onto these students. I've described this variously as a heaviness, as "slow death," as trauma. The students I spoke with described "slowly unravelling" and deep, embodied grief from institutional betrayal. They talked about faking joy and pride at their university graduations, and lying to friends and family to avoid burdening them with the pain and betrayal. They talked about the cost: financial costs, thousands of dollars in therapy and legal fees; emotional costs, borne in their struggle to trust strangers and even friends; physical costs, emerging from the exhaustion of post-traumatic stress; and costs to their reputation, in being *known* for it, whether by their academic communities treating them with pity or judgement,

or by future employers who can find their assault and activism at the top of a google search. They described loss: of friendships, loss of easy and casual sexual relationships, and of hope that there are good places and good people in the world. They talked about waste: of their time on frustrating, circular processes; of money on judicial processes that only ended up blaming them; and of the time and energy spent on activism to keep their universities accountable when things would just revert when pressure was lifted. And finally, they talked about how it *never ends*. Years later, processes are still ongoing; universities are still failing to provide adequate services for survivors; and retaliatory perpetrators are still appealing sanctions.

I was often asked how I could research such a difficult topic day-in and day-out. Did it not impact me to read, research, and deeply reflect on experiences of harm and their root causes? Feminist scholars have long written about the emotional and affective impacts borne through research on violence against women: Some of the documented emotional effects include:

> [A]cute feelings of anger, sorrow, shock, guilt, pain, fear, and hope; the occurrence of nightmares, flashbacks to incidents of rape or childhood abuse, violent nightmares, sleeplessness, heightened feelings of insecurity and safety, sexuality; and a whole host of other physical, psychological, and practical (i.e., lifestyle adjustments) effects. (Blakely 61)

And yet, for me, the negative affective experience was ultimately suppressed by the other "sticky" affects inherent to this work. In particular, I found myself propelled forward by the anger, indignation, and perseverance of the students I spoke with. This knowledge is painful, but so are the experiences behind it.

Working to imagine and construct solutions to deeply flawed university processes is difficult, but it is necessary. But more than this, the students I spoke with — betrayed, angry, traumatized, re-traumatized, exhausted, burnt out, bored — are actively resisting. Who am I to ignore their testimony because it is hard? Who are any of us, as outsiders to another's experience, to close ourselves off because it is easier? Who are we to leave them to do it alone? This is not to say that guilt or obligation is or should be our driving motivator. For me, I am driven to engage in this struggle because it is central to building the world I want to live in. But in addition, I want to point out that this work is not always draining or depleting; the affective experience of "seeing the world as it is" is not exclusively harmful (Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness* 162). To explain, I turn to feminist theorists who engage with the "politics of negative feeling."

Blackman, a media and cultural theorist, explores what it might mean for us to "depathologize feeling 'bad,'" and how it might "open up new ways of thinking about agency, change and transformation" (25). She argues that negative states can offer "productive possibilities for political practice and social transformation" (25). Her research offers a queer, feminist reading of mental illness, and she describes how sensations like "pain, fear, anxiety and distress" — when displaced from social and political context — serve to keep structures of oppression "alive and in place" (26). But with a critical lens, we might come to understand and experience them differently. Through the politics of "radical negativity," we might find ways to resist. In her treatise on depression, Cvetkovich explores such practices that can be used to live well in the context of oppression and inequality; and

how we might "get hope and despair moving" in creative ways, even when our world "seems to be killing us" (*Depression* 29):

> The goal is to depathologize negative feelings so that they can be seen as a possible resource for political action rather than as its antithesis. This is not, however, to suggest that depression is thereby converted into a positive experience; it retains its associations with inertia and despair, if not apathy and indifference, but these feelings, moods, and sensibilities become sites of publicity and community formation. (*Depression* 2)

What I find productive here is that these scholars do not seek to "convert" negative feelings "into something useful or positive" (5). Instead, they actively resist "redemption" narratives, calling instead for "categories like utopia, hope, and happiness" to be understood as "entwined with and even enhanced by forms of negative feeling" (5). While my project has focused on the weight, burden, and costs of institutional betrayal and sexual violence, I want to emphasize how these negative affects — even if they will never be positive — might at least be productive. As Robyn put it, her trauma was "a life sentence, but it's not a death sentence." She continues to live in spite of this harm, and with a different outlook and resolve that came from surviving it. Thus, the affective experience of sexual violence and institutional betrayal may be heavy, painful, and even deadly — but "feeling bad" might also offer opportunities for a new way of understanding and being in the world.

