

# **Reading, Writing and Resistance: Feminist and Neoliberal Subjects in the Canadian Academy**

by

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## **Abstract**

Feminism has a short but important history within the Canadian academy, one whose future is put at risk by the increasing corporatization of the university. The goal of this thesis is to investigate the production of female subjectivities in the university by exploring emergent modes of feminist resistance within and against the neoliberalization of the Canadian academy. Against this backdrop, and through analysis of three case studies drawn from the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, my thesis examines and theorizes three pairs of contrasting female subjectivities within the neoliberal academy: the professionalized female academic versus the feminist academic; the entrepreneurial female student versus the indebted student; and the self-securitized woman versus the autonomous woman. Through the investigation of the resistant subjectivities in each of these couplets, I argue that it is integral for feminist movements on campus to combine a critique of patriarchy with a critique of the neoliberal university.

**Keywords:** Neoliberalism; subjectivities; Canadian universities; feminist resistance; critical discourse analysis; corporatization; intersectional feminism

## **Dedication**

To my family, for their constant encouragement, love and humour.

And for my niece Sadie, and my nephews Elijah, Owen, and Hudson, for never ceasing to inspire and amaze me.

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# Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Acronyms.....	viii
<b>Chapter 1. The Canadian University: A Key Site for Feminist Struggle .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Literature Review .....	3
1.2. Methods .....	21
1.3. Organization of the Text.....	25
<b>Chapter 2. “RIP Feminism: Apparently We Don’t Need you Anymore”: The 2009 Closure of the Guelph Women’s Studies Program .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1. 40 Years of Women’s Studies in Canada .....	32
2.2. The Professionalized Female Academic.....	34
2.3. Case Study: The 2009 Closure of the University of Guelph’s Women’s Studies Program .....	38
2.4. Resisting Corporatization in the Name of Austerity: The Production of the Feminist Academic Subject.....	45
2.5. Women’s Studies in the News .....	50
2.6. Conclusion .....	53
<b>Chapter 3. “It’s Not About One Bad Apple”: The 2007 York University Vanier Residence Rapes .....</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1. Sexual Assault on North American Campuses: A Review of the Literature.....	55
3.2. Fear, Security and Self-Securitization on University Campuses.....	60
3.3. Case Study: The 2007 Vanier Residence Rapes at York University .....	62
3.4. Resisting Self-Securitization: The Creation of the Autonomous Woman .....	67
3.5. Conclusion .....	73
<b>Chapter 4. A “Dirty Sexist Increase!”: The 2012 Quebec Student Strike .....</b>	<b>75</b>
4.1. The Political Economy of Post-Secondary Education in Quebec .....	76
4.2. The Entrepreneurial Student.....	78
4.3. The Quebec Student Strike.....	81
4.4. The Indebted Subject: Feminism and the Quebec Student Strike .....	85
4.5. Conclusion .....	91

<b>Chapter 5. Conclusion: From the Ivory Tower to the Streets .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>103</b>

## List of Acronyms

BUGS	Board of Undergraduate Studies (Guelph)
CAFE	Canadian Association For Equality
CAUT	Canadian Association of University Teachers
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CFS	Canadian Federation of Students
CHST	Canada Health and Social Transfer
CHT	Canada Health Transfer
CLASSE	Coalition Large de Association pour une Solidarité Étudiante
CRC	Canada Research Chairs
CSA	Central Student Association (Guelph)
CST	Canada Social Transfer
EPF	Established Program Financing
FECQ	Federation Étudiante Collegiale du Quebec
FEUQ	Federation Étudiante Universitaire du Quebec
GWSSA	Graduate Women's Studies Student Association (York)
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
METRAC	Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children
OISE	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
PSE	Post-Secondary Education
PLQ	Parti liberal du Quebec
PQ	Parti Quebecois
SES	Sexual Experience Survey
SAVE	Sexual Assault Voice of Edmonton
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
UBC	University of British Columbia
U of G	University of Guelph
U of T	University of Toronto
WFH	Wages for Housework
WMST	Women's Studies
WSSA	Women's Studies Student Association (McGill)

## Chapter 1.

# The Canadian University: A Key Site for Feminist Struggle

Feminism has a short but important history within the Canadian academy, one whose future is put at risk by the increasing corporatization of the university. The goal of this thesis is to investigate the production of female subjectivities in the university by exploring emergent modes of feminist resistance within and against the neoliberalization of the Canadian academy.<sup>1</sup> The context of this study is the transition from the Keynesian welfare state to the neoliberal state and the related corporatization of Canadian universities,<sup>2</sup> processes that have had profound implications for female academics and students. Against this backdrop, and through analysis of three case studies drawn from the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, my thesis examines and theorizes three pairs of contrasting female subjectivities within the neoliberal academy: the *professionalized female academic* versus the *feminist academic*; the *self-securitized woman* versus the *autonomous woman*; and the *entrepreneurial female student* versus the *indebted student*. Through the investigation of the resistant subjectivities in each of these couplets, I argue that it is integral for feminist movements on campus to combine a critique of patriarchy with a critique of the neoliberal university.

<sup>1</sup> Neoliberalism, as defined by David Harvey is: “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the states is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.” David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>2</sup> See: David Harvey, 2007; Donald Fisher et al., 2009; William Bruneau, 2004; Neil Tudiver, 1999; Dale Kirby, 2007; Sabine Milz, 2005; Enda Brophy and Myka Tucker-Abramson, 2011.

This chapter reviews the relevant historical and theoretical literature for this project, offers an overview of the methodology employed, outlines the three pairs of contrasting neoliberal subjectivities, and introduces the three case studies within which these contending subjectivities are explored. In this thesis I use social theorist Michel Foucault's two-part definition of subjectivity offered in the essay "The Subject and Power."<sup>3</sup> In this piece, Foucault describes subjectivity as a condition of being both "subject to someone else by control and dependence" and "tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge."<sup>4</sup> Rather than seeing subjectivity as formed purely through practices of domination, this conception of the subject focuses on how power is "[...] a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action."<sup>5</sup> In other words, Foucault's understanding of subjectivity here is an active one. Subjectivity is shaped from above by domination, but it is also capable of resistance from below.

In my discussion of the feminist subjectivities, I adopt Black feminist scholar bell hooks' definition of feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression."<sup>6</sup> While this definition is a fairly simple one, it is also both useful and powerful in identifying feminism as an intersectional<sup>7</sup> movement that breaks down the illusion that the liberation of women is possible while other forms of oppression still flourish. The motivation for this study comes partly from my own experience as a feminist student and teacher within the academy. This perspective has made me increasingly aware of the continued funding cuts to arts and humanities departments, the precarious status of female academic workers, the instrumentalization of knowledge, and the indebted status of female students. As women's studies (WMST) departments

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 3 (1982).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 781.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 789.

<sup>6</sup> bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw originally used the term intersectionality to "denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's [...] experiences" with sexual violence and employment. In general the term refers to the way in which varying identities intersect to be able to "better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression constructing group politics." Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1244.

struggle, as violence against women continues on campus and female students in already precarious financial situations plunge deeper into debt, there is an urgent need for a feminist critique of the neoliberal university.

## 1.1. Literature Review

This thesis is set within the walls of the neoliberal campus. As such this section begins by offering a brief history of the relationship between the rise of neoliberalism and the transformation of the Canadian university. Education in Canada is the responsibility of the provinces, although the federal government indirectly transfers money to post-secondary institutions through transfer payments, loans scholarships and fellowships.<sup>8</sup> As Keynesianism<sup>9</sup> took hold as a model for regulating the economy in the period after WWII, provinces across Canada saw significant growth in public investment in post-secondary education (PSE).

Education scholar William Bruneau lists several key factors that contributed to the expansion of PSE in Canada during the post-WWII era. As Canadians were better off in the 1960s than ever before due to lowering levels of social inequality, PSE became more accessible for the working and middle classes.<sup>10</sup> With the betterment of standards of living there was also a rise in the consumption of both material and ephemeral goods.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there was increasingly a belief among the Canadian political class in the connection between investment in public PSE and overall economic growth.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps most importantly, public and accessible post-secondary education, along with

<sup>8</sup> Donald Fisher, Kjell Rubenson, Glen Jones and Theresa Shanahan, "The political economy of post-secondary education: a comparison of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec," *Higher Education* 57 (2009): 553.

<sup>9</sup> The general principals of Keynesian economics, according to Marxist geographer David Harvey, included: "an acceptance that the state should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens, and that state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary intervening in or even substitution for market processes to achieve these ends." Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> William Bruneau, "A Canadian Journey: Post-Secondary Education Since, 1945," *Canadian Education Association* 44, no. 4 (2004): 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

health care and social assistance, was a longstanding demand of the working class, one that was granted in numerous countries in the Post-War era.<sup>13</sup> Labour researcher Ursula Huws argues that the state-provided public services of the welfare state represent “a portion of what labor has managed to claw back from capital.”<sup>14</sup> As a result of these factors, federal and provincial governments invested heavily in new colleges and universities across Canada, founding Concordia University in Quebec, the University of Prince Edward Island in Prince Edward Island, Trent University, Guelph University, York University, and Ryerson University in Ontario, the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, and University of Calgary in Alberta.

The creation of more universities was also spurred by demographics. In 1960 more than half of the population of North America was under 25 years old, a generation we know as the “Baby Boomers.”<sup>15</sup> University enrolment in Canada increased more between 1963 and 1968 than it had in the 50 years previous,<sup>16</sup> and one third of these students were women.<sup>17</sup> Sociologist Dominique Clément has argued that the 1960s saw a huge spike in social movement activism as educational accessibility and economic success led “larger numbers of people from the burgeoning middle class to participate in voluntary associations and political activities.”<sup>18</sup> The proliferation of women attending university and the political climate led to a spike in women’s groups and activism on campuses.<sup>19</sup> The university had become a key site of feminist struggle within Canada and North America.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Garton and Margaret E. McCallum argue that labour had an ambivalent relationship with the welfare state: “On the one hand, labour has long been suspicious of the welfare state as a weapon to undermine working-class radicalism. On the other hand, labour has sought to support the welfare state as a means of easing the worst excesses of capitalist exploitation.” Stephen Garton and Margaret E. McCallum, “Workers’ Welfare: Labour and the Welfare State in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Australia and Canada,” *Labour History* 71 (1996): 116.

<sup>14</sup> Ursula Huws, *Labor in the Global Digital Economy: The Cybertariat Comes of Age* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Dominique Clément, “Generations and the Transformation of Social Movements in Postwar Canada,” *Histoire sociale/Social history* 42, no. 84 (2009): 365.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>17</sup> Bruneau, “A Canadian Journey,” 26.

<sup>18</sup> Clément, “Generations and the Transformation of Social Movements,” 368.

<sup>19</sup> In 1969 women’s groups in British Columbia increased from two to over a hundred. *Ibid.*, 364.

The breakdown of the Keynesian system during the 1970s and 1980s brought a systematic shift within PSE across many provinces in Canada. Neoliberalism was not ushered in overnight of course, and cracks in the Keynesian system began to appear as early as the late 1960s. Across capitalist countries, by the early 1970s unemployment and inflation began to rise and what became known as “stagflation” set in, a condition that was not provided for in Keynesian economics and which continued for most of the decade.<sup>20</sup> The abandoning of fixed exchange rates between currencies in 1971, the shock of the OPEC oil embargo in 1973, and the fiscal crises of public administrations, triggered the fall of the Keynesian system in numerous states.

During the 1980s, governments in the United States (under Ronald Reagan), the United Kingdom (under Margaret Thatcher) and Canada (under Brian Mulroney) turned their backs on Keynesian principles for managing the economy and embraced the free market instead. This move was cemented internationally, David Harvey argues, in the 1990s with the Washington Consensus, where the tenets of global neoliberal reform were out laid out.<sup>21</sup> This manifested in numerous countries through deep cuts to public institutions in the belief that:

State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because [...] the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit.<sup>22</sup>

In his book *Universities for Sale: Resisting Corporate Control over Canadian Higher Education*, Neil Tudiver, of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) outlines several reasons why PSE in Canada was targeted for funding cuts. In 1971 unemployment rose to 6% in the country, peaking at 11% in 1982.<sup>23</sup> The House of Commons, under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, implemented wage controls between

<sup>20</sup> Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Neil Tudiver, *Universities for Sale: Resisting Corporate Control over Canadian Higher Education* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company Ltd., Publishers, 1999), 62.

1976 and 1978 believing that labour costs were one of the major causes of inflation.<sup>24</sup> Under the monetarist economic policies of the late 1970s, interest rates rose by 20%, throttling the economy and causing the federal government to impose even more fiscal restraint.<sup>25</sup>

The implementation of neoliberal policy for PSE in Canada was pursued most fervently in the 1990s however. This decade saw several major shifts in how funds were transferred from the federal to provincial governments. The first of these shifts was in 1997 when the federal government adopted the Established Program Financing (EPF) system, whereby funding was transferred to the provinces through tax points<sup>26</sup> and cash transfers.<sup>27</sup> Although these transfers were intended for areas such as health care or education, the provinces were not bound to spend the money in those areas.<sup>28</sup> In 1995 the federal government cut funding for social programs by \$7 billion and created the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST).<sup>29</sup> The CHST combined the funds for health, education, social assistance and other social programs, against leaving it up to the provinces to spend the money as they saw fit.<sup>30</sup> In 2004 the CHST was split into the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and the Canada Social Transfer (CST), thus effectively only specifying a transfer for health.<sup>31</sup> As of 2007 a commitment was made to earmark a certain amount of the CST specifically for PSE, but there is still no dedicated federal transfer.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>26</sup> A tax point is a “permanent transfer of income tax [...] from the federal government to the provincial governments. The federal government reduces its basic tax rate by a specific percentage and the provinces increase their by an equivalent.” Odette Madore, “The Transfer of Tax Points to Provinces Under the Canada Health and Social Transfer,” *Economics Division: Government of Canada* (1997).

<sup>27</sup> Canadian Federation of Students, “Funding for Post-Secondary Education,” (2013).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

The declining public funding for PSE has meant that the private sector has become a significant source of subsidy for universities. The economic climate and the search for industry funding has brought about what education professor Dale Kirby argues is the “marketization” of the university whereby the “traditional academic-humanist values, and public and citizenship interests are overtaken or displaced by market principles such as competition, profit and private interest.”<sup>33</sup> From the perspective of neoliberal economics, in the absence of outright privatization, universities should at the very least be servicing the needs of the private sector. One example of the latter option gaining traction within Canadian PSE is the changing mandate of Canada’s three research councils.<sup>34</sup> The Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada’s (SSHRC) *Strategic Plan for 2006-2011*, which transformed the institution from a granting council to a knowledge council, states that “after years of sustained public investment in research, governments expect to demonstrate the benefit of research through increased commercialization.”<sup>35</sup> As well, the 2012 federal budget, referred to as the *Economic Action Plan*, specified that federal granting councils have been strengthening partnerships between researchers and private companies in order to “target research to business needs and transfer knowledge into economic advantage.”<sup>36</sup> While the budget allocates a “reinvestment”<sup>37</sup> of \$37million for the 2012-2013 year, it emphasizes that the priority will go toward funding research that features “industry-academic partnerships,” with only \$7million being allocated to SSHRC, once again devaluing the role of the social sciences and humanities.<sup>38</sup> As English and film scholar Sabine Milz states, public funding is increasingly allocated to research that focuses on “immediately applicable knowledge production, research-corporate linkages, and competitiveness in the global

<sup>33</sup> Dale Kirby, “Reviewing Canadian Post-Secondary Education: Post-Secondary Education Policy in Post-Industrial Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* 65, no. 3 (2007): 12.

<sup>34</sup> Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR).

<sup>35</sup> SSHRC’s Governing Council, *Strategic Plan, 2006-2011* (Ottawa: 2005), 10.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Canada, *Economic Action Plan 2012* (Ottawa: 2012).

<sup>37</sup> A reinvestment does not mean additional funds.

<sup>38</sup> Government of Canada.

economy.”<sup>39</sup> Kirby argues that one of the concerns within sectors of the academic community is that the valorization of commercial research applications will come at the “expense of curiosity-driven research pursuits.”<sup>40</sup> To this we might add research pursuits that are driven by the goals of gender, racial, class, and other forms of equity.

Tuition in Canada has also risen dramatically along with the decline in public funding, and this shift has been accompanied by a marked increase in student borrowing and debt, a key theme of this thesis. Tuition fees on average rose over 135% - over six times the rate of inflation – between 1990-91 and 2000-2001 making up 19% of the revenue of Canadian universities.<sup>41</sup> In 2009 tuition reached 21% of college revenue while government funding fell from 72% to 55% between 1989 and 2009.<sup>42</sup> The past five years alone have seen a dramatic increase in undergraduate tuition fees, with average tuition for the 2012-2013 year at \$5,581 rising from \$4,747 in 2008-2009.<sup>43</sup> Government expenditure, on the federal and provincial levels, has also increasingly been distributed in the form of student loans rather than student or institutional grants.<sup>44</sup> The Canadian Student Loan Program provides over 1.9 billion in loans to 333,000 students annually.<sup>45</sup> Average student debt, as estimated by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), is currently estimated to be about \$27,000.<sup>46</sup> Despite the increase in tuition fees, and the serious drawbacks for students of loan-based financial assistance, university enrolment has also consistently been on the rise, demonstrating the ever more mandatory nature of a PSE degree.

<sup>39</sup> Sabine Milz, “Canadian University, Inc., and the Role of Canadian Criticism,” *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 27, no. 2 (2005): 129.

<sup>40</sup> Kirby, “Reviewing Canadian Post-Secondary Education,” 13.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> May Luong, “The Financial Impact of Student Loans,” *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 11, no. 1 (2010): 5.

<sup>43</sup> Statistics Canada, “Undergraduate Tuition Fees for Full Time Canadian Students, by Discipline, by Province,” *Summary Tables*, (2012) [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca).

<sup>44</sup> Laura Wright, David Walters, and David Zarifa, “Government Student Loan Default: Differences between Graduates of Liberal Arts and Applied Fields in Canadian Colleges and Universities,” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 5 no. 1 (2012): 90.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>46</sup> Aleksandra Sagan, “Average Student Debt Difficult to Pay Off, Delays Life Milestones,” *CBC News* March 11, 2014.

The expansion of PSE and the cutting of public funding has advanced in lockstep with another key theme in this thesis, the increasing securitization of the university. Cultural studies scholar Henry Giroux argues in *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* that corporate partnerships often advance the militarization or securitization of the university.<sup>47</sup> Although Giroux's account focuses heavily on the utilization of the university as a site of militaristic knowledge in the United States post-9/11, many of the same assertions apply for Canada as well. Giroux offers the example of how the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) group People Against Militarization stopped the partnership between OISE and the Atlantis Systems Corporation, a company that "provides knowledge, training and simulation equipment for the militaries of a number of countries."<sup>48</sup> Connections between securitization and the university can also come in other forms, however. As sociology PhD candidate Julie Gregory argues, the branding of universities and their securitization are "intimately linked."<sup>49</sup> By branding Gregory means how the university sells itself to its students, thereby making safety a commodity that can be consumed.<sup>50</sup> Gregory asserts that after an array of news stories emerged regarding sexual and/or violent assaults on campuses, administrators have begun to implement the "techno-securitization" of their universities.<sup>51</sup> Gregory gives the example of Carleton University's response after a sexual assault occurred on campus in 2007. The university underwent a campus wide safety audit that resulted in implementing strategies such as an emergency notification system that sent students safety alerts through campus computers, e-mails, and text messages.<sup>52</sup> Gregory argues that measures such as these put the responsibility for safety on individual students making them accountable for their own safety and that of their peers.<sup>53</sup> Liz Elliot, a former founding co-director of the Simon Fraser University Centre for Restorative Justice, calls this kind of security a "security without care", or an "anti-

<sup>47</sup> Henry Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Julie Gregory, "University Branding via Securitization, *Topia* 28 (2012): 67.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

social definition of security that undermines the importance of developing and sustaining compassionate, equitable relationships.”<sup>54</sup> After the security measures are put into place the legal and social responsibility is transferred to the individual student who must consume their way to safety.

The neoliberal transformation of the Canadian university described here, while pronounced, has also been contested regularly through acts of collective resistance. This is not to say that neoliberal restructuring is always met with resistance. Many reforms are passed through quietly and opaquely, or are at times even welcomed by students and faculty who have succumbed, or embraced, the idea of the university as a business. While acknowledging this, my study pays particular attention to how the process of neoliberalization can be disrupted, especially through movements that align students, faculty, and communities outside the university. Tudiver, as well as communication scholar Enda Brophy and English literature scholar Myka Tucker-Abramson, have argued for the formation and strengthening of unions on university campuses as one of the most effective forms of resistance to neoliberalization.<sup>55</sup> Brophy and Tucker-Abramson also identify the importance of solidarity that traverses the boundaries of the university, understanding that the politics of the university are too “intimately enmeshed within the urban, provincial, national and international fabrics for us to limit ourselves to university politics.”<sup>56</sup>

It is from the perspective of resistance that I approach my critique of postfeminism and associated neoliberal subjectivities promoted within the university. I describe the discourse of postfeminism as primarily characterized by the position that feminism is something of the “past” and/or is “unnecessary” given that its stated goal has been achieved--namely the equality of individual opportunity for women. Postfeminism is an inherently neoliberal response to the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s,

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>55</sup> Enda Brophy and Myka Tucker-Abramson, “Struggling Universities: Simon Fraser University and the Crisis of Canadian Public Education,” *Topia* 28 (2012): 32.

<sup>56</sup> Brophy and Tucker-Abramson trace the development of the Simon Fraser University downtown campuses within the Downtown Eastside (DTES), one of the poorest areas in Canada and a hub for grassroots organizing and resistance, which included a occupation of the building site by DTES activists, students, and supporters. Ibid., 28.

and one, as we shall see, which has found an ideal setting in the contemporary academy.

Postfeminism is, however, a contested term, with differing interpretations. Feminist sociologists Christina Scharff and Rosalind Gill outline four of these uses. The first designates a break within feminism that challenges the “hegemonic” Anglo-American feminism marking a shift to a more intersectional, anti-foundationalist, post-structural and post-colonial feminism.<sup>57</sup> A second one refers to the “historical shift” after second wave feminism asserting that past forms of feminism have been “judged and left wanting”.<sup>58</sup> The third use of the term emerges out of a conservative backlash against feminism.<sup>59</sup> This backlash-derived discourse, which aligns itself with neoconservative and often anti-feminist discourse, works to suggest that “all the battles have been won,” or that women “can’t have it all – something has to give,” and finally that political correctness is a “new form of tyranny [and] that (white) men are the real victims.”<sup>60</sup>

The fourth way in which Scharff and Gill suggest the term is used, one that I draw upon and advance in this thesis, is Angela McRobbie’s connection of postfeminism and neoliberalism.<sup>61</sup> In *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, McRobbie argues that postfeminism takes into account the vocabulary of feminism, using terms such as “choice,” and “empowerment,” yet folds these into a discourse of individualism.<sup>62</sup> Young women are “offered a notional form of equality, concretized in education and employment, and through participation in consumer culture and civil

<sup>57</sup> This group includes a range of feminists including, but not limited to: bell hooks, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Judith Butler, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Donna Haraway. Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, “Introduction,” *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 3.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Sociologist Jess Butler states that Susan Faludi advanced the backlash thesis stating that feminism was now seen as “spawning an entire generation of miserable, burned-out, confused women.” Jess Butler, “For White Girls Only? Postfeminism and the Politics of Inclusion,” *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 42.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Please see previous definition of postfeminism given in the introduction.

<sup>62</sup> Angela McRobbie, *Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009), 1.

society, in place of what a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer.”<sup>63</sup> Postfeminism is thus not without broad appeal or internal contradictions.

