

NOT ON MY WATCH: WHITE TIME IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND ITS
IMPACTS ON STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Not on my watch: White time in post-secondary education and its impacts on students' mental health

Master of Social Work, 2018

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This is a qualitative narrative study of the impact that white time within post-secondary educational institutions has on the mental health of students. White time can be described as the concept of time that has been created to favour the experiences of the dominant white community. Using a narrative approach, the researcher interviewed several participants to understand how current and/or past post-secondary students understand time within these academic institutions.

After interviewing two students, and analyzing the data, it was found that both students found the temporal constraints within post-secondary education to be overwhelming. Both participants described situations in which they have experienced white time within their academic careers. Additionally, both participants linked their experiences of white time and of temporal constraints to a negative impact on their mental health.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research paper to all those who, like me, have faced the adversities of time while attending post-secondary institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Time is one of the most basic aspects of human experience and of our social lives (Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2003) and governs almost all aspects of our lives, from simple things such as when we sleep, when we wake, when we eat, to when we are ‘supposed’ to do things such as go to school, get a job, and create a family. However, time in this form has not always existed.

While time itself is an abstract concept that was socially constructed (Leaton Gray, 2017), there is another concept of time that seems to be controlling our every move: white time. White time describes the concept that our notion of time was strictly developed using the experiences and the values of the dominant population: white, able-bodied, wealthy Christians (Mills, 2014).

This research paper explores the concept of white time, as well as how it operates within post-secondary educational institutions. Further, this research paper examines if and how white time impacts the mental health of students attending these institutions.

In order to critically examine the practices and the values that are in place within educational institutions, this research study used a decolonizing theoretical framework. This theoretical framework is one that is often left out of mainstream academic research (Daza & Tuck, 2014), however is appropriate to this research as it attempts to gain an understanding of the Western, Eurocentric ideals being upheld within academia. A decolonization approach allows for the acknowledgement and understanding of colonization within the West, and also allows for the reframing of discourses while making room for alternatives.

This research study used a qualitative research design and a narrative approach. A narrative approach to research involves focusing on the full experience of individuals, as well as what those experiences mean to the individual (Carless & Douglas, 2017). As a qualitative

research study, interviews were conducted with two participants who are currently attending to post-secondary studies, specifically in graduate school. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured conversational style and followed an interview guide consisting of topics such as how the participants understand time and specifically white time, what their experiences of time are within post-secondary education as well as potential alternative approaches to time within academia.

To begin, this research paper includes five chapters detailing the study. The first chapter will provide an overview of existing literature relating to time, whiteness, mental health and post-secondary education. Following the literature review, the second chapter will discuss decolonization. This section details what a decolonizing theoretical approach is, what it means for research, as well as the rationale between choosing a decolonizing approach versus an anti-colonial approach. Next, the third chapter provides a description and overview of the methodology and methods used. This section details narrative inquiry, methods of recruitment, the research design as well as data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter describes the findings from the research study, followed by a final chapter discussing the findings, their implications and any next steps to be taken.

This topic is one that is very important and has a personal connection for me. As a student myself, I have first-hand experience with the operation of white time within education, specifically within post-secondary education.

As a white, cis-gendered female, I was raised in a fairly affluent neighbourhood and attended wealthier schools. As a member of a dominant part of society, I have always been around folks who do well in school and who work towards post-secondary education and getting a good job. I cannot say that it was ever explicitly expressed to me, however it was discussed

within my elementary and secondary schooling as if it was the expectation, and adults in my life consistently asked what I ‘wanted to be when I grew up,’ and then as I got older the question became ‘what university are you looking at?’

For as long as I can remember, I have valued being a ‘good student’ because I believed that this is how I would gain success in my life. Throughout elementary school and secondary school, I suffered at the hands of my perfectionism and looking back, I can acknowledge that this desperate need for perfection stemmed from wanting a sense of control in an educational system where I felt I had none. The education system has always dictated what is good and what is bad, and has always instilled that the only way to be successful and live a good life is by following their rules. I grew up knowing as soon as I graduated high school I needed to go to university, and when I was done my undergraduate degree I needed a graduate degree, and then needed to get a good job and start a family. Fast forward a few decades and here I am, twenty-two years old and only a few weeks away from obtaining my Master of Social Work.

I first began to be aware of the negative impacts of time in the latter part of high school. I was trying to figure out where I was going for university, while trying to finish all my assignments with perfect grades. Oftentimes, I felt as though there was not enough time in the day to accomplish my tasks. This struggle with time became more evident when I began my undergraduate degree, followed by my graduate degree. I was taking a full course load, working two jobs, maintaining two volunteer positions all while attempting to maintain a social life and a self-care regimen. Needless to say, my mental health suffered greatly as the expense of feeling as though I did not have enough time.

As an individual who struggles with their mental health, and has episodes of debilitating depression and anxiety, maintaining this busy schedule was very difficult. While I was

struggling, I was hesitant to ask for extensions or support because I felt as though it was an excuse for not being able to keep up. However, attempting to keep up with the demands of education felt as though I was drowning in tasks and obligations I could not complete.

This research study provides valuable information, as an overwhelming amount of students have lived similar experiences. This research allows for the understanding of the temporal demands of education as well as understanding the impacts on students' mental health and wellbeing.

CHAPTER 1: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This research paper studies the foundation of post-secondary educational institutions in white time and its impact on students' mental health. White time refers to the idea that time was (re)constructed specifically by (and to favour) the experiences of the white community, and that as a result has led to unequal access to institutions, power and knowledge as it emphasizes the power difference between white populations and racialized populations (Mills, 2014). This literature review will discuss several themes that are prevalent in existing literature relating to white time in education. While conducting research for this project, it became apparent that there is a severe lack of conversation relating to the existence and impact of white time. As a result, this literature review will discuss the limited research on white time, the existing research relating to students' mental health as well as the expectations of students within educational institutions.

It should be noted that the dominant paradigm expressed within the literature on white time, education and mental health is positivism, rather than a paradigm of critical examination. Positivism concerns itself with only describing facts, and not with any deeper meaning, often maintaining the status quo rather than resisting and creating change (Krauss, 2005).

Time

A first theme to be discussed is that of time, both as it is understood today as well as in a traditional sense. Yalmambirra explains that time traditionally referred simply to things or events, and states that there is no traditional word that describes time as an abstract concept (2000). Yalmambirra (2000) describes time as we know today as having begun with the invention of the calendar and clock, as it influenced our lives to maintain a schedule of when

things should be done and constructed our notion of punctuality, scheduling (Shahjahan, 2015) and time management (Hartman & Darab, 2012).

Understanding the development of time allows for critical thinking and exploration of its implications. Specific to time, this research study is interested in white time. Mills defines that white time is the concept of time shaped by the interests and benefits of the white community, while ignoring those of racialized communities (2014); this further marginalizes racialized populations and reinforces the inherent superiority and dominance of white populations. Further, white time, and the power relations that exist within, result in unequal access to institutions, services, resources, power and knowledge (Mills, 2014), constructs social status and negotiates levels of power and control (Leaton Gray, 2017). Hunn (2004) states that this level of whiteness that operates within our educational institutions encourages individualism and competition between students.

Relating to educational systems, Leaton Gray addresses the existence of time within education – which she describes as a social construct (2017). Leaton Gray states that our current education system reflects the dominant knowledges and values that were in place in Western European areas when universal schooling first began (2017). As a result, our current educational system still reflects the experiences of these agricultural Christian populations. Additional examples of time favouring the dominant populations within our educational systems are labeling student's progress in comparison to that of others' based on their biological age, as well as the categorization of different types of learning (Leaton Gray, 2017). Leaton Gray also discusses the concept of time being used as a commodity within the educational system. This means that in educational institutions, there is a set amount of time students are expected to spend completing work, while also using time as a means to control students – for example using

time as a punishment by enforcing detentions where students must spend more time to compensate for their behaviour or by taking time away from students during their free time (Leaton Gray, 2017). The manners in which time operates within post-secondary institutions leave students living in “temporal prisons” (Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2003).

