Imagining Safety for Racialized Students in Remote Learning

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This chapter explores practices and considerations for creating safer and more accountable classrooms for Black, Indigenous, and students of colour. Specifically, we seek to understand and examine the ways in which remote learning environments pose specific challenges and concerns for students of colour. To examine this issue, we draw on the major findings of a project that we co-lead at McMaster University, titled Learning in Colour, which originated via efforts to produce tangible resources for educational stakeholders to engage with when organizing planning and facilitating their classes. Informed by the experiences and recommendations posed by Black, Indigenous, and students of colour, our project centres marginalized students' voices and offers action-oriented steps to integrating these perspectives about what students of colour want instructors and peers to know before shaping, delivering, and engaging in classroom dialogue and course content. As the COVID-19 pandemic shut down campuses across Canada during our project, we expanded our work to consider how remote learning exacerbated, contributed to, shaped, and is shaped by students of colours' experiences of and concerns about their emotional, academic, and interpersonal safety and ability to engage actively in their learning.

The goal of this chapter is to outline our findings within the broader context of what staff, faculty, and students can learn from the ongoing work of marginalized community members to advocate for structural changes within the institution and in the delivery of online and blended learning options. To bolster the data derived from our Learning in Colour project, we draw on numerous projects that came before us at McMaster University, which explored and unpacked students of colour' experiences of tokenization, and exclusion in the classroom and their ideas for fostering safer spaces. Further, we examine the themes uncovered in our study and link them to broader concerns posed by remote learning, such as surveillance, anonymized online racism/violence, and how students of colour must navigate online classrooms in similar ways to their experiences of in-person learning. We then articulate considerations and implications, derived from our focus group and secondary data, to assist in addressing the broad concerns posed by remote learning environments. Throughout this chapter, we emphasize the need to centre marginalized persons' voices, lived experiences, and ideas in the development of pedagogy, while also understanding that learning initiatives have "othered" marginalized students through both asking them to educate others and excluding them from potential responses to these issues. Put simply, we acknowledge the complexity of these issues and the need for nuanced responses that meaningfully integrate marginalized persons' perspectives. Our analyses conclude with some tangible recommendations and their implications around creating and imagining safer remote, blended, and in-person classrooms for marginalized students.

Context

The Learning in Colour project that grounds this chapter began in 2019 and sought to expand on existing efforts within McMaster University to critically analyze and address the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and students of colour (al Shaibah, 2020; Watt et al., 2014). Specifically, in 2019, Renata assumed the role of co-facilitator of a student caucus group in the School of Social Work at McMaster, named United in Colour, to build upon existing peer support services and advocacy initiatives seeking to better the experiences of students of colour in the department. Renata and her co-facilitator, Fatemah Shamkhi, also sought to expand this work outside of the School of Social Work to identify shared experiences across faculties and build solidarities that had long been dormant within McMaster University (Keane &

Joseph, 2017; Watt et al., 2014). To accomplish this goal – and to centre the need for action-oriented solutions to the issues that students of colour continued to identify at McMaster University – Renata and United in Colour partnered with Maddie and Dr. Ameil Joseph to fund a project seeking to mobilize these dialogues into an educational resource for fostering safer classrooms. The Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation, and Excellence in Teaching is a research institute within McMaster University that has historically provided funds to student leaders engaged in social justice-oriented research.

In early stages of the project, our team drew upon the important work of two alumni at McMaster to lay foundation for our study: the RACE (Students of colour' Account of Classroom Experience) forum and report, led and authored by Roche Keane and Dr. Ameil Joseph in 2017, and the Suggestion Box, curated by Glenda Vanderleeuw in 2018. These projects both invited, documented, and analyzed the experiences of students of colour in the School of Social Work, with over 50 students participating across both projects. The dissemination of these projects paid special attention to how student participants identified the following: systemic issues and harms within course content, structure, and delivery; experiences of microaggressions; distinct feelings of unsafety and unbelonging in classrooms and on campus; and the glaring gaps in pedagogy that failed to meaningfully address intersectionality, race, racism, and racialization as situated within larger projects of oppression. Each of these projects concluded with the following recommendations (summarized):

1. Increased representation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized identities in the academy, including within scholarship, course content, and university faculty, staff, and students;
2. Microlevel interventions within classrooms that centre marginalized students' safety, with particular focus on the need for teaching teams to directly redress racist discourse in class dialogue/content;
3. The intentional expansion and integration of critical and intersectional theoretical, methodological, and practical frameworks for learning, with emphasis on the need for all courses/disciplines to meaningfully discuss race, racism, and racialization;
4. Efforts to educate stakeholders (e.g., instructors, teaching assistants, and student-facing staff and administration) on safely intervening in unsafe or hostile classroom and campus environments to reduce the burden placed on students of colour to undertake the labour of addressing racism.

