EDI AS A FORM OF INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVISM

EDI AS A FORM OF INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVISM: CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES'
FIGHT AGAINST RACIAL INEQUALITY

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Lay Abstract

Universities have made commitments to eradicate or reduce inequalities as they project an image of progressiveness and inclusion. Canadian universities have promoted their EDI initiatives more rigorously, especially in the wake of the proliferation of protest actions in support of Black Lives Matter and #StopAsianHate. As universities began to show support, their efforts were construed as activist by right-wing pundits, while being regarded as largely symbolic and ineffective by scholars. Using insights from social movement theory and the sociology of education, I examine the possibilities and constraints of EDI offices in top English-speaking U15 Canadian universities. I conduct in-depth interviews with seven of the top EDI officers and examine statements published by university officials to consider the social change goals and actions of universities. First, EDI leaders in Canadian universities cannot necessarily be considered social movement activists, but rather are best described as *institutional mediators*. Second, when universities make public statements about racial inequalities and producing social change, their actions and claims fall short of activism, refraining from using the motivational framing. Finally, while adding resources to EDI offices does increase universities' bureaucratic capacity to address racism, institutional opportunity does not translate into action on all anti-racism issues. I argue that the EDI practices of Canadian universities should not be considered a form of institutional activism, as I identify gaps between the institutionalized promotion of social issues and a social movement agenda.

Abstract

Can university EDI offices actually reduce racial inequalities? Should we consider their efforts on social change to be activism? The question of eradicating inequalities has been at the centre of socio-political issues in our society in the last few decades. Universities have made commitments to eradicate - or at least reduce - inequalities as they project an image of progressiveness and inclusion. Accordingly, Canadian universities have promoted their EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) initiatives more rigorously, especially in the wake of the proliferation of protest actions in support of Black Lives Matter (BLM) and #StopAsianHate. As universities began to show support for these social movements by providing official statements to the public, their efforts were construed as activist by right-wing pundits, while being regarded as largely symbolic and ineffective by scholars. Using insights from social movement theory and the sociology of education, I examine the possibilities and constraints of EDI offices in top English-speaking Canadian universities. In this case study of institutional approaches to racial inequality, I conduct in-depth interviews with seven of the top EDI officers in Canada and examine statements published by university officials to consider the social change goals and actions of U15 universities. I have three main findings. First, EDI leaders in Canadian universities cannot necessarily be considered social movement activists, but rather are best described as *institutional mediators* in advancing social issues toward social changes within institutions. Second, when universities make public statements about racial inequalities, and even when they make commitments to produce social change, their actions and claims fall short of activism, refraining from using the motivational framing of a call to action. Finally, I find that while adding resources to EDI offices does increase universities' bureaucratic capacity to address racism, this institutional opportunity for social change does not translate into action on all anti-racism issues. Specifically, Canadian universities have been much more vocal and active in responding to demands of the Black Lives Matter movement than to the demands of the #StopAsianHate movement. I argue that the EDI practices of Canadian universities should not be considered a form of institutional activism, as I identify gaps between the institutionalized promotion of social issues and what would be considered a social movement agenda. This research contributes to the sociology of education literature, supporting its skeptical view about the effectiveness of EDI efforts within universities, while providing original insights on how universities' EDI practices fall short of their stated goals in reducing racial inequality. In addition, it makes contributions to social movements theory's understanding of organizational activism, expanding its understanding on the constraints on social change within organizations, impacting not only the outcomes of efforts to reduce inequality, but also the goals envisioned by EDI officers in the first place and restricting claims-making

rhetoric. Overall, this research reflects that barriers embedded within universities based on institutional and cultural values are still main forces in delaying and hindering more progressive social change.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

List of All Abbreviations and Symbols

$\neq$: Does Not Equal

2SLGBTQ+: Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and additional people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities

BLM: Black Lives Matter

CA: Corporate Activism

CIHR: Canadian Institutes of Health Research

CRT: Critical Race Theory

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

EDI: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ODEPD: Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Protected Disclosure