Ylijoki & Mäntylä’s (2003) work addresses several different perspectives of time within the realm of academia. The first perspective is that of scheduled time, which the authors describe as time that is controlled and used by external factors, for example deadlines and class schedules, with the participants of the research expressing that with academia accelerating its pace, more time is being demanded by external factors (Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2003). Another perspective of time discussed is that of personal time, which is defined as the use of time that is not governed by any other external factor (Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2003) and reported by participants that it is often lacking due to high demands of scheduled time. These ideas make room for a more critical understanding of the dominant approach to time in educational institutions.

Whiteness

A common theme across much of the literature relating to students’ mental health and educational institutions’ expectations is whiteness. Katz (2005) describes whiteness as maintaining an “everywhere-and-nowhere” position as it maintains its power and normalcy very discreetly despite being embedded in every structure and system within society. For example, the majority of research studies I found focus on the experiences of predominantly white folks in predominantly white institutions dealing with very Eurocentric-based concepts, with the exception of a few authors who discuss the white-settler foundations of education (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Asher, 2009; Durkee & Williams, 2013; Gillborn, 2005; Hancock, 2001; Hjeltnes et al., 2015; Macaskill, 2013; MacKean, 2011; Martin, 2010; Nash et al., 2017; Rangel, 2016;

Reavley & Jorm, 2010; Riviere, 2008; Venville & Street, 2014; Wynaden et al., 2014). Dena Hassouneh (2008) explains that Eurocentrism is entrenched in our educational systems through the standards and traditions held, as well as through the daily practices such as competitiveness and evaluation. Upon the critical examination of literature relating to our current educational system, it is evident that knowledges and experiences from cultures that are not considered Western European have been invalidated, dismissed, and excluded from recounts of history and from our educational system (Battiste, 2009; Hunn, 2004).

Shahjahan (2015) reports that academics are often dealing with a multitude of health concerns, and continues to say that the impact is often more prominent in those who are ‘othered’ or who do not fit the model of whiteness. Post-secondary educational institutions often are based in the assumption that all students are white, neuro-typical, able-bodied, and in good financial standing. Students face many burdens and struggles when they do not fit this ideal (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Durkee & Williams, 2013; Macaskill, 2013). Durkee and Williams (2013) explore how the educational system expects and encourages racialized students to “act white” and adhere to colonial norms in order to be successful. Overall, the limited literature written through critical perspectives focuses on the normalized whiteness and white supremacy within educational institutions and policies as well as its consequences of racial inequity and colonialism (Asher, 2009; Gillborn, 2005; Rangel, 2016).

While it is important to acknowledge and be aware of the existence of Eurocentrism within our educational system, it is crucial to also acknowledge the impact of this. The inherent privileging of white history, practices and knowledges within education results in the inherent superiority and favouring of white students. With this, comes the silencing and oppression of racialized students.

Mental Health Concerns

An additional theme that was common in the existing literature on education is the incidence of mental health concerns among students (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Durkee & Williams, 2013; Hancock, 2001; Macaskill, 2013; MacKean, 2011; Maclean, 2016; Martin, 2010; Nash et al., 2017; Venville & Street, 2014 Vostal, 2015).

In a study conducted by Andrews and Wilding, a questionnaire was given prior to students commencing post-secondary education, and was then administered at the mid-term; results demonstrated that 9% of students who were symptom-free during the pre-study were experiencing symptoms of depression and 20% had become anxious at a clinically significant level (2004). In one research study, participants reported that timelines within their academics resulted in stress, exhaustion and other negative health impacts (Hartman & Darab, 2012). Maclean (2016) claims that these “maddening” systems within academia are created and perpetuated by the power struggles and hierarchies within the institutions. In fact, mental health concerns seem to have become quite a common occurrence within educational institutions. Horton and Tucker (2014) state, “it is practically the norm to be sleep-deprived, working until the early hours, behind with deadlines, underpaid... full of caffeine and alcohol.”

While there is evidence of high levels of mental health concerns in post-secondary educational institutions, studies show that students are often not seeking any support for their difficulties. Maclean (2016) cites that close to half of participants of a study reported mental health concerns and Martin (2010) reports that one-third of their participants deem their studies as their main source of mental health concern. However Nash et al. (2017) report that two-thirds of those struggling are not seeking help.

While there is plenty of existing literature studying the incidence of mental health concerns among students, specifically those attending post-secondary institutions, there is a severe lack of knowledge regarding potential stressors for these concerns as well as the impact that these struggles may have on students in their academic and personal lives.

Educational Expectations

Over time, the expectations of post-secondary institutions have evolved, much like everything does in this world. However, post-secondary institutions have adapted neoliberal values (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Maclean, 2016; Shahjahan, 2015; Vostal, 2015), therefore perpetuating the privilege of dominant populations.

By adapting neoliberal values, post-secondary institutions are mimicking the expectations of commercial corporations (Vostal, 2015) such as competition, efficiency, privatization and productivity (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Vostal, 2015). As such, students who currently attend, or who have recently attended post-secondary educational institutions are facing expectations and stressors that previous generations of academics did not (Maclean, 2016).

In addition to the neo-liberalization of post-secondary education, the speed of education is increasing dramatically along with academia's expectations and resulting in high volumes of workload. Inevitably, this is resulting in many students quitting academia, or resulting in stress and mental health concerns for students who do stay in the academic realm (Fischer, Ritchie & Hanspach, n.d.).

Slow Scholarship Movement

A final theme that was examined in existing literature is that of the slow scholarship movement. Slow scholarship is part of the Slow Movement that began between the 1970s and 1980s (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Sellman, 2014) and now has associations in many aspects of

human life, including fashion, food, and art (Sellman, 2014). From the beginning, the Slow Movement, in all its avenues, has challenged the temporalities within realms (Hartman & Darab, 2012) and emphasizes the difference between quantity and quality (Sellman, 2014).

The slow scholarship movement specifically encourages a less is more approach within our learning environments (Shahjahan, 2015) and suggests that slowing the pace leads to more meaningful experience (Smith, et al., 2018). Many scholars note that it is imperative to recognize that not all students learn in the same ways nor at the same pace, and therefore slow scholarship provides students with the opportunities to have the time and space to think, challenge, experiment and write (Sellman, 2014; Shahjahan, 2015; Smith, et al., 2018). Slow scholarship encourages academics to acknowledge how the dominant discourse of time within the educational system has colonized and impacted the manner in which we live and how we complete studies (Shahjahan, 2015).

Smith et al. state that slow scholarship is essential to our current educational system, as it is crucial in allowing students the time and space to unlearn (Smith, et al., 2018). This is an interesting point to consider, especially in the field of social work. As social work students, there is a process of unlearning the dominant discourses that have been internalized in order to truly understand processes of colonization, marginalization and oppression. However, the current operation of time within educational institutions values time as a measure of productivity and success (Shahjahan, 2015), therefore making slow scholarship an alternative mode of resistance to white time (Sellman, 2014; Smith, et al., 2018).