Building on these themes – borne from a commitment to ensure that United in Colour sustained itself after student turnover diminished its momentum – we sought to mobilize and expand on these foundations to work toward material and tangible changes across McMaster. It is important to recognize that, beyond what has been documented at McMaster, racism has taken shape historically in the academy since its inception, which has resulted in ongoing patterns of harm, socioemotional impact, and alienation of students of colour from feeling a sense of belonging and safety on campus (Gregory, 2021; Henry et al., 2017; Sonn, 2008). These experiences have been well-documented in literature and in advocacy efforts from students of colour across Western academic institutions (Brown, et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Hubain et al., 2016; Nakaoka & Ortiz, 2018; Sue et al., 2009; Watt et al., 2014). The RACE Report, the Suggestion Box, and the ongoing work of United in Colour serve only as an example of the broader efforts of students of colour at McMaster and across Canada in meaningfully naming and addressing racism in the academy. However, what our study contributes to this continually growing body of work is an emphasis on tangible and action-oriented resolutions to these experiences of racism, which aims to break these systemic patterns of harm that continue to be reported by students of colour (Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2014).

During our data collection, COVID-19 facilitated large-scale shutdowns of in-person learning at McMaster University and beyond. As a result, our study also engaged with an issue that had yet to be meaningfully considered within McMaster and across universities in Canada: the unique barriers and harms that Black, Indigenous, and students of colour experience in remote learning. With this in mind, we turned to literature to ground our foray into how safety in remote learning must attend intentionally to marginalized students and their experiences.

Literature Review

To situate this discussion, we first begin with an examination of the specific harms that students of colour experience in the postsecondary context. First, we must recognize the ways in which Western academic institutions serve as pillars of Eurocentric, White, and colonial epistemologies and practices (Brunsma et al., 2012; Hytten & Adkins, 2002; Montgomery, 2013). Understanding that whiteness permeates Western society allows an avenue for systems, such as education, to epistemically, interpersonally, and institutionally uphold white supremacy (Brunsma et al., 2012; Doornbos, 2020; Gregory, 2021; Hytten & Adkins, 2002; Montgomery, 2013). When uninterrupted and unacknowledged, systemic whiteness in education continues to marginalize and harm, implicitly and explicitly, students of colour in a fashion that is personal, psychological, and spiritual (Doornbos, 2020). The result of this constant harm includes gaps in and alienation of learning, thriving, mattering, and voice/representation; as critical Indigenous scholar, B. Love coins it, these practices are a form of spirit-murdering racism (Doornbos, 2020).

Literature on racism in the academy has extensively analyzed the prevalence of racist microaggressions as the most common harm that racialized educational community members endure, actively facilitated by Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Sue et al. (2009) define microaggressions as the implicit or explicit, intentional or unintentional, linguistic, behavioural, or contextual expressions of harm that often invalidate, dismiss, tokenize, or violate marginalized persons. These expressions of harm are so common that they are often challenging to identify and name. Microaggressions communicate stereotypical assumptions about racialized communities and their identities, including perceptions of appearance, intellect, personality, nature, and belonging (e.g., comments about hair, skin tone, language skills, emotional expressions.). According to literature on the subject, racist microaggressions often emerge during "difficult dialogues" in the classroom, such as those that discuss identity, power, culture, and race, and can be imbued within pedagogy and course instruction (Brown et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Hubain et al., 2016; Nakaoka & Ortiz, 2018). For example, courses that use debates as opportunities for student participation are often not structured in a way that prevents the discussion from dissolving into an argument about the existence and significance of racism (Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Hubain et al., 2016).