Attention to its contradictions are especially enlightening. Gill gives the example of the shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification where, in mainstream culture, women’s sexuality is presented as being “autonomous and empowering” meaning that women appear to have control over their own sexuality and bodies, while still “appearing much like previous representations of women as the objects of male fantasy.”<sup>64</sup> Another example of postfeminism’s contradictions, explored further in Chapter 3, is the promotion of self-defence classes as a form of empowerment for women. While suggesting that women will gain the power to fight off their aggressor, the promotion of this form of what I call self-securitization also implies that women who have not learned to defend or protect themselves are contributing to their own victimization, individualizing responsibility and detracting attention from male violence.

This understanding of the concept of postfeminism helps highlight these and other contradictions faced by contemporary women. As Scharff and Gill explain, McRobbie’s definition is particularly useful because it “positions postfeminism as *an object of critical analysis*, rather than as a theoretical orientation, new moment of feminism or straightforward backlash.”<sup>65</sup> Rather than adopting a nostalgic position with respect to past feminist movements, McRobbie notes that the dominant discourse of postfeminism closes off a return to past feminism and rather demands a reinvented feminist politics.<sup>66</sup>

As noted, McRobbie and other scholars following her line of research draw close connections between the tenets of postfeminism and those of neoliberalism, suggesting that postfeminist discourse began to permeate the media along with the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s. Part of the reason for the rise of this discourse, youth culture

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>64</sup> Meg Barker and Rosalind Gill, “Sexual subjectification and Bitchy Jones’s Diary,” *Psychology and Sexuality* 3, no. 1 (2012): 26.

<sup>65</sup> Gill and Scharff, “Introduction,” 4.

<sup>66</sup> Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young women in twenty-first century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

scholar Anita Harris argues, is that women have become the central figures of late modernity, or neoliberalism, marked as it is by deindustrialization, the retreat of nation-states from business regulation and social welfare, and a focus on enterprise, economic rationalism, and individualization.<sup>67</sup> The neoliberal principles of individualism and personal responsibility, self-reinvention, and self-transformation, Harris argues, have positioned women as the ideal neoliberal citizen, for two key reasons.<sup>68</sup> First, the success of feminist campaigns for the incorporation of women in education and employment came at the same time as the restructuring of the global economy, one that increasingly relied on the *waged* (and usually underpaid) as well as the *unwaged*, labour of women.<sup>69</sup> Second, the new ideology of individualism co-opted feminist ideals of choice and increased opportunities for women.<sup>70</sup> McRobbie describes this as a way in which gender was actually retrenched through the discourse of “female freedom.”<sup>71</sup>

For their part, Gill and Scharff identify three ways that neoliberalism and postfeminism overlap: they are structured by a “current of individualism” undermining the social or political; they both “demand an autonomous, self-regulating, active subject,” and both call upon women to “work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen.”<sup>72</sup> While not explicitly using the term postfeminism, political theorist Nancy Fraser similarly argues that second-wave feminism has been absorbed into neoliberal policy restructuring, or what she argues has been a resignification of feminist ideals.<sup>73</sup> Fraser demonstrates this resignification by showing how “four foci of feminist critique were taken up by neoliberalism: anti-economism, anti-androcentrism, anti-etatism, and contra and pro

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that capital has always relied on women for their unwaged reproductive labour. This point has been made most fervently by scholars from the Wages for Housework Movement: Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa. Ibid., 6.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>71</sup> McRobbie, *Aftermath of Feminism*, 55.

<sup>72</sup> Gill and Scharff quoted in Butler, “For White Girls Only?” 45.

<sup>73</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History,” *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013): 218

Wesphalianism.”<sup>74</sup> Where Keynesianism, Fraser argues, tried to “use politics to tame markets,” neoliberalism seeks to “use markets to tame politics.”<sup>75</sup>

In other words, these authors tend to converge around the idea that the women’s movement has been replaced with what McRobbie calls a “movement of women.”<sup>76</sup> Where the women’s movement was political, collective, and challenged the status quo, a movement of women, as a new and contradictory form of gender power, works to “manage the requirements of the new global economy and the availability of a feminized workforce through producing and overseeing changes for women, [and] young women in particular.”<sup>77</sup> Working and spending are now the “defining features of new modes of female citizenship.”<sup>78</sup>

While postfeminism is a dominant subjectivity on the university campus, its inculcation begins much earlier in women’s lives. The stories of economically successful women are conveyed to young women as what child and youth Studies scholar Shauna Pomerantz et al. describe as “postfeminist narratives” of Girl Power and Successful Girls, whereby girlhood, and womanhood, are considered beyond the need for “help, politics, or a language of opposition with which to name gender justice.”<sup>79</sup> The term Girl Power originally emerged out of the early 1990s Riot Grrrl punk movement in the United States, and was meant to represent a new kind of girl who was viewed as “assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity.”<sup>80</sup> However, once marketers realized the potential to “cash in” on female empowerment, Girl Power was turned into a kind of “pseudo-feminist branding” that came to reflect the “ideologies of white, middle-class individualism and personal responsibility.”<sup>81</sup> Sociologist Jess Butler

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 219-223.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>76</sup> Christina Scharff, “Disarticulating feminism: Individualization, Neoliberalism and the Othering of ‘Muslim Women,’” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 18, no. 2 (2011): 21.

<sup>77</sup> McRobbie, *Aftermath of Feminism*, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Scharff, “Disarticulating feminism,” 124

<sup>79</sup> Shauna Pomerantz, Rebecca Raby, Andrea Stefanik, “Girls Run the world?: Caught between Sexism and Postfeminism in School,” *Gender and Society* 27, no. 2 (2013): 202.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>81</sup> Marnina Gonick quoted in “Girls Run the World?” Ibid., 189.

argues that ultimately the ideal postfeminist subject is white, heterosexual and Western, but non-white participants are still implicated in postfeminism requiring them to “reject political activism in favour of capitalist consumption and cultural visibility.”<sup>82</sup>

The discourse of postfeminism, these authors argue, has serious consequences for women. This consumer-bound Girl Power, youth scholar Jessica Taft suggests, fails to “provide girls with tools to understand and challenge situations where they experience sexism and other forms of oppression.”<sup>83</sup> Empirical studies have revealed this lack of awareness of sexism and a diminished understanding of the ways in which situations of oppression can be opposed. In Scharff’s study of young women’s engagement with feminism she found that many of the women use the construction of “Muslim women as powerless victims of patriarchy” to disavow the need for feminism in their own lives.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in an attempt to determine how being smart “affected their negotiations of gender identity,” Pomerantz et al. drew on interviews with 51 academically successful girls between the ages of 12-17 in order to reveal that while the majority of the girls interviewed were aware of some form of gender inequalities in their lives, they lacked the language of feminism to name what they were experiencing as sexism.<sup>85</sup> In one example, one young woman, Lisa, said: “I always think that girls have that much more pressure than guys do, but I’m not sure why I think that way.”<sup>86</sup> Rather than gender, class, or race inequality being seen by women as systemic barriers to be resisted, these studies suggest, they are more often considered individual issues to be overcome.

In *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century*, Harris explains these ideas instilled in young women by designating two different types of “girls”: the “can-do” girl and the “at-risk” girl. Can-do girls are known for their “high ambitions with regard to their employment and their commitment to elaborate planning for success in their

<sup>82</sup> Butler, “For White Girls Only?” 50.

<sup>83</sup> Jessica Taft quoted in “Girls Run the World?” Ibid., 190

<sup>84</sup> Scharff, “Disarticulating feminism,” 128.

<sup>85</sup> The participants were even provided a definition of feminism by the authors as “when boys and men are seen as better than girls and women.” Ibid., 193.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 200.

careers,”<sup>87</sup> while the “at-risk” girls are thought to be struggling because of “poor personal choices, laziness, and incompetent family practices.”<sup>88</sup> The can-do girls, who usually come from white, middle-upper class backgrounds, are “docile good girls who uncomplainingly participate in meeting the needs of the marketplace.”<sup>89</sup> At-risk girls are usually young women who find themselves in difficult situations, often because of structural disadvantages or systemic discrimination, but this framework tends to “dramatize and individualize their problems.”<sup>90</sup> Those who benefit the most from this logic, then, tend to be those who come from privileged backgrounds.

This thesis explores the promotion of McRobbie’s conception of postfeminist discourse from above within the neoliberalization of the Canadian academy, as well as feminist contestation of this discourse--and neoliberalization itself--from below. In investigating these conflicts as processes through which subjectivities are formed, I draw on Foucaultian, autonomist Marxist, and feminist-autonomist theorists. These perspectives are useful, I argue, because of their attention to the social construction of the subject on the one hand, but also to the subject’s ability to resist on the other.

In his essay “The Subject and Power” (1982), Michel Foucault defines three different modes by which people are made subjects: objectification, where the subject is objectified through “dividing practices,” whereby the subject is “divided inside himself or divided from others (i.e. “the mad and the sane”)<sup>91</sup>; scientific classification, where a person is objectified under the scientific disciplines (i.e. “the objectivizing of the sheer fact of being alive in natural history or biology”)<sup>92</sup>; and the process of subjectification, where the subject “turns himself into a subject,” (i.e. how people have come to recognize themselves as subjects of “sexuality”).<sup>93</sup> The latter mode is useful for my analysis because of its focus on the active participation of the subject in this process. At the core

<sup>87</sup> Harris, *Future Girl*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 778

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 777.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 778.

of Foucault's idea of subjectivity is the rejection of the existence of an essential human nature, or natural, primary self.<sup>94</sup> The subject, for Foucault, "constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self," practices that are not "invented by the individual himself" but rather "are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society and his social group."<sup>95</sup> Foucault's analysis of power and the subject, I argue, offers the analytic tools necessary to reject the idea of power as a simple relationship between "[a] legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other," where subjects are reduced to the status of those who are granted rights, and those who have their rights removed.<sup>96</sup> Instead, the subject is conceived as an active one, constituted in and through everyday practices, embedded in power relations, actively participating in "struggles and confrontations" that "transform, strengthen or reverse[s]" these relations of power.<sup>97</sup>

Power, according to Foucault is the:

Multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these forces relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.<sup>98</sup>

Foucault makes clear that there is no escape from power and that we are always entwined in its relations. Power relationships are not a system of domination we can be liberated from, but rather a "set of force relations" to be worked within and upon for the

<sup>94</sup> Kathi Weeks, *Constituting Feminist Subjects*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>95</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1994), p. 282.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>97</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Random House, 1990), 92.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

formation of new subjects.<sup>99</sup> Foucault argues that because there are power relations there is the “possibility of resistance,” highlighting the fact that there is indeed room for the creation of resistant subjectivities.<sup>100</sup>

While Foucault’s later work focuses more on resistant subjectivities, some feminist scholars have argued that his vision of the subject is disempowering for revolutionary action. Philosophy professor Jana Sawicki outlines some of the main critiques in “Feminism, Foucault, and ‘Subjects’ of Power and Freedom.”<sup>101</sup> Scholars such as Nancy Fraser, Nancy Hartsock, and Barbara Christian have charged that he rejects “modern foundationalist epistemologies (and their humanistic philosophies of the subject)” and that he does not provide an adequate politics of resistance.<sup>102</sup> These critiques notwithstanding, Sawicki argues that Foucault is not incompatible with feminist critique, as long as one is “willing to jettison the utopian humanist notion of total emancipation.”<sup>103</sup> While not denying the charge that his “rhetoric is masculine, his perspective, androcentric, and his vision rather pessimistic,”<sup>104</sup> this thesis draws on Foucault’s theory of the subject as useful for two main reasons. Not only is Foucault’s conception of the subject an active one, but rather than conforming to any innate characteristics or essence, subjectivity according to Foucault is constantly in the process of transformation, a vision that is particularly appealing given that it does not reify gender.

Alongside this “active” reading of Foucault, my thesis draws on autonomist Marxism, especially its emphasis on resistance. Similar to the approach advocated by Foucault in “The Subject and Power,” autonomist Marxists have used resistance as an

<sup>99</sup> Foucault importantly states that power relationships do not exist when “the determining factors saturate the whole.” He gives the example of slavery stating that there are no power relationships when “man is in chains.” “The Subject and Power,” 790.

<sup>100</sup> Foucault, “The Ethics of Concern,” 292-293

<sup>101</sup> Jana Sawicki, “Feminism, Foucault, and “Subjects” of Power and Freedom,” *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. ed. Susan J. Hekman (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 159.

<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, Sawicki notes that these critiques of Foucault are similar to those lodged by non-feminist social and political theorists. *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

analytical starting point in their investigations of power relations. As described by Nick Dyer-Witheford, autonomist Marxism came out of a “cluster of theorists associated the *autonomia* movement of Italian workers, students and feminists of the 1960s and 70s.”<sup>105</sup> In fashioning this approach, autonomist Marxists have begun their analysis from workers’ struggles and how they “wrest control away from capital.”<sup>106</sup> The working class (and labour more generally) is defined broadly by autonomists, who argue, as Dyer-Witheford asserts, that “[in]sofar as workers, rather than being organized by capital, struggle against it, they constitute *the working class*.”<sup>107</sup> Antonio Negri has been at the forefront of expanding the definition of labour by arguing in the 1970s that along with capitalist abandoning of Keynesian regulation, the “mass worker” of Fordist/Keynesianism was being transformed into a “social worker.” With the rise of post-Fordism and neoliberalism,

*[t]he time of social labour-power is a working day so extended as not only to comprise within itself the relation between production time and reproduction time, as a single whole but also and above all to extend the consideration of time over the entire life-space of the labour market.*<sup>108</sup>

The social worker, as envisioned by Negri, thus breaks with the more traditional Marxist understanding of the waged and subjugated working class. Negri proposes a more expansive definition of what constitutes the productive (and resistant) subjects of capital, which includes students, housewives, and the unemployed.

According to Negri’s articulation of the 1980s, the socialized worker was formed out of a combination of “old” working class and “new” social movements, a nexus that arises out of “two fundamental axes.”<sup>109</sup> The first axis is “from society toward the world of labour,” which, he argues, injects into the old working class the concerns of “feminism, of ecology, of young people, of anti-racist struggle, of social activism, and, in general, a

<sup>105</sup> Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (USA: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 64.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>108</sup> Antonio Negri, “Archaeology and Project: The Mass Worker and the Social Worker,” *Revolution Retrieved: Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects (1967-83)*, (London: Red Notes, 1988), 110.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

radical cultural modification and a perspective of irreducible grassroots autonomy.”<sup>110</sup> The second is “from the world of work to society” which brings forth a critique of capitalism and of “exploitation aggravated and distributed through the most diverse strata of society,” and a demand for “increase[d] power in the shaping of the economic order.”<sup>111</sup>

The autonomists’ characteristic focus on unwaged forms of labour is closely aligned with socialist feminist scholarship that has its roots in the recognition and contestation of the unwaged work of women within the home. Founders of the Wages for Housework Movement (WFH) such as Silvia Federici and Mariarosa Dalla Costa were at the forefront of feminist autonomist theory and resistance.<sup>112</sup> WFH looked at reproductive work, which Federici describes as “the complex of activities, relations, and institutions that in capitalism produced and reproduce labour power that is people’s capacity to work.”<sup>113</sup> The family thus identified as the “other factory,” where women were “caged in a form of labour – housework – with an unlimited working-day, no wage, no vacation, no pension and no social assistance.”<sup>114</sup> The WFH movement had several goals, including achieving the simple recognition that *housework is work*; that housework was one problem that all women had in common and thereby a source of potential unity, and, that the tactic of “getting a job” in order to become free of men was alienating women who “do not want to work outside the home because they work hard enough taking care of their families.”<sup>115</sup> Significantly, WFH fought not only for compensation but also “more social services and *free social services*.”<sup>116</sup> Underscoring the affinities between these demands and those of student movements, Federici has also argued for free university education, believing that it would allow for creativity to be a “mass condition,” not just

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>112</sup> Matthew Carlin and Silvia Federici, “The Exploration of Women, Social Reproduction, and the Struggle against Global Capital,” *Theory and Event* 17, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “Domestic Labour and the Feminist Movement in Italy since the 1970s,” *International Sociology* 3, no. 1 (1988): 25.

<sup>115</sup> Silvia Federici, “Putting Feminism Back on Its Feet,” *Social Text* 9 no. 10 (1984): 340.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 341.

available to those who can afford it.<sup>117</sup> This perspective is integral for my argument that the elimination of student debt and free tuition is indeed a feminist project.<sup>118</sup> By opening up the definition of a worker to include those who did not receive a wage, feminist autonomists not only acknowledged women's work within the home, but also set the stage for the analysis of unwaged labour and the exploitation of subjects beyond the walls of the factory more generally, including students. Inspired by the writing of Federici and Dalla Costa, I look at the gendered disparities arising from both unwaged as well as waged labour in the university throughout my case studies.

Kathi Weeks brings autonomist Marxism into conversation with feminist standpoint theory<sup>119</sup> in order to describe the formation of feminist subjectivities. Feminist standpoint theory, as described by Weeks, is a "collective interpretation of a particular subject position rather than an immediate perspective automatically acquired by an individual who inhabits that position."<sup>120</sup> A standpoint, Weeks argues, "is a project, not an inheritance; it is achieved, not given."<sup>121</sup> In this way, Weeks does not propose a singular feminist subject, but instead suggests that different subject positions can lead to feminist standpoints that are "productive of multiple, subversive, collective subjects."<sup>122</sup> I draw on this idea throughout the thesis in order to describe the three resistant feminist subjectivities I see emerging from the case studies and, more broadly, to discuss the ways in which diverse feminist subjectivities resist the neoliberal university from multiple standpoints.

## 1.2. Methods

These themes and processes are brought into relief in this thesis through a feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA) of media texts connected to three cases of

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>118</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>119</sup> See: Nancy Hartsock, 1998; Dorothy Smith, 1989; Alison Wylie, 2003.

<sup>120</sup> Weeks, *Constituting Feminist Subjects*, 135-136.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 136.

women's collective resistance to the neoliberalization of Canadian universities over the last decade: the closure of the Guelph Women's Studies program (2009), the securitization of campus following the York University Vanier Residence Rapes (2007), and the proposed Quebec tuition hike (2012). Drawing on these texts, I describe the features of the postfeminist, neoliberal subjectivity that is now a dominant presence on Canadian campuses. In each of these case studies, I also investigate the forms of discourse created by movements of collective resistance against these processes in order to understand how they discursively framed their oppositional subjectivities.

Following Rosalind Gill, I use the term discourse in this context to refer to "all forms of talk and texts, whether it be naturally occurring conversations, interview material, or written or broadcast texts of any kind."<sup>123</sup> Gill helpfully describes four qualities of discourse analysis. The first is a focus on the texts themselves. In other words, discourse analysts examine the "content and organization of the texts in their own right."<sup>124</sup> The second is a focus on how language is constructive, and CDA shows *how* it constructs our understandings of the world through texts.<sup>125</sup> The third is an understanding of discourse as a social practice, meaning that discourse is defined by and contributes to the structure of society. Finally, Gill notes that discourse is perceived to be "involved in establishing one version of the world in the face of competing versions."<sup>126</sup> While acknowledging the value of all these themes, in this thesis I pay the closest attention to the latter dimension of discourse, by seeking to highlight the competing versions of the world as presented by neoliberal postfeminist discourse on the one hand, and resistant, feminist discourses on the other.

My choice of doing an explicitly *feminist* CDA is also influenced by the work of English literature scholar Michelle Lazar, who suggests that the goal of this specific approach is to show the

<sup>123</sup> Rosalind Gill, *Gender and the Media*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 58.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities<sup>127</sup>

Further to this, Lazar suggests we should address how these texts have “material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific communities.”<sup>128</sup> While Lazar acknowledges that CDA approaches its texts in a way that emphasizes and critiques the ideological underpinnings of the texts, she suggests there are important reasons for a specifically feminist version of the approach: in order to acknowledge that not all studies regarding gender are necessarily feminist, and that feminist views of gender relations are motivated by the need to change them; because there is a need to establish a “feminist politics of articulation,” whereby the research and researcher are “guided by feminist principles and insights;”<sup>129</sup> and finally because by naming the practice of certain CDAs as feminist there is an opportunity to organize in what Lazar calls a “common form.”<sup>130</sup> In line with the ultimate goal of this project, that of finding resistant feminist discourses that counter neoliberal ones, this methodological approach highlights discourse as a field of contestation.

For each of these three case studies, I examined articles and editorials from student newspapers such as *The Cannon* (the University of Guelph) and *The Excalibur* (York University), local news sources covering university issues such as *The Guelph Mercury*, *The Montreal Gazette*, and *The Toronto Star*, and national outlets reporting on the three cases, including *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*.<sup>131</sup> I also looked at a variety of documents produced by university administrations, such as press releases and blogs, as well as documents produced by government sources, including policy and

<sup>127</sup> Michelle Lazar, “Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 4, no. 2 (2007): 142.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>131</sup> These sources acted as primary and secondary sources as I was looking at them for both the background of the case studies as well as performing a feminist discourse analysis on their content.

budget documents.<sup>132</sup> Student newspapers were particularly useful for establishing elements of resistant discourse, including letters to the editors and interviews. In addition to these sources, I also looked toward alternative media online sites such as *Rabble* and *Feministing*, and to *Translating the Printemps Érablé*, the translation site run by a volunteer collective during the Quebec Student Strike that began translating francophone media coverage of the strike in an attempt to “balance the English media’s extremely poor coverage of the student conflict in Quebec.”<sup>133</sup> Finally, I looked at discursive resources created by the movements themselves that were primarily found, or linked to, on their own websites and social media.

To locate news items that were related to the case studies, I primarily used the ProQuest database. I also searched university websites using key terms.<sup>134</sup> The events investigated in this thesis are certainly of different magnitudes as far as the scale and reach of the events characterizing them. As a result, there was significantly more coverage of the 2007 Vanier Residence Rapes and the Quebec Student Strike compared to the closure of WMST at Guelph, for example. Nonetheless, in searching through these texts I was not looking for a representative sample of all texts on the chosen case study, but rather I was looking to develop a sense of the way each issue was constructed and contested discursively through its representations in print and online media. In the case of university administrators, policy makers, and others promoting the neoliberalization of Canadian campuses, I was interested in evidence of what Lazar calls “recuperative reflexivity,” whereby dominant actors are “obliged to acknowledge the existence of progressive (feminist/anti-racist/anti-homophobic) discourses for pragmatic reasons or from a desire to project an enlightened self-image,

<sup>132</sup> I give a more detailed explanation of which sources were used for each case study within the following chapters.

<sup>133</sup> *Translating the Printemps Érablé*, <http://translatingtheprintempserable.tumblr.com/101>.

<sup>134</sup> These key terms varied for each case study. For my case study on the closure of WMST at Guelph these included such terms as “Guelph women’s studies,” “austerity,” “cuts,” “University of Guelph budget,” “Save the Women’s Studies Program at Guelph,” and the name of key players involved, for example Guelph University President Alastair Summerlee. For my case study on the Quebec tuition hikes search terms included: “tuition hikes,” “Quebec Student Strike,” “Charest.” For my case study on the 2007 Vanier Rapes these included: “York University rapes,” “York University sexual assault,” “Vanier rapes,” “SlutWalk.”

yet many only superficially attend to them.”<sup>135</sup> As so-called “progressive” institutions of knowledge, universities are tasked with an obligation to pay homage to progressive politics. Usually this means using terms that remain vague such as equality rather than specifically addressing systemic issues, while often neglecting the responsibility to enact or nourish their manifestations. The surfacing of these progressive movements within administrative or political discourse is useful to my analysis as it provides a valuable marker of the contestation occurring on university campuses.