Some scholars have been discussing the accelerating pace of educational institutions and suggesting that academia is beginning to approach the territory of precariousness (O'Neill, 2014). The slow scholarship movement emphasizes that there is an engrained ideal that

everything must be done quickly and efficiently, but this may not be beneficial to all individuals. Sellman discusses the slow scholarship movement by stating that rushing academia is not going to benefit every student, as each learn differently and also raises the question: how much content must a student be able to reproduce before they are considered safe and competent for their jobs (Sellman, 2014)? This is especially true in social work education, as students are rushed to complete paper after paper, presentation and evaluation – and at what point does this plethora of numerical evaluations deem them an effective practitioner?

In the year 2001, the Dean of Students from Harvard University voiced his concerns for the expectations of post-secondary academia. In response, he penned and sent a letter to new student's that was titled "Slow Down." In this letter, he explains several pieces of advice for students relating to their success, and encourages them to slow down and find balance in their lives. He says:

the most important thing you need to master is the capacity to make choices that are appropriate to you, recognizing that flexibility in your schedule, unstructured time in your day, and evenings spent with your friends rather than your books are all, in a larger sense, essential for your education. In advising you to think about slowing down and limiting your structured activities, I do not mean to discourage you from high achievement, indeed from the pursuit of extraordinary excellence, in your chosen path. But you are more likely to sustain the intense effort needed to accomplish first-rate work in one area if you allow yourself some leisure time, some recreation, some time for solitude, rather than packing your schedule with so many activities that you have no time to think about why you are doing what you are doing (Lewis, 2001, para. 4).

Limitations in Existing Literature

As discussed above, much of the existing literature pertaining to mental health within post-secondary institutions, while plentiful, is not very critical. Existing literature discusses the rising incidence of mental health concerns of students, however fails to critically explore the factors behind the increasing rates. Additionally, literature on slow scholarship and the colonization of time is still rare. The critical engagement of time, and challenging the colonial notions that have for so long been the norms is a new concept of thought, and therefore there is not a large amount of existing literature. Similarly, the slow scholarship movement is beginning to gain attention with the increasing demands of post-secondary education, however due to this new form of resistance, literature is scarce.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research study uses one theoretical framework to approach both the topic of and the research of white time within post-secondary institutions. The theoretical framework used is decolonization. Decolonization is a theoretical framework that historically has been used within critical and anti-oppressive education and research, and has, to this day, been often left out of mainstream conversations of research (Daza & Tuck, 2014). This particular research study is using decolonization as its theoretical framework as it allows for a critical examination of the values, ideals and practices that are prominent within educational institutions while making space for alternatives.

While post-colonialism, anti-colonialism and decolonizing have often been described as a part of anti-oppressive education that mean the same thing (Daza & Tuck, 2014), it is important to note that decolonization is not a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonization was intentionally chosen as the theoretical framework for this study, versus other frameworks such as post-colonialism and anti-colonialism. Post-colonialism has drawn plenty of negative attention and dissatisfaction as ‘post’ implies what is occurring after colonization, however, as colonization and colonialism is an ongoing issue, this theoretical framework is inaccurate (Daza & Tuck, 2014). Anti-colonialism recognizes the history of colonization facing Indigenous populations, and provides an oppositional discourse to the traditional Eurocentric discourse. However, anti-colonialism emphasizes the perpetuation of colonization, and challenges colonial discourses (Collins, 2013), and does not make any effort to undo colonialism but rather mask it (Tuck & Yang, 2012), whereas decolonization pushes past questioning Western power and control and looks for spaces to include alternative, non-Western ways of being (Helu Thaman, 2003).

Decolonization, in a simple form, can mean accepting the lived experiences of individuals and supporting unique cultural heritages (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). Where colonization describes control, power and systemic discrimination (Asher, 2009; Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002), decolonization works to transform our understanding of power and knowledge (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012). Tuhiwai Smith (2012) discusses that research in and of itself is a set of practices and privileges brought forward by colonization, which were then institutionalized in academic institutions. Decolonization provokes a revolutionary way of thinking about knowledge and ways of being (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Helu Thaman (2003) recognizes the importance of decolonization as it provides an approach to understand how European values and practices, such as ways of thinking and living, communication, time and language, have been embedded in our culture and how this can be very disempowering and oppressive for marginalized populations. Further, Helu Thaman (2003) discusses that decolonizing studies go further than simply discussing the politics and culture of society, but rather examine the embodiment of whiteness within our society that impacts individuals' sense of self within their world.

When using a decolonizing theoretical approach, there are several things that are important to acknowledge and understand so as to not simply appropriate Indigeneity. In their work, Tuck and Yang (2012) discuss a concept called 'settler moves to innocence.' This concept describes the actions taken by settlers to relieve negative feelings and guilt of colonization without giving up any of their power (Tuck & Yang, 2012). These strategies serve only the dominant settler population. An example discussed within the article is that of the language that has been incorporated into education; the language of decolonization has been included in some aspects of education, however the understanding is very superficial (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The

incorporation of such language allows settlers to be perceived as though they acknowledge the atrocity of colonization, however it does not take into account what decolonization is nor what it wants. It is also important to recognize that while decolonization is an approach to challenge the whiteness that is embedded within our educational system, it is crucial to also discuss traditional, Indigenous practices and knowledges. Without doing so, simply challenging whiteness and the values of our educational system without discussing Indigenous understandings, we continue to perpetuate whiteness and settler moves to innocence.

Using a decolonization approach provides a framework for examining, understanding and reframing the educational institutions within our society. Despite the long-standing existence and development of educational systems, our curricula and practices still uphold traditional European values from when universal schooling first began (Leaton Gray, 2017) and still dismiss, reject and ignore non-Western alternatives (Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002). Helu Thaman further emphasizes this point by stating that “our academic education is not culture free, nor does it occupy an ideologically neutral high ground” (2003) as it is embedded in Western, white norms, values and ways of knowing (Gray, Coates, Yellow Birth & Hetherington, 2016).

This research aims to understand how temporal operations within post-secondary institutions impact students’ mental health, without settler moves to innocence. Using a decolonizing framework, this research will expose the Eurocentric view of time that has colonized our education and analyze how colonization exists within the temporal operations of education and then work towards making space for traditional values and practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Narrative Approach

This research study draws upon a narrative methodological approach. A narrative approach to a study involves understanding the stories from an individual or small group relating to their own lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). More specifically, Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou describe narrative methodology as an approach that examines how stories themselves are structures, ways in which they work, by what means and by whom they are produced and how they are silenced and/or accepted (2013). Through the telling of lived experience through stories, individuals are able to demonstrate their identities and how they understand their societies, as well as allow a way to make sense of both verbal and non-verbal language (Fraser, 2004). In using a narrative approach, it is possible to bring together many layers of experience from individuals (Etherington, 2013).

This research study uses an experience-centered approach to narrative methodology (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013) where individuals share their own personal experiences in the form of storytelling (Creswell, 2007). This narrative approach is utilized in this research in order to understand students' experiences of time in post-secondary education, as well as to understand if and how these experiences impact their mental health.

In using a narrative approach to research, it is common for researchers to use semi-structured interviews in order to collect their data (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). Kvale (1996) describes semi-structured interviewing as neither an open conversation, nor a conversation that is highly structured, but rather a conversation stemming from several suggested questions focusing on a particular topic and allowing space for the interviewee to take the conversation to a place that is important to them. Specifically, these interviews are interviewee-

focused rather than being instrument focused, and use a conversational style of interviewing where the researcher *takes their time* listening to the stories of the participants (Fraser, 2004). In order for this type of research to be successful, it is important that there is trust within the research relationship, that there is mutual collaboration and that the interviewee feels that their voice is being heard and understood (Etherington, 2013).

Research Design

I began with the following question: how do students perceive the operation of white time within post-secondary institutions, and how does that impact students' mental health? The primary objectives of this research project were to understand how post-secondary students experience time within their educational institution, as well as how these experiences impact their mental health, if at all.