When racist discourse emerges during class dialogue, students of colour are often subjected to intense feelings of discomfort, unsafety, fear, and isolation, which render long-term impacts on their ability to engage in their learning fully (Brown et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Hubain et al., 2016; Malone & Barabino, 2008; McGee, 2016; Nakaoka & Ortiz, 2018; Ong et al., 2018; Sue et al., 2009). For instance, students of colour have reported the difficulties of navigating whether they should intervene when racism happens in the classroom; failure to intervene results in racism being reified, while intervening often demands that students of colour educate others about racism via personal disclosure and defense of identity. This dynamic is underscored by the willingness, capacity, and interest from teaching teams in preventing or stopping racism in the classroom; many White instructors might 'opt out' of these discussions based on their own discomfort or their perceived deficits in knowledge on the subject matter. The long-term impacts of such experience are multifaceted: it may increase students of colour' perceptions of being judged, excluded, criticized, and surveilled by their student peers and instructors; students of colour might endure being labeled "disruptive" or "angry" for their interventions, which might follow them throughout their education; and it could actively facilitate increased isolation, alienation, and poor physical, emotional, social, and cultural health outcomes for students of colour (Brown et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Hubain et al., 2016; Nakaoka & Ortiz, 2018; Malone & Barabino, 2009; McGee, 2016; Sue et al., 2009;).

There is also a growing body of literature exploring how racist microaggressions manifest in remote learning spaces to expose the white supremacist, colonial foundations of Western education. Microaggressions, being one of the most "prevalent manifestations of contemporary racism," transcend modalities of teaching and learning, which raises further obstacles of exploring, exposing, and discussing harm in online learning environments (Brokensha & Conradie, 2016; Chellman, 2016; Harper, 2020; Tynes et al., 2008). Since the beginning of COVID-19 shutdowns, racist discourses have

arisen and persisted from alt-right groups surrounding anti-Asian and anti-immigrant rhetoric around the contraction and spread of COVID-19, which has resulted in sharp climbs in xenophobic violence against international students, Asian community members, and immigrants (Harper, 2020). Further, Minneapolis Police's murder of George Floyd and the subsequent rise of advocacy efforts to protect Black lives and defund the police, which sparked in June 2020 and have carried throughout the past two years, have also resulted in increases to online abuse and hatred against Black communities (e.g. the counter-surge of "All Lives Matter," "Blue Lives Matter," and other anti-Black rhetoric on social media and in news outlets). Lastly, in Canada, the uncovering of mass grave sites of Indigenous children at former residential school sites have evoked tense debates about the commemoration of racist political figureheads and architects of the colonial state of Canada, including the erection and toppling of statues of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister and a pioneer of the violent residential school system (Austen, 2021; Clark et al., 2014; Hopper, 2018).

Because much of this discourse is lived and documented online, it is important to recognize the tangible implications and consequences that such rhetoric has on Black, Indigenous, and students of colour as they embark on remote and blended postsecondary education. While online learning spaces have been credited for creating spaces for alternative forms of engagement that allow students to critically explore difficult issues, there is a steep risk of reifying colour-blind, colour evasive ideology that deliberately obfuscates and erases racist inequities and the discourses that continue to shape Western education (Brokensha & Conradie, 2016; Harper, 2020; Naffi et al., 2020; Zipf, 2021). It has been found that, in both synchronous and asynchronous online discussion and learning environments, potentially "sensitive and controversial" discussion of topics such as racism, sexuality, power, and privilege can create avenues to generate authentic dialogue, while also evoking discomfort towards reflecting on identity when not critically and responsively mediated and facilitated (Brokensha & Conradie, 2016). For example, online learning might facilitate a veil of anonymity that emboldens people to spew racism on asynchronous course sites or during synchronous events, without facilitators' prepared forms of and capacities to intervene (Elmer et al., 2021; Lee, 2021; Ling et al., 2021). Further, efforts from educators to integrate current issues into courses via class participation (e.g., prompts for discussion boards on course sites that ask students to discuss something in the news) risk creating space for racist discourse to emerge and be open for debate online. These realities directly facilitate and accelerate racial trauma that Black, Indigenous, and students of colour are experiencing, where they are often forced to either contest, argue, defend themselves, or accept and internalize racism in online chats, breakout rooms, course sites, and in their personal lives (Brokensha & Conradie, 2016; Harper, 2020; Tynes et al., 2008).