QNU: Quality Network for Universities

SMO: Social Movement Organizations

SSHRC: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

UBC: University of British Columbia

Declaration of Academic Achievement

I declare that this thesis has been completed solely by myself with input from the supervisor and members of supervisory committee. Except where stated otherwise in the text by reference and acknowledgement, I am responsible for the research, analysis, writing, and all works pertaining to the entirety of this dissertation. This work has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in other applications for a degree.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Can universities make meaningful social change? The branding of universities as politically liberal and progressive institutions has connected them as supportive of various social movements and forms of activism for decades. Such a notion of assuming that universities are keen on supporting movements became more prevalent as the question of eradicating inequalities has been at the centre of socio-political issues in our society in the last several decades. Reflecting this, in recent years, universities in fact have played a significant role in the promotion of eliminating inequalities through various initiatives, practices, and policy changes. Following this trend of attempting to make progress in achieving equity, Canadian universities have adopted the notion of EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) more rigorously in the last few years. The widely held image of universities being allies of anti-discrimination movements became more prominent in the wake of the proliferation of protest actions in support of Black Lives Matter (BLM) in 2020, and #StopAsianHate in 2021. One way of explaining the support given to movements by universities is institutional activism. However, could EDI offices and subsequent practices aimed to reduce and eradicate discrimination be considered as institutional activism? Do they strive to achieve social movement goals?

Universities often get criticized from both ends of the political spectrum for their social justice-like support of social movements. To certain groups, universities' support is seen as either too much or too little in responding to any given social issue. However, in the field of social movements, scholars have long understood higher education to be both a site of liberation and a source of continued inequality and oppression (Henry et al.,

2017a; Henry et al., 2017b; Milian and Wijesingha, 2023; Wijesingha and Ramos, 2017). This research provides a look at different inner mechanisms of universities' EDI practices. Despite the criticisms they receive, EDI offices should be analyzed from a different perspective to gain deeper insight on their mechanisms rather than painting them with the same stroke as institutional activism. Additionally, the commitments made for EDI initiatives and practices by universities to address equity-related issues such as racism may be vague or specific, strong or weak, depending on circumstances and movements to which they are responding.

In this research, the main goal is to understand the role and impact of the EDI work that is taking place in Canadian universities and whether these practices are leading to social change, as well as how comparable they are to the works of institutional activism. To better understand the process of EDI work and practices in Canadian universities, in the next three chapters, the following research questions will be answered: 1) How do the roles and goals of EDI leaders in Canadian universities relate to the process of social change within institutions, and how do they (or not) resemble the works of institutional activism as insider activists? 2) Framing theory tells us what social movement statements look like and what they attempt to accomplish – are the claims universities make regarding the BLM movement consistent with framing theory?; and 3) Once the organizational capacity necessary for policy change to occur is established, does it support all forms of activism equally? Does institutional capacity, such as an EDI office built to eliminate racism, apply to all kinds of racism? Or is it better equipped or perhaps even selective in addressing some forms of racism more than others?

The Question of Equity in Higher Education and Social Justice

Although working under a different context than social movement organizations (SMOs), postsecondary institutions in Canada face ongoing obstacles as they attempt to implement policy reforms to address the issue of discrimination amongst its campus populations including students, staff, and faculty members. There is an (in)visible workings and process within institutions that impedes supposed reforms. This creates significant discrepancies and/or gaps between their proposed position on the social issue and how they can, as an institution, bring much needed social change. Thus, while the work attempting to achieve equity in higher education has been ongoing for decades, its effectiveness and outcomes have been questionable. Why, then, is there such slow progress? To answer this question, scholars in fields like social movements and education have explored the topic extensively.

Unequal Opportunities in Institutionalized Higher Education

Throughout the last two to three decades, the issue of inequity has proliferated even more throughout our society. Thus, the need for equity and diversity penetrated more traditional institutions like universities. The prevalence of attempts to implement more comprehensive equity practices has led scholars to delve into the subject to gain better understanding. In fact, proposed equity policies in higher education have been studied by numerous scholars with the focus often made on discovering how the pervasive nature of discriminatory practices that cyclically enforce unfair hiring processes in higher education are revealed through equity practices/policies. The results from these studies showed that even though social changes do occur at varying levels within

Canadian universities through the process of organizational negotiations, this does not necessarily execute the desired effect in reducing most types of discrimination occurring within the walls of universities. This is particularly important to note in preface to delving into my research as questions about the effectiveness and impact of EDI practices are not new, but have been ongoing for years through different versions of anti-discrimination practices and policies in universities.