To begin the research process, my supervisor approved a preliminary proposal. Following this approval, a proposal was made to the Ryerson University Ethics Board containing information about each step of the proposed research study. The Ethics Board made several suggestions and recommendations, and after some revisions and the addition of details, the research study was given ethics approval.

Recruitment

The recruitment process for this research study began with the creation of a recruitment poster (see Appendix A). Upon the approval from the Ryerson University Ethics Board, the researcher created a project-specific Facebook account that would be used for recruitment purposes for the study. The recruitment poster was shared several times on this Facebook account to inform potential participants about the research opportunity. In order to maintain

confidentiality, comments on the post were disabled to ensure that any interested individuals must directly send an email to inquire about participation.

Potential participants were required to meet several criteria in order to participate in this study. This inclusion criteria required that individuals be eighteen years of age or older as well as a current and/or past student of a post-secondary educational institution. This study did not use gender, sexual orientation, ability, race, culture, ethnicity, class or mental ability as identifiers in the research study. The former were not used as identifiers in this study as I did not want to limit the data and experiences reflected in this research to particular populations, as each individual may have had different experiences. Using limited identifiers was intentional in hopes to allow for a variety of experiences to be discussed within this research.

Each participant, prior to beginning the interview process, was given a consent form (see Appendix B) that they read over on their own as well as with the researcher to ensure its content was fully understood. The consent form included information concerning the goal of the research study, any potential risks and benefits as well as information concerning confidentiality. This research study is one of low risk; participants may experience discomfort and anxiety discussing topics that have a potential to be linked with past negative experiences, however to mitigate this risk, the researcher made clear to each participant that they were able to skip questions, stop the audio-recording or withdraw from the study at any time and also provided the participants with a list of resources within several communities (see Appendix C).

Data Collection

Two participants were interviewed for this study. These participants both identified as white, cis-gender women between the ages of mid-twenty to mid-thirty and were both current post-secondary students. In order to keep their identities anonymous, I have given each

participant a pseudonym to which they will be referred for the research paper; Participant 1 is Natalie and Participant 2 is Elizabeth.

I met with participants one-on-one for semi-structured interviews for this research study. One interview was conducted face-to-face at a convenient time and place for the participant, and the other interview was conducted over a video call at a convenient time. The interviews did not have a preset time limit or expectation. As this study is about challenging and decolonizing how time operates within post-secondary education, the researcher did not want to endorse a time frame, but rather allow the participants the space to engage in a conversation without imposing boundaries. During these interviews, participants were asked to engage in a conversation with the researcher relating to the concept of white time, the operation of time within education as well as their personal experiences. A narrative interview was chosen for this study as it allows the researcher to listen to individuals' experiences and allows the participants to express their views in their own words (Kvale, 1996).

Common to semi-structured interviews, and to keep the conversations on relevant topics, an interview guide was created (see Appendix D). This guide provided several overarching themes pertaining to this study, while allowing the participants to interpret the questions as they relate to their own experiences and for the conversation to take its natural course. Both interviews were audio-recorded with the knowledge and consent of participants. Following the interviews, the audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim into a physical word document and destroyed.

Data Analysis

Using these transcripts, the researcher reviewed them using a narrative thematic analysis to look for commonalities and differences by weaving together pieces of each participant's

stories (Fraser, 2004). Thematic analysis is a form of data analysis in which the data is read and re-read, focusing on what the participants were saying (Riessman, 2008) to identify themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Upon identifying themes within the data, these themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researcher reviewed the verbatim transcripts line by line, and began by highlighting words or phrases that stood out. Next, the researcher examined which words or phrases were common among both participants and which were unique. Using a master list of all important words and phrases, the researcher began to order the information based on commonalities, or common themes. Once several major themes were identified from the data, the researcher once again read through the transcript, this time highlighting where the major themes were apparent. This approach to data analysis illustrates the patterns in the data and allows the stories of both participants to be compared and contrasted (Riessman, 2008). Upon the completion of a thematic analysis, several themes were identified: 1) Mental Distress; 2) Colonization of the Academy; 3) Other Life Responsibilities; and 4) Alternative Perspectives.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings that came as a result of the thematic analysis completed using the research data. This chapter begins by providing a brief description of the narrative of each participant. These brief narratives are included to illustrate the experiences of both Natalie and Elizabeth relating to white time within their own journeys of post-secondary institutions. The remainder of the chapter will discuss four major themes that presented themselves within the research data. These themes are: the colonization of academia, the responsibilities of life, mental distress and alternative perspectives.

Participant 1: Natalie

Natalie is a student in a graduate program and is working towards her master degree. Natalie explained that after completing her undergraduate degree, she waited several years before applying to begin her master degree. The reason for this being that education has become an increasing financial burden, and despite having good grades during her undergraduate degree, she knew she could not afford the tuition of a graduate program.

Natalie enjoys learning and enjoys school, however describes that she is often not allotted the time she needs to thoroughly learn and absorb information, by reading, asking questions, practicing and thinking critically.

While Natalie is happy to be pursuing further education, despite waiting several years after the completion of her undergraduate degree, she explains that she often hears from those who did not wait that she is ‘moving backwards’ by returning to the educational system.

Natalie expressed several times throughout her interview that she feels as though academia is demanding large amounts of her time and expecting a copious amount of work to complete in a short amount of time – which she describes as unrealistic. In addition to simply

academia demanding her time, Natalie also explains that there are other factors in her life that are demanding her time, which makes it difficult to find balance and take care of herself in a healthy way.

Participant 2: Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a graduate student working to complete her master degree. Elizabeth identifies as an individual with a complex mental health history, and describes during her interview how that has impacted her experience in the educational system.

At the beginning of her interview, Elizabeth described the expectation of our society that we are expected to complete high school, go to university, complete a graduate program, get married, have kids, have a career, and emphasizes that it feels as though time is of the essence. While Elizabeth is conscious of these expectations and does not agree, she explains that she feels as though in order to be successful in her life, she needs to live her time according to these colonial expectations.

Elizabeth emphasizes the challenge of trying to be a full-time student and completing all of the tasks associated with this in addition to maintaining her health and wellness and tending to other life responsibilities. Elizabeth discloses that there are times during the school year where she is at her breaking point, but feels the pressure to continue pushing herself in order to keep up with her peers and be successful. While Elizabeth states that she is very keen on continuing her education and continuing learning, she feels that she may not do so because she is afraid of putting her mental health in jeopardy of a crisis due to the expectations and time constraints.

The Colonization of Academia

Throughout the interviews, the researcher aimed to discuss the way in which academia functions, including its schedules, classes, deadlines, and time. While Natalie and Elizabeth

discussed their own perceptions and their own experiences, a commonality began to appear: both participants were very critical of how colonization had seeped into the realm of academia.

Natalie explains that the educational system seems to exclude those who are not a part of the dominant community, by means of money, and assumes that only those who have proven themselves worthy and privileged deserve to attend higher education. Natalie states:

Education is something everyone deserves but there's this idea that education is not for everybody, by the rich. And the rich are like 'well I worked hard for my money so I should be able to go to school, you guys just need to work harder to be able to afford to go to the schools that I go to.' So then, you know, systemically those folks don't get an education and then they you know, continue to get lost in you know, whatever societal way (325-330).

Continuing on the topic of colonization within academic institutions, Natalie further expresses that once you are in such an institution, very colonial and Eurocentric ideals are emphasized and adhering to colonial operations is the only way through academia with success. She says, to get in to post-secondary education, individuals must represent the dominant population, or must work harder to prove themselves and then work to manage all of the obligations of academia. As a result, post-secondary institutions continue to "pump out these...more of these colonized bodies (367-368).