When "safe" spaces are becoming of paramount interest in many postsecondary contexts, we must expand our current frameworks for understanding what constitutes safety in remote and in-person learning (Brokensha & Conradie, 2016; Chellman, 2016; Doornbos, 2020; Garran & Rasmussen, 2014; Mehta & Aguilera, 2020; Naffi et al., 2020). Namely, we question whether these spaces can truly ever be "safe" for students of colour when racism and whiteness are imbued within the very fabric of the institution. When safety has been shown to be conflictingly imagined by students depending on their lived experiences and social locations, it can be difficult to propose an intervention that meaningfully attends to these differences between "discomfort" and "unsafety" in learning (Garran & Rasmussen, 2014). With this in mind, we are interested in how spaces can be made safer via intentional commitments to and investments by educational stakeholders in actively challenging racist discourse in the classroom.

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

In this chapter, we will draw on three major themes derived from our Learning in Colour project and link them specifically to the concerns posed around safety in remote learning environments. To do so, we draw upon a combination of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and a Critical Theory of Technology (CTT). CRT maintains its roots in critical legal studies but has since been adapted and applied to a variety of contexts in order to better understand how racialized

communities experience racism and harm in conjunction with other forms of oppression (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Sefa Dei & Singh Johal, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT's central tenets focus on the ways in which racism is foundational to the Western constructs of social life and, while race is a social construct, it renders tangible and lived experiences of racism that affect racialized communities' access, mobility, safety, and being (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT also exposes majoritarian rhetoric of colour-blindness and race neutrality in constructing an 'objective' (White, colonial) reality to instead uncover and centre counter-narratives and partial histories of racism that persist in Western space (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CTT highlights the differences between and among online teaching paradigms, which reminds educators that technologies and technological platforms of learning are not separate or removed from society or systems and the values, beliefs, or truths these spaces hold (Boyd, 2016). Rather, technology and technological teaching platforms are merely adaptations of social and political systems that can be used to promote and reinforce discourses that benefit some and harm others (Boyd, 2016). In essence, technology is not socially, economically, or politically neutral as technological environments can shape the values and worldview of its inhabitants; can redefine the way human users understand themselves and their relationship to the world; and can operate at the level of meaning and ethics (Boyd, 2016). CRT and CTT both critically analyze the discourses and patterns of interaction produced from systems, society, and technology and the impacts these discourses have on the daily lived experiences of people of colour. The overlapping goal of CRT and CTT is to use the seedling of critical analysis to equitably reform the delivery of online education, overturn the harmful conversations and discourse that arise in online delivery, and rigorously address factors that influence feelings of academic, emotional, and interpersonal safety in online learning environments (Boyd, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Regarding online education, where digital technologies and methods of scholarship have been shown to be rife with algorithmic bias, data extraction, and disproportionate drive to surveil, discipline, and punish racialized bodies through digital means, it becomes increasingly clear how digital learning spaces reflect perspectives, biases, and agendas of their creators, which then is reproduced in blended and online contexts (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). For example, common issues of accessibility to physical and intellectual learning concerns, racialization in digital contexts (e.g. those who have accents communicating online, tones of speech, skin tones in proctoring/video software), and the assumption of common-sense designs rooted in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), are specific to technological learning contexts that disproportionately affect racialized and intersectional bodies, despite accommodating other intersectional populations and learning styles (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). From a CTT perspective, we can then understand how technology creates a cyber culture that redefines human identity, meaning, and means of human interaction (Boyd, 2016). Therefore, online education is no longer a tool for the promotion of neutral learning but rather a wide-reaching environment that manages and controls access to information, structures relationships, and redefined individual identity (Boyd, 2016).

An amalgamation of these theoretical commitments creates space for a critical perspective of remote learning that recognizes its complex historical and contemporary realities of racism. To support these epistemological approaches, we utilized a myriad of qualitative data collection techniques, including secondary data analysis (of prior projects and another one that our team completed for another department) and primary focus groups with ten Black, Indigenous, and students of colour at McMaster University to explore their experiences of racism and recommendations for redressing it in the classroom. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) along with Boyd (2016) suggest that qualitative data collection and analysis are aligned with CRT and CTT to uncover marginalized peoples' counter-narratives and treat them like legitimate forms of knowledge that challenge discourses of neutrality.