The betrayed student might be understood as an *affect alien*: "those who are alienated by virtue of how they are affected by the world or how they affect others in the world" (Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness* 164). Ahmed introduces the idea in her book-length study on happiness, which begins with suspicion about happiness as an unequivocal "good" thing. She argues that happiness operates as a normalizing and oppressive force, allowing

some (privileged) subjects to flourish, and others to be judged and abandoned. She describes how subjects who question or resist conventions of happiness come to be constructed as the *cause* of unhappiness. For example, the feminist "'spoils' the happiness of others" by "not finding the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising" (*Promise of Happiness* 65). But is the "feminist killjoy" really killing joy? Or is she simply "expos[ing] the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy?" (65). Ahmed acknowledges that for some, "Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places" (66).

Like feminists, anyone who reveals the workings of oppression, and thus disturbs the fantasy that happiness is possible or even ideal can be "attributed as the origin of bad feeling" (65). Those who experience racialized, gendered or sexual violence can easily be understood through this paradigm, as can the student victims of sexual violence who question, publicize or protest their experience of institutional betrayal. For example, in resisting a perpetrator's advances or reporting an assault, a survivor is *causing* the offender's unhappiness. In challenging the systems that fail to deliver justice, the survivor is *causing* unhappiness to the bureaucrats and administrators who prefer the status quo. In calling out betrayal, the survivor is *causing* unhappiness for officials whose jobs and incomes are tied the university's good name. If the survivor would just accept the rape or betrayal and move on — *if she didn't make trouble* — she could be happy, too. Thus, as trouble circulates in an affective economy, it accumulates around certain figures who (or whose actions) misalign with the status quo. And in the context of neoliberal rape culture, the woman's risky body is "already read as being trouble before anything happens" (60-61).

Being a troublemaker, experiencing alienation, or raising one's consciousness about "just how much there is to be unhappy about" does not necessarily mean being *unhappy*. For Ahmed, alienation refers to being "out of line with an affective community" (41). To become alienated is to "not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good" (41). But this does not mean there is no pleasure. In rejecting oppressive norms of happiness, one might actually have *more* access to "desire, imagination and curiosity" (70). Most often, resisting happiness involves a "strange and perverse mixture of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism" (163). For example, Ahmed describes a grief that emerges in leaving happiness behind, particularly because rejecting happiness does not necessarily "make things possible" (78). However, this is powerful, too. Consider what Berlant calls relations of "cruel optimism" — "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (*Cruel Optimism* 1). These affective attachments are cruel because they are circular and self-reinforcing; cruel optimism might look like a "vague hope that things get better, without the political action needed to actually change what is wrong" (McGregor et al. 11). But if we resist "fraying fantasies" and "dissolving assurances" (Berlant 3), and accept our proximity to unhappiness, we might access new rewards: reclamation, connection, solidarity, and "even joy in killing joy" (Ahmed 87).