A second pattern relating to the colonization of academia that appeared in the data, was that of time. This research study aimed to understand how time operates within post-secondary educational institutions, and how that impacts students. Both Natalie and Elizabeth discuss the temporal expectations of their experience with academia. Elizabeth speaks to her experience with academia:

There is really rigid guidelines around like completing assignments, for example, that is really related to time, or like being in class and participating or...there's a lot of rules and a lot of tasks and a lot of things that need to be done in a short amount of time (263-266).

Natalie also speaks to this point, and discusses having to keep up and practice effective time management in order to successfully navigate academia. Natalie explains,

I hate the idea of keeping up and managing your time and to um...in order to get all these letters behind your name, right? For what? But it's such a capitalist society we live in that if you don't do it then you fall behind and then you feel the effects (164-167).

Both participants emphasized the need to "keep up" or "catch up" with their peers in order to feel as though they were meeting the expectations of their program. Natalie and Elizabeth both discussed the need to manage their time impeccably in order to come close to completing all their tasks, whether they be school related or not.

External Factors: Life Responsibilities

A second common theme that appeared upon analyzing the research data was factors outside of academia that have an impact on the quality and quantity of work produced within post-secondary education.

Academia upholds a belief that those who are worthy of attending educational institutions are very privileged and hold a great amount of power. Meaning, academia assumes students attending these institutions are wealthy, able-bodied, neuro-typical individuals. However, individuals attending post-secondary institutions also have responsibilities outside of the academy. Some students must work in order to pay the cost of an education, some students volunteer outside of the classroom to enhance their experiences, some are care-takers, some have

mental or physical disabilities, and some celebrate holidays and traditions that are not recognized by the academy. Natalie explains,

So if you have to work for example, cause you didn't come in with a bunch of money to school then your time is also affected, in the time that you can put into your readings and your actual school work (298-301).

Natalie discusses that in her experience, when she has responsibilities to attend to that are outside of the academy, it impedes her academic expectations. By needing to fulfill the responsibilities of life, it begins to feel as though there is not enough time to complete everything. Academia expects a large amount of work to be completed in a short amount of time, however the amount of time you have in order to do so is impacted by other external factors. Those who may not be hyper-privileged within educational institutions must fulfill extra duties, therefore lessening the time allotted to academia.

Elizabeth speaks to her own personal experience with fulfilling her obligations of life while being a student:

I was working two jobs, I had like two or three volunteer jobs...I was, you know, doing school. I was doing a full course load as well, um, living with my boyfriend, had cats, just like...I couldn't have possibly done more (60-61).

Elizabeth's personal experience embodies the essence of what many students experience while in post-secondary education. Elizabeth stated that she had many obligations, including those within academia as well as those not within academia. Elizabeth expressed that her time and energy were being used to their maximum potential in an effort to accomplish all that she needed. Later in her interview, Elizabeth explains that following the year of exerting herself to complete all her responsibilities, she "collapsed".

Both Natalie and Elizabeth express that the responsibilities in their life that are outside of academia have a grand impact on their experience within post-secondary institutions. Having responsibilities in addition to the expectations of academia result in individuals needing to delegate certain amounts of time to specific tasks. However, it often feels as though there is not enough time to complete academic requirements as well as other responsibilities of life. Therefore, some aspect is going to suffer – students either spend their time on all of their responsibilities, and inevitably the quality will suffer, or students spent all of their time on academic requirements and therefore begin to lose other aspects of their life.

Mental Distress

A third theme that was very prominent throughout the research data was that of the mental distress of the participants. Natalie and Elizabeth express that the expectations of post-secondary education are overwhelming and produce large amounts of stress and anxiety.

Natalie explains that she feels a constant need to do better and prove herself within her academics. She says “I’m already doing the best I can, we’re all doing the best that we can it’s just that the expectations of the outcomes is unrealistic (382-383).” Natalie explains that post-secondary institutions have high standards regarding the quality as well as the quantity of work expected of students. As a result, she feels as though no matter how hard she is trying, there is an expectation for her to work harder and do better. Natalie points to the unrealistic expectations of academia as a primary reason for feeling stressed and a pressure to improve.

Similarly to Natalie, Elizabeth discusses the copious amounts of work that students are expected to complete and the pressure that educational institutions inflict on students. Elizabeth explains that there comes a point when the stress of academia becomes overwhelming. She says,

There's so many times near the end of semesters that I'm just like...I'm falling apart and my peers are falling apart and we are all at this breaking point and it's not healthy and we all know it's not healthy (288-290).

Elizabeth refers to the accumulation of assignments and tests from each course that creates an amount of work that seems impossible to complete. In order for her to complete all the tasks assigned to her, Elizabeth says it takes prioritizing her academic work over her other responsibilities.

I have definitely seen myself over the years throw away all my self-care stuff that is like, really important to me...and like really important to like, function because I'm like a very complex person with a mental health history so like, self-care should be like my number one thing....And I think a lot of the time when it came to school and like, time management I started prioritizing all those things above the only thing that did matter which was my wellness and I think that if I can't be well, if I can't function then I can't do anything (119-133).

Elizabeth expresses that she often prioritizes academia over other responsibilities in her life. For Elizabeth, this is a dangerous scenario as an individual with a history of mental health struggles, as she knows that there are things she needs to do to keep her healthy and functioning. However, she often feels there is not enough time to practice her self-care and also complete her academic requirements. As a result, Elizabeth either prioritizes her academic life, and suffers in other aspects of her life, or prioritizes her health and lets her academic life suffer. The question this raises is why can both not be possible? Why has academia become a system where students must operate in an all-or-nothing manner, and must inevitably suffer in some aspect of their life?

Often times, according to both Natalie and Elizabeth, it is their mental health that takes the brunt of the impact.

Between trying to balance their time between academia and life, Natalie and Elizabeth express that the workload of post-secondary education is overwhelming and is becoming precarious. Both participants express that the stress and mental health distress caused by the expectations of academia seem to be branching away from the true concept of learning, and rather are simply to warrant the ‘privilege’ of adding several letters behind your name to prove your worth and ability. Elizabeth explains,

I really wanted to get a PhD, I wanted to you know, continue exploring these topics. But after hearing horror stories of what it does to your mental health, and the expectations that it has, I’m really sad because now I don’t think I’ll do it because I don’t wanna put myself in a crisis over three more little letters to put in front of my name. I wish so badly that I lived in a world where getting my PhD wouldn’t cause me to have a mental health crisis and that’s how I feel right now (424-429).

While Elizabeth makes it clear her intention to pursue further education has been put to a stop as a result of the mental distress caused by academic institutions, her and Natalie discuss other common decisions among their peers. Both participants explain that some of their peers make decisions similar to that of Elizabeth and decide not to pursue higher education as a result of the impact it may have on their mental health, while some of their other peers choose to continue their education despite the risks because they feel it is what they are supposed to do in our society. Many feel as though the only way to be successful in our society and obtain our dream job is by suffering through academia, as though surviving the demands of academia make us

better citizens and better workers. Again, this raises the question: why can academia not be an empowering experience of learning, rather than a toxic environment of suffering?

Alternative Perspectives

In the final part of the research interview, the participants were asked about a potential better temporal approach within post-secondary academia (See Appendix C). The results of this conversation prompted many suggestions from Natalie and Elizabeth about alternative perspectives and alternative approaches within academia.

When Elizabeth was prompted about academia in her ideal world, she explained that educational institutions would have;

more flexibility, more space, more options, more ability to be present, and I guess like less work to do and less deadlines then things would just flow better. Also if we weren't graded in the same way that we're graded then I think that our experiences would be different (399-402).