I identified discourses within these texts as postfeminist by using Jess Butler’s understanding of what constitutes a postfeminist narrative, performance, and/or text.<sup>136</sup> Butler suggests that the characteristics of such discourse include that 1) it implies that gender equality has been achieved and feminist activism is thus no longer necessary; 2) it defines femininity as a bodily property and revives notions of natural or sexual difference; 3) it marks a shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification; 4) it encourages self-surveillance, self-discipline, and a makeover paradigm; 5) it emphasizes individualism, choice, and empowerment as the primary routes to women’s independence and freedom; and 6) it promotes consumerism and the commodification of difference.<sup>137</sup> In addition to these qualities, many of the media texts that I identified as promoting postfeminist discourse also denied the impact that certain issues had on women by not referencing women or gender at all.<sup>138</sup> The air of “gender neutrality,” I argue, is actually a key characteristic of postfeminist discourse within the neoliberal university.

### **1.3. Organization of the Text**

Each chapter in this thesis discusses a different manifestation of neoliberalization: the downsizing of the university, the securitization of campuses, and

<sup>135</sup> Lazar, “Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis,” 152.

<sup>136</sup> Jess Butler expands on Rosalind Gill’s original characteristics in her article “For White Girls Only?”

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>138</sup> I elaborate on this specifically in Chapter Two and Three when discussing the closure of WMST at Guelph, and the Quebec tuition hike.

the raising of tuition. The chapters, while relating events in more or less chronological order, are organized primarily according to the degree that the feminist social movements in each of the case studies were able to reach beyond the academy through their activist organizing. While each of the case studies examined was relevant and important to communities beyond the university, the movement opposing the closure of the Guelph University Women's Studies program that is discussed in Chapter 2 was most limited to the university itself. The response to the Vanier Residence rapes, that is discussed in Chapter 3, while it did not have much of an impact off campus initially, ultimately sparked an international protest event that is held in cities around the world: SlutWalk. Finally, the Quebec Student Strike, examined in Chapter 4, created deep and powerful connections between communities on and off campus, both of which spilled out onto the streets of Quebec in solidarity against the move to raise tuition. The discussion of the cases investigated in this order is therefore intended as a way of illustrating a key point made in this thesis that connections between communities on and off campus are often a feature within the most successful responses to the neoliberalization of the Canadian university, and that university organizers need to eschew insular approaches in favour of making links to the broader community.

The three case studies each present a contrasting pair of subjectivities. While these subjectivities are organized into neoliberal/postfeminist subjectivities on the one hand, and resistant subjectivities on the other, it should be noted that particular subjects do not always fit neatly into one subject position or the other. Across university campuses and within the cases investigated in this thesis there can be found examples of students and faculty displaying contradictory characteristics of both neoliberal and feminist subjectivities. As subjects we often embody contradictory positions that do not reconcile with neatly defined ideas or politics. The purpose of organizing the subjectivities I describe according to these structuring binaries is to be able to examine the discourses that constitute and promote these subjectivities, while always remembering that social life is messy and subjects can be complicated and defy categorization.

These concerns notwithstanding, in Chapter 2 I examine the subject of the *professionalized female academic*, as well as how the restructuring of funding,

disciplines, and university labour has impacted the role of women engaged in teaching and research. Professionalized female academics are increasingly expected to fulfill the role of what McRobbie describes as the “working girl,” a subject that is urged to remain competitive and independent, prioritizing her identity as a consumer and worker by eschewing ties to collective movements such as feminism.<sup>139</sup> The professionalized female academic, I argue, has an instrumental relationship to knowledge, pursuing those areas of inquiry that are more likely to be funded within the emergent marketplace of ideas. I contrast this emergent neoliberal subject with what I call the *feminist academic*, one that pursues knowledge from the perspective of women and for the goals of emancipation. The feminist academic, I suggest, has been and continues to be produced out of the struggle to keep feminist scholarship alive in the university.

To understand this subjective couplet I use as my case study the closure of the University of Guelph (U of G) WMST program in 2009 and the “Save the Women’s Studies at Guelph” movement that attempted to save the program. The elimination of the program was justified by the U of G administration as a recession measure. At the same time however, the U of G announced they were furthering partnerships with the private sector, and maintaining their support for programs that were oriented towards the needs of industry. The Save the Women’s Studies at Guelph movement was organized by faculty members, scholars and students from Guelph and various other universities, and caught the attention of North American alternative media by encouraging people to sign petitions, attend protests, and write letters to the university’s administration. While the significant response to the imminent closure demonstrated the importance of WMST programs in Canada, for many people the closure itself points to a troubling (and characteristically neoliberal) trend of eliminating programs that aren’t seen as commercially viable. The case also demonstrates how academic feminists are rendered precarious by the corporatization of the university, the distribution of public funding, and the attack on feminism being carried out within and outside of the academy. Using sources derived from the Save the Women’s Studies at Guelph movement, as well as newspaper articles, university press releases and statements from U of G’s president, I

<sup>139</sup> McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 72.

show how despite the neoliberal university's seeming embrace of women and diversity on campus, its rhetoric undermines the feminist case for WMST programs in Canada.

In chapter 3 I look at the regulation of women's bodies in the physical space of neoliberalizing university campuses through the emergence and promotion of the *self-securitized subject*, exploring how women's minds and bodies become controlled by fear. The self-securitized subject is responsible for her own safety and security according to the individualistic logic of neoliberalism. To theorize this subject I draw on Hardt and Negri's useful (albeit genderless) discussion of the securitized neoliberal subject in *Declaration*<sup>140</sup>. I contrast the self-securitized female subject with what I call the *autonomous woman*, a subject who promotes and utilizes the collective power of women's movements to resist both men's violence and the imposition of fear, control and self-securitization. In outlining this subject, I use the work of autonomist feminist scholars Silvia Federici, Kathi Weeks, and Mariarosa Dalla Costa.

This chapter identifies these opposed subjectivities through an investigation of the controversies surrounding two rapes that occurred in Vanier Residence at York University in 2007. With the first week of classes in fall of 2007 two men, one of whom was a York alumnus, entered the residence and raped two women. After discussing the specifics of this case, I situate it within broader trends, surveying what we know about the incidence of sexual assault against female students on North American campuses,<sup>141</sup> as well as how women who are assaulted have to do deal with public and private scrutiny such that most cases of sexual assault go unreported. Drawing on news articles, university bulletins and press releases, I show how in its response to the Vanier Residence rapes the university promoted a self-securitized framework where women's actions were seen as the way to prevent, or at least minimize, their chances of getting assaulted. In response to the neoliberal emphasis on the role of the individual women in preventing rapes, or instigating them, I describe how in this case women fashioned a collective response to self-securitization and victim-blaming through the formation of the

<sup>140</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo-Navis, 2012).

<sup>141</sup> Mary P. Koss et al., 1987; Bonnie S. Fischer et al., 2000; Walter Dekeseredy and Katherine Kelly, 1993; Martin D. Schwartz and Molly S. Leggett, 1999; Kimberly Talbot, 2010.

SlutWalk, as well as organizing a postering campaign on campus turning the sentiment of “Don’t get Raped” into that of “Don’t Rape.”

In Chapter 4 I focus on the subject of the *entrepreneurial student*, examining how under neoliberalism the female student is increasingly expected to become both the embodiment of a worthwhile (self)investment and a subject that is likely to pay off her debts. Here I use the work of Foucault to identify how the female student is expected to become a kind of “entrepreneur of herself,” one that incurs “expenses by investing to obtain some kind of improvement” – namely, education.<sup>142</sup> I also borrow the concept of the *indebted subject* from autonomist theorist Maurizio Lazzarato’s *The Making of the Indebted Man*,<sup>143</sup> and Hardt and Negri’s *Declaration*,<sup>144</sup> in order to theorize the emergence of resistance based around the imposition of student debt. The indebted subject, I argue, claims her own indebtedness as a platform on which to build a movement for free and accessible education for all.

These contrasting subjectivities are highlighted through an examination of the proposed 75% tuition fee hike in Quebec and the resultant student strike, a conflict I maintain demonstrates the possibilities of feminist resistance against student debt in Canada. The strike against the proposed tuition increase began on February 13, 2012 and lasted until a tuition freeze was negotiated in September 2012, mobilizing over 175,000 students as well as faculty and the general public. While the Quebec Student Strike was not predominantly a feminist movement, my thesis explores the emergence within the strike of a specifically feminist critique of debt. Despite the fact that women make up the majority of students enrolled in PSE institutions they still make less than males in the workforce, are more likely to work in precarious or part time positions, and are still more likely than men to be unemployed.<sup>145</sup> While these gaps do lessen with the increase in education that is obtained, the numbers still demonstrate the extent to which

<sup>142</sup> Michel Foucault, “14 March 1979,” *The Birth of Biopolitics Lectures at the College de France*, eds. Michael Senellart, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 229.

<sup>143</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2012).

<sup>144</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo-Navis, 2012).

<sup>145</sup> “The Persistent Gap: Understanding male-female salary differentials amongst Canadian academic staff,” *CAUT Equity Review* 5 (2011): 2.

women are especially impaired in paying off their student debt. In the analysis of this case study I used texts, including a statement issued by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute and Geography & Environment Studies at Concordia, to highlight the particular critique advanced by women within the struggle. I also draw on media interviews with feminist organizers to outline the way in which women's voices (even within social movements like that of the Quebec Strike) are still marginalized within the neoliberal university. This chapter makes links between women's issues within the academy and social issues more broadly.

The conclusion, Chapter Five, argues that further scholarship in this area and feminist movements on campus needs to extend and expand a critique of both patriarchy and neoliberalization within the university. Finding common themes across all three cases of resistance, I show how each one took aim at and broke down the individualistic ethos of postfeminism and encouraged collective and community-based responses. I also suggest directions for future research that would extend a more broadly intersectional feminist critique of the neoliberal university.

The social movements featured in each of these case studies, while taking place at different universities in Canada, all share a frustration with the neoliberal turn of the university and the way in which women are implicated within it. Importantly, as the last chapter argues, the success of these movements was and continues to be intimately tied with their connection to communities outside of the academy. Rather than seeing the university as an institution isolated from society, these movements demonstrate how the academy can be put to the service of the broader social good. In investigating feminist resistance within the academy, I set out to reveal the cracks in a postfeminist discourse that trumpets the gains women have made while ignoring the fundamental inequalities that still exist. To contrast this dominant discourse, I argue that the movements within this thesis offer us useful tools in how to create meaningful feminist resistance.

## Chapter 2.

### **“RIP Feminism: Apparently We Don’t Need you Anymore”: The 2009 Closure of the Guelph Women’s Studies Program**

This chapter contrasts the neoliberal subjectivity of the professionalized female academic with the resistant feminist subjectivity of the feminist academic. The professionalized female academic is immersed within the increasingly competitive race for secure academic positions, having to overcome systemic barriers without complaint. As this chapter documents, the Canadian university has increasingly become a space utilized and transformed by government and industry to further their own political and economic interests, including the corporatization of the university. This transformation directly inhibits critical studies in general and feminist studies in particular.

My case study focuses on the closure of the University of Guelph (U of G) Women’s Studies (WMST) program in 2009. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, Dalton McGuinty’s provincial Liberal government froze funding to Ontario universities leading to a series of cutbacks to institutions of higher learning across the province. The U of G administration justified the closure of the program by suggesting it was the result of austerity measures that the university was forced to take.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on news articles, university bulletins and blog posts, this chapter shows how, in an environment dominated by postfeminist thought WMST, much like feminism, was presented as an unnecessary expense.

<sup>1</sup> Alastair Summerlee, “Tough Times Call for Tough Measures, Smart Decisions and Creative Ideas,” *From the President’s Window*, January 14, 2009, [http://www.uoguelph.ca/president/blog/2009/01/tough\\_times\\_call\\_for\\_tough\\_mea.php](http://www.uoguelph.ca/president/blog/2009/01/tough_times_call_for_tough_mea.php).

In what follows, I first offer a compressed history of the emergence and institutionalization of WMST in Canada. I follow this history by drawing on Angela McRobbie's discussion of the "working girl" and related concepts in feminist scholarship in order to describe the postfeminist subjectivity of what I call the professionalized female academic. Surveying reports on gender in Canadian academia, I demonstrate how the university is still an unequal environment for women. I then proceed to my case study, the 2009 closure of the U of G WMST program, detailing the events that led up to the closure. In response to the administrative emphasis on individual competitiveness in academia and "bottom lining" the university, I discuss how the professoriate and students resisted the closure through close scrutiny of the administrative procedures leading to the decision, demonstrations on campus, letter writing campaigns, and reaching out to other campuses and feminist forums. Through these actions I propose that a counter-subjectivity to the professionalized female academic became visible, a resistant subject I call the feminist academic. Although the WMST program was ultimately not saved, I argue that the response highlights the continued importance of feminist critique within the Canadian university.

## **2.1. 40 Years of Women's Studies in Canada**

WMST is still a comparatively new discipline within the university and remains in a constant state of flux, consistently and increasingly having to justify its very existence within the academy.<sup>2</sup> WMST, at its core, challenges the patriarchal conceptions of "truth" within the academy. As Simone de Beauvoir wrote in 1952, "representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth."<sup>3</sup> The women's movement and WMST aimed to take apart what was deemed as "objective, neutral and true" by the Western intellectual

<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive overview of the beginning of Women's Studies in Canada can be found in the compilation of essays from the founding women in: Wendy Robbins, Meg Luxton, Margrit Eichler, Francie Descarriers, eds. *Minds of Our Own: Inventing Feminist Scholarship and Women's Studies in Canada and Quebec, 1966-76* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in: Meg Luxton, "Feminism and the Academy: Transforming Knowledge?" in *Reconsidering Knowledge: Feminism and the Academy*, edited by Meg Luxton, Mary Jane Mossman (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 25.

tradition.<sup>4</sup> It called attention to raced and gendered subjects, and resisted and complicated the idea of the universal subject, embodied in the white middle-class male.<sup>5</sup>

The creation of WMST in Canada can be thought of as an example of what autonomist Marxist Gigi Roggero calls “institutions of the common.”<sup>6</sup> Neither “happy islands,” nor “free communities sealed off from exploitative relationships,”<sup>7</sup> Roggero notes that institutions of the common are built up at the border of the university.<sup>8</sup> Unlike understandings of the common that see it as a pre-existing territory to be defended, Roggero identifies it as the “organization of something that did not exist beforehand, or the new composition of existing elements in a subversive social relationship.”<sup>9</sup> The establishment and institutionalization of “oppositional knowledges” such as black, race, ethnic, women’s and LGBTQ+ studies was not the “opening of new lines of inquiry” proposed from above by the academy, Roggero points out, but rather the result of demands from social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>10</sup> In the words of gender studies scholar Meg Luxton, the first WMST course offered at the University of Toronto in 1970 and the first degree-granting program offered at the University of British Columbia in 1971 were born just as much from an “intellectual project,” as they were from a “political movement.”<sup>11</sup>

Feminist scholarship in the 1960s came out of both frustration and excitement. Frustration because women’s critiques of the academy were being “ignored or denied,” and excitement for the way female scholars were developing new “ways of seeing,”

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Thornton, “Universities Upside Down: The Impact of the New Knowledge Economy,” *Reconsidering Knowledge: Feminism and the Academy*, eds. Meg Luxton, Mary Jane Mossman (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 79.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Gigi Roggero, *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*, trans. Enda Brophy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>11</sup> Luxton, “Feminism and the Academy,” 27.

learning and knowing.<sup>12</sup> The voices of women were not only discredited, but completely absent within an academy structured on a masculinist, and often outright misogynist culture.<sup>13</sup> The transformation of knowledge production and the academy in which it became situated was central to the goals of feminism within the academy. Sociologist Dorothy Smith argues that there was not just a struggle between the academy and the purveyors of these oppositional knowledges, but also an internal struggle within the feminist protagonists of the incipient movement: “For us, the struggle was as much within ourselves with what we know how to do and think and feel, as with the regime as an enemy outside us. Indeed, we ourselves had participated, however passively, in that regime.”<sup>14</sup> These dual struggles are still very much a part of the experience of women within the contemporary academy, particularly when battling the continued instrumentalization of knowledge in the academy.

## 2.2. The Professionalized Female Academic

Secure faculty positions in Canada are in high demand and are creating an increasing competitive job market, a situation that contributes, to the creation of a form of subjectivity I call the professionalized female academic.<sup>15</sup> The professionalized female academic is affected on the one hand by the scarcity in full time positions and funding (due, in large part, to the neoliberal restructuring of the university), and on the other by the ongoing systemic, and gendered obstacles to advancement that women in academia continue to face. The performance of unpaid work has increasingly become a part of the path to success, with internships, professionalization activities, and committee work becoming central to the evaluation of academic and professional commitment. The

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Smith, “Women’s Studies: A Personal History,” *Minds of Their Own: Inventing Feminist Scholarship and Women’s studies in Canada and Quebec, 1966-76*, eds. Wendy Robbins, Meg Luxton, Margrit Eichler, and Francine Descarriers (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 69.

<sup>15</sup> In a 2010 Statistics Canada Survey of university full time staff it was found that in 2009 there were 20,685 tenured professors down from 26,487 in 1999. While the number of tenured professors went down, the number of sessionals rose from 2,865 to 3,135. Stephanie Findlay, “Whatever happened to tenure?,” *Maclean’s*, January 17, 2011.

professionalized academic must remain competitive gearing their research towards instrumental ends guided by self-interest and preservation rather than “intellectual curiosity or social needs.”<sup>16</sup>

The professionalized female academic has many elements in common with the figure of the “well-educated working girl,” proposed by McRobbie as one of the key subjects of postfeminism.<sup>17</sup> The well-educated working girl is expected to “prioritize earning a living as a means of acquiring status, ensuring an independent livelihood, and gaining access to the world of feminine goods and services.”<sup>18</sup> While financial independence from men was and is one of the achievements that the women’s movement fought for, McRobbie argues that the qualifications that women accrue work to “function as a mark of a new gender divide,” whereby “[y]oung women are ranked according to their ability to gain qualifications which provide them with an identity as female subjects of capacity.”<sup>19</sup> While there is a pervasive acknowledgement of past feminist struggles that have led to the “new-found freedoms of young women in the West,” McRobbie suggests that there is also a pervasive lack of acknowledgement of the “enduring inequities, which still mark out the relations between men and women.”<sup>20</sup> Individuals are now left to self-monitor their life and career choices, and a lack of success is now chalked up to poor life decisions. Women thus must become

more reflexive in regard to every aspect of their lives, from making the right choice in marriage, to taking responsibility for their own working lives and not being dependent on a job for life or on the stable and reliable operations of a large bureaucracy, which in the past would have allocated its employees specific and possibly unchanging roles.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 15.

<sup>17</sup> McRobbie proposes that there are four spaces of postfeminist attention: the fashion-beauty complex, the space of education and employment, embodied in the work girl, the space of sexuality manifested in the phallic girl, and finally the space of globalization epitomized in the global girl. Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009), 59.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

For the professionalized female academic, in the neoliberal university, the very acknowledgement of systematic oppression, or mention of current inequalities, is deemed to be an excuse for making poor life decisions, not working hard enough, or not setting lofty enough goals.

One example of the growing competitiveness that characterizes academia, and women's underrepresentation in the upper echelons of it is the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program. The program, established in 2000 by the federal government, provided for 2,000 scholars that would be appointed to prestigious research positions across the country.<sup>22</sup> By 2008, however, only 22.5% of these scholars were women, leading eight female professors to file a human rights complaint against the federal government.<sup>23</sup> As a result of this complaint, an agreement was signed whereby data on Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, racialized minorities, and women was compiled by the CRC secretariat.<sup>24</sup>

While the traditional focus on feminist organizing has been on hiring equity, the neoliberal response has been that such provisions threaten "excellence." This commonly held misconception was refuted by the 2012 Expert Panel on Women in University Research report *Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension* that demonstrated "Barriers and biases, many of them subconscious, remain factors that negatively affect the career trajectories of women researchers," and that the reduction of these biases through equitable measures will "promote excellence by encouraging research contributions from a range of individuals."<sup>25</sup> As we shall see in what follows, the privileging of "excellence" over, say, representation as a principle guiding policy is a key discursive tenet of the neoliberal university. This logic is critiqued, among others, by former comparative literature professor Bill Readings, when he argues that "excellence,"

<sup>22</sup> Wendy Robbins and Vicky Simpson, "Pyramids of Power: A Statistical Snapshot of Women in Post-Secondary Education in Canada and Some Ideas for Making Change," *Atlantis* 33 no. 2 (2009): 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> The CAUT Alternative Fifth-Year Review found multiple inequities in their report in 2005 that surveyed the current CRC chairs. *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Council of Academics, "Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension," *The Expert Panel on Women in University Research* (Ottawa: 2012), 137.

is a criterion that supposedly “overcomes the problem of the question of value across disciplines,” often “serve(s) the purpose of exclusion.”<sup>26</sup>

Apparently undeterred by the CRC controversy, in 2010 the federal government created the Canada *Excellence*<sup>27</sup> Research Chairs, of which all of the 19 chosen Chair holders were men.<sup>28</sup> The Council of Canadian Academics was asked to investigate and found a lack of transparency within government, the three Canadian granting councils, and private sector funders.<sup>29</sup> The report identified several barriers that women face in gaining access to influential research and faculty roles including social capital/schema barriers;<sup>30</sup> an emphasis on conventional successful career models; lack of a proactive process to seek non-dominant models; lack of support for, or valuing of, women in research; barriers related to family or community responsibilities,<sup>31</sup> the research process, and characteristics of grant program requirements as barriers.<sup>32</sup> The Council of Canadian Academics’ report suggests a consistent resistance from government and private funding organizations to create positions that are more accessible to those who are currently underrepresented.

The findings are in line with the general trend within the university of women being disproportionately represented in the most precarious ranks of university professors. The Canadian Association of University Teachers’ (CAUT) Equity Pay Gap report found that despite the fact that the percentage of women in faculty positions has increased from 16.5% in 1986 to 33.1% in 2006, women still occupied fewer positions in all ranks except in what the report lists as “other” – a category that includes “contract faculty, instructors, lecturers and other precarious positions.”<sup>33</sup> Women in general, at the

<sup>26</sup> Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>28</sup> Leo Charbonneau, “Canada not alone in terms of gender disparities in research,” *University Affairs*, November 22, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Council of Academics, “Strengthening Canada’s Research Capacity,” xiii.

<sup>30</sup> These barriers included the “[d]ominance of white males in decision-making roles” creating an idea of what “good scholars and scholarship looked like.” *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>31</sup> This includes family and child care responsibility; parental leave; mobility factors. *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>32</sup> This includes lack of equity oversight, workload barriers, and upstream paucity. *Ibid.*, 213

<sup>33</sup> CAUT, “The Persistent Gap: Understanding male-female salary differentials amongst Canadian academic staff,” *CAUT Equity Review* (Ottawa: 2011): 2.

undergraduate, graduate, and faculty level are still underrepresented in numerous major disciplines, especially in the fields of math and science.<sup>34</sup>

Given this context, women in WMST are in a doubly precarious position, first as women, and second as women who are pursuing knowledge in a field that is not considered economically profitable and, as we shall see, one that is constantly at risk of having its institutional support eliminated. Academic women who are in WMST are therefore studying what Foucault calls a “subjugated knowledge,” one that is a part of a “whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity.”<sup>35</sup> Positioned in the undervalued realm of subjugated knowledges, WMST is seen as an unprofitable critical discipline, inhabited by those who have not conformed to the standards of “professionalization” now thought essential to success in the neoliberal university.

### **2.3. Case Study: The 2009 Closure of the University of Guelph’s Women’s Studies Program**

The 2009 closure of the Guelph Women’s Studies program is just one example of cutbacks at Canadian universities.<sup>36</sup> The freeze on provincial funds decreed to Ontario universities in 2008 inspired particularly dramatic cuts including the closure of entire departments. On the heels of the global financial crisis, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that there would be a government-funding freeze for universities

<sup>34</sup> Canadian female faculty members across major disciplines: Education: 49.9%; Fine Arts: 42.2%; Health Professions: 39.5%; Social Sciences: 34.9%; Mathematics and Physical Sciences: 15.2%; Engineering & Applied Sciences: 12%. Aniko Varpalotai, “The Status of Women at Canadian Universities and the Role of Faculty Unions,” *Forum on Public Policy: A Journal at the Oxford Round Table* (2010): 2.