I heard traces and descriptions of sadness, uncertainty, and affective alienation across my interviews, just as I heard anger, hope, and "a belief that the world can be different" (Ahmed 162). But these weren't reorientations to a former status-quo happiness. Instead, they sounded like something closer to a "queer optimism," where "hope rests upon the possibility opened up by inhabiting the negative" (161). Our conversations were heavy,

but these individuals were still committed to questioning. To me, the act of asking hard questions about the world reveals a subject who believes there could be answers different from what is already known, even if there isn't a perfect happiness waiting. Take Anna for example:

> **Anna:** And so how do make things a community issue? I don't know. It's really hard to figure out. But I believe we can. In my more sort of, like, optimistic moments, I'm like, we can abolish prisons!
> **Paige:** [Laughs].
> **Anna:** And have consent, and respect, and all that kind of good stuff. And we can have justice that actually works. [But] then I'm just like, "Gosh, can it actually happen in university?" 'Cause I think I used to think that you just had to have the right policy, just need to have the right education programs. Now I don't know if it can happen in a university, but at the very least, we can do better.

Here Anna explains how, pre-betrayal, the solutions felt easy, and the key to happiness was patience and perseverance. Now, she's more skeptical, and less inclined to offer easy trust or optimism in policies or education programs to make lasting or expansive change. Similarly, Chandra described how her goals pushed up against externally imposed limits, although these didn't alter the fact that she wanted to see change:

> **Chandra:** I want to see really big change, [but] I know that I won't be like, alive when that happens, so I want to be as many drops in the bucket as I can. So, if I can start with changing this policy, and I can start with changing policy on other campuses. And if I can start with… I don't know how I'm going to tackle the police one, because this complaint process is very slow. But I want cops to take it, [to] treat it way more legitimately. It is a crime, and I do not feel like it was treated like a crime.

Like Chandra, Kennedy continued to believe that a massive overhaul of existing systems is needed. In our interview, she called for sweeping changes to how universities are structured and operate — despite knowing these are unlikely. This concurs with scholarly research

indicating that experiences of institutional betrayal can serve as a motivator for activism to improve their institutional climate (Linder and Myers 10):

> **Kennedy:** You know, these places… I honestly think it's a systemic issue among HR professionals of a certain generation and education level.
> **Paige**: Right, yeah.
> **Kennedy:** I think the main thing that needs to happen is that whole groups of people need to be fired and universities need to be closed down. None of these people have any sense of personal responsibility. [For example], the stuff that's happening in the US at MSU [Michigan State University] with Larry Nassar.
> **Paige:** Totally, yeah.
> **Kennedy:** The president essentially got pressured to step down and she did. [But] the replacement president — the current one, I mean — he's a shithead too. Like, it's all of them! The board, the trustees who appointed him. They had the faculty and the students thank them with a no confidence motion! But they don't feel any sense of personal responsibility for this whole system of cover-ups. So even though people stepped down there, enough of the same group and the same mindset are still there. The mindset of, "It's the little girls who are the predators, here." Enough of that is around, and you just need to wipe it out.

A university firing its entire HR staff or being shut down by the government is not realistic. But as Judith Butler remarked upon visiting the Occupy Movement in New York, "If hope is an impossible demand, then we demand the impossible" (193). As Mark Stern elaborates, engaging critically with "power, inequality, and injustices ... allows us to understand and engage with the present with a historical, social and political competency" (396). This might mean coming away with impossible sounding dreams. But Stern also suggests that these are part of an "educated hope" (here he draws on Henry Giroux's concept), which, "makes the leap for us between *critical education*, which tells us what must be changed; *political agency*, which gives us the means to make change; and the *concrete struggle* through which change happens" (Giroux, qtd. in Stern 396). Kennedy demands a change that could actually eradicate the conditions for the betrayal she and others experienced. And while it is utopian,

unlikely, or even impossible, this goal did not (and does not) preclude her own action to continue fighting for change.