Elizabeth continued by saying,

I feel like in a perfect world, time would be so much more flexible. I feel like we would be able to drop in to online classes. Like, not actually having to be in class, but being able to listen to online lectures or be able to drop in online like webinar style. I think that travelling, I think that having to get there at certain times, I think those cause a lot of impediments. I know that certain profs are like, really flexible with deadlines cause I think that's a really big part of this time stuff...I think that flexible deadlines are great. I think that accommodations are great (376-385).

Elizabeth's suggestions on how to improve the learning and temporal atmosphere of academia emphasized increasing flexibility. By increasing the flexibility given to students, it would allow

for them to delegate time to both their academic responsibilities, as well as other life responsibilities. Allowing students the time and space to work at their own pace, and allowing students to be the expert in their own learning style and responsibilities would alleviate some of the stress caused by the pressure from the educational institution, as discussed in the last section.

When asked about an alternative approach that would be ideal for herself, Natalie explained,

I think that learning is....we just need to know what the core concepts are that we're trying to learn...right? Be better at whatever profession we are in. And just, have that time to practically and academically have the time to learn and absorb the information...I need to be able to go out in the world, see it, like practice it and try it out for myself. So like, if we have more um, opportunities to do that, so that rather than having like five papers for the semester just have like literally one paper, um and then just like a presentation or something. I don't know, I think part of me is thinking yeah, we have to have a way to measure our learning to justify in our capitalist society why we deserve these letters...I guess. I don't agree with that either (394-406).

Natalie began by expressing similar suggestions as Elizabeth, recommending more flexibility and freedom for students in their academic career. Natalie states that she personally would benefit from the ability to digest information and applying information, rather than simply reading and regurgitating. As Natalie continued to explore perspectives that would improve the learning and temporal environment of educational experiences, she began to want to see changes in larger parts of the system, such as how students are graded. Elizabeth also began to escalate the changes she wished to see in an ideal academic world, stating,

I think that it gets so much bigger, you have to start tearing apart all the systems to even make time feel better at school. Like, it's not just changing a couple practices and policies, like it's really a lot deeper about changing our whole education system so things don't feel so overwhelming (405-408).

It is evident, that both participants wish for small changes that would allow for students to have more flexibility, more freedom and the ability to prioritize some tasks without the erasure of others. However, it is also evident that both participants recognize that in order to fully ensure a healthy, productive and effective learning experience within post-secondary education, there is much more that must be done than a few changes to course content, but rather a deeper deconstruction, decolonization and reconstruction of the entire educational system.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As an individual who, myself, has struggled immensely with the temporal aspects of post-secondary education, I was both pleased and upset with the findings from the research data. Preparing for this research, I expected to hear participants sharing stories of struggling with the workload and deadlines within post-secondary education. Throughout my own studies, I have had many conversations with classmates where we both expressed our stress and anxiety relating to academia. However, I was not prepared for the honesty of the stories that would come from my participants, and discovering that my struggles were not entirely unique was a hard pill to swallow.

On one hand, discussing the issue of white time within post-secondary education with other students was remarkable, as it was pleasant to hear that others have shared similar struggles. Providing a sense of relief that I was not alone in my troubles, and calming my worry that I was potentially not meant for higher education, it was comforting to converse with those who similarly have felt the adversities of time within their academic career. On the other hand, however, it was deeply upsetting to come to the realization that my struggles are not just my own, but other students are struggling. In fact, in both the existing literature and in the conversations with Natalie and Elizabeth, it appears to be a norm for students to be struggling, burning out and ultimately experiencing mental health crises – which leaves me wondering, why a system that appears to be so harmful to its students seemingly gets away with the harm and continues to perpetuate mental health distress.

Responding to the Research Question

This research study was designed to answer the question: how do students perceive the operation of white time within post-secondary institutions, and how does that impact students’

mental health? Upon the completion of data collection and analysis, I believe that this question has begun to be answered.

In order to answer this question, a brief narrative of each participant was created using information that they shared during the interview. These brief narratives were used to ensure the excerpts in the findings section had context relating to each participant. Following the creation of the narratives of Natalie and Elizabeth, the research data was reviewed for re-occurring themes. The themes that appeared from the data were: (1) the colonization of academia, (2) life responsibilities, (3) mental distress, and (4) alternative perspectives.

In reviewing and linking together the data from both participants, it was possible to begin to answer the research question. Both participants, Natalie and Elizabeth, discussed how they perceived white time, or other temporal constraints, within post-secondary education. Natalie and Elizabeth discussed the focus on quantity within academia: the expectations of the amount of work students must complete is rapidly increasing, however they are not being given the time to do so effectively. Both participants explain that this pressure from the institutions results in the prioritization of academia over all else, simply because there is not enough time in one day to complete all the obligations. The participants discussed concepts such as the scheduling of classes, which are often back-to-back and can be inaccessible for many, deadlines which are often at similar times in each course resulting in an overwhelming amount of tasks, and the holidays acknowledged with academia which completely disregard all religions but Christianity.

The second part of the research question focused on the impact of temporal operations on students' mental health. Natalie and Elizabeth both had plenty to share during this part of the interview.

Elizabeth was very honest in disclosing her own history with mental health concerns, and explained very thoroughly the impact of temporal expectations and constraints within education. Elizabeth shared that due to most courses following the same time frame for assignments, there were often points of each semester where the work became overwhelming and she, along with her peers, would reach a breaking point. Elizabeth shared her experience of collapsing from the stress and pressure of trying to maintain her academic life as well as her personal life. Elizabeth also divulged her wish to complete her PhD and continuing her education, however shared that she believes this may not be possible because she does not want to put her mental health at risk for a crisis.

Natalie, while she did not share any personal history of mental health struggles, did speak to the stress and anxiety that she feels from academia. Natalie shared that her physical and mental health often were negatively impacted by the amount of stress she felt and shared that she feels as though her best is not viewed as good enough by academia; as though academia is always pressuring students to complete unrealistic amounts of tasks in a short period of time, and if they are unable to do so there are consequences, such as lower grades, failures or monetary consequences to pay for extra semesters.

An interesting piece of information was discussed during the research interview with Elizabeth: post-secondary institutions must be aware of the issues relating to students' mental health crises, as they have added reading weeks to each semester during the school year. In light of the mental health crises on university campuses, increasing waitlists for counseling, and higher suicide rates (Kitzrow, 2003), many post-secondary institutions have added one week-long break in the middle of each semester. Post-secondary institutions all report similar reasons for implementing these breaks. Petros Kusmu, the Student Union President at the University of

Alberta, commented that they “are giving the students a break at a time when, frankly, we start seeing students get stressed out and we see some of the highest numbers of visits to our mental health centre” (News Staff, 2014). Evidently, post-secondary institutions are well aware of the struggles of their students, however in a neoliberal world, productivity is valued in order for the educational institutions to make money (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Maclean, 2016; Shahjahan, 2015; Vostal, 2015), and therefore the speed and pressure of academia increase while the institutions do little to ensure student health and wellness.

In reviewing the research data, the participants of this study emphasized that post-secondary educational institutions inflict unhealthy temporal expectations, which rarely benefit the majority of the student population. Instead, the temporal operations within academia often only benefit those with privilege, including wealthier students, those who do not have a history of mental health concerns and those who are part of the dominant white population in some other way. This research study also demonstrated by way of the data collected from participants that these temporal operations and constraints are harmful and unhealthy to the mental health of students.

Implications for Decolonization

This research and its findings link back to decolonization and add to the conversations about decolonizing the academy and decolonizing time. It draws attention to decolonization as a theoretical framework to be used in future research on the academy.