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, “7 January 1976,” *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Centre for Studies in Social Justice at University of Windsor in 2013, suspended admission to 20 humanities programs at the University of Alberta in 2013, suspension of 8 programs at Mount Royal University in 2013, Arts and Culture at the University of Regina.

due to a “worsening economic climate.”<sup>37</sup> U of G had entered into the recession with a \$16-million deficit that they planned to eliminate in the following two years, but with government funding no longer able to offset the inflation costs, the university announced that they needed to find “about \$7.5 million in savings from its operating budget.”<sup>38</sup> In an online blog post U of G President Alastair Summerlee warned of a number of austerity measures that would be put in place over the next year<sup>39</sup> including “eliminating courses, majors and programs with lower enrolments; closing or amalgamating some units, activities and functions; and moving to focus on a reduced number of activities.”<sup>40</sup> In late February 2009 it was announced that the WMST program was slotted for potential closure, and in April that year the University Senate voted to close several programs, including classical languages, urban landscape management, majors in rural development and sociology and minors in educational psychology and environmental studies, and the WMST program.<sup>41</sup>

Given this scenario, it is not surprising that the primary justification given by the administration for the closure of WMST was financial. U of G WMST professor and former program coordinator Helen Hoy suggests this excuse was ill-founded when one considers that the program was run on just \$78,000 per year, employing only a part-time coordinator and staff person.<sup>42</sup> Karen Wendling, a philosophy professor at U of G, noted that the program’s budget was equivalent to the “cost of two university advertisements in *The Globe and Mail*,”<sup>43</sup> emphasizing that advertising and exposure were more important to the university administration than maintaining a critical program promoting women’s

<sup>37</sup> Summerlee, “Tough Times Call for Tough Measures.”

<sup>38</sup> Magda Konieczna, “U of G Must Cut Operating Budget by \$7.5M,” *The Guelph Mercury*, December 2, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> These measures included: a six month hiring freeze, postponement or suspension of major building projects, reducing departmental discretionary expenditures, tuition hikes, and restructuring practices to accommodate the personnel losses due to voluntary early retirements and resignations. Summerlee, “Tough Times Call for Tough Measures.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Kim Mackrael, “Organic Agriculture Program Escapes Cuts,” *The Guelph Mercury*, June 21, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Vivian Belyk, “Women’s Studies on the Chopping Block,” *Herizons Summer* (2009): 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 6.

perspectives in academia. All told the cancellation of the program only saved about 0.17% of the university's budget shortfall.<sup>44</sup>

In a vain attempt to save the department, WMST coordinator Norman Lewis sought to cut the budget even further, but the Dean of Arts remained impassive suggesting that the program was "no longer viable."<sup>45</sup> Where other programs (such as the organic agriculture major) were given a one-year reprieve and were asked to look for industry funding and teaching support, WMST was not afforded the same opportunity.<sup>46</sup> Illustrating a key logic of the neoliberal university, the ability to create industrial partnerships was thus seen by the administration as central to the viability of a program, meaning the programs that do not have a "commercial value" are seen as disposable.<sup>47</sup>

The second argument that the university administration employed was that, as Meg Luxton notes, WMST was "out-dated and at an impasse" given its relatively low enrolment.<sup>48</sup> WMST found it difficult to increase enrolment because of it being chronically underfunded.<sup>49</sup> To substantiate the argument that WMST was out-dated, the Dean of Arts told the Board of Governors that the WMST curriculum had not seen a revision since 1994.<sup>50</sup> Despite a chronic lack of funding, Hoy corrected the Dean stating that she had led a complete revision in 2000.<sup>51</sup> In fact, a senate review in 2007 had declared that the WMST program was an "intellectually stimulating program ... in the

<sup>44</sup> Luxton, "Feminism and the Academy," 32.

<sup>45</sup> Belyk, "Women's Studies on the Chopping Block," 6.

<sup>46</sup> University of Guelph, "Senate Moves Change Forward," *Campus Bulletin*, April 08, 2009. [http://www.uoguelph.ca/news/2009/04/senate\\_moves\\_ch.html](http://www.uoguelph.ca/news/2009/04/senate_moves_ch.html).

<sup>47</sup> In the spring of 2010 the school announced a gift of \$3 million from the grocery store chain Loblaws to establish a research chair in sustainable food production. "Don't erase women's studies: profs to U of G; Faculty urge colleagues to fight for program, which is on chopping block as part of the cuts," *The Guelph Mercury*, March 18, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Luxton, "Feminism in the Academy," 32.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Thana Dharmarajah, "U of G cuts academic programs; Women's studies and organic agriculture among those eliminated," *The Guelph Mercury*, March 29, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Helen Hoy, "Motion at Senate to Overturn Board of Undergraduate Studies Decision to Eliminate WS," April 2009, 3.

vibrant, young discipline of women's studies," and plans to expand the program had been suggested.<sup>52</sup>

Crises are often used to push in radical reforms to policy from above. In this case, both university executives and the provincial and federal governments used the 2008 recession as a kick off point to further corporatize universities, eliminating dissident programs within them. In her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein refers to such "orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of a catastrophic event," as "disaster capitalism," where dramatic adverse events, whether economic, environmental, or military, are viewed as opportunities to restructure from above.<sup>53</sup> This process can be seen at the micro-scale within the university: the rise of tuition fees, the growing partnership of universities with business, the increase of private security on campuses, and the cancellation of programs that might be seen as critical of established hierarchies are all, as we shall see in this chapter and those that follow, measures that have been brought in or scaled up due to crisis.

In an uncanny illustration of shock doctrine thinking, U of G President Alastair Summerlee repeatedly discussed the 2008 recession in his blog, positively spinning the crisis as a time of "opportunity," that provided a "reality check."<sup>54</sup> In one post he wrote that, "the remedies [to the financial crisis] will require changing the way in which we approach our core business of teaching, research and learning."<sup>55</sup> In another post Summerlee wrote that the theme of 2009 is "Getting Back to Basics," whereby "it's more important than ever for U of G to re-examine its pursuits, practices and visions, and concentrate its efforts on the programs and ideas that can truly make a difference in the budding new reality."<sup>56</sup> The cancellation of WMST just three months later suggested the program had no place in this "new reality." Summerlee wrote "there is little value in innovations that cannot be put into practice," meaning that knowledge that cannot

<sup>52</sup> Belyk, "Women's Studies on the Chopping Block," 6.

<sup>53</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, LLC., 2007), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Alastair Summerlee, "It's Guelph's Time," *From the President's Window*, February 11, 2009. [http://www.uoguelph.ca/president/blog/2009/02/its\\_guelphs\\_time.php](http://www.uoguelph.ca/president/blog/2009/02/its_guelphs_time.php)

<sup>55</sup> Summerlee, "Tough Times Call for Tough Measures."

<sup>56</sup> Summerlee, "It's Guelph's Time."

actively contribute to the capitalist economy has no place within the walls of the university.<sup>57</sup> His vision for the academy is therefore a thoroughly neoliberal one, whereby, no matter the discipline, “useful” knowledge is that which can be used to generate wealth for the private sector.<sup>58</sup>

In Summerlee’s posts, and interviews with local newspapers he continually takes a “common sense” approach to his decisions. This approach to university regulations stems from premier Mike Harris’ “Common-Sense Revolution” in 1995, which included the deregulation of tuition fees and the granting of degrees from private universities, a distinct turn towards the neoliberalization of the Canadian university.<sup>59</sup> Summerlee uses this neoliberal logic to deflect personal or political blame onto impersonal market forces. For instance, when questioned about his pay raise of \$87,000 from 2006-2008, bumping up his pay to more than \$440,000 annually he stated that it was in line with the market, even though he is one of the highest paid university presidents in Canada.<sup>60</sup> In regards to the maximum allowed hike of tuition fees he stated “Frankly, it’s the cost of education,” and goes on to explain that anecdotally he has heard that students are pleased to be at the U of G.<sup>61</sup> Summerlee’s response to the tuition hikes followed this same rhetoric:

On one level I would love there not to be increases in fees ... But I’d love there not to be increases in gas prices, too. Like most people I would rather that inflation didn’t exist, but it does. I am also very keen that we preserve all of the things that we do here, that we think are important and unique.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Thornton, “Universities Upside Down,” 83.

<sup>59</sup> Donald Fisher, Kjell Rubenson, Glen Jones and Theresa Shanahan, “The political economy of post-secondary education: a comparison of British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec,” *Higher Education*, 57 (2009): 552.

<sup>60</sup> “Don’t Put U of G in Financial Bind,” *The Guelph Mercury*, April 5, 2008.

<sup>61</sup> “Students Plan to Rally to Protest Cost of Tuition,” *The Guelph Mercury*, October 24, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Rob O’Flanagan, “U of G to Hike Tuition; President Alastair Summerlee Says Maximum Increase Necessary to Offset University’s Major Deficit,” *The Guelph Mercury*, April 4, 2008.

By linking tuition increases to the seemingly natural force of the market, which works to naturalize the market itself, Summerlee detaches the rise of tuition costs and future austerity measures from the responsibility of the university and the government.

Amid the cuts, the neoliberalization of the university proceeded apace however. In January 2009, U of G hired Kevin Hall, a self-proclaimed “cheerleader for research and business together,”<sup>63</sup> and engineering consultant, as the new Vice-President of Research. In a speech to the Guelph Partnership for Innovation he remarked “You know what? If research was relevant, it should have some kind of application to industry, whatever that industry is.”<sup>64</sup> He went on to say that “It’s not always the idea that we’re developing in the university. It’s the product.”<sup>65</sup> Hall makes clear that knowledge that does not actively contribute to the capitalist economy is not “relevant,” leaving little room for critical feminist scholarship which challenges the very corporate structure of the university.

While the executives of U of G had very little to say specifically on the record about cutting the WMST program, what was not said was often just as indicative of their outlook. By not mentioning the program, the administration obscured the way that austerity measures disproportionately affect women. The Associate Vice-President (Academic) Serge Desmaris, argued it was “not about women’s studies at all,” and that the program was just “part of a package of programs that could be discontinued.”<sup>66</sup> Desmaris argued that the message that WMST is being directly targeted “could not be further from the truth,” stating that the program was “Clearly [...] not of interest to the majority of students.”<sup>67</sup> In a letter published in *The Guelph Mercury* by Zhaleh Afshar, a public educator representing the Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis organization,<sup>68</sup> she argued that the decision did, in fact, have a lot to do with WMST: “During economic downturns, gender-based inequalities grow – women are disproportionately impacted by

<sup>63</sup> Liane Fisher, “U of G Research Head Champions Close Ties for Business, Science,” *The Guelph Mercury*, January 23, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> “Don’t Erase Women’s Studies.”

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> An organization that works to end violence against all women and children.

poverty and families face the strain of job cuts and other economic stressors.”<sup>69</sup> The seeming “impersonal rationality” of gender neutrality conceals what Dorothy Smith describes as the “male subtext” that is “integral, and not accidental,” and classically neoliberal.<sup>70</sup>

In cutting WMST, the administration found an unlikely ally in an outspoken member of the U of G’s Central Student Association (CSA). In an interview with *The Cannon*,<sup>71</sup> CSA Academic Commissioner Christi Garneau-Scott argued that WMST wasn’t “meeting the needs of its students” and that while the budget sparked the conversation she believed that program was not worth the amount being spent on it.<sup>72</sup> Garneau-Scott, whose controversial vote went against her representative student association,<sup>73</sup> responded to her critics stating that she didn’t “think the major [in WMST] is what made us discuss those issues on campus. I think it’s the type of people we have here, and those conversations are going to continue whether we have a program or not.”<sup>74</sup> Garneau-Scott denies the importance of having a dedicated space and program to discuss issues of gender, race, and oppression more generally. This kind of gender neutrality, or lack of consideration of gender, is one of the main arguments used to delegitimize not only WMST programs, but feminism in general. As legal scholar Margaret Thornton argues, the remasculinization of the university hides behind the tenets of the knowledge economy: “rationality, neutrality and technocratic knowledge.”<sup>75</sup> It is in this context that a national debate, sparked by the proposed closure of the U of G WMST program, began.

<sup>69</sup> Zhaleh Afshar, “Women’s Studies Course too Valuable to Lose,” *The Guelph Mercury*, April 2, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> Thornton, “Universities Upside Down,” 87.

<sup>71</sup> The Cannon is a U of G student run newspaper.

<sup>72</sup> Greg Beneteau, “CANNON EXCLUSIVE: Garneau-Scott answers her critics,” *The Cannon*, May 18, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> The vote passed with a vote of 8-6 at the University Senate’s BUGS. Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Thornton, “Universities Upside Down,” 77.

## 2.4. Resisting Corporatization in the Name of Austerity: The Production of the Feminist Academic Subject

The closure of the WMST program caused a stir on the U of G campus and off. The Save Women's Studies at Guelph campaign was started by students and faculty on campus, but quickly circulated throughout feminist media channels and was supported by students and staff at other Canadian universities. With a very short window of opportunity, students and faculty organized quickly. What became evident through this resistance was the emergence of what I call the feminist academic subject, within which a vindication of the importance of feminism and its collective values directly opposed the university's corporate agenda.

The feminist academic resists the prioritization of individual over collective responsibility. bell hooks, reflecting on the aftermath of women's movement, writes that

[s]uddenly, faced with making a living in the real "white supremacist capitalist patriarchal" world, many of us began to shift our values away from the freethinking of those heady days of cultural revolution to compromise and adjust. More and more, everyone around us was becoming increasingly conservative.<sup>76</sup>

hooks argues that "All the women who gained more power and money as a result of the feminist movement who now choose to disassociate themselves from its politics do so in part to win favor with men."<sup>77</sup> Rather than women working to dismantle a patriarchal society, hooks argues that they instead work to achieve equality *within* it.

The academy, while more welcoming to women and disadvantaged groups more generally than in the past, is still dominated by "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." Contrary to the postfeminist narrative, Luxton argues that many of the problems that feminist scholarship sought to address still remain pressing.<sup>78</sup> The continued opposition to feminism and WMST programs in the university demonstrate that there are still significant barriers for women, particularly those coming from Indigenous, rural,

<sup>76</sup> bell hooks, *Communion: The Female Search for Love*, (New York: W. Morrow, 2002), 46.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>78</sup> Luxton, "Feminism and the Academy," 36.

racialized, or immigrant communities.<sup>79</sup> It is not enough to have certain women represented in the academy; education must be available and inclusive to all women. The feminist academic acknowledges their precarious position within the academy, recognizing the necessity of their work and the toll that their commitment to feminist principles, has on their lives. Rather than engaging in purely instrumental knowledge the feminist academic, as feminist and postcolonial theorists M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty write, continues to

work across the fictive boundaries of the academy, constantly wrestling with its costs, and knowing that the intellectual, spiritual and psychic stakes are high, but believing that it is imperative to engage in the struggles over the production of liberatory knowledges and subjectivities in the belly of the imperial beast.<sup>80</sup>

At U of G feminist students and professors demonstrated an unwillingness to remain passive, despite their already precarious positions, forming their own feminist subjectivities.

Faculty members from various disciplines added their voices in protest writing a letter to their colleagues that urged them to pressure Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) to overturn the decision.<sup>81</sup> They argued that the program was one of the only places where societal barriers such as racism, sexism and homophobia can be discussed.<sup>82</sup> Wendling pointed out that the savings created from getting rid of the WMST program would be the equivalent of changing to a cheaper brand of toilet paper.<sup>83</sup> In addition, a number of professors gathered an ad hoc committee to document the procedural errors and misinformation that was circulated by executive staff as well as the media more generally. The compiled information resulted in a *Motion at Senate to Overturn Board of Undergraduate Studies Decision to Eliminate WS*. The motion details

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>80</sup> M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty, "Cartographies of Knowledge and Power: Transnational Feminism as Radical Praxis," *Reconsidering Knowledge: Feminism and the Academy*, eds. Meg Luxton and Mary Jane Mossman (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 60.

<sup>81</sup> "Don't Erase Women's Studies."

<sup>82</sup> Andrew Garvie, "Women's Studies on the Chopping Block," *The Cannon*, March 20, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Judith Sainsbury, "Loss of women's studies a blow," *The Guelph Mercury*, April 21, 2009.

the failure of BUGS to keep faculty and students informed and the extensive procedural errors and the failure to follow due process.<sup>84</sup>

In February 2009, when it was announced that WMST was up for *potential* closure, the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts informed the WMST Coordinator that the program had been cancelled instructing staff to "cease enrolling students."<sup>85</sup> WMST faculty were never formally notified of the decision<sup>86</sup> resulting in the majority of faculty being informed indirectly. The motion also refutes the Dean's claim, in his report to BUGS, that the Associate Dean undertook a consultation process with WMST faculty and students.<sup>87</sup> In fact only the Executive WMST Committee was invited, and were assured that a larger group meeting would take place, which never happened.<sup>88</sup> The motion also details the incorrect information that was circulated to BUGS. WMST, unlike what was reported in the media, in fact had 35 majors, 16 minors, and 3 areas of concentration.<sup>89</sup> The quick turnaround of the decision, and the general opaqueness of the process gave the professoriate little time to assemble, yet in that short time a number of scholars from numerous disciplines came forward and clearly articulated their vindication of the importance of feminism in the academy.

Feminist news outlets circulated a petition to save the program. *Feministing*, an "online community for feminists and their allies,"<sup>90</sup> featured an article by a member of the movement calling for support from members of the online feminist community: "So what can you do? You can send emails! Let Guelph know that cutting Women's Studies

<sup>84</sup> I feel the need to go over this document closely as it expressly demonstrates how Women's Studies was put in a compromised position.

<sup>85</sup> Helen Hoy, "Motion at Senate," 1.

<sup>86</sup> The Women's Studies Committee is comprised of about 80 faculty members from across the university that meets to ratify decisions around curriculum. Ibid., 1.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>89</sup> An Area of Concentration is equivalent of a Major, but in a 3-year program. The figures given in the Dean of Art's reports on enrolment were incredibly low and show slight decreases in enrolment between the 2007 and 2008 year while the figures provided by the document show a marked increase. Ibid., 2.

<sup>90</sup> "About," *Feministing*, 2014.

anywhere is a blow to feminism everywhere!”<sup>91</sup> The cause was also featured on *Bitch Media*’s<sup>92</sup> weekend news roundup featuring links with where to get more information.<sup>93</sup> A call for action was also circulated amongst several listservs and forums asking supporters to send letters to the administration.

Undergraduate students across the U of G campus organized a petition, online groups, and protests in an attempt to save WMST. On March 26, 2009 over 100 students protested the administrative offices at U of G demanding that WMST be saved.<sup>94</sup> Students from other campuses added their voices to save the WMST program. The McGill University Women’s Studies Students Association (WSSA) wrote a letter to Summerlee in solidarity with students at U of G. The WSSA wrote:

Women’s Studies is a discipline concerned with crucial issues of power and justice, too seldom addressed in other academic fields. Far from peripheral, the analyses forwarded in the Women’s Studies program are central to understanding the uneven distribution of wealth, power, safety and life chances which shape the lives of the vast majority of people.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, in the Trent University newspaper *The Arthur*, Jon Lockyer, wrote

It would seem that given the current restructuring of the neo-liberal framework in larger society, that in much the same way as gendered, racialized, poor, and working class people continue to bear the brunt of this economic failure, so too will university programs that seek to represent these very people.<sup>96</sup>

The statements of support for WMST from the McGill WSSA and *The Arthur* draw attention to the way in which issues taught within WMST programs resound outside of

<sup>91</sup> ONTHEWING, “Save Women’s Studies at the University of Guelph!” *Feministing*, March 16, 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Bitch Media is a an organization that aims to “provide and encourage an engaged, thoughtful feminist response to mainstream media and popular culture.” “About Us,” *Bitch Media*, 2014.

<sup>93</sup> Kelsey Wallace, “Yippee-ki-yi-yay, it’s a Weekend Roundup!” *Bitch Media*, March 30, 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Joanne Shuttleworth, “Student Unrest Erupts; as Many as 100 Rally at the University of Guelph to Demand Courses be Retained,” *The Guelph Mercury*, March 27, 2009.

<sup>95</sup> wssamcgill “Save Women’s Studies at Guelph!,” Women’s Studies Students’ Association of McGill University, March 28, 2009.

<sup>96</sup> Andrew Garvie, “The struggle to “Save Women’s Studies” continues...” *The Cannon*, March 31, 2009.

the academy and argue for the important role WMST programs play in challenging capitalism and oppression more broadly.

Students also rallied on April 7, 2009 at the final decision meeting where the WMST program was cut. One first year student, Molly McManus, who spoke from the visitor's gallery, cited lack of transparency as one of the major deficiencies of the process, quoting Summerlee's own words from his video podcast back to him, demonstrating the hypocrisy of his decision: "I am confident that working together, we will continue to push the boundaries and make the University of Guelph proud of the institution we have become."<sup>97</sup>

After the decision, students gathered on November 13, 2009 to collectively mourn the loss of their department. About 100 supporters in black clothing held a mock funeral on the U of G campus.<sup>98</sup> Headstones were carried inscribed with "RIP Feminism: Apparently We Don't Need You," calling attention to the symbolic rejection of feminism that the university had performed.<sup>99</sup> The eulogy read by Professor Karen Houle, noted that the closure of WMST amounted to a "disappearance" where students were left without a sense of closure.<sup>100</sup> One student who organized the funeral, Veronica Majewki, said that the funeral was meant to give students a forum to grieve, not only as a reminder of the past, but also to "empower them to do something" in the future.<sup>101</sup> Although the WMST program was not reopened, the conflict surrounding its closure did bring the need for feminism on university campuses back to the forefront of discussion.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Greg Beneteau, "Women's Studies gone but not forgotten," *The Cannon*, November 16, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Renee Bondy, "Women's Studies: Is it time to change course?" *Herizons* Fall (2010): 18.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>101</sup> Beneteau, "Women's Studies Gone but Not Forgotten."

## 2.5. Women's Studies in the News

The closure of WMST at U of G, thanks to the student and faculty organizers, attracted national media attention. Less than a year after the closures, discussion of WMST programs in the *National Post* and on the CBC radio program *The Current* sparked a national debate about the value of WMST and feminism more generally. In late 2009 and early 2010 the *National Post* posted editorials and opinion pieces that condemned WMST programs, and feminism more generally, describing them as “angry, divisive and dubious programs.”<sup>102</sup>

One article, written by the editorial staff of the *National Post*, claimed that feminism, and in particular WMST scholars, have “done untold damage to families, our court systems, labour laws, constitutional freedoms and even the ordinary relations between men and women.”<sup>103</sup> These “damages” include fighting for employment equity where “hiring quotas [are now] based on one’s gender or race rather than on an objective assessment of individual talents,” preferential treatment in the justice system for “traditionally disadvantaged groups,” universal daycare and the belief that the only differences between males and females are “relatively insignificant, external features.”<sup>104</sup> The author transforms the accomplishments of the women’s movement into a list of injustices that women have perpetrated towards men, a common trait of anti-feminist discourse. The article also asserts that the outcome of feminist movements has meant a greater role for government in society, whether it be the redirection of social spending towards childcare or regulations requiring hiring parity. While the article thus embodied many of the qualities of the individualistic and competitive characteristics of postfeminist discourse, but the response to it emanated from a resistant group of feminist academics and their supporters.