While Robyn still felt as frustrated as ever at her own experiences and the rarity of justice for survivors, she had gained new perspective as time (and events) had passed. The day we spoke, Christine Blasey-Ford and Brett Kavanaugh took the stand in the US Senate Judiciary Committee hearing to decide his fate as Supreme Court nominee. By chance, we'd both spent our mornings engrossed in the coverage. For Robyn, the fact that Blasey-Ford was being *heard*, and that the public, or rather, certain publics were rallying around her signalled a shifting landscape. The tentative emergence of a cultural shift in which powerful men are being held accountable for their actions made Robyn feel differently about the future:

> **Robyn**: I do kind of feel a little more emboldened now, because the #metoo thing wasn't a thing when I reported to the university. I feel like people are starting to believe survivors a little bit more. I think we have a hell of a long way to go, but I don't feel like I'm the only one anymore… That maybe sounds kind of cliché.
> **Paige:** No, not at all. I think especially with #metoo and the way those conversations are happening online, and very publicly. It's different.
> **Robyn:** Yeah [...] It just feels [different]. I've seen the way the system works, and how it *doesn't* work. We know the criminal system doesn't work. Clearly, it doesn't work, that's why no one reports. But also, the university system doesn't work, so, I still feel hyper-vigilant and scared. But I also feel a little more encouraged that there is a new system now [Laughs].
> **Paige:** [Laughs].
> **Robyn:** People taking things into their own hands in a way. And [other] people taking that a little more seriously.

That Robyn had an affective response to a digital discourse might seem surprising. Generally speaking, the idea of embodied impacts that do not require an actual *meeting of bodies* seems incongruous. But Jessalyn Keller et al. describe how affect "flows … in and through social media networks," drawing bodies and individuals into connection and relation (25). Indeed,

they argue that "digital connections and mediation between girls and women may enable new forms of solidarity" (25). Variously described as "alternative discursive spaces" and "feminist counter-publics," these are spaces where survivors can "construct a collective response to rape culture," whether that involves documenting and critiquing rape culture, satirizing victim-blaming, making testimonials, or giving support (Sills et al. 937). The affective solidarity generated by these digital discourses is "multi-faceted, thick and encompassing" (Keller et al. 29). Outside of my interviews, I gathered and examined testimony scattered across the internet, such as blog posts and tweets, where survivors described the "chill" of campus rape culture, and the "warmth" of reading other survivors' stories online. One of Keller et al.'s interviewees described being unable to sleep after reading and participating in the "#BeenRapedNeverReported" hashtag that circulated during Jian Ghomeshi's trial (28-29). Ghomeshi, a Canadian TV/radio personality who was accused of sexual violence by more than 20 women and one man, was charged with several counts of sexual assault. Even though he was later acquitted in a trial that laid bare the problems with criminal justice responses to rape, these events led to a Twitter explosion, with more than 40,000 people using the hashtag within a week (27). Prudence Chamberlain describes how "affective surges can create a 'sticky' form of social movements, in which feeling and activists become attached or adhered" (13).

The students I spoke to were engaged in both online and in-person communities of solidarity, which had practical and affective impacts. For example, Kennedy and Chandra described how talking with other students offered them advice, resources and tools to cope with their experiences of betrayal, and to resist their universities' harmful practices. Anna and

Katie additionally described how their entire friend groups were informed by their activism. Other students who had experienced sexual violence and/or betrayal could "meet them where they were at," whether that was anger or grief. In recognizing the activist work of survivors on university campuses as its own "sticky social movement," I'm reminded of Erin Wunker, Hannah McGregor and Julie Rak's discussion of "refuse" in their new collection about sexual violence in Canada's literary academic sphere. The collection *Refuse: CanLit in Ruins* gathers the testimony, critiques and creative work of students and academics reflecting on recent sexual violence and racial scandals in their field. Namely, the dismissal and so-called "witch hunt" of Steven Galloway, the former chair of Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia who was accused of sexual harassment and rape by several students; and the aftermath, during which an open letter was written in his defence and signed by well-known Canadian authors. This collection engages with "refuse" in three crucial ways:

> It is saying "no" to the serious inequities, prejudices, and hierarchies that exist within Canadian literature as an industry (often shortened to "CanLit") and an area of academic study. "Refuse" is another word for garbage, for waste. And what wastes our time, and our lives as writers and teachers, is the kind of endorsement of the status quo that we can see taken out of CanLit. But "refuse" can also mean "re/fuse," to put together what has been torn apart, evoking that idea that, after something is destroyed, something better can take its place. (McGregor et al. 9)

The students I spoke with, and those across institutions in North America are not only refusing to accept this status quo and naming their institutions' practices as refuse, but are also actively re/fusing together communities of care and resistance.