This research adds to the existing conversation about decolonizing post-secondary educational institutions in several ways. This work brings to light the values and practices that are apparent within academia and challenge the colonial ways of thinking that have become institutionalized within our education system. The findings of this research illustrate that in order

to benefit students within the academic realm, it is important for institutions to begin to work away from their neo-liberal values such as productivity and competition and begin increasing equal access to academic institutions and focusing on a positive educational experience.

Similarly, these research findings also add to the conversation within existing academic literature in regards to decolonizing time within post-secondary educational institutions. This research and its findings suggest that we begin to make our way back to traditional time, as defined by Yalmambirra (2000) where things are completed when they need to be with a focus on the experience, rather than emphasizing a linear operation of time. Working back to a traditional sense of time, and decolonizing our notion of temporal operations would result in less time spent on scheduled obligations and more time on personal happenings. This increase in personal time comes from a finding from Ylijoki and Mäntylä (2003) as well as from a recommendation from Harry Lewis of Harvard University. Decolonizing the temporal demands of academia and allowing more time for personal life would as a result allow students to practice self-care, tend to their mental health and in turn would result in a more positive and beneficial academic experience.

Further conversations to which this research adds is that of mental health. As discussed in the review of the literature, there is existing literature on mental health within post-secondary institutions. These conversations however are from a positivist viewpoint and therefore this research adds a critical lens to such crises. Existing conversations acknowledge that mental health is a concern within post-secondary educational institutions, however this work takes the conversation a step further and provides context as to why this crisis is occurring as well as recommendations on how to improve. This research is important to the conversation of decolonization as it challenges the norms within the academy and encourages resistance via

various alterations to ease the temporal constraints and in turn alleviate mental distress on students. Further, this research may provide solidarity, by demonstrating that many students are struggling, and therefore may provide a sense of relief to others who may feel their distress is theirs alone.

Limitations of the Study

This section will discuss the several limitations to this research study. The limitations include that the data is not transferable to the rest of the population, the potential for researcher bias as well as the limitation of time.

Due to the small number of participants, this research data is not transferable to the rest of the population. First, in considering the whole of student populations, there are of course some who benefit greatly from post-secondary institutions. The narratives included in this research study both reflect a perspective from women-identifying individuals, in a large metropolitan city. These research findings may not translate to students of other genders, cultures, and ability. The mitigation of this limitation will be discussed further in the next section pertaining to future research on the topic.

A second potential limitation of this study is that of researcher bias. As a researcher who is currently a post-secondary student, as well as being a student who has struggled with my mental health while attending post-secondary institutions, I held an insider relationship with the participants. This means that we shared a common identity of being a student, and therefore strengthened the research relationship. Being a student may have made it possible for me to misinterpret the data in terms identifying or projecting my own experiences. To eliminate this limitation, it would have been ideal to re-connect with the participants to ensure that the narrative

I drew from their stories was accurate and authentic, however due to temporal constraints, this was unable to occur.

Ironically, in a research study examining the impacts of time on students' mental health, time was a great barrier to this study. Research for this study began at a time that is commonly very busy and overwhelming for students. I began searching for research participants nearing the end of the winter semester, and therefore it was a time that many students felt the pressure to finish their requirements for the academic year. As a result, it was difficult to find participants whose scheduled matched with my own. While other students were constrained by temporal pressures of academia, I was too in order to have the research completed. I continue to reflect on the irony of completing a research study critically examining the operation of time within post-secondary institutions while simultaneously being stuck in the temporal constraints and expectations of my own academia.

Now What?

This research study unveiled some important information regarding the experiences of students in post-secondary institutions relating to the operation of time and its impacts on students' mental health. However, in this area there is still much work to be done. This section will discuss what steps may be taken in further research on the topic, as well as how to mitigate the limitations of this research study.

Recommendations from Findings

As discussed in the findings chapter of this research paper, the participants of this research study provided several suggestions for how the environment of post-secondary institutions could be improved in the future to ensure the health and wellness of students. These findings present several tangible ways to challenge the Western practices that have been

embedded within our academic institutions. By decolonizing post-secondary education, we reconstruct how academia is structured and restructure it to provide more opportunities and equal benefit to all students. Below is a list of specific recommendations from the participants, Natalie and Elizabeth.

- More flexible class schedules
 - Options for classes; for example, allowing early morning classes to be optional classes rather than mandatory as they are not always accessible for those who commute, need to get children to school, or for those who take psychiatric medications.
- More space for classes
 - Providing more space/locations for classrooms would allow for leeway in the time class ends. This would prevent conversations and reflections from being cut short when another class arrives to the room.
- Online options for courses, as this would allow more accessibility for those who may struggle to access on-campus classes.
- More flexible deadlines
 - In programs where all courses are mandatory, it would be helpful for professors to discuss assignment deadlines to avoid having all assignments and tests in close proximity, therefore reducing stress on students and allowing students to submit their best work.
- Fewer assignments
 - Providing students with fewer assignments allows students the time and space to reflect, discuss, challenge, think critically, and write purposefully. This allows

students to be able to absorb the information rather than haphazardly memorizing and regurgitating information.

- More accessible accommodations
 - Many students benefit from academic accommodations for a variety of reasons from learning disabilities, mental health concerns, medications, and physical disabilities, for example. Currently, students are required to obtain documentation of their disability and reason for accommodation. It would be more accessible if educational institutions designed an accommodation system that does not require students to label themselves and obtain written proof of the accommodation they are requesting.
- A long-term recommendation is recreating the grading system
 - The present grading system feels very subjective and caters to specific types of students, such as those who follow the rigid operations of colonial education.

These findings and recommendations presented by Natalie and Elizabeth would help alleviate the temporal constraints and stress within post-secondary education in several ways. Firstly, providing more flexible class schedules, deadlines and a fewer number of assignments would allow students to fully indulge themselves in the learning process. This means that students would have more time for fewer assignments, giving them the opportunity to engage with the material, resulting in a more positive learning experience. Secondly, by providing online programs or courses and ensuring that accommodations are fully accessible, students would spend less time navigating barriers and thus result in a lower level of stress and a higher focus on their academics. Lastly, the participants recommended an overhaul to the current grading system, which they believe is subjective and colonial. Creating a new way of measuring learning would

perhaps result in a decrease in stress and anxiety over their letter grades or percentage grades and provide students the opportunity to focus on learning and embodying the material.

Recommendations from the Literature

The earlier chapter reviewing existing literature discusses several scholars who discuss alternative perspectives to colonial education and white time. These recommendations from the literature are similar to those suggested by Natalie and Elizabeth, and provide ways to decolonize academia and its temporal operations. Below are specific recommendations from scholars in the area of mental health in post-secondary institutions and in the areas of slow scholarship and white time:

- Providing online education would make education potentially more accessible for certain populations. This could also result in smaller class sizes and therefore increase rapport between professor and students, resulting in a more trusting and healthy learning environment (Smith, et al., 2018).
- Improve upon the supports offered to students within educational institutions (Smith, et al., 2018).
- Allow more flexibility in student schedules to allow for students to find a balance between their academic and personal lives (Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2013).
- Decolonize time and nurture depth within academia to improve the quality of both life and work (Shahjahan, 2015).
- Explore alternative notions of time and knowledge (Shahjahan, 2015).
- Academic institutions need to address the neo-liberalization of the academy as well as the mental health crisis (Maclean, 2016).

- Create a less competitive environment, and instead emphasize solidarity and respect (Maclean, 2016).
- Slowing down the academic realm would allow students to feel better balanced and result in an improved experience within post-secondary education (Sellman, 2014).