<sup>102</sup> “Women’s Studies is Still With Us,” *National Post*, January 26, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

While not all of the responses were positive,<sup>105</sup> many of them called out postfeminist logic.<sup>106</sup> Professor Susan B. Boyd, chair in Feminist Legal Studies at UBC, wrote in to say that “it is hard to believe that the editorial board of a national newspaper would so thoroughly dismiss the initiatives that have been taken in our country to redress the historic inequalities experienced by many women as well as minority groups.”<sup>107</sup> Another letter, from Penni Stewart, the president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and Katherine Giroux-Bougard, the national chairperson for the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), dismissed the author’s notion that “women and men are treated equally, and feminism has fundamentally undermined individual rights, the court system and Canadian society.”<sup>108</sup> Rather, as Stewart and Giroux-Bougard wrote,

[o]n the planet the rest of us live on, women continue to earn significantly less than men for performing the same work, are underrepresented at every level of government, are more likely to live in poverty and are at a significantly higher risk of violence and abuse.<sup>109</sup>

Stewart and Giroux-Bougard went on to point out that WMST programs are at risk due to cutbacks by “underfunded universities” that put “programs that lack a commercial value on the chopping block.”<sup>110</sup> Letters from readers outside of academia also recognized the importance of WMST and the historic subordination of women and disadvantaged groups more generally. As one reader wrote,

[t]he *Post* editorial board needs to think about the messages it is sending and take responsibility for encouraging the deep-rooted, systemic oppression shared by women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, disabled individuals, gays and people of lower classes.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Some argued that what feminists wanted wasn’t equality and rather “domination.” Wally Keeler, “The Great Value of Women’s Studies,” *National Post*, January 27, 2010.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Susan B. Boyd, “Women’s Studies Enriches the Nation,” *National Post*, January 28, 2010.

<sup>108</sup> Penni Stewart and Katherine Giroux-Bougard, “Women’s Studies Courses – ‘Essential to an Equitable Society,’” *National Post*, February 2, 2010.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Stacey Hyde, “Women’s Studies Enriches the Nation,” *National Post*, January 28, 2010.

While the comments in praise of the article were few, they are representative of an anti-feminist, neo-conservative voice. Interestingly, the arguments in the *National Post* articles against WMST and the contending ones of those who vindicate its importance have one thing in common: they both associate feminism as being oppositional to market-based individualistic thought. This demonstrates the degree to which feminism is viewed by critics and supporters alike as not only oppositional to the current climate of neoliberalism, but as a movement with the power to influence change.

The feminist academic was thus thrust into the spotlight and took center stage in a national debate that even prompted the editor of the *National Post*, Anne Marie Owens, to respond. While Owens wrote that there are ways in which to effectively critique feminism, particularly what she identifies as the “extreme of the women’s movement,” she acknowledged that “finding fault with all of feminism and viewing every case that Women’s Studies has championed as being regressive for society, rather than being an attempt to correct a historical imbalance is misguided.”<sup>112</sup> Owens went on to write about the importance of feminism in her own life reflecting on the gains in the workplace and in the home that have direct ties to the women’s movement. Owens does state that she no longer needs her “non-sexist word finder” which she believes is a “sign of how far things have progressed,” but she concludes in a way that echoes the feelings of many of the feminists who wrote in: “On a good day at work, it’s easy to believe the need for Women’s Studies programs is over in an age of such equality. An editorial that delivers such a sweeping indictment of those gains reminds us that work of such courses is not over yet.”<sup>113</sup> While those who condemned WMST including the author of the original editorial might have seen themselves as dismissing feminism, what they demonstrated instead was a drastic need, and often a demand for, a continued feminist movement.

<sup>112</sup> Anne Marie Owens, “‘Neanderthal jackass?’ Not me,” *National Post*, February 05, 2010.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2.6. Conclusion

The subject position inhabited by the professionalized female academic often stifles resistance within the academy. Yet, many academics and students find a way to reject this position of instrumentalization as a tool of silencing, and rather point towards the need to critique the structures that perpetuate systems of oppression, patriarchy and white supremacy within the academy. The feminist academic prioritizes solidarity over individualism and competitiveness, finding community within struggle. The threat not only to WMST departments, but to feminism itself in the academy demands the attention of those who still view the university as an important space for critical education. Voices are stifled when they are dictated by gendered funding allocation and cut off from resources. The dissenting voices that are excluded as a result are disproportionately those of women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ groups, whereas the supposedly gender-neutral, “rational” voice, extolling austerity, competition, and markets, so often represented by white cis-gender males, grows louder. Continuing to disassemble “gender-neutral” policies within and outside of the university is critical to pointing out and confronting the underlining and naturalized systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and white-supremacy.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **“It’s Not About One Bad Apple”: The 2007 York University Vanier Residence Rapes**

While the previous chapter contrasted the postfeminist subject of what I call the professionalized female academic and the resistant subject, the academic feminist, this chapter contrasts what I theorize as the self-securitized woman with the autonomous woman. Through the promotion of this subject position, I argue, the responsibility of the university to create safe campuses for all people manifests not as a collective effort, but through the individualized securitization of women’s bodies.

I investigate the production of the self-securitized woman through an analysis of the discourses, controversies and conflicts surrounding two rapes that occurred in Vanier Residence at York University in 2007, when during the first week of classes a York alumnus and his friend went into the building and raped two young women. Drawing on news articles, university bulletins, and statements from the university administration, I show how the university adopted and promoted a “self-securitized” framework according to which women’s own actions were seen as the best way to prevent, or at least minimize, their chances of getting assaulted.

While the cause of these controversies was a profoundly disturbing event, an investigation of the conflicts surrounding the rapes demonstrates that the contemporary university remains a key site of feminist struggle. I theorize the resistant subjectivity that emerged as the autonomous woman, who is self-determining rather than self-securitizing. Counterposing autonomy as a collective and feminist response to individualism as a neoliberal value, I explore this subjectivity by looking at the response by feminist campus organizations to the security discourse promoted by the media and the public after the rapes. I conclude by investigating the formation of the SlutWalk, an

annual march against victim-blaming and slut-shaming, organized in the aftermath of the rapes which addressed the persistent discourse of self-securitization. Before dealing with the specific case of the York rapes, I offer a review of the scholarly literature on sexual assault on North American campuses however in order to provide a broader context and illustrate the very urgent need for a feminist response to sexual assaults of women on university campuses.

### **3.1. Sexual Assault on North American Campuses: A Review of the Literature**

While several studies have been conducted over the last 30 years in the United States on the incidence of sexual assaults on university campuses,<sup>1</sup> there is a distinct lack of research when it comes to identifying the number of sexual assaults on Canadian campuses.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding this serious gap in our knowledge, the studies surveyed here offer a statistical review of the rates of sexual victimization of women on university campuses. Taken together, these studies demonstrate a consistent, even structural pattern of victimization of women, as well as an associated perpetuation of rape myths, at post-secondary institutions on North American campuses.

Mary P. Koss et al. conducted the first major study on campus sexual assaults in 1987 in the United States using what came to be known as the “Sexual Experience Survey” (SES).<sup>3</sup> By incorporating different types of victimization, Koss explored how women were victimized in ways that were not necessarily criminal.<sup>4</sup> Koss et al. found that, when their evidence was extrapolated for average college tenure of 4 years, that nearly 1 in 4 women were victims of rape.<sup>5</sup> In addition they found that 33% of men

<sup>1</sup> Mary P. Koss et al., 1987; Bonnie S. Fischer et al., 2000; Martin D. Schwartz and Molly S. Leggett, 1999; Kimberly Talbot, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Dekeseredy and Katherine Kelly, 1993; Walter Dekeseredy, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Martin D. Schwartz and Molly S. Leggett, “Bad Dates or Emotional Trauma?: The Aftermath of Campus Sexual Assault,” *Violence Against Women* 5 (1999): 260.

<sup>4</sup> Bonnie S. Fisher, Leah E. Daigle, and Francis T. Cullen, *Unsafe in the Ivory Tower: The Sexual Victimization of College Women* (California: Sage Publications, 2010), 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

surveyed would commit a sexual assault if they knew they would not receive punishment for their actions.<sup>6</sup>

The 2000 United States' National College of Women Sexual Victimization Study, led by Bonnie S. Fischer et al., supported Koss et al.'s findings.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, Fisher et al.'s study also looked at the rates of verbal abuse and stalking on university campuses finding that 75% of women had experienced at least one type of verbal abuse and 13.1% had been stalked at least once.<sup>8</sup> In 1993 Walter DeKeseredy and Katherine Kelly conducted the first ever Canadian national representative sample survey on the "sexual, physical, and psychological victimization of women in university/college dating relationships therefore."<sup>9</sup> The study found that 45.1% of women and 19.5% of men indicated being victimized since leaving high school.<sup>10</sup> The Canadian statistics suggest similar rates of sexual violence are perpetrated against women on Canadian and American campuses.

While all of the studies cited here included both date rape and acquaintance rape within their definitions of rape, Martin D. Schwartz and Molly S. Leggett's 1999 study on the emotional trauma of rape survivors found that there was statistically no difference in the severity of the mental effects reported by women who had been raped by force as compared to those that were raped while intoxicated.<sup>11</sup> Notably the authors found that 79.3% of women who were raped while intoxicated blamed themselves.<sup>12</sup> Moreover the prevalence of such rape myths<sup>13</sup> were shown to be surprisingly widespread in Kimberly K. Talbot et al.'s study, where they found that 22% of people surveyed thought women

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>9</sup> Walter DeKeseredy and Katherine Kelly, "The Incidence and Prevalence of Women Abuse in Canadian University and College Dating Relationships," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 18, no. 2 (1993): 137.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>11</sup> Schwartz, "Bad Dates or Emotional Trauma?" 263.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>13</sup> Rape myths are "prejudicial, stereotypes, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists." Kimberly K. Talbot, Karen S. Neil, Linda L. Rankin, "Rape-Accepting Attitudes of University Undergraduate Students," *Journal of Forensic Nursing* 6 (2010): 172.

were partially or totally responsible for rape if they were in a deserted space, one-third if they were drunk, and 37% if they did not say no clearly enough.<sup>14</sup> Because of the perpetuation of rape myths and the stigmatization of acquaintance rape in particular, Schwartz and Leggett argue that many women will not reach out to rape counsellors or mental health service and are thereby often left confused as to why they are suffering from emotional pain and mental distress.<sup>15</sup>

These studies on the prevalence of acquaintance rape and rape myths are, in part, in reaction to a large body of backlash literature that blames the victim and/or excuses the perpetrator of responsibility for the assault.<sup>16</sup> Feminist backlash literature is characterized by Susan Faludi, author of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, as a “preemptive strike that stops women long before their goals are achieved.”<sup>17</sup> One strain of backlash literature is aimed at delegitimizing the strides made to pass laws that protect rape victims.<sup>18</sup> For instance professor of Social Welfare Neil Gilbert has argued that date or acquaintance rape is the product of women regretting consensual encounters.<sup>19</sup> Gilbert argues that women in college are “too educated not to realize they had been raped,” and if they didn’t report it to authorities then it did not happen.<sup>20</sup> One of the leaders of the backlash movement, journalist Katie Roiphe, the author of *The Morning After: Fear, Sex and Feminism*, has argued that women are not affected by what is a “bad date that might have gone too far,” and that it is the women’s movement that has encouraged women to feel violated.<sup>21</sup>

In response to the backlash discourse, Susan Estrich, a former law professor at Harvard University, defined two different types of rape: “real rape,” where the

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Barnett, “How Newspapers Frame Rape Allegations: The Duke University Case,” *Women and Language* 35, no. 2 (2013): 14.

<sup>15</sup> Schwartz, “Bad Dates or Emotional Trauma,” 264.

<sup>16</sup> Neil Gilbert, 1991; Katie Roiphe; 1994; Christina Hoff Summers, 1994). Talbot, “Rape-accepting attitudes,” 172.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine van Wormer, “Anti-Feminist Backlash and Violence against Women Worldwide,” *Social Work and Society International Online Journal* 6, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Schwartz, “Bad Dates or Emotional Trauma,” 252.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 253.

“perpetrator is a stranger; the act is committed in a public setting; the victim shows signs of resistance or being overpowered,” and “simple rape,” where the survivors are “raped in private settings and by people they know.”<sup>22</sup> While Estrich understands that “simple rape” is “real rape,” she argues that survivors of “simple rape” are often made to provide proof of struggle, and/or to have a witness to ensure that the sexual act was not consensual.<sup>23</sup> Taken together these studies demonstrate a consistent, even structural pattern of victimization of women and perpetuation of rape myths, at post-secondary institutions.

There is ample evidence of both overt and discursive violence against women on Canadian campuses, and within the past few years this violence has become a prominent topic for discussion in the media. In 2013 sexist chants encouraging non-consensual sex were performed during frosh week at a number of schools across Canada, including St. Mary’s University and the University of British Columbia (UBC).<sup>24</sup> As well, in 2014 there were two cases that demonstrated the use of social media in perpetuating campus misogyny. At University of Ottawa five men, four of whom were elected student officials, held a “sexually aggressive Facebook group chat,” about the student president Anne-Marie Roy that was later posted online.<sup>25</sup> In December 2014 an incident at Dalhousie University was in the news when a Facebook group of male fourth-year dentistry students came to light in which the students had posted misogynistic comments about their female colleagues that included “crude jokes about sedating them for rough sex,” and a poll on who’d they rather have “hate” sex with.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, these stories all received widespread media attention due in large part to the pressure that students put on the universities in question to address these issues in a meaningful and lasting way.

<sup>22</sup> Fisher, *Unsafe in the Ivory Tower*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> The chants were full of lyrics such as: as “Y-O-U-N-G at UBC we like em young Y is for yourrr sister O is for ohh so tight U is for Under age N is for non consent F is for goo to jail [sic].” Arno Rosenfeld, “‘N IS FOR NO CONSENT’ Sauder First-Years Led in Offensive Chant,” *The Ubysey*, September 6, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Feibel, “Sexually Aggressive Group Chat Between Student Officials Posted Online,” *The Fulcrum*, February 28, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Jane Taber, “Dalhousie Dental School Investigates Misogynistic Facebook Comments,” *The Globe and Mail*, December 16, 2014.

Incidents of overt violence against women, on the other hand, are more likely to enter the mainstream media if they fit into a particular rhetoric, usually violence that is committed by a stranger. The most infamous act of violence against women on university campuses was the Montreal Massacre, where 14 women were shot and killed at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique.<sup>27</sup> On December 6, 1989 Marc Lepine entered a classroom of engineering students, separated the men out from the women, and opened fire on the women shouting "I hate feminists,"<sup>28</sup> before turning the gun on himself.<sup>29</sup> In Lepine's suicide note he called the murders a "political act" and blamed feminists for "ruining his life."<sup>30</sup> In recent years violence against women has persisted. Recent instances of sexual violence that attracted mainstream attention took place in 2012 at Ryerson University with at least six women reporting being assaulted by a stranger on campus,<sup>31</sup> and in 2013 UBC was the scene of another crisis as a serial sexual assaulter groped, punched, and tried to physically drag at least six women.<sup>32</sup>

Despite evidence that people known to the victims actually perpetrate the vast majority of assaults on university campuses, the safety measures taken by university administrations tend to be directed towards the outlying areas of the campus. For instance, at UBC a private company was hired to patrol residences and the RCMP

<sup>27</sup> Names of the women killed: Genevieve Bergeron, Nathalie Croteau, Anne-Marie Edward, Maryse Laganiere, Anne-Marie Lemay, Michele Richard, Annie Turcotte, Helene Colgan, Barbara Daigneault, Maud Haviernick, Maryse LeClair, Sonia Pelletier, Annie St-Arneault, Barbara Klucznik Widaiewicz.

<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that in nearly 25 years after the Montreal Massacre, much of the language and sentiment professed by Marc Lepine was echoed by Elliot Rodger, who killed six people and injured 13 at and around the University of California: Santa Barbara, specifically targeted women. Rodger, who killed himself after the spree, blamed women in his manifesto for the fact that he was 22 and still a virgin stating that he would "take great pleasure in slaughtering all of you. You will finally see that I am, in truth, the superior one. The true alpha male." Alex Grieg, "I will slaughter every single blonde s\*\*\* I see': Lonely Killer Posted Chilling Video Warning of 'Retribution' because he was still a Virgin at 22," *The Daily Mail*, May 24, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Edith Zorychta, "Acts of memory: the legacy of the Montreal massacre," *CAUT Bulletin* 47, no. 10, (2000).

<sup>30</sup> Sharon Rosenberg, "At Women's Studies Edge: Thoughts Towards Remembering a Troubled and Troubling Project of the Modern University," *Troubling Women's Studies: Past, Presents and Possibilities*, eds. Ann Braithwaite, Susan Heald, Susanne Luhman and Sharon Rosenberg (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2004), 199.

<sup>31</sup> Luc Rinaldi, "Campus sex assaults spark protest," *The Eyeopener*, September 18, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Bigam, "Women assaulted in third sexual assault at UBC in as many weeks," *The Ubysey*, October 19, 2013.

deployed bike patrols, police-dog services and officers to protect the campus while searching for the perpetrator of the assaults.<sup>33</sup> One student interviewed by *The Globe and Mail* described police and security as being “everywhere.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, after the sexual assaults at York University students began calling for a greater security presence. James Sheptycki, a criminology professor at York University, said that students went from having protests about cameras on campus to asking for them,<sup>35</sup> illustrating how students can thus become active in their own securitization.

### **3.2. Fear, Security and Self-Securitization on University Campuses**

As a result of these kinds of events, women on university campuses have become the subject of intense regulation through both external and internalized forces. In Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s 2012 pamphlet *Declaration*, they outline the four subject positions they see as emerging under neoliberalism, among which they include “the securitized subject.” The securitized subject is immersed within the “total surveillance” that Hardt and Negri argue is the condition of society as a whole.<sup>36</sup> They suggest that fear, above all, is what drives people to be complicit in the consolidating surveillance regime, accepting the role of both “watcher and watched.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the authors emphasize that while there may be fear among populations of “ruling powers and their police,” it is not as strong as the fear of “dangerous others and unknown threats – a generalized social fear.”<sup>38</sup> This generalized social fear acts as a way to ensure allegiance and secure legitimacy from the public, producing a situation where people actively participate in and even call for their own securitization.

<sup>33</sup> Ian Bailey and James Bradshaw, “UBC facing security crisis in shadow of sex attacks,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Joe Fiorito, “Say cheese (or chili) and smile for the cameras,” *The Toronto Star*, January 25, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo-Navis, 2012), 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 24.

Communication scholar Fiona Jeffries argues that by separating the personal experience of fear from underlying politics, fear of violence is “delinked” from neoliberal restructuring.<sup>39</sup> Fear is then displaced onto the individual and removed from the political sphere often working to distract from more systemic problems of oppression.<sup>40</sup> Jeffries cites urban scholar Stephen Graham who argues that everyday spaces that have high “circuits of movement” are being touted as “zones of threat.”<sup>41</sup> Graham suggests that this is used as a justification for increased security and police presence.<sup>42</sup> Given the high-profile events outlined in the previous section, I argue that the university can be considered one of these “zones of threat,” where the fear of violence is used to regulate the movement of bodies through the process of external and internal securitization. While all bodies are subject to this discourse, the fear of rape particularly targets women.

The internalization of surveillance strategies creates what Foucault calls an “efficiency of power” whereby

[h]e who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle in his own subjection.<sup>43</sup>

The self-securitization of the female subject, the inscribing of her guilt if she does not remain vigilant as she was warned, allows “external power” (for instance the power of the state or capital) to eliminate its physical presence taking on what Foucault calls a “non-corporal” form that is constantly present in each individual.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Fiona Jeffries, “Fear Disarmed,” *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 12 (2013): 333.

<sup>40</sup> For example Stephen Harper in August 2014, refused to call for an inquiry into the murdered and missing indigenous women in Canada stating “We should not view this as a sociological phenomenon. We should view it as a crime.” “Harper Rebuffs Renewed Calls for Murdered, Missing Women Inquiry,” *CBC News*, August 21, 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Jeffries, “Fear Disarmed,” 335.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House Inc., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995), 202.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argues that fear has made it so that there are three roles to play: perpetrators, victims, and collateral damage, meaning “we are all vulnerable, all in danger and all dangerous to one another.”<sup>45</sup> Jeffries suggests that this condition has the effect of “separating personal experience and politics, by de-linking fear of interpersonal violence,” from neoliberal reform where fear is naturalized.<sup>46</sup> This is exemplified in the individualization of security and responsibility whereby university administrators partially download their obligation of creating a safe campus to their students. This sentiment permeated the discourse from York University administrators after the rapes were committed in Vanier Residence.

### **3.3. Case Study: The 2007 Vanier Residence Rapes at York University**

As the previous sections suggest, sexual assault and violence against women are endemic on Canadian campuses. While, as we have seen, the bulk of sexual violence against women on campuses occurs under a veil of silence, the 2007 rapes at York University sparked intense media coverage. On September 7, 2007 two men in their twenties, Daniel Katsnelson, a York alumnus, and Justin Connort entered Vanier Residence on York University’s Keele campus and raped two young women. They entered six different residence rooms on various floors, fleeing some after realizing the women were not alone.<sup>47</sup> Entering a room Katsnelson reportedly asked one of the survivors “Do you want to get lucky with a couple of Jewish guys?” before proceeding to rape her. Later that September Katsnelson and Connort turned themselves in and were charged with five counts of break and enter, two counts of sexual assault, two counts of gang sexual assault and two counts of forcible confinement.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Fiona Jeffries, “Mediating fear,” *Global Media and Communication* 9, no. 1 (2012): 40.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>47</sup> Michele Henry, “Dorm Room Rapes Stun York U; ‘We go in packs’ to the bathroom, students say after 2 men enter 6 rooms and attack sleeping women,” *The Toronto Star*, September 09, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Kirk Makin, “York University Rapist Jailed for Eight Years,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 15, 2010.

The attacks happened on the first pub night of the year shortly after the conclusion of frosh week. The names of the residents were still on the door making it easier for the new residents to get to know each other, but also giving clues as to the gender of most of the students. The fear after the assault was long lasting. As one third-year student, Morrissa Silvert, who lived at Vanier at the time of the rapes stated a full year after the attacks: "I feel even worse now. When it happened, I tried really hard not to think about it a lot. As it went later and later through the year, I started to think about it more and more."<sup>49</sup> Houry Seukunian, a 19-year-old resident at Vanier at the time of the rapes, described the general feeling amid the student population: "I'm scared to go to the bathroom by myself. We go in packs. I knew our campus wasn't safe. But, you can walk around outside with people. You're not going to have people sleep next to you in bed because you're scared."<sup>50</sup> Gilary Massa of the York Federation of Students told *The Toronto Star* that women continued to walk in groups even after Katsnelson was taken into custody.<sup>51</sup>

Following the assaults the school implemented several extra security measures including the doubling of York security patrols, increased staff at Vanier Residence and other residences on campus, heightened presence of Toronto Police services on campus, on-site counselling for students, security alerts issued through several channels including the university web site and student e-mails; ongoing contact with student government and associations, and the display of posters across the campus that reminded students to stay vigilant.<sup>52</sup> These practices were in addition to York's already existing 24/7 campus security patrols and monitored CCTV coverage, foot patrols, and a network of emergency "Blue Light" telephones.<sup>53</sup> Despite the heightened security measures, York graduate Rebecca Hall wrote to *The Toronto Star*, critiquing York University administration's efforts to create a safer campus: "York tends to increase

<sup>49</sup> Precious Yutangco, "York Attack Memories still Fresh; A year After Rapes were Reported in Dorms, University has Beefed up Security to Keep Students Safe," *The Toronto Star*, September 3, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Henry, "Dorm room rapes stun York U."