It is also imperative to note the foundation of how such discrimination seeps throughout the entirety of institutions as they work symbiotically and it is not only linked to racism, but intrinsically tied to other characteristics such as gender in an intersectional manner (Crenshaw, 1991). The perpetual phenomenon of creating structural hierarchies using race and gender within institutions holds a long history far beyond contemporary Canadian society. Therefore, it is no surprise that as the notion of EDI practices strives to achieve social change within a multitude of social aspects, gender has also been central to universities' policies. The systemic ways in which gender has been incorporated as a means to create a discriminatory environment in organizations have been discussed by many scholars in the past. Acker (2006) argued that organizations reflect the people that are in them and that they are portrayed with the ideal worker, assumed to be a man. Although organizations are often considered as gender neutral, this stance is questionable as the power dynamics within institutions are dominated by men, and as such, male behaviours and perspectives are not considered to be "gendered" while favouring men over women (Acker, 2006). The notion of hierarchical representation is also found in the system of discrimination based on race (Ray, 2019). Furthermore, racism and its impact

has persisted throughout most, if not all, of Canada's history in that it has penetrated every aspect of the society deeply and unconsciously through decades of colonialism (Mohamed and Beagan, 2019). Hence, the long history behind universities as institutions is fundamentally rooted in colonial ideology that led to establishment and perpetuation of racist practices. Coupled with bureaucratic agendas, many of universities' institutional practices are representative of racism. To remedy this issue of discrimination against minorities of all kinds, equity initiatives are set to promote changes within universities. These initiatives have held many different names, and today, we are most familiar with the term Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

In recent years, research on EDI initiatives and policies has grown, and while the focus on the term EDI might be a relatively recent phenomenon, attempts were made to ground set rules for "equal opportunities" in North America. Dobbin (2009) argues that in the context of the United States, equal opportunities in the workplace are thought to be the "legacy" of the civil rights and feminist movements. What is interesting from this is that it was the corporate experts who were in charge of defining what constitutes equal opportunities in practices such as hiring and promotions. Furthermore, it was the same corporate experts that defined what is considered as "discrimination," and not Congress or the courts (Dobbin, 2009). This demonstrates that there is evidence of bureaucratic processes of private entities exerting power to dominate the narrative and not the governing powers, as it would be assumed to set such foundations. Although Dobbin's study is conducted in the context of the United States, it provides an insight into how the institutional definition of equal opportunities seeped into generally held equity practices.

The intervention of corporate experts in places like universities is an interesting factor. It is convenient to adapt the widely accepted concept of equal opportunities for many organizations even when such definitions are driven by corporations and that "equity" might represent unequal opportunities. This then, could lead to different levels of responses to social issues due to skewed definitions of equity, when they might be all dealing with anti-racism like BLM and #StopAsianHate.

Institutions' unequal opportunities were often studied in past research. In examining the practicality of equity policies, Wijesingha and Ramos (2017) found that tenure and the promotion processes in Canadian universities often reflect unequal opportunities for racialized and female faculty members. The study uncovered that tenure and promotion for racialized female faculty members occurred at a different rate in comparison to their non-racialized and male counterparts. Similarly, Mohamed and Beagan (2019) argued that everyday racism in higher education is structurally embedded, which is reflected through a lack of administrators and tenured professors of colour. Despite the fact that there has been an increase in equality regimes and diversity policies in Canadian universities, racism and colonialism still play significant roles in disadvantaging racialized and Indigenous faculty members. While Canadian universities have voiced their concerns on continuing discrimination through the years, there is still a question of whether these efforts led to any reduction of racial disparities. Even after years of extensive talk about EDI campaigns proposed by Canadian universities, there is not enough data available to understand how their policies have been prioritized to make an impact. Some of the more visible changes, such as hires of racialized staff members,

the introduction of anti-bias training systems, contingency plans for harassment in the workplace, as well as an increase in equity officers, are a few of the categories that are currently quantified. Therefore, to expand our understanding and possibly broaden the scope of existing understanding of EDI practices in Canadian universities, the collected data and analysis from this research will provide deeper insight.