Future Research

This research begins to examine how time operates within post-secondary educational institutions and how these temporal operations benefit the dominant white population. Further, this research discusses how temporal constraints within academia impact the mental health of students within these institutions. While this study has produced findings that suggest post-secondary institutions operate in a temporal manner that is harmful to students and causes overwhelming amounts of stress and mental distress, it is merely the beginning of the research needed on this topic. The following section discusses several key recommendations for further work in this area.

I recommend that further research in this area use a larger sample size. It is important to increase the sample size in the future to achieve research findings that are more representative of the student population. This research study contained data from two participants who are current students in graduate studies at an educational institution located within a large metropolitan city. It could be helpful in the future to hear stories and experiences from past students, students pursuing an undergraduate degree, as well as students attending multiple institutions in a variety of locations. This would allow for a variety of experiences to be heard and may result in different findings.

On a similar note, I believe it is important for future work to be over a longer period of time. This research paper was created according to a timeline, and therefore the potential for

some participants may have been missed, as previously discussed. Allowing a longer research period could result in more participants, and therefore more data that is representative of a greater student population.

CONCLUSION

Time has been socially constructed to benefit the dominant white population (Mills, 2014). Within post-secondary educational institutions, time presents itself in schedules, deadlines and holidays. The temporal operations within academia are often based on the assumption that students are in good financial standing, not in a position of care taking, in good health, and practice dominant Christian traditions.

As presented in the review of existing literature, it is clear that there few scholars discussing the operation of white time within post-secondary institutions. There are some scholars including Mills (2014), Leaton Gray (2017) and Yalmambirra (2000) who discuss the concept of time, in a traditional sense as well as in a current sense. Relating to mental health of students within post-secondary institutions, there is plenty of literature however much of it is from a positivist view, and therefore does not critically examine why alarming rates of mental health concerns are occurring within academia, nor do they lay a foundation for how to move forward.

Research in this area is very important to me, and very relevant. As a student, I too face the adversities of time and suffer through balancing work and personal life. My own experiences are the reason I am so passionate about the work I do. However, even while I am conscious of the harmful side of temporal operations within academia, I often still find myself struggling with an internal conflict between resisting and continuing to allow it to control my life.

While completing this research paper, I was working two jobs, seven days per week. Within a few weeks it became very apparent that my mental health was suffering immensely because I could find no time to take care of myself. Eventually I quit one job.

I laugh at the irony of quitting a job because I needed more time to focus on school work and my mental health, while writing a research paper critically examining temporal operations within academia and its impacts on mental health. This work is relevant, and this work is important. I am proof of that.

To conclude this research paper, I quote Ylijoki and Mäntylä (2013, p. 75): “self-destructiveness is not a byproduct of productivity.”

APPENDIX A – Recruitment Poster

Dear current and/or past post-secondary students?

Do you feel like the schedule, timelines, due dates, etc. of school favour certain people? Are you struggling with how time operates within post-secondary educational institutions?

White Time can be understood as the concept of time created to favour the experiences of the dominant White community.

Emily Britt is conducting research at Ryerson University in hopes to understand how White Time operates within post-secondary educational institutions and how it impacts students' mental health.

If you are interested in participating in an interview sharing your experiences, or for more information, please contact Emily at emily.britt@ryerson.ca!

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

rebchair@ryerson.ca

Are you struggling with Time at school?

White Time: the idea that time has been created to favour the experiences of the dominant White community.

Emily Britt, BSW, is conducting research at Ryerson University relating to White Time in post-secondary education and its impacts on students' mental health.

If you are interested in participating in an interview sharing your experience, please contact Emily Britt:

emily.britt@ryerson.ca

The logo for Ryerson University, featuring the text "Ryerson University" in white on a blue rectangular background, with a yellow vertical bar to the right.

Do you feel like certain people are favoured?



**Ryerson University
Consent Agreement**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

‘NOT ON MY WATCH:’ WHITE TIME IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON STUDENTS’ MENTAL HEALTH

INVESTIGATORS: This research study is being conducted by Emily Britt, MSW Candidate, and Jennifer Poole, MSW, PhD, from the School of Social Work at Ryerson University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Emily Britt at emily.britt@ryerson.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to understand what impact White Time within post-secondary educational institutions has on the mental health of students. White Time can be described as the concept of time that has been created to favour the experiences of the dominant community and the norms that have been created due to the favouring of these experiences. Through interviews with several participants, the researcher seeks to understand how current and/or past post-secondary students understand time within these institutions. These results will be used for the Major Research Paper of Emily Britt in completion of her Master of Social Work degree.

What You Will Be Asked to Do: If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Provide consent by completing and signing this form, after understanding your participation, confidentiality and clarification of any questions.
- Provide information including your educational background.
- Answer open-ended questions relating to your experiences of time in post-secondary education as well as your mental health.
- There is no scheduled time limit on the interview; we may take as long as you need.

Potential Benefits:

Participants may feel a sense of relief after sharing their experiences, and knowing others may feel similarly

Advancement of knowledge

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

What are the Potential Risks to you as a Participant:

Risk exists in sharing and reflecting upon negative experiences with a researcher, as it puts oneself in a vulnerable position and could be a psychological risk by initiating anxiety, upset, or uncomfortable emotions. If this happens, participants are always able to choose not to answer any questions or stop an interview either temporarily or permanently. Additionally, participants will be provided with a list of resources prior to the interview in the event that you should need support to work through your feelings following the interview.

Confidentiality:

Only the two researchers involved with this project will have access to this information. The audio-recording of the interview will be stored on a password protected device. The consent form will be stored in the researchers locked office at Ryerson University. After the interviews have been transcribed, pseudonyms will be used and identifying information as well as the audio-recording of the interview will be erased. As the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed, the participant has the right to review and edit the recordings to remove or add information.

Incentives for Participation: Participants will be provided with a resource list of supports available to them following the interview as well as provided refreshments during the interview.

Costs to Participation: There should be no costs to participation as interviews will be scheduled based on mutual availability and are offered at convenient locations for the participants.

Compensation for Injury: By agreeing to participate in this research, you are not giving up or waiving any legal right in the event that you are harmed during the research.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given the incentives and reimbursements described above. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or the investigators Emily Britt and Jennifer Poole involved in the research.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research, please ask. You may contact:

Emily Britt, BSW, MSW Candidate

School of Social Work
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5B 2K3
emily.britt@ryerson.ca

Jennifer Poole, MSW, PhD.
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'NOT ON MY WATCH:' WHITE TIME IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and later destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX C – Community Resources

Hamilton

Canadian Mental Health Association
905-521-0090

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton – West 5th Campus
905-522-1155

COAST: Crisis Outreach and Support Team
905-972-8338

Womankind Addiction Services
905-521-9591

Men's Withdrawal Management Centre
905-527-9264

Family Services Hamilton
905-527-2002

Brantford

Canadian Mental Health Association
519-752-2998

Brant Community Healthcare System
519-751-5544

St. Leonard's Community Services
519-759-0003

Family Counselling Centre of Brant
519-753-4147

Toronto/GTA

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
416-535-8501

Mental Health Outreach Service
416-864-5120

GTA Counselling Services
647-899-2692

APPENDIX D – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

1. Why did you decide to participate in this study?
2. How do you understand time and time ‘management’?
3. Tell me about your relationship with ‘time’. For example: schedules, deadlines, holidays, etc. in post-secondary school. What effect has it had on you? Emotionally? Physically? Mentally?
4. White time is the name given to a system of time that favours dominant/white societies. What do you think about this approach?
5. In your opinion, is there a better way to approach ‘time’?
6. Is there anything else you would like me to know?
7. Would you like to receive a copy of the research findings once this study is complete? If so, here is information about the study including a link to the Ryerson University Digital Repository where you will be able to access my research paper.

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

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