<sup>51</sup> Tamara Cherry, "Ex-student charged in York rapes; Thornhill man, 25, once tried to launch after-school program for children, acquaintance says," *The Toronto Star*, September 21, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> "Arrest made in Vanier Residence sexual assaults," *Yfile*, September 21, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> "York Adds Extra Security in Wake of Sexual Assaults in Vanier," *Yfile*, September 10, 2007.

safety measures only when incidents are brought to the media's attention, rather than taking preventative measures all the time."<sup>54</sup> Only after persistent demands from the York Federation of Students, York's largest student union, did the school agree to hire an independent safety audit company, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), to perform a safety audit that included long-term suggestions for creating a safer campus.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to ramping up security on campus,<sup>56</sup> York and police officials promoted self-securitization by students. York University's Director of Media Relations, Alex Bilyk, continually urged students to remain "vigilant." Detective Kim Hancock said that students needed to be cautious not only after dark, but "at all times," she advised that "If you have a lock on your (dorm) door, use it at night."<sup>57</sup> The effects of such discourse were noticeable. For example *The Toronto Star* reported that after the sexual assaults there was a spike in women registering in self-defence classes, claiming to be taking charge of their own safety. Deb Chard, an instructor of Wen-Do, stated: "All the statistics show that women who fight back or make scenes are more likely to survive [an attack]."<sup>58</sup> Chard continued commenting: "If you walk with a certain type of confidence, you're less attractive to an attacker. You don't seem like a victim."<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, everyone from the university, to the police to the rapist himself in comments made after his arrest used the same discourse of victim-blaming. The fact that the actual perpetrators of rape often use the same rape myths to justify their actions became evident when, in court, Daniel Katsnelson's lawyer wrote that Katsnelson hoped that "some day the victim would be able to take something positive away from this, as he

<sup>54</sup> Rebecca Hall, "Security Lacking at York," *The Toronto Star*, September 11, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Yutangco, "York Attack Memories still Fresh."

<sup>56</sup> York invested \$1.4million into a residence watch program, and added over 140 new cameras in the year following the attack. Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Henry, "Dorm room rapes stun York U."

<sup>58</sup> Daphne Gordon, "Women learn to fight back; Campus attacks in Toronto prompting higher enrolment in self-defence classes, organizers say," *The Toronto Star*, September 20, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

has ... that maybe she will know to keep her doors locked.”<sup>60</sup> Although Katsnelson’s remark was markedly repellent, it fits in with a larger discourse of victim-blaming where the actions, personality, and morals of the survivor are scrutinized particularly when the case doesn’t fit into the framework of a “real rape.”<sup>61</sup>

Victim-blaming discourses had the effect of downplaying the severity and frequency of acquaintance rape, while shifting the focus onto stranger rape. The specific case of the Vanier Residence rapes occurred in a broader context where fear of stranger rape and an ill defined, non-campus “other” predominated. As the studies described above have demonstrated, the focus on stranger rape that occurred in discussions surrounding the rapes at York is disproportionate considering the statistics showing that the majority of survivors are raped by someone they know. Yet the focus on stranger rape persists. For example, in a *Toronto Star* timeline of York University campus sexual assaults, there were no instances of acquaintance rape listed.<sup>62</sup> The constant discussion of stranger rape in the media, public institutions, and governmental campaigns serves to displace attention from the systematic causes of violence onto a foreboding “other.” In these depictions, perpetrators of sexual violence are often portrayed as “driven by sadistic impulses”<sup>63</sup> and the genesis of sexual violence is found in “sites of excess, such as racial hatred, open borders, and sexual perversion.”<sup>64</sup> As feminist and legal scholar Kristin Bumiller asserts, the majority of cases that reach the public sustain “excessive fears among women about the potential threat of violence from dangerous (usually dark-skinned) strangers.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Dale Anne Freed, “Rapist Hopes Teen sees the ‘Positive’ as Court Hears about York U Nightmare, Assailant says Ordeal may Teach Victim to Lock Door,” *The Toronto Star*, March 27, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> The survivors were what Kristin Bumiller describes as “iconic representations of victims,” innocent, and white. The attention that is paid to the “ideal victim” often detracts from survivors who do not conform to the “stereotyped conceptions of innocence and worthiness.” Kristin Bumiller, *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence* (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>62</sup> Liam Casey and Raveena Aulakh, “The University Must Warn of Assaults, Students say: York Under Fire for Lack of Information about Alleged Assaults,” *The Toronto Star*, July 19, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Kristin Bumiller, *In an Abusive State*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

At York University, fear of violence often tends to be projected onto the North Toronto area of Jane and Finch, the neighbourhood that surrounds the campus. Jane and Finch is a low-income, racialized area that is often at the center of “sensationalized media reports on crime, gun, violence, and poverty.”<sup>66</sup> In a Ryerson University student publication *RyersOnline*, the author compares the surrounding area of their university to that of York’s:

Women complained [that] there are no boundaries between [York’s] vast campus and the surrounding neighbourhoods [...] This leaves the campus wide open to whoever wants to stroll through York’s forest-filled, and often poorly-lit grounds – including “sketchy” people wearing gang colours.<sup>67</sup>

The author then goes on to claim that Ryerson, is the safer of the two campuses: “Our grey, sometimes dirty, urban community *isn’t* pretty. But feeling safe on campus is a beautiful thing.”<sup>68</sup> Invoking images of people clad in “gang colours” suggests a racialized and dangerous other lurking in the shadows of the campus.

Such stereotypes clash with the reality of the 2007 rapes. As previously noted the main perpetrator, Katsnelson, was a York alumnus, who not only “came from a good family” and had “a good background” but also worked for the “Responsible Business Group” with former Toronto Mayor David Miller after the rapes.<sup>69</sup> Although Katsnelson was a stranger to the two women, he does not embody the image of the dangerous other that the student journalist evokes. As two York University graduate students, Naoko Ikeda and Emily Rosser wrote in response to the article and the general discourse around the rapes, the journalist slips “between discourses of women’s safety and spatialized race-danger” with ease.<sup>70</sup> Separating the campus from its surrounding

<sup>66</sup> Naoko Ikeda and Emily Rosser, ““You be Vigilant! Don’t Rape!”: Reclaiming Space and Security at York University,” *Canadian Women Studies* 28, no. 1 (2009): 38.

<sup>67</sup> It was just a few years later that Ryerson University experienced its own case of serial assault. *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> This article was posted on September 11, 2007 before the two perpetrators were arrested and found to be young white men. *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>69</sup> The identity of Katsnelson was not known by Miller as he had changed his name to Daniel. Freed, “Rapist Hopes Teen sees the ‘Positive.’”

<sup>70</sup> Ikeda, “You Be Vigilant,” 38.

community thus works as a denial of the fact that the campus itself is “deeply implicated and constituted through particular social relations of power, including gender and racial hierarchy,”<sup>71</sup> not to mention a part of the community in which it is located.

Moreover, the fear of the other that is encouraged often creates the conditions for enacting increasingly stringent security measures. Bumiller argues that this process produces a “culture of control” grounded in “conceptions of essential ‘otherness’ of the criminal and highly dependent on mechanisms of social segregation.”<sup>72</sup> Bumiller makes clear that, contrary to the way that the women’s movement in the 1970s worked to dispel rape myths as those that were rooted in “patriarchy and gender hierarchies and the sexual socialization of women to be passive and men to be aggressive,” the state-sanctioned anti-violence campaign criminalizes and pathologizes offenders while obscuring the root causes of violence against women, including misogyny, racism, and homophobia.<sup>73</sup> The autonomous resistance to this process of securitization and self-securitization on York campus effectively re-politicized the problem of sexual violence on university campuses.

### **3.4. Resisting Self-Securitization: The Creation of the Autonomous Woman**

The incidents at York University sparked feminist discussions and actions that brought a resistant subjectivity to the forefront, one I call the autonomous woman. I understand autonomy as a capacity for women’s collective self-determination or self-governance. My discussion of the autonomous woman draws on the theory and activism of autonomist feminism, which has a history that stretches back to the Wages for Housework (WFH) movement described in Chapter 1. As Silvia Federici explains, autonomy in the women’s liberation movement originally meant independence from men

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>72</sup> Bumiller, *In an Abusive State*, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 16.

in the family and political organizations, it also meant that women could organize and live autonomously from men.<sup>74</sup>

Feminist autonomism is also about being able to understand, as Kathi Weeks suggests, that while “subjects are constituted by social systems” we should also recognize that “collective subjects are relatively autonomous from, and capable of acting to subvert, those same systems.”<sup>75</sup> Although the autonomous woman operates within the capitalist structure, it does not mean that they must define themselves by it; rather they can define themselves through their collective action against it. This conception of autonomy markedly contrasts and is in opposition to neoliberal individualism, which is about valuing one’s own individual interest over the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the collective. Individualizing the problem of sexual violence through the discourse of self-securitization works to dismantle the possibility of a collective response. Rather than being bound to the individualizing practices of self-securitization, I argue, the autonomous woman practices collective responsibility over individual responsibility.

The autonomous woman works to change what Jeffries calls the negative conception of security as “security *from* crime, harassment, threats to property etc.,” to the positive “security *of* housing, healthcare, transportation and so on.”<sup>76</sup> Fear and insecurity thus become a terrain of struggle, and collective resistance to fear and domination produces “alternative social forms” and alternative subjectivities.<sup>77</sup> The act of resistance is in itself a creative act that, Federici argues, is a way of “breaking out of our isolation, seeing our relations with others change, discovering new dimensions in our lives.”<sup>78</sup> As Hardt and Negri remind us, “[n]o matter how mighty and arrogant seems that power standing above you, know that it depends on you, feeds on your fear, and survives only because of your willingness to participate in the relationship.”<sup>79</sup> The response that began within the York University community, but reached well beyond the

<sup>74</sup> Matthew Carlin and Silvia Federici, “The Exploitation of Women, Social Reproduction, and the Struggle against Global Capital,” *Theory & Event* 17, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>75</sup> Kathi Weeks, *Constituting Feminist Subjects* (London: Cornell University Press, 2012), 92.

<sup>76</sup> Jeffries, “Fear Disarmed,” 335.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>78</sup> Silvia Federici, “Putting Feminism Back on Its Feet,” *Social Text* 9 no. 10, (1984): 343.

<sup>79</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, 41.

walls of the campus, worked to not only unpack and resist the language of securitization, but to constitute a new subjectivity that openly addressed the external and internal powers that control the actions and bodies of women.

The Graduate Women's Studies Students Association (GWSSA) was one of the first groups to respond after the attacks. Frustrated with the discourse of securitization that emerged on campus in response to the rapes, the GWSSA worked to change the conversation around how best to address campus violence. Naoko Ikeda and Emily Rosser, members of the GWSSA, wrote about the administration's response post-attack: "It was frustrating to be framed as potential victims who must watch out to prevent our own assaults, but at the same time having all the appropriate responses to violence already scripted out for us through the security apparatus."<sup>80</sup> In an open letter that was distributed around campus and in the York University campus newspaper *The Excalibur*, the GWSSA wrote about the danger of the use of security language, such as being "vigilant,"

[...] we're angry because instead of hearing a loud and repeated condemnation of sexual assault, we're told how to avoid being raped. York administration's security bulletin calls on us to be "vigilant" about our safety. Women have heard this before: don't make the same mistakes as 'those' women; do not go out alone at night; don't be in the wrong place at the wrong time; basically don't get raped.<sup>81</sup>

The letter also called upon students to recognize the interconnectedness of rape to large systemic problems, "Rape is not accidental, and it is not isolated. It thrives in a culture that is tolerant of violence, especially violence against women. Currently it thrives here, at York."<sup>82</sup> The GWSSA dispels the idea that rape is an individual problem and by doing so calls for collective responsibility of a culture of violence and sexism.

Utilizing an intersectional feminist approach to violence on campus, the GWSSA partnered with a class of undergraduate Women's Studies students to co-write a letter of solidarity for the York University Black Students Association after white supremacist

<sup>80</sup> Ikeda and Rosser, "'You Be Vigilant!'" 39.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

graffiti was found across the campus.<sup>83</sup> Creating this connection demonstrated the GWSSA's position that all movements against violence should also be fundamentally anti-racist. Rather than misdirecting fear off campus and onto the other, the GWSSA challenged the culture of fear by joining in solidarity against systems of oppression for, as Federici says, "It is power – not power over others but against those who oppress us – that expands our consciousness."<sup>84</sup>

The GWSSA also encouraged its members to discuss these issues in their classrooms. Some members did so using York Campus Alerts as pieces for critical analysis encouraging them to think how the language of fear is constructed.<sup>85</sup> The GWSSA also started a guerrilla postering campaign where they crossed out the phrase "Don't Get Raped" with "Don't Rape," thus directing the responsibility away from survivors and onto the perpetrators.<sup>86</sup> Ikeda and Rosser believe that the GWSSA's actions contributed to an "increase in discussion and student involvement in resisting securitization on York's terms" opening up discussions of what a community response to the rapes rooted in justice for all would look like.<sup>87</sup>

York once again found itself at the center of debate about self-securitization when on January 24, 2011 – just over three years after the rapes in Vanier residence – two male police officers and two school security guards were asked to come to the university's Osgoode Hall law school to speak on a safety panel.<sup>88</sup> In response to a question asking how women could keep themselves safe from sexual assaults Constable Michael Sanguinetti commented "I've been told I shouldn't say this [but] women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized."<sup>89</sup> Sanguinetti later

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>84</sup> Federici, "Putting Feminism Back on Its Feet," 344.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>86</sup> The posters did garner some opposition. One male professor complained that the posters implicated all men as potential rapists, and one male graduate student commented, "with no hint of irony," that the posters were not "sexy enough." Ikeda and Rosser, "You be Vigilant!" 40.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>88</sup> Adrian Morrow, "Police Officer's Sex-Assault Remarks Prompt Reprimand," *The Globe and Mail*, February 18, 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Nicki Thomas, "'Sluts' March Against Sexual Assault Stereotypes," *The Toronto Star*, April 03, 2011.

apologized to the university and was disciplined internally (although the details of how were not released to the public).<sup>90</sup> While Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair condemned the remarks saying that they “place[d] the blame upon victims, and that’s not where the blame should ever be placed.”<sup>91</sup> Sanguinett’s remarks were a reminder of how rape-myths persist within law enforcement. The comments also sparked the beginning of the SlutWalk movement.

The first SlutWalk took place on April 3, 2011 at Queen’s Park in Toronto and was attended by between three thousand and five thousand people, just “ten short weeks” after the comment was made to a group of ten people.<sup>92</sup> After the Toronto SlutWalk, the movement spread to cities around the world. The original SlutWalk was organized by a core group of women including Heather Jarvis, Sonya Barnett, Alyssa Teckah, Jeanette Janzen, and Erika Jane Scholz.<sup>93</sup> After Jarvis, a former Torontonian going to school at Guelph University, read about the incident in the *Excalibur* she contacted Barnett and they decided to “have a walk to express our frustrations and demand better.”<sup>94</sup> The organizers reached out through social media asking people to join them to:

[...] make a unified statement about sexual assault and victims’ rights and to demand respect for all. Whether a fellow slut or simply an ally, *you don’t have to wear your sexual proclivities on your sleeve*, we just ask that you come. *Any gender-identification, any age. Singles, couples, parents, sisters, brothers, children, friends. Come walk or roll or strut or holler or stomp with us.*<sup>95</sup>

The invitation to all people broke down the individualizing barriers that are erected both physically and psychologically through securitization.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Andrea O’Reilly, “Slut Pride: A Tribute to SlutWalk Toronto,” *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 245.

<sup>93</sup> Sarah Miller, “Police officer’s remarks at York inspire ‘SlutWalk’” *The Toronto Star*, March 17, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> “Home,” SlutWalk Toronto, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://slutwalktoronto.com>

The SlutWalk directly addressed both victim-blaming and the use of the word slut. The SlutWalk Toronto website states that SlutWalk is re-appropriating the term, “slut,” a word that has historically had a negative connotation “[a]imed at those who are sexually promiscuous, be it for work or pleasure, it has primarily been women who have suffered under the burden of this label.”<sup>96</sup> The fear of the free movement of women’s bodies, as feminist-autonomists have pointed out, is part of a long history of the female body being regulated by the state and capital in order to be utilized for its productive and reproductive capacities.<sup>97</sup> The restriction on the movement of women’s bodies works to strip away practices of self-determination. Through the re-appropriation of the term the organizers attempted to shrug off its power to insult and control women.

Heather Mallick, a journalist writing in support of the SlutWalk for *The Toronto Star*, wrote that it is not “what you’re wearing that matters, it’s that cops, and indeed rapists, will assess you whatever you wear.”<sup>98</sup> SlutWalk points to the larger institutional problem of engrained patriarchy. “It’s not about one bad apple cop,” said Jane Doe, an activist who sued the police after she was used as bait to catch a serial rapist – one of the speakers at the first Toronto SlutWalk – “It’s about an institution that is permeated with these kind of notions and beliefs.”<sup>99</sup> Rather than calling for the protection of the state and capital, through the form of private security, techno-securitization of the campus etc., Doe demonstrated that it is the very institutions that we rely on for “protection: that perpetuate shame and fear that fracture our communities.

The SlutWalk was not without critique from other feminists. Feminist scholar Kathy Miriam argued that the SlutWalk is “an example of a kind of feminism that has effectively supplanted collective world-changing project with individualized

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> This is more broadly discussed in Silvia Federici’s book *Caliban and the Witch* (2004). Tessa Echeverria and Andrew Sernatinger, “The Making of Capitalist Patriarchy: Interview with Silvia Federici,” *The North Star*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.thenorthstar.info/?p=11947>.

<sup>98</sup> Heather Mallick, “Why SlutWalk? Because Women Don’t Ask for it,” *The Toronto Star*, March 30, 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas, “Sluts’ march against sexual assault stereotype.”

empowerment.”<sup>100</sup> Miriam also points towards critiques from women of colour who she notes “have been historically configured and concretely exploited as always already sluts and thus unrapeable.”<sup>101</sup> The original name of the SlutWalk did come from the specific comment made by the police officer, but the “re-claiming” of the term wasn’t seen as core to some of the movements that followed in other cities. Acknowledging these issues, Hannah Altman, one of the founders of the Philadelphia SlutWalk, decided to focus the emphasis on “blaming the perpetrator and not the victim,” rather than reclaiming the term.<sup>102</sup> Having read the critiques and concerns around the lack of intersectionality in previous SlutWalks, Altman also recognized “that as a young, white, college-going woman, it was important to examine my privilege if this was to be more than just another white heterosexual movement.”<sup>103</sup> In the end SlutWalk Philadelphia featured speakers that included a transgender activist, four people of colour, a Muslim woman, two lesbians, two academics and a state senator, and acknowledged the history of violence against people of colour and transgendered individuals in Philadelphia.<sup>104</sup> This is not to say that the SlutWalk has addressed all of their problems regarding intersectionality, but rather that the movement has begun to bridge the gap between feminist movements on campus and off in its organizing.

### 3.5. Conclusion

Immersed in a culture of fear and blame, practices of securitization have become common for most women. The internalization of these practices contributes to increasing individualization, which is one of the key characteristics of the neoliberal self-securitized subject. The 2007 Vanier Residence rapes at York University and Sanguinetti’s comments three years later led to a forceful critique of the way in which security and fear operate as political and economic tools to control women’s bodies. The response from

<sup>100</sup> Kathy Miriam, “Feminism, Neoliberalism, and SlutWalk,” *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 262.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>102</sup> Hannah Altman, “SlutWalk Philadelphia,” *Feminist Studies*, 38 no. 1 (2012): 252.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

organizations at the York University campus and the creation of the SlutWalk movement not only fought against the discourse of securitization, but created a new autonomous woman, one that I argue embraced self-determination rather than self-securitization. Through the reframing of sexual assault as a political issue that affects everyone rather than being merely a women's issue that only affects some, these movements effectively showed that the feminist response must be communal not individual.

## Chapter 4.

### A “Dirty Sexist Increase!”: The 2012 Quebec Student Strike

This chapter contrasts the neoliberal subjectivity of the entrepreneurial student with the resistant feminist subject of the indebted student. Going to university has, increasingly, become a “debt sentence” for many Canadians. The average debt for Canadian students is currently about \$28,000, with the total amount of student loans being owed to the federal government currently sitting at over \$15billion.<sup>1</sup> As this chapter argues, student debt is a feminist issue because, while impacting all students, it disproportionately affects women.

The case investigated in this chapter is the Quebec Student Strike, which began in response to the proposed 75% tuition hikes in 2012. The proposed hikes were justified by Quebec Premier Jean Charest as a way to bring Quebec’s tuition in line with fees in the rest of Canada. The resulting strike was imbued with feminist politics, not just because feminists and feminist organizations were heavily involved, but also because strikers sought to be reflexive about creating intersectional approaches to organizing against the neoliberalization of the university system in the province.

In what follows, I provide a brief overview of the history of post-secondary education in Quebec, a history that is markedly different from the rest of Canada. I proceed to introduce the entrepreneurial, expanding upon Michel Foucault’s conception of the neoliberal “entrepreneur of the self.” I also argue that the gendering of disciplines and the gender wage gap, amongst other factors, lead to debt being a women’s issue. I

<sup>1</sup> “Student Debt in Canada: Education shouldn’t be a debt sentence,” *Canadian Federation of Students* (2013).

then discuss my case study including an outline of the Quebec Student Strike as well as the response from the media. Finally, using the discussion of the indebted subject in Maurizio Lazzarato *The Making of the Indebted Man*,<sup>2</sup> as well as in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Declaration*,<sup>3</sup> I describe a resistant form of subjectivity arising in response to the promotion of the entrepreneurial student, and discuss how feminists throughout the protest embodied this form of subjectivity. I argue, overall, that feminists within the movement worked to point out the highly gendered power relations characterizing debt, education, and capitalism.

#### **4.1. The Political Economy of Post-Secondary Education in Quebec**

In their comparison of the political economy of provincial post-secondary education systems in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, Donald Fisher et al. argue that while the latter province has been the least affected by neoliberal policies, the shift towards corporatization of PSE remains evident.<sup>4</sup> The Quebec education system differs from the other Canadian provinces in large part because of its ties to the project of Quebec nationalism on the one hand, and continued student activism on the other. In the 1960s Quebec experienced what became known as the "Quiet Revolution," which coalesced in a series of social, economic, political, and religious changes during the Keynesian era.<sup>5</sup> The Quiet Revolution had a lasting impact on PSE in the province particularly because of the commitment to the preservation of French language and culture in higher education.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo-Navis, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Donald Fisher, Kjell Rubenson, Glen Jones, and Theresa Shanahan, "The political economy of post-secondary education: a comparison of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec," *Higher Education* 57 (2009): 552.

<sup>5</sup> Zoe Unger, "Educational Reevaluation, Political Transformation: Quebec and Higher," *College Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

To address changes to higher education, in 1963 the Quebecois government formed the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec, or the Parent Commission. The report identified a need for “the democratization of education and for increased access to education as a means to achieve economic and social change.”<sup>7</sup> Democratizing education, the report suggested, included addressing both economic measures, such as:

[...] tuition-free college education; allocation of a specific amount for the implementation of the school success plans to be integrated with the Cegeps’ strategic plan,<sup>8</sup> university funding based on the number of students enrolled; regulation of university tuition fees; loan bursary programs; and university funding partly based on the number of degrees awarded.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these measures, the Commission encouraged the development of pedagogical strategies that would instil in students “different methods of perceiving reality.”<sup>10</sup> The overall aspiration for PSE in Quebec, according to the report, was to create “an egalitarian system that worked to produce activist, informed citizens capable of a nuanced, critically complex understanding of the society in which they took part.”<sup>11</sup>

Even in the 1980s and 1990s when the federal government began cutting funds to PSE, Quebec, for the most part, resisted offloading costs onto students, seeing education as a “short-, medium- and long-term investment,” unlike other Canadian provinces.<sup>12</sup> Despite a brief spike when it tripled in the period between 1990 and 1994 tuition remained frozen at \$1668 until 2007.<sup>13</sup> Tuition freezes in Quebec have also been in large part due to resistance from Quebec’s student population. The spirit of activist-

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> CEGEP stands for “Colleges d’enseignement general et professionnel.” CEGEPs were part of a unified college sector that began after grade eleven. CEGEPs offered “three-year programs for advanced technical training leading to the workplace and two-year pre-university programs intended to prepare students for a general education or specialized competency for university.” CEGEPs remain free of charge for students within Quebec. Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Fisher, “The political economy of post-secondary education,” 552.