In January 2020, we received McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB) clearance to conduct our study. Participants were recruited via social media and emails and were compensated via transportation fare and refreshments. All ten participants that reached out to express interest in participating in the study were included. In February 2020 (pre-COVID shutdowns), we conducted an in-person qualitative focus group with ten undergraduate and graduate Black,

Indigenous, and students of colour from across various faculties and departments at McMaster. The focus group, which was led by racialized members of our team, spanned close to three hours in length. Upon completion, the audio recording of the focus group was transcribed by members of the research team and subsequently anonymized. Our team drew upon Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) approach to thematic analysis to analyze the data, which uses CRT to examine dominant and alternative narratives emerging from participants' accounts.

Findings

While many themes emerged from our conversations with students and in our analyses of secondary data such as the Suggestion Box and the RACE Report, we focus on three themes that speak to unique safety concerns experienced by students of colour in remote learning.

Harms in the Classroom

Students in our study spoke of harms experienced in the classroom, which were often perpetrated by White peers, teaching assistants, and instructors and left unaddressed. In particular, students voiced their frustration with the ways in which instructors tended to ignore, dismiss, or gloss over racist discourse by not intervening, not apologizing, and not seeking to redress said harms. As two students describe:

> *Kayla*: All of the students of colour are just left with unresolved trauma because profs aren't apologizing, they aren't changing behaviour, they aren't actually, publicly openly addressing the harms done. Even if that's just the bare minimum of like, "hey, I recognize that harm was done, and I played a role in it… probably the primary role in it…"

> *Genevieve*: There's no consequences for them, right? And its like… what do you do? Like, you're standing in front of the entire institution where every part of it support[s] them, and they know nothing is gonna happen to them. And, at a point, you're just like… is it even worth it to like, go up and stand against them. 'Cause… you really are fighting like… systemic racism on your own, right? With your bare hands.

Here, we see that instructors play a significant role in facilitating safety and should exercise responsibility for creating a space where missteps can be addressed via accountable practices (e.g., apologizing). Part of the harm beyond the experience of a racist comment is the response, or lack thereof, to it, which often forces students into uncomfortable positions of having to either intervene (via educating their peers, defending themselves, and engaging in personal disclosure to articulate the harms of certain comments) or let it go (which might facilitate a sense of guilt, failure, discomfort, or sadness). Many students spoke of the ways in which these dynamics often resulted in them not feeling safe enough to return to the class, whether it be in person or online.

This process is complicated further by online learning environments. In our discussions with students and in our

secondary data analyses, we observed the benefits and drawbacks of online learning in facilitating safety. Of benefit, students indicated that the ability to turn off their camera, mute their microphone, and/or turn down the volume during synchronous classes and selectively engage with asynchronous content (e.g., discussion board posts) granted them some agency and flexibility in navigating potentially racist discourse. However, students also suggested that policies requiring "cameras on" for participation grades could create a sense of discomfort, particularly for those who identified as being one of the only students of colour in the class. For example, students describe such policies as feeling like "surveillance" and might make students of colour feel hypervisible and, therefore, a target for racism. Further, students described feeling "on edge" around the potential for "Zoom bombing," which here refers to the infiltration of an online synchronous Zoom event and the expression of harmful/violent ideas in written and verbal ways, and other forms of racism that could be communicated in the chat function by students who felt relatively protected by anonymity in an online class. Participants indicated that it is more challenging to intervene in such events, both explicit and implicit forms of racism, during online learning as it could be perceived as disruptive and could put students of colour in the spotlight. When classes did not feel organized in a way that considered these concerns, many students of colour reported feeling unsafe and unable to fully engage in their remote classes.

Racial Trauma

Stemming from these experiences of harm, participants articulated the socioemotional burden and racial trauma resulting from these interactions that directly affect students of colour' ability to engage in the remote learning environment. Racialized trauma is here defined as a series of traumatic events that occur as a result of witnessing or experiencing racism at an interpersonal, institutional, or structural level (Hargons et al., 2021). We use this term to recognize the long-standing impacts that racism can have on students of colour' mental, physical, social, cultural, and intellectual health. An excerpt from the focus group describes these dynamics:

> *Lauren*: It boils my blood and I know it's because, like, I'm sitting with trauma from, like, what happened to me in that class. And then also essentially being, um, profiled by the professor.