Where these stories connect back to Ahmed, Cvetkovich and Berlant most concretely is in the words my participants used to describe the future(s) and its (im)possibilities. My

conversation with Katie illustrates this well. When I asked her if she felt hopeful, she laughed and told me that she and hope had a "complicated relationship":

> **Katie:** But I'm still doing it! You don't do things if you have no hope. So there must be something there that is telling me that this is worthwhile.

Instead of a vague hope, or a patient one, she felt desire. As Ahmed explains, "Desire is both what promises us something, what gives us energy, and also what is lacking, even in the very moment of its apparent realization" (*Promise of Happiness* 31). Similarly, Shapiro notes that desire is often about gaps, or lacks; what is needed to "complete our subjectivity" (43). When I asked her what she felt looking around at the Canadian campus context, Katie described feeling desire to create, to disseminate, to protest:

> **Katie:** So in terms of how that makes me feel… [Pause]. It pushes me. Which isn't really a feeling… But I guess it is a motivator, um, to do things and create things. And I think... Since I've been an activist, I've seen and heard of others across the country, which has been pretty cool to watch. And it's like yeah, that's just it.
> **Paige:** Yeah, absolutely.
> **Katie:** I didn't even know some of the ways of pushing back were available to me until someone was like, "Hey, this is gender discrimination under the human rights code." And I was like, "What's that?" So I guess, a desire to disseminate knowledge and experience. It's like a whisper network not of perpetrators but of like, how to get what you need [Laughs].

Instead of an easily named or categorized sensation, Katie paused and said she "feels pushed." Taken together, my participants "don't know" what will work, and they recognize that all the change they want to see might not happen in their lifetimes (if at all); but they feel "emboldened" by alternative discourses, feminist counter-publics, and communities of care and resistance. They feel "pushed" to share resources and tools so that others can resist betrayal. And by engaging with one another, they build new affective economies. Their collective action has its own affective power and resonance. Each body and action adds to it,

such that their "negative feeling" and solidarity builds new atmospheres, and new capacities to affect and be affected. While sexual violence, rape culture and institutional betrayal had changed their understanding of this world, they didn't foreclose their belief in the possibilities of other worlds. And more than this, their experiences didn't make them any different from any other person who has been harmed in the world, or betrayed by the people and institutions they expected to treat them with respect and keep them safe. I want to end on that note: that while this thesis has delved into difficult affective experiences and a critical view of the world as it is, life goes on, and these students are "okay":

> **Paige:** Are there any other things that you want me to know, or that you feel are important to your story?
> **Robyn:** Mm… [Pause]. I just like really want to emphasize that… [Pause]. I'm like, okay.
> **Paige:** Mm hmm.
> **Robyn:** I just… I just don't want people to think that these things break you. I mean, yeah, they do in some ways. But I live a good life and I'm going to go on to live a good life. And of course, you know this. But I feel it's an important thing in the discussion right now. There's a lot of discussion of victims and of trauma. But also, I'm still a whole and generally happy person, who functions well in society.
> **Paige:** And are still like, a professional, and can still do your job, and be in relationships, and yeah.
> **Robyn:** Yeah. And you know, I walk through life every day, and many people around me don't know… And I guess I just hope people know that this isn't a death sentence. It's a life sentence, but it's not a death sentence.
> **Paige**: I was actually going to follow up on this from the start of our conversation… like the "victim box." Like, sort of a box that you get put into, or a way of seeing victims and survivors that isn't necessarily true at all.
> **Robyn:** Yeah. I don't want to be held with kid gloves. I like when someone says, "I'm sorry that happened to you." But then, like, we can change the topic [Laughs].

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