<sup>10</sup> Unger, “Educational Reevaluation.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

oriented education as described by the Parent Commission has stuck with students who have consistently rallied to keep education accessible. About 100,000 students went on strike in 1996 opposing a 30% increase in tuition fees, and students struck again in 2005 after the Liberal government proposed a \$103 million cut to financial aid.<sup>14</sup> Both strikes were successful.

The election of the Liberal premier Jean Charest in 2003 marked a decisive shift in the provincial outlook toward education and an intensification of student resistance. Where Charest saw education as “an economic enterprise,” Quebecois students view education as “a public service that makes possible the formation of social and intergenerational solidarity, benefitting society as a whole and facilitating the individual’s entry into the labour market as well as the realm of citizenship.”<sup>15</sup> In 2007 the government passed legislation that would allow for tuition to increase by \$100 per year for five years.<sup>16</sup> In March 2011 Quebec’s Finance Minister Raymond Bouchard announced that the provincial government planned to raise tuition fees by \$325 over a period of five years adding up to a \$1,625 hike.<sup>17</sup> Tuition would thus total \$3,793 in 2017.<sup>18</sup> This proposal would ultimately lead to the biggest student strike in Quebec history, as students rejected the neoliberal turn that PSE was taking in Quebec.

## 4.2. The Entrepreneurial Student

The subject I identify as the entrepreneurial student is first and foremost seen as an investor in and consumer of their education. The concept of the entrepreneurial student borrows from Foucault, who in his 1978-79 lectures at the College de France describes how in neoclassical economic theory subjects are urged to become the entrepreneurs of themselves.<sup>19</sup> The “entrepreneur of himself,” as described by Foucault,

<sup>14</sup> “Some key events in Quebec’s battle over tuition,” *CTV News*, April 27, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Unger, “Educational Reevaluation.”

<sup>17</sup> “Some key events in Quebec’s battle over tuition.”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, “Lecture Nine,” *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-79*, ed. by Michael Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 226.

is “for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the sources of [his] own earnings.”<sup>20</sup> Under neoliberal economic theory, the division of society into the employers on the one hand and producers on the other is thereby collapsed.<sup>21</sup> As described by Foucault, neoclassical economic theorists argued that “capital” could be viewed as “everything that in one way or another can be a source of future income.”<sup>22</sup> Capital then, in this sense, is “the set of all those physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage.”<sup>23</sup> The neoliberal discussion of human capital, Foucault argues, allows for the application of economic analyses to “completely new fields and domains,”<sup>24</sup> meaning that every aspect of life can then be quantified according to the return on an investment.

Human capital resides in the entrepreneurial subject. Like the entrepreneur each person is responsible for risks associated with the investments they choose or do not choose to make. Although Foucault articulates that “neo-liberals lay stress on the fact that what should be called educational investment is much broader than simply schooling or professional training and that many more elements than these enter into the formation of human capital,” education is considered one of the most essential investments.<sup>25</sup>

Student debt is the primary way in which people without the necessary funds can “invest” in their PSE in the hopes of yielding dividends down the road. As sociologist Laura Wright et al. explain (illustrating the extent to which the neoliberal perspective has become a dominant frame for understanding education), “despite the increased costs of postsecondary education, students continue to invest in their human capital in order to compete in the new knowledge-based economy.”<sup>26</sup> Human capital theory suggests that

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Wright, David Walters, and David Zarifa, “Government Student Loan Defaults: Differences between Graduates of the Liberal Arts and Applied Fields in Canadian Colleges and Universities,” *Canadian Sociological* 50, no. 1 (2003): 230.

investments in education bring “individual returns (such as increased social mobility) and societal returns (such as economic growth, decreased inequality, and enhanced social cohesion).”<sup>27</sup> Human capital theory also assumes that students consider education according to the rational action approach, which is, like human capital, a central concept to neoclassical economic theory of debt repayment. Rational action perspectives view students as “behaving logically and rationally” taking into consideration the “costs and benefits of their decisions.”<sup>28</sup>

While labour force surveys have consistently shown that people who have postsecondary credentials do tend to have higher earnings than those who only hold a high school diploma, levels of student debt in Canada have also skyrocketed while average real earnings have remained stable since 1986.<sup>29</sup> Those who choose to pursue degrees in the arts and humanities experience a much harder time repaying their loan because of their relatively low earnings compared to graduates of other programs.<sup>30</sup> From a “rational” market perspective then, a degree in the arts and humanities is considered “less” valuable because it does not offer the highest guarantee of return. As one financial planner puts it, “You want the degree, and the debt that you take on for that degree, to lead to a job that’s going to make that debt worthwhile.”<sup>31</sup> The objectives of the debt economy are inherently political as they work towards the “neutralization” of memories of collective labour struggles. The goals of education become individualized and calculative absorbed by the urgency to escape indebtedness in the future.

Anita Harris argues that young women have disproportionately become the target for the creation of the “ideal late modern subject,” one that closely recalls Foucault’s

<sup>27</sup> Jason Edgerton, Tracey Peter, and Lance W. Roberts, “Back to Basics: Socio-Economic, Gender, and Regional Disparities in Canada’s Educational System,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 31, no. 4 (2008): 862.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, “Government Student Loan Defaults,” 92.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>31</sup> Ericka Shaker and David Macdonald with Nigel Wodrich, “Degrees of Uncertainty: Navigating the Changing Terrain of University Finance,” *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* (2003): 10.

entrepreneurial subject.<sup>32</sup> Harris argues that women are now supposed to be “flexible, individualized, resilient, self-driven, and self-made,”<sup>33</sup> subjects of intense government regulation that aim to make women “docile good girls who can uncomplainingly participate in meeting the needs of the marketplace.”<sup>34</sup> Poor decision-making is commonly used to explain “unsuccessful women,” which ultimately works to individualize the problem<sup>35</sup> of debt, laying blaming on those who “refuse to adjust their educational aspirations with the needs of the job market.”<sup>36</sup> This kind of neoclassical discourse has permeated mainstream discussions of education, and becomes evident in accusations of students being “entitled,” which, as I will demonstrate below, was particularly evident through the mainstream media’s coverage of the Quebec Student Strike.

### 4.3. The Quebec Student Strike

In early 2010 Premier Jean Charest, leader of the Parti Liberal du Quebec (PLQ) announced that the Quebec provincial government would be increasing tuition fees by 75% over a period of five years beginning in 2012.<sup>37</sup> The PLQ insisted that students “pay their fair share” of education costs.<sup>38</sup> The response to the tuition hikes began with a petition signed by 30,000 students, a series of one-day strikes, and demonstrations with protestors numbering in the tens of thousands as well as a series of smaller protests throughout 2010-2011.<sup>39</sup> On February 13, 2012, after the PLQ refused to meet with the students, students voted for a general unlimited strike.<sup>40</sup> The striking students, numbered at 175,000 – half of Quebec’s PSE students – were represented by three major student

<sup>32</sup> Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Harris notes that these individualizing tactics are used to obscure the “structural conditions that in fact limit their choices (that) are generally only taken into account to demonstrate how families and communities model inappropriate lifestyles to their youth.” *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Shaker, “Degrees of Uncertainty,” 10.

<sup>37</sup> Cayley Sorochan, “The Quebec Student Strike – A Chronology,” *Theory and Action* 15, no. 3 Supplement (2012).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

associations: the Fédération Étudiante Universitaire du Québec (FEUQ), the Fédération Étudiante Collegiale du Québec (FECQ), and the Coalition Large de Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (CLASSE).<sup>41</sup> Students held nearly nightly demonstrations, and on March 22, 2012, organized the second<sup>42</sup> largest demonstration in history, with over 200,000 people in attendance. As well, students imposed picket lines that effectively shut down universities, colleges and CEGEPs.<sup>43</sup>

While the goal of the strike was ultimately to freeze tuition, the students pointed towards larger problems of debt and unemployment, joining a series of student led anti-austerity protests from New Zealand to Chile.<sup>44</sup> The 2008 financial crisis, Enda Brophy writes, brought to the forefront issues of precarity and debt for students: “Young people are beginning to decry the shameful financial burden imposed on them for wanting nothing more than an education and a decent shot in the labour market.”<sup>45</sup> But, from the beginning, the mainstream Anglophone media viewed the strike as a “misnomer, since students aren’t salaried workers and are just boycotting their courses to their own detriment.”<sup>46</sup> In one *National Post* article, columnist Jesse Kline writes:

When airline pilots walk off the job, it’s a strike; when airline passengers refuse to fly, it’s a boycott. People certainly have the right to boycott any businesses they choose. But refusing to buy gas from a particular service station is one thing; trespassing on private property to prevent others from fill their tanks is quite another. So let’s call this what it is: a student boycott.<sup>47</sup>

In equating students with consumers, comparing them to airline passengers, or people buying gas, Kline wards of any understanding of the students as workers. In fact he goes

<sup>41</sup> CLASSE was a temporary coalition that formed out of l’Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante or ASSE). Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> The largest demonstration was against the Iraq War.

<sup>43</sup> Sorochan, “The Quebec Student Strike – A Chronology.”

<sup>44</sup> Enda Brophy, “The Combustible Campus: From Montreal to Mexico City, Something is Stirring in the University,” *Briarpatch*, September 01, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Lysiane Gagnon, “CLASSE Struggle in Quebec,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 16, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Jesse Kline, “Quebec Students Highlight Need for ‘Right-to-Learn’ Provinces,” *National Post*, May 10, 2012.

onto say that “If [the university] were any other type of business, the schools could simply say, ‘see you’ and continue providing services to those who want to learn.”<sup>48</sup> This conception of the university is what philosopher Michael Seymour, has argued is an “entrepreneurial conception of the university as a luxury product,” an understanding that aligns itself with the vision of the entrepreneurial student who is “in the pursuit of their own personal career interests.”<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, despite being called “entitled” and “selfish” in the media, the aims of the strike were to maintain and further accessible education for all rather than secure individual successes. Many of the arguments against the striking students were centered on the fact that Quebec had the lowest tuition in Canada. In a *Macleans*’ article, for example, columnist Alex Ballingall wrote that the strike left “many in the rest of Canada scratching their heads over why there’s been such uproar.”<sup>50</sup> The issue was not about tuition; ultimately it was about debt, where students continue to face increasing interest rates and a sparse job market.

This conservative critique of the students escalated after minor acts of “violence” were exhibited including bricks being thrown onto the tracks of the metro system and the painting of the Education Minister Line Beauchamp’s office windows with the symbolic red square that came to symbolize the solidarity of the movement. Beauchamp used these actions to try and delegitimize the movement, refusing to meet with the students if CLASSE was present because they had not openly denounced the acts of violence.<sup>51</sup> What was downplayed, or in some cases justified, in the mainstream media and in government discussions was the overt use of violent tactics by the police, including kettling, the firing of rubber bullets, and one incident that caused protestor, Francis Grenier to nearly lose an eye to a stun grenade.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately the FEUQ and FECQ refused to break the movement’s solidarity and meet with Beauchamp without

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Seymour, “Tuition Hikes –John Rawls Against the Concept of the Entrepreneurial University,” *Le Devoir*, trans. Le Printemps Érable, May 26, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Alex Ballingall, “A Not-So-Quiet Student Riot,” *Macleans*’s, May 21, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> “Charest stands up classless CLASSE,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 28, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

CLASSE.<sup>53</sup> On April 22, 2012, in response to Beauchamp's refusal to meet as well as the police violence, the members of CLASSE unanimously voted in favour of civil disobedience excluding any kind of physical harm against another person.<sup>54</sup> This culminated on May 16, 2012 when emergency bill Law 78 was passed which criminalized demonstrations that were within fifty meters of an educational institute, and demonstrations that did not provide their itineraries to police eight hours in advance. Institutions were also allowed to cut off funding to student federations or associations that were found to be in violation of the law.<sup>55</sup> On the same day in Montreal, a law was passed making it illegal to cover one's face at demonstrations.<sup>56</sup> The combination of these laws effectively criminalized the strike.

Once passed, numerous mainstream media outlets legitimized the laws because, as Kline wrote, "those who want to learn are being held hostage by a group of whiny, entitled student union members."<sup>57</sup> One writer for *Maclean's* magazine, Martin Patriquin, even titled his article "Quebec's new ruling class," referring to students whose strike he described as "a schizophrenic display of righteous, pacifist outrage and opportunistic violence."<sup>58</sup> In *The Globe and Mail*, columnist Margaret Wentz wrote that the students were suffering from an "entitlement mentality," where they feel as though the state owes them everything and if they don't get it they'll "riot in the streets!"<sup>59</sup> Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, spokesperson for CLASSE, argued that the strike was not a matter of entitlement especially considering that "The people who will be paying for these tuition hikes in full are the ones in high school now."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Sorochan, "The Quebec Student Strike."

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Kline, "Quebec students highlight need for 'right-to-learn' provinces."

<sup>58</sup> Martin Patriquin, "Quebec's New Ruling Class," *Maclean's*, June 4, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Margaret Wentz, "Tuition Protestors are the Greeks of Canada," *The Globe and Mail*, May 10, 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Cherry, "Peaceful protest over tuition hike; Thousands rally; More action planned for Tuesday," *The Gazette*, March 19, 2012.

In September, after continuing the strike throughout the summer with over 2500 people arrested and hundreds of victims of police violence, under ministerial decree it was announced that the tuition freeze would remain in effect and students voted to return to class. In the same month, Parti Quebecois (PQ) leader Pauline Marois defeated Charest and his Liberal government.<sup>61</sup> Although many perceived the strike to be over at this point, CLASSE insisted that the movement was not only for a tuition freeze, but was a critique of a larger neoliberal agenda and the fight for free tuition. The open-ended nature of the call for free tuition defies the “conditions of reasonable discourse in a prosperous way,” opening up a space for the discussion of a vision of the university outside of the confines of the neoliberal state.<sup>62</sup>

#### **4.4. The Indebted Subject: Feminism and the Quebec Student Strike**

The Quebec Student Strikes is a clear and compelling example of collective resistance by what autonomists and other social theorists have dubbed the indebted subject. Debt has become central to social movements across the world, including struggles ranging from movements against debt in developing countries to Strike Debt! an offshoot of the Occupy movement. The critique of debt has also been the focus of numerous critical texts, including David Graeber’s *Debt: The First 5000 Years*,<sup>63</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Declaration*, Maurizio Lazzarato’s *The Making of the Indebted Man*, and Andrew Ross’ *Creditocracy and the Case for Debt Refusal*.<sup>64</sup> Hardt and Negri, as well as Lazzarato, identify the indebted subject as a key form of neoliberal subjectivity. In the case of the Quebec Student Strike, I argue that by acknowledging their indebtedness the students worked to resist it. A key argument made by Lazzarato is that debt deprives people of their future choices.<sup>65</sup> While “technically free,” they are only free insofar as they “assume the way of life (consumption, work, public spending,

<sup>61</sup> Sorochan, “The Quebec Student Strike.”

<sup>62</sup> Darin Barney, “The Truth of le Printemps Érables.” *Theory and Event* 15, no. 3 Supplement (2012).

<sup>63</sup> David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Ross, *Creditocracy and the Case for Debt Refusal*, (New York: Or Books, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, 8.

taxes etc.) compatible with reimbursement.”<sup>66</sup> The indebted subject must work to pay off their loan of capital. By declaring the student as labourer, the idea of the student as entrepreneur, a virtually indentured labourer, is turned on its head.

I also argue in this chapter that the indebted subject is also a strongly gendered subject. Gendering the indebted subject shows how debt particularly affects women and also demonstrates that debt is therefore a feminist issue. Women now make up the majority of undergraduate students in Canada, but still primarily populate the arts and humanities while males are disproportionately channelled into math and sciences, where there are “higher returns” on investment.<sup>67</sup> Sociologist Jason D. Edgerton et al. argue that these findings are evidence of the still existing “societal gender typing” that is found in the educational system “needlessly constraining the cognitive potentials and educational horizons of both boys and girls.”<sup>68</sup>

Once out in the labour market, there is still a very real gender wage gap among university graduates. This wage gap sees women earn only \$.83 on average for every dollar a man receives, despite the fact that more women hold post-secondary degrees.<sup>69</sup> Industrial relations scholars Brahim Boudarbat and Marie Connolly’s study, which looked at Statistics Canada’s National Graduates Survey from 1988-2007, found that women made 6-8% less than men in almost all cohorts two years after graduation.<sup>70</sup> Five years after graduation the gap had widened to 8-14%.<sup>71</sup> Women are also more likely than men to have difficulty repaying their loans, although interestingly they are less likely to default on them.<sup>72</sup> University of Western Ontario sociology PhD candidate Laura Wright and her co-authors suggest that this may be because, as women make less than men, they are

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>67</sup> Jason D. Edgerton, Tracey Peter, and Lance W. Roberts, “Back to Basics: Socio-Economic, Gender and Regional Disparities in Canada’s Educational System,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 31, no. 4 (2008), 867.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 876.

<sup>69</sup> Brahim Boudarbat & Marie Connolly, “The gender wage gap among recent post-secondary graduates in Canada: a distributional approach,” *Canadian Journal of Economics* 46, no. 3 (2013): 1038.

<sup>70</sup> One notable exception was the 1990 cohort that had a cap of only 2.2%. Ibid., 1048.

<sup>71</sup> This is with the exception of the 1990 cohort and the 1995 cohort. Ibid., 1048.

<sup>72</sup> Wright, “Government Student Loan Default,” 96.

more “averse to the risks and consequences of default.”<sup>73</sup> Together, these findings suggest that women frequently experience debt and repayment in very real and different ways than men do.

In a clear demarcation of the hike as a feminist issue, one of the memorable slogans from the strike called the hike a “Sale hausse sexiste!” or a “dirty sexist increase!”<sup>74</sup> The strike united student groups with feminist organizations from outside the academy such as the Help Centre for Sexual Assault, the Quebec Committee of the World March of Women, the Young RebElles, the Shelter for Abused Women and Women in Difficulty, and the Fédération des femmes du Québec.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, CLASSE proclaimed itself a feminist organization writing in their manifesto “Share Our Future,” that: “We are women, and if we are feminists it is because we face daily sexism and roadblocks set for us by the patriarchal system; we constantly fight deep-rooted prejudice.”<sup>76</sup> In support of the strike, the Simone De Beauvoir Institute, a college of Concordia University dedicated to feminism and social justice, wrote that “[t]hinking about women and social policy means thinking beyond so-called ‘women’s issues’ such as sexual harassment or daycare. While these issues are important, we also need to understand the way social policies impact women in particular.”<sup>77</sup> Looking at feminist currents within the strike will allow us to do exactly that.

Two of the first departments to join the strike from Concordia University were Geography and the Simone De Beauvoir Institute. The Geography Strike Mandate stated that the department is committed to “building an awareness to the ways in which structures of inequality and oppression perpetuate our social fabric, disproportionately

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 109-110.

<sup>74</sup> Marianne Bretton Fontaine, “Students and Feminists Rise up in the Quebec Student Strike,” *Rebel Youth*, June 12, 2012, <http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.ca/2012/06/students-and-feminists-rise-up-in.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> CLASSE, “Share Our Future: The CLASSE Manifesto,” *Stop the Hike*, 2012. <http://www.stopthehike.ca/2012/07/share-our-future-the-classe-manifesto/>.

<sup>77</sup> Simone De Beauvoir Institute, “Statement on Tuition Fees in Quebec and their Impact on Women,” February 29, 2012, 7.

affecting populations marginalized on a basis of gender, race, class, and ability.”<sup>78</sup> The mandate goes onto say:

[w]hereas our valued university education involves an examination of these structures through studies of for example (but not limited to): global histories of colonialism and imperialism, environmental justice, and neoliberal patterns of globalization dependent on cheap, feminized labour.<sup>79</sup>

The department captures the tone of the strike movement intersecting the issues in Quebec with those occurring on a global scale, effectively re-politicizing debt and situating the strike in the current context of neoliberalism. The Mandate is concluded by reiterating the position of students as labourers: “Be it further resolved that we understand the core of a student strike is to be the recognition that academic work is a form of intellectual labour dependent on student participation.”<sup>80</sup>

In a statement aligning with these sentiments, the Simone De Beauvoir Institute wrote about the impacts that neoliberalism has had on women more generally and students in particular. The statement describes the tuition hike as “an example of social policy that perpetuates gender inequality,” as women still earn less than men, and thus the tuition hikes would impact women more than men.<sup>81</sup> Critiquing human capital theory, and by extension the model of student as entrepreneur, the institute writes that hikes have longer term consequences on women:

Suppose that two students – one a man, one a woman – each finish a BA with a debt of \$25 000. Each and every month, the woman has to spend more of her income to pay back her debt. Asking individuals “to invest” in their future asks women to pay more, proportionally speaking, than men over their lifetimes.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> “The Strike Mandate,” *Geography on Strike*, April 16, 2012, <https://geographyonstrike.wordpress.com/the-strike-mandate/>.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Simone De Beauvoir Institute, “Statement on Tuition fees,” 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

The writers of the statement also note how this trend will disproportionately affect single mothers, who will need to “allocate more of their income to obtain the same access to state-funded institutions,” both for themselves and for their children.<sup>83</sup> As well, the Institute takes an intersectional approach addressing the problems of financing education for students who come from low-income backgrounds and students of colour. Statistics Canada reports that “visible minority” women were more likely to be in a low-income situation than non-visible minority women. Similarly, compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts, Aboriginal women are less likely to have a university degree.<sup>84</sup> To raise tuition fees would thus inevitably create less diverse classrooms depriving many of a postsecondary education.

Feminist organizers within the Quebec Student Strike not only demonstrated how resisting debt is part of the feminist struggle, but also critiqued the very organization of the strike and gave instruction on how future student movements could better incorporate feminist values. There were tensions surrounding gender relations within the strike and particularly within CLASSE. As one organizer, Vanessa Gauthier Vela, stated:

Feminist(s) made a place for themselves during the strike but they were not invited as feminists in the preparation of the strike. In fact, there were so many conflicts between the national team and the feminists in ASSE that the whole women’s committee resigned a little before the strike.<sup>85</sup>

Vela said that feminists organized autonomously within the movement noting that “[t]hey produced papers, leaflets, and workshops on the topic of women and education, but also on the place of the women in the strike.”<sup>86</sup> Feminists thus worked on two fronts; one within the movement to stop the hikes, and the other to address sexism within the movement itself:

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>84</sup> Statistics Canada cited in “Statement on Tuition Fees.” Ibid., 6.

<sup>85</sup> Brian Fagan, “Interview with an organizer from the Quebec 2012 mass students strike & movement,” *Workers Solidarity Movement*, October 23, 2013, <http://www.wsm.ie/c/interview-organiser-quebec-2012-mass-student-strike>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

It did not take time to realize that the dynamics of the strike produced the same old reflexes as in any sphere of life. Men are usually more visible and make more valued tasks whereas women usually do invisible and under-valued tasks. Throughout the strike, the feminists criticized these paternalistic reflexes in the movement by imposing critiques as much as proposing solutions.<sup>87</sup>

Reiterating this sentiment in a 2013 open resignation letter, after the Quebec Student Strike had ended, from ASSE's Myriam Tardif, Rushdia Mehreen, and Beatriz Munoz wrote "The 'profile type' of a delegate who speaks in front at the assembly without shyness or apprehension is the white male university student from Montreal who studies at UQAM."<sup>88</sup> Mehreen and Munoz also presented during the Montreal Student Movement Convention in June 2014 addressing some of these issues and providing a "space for students to discuss the history and social context of student organizing, to exchange strategies for effective mobilization, and to examine the challenge of building an intersectional student movement."<sup>89</sup> Mehreen and Munoz said that had trouble making their voices heard within the movement, another conference attendee agreed:

It was so frustrating. There were so many instances where I would say things, or I would be facilitating meetings, and consistently be questioned [...] I would have colleagues who were white, able [cis] men who would be able to say the exact same things I said, or summarize what I said, and people would be like, 'Yeah, that totally makes sense, we should do that!'<sup>90</sup>

The Student Movement Convention allowed for people to speak not only about the way in which the strike was organized, but also to debate about the issues that extended beyond the "resolution" presented by the election of the PQ and the scrapping of the tuition increase. In fact, the PQ, while being heralded as one of the key actors in helping end the strike, still imposed a gradual tuition increase and now has both the former

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Michelle Pucci, "Invisible Minorities? Underrepresentation of Women, People of Colour an Unacceptable Phenomenon," *The Link*, February 26, 2013.