> *Ahmed:* I feel that. And I think it can happen in those bigger ways…you know, being profiled or called out by your prof, but also in the, like, everyday stuff. Where, like, you're in class and race comes up and everyone looks at you and you're like, "oh, I guess I'm talking now" [everyone laughs].

> *Farha:* And not only, like, I guess I'm talking now, but I guess I'm disclosing now [noises of agreement].

> *Moderator*: Because it's not valid unless you back it up with something traumatic.

> *Lily*: That's a big thing they miss, too, is the impact of all that stuff, you know? The impact is not just…you know, it's not just an isolated situation where it stays there. It impacts you in different ways. For me, it impacted how to even study…you know, I was isolated, I felt like my peers were not my peers. It's like, I guess I'm alone in this? Mental health wise, just the anxiety and… just the trauma of it – they don't get that piece.

Students identified the explicit and implicit harms that they were experiencing in the classroom, which then led to broader impacts shaping long-term engagement in their education. While it is important to identify the more intentional forms of racism, such as being profiled, students pointed to the everyday, commonplace instances of being tokenized, asked to educate others, and forced to hear racist commentary from their peers as being especially taxing emotionally, intellectually, and socially.

Experiences of racial trauma are further complicated by remote learning spaces, where students of colour we spoke with described feeling constantly inundated with images and words of racism both in their online classes and in their consumption of media. Many students described feeling "consumed" by it and unable to escape it. As one student described, "It's on my social media, it's in the video lectures, it's in the chat box in synchronous classes, it's on the discussion boards, it's in instructor's PowerPoints. It's everywhere." While some students indicated that they appreciated instructors' and student peers' efforts to discuss current issues, they also emphasized the absence of meaningful attention to students of colour' experiences of these conversations, including a lack of content warnings, few or no resources provided, and the failure to address racist discourse that happens in real-time during the class. Chronic exposure to such dynamics were discussed by students as exacerbating existing stressors created by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in significant feelings of isolation, fear, anxiety, depression, and hopelessness that shaped students of colour' ability to fully engage in their learning.

Systemic Issues in Pedagogical Structure

To understand the experiences of harm and racial trauma that students were identifying throughout the project, we ground this analysis in an awareness that these concerns with pedagogy have systemic, institutional, and structural roots in White, Western academe. Here, we understand that these are not isolated incidents specific to certain departments, faculties, or universities; rather, they point to the interconnectedness within the network of projects of white supremacy and colonialism that postsecondary institutions uphold. An interaction from our focus group emphasizes this reality:

> *Victoria*: In political science, some of my profs would say, "Okay, we know the system is racist, but moving on!" And it's just like, so you just decided that "Yeah, okay, that's what the system is, moving on, now let's just learn about the other stuff." And it's just like, okay, we're just leaving it at that then and that's as far as we delve into it. It's irritating and its annoying and you feel like, "How can I get a full picture of anything if we're not addressing the system in its entirety?"

> *Nate*: I agree with that, too. It happens in my department. And I think that proves, like…I don't think that everything we're talking about is, like, one department or even McMaster-specific. It's most definitely just like, higher education because I do have friends in different schools and, you know, all our experiences do mirror each other's. Like I said previously, having placeholders like equity and inclusion and all these offices are usually there just to make the school look good.

In these reflections, we see that some courses might exercise awareness of racism within social systems; however, they often do not go beyond rudimentary analyses and, instead, risk individualizing issues and protecting the systemic concerns within the institution itself. Nate's comments expand on these concerns to identify the ways in which shared experiences across Western academic spaces point to their structural nature. Put simply, higher education's roots in whiteness and colonialism actively facilitate these microlevel experiences of harm.

These systemic concerns have been perpetuated in the shift to remote learning, whereby students have identified conflated concerns related to racism, inaccessibility, and exclusion built into allegedly neutral online learning platforms. As Afzaal's (2022) undergraduate McMaster research project explored, many students of colour reported concerns with proctoring software where they were targeted disproportionately for alleged "cheating" based on the software's inability to recognize and adapt to non-White individuals on camera. Further studies at McMaster and beyond have explored the experiences of students of colour with additional marginalized identities (e.g. queer and trans students, disabled students, student experiencing low income and resources) and barriers to engaging in online learning, including unsafe home environments, unreliable internet access, lack of financial aid and adjustments to tuition during the pandemic, and discriminatory "cameras on" policies, among others (Brockbank et al., 2021; Chellman, 2016; PACBIC, 2008). A failure to attend to the unique barriers that marginalized students navigate while attempting to access and engage fully in remote learning facilitates these broader systemic concerns, where pedagogy and course instruction continue to remain stagnant and unresponsive to the changing sociopolitical landscape of students' lives.