<sup>89</sup> Jill Bachelder and Igor Sadikov, "Quebec student strike organizers host international convention," *The McGill Daily*, June 25, 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

leaders of the FEUQ and FECQ within their party.<sup>91</sup> In an interview, Anna Kruzynski, a professor at the School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University, voiced her concerns about the negotiations with the PQ that led to the end of the strike:

I think that the FEUQ/FECQ misunderstood that in the system that we're in where social relations are stratified one must always keep in mind that government is not an ally. The government is your target, even if they're pretending to be your friend. It's still a conflict in social relations and it's still about building power. It's never going to be possible to sit down and negotiate on equal footing with the government.<sup>92</sup>

## 4.5. Conclusion

The accumulation of student debt has become completely normalized within Canada. The Quebec Student Strike worked to subvert the common sense of neoliberalism's dependence on debt and open up a different discussion on PSE. Feminists within the strike pointed towards the systemic inequalities that allow for the debt system to exploit disenfranchised groups within society, including women. By addressing the ways in which debt affects everyone, but these groups disproportionately, feminist currents within the Quebec Student Strike argued that raising tuition was far from a gender "neutral" policy. As well, the way in which feminists continued to question and critique the way in which the student strike was organized illuminated the way that even within progressive movements systems of oppression still continue to operate.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Gottinger, "A Look Back at the Maple Spring: An Interview with Anna Kruzynski," *White Rose Reader*, May 2, 2013, <https://whiterosereaderdotorg3.wordpress.com/2013/05/02/maple-spring-in-retrospect-an-interview-with-anna-kruzynski/>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 5.

### Conclusion: From the Ivory Tower to the Streets

I have argued through this thesis that there is an urgent need for feminist political movements on campus to combine a critique of patriarchy with a critique of the neoliberal university. The three case studies that this thesis centers around highlight the surfacing of such a double critique within movements of feminist resistance to the neoliberal university. In each of the three cases, collective instances of feminist struggle arose against manifestations of the neoliberalizing university and its dominant postfeminist discourse surrounding topics such as gender equality, women's safety on campus, student tuition, and the curriculum. Discussions around sexual assault and the proliferation of misogynist speech on campus, the closure of arts and humanities programs, as well as gender politics and the need for feminism on university campuses have recently become popular topics in the mainstream news media. While these issues are often picked up in media reports because of the vocal resistance of women to particular incidents on campus, their discussion is usually not framed within a larger critique of the neoliberal university. As such, a key part of the problem is missed.

The current need for this kind of feminist critique is underscored by the wide range of conflicts and controversies surrounding gender politics and gendered violence on university campuses in North America. In 2013, for a senior art project at Columbia University, undergraduate student Emma Sulkowicz vowed to carry a dorm room mattress with her around campus until her alleged rapist was expelled.<sup>1</sup> Sulkowicz gained international attention for her project, contributing to what *New York Magazine*

<sup>1</sup> Vanessa Grigoriadis, "Meet the College Women Who Are Starting a Revolution Against Campus Sexual Assault," *New York Magazine* September 21, 2014.

has called a “revolution against campus sexual assault.”<sup>2</sup> In Canada cases of sexual assault are similarly at the heart of a current debate about rape culture on campuses. In 2014 the University of Ottawa suspended their men’s hockey team after finding out about the alleged sexual assault of a young woman by two players in Thunder Bay Ontario.<sup>3</sup> More recently, something akin to a national debate has been taking place about the measures taken against a number of Dalhousie dentistry students who participated in the “Class of DDS 2015 Gentlemen,”<sup>4</sup> a Facebook group that featured violent and misogynist commentary about female students in the program.

Continuing this trend of misogyny on Canadian university campuses, men’s rights organizations have experienced a resurgence among, in particular, male millennials. The umbrella organization for the majority of men’s rights groups on campuses is the Canadian Association for Equality (CAFE),<sup>5</sup> which has six official branches across Canada<sup>6</sup> and supports numerous unofficial branches. Men’s rights groups center on the idea that men are increasingly more oppressed than women, (largely leaving out a discussion of race and class), and feminism is considered the root of this problem.<sup>7</sup> The tactics of these groups range from parody through to intimidation and outright threats of physical violence.<sup>8</sup> One example of these tactics was Men’s Rights Edmonton’s (MRE) parody of the Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton’s (SAVE) successful “Don’t be that guy” poster campaign with a counter-poster with the injunction: “Don’t be that girl.” Where SAVE’s posters had text such as “Just because you help her home ... doesn’t mean you get to help yourself. Sex without consent =

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Alphonso, “Hockey Players Face Sex Assault Charges,” *The Globe and Mail* August 23, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 4 for a brief outline.

<sup>5</sup> CAFE calls themselves a “Men’s Issues Awareness Society” rather than a “men’s rights organization” because they believe that the “current political and legal mechanisms to ensure equality rights in Canada would generally be sufficient if they were applied without bias or prejudice.” “FAQ,” *The Canadian Association for Equality*, accessed February 2015. <http://equalitycanada.com/about/frequently-asked-questions/>.

<sup>6</sup> Campuses: University of Toronto, York University, University of Guelph, McGill University, Carleton University, Trent University.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Theriault, “Why The Men’s Rights Movement is Garbage,” *The Huffington Post* March 28, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

sexual assault,”<sup>9</sup> MRE’s posters said: “Just because you regret a one night stand doesn’t mean it wasn’t consensual. Lying about sexual assault = a crime. Don’t be that girl.”<sup>10</sup> The position being perpetuated by men’s rights groups such as MRE is that Canadian campuses are becoming too centered around women’s issues, but, as my thesis has demonstrated, the opposite is in fact true, that feminism is increasingly a marginalized perspective on campuses.

As this thesis has argued, hostility towards feminism can also manifest in seemingly neutral measures such as university budget cuts. Yet these cuts tend to disproportionately target not only the most critical departments, but also those that are primarily populated by women. In 2012 universities across Canada began implementing a process called “program prioritization,” where the university community is invited to review every program according to the same qualitative and quantitative criteria.<sup>11</sup> The process, which took place alongside budget cuts to higher education across Canada, has been critiqued by faculty concerned that “fine arts, languages and some humanities” will be unfairly targeted and have “limited recourse to defend these programs against charges of low enrolment and high costs.”<sup>12</sup> The first victim of this process was the arts and culture bachelor’s degree at the University of Regina, followed by Latin American Studies, and Francophone Studies.<sup>13</sup> In 2013, amongst other programs, the theatre program at Mount Royal University was cut due to lack of funding (among other programs),<sup>14</sup> and the University of Windsor closed its Centre for Studies in Social Justice, absorbing the program into more traditional disciplines such as sociology.<sup>15</sup> At Capilano University in British Columbia the suspension of programs in studio art, textile

<sup>9</sup> “Our Campaigns,” Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton, accessed February 2015, <http://www.saveedmonton.com/our-campaigns.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Macpherson, “VPD Disturbed by ‘Don’t be that Girl,’ Campaign: It’s a Parody on an Anti-Rape Campaign,” News1130 July 10, 2013, <http://www.news1130.com/2013/07/10/vpd-disturbed-by-dont-be-that-girl-campaign/>.

<sup>11</sup> James Bradshaw, “No Department is Safe as Universities Employ U.S. Cost-Cutting Strategy,” *The Globe and Mail* January 04, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Jen Gerson, “The Curtain Comes Down; Budget Woes Put University Program at Risk,” *National Post* April 22, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Brean, “Social Justice to Join the Ghostly Ranks of Obsolete Academic Departments Haunting University Campuses,” *National Post* June 23, 2013.

art, computer science, and interactive design was intended to help rectify a budget shortfall of \$3.5million after a \$70-million reduction in the provincial budget for advanced education.<sup>16</sup>

All of these issues have been spun in the mainstream media by postfeminist and even anti-feminist voices. In response to the Dalhousie dentistry school incident, the prominent conservative columnist Margaret Wenté recently wrote in *The Globe and Mail* that women should “practice manning up” and stop “monsterizing men.”<sup>17</sup> In another article, Wenté writes that “Such coarse talk is not atypical of young male group behaviour,” employing the “boy will be boys” rhetoric that is so often used to naturalize misogynistic actions and male violence.<sup>18</sup> This kind of discourse also plays into the idea that men’s sexuality is somehow being limited or threatened. Sarah Boesveld, writing for the *National Post*, has said that campaigns that address potential perpetrators like the “Don’t be that guy” campaign make the assumption that “male students, or any man on campus, may be a rapist-in-waiting.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Graham Templeton wrote for *The Huffington Post* “Men understandably resent having their ever-more-timid sexuality portrayed so ghoulishly [...] It’s the reaction anyone would have if every expression of their genuine sexual nature was condemned with such strutting self-righteousness.”<sup>20</sup> These reporters reinforce the idea that there is some kind of inherent masculinity, that this masculinity justifies misogynistic behaviour and that campus feminists are unfairly tempering this natural disposition.

This kind of conservative discourse is also produced around the disappearance of social science and humanities programs. Not uncommon among the mainstream media is the sentiment that these disciplines address is passé, no longer needed or

<sup>16</sup> Brian Platt, “Capilano University Staff Mull Lawsuits Over Program Cuts,” *The Globe and Mail* June 14, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Wenté, “Advice to Young Women: Man Up: Stand Up and Deal with Garden-Variety Jerks, Rather than Monsterizing Men and Making a Victim of Yourself,” *The Globe and Mail* January 10, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Wenté, “Dalhousie’s Dental Hysteria,” *The Globe and Mail* January 06, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Boesveld, “Culture of Distrust; Discussions of Campus Rape Pit Sexes Against Each Other,” *National Post* October 25, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Graham Templeton, “The One Thing “Don’t Be That Girl” Got Right,” *The Huffington Post* July 12, 2013.

even as *National Post* reporter Joseph Brean wrote “pandering.”<sup>21</sup> Brean mockingly writes of the mounting number of closed programs that “a fair few of these tweedy losers were built upon niche academic constituencies whose fates follow broader cultural and intellectual trends.”<sup>22</sup> Stunningly, Wenthe argues that in fact there are few places in the academy left for “[s]erious heterosexual guys.”<sup>23</sup> While conservative reporters like to argue that the university is a bastion of feminist thought, my research documents a continued attempt to exile feminism and its institutions from the academy.

Notwithstanding this backlash, movements and organizations continue to put forward proposals aiming to establish a more feminist campus. In regards to sexual harassment on university campuses for example, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) in Toronto released a report on sexual assault policies on university campuses in Canada. After reviewing 10 universities’ policies on harassment and sexual assault, METRAC proposed a number of solutions, including having policies that explicitly address sexual assault by acknowledging that it is distinct from other types of misconduct given its “gendered power dynamics and unique challenges by those who are victimized.”<sup>24</sup> Putting this principle into action, the University of Windsor began the Bystander Initiative. This initiative takes the form of workshops where students learn the “importance of speaking out against social norms that support sexual assault and coercion, how to recognize and safely interrupt situations that could lead to sexual assault, and how to be an effective and supportive ally.”<sup>25</sup>

Progressive and feminist proposals have extended to tuition, another key topic of this thesis. In the battle over tuition and creating more accessible and equitable education the Ontario Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) put forward two priorities

<sup>21</sup> Brean, “Social Justice to Join the Ghostly Ranks,”

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Wenthe, “An Agent of the Patriarchy? Oh Please; David Gilmore is Obviously a Harmless, Although Foolishly Unguarded, Guy. And Yet People got Seriously Fussed,” *The Globe and Mail* September 28, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> METRAC, *Sexual Assault Policies on Campus: A Discussion Paper* (Toronto: 2014).

<sup>25</sup> “Empowering Student Bystanders,” *University of Windsor* Accessed 2015.  
<http://www1.uwindsor.ca/bystander/>.

in 2013: 1) reduce tuition fees by 30% for all students over three years with part of the funding being re-allocated from the Ontario tuition grant and provincial tax credits; and 2) after three years to implement a framework that would ultimately eliminate tuition fees altogether.<sup>26</sup> The CFS suggests that student loans could be converted to grants at minimal cost by shifting “regressive and ineffective measures,” such as “federal and provincial government spending on education tax credits, savings schemes and loan assistance programs for Ontario students.”<sup>27</sup> In Quebec, the student organization leading the 2012 strike, CLASSE, has also put forward proposals for making education more accessible, arguing that rescinding \$950million in tax cuts to the rich alone, the province could fund free education in Quebec.<sup>28</sup> More recently, in March of 2015 Quebec students voted to strike again against government cuts to public services such as education and health care by the current Quebec Liberal Party.<sup>29</sup> The strikers are expanding their political targets opposing austerity measures more generally and addressing the critique that “self-centered” students were the primary participants of the 2012 strike.<sup>30</sup>

Also in 2015 the unions CUPE 3903<sup>31</sup> at York University, and CUPE 3902<sup>32</sup> at the University of Toronto went on strike demanding equity for Teacher’s and Graduate Assistants, and Contract Faculty. CUPE 3902 and 3903’s demands include greater protection from harassment and bullying<sup>33</sup> and substantial increases in childcare funds.<sup>34</sup> As well, CUPE 3903 is calling for better protection for contract faculty, a group that has

<sup>26</sup> CFS-Ontario, *Free Post-Secondary Education in Ontario: The Case for Eliminating Tuition Fees*, (2013).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>28</sup> CLASSE “Free Education?” *Stop the Hike* Accessed: 2015, <http://www.stopthehike.ca/tout-sur-la-hausse-des-frais/la-gratuite-scolaire-est-ce-possible/>.

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin Shingler, “Quebec student protests: What you need to know: Three years after the Maple Spring of 2012, Quebec students are back in the streets,” *CBC News*, April 2, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> CUPE 3903 represents: Teacher’s Assistants, Graduate Assistants, and Contract Faculty, at York University.

<sup>32</sup> CUPE 3902 represents: Teacher’s Assistants and other contract instructional staff, at the University of Toronto.

<sup>33</sup> CUPE 3902, “Employer Responses to CUPE 3902 Unit 1 Bargaining Commitments (After 6 Months of Negotiations)” January 27, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Grievance Officer, “Bargaining Update #19,” *CUPE 3903* March 6, 2015, <http://3903.cupe.ca/2015/03/06/bargaining-update-march-6/>.

historically been composed primarily of women.<sup>35</sup> These and other groups in Canadian universities are continuing to actively resist the neoliberalization process by promoting policy and collective bargaining measures that support the creation of an equitable and feminist campus.

My investigation of the chosen case studies—the conflicts surrounding the 2009 closure of the University of Guelph’s Women’s Studies program, the 2012 proposed 75% tuition hike in Quebec, and the 2007 York University Vanier residence rapes—has allowed me to explore three pairs of contrasting subjectivities characterizing the neoliberal university: the *professionalized female academic* (who embraces the university’s requirement to produce market-friendly research) versus the *feminist academic* (who vindicates and pursues the critical study of social processes from the standpoint/s of women); the *self-securitized subject*, who assumes the responsibility of not getting assaulted and therefore blamed) versus the *autonomous women* (who is self-actualizing rather than self-securitizing, and connects women’s lack of safety to patriarchal violence); and finally the *entrepreneurial female student* (who views education as an investment in her own human capital) versus the *indebted student* (who actively acknowledges and resists the production and accumulation of the debt system). While, as noted at the outset of this thesis, specific women may encompass more than one, if not all, of these subjectivities, my chosen case studies have allowed me to tease out the discourses surrounding, constituting, and being constituted by each one, at specific historical moments.

In Chapter 2, I established how the Save the Women’s Studies at Guelph group, while ultimately unable to save the program, did reach out to and connect faculty and students across Canada, many of whom made the connection between the neoliberal restructuring of the university and the elimination of critical programs. Even after the program was closed, this conversation continued in the news media, with support coming from people and organizations outside of the academy.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

In Chapter 3 I showed how feminist groups at York University resisted the neoliberal discourse of self-securitization. Members of the Gender and Women Studies Student Association paired up with their students and other organizations on campus to critique the use of techno-securitization by the university. The SlutWalk, in particular, encouraged collaboration between university students and community organizers, demonstrating that while the campus was one location where women were encouraged to self-securitize, the discourse permeates all institutions of society. I argue in this thesis that a strong commitment to collectivism, connections between communities on and off campus and a commitment to a critique of neoliberalism and capitalism are integral not only for future feminist movements on campus, but also for future critiques of the university.

I demonstrated in Chapter 4 that although the Quebec Student Strike was not explicitly framed as a feminist movement, feminist currents nonetheless organized autonomously throughout the movement, and especially at its base. At the core of the student strike was a critique of student debt and the way in which it is increasingly naturalized under neoliberalism. Feminists within the strike showed how debt uniquely and disproportionately affected women. Moreover, students were joined in solidarity with numerous community feminist organizations as well as labour unions, and residents of Montreal. There were also solidarity protests across Canada.

There is no shortage of recent incidents that illustrate the neoliberal turn of the university, a transformation which has included the redirection of funding to favour the interests of the private sector, the creation of private, degree granting institutions, the continuous rise of tuition fees, particularly international student fees, and funding cutbacks targeting the arts and humanities programs, to name a few. I chose the three specific cases investigated in this thesis not only because they were driven by classic processes of neoliberalization and resonated beyond the campus and captured the attention of the mainstream media, but also because of the extensive and explicitly feminist opposition they triggered.

As noted in the first chapter, my theoretical approach to these cases and the decision to approach them from the perspective of the contrasting subjectivities they

were characterized by is influenced by Michel Foucault's active conception of the subject. Foucault's argument that we should take "forms of resistance against different forms of power" as our starting point rather than "analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality"<sup>36</sup> dovetails with the approach characterizing autonomist Marxism, a theoretical tradition that begins its analysis from below rather than from above. In particular, I have used the work of feminist autonomist Marxists, who examine the gendered nature of waged and unwaged labour and have provided a critique of patriarchy that is intimately and inextricably tied to a critique of capitalism.

The use of feminist discourse analysis<sup>37</sup> allowed me to track what Rosalind Gill and others<sup>38</sup> have called postfeminist discourse through the three aforementioned cases. This discourse was sometimes overt and sometimes latent (such as in Chapter 2 with the statements of university administrators). Yet through these cases I have shown how such discourse, while operating differently under varying circumstances, remains a dominant feature of the neoliberal university. For instance, while the proposed 75% tuition hikes in Quebec that were discussed in Chapter 4 did not explicitly target women and gender was not mentioned as a part of the hike, feminists were able to point out how this policy disproportionately affected women, thus challenging a key tenet of postfeminism and neoliberal discourse around the university – that gender equality in post-university outcomes has somehow been achieved. Throughout the thesis I have been able to demonstrate how systemic problems such as sexism are disappeared in the discourse of university administrators by not bringing them into the conversation to begin with. This operation was evident in the case study investigated in Chapter 2 for example, when the University of Guelph Vice President (Academic) claimed that the cutting of the Women's Studies program was "not about women's studies at all."<sup>39</sup> In contrast, the discourse investigated in the case study in Chapter 3—the 2007 rapes in

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8 no. 4 (1982): 780.

<sup>37</sup> Michelle Lazar, "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis," *Critical Discourse Studies* 4 no. 2 (2007).

<sup>38</sup> See: Angela McRobbie, 2009; Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, 2011; Shauna Pomerantz, 2013; Jess Butler, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> "Don't Erase Women's Studies: Profs to U of G; Faculty Urge Colleagues to Fight for Program, which is on Chopping Block as Part of the Cuts," *The Guelph Mercury* March 18. 2009.

Vanier Residence—explicitly addressed women, framing women’s own actions, or lack thereof, as the key to rape prevention.

One of the key themes connecting all of the case studies was the postfeminist and neoliberal promotion of individualism,<sup>40</sup> through which attention systemic problems affecting women (debt, violence, lack of adequate educational opportunities) in university settings and beyond was displaced. A primarily individualistic response to these systemic problems, that of self-regulation, was one of the key traits characterizing the three postfeminist subjectivities I explore in the case studies. The University of Guelph demonstrated this through their dismantling of a program that favoured collectivist over individualistic approaches to knowledge production. In Quebec, the Liberal government under Charest viewed education as an individual investment rather than a societal right. And finally, at York University women were assumed to be responsible for their individual safety.

The three subjectivities that are formed through the resistance to this postfeminist logic of competitive individualism made visible the barriers that women still face and attempted to change them through feminist movements. Despite the differences among the case studies chosen, two main threads therefore connected the movements: a vindication of collectivism in the face of the individualistic subjectivity promoted by postfeminist discourse, and a strong organizational connection with communities outside of the university.

This thesis does not, of course, claim to be an exhaustive treatment of emergent female subjectivities within the neoliberal university, and there are many avenues for potential future research. For example, future research should examine the affects of postfeminist discourse on, in particular, women of colour within the Canadian university. Jess Butler argues that the ideal postfeminist subject is a “white, Western, heterosexual woman,”<sup>41</sup> but, at the same time, she also points out that postfeminism does include “in

<sup>40</sup> The emphasis on individualism is among the key qualities Jess Butler identifies as characteristic of postfeminist narratives. Jess Butler, “For White Girls Only? Postfeminism and the Politics of Inclusion,” *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 44.

<sup>41</sup> Jess Butler, “For White Girls Only?” 47.

specific and limited ways [...] nonwhite and nonheterosexual subjects.<sup>42</sup> How then are women of colour specifically implicated through postfeminist discourse on campus, and how have they resisted it? As well, given that postfeminism has had the effect of concretizing gender through biology, further inquiry into how transgender women navigate the corporate landscape of the university would also be important to contribute to a truly intersectional feminist critique of the neoliberal university.

All the movements of resistance investigated in this thesis secured the creation of a collective, autonomous feminist voice that distinguished itself from and actively opposed its postfeminist counterpart. To be sure, the degree to which they were ultimately successful differs from case to case: the Save the Women's Studies at Guelph group did not manage to prevent the closure of the program; the Quebec Student Strike, while preventing the 75% tuition hike, ultimately ended because of a deal with the PQ (which later ended up incremental tuition hikes); the SlutWalk continues and is still held annually in cities across North America. These varying levels of success were, I argue, partly determined by the strength of the connections between communities on campus and off. In other words, the stronger the links were, the more successful the movements seem to have been. Continued links with communities off campus would therefore appear to be integral to creating a broader feminist movement of resistance.

I have explored in this thesis the way in which the tenets of neoliberalism have encouraged many women, in all positions in the academy, to self-regulate, whether in their careers, their investments, or their bodies, to achieve success or to escape violence, poverty, or diminishing educational resources. Challenging this discourse, I have contrasted neoliberal subjectivities with feminist subjectivities, whereby women have joined together autonomously and collectively to fight against *all* forms of oppression, gendered or otherwise. A critique of patriarchy, as this thesis argues, must be intimately tied to a critique of capitalist institutions like the neoliberal university. As well, feminist movements of resistance must break down barriers between students, faculty, and staff and between the ivory tower and the streets—only then will there be room for a true breaking free of the confines of gendered subordination.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 49.

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