Discussion, Recommendations, and Implications

Emerging from the narratives of students of colour participating in the studies we conducted and reviewed is an emphasis on the importance of centering marginalized voices and lived experiences in developing pedagogy. Reflecting the central commitments of Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory of Technology, we aim to acknowledge the ways in which counter-narratives revealing partial and erased histories of racism disrupt majoritarian discourses framing White, Western academia as decidedly objective, neutral, and colour-blind (Boyd, 2016; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Sefa Dei & Singh Johal, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Participants' accounts of harm and the longstanding racialized trauma that these instances evoke help us to better understand the ways in which systemic issues, including whiteness and racism imbued within the Western academic institution, frame interpersonal and microlevel racism as isolated incidents. Via joining together to identify and name these patterns, our study sought to build solidarities among students of colour to support the process of understanding that their experiences of racism are not isolated; rather, they are structural in nature and emphasize the need for significant shifts in institutional approaches to course structure and instruction.

This final section seeks to mobilize these findings into informed recommendations for educational stakeholders in developing remote, blended, and in-person courses. These suggestions are informed by our own projects, those that came before us, and what has been described in emerging literature on the subject. While many of these recommendations focus on microlevel ways for instructors, teaching teams, and student-facing staff to create safer

classroom spaces, we also seek to maintain awareness of the need for institutional investment, support, and commitment to redressing systemic harms built into Western academe.

When considering how to facilitate remote spaces that recognize the unique barriers and harms that students of colour are subjected to, online education requires a commitment to humanizing pedagogies that centre inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, and equity (Boyd, 2016; Chellman, 2016; Gomez, 2009; Mehta & Aguilera, 2020; Naffi et al., 2020). Humanizing approaches to pedagogy root themselves politically through an attention to the context-specific sociocultural issues of power, representation, and ideology in online learning environments to counteract the inequities and power differentials rife in Western education (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). These approaches shift away from UDL for its inadequacies in meaningfully addressing various forms of social and pedagogical oppressions experienced in formal education via glossing over dynamics and differences in power, privilege, and epistemic governance (Boyd, 2016; Chellman, 2016; Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). Rather, a humanizing digital pedagogical approach would engage with issues of inclusion, racialization, and hierarchy within teaching and learning practices by drawing on popular education. Derived from the works of Paulo Freire, this approach centres and builds critical consciousness about the political nature of education. Further, this approach pursues opportunities to interrogate power, privilege, and ideology underpinning Western academia. The goal of this approach is to create space for exploring the myriad of ways that marginalized peoples are dehumanized within institutions via counter-narratives and valuing lived experience as legitimate forms of knowledge (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). Here, an opportunity to engage in culturally responsive instruction presents itself, moving beyond the purely technical and ideological framing of education, to account for sociocultural, historical, political, and contextual realities, including inequity, colonialism, racism, and cultural imperialism. An awareness of how different cultural experiences shape student and teacher perspectives on teaching and learning, as well as a willingness to transform curriculum, policy, and pedagogy to respond to these realities, would be the first implication post-critical reflection of educators (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020).

Building humanizing digital spaces requires instructors to create opportunities for collaboration with students and develop strategies that empower them to become actively engaged in shaping their learning (Boyd, 2016; Chellman, 2016; Doornbos, 2020; Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). This would involve inviting students to participate in online course design and structure to ensure that these classes attend to their unique experiences, concerns, and goals, which includes: (1) engaging in participatory media production activities and discussion, (2) challenging racial-linguistic ideologies embedded in digital, Eurocentric tools of technology, (3) critical analyses of course policies that benefit some students and harm others (e.g. cameras on, discussion boards), and (4) reimagining best practices and being adaptive to the context (Chellman, 2016; Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). Instructors would then be required to engage in practices of reciprocity and transparency to challenge power differentials positioning them as experts, develop decision-making processes that are more inclusive, participatory, and equitable and demonstrate a critical awareness of students' specific experiences, needs, and goals. Transparent conversations rooted in these considerations allows for a pathway to power sharing or reciprocal learning, where synchronous or asynchronous discussion can be had to further explore the needs of students in comparison and in contrast to the way the course has been designed (Chellman, 2016). This can then easily initiate conversations around classroom safety, rules of engagement, and amendments to class contents/ structure that may be harmful or lacking diversity and reflection consistent with students' learning objectives (Chellman, 2016). Meaningfully integrating these considerations into syllabi as discussion points and expectations and addressing these considerations in introductory classes will allow a thoughtful and collaborative discussion while laying necessary "ground rules" of classroom culture before primary course content is engaged with throughout the semester.

These larger shifts to conceptualizing course structure can be bolstered by interpersonal facilitation skills that instructors can draw upon. We list them below in point form to make the information easily readable and consumable for educators seeking quick tips and tangible strategies, which we built on in our Learning in Colour website:

- Create accessible materials that are compatible with assistive technologies, use inclusive writing, reflect the multiple histories and identities of people in class, and are available in multiple formats with additional accessible

considerations.

- Choose digital technologies that are accessible to all students and are particularly cognizant of potential language barriers, accessibility concerns, and student privacy/agency (e.g., the ability to change screen name). These platforms require heightened security against practices such as Zoom bombing and should have recording functions.
- Avoid colour blind, one-size-fits-all approaches that erase histories of racism and their relationship with the topics that the course is discussing. Consider students' various needs and develop flexible teaching approaches that involve drawing on resources (e.g., community experts) to aid in facilitating difficult conversations on complex topics that are outside of the scope of the instructor (e.g., racism).
- Seek ongoing feedback from students about their experience of the course via accessible and anonymized online feedback forms and iteratively develop and adapt courses to integrate these suggestions as appropriate, which can facilitate greater trust between students and instructors.
- Creative use of synchronous and asynchronous design to cover complex and challenging topics, including race, gender, sexuality, and disability. For example, if the course seeks to discuss a topic where students in the room will likely have lived experience, evaluate the efficacy of certain strategies (e.g., something like a debate) and consider the potential harm that could happen. Instead, think about videos, readings, or other sources that could meaningfully contextualize the discussion in a way that allows students to engage in their own time and without the added pressure of talking about it with peers who may not have much knowledge about it. Provide reflection questions for personal exploration of the topic before requiring that students discuss it in an open class space.
- Offer students multiple ways of engaging in the class and create space for students of colour to exercise agency in choosing how to participate. For example, cameras on policies of participation might not consider the barriers that students experience to participating in this way and the potential discomfort they may feel in being hypervisible.
- When harm happens in the classroom, instructors should facilitate fully threaded discussion that goes beyond merely seeking clarification. Instructors can draw on various forms of calling in students to constructively interrogate ideas, engage in comments that respectfully aim to uncover implicit assumptions, and identify new perspectives on ideas introduced. Students of colour indicate that silence/absence of intervention on the part of instructors perpetrates more harm than intervening in racist discourse.
- Create rules for online, blended, and/or in-person class engagement, where students are invited to think about what would make them feel safer in the classroom. For example, discussing how students can exercise accountability for missteps could reimagine accountable practices that are not shame-based and create a classroom space for open, transparent, and reflective dialogue.

Overall, educators, faculty members, and departments are responsible for creating safer classroom environments in a way that is both reactive to harmful events occurring in real-time but also proactive in recognizing the ongoing tensions and racism impacting racialized communities (Boyd, 2016; Chellman, 2016; Gomez, 2009; Harper, 2020; Mehta & Aguilera, 2020; Naffi et al., 2020). Rather than seeing this as a burden, educators should see this as an opportunity to address a gap that has reverberated in the pedagogy for years: a need for sociocultural and sociopolitical awareness of the ways in which structural harms shape students of colour' educational experiences, and a commitment to developing policies, strategies, and opportunities for allyship in creating safer and more accountable classrooms. Pre-emptively preparing to interrupt, address, and educate around discourses that arise from socio-political events such as these creates a necessary interruption to harm in classroom and online spaces, while also protecting students of colour from uncompensated labour, emotional and/or physical harm, and racial trauma (Harper, 2020). What this requires is resourcing educators, faculty members, and departments in teaching through complex sociopolitical times and creating safer online or hybrid classroom cultures.

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