How Does EDI Not Work? Ineffectiveness in Equity Practices

In discussing current EDI practices, one of the most studied aspects is their ineffectiveness. This body of literature is closely connected to this research in examining both the understanding of how EDI work in Canadian universities can produce social change, as well as understanding how such works are comparable to institutional activism. Scholars like Four Arrows (2023) argued that EDI practices in higher education are indeed "DIE." The author states that it is not that EDI is not sincere, but that their strategies in making social change are rooted in practices that are proven to be ineffective. Interestingly, the author continues to note that most EDI practices focus on internal issues, with not enough attention on curriculum, when that should be one of the first places to explore "anthropocentric, hierarchical, materialistic mindsets that currently rule" (Four Arrows, 2023: 30). Similarly, Morin and Bishop (2023) discussed the concept of "white delusion" in organizations where deeply rooted white privilege dominates the equity practices, and in order for social change to effectively occur, it is necessary to apply Critical Race Theory (CRT) to better understand this whiteness within systemic flaws to advance equity, diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, Milian and Wijesingha (2023) discussed how EDI is not working on a practical level and is thought to be

inauthentic in a learning environment. Similarly, Tamtik and Guenter (2019) found that while there is an increased adaption of EDI practices, there are still areas to be improved.

On the other hand, the ineffectiveness or lack of impact of current EDI practices in Canadian universities could be explained due to recent changes where the importance of EDI work and support has been dwindling. In their recent article in Harvard Business Review, Mackenzie et al. (2024) discussed that DEI (EDI hereafter) is experiencing a time of what is called "closed doors" where the means of changes are strained in the field of social movements. They discussed that there was an opening of opportunities for EDI following the death of George Floyd. However, with the resources and means of accessibility to social change declining after its peak attention, companies started to adapt to sustain EDI presence.

The uneven opportunities and tautological manner of (re)producing inequality in Canadian higher education is a conversation that has been ongoing for decades. Even before the establishment of official EDI offices in Canadian universities, the rather unsuccessful nature of previous iterations of policies and practices in an attempt to achieve equity has been studied by numerous scholars. As explained, Canadian universities, being traditional institutions, are quite heavily rooted in systemic racism that is derived from a long history of colonialism. This topic is studied within the field of sociology of education with questions on the impact and effectiveness of equity policies. As Canadian universities are "almost exclusively public institutions," they are closely tied to all levels of Canadian government's demands (Chan and Fisher, 2008). Therefore, when the Canadian government demanded EDI plans to be weaved into institutions, it

was done unquestioned (Tri-Agency, 2021). However, proposed action plans under EDI initiatives outlined by Canadian universities tend to include no effective assessment of how such action plans are meeting the actual needs of its population on campus in accordance with the relevance of the equity issues found in their institutions (James, 2023). As a result, there is a significant gap in the plans and practices, as policies like bias training and targeted hiring that were designed to increase diversity are not effective in addressing the systemic issues (James, 2023; Henry et al., 2017b). Thus, there have been recent conversations that discuss the ineffectiveness of EDI practices, but there is also not enough explanation on why ineffectiveness of achieving equity still persists when there are existing opportunities within Canadian universities to address inequity. By evaluating the two different movements and their outcomes in responses by Canadian universities, this research will shed light on what may trigger different outcomes by similar social issues that both are tied to anti-racism movements.

Additionally, this research also speaks to the existing literature on biases and structural barriers that challenges on Indigenous and Black students, faculty, and staff. This thesis also addresses the need to challenge racialized policies, as well as universities' failure to diversify their system. There has been a contentious discussion on how the lack of Black representation in the Canadian academy is a cyclical issue that leads to the barriers of retaining a high number of students and faculty within institutions (Ibrahim, Kitossa, Smith and Wright, 2022). This goes in hand with the discussion of the lack of Indigenous representation in Canada's higher education as Henry et al. (2017b) pointed out that even with "[f]our decades of equity policies," it has failed to show meaningful

changes in reflecting the diversity of broader society within campus population.

Therefore, analysis of Canadian universities' responses to #StopAsianHate as an anti-

Asian racism movement in this research will provide insight on how other minorities'

racialized issues are taken by universities in addressing diversity and inclusion. This will

also add to existing research on anti-Asian racism that is pervasive under systemic

conditions that are present in Canadian institutions (Chen, 2021).

Why EDI? The Dogma of Equity in Canadian Universities

Contrary to Dobbin's (2009) findings in the United States, in Canada, recent

actions by the federal government have redefined the impact of EDI in Canadian

universities. For example, the Tri-Agency[1] funding councils in the federal government

have developed incrementally stronger requirements for universities to increase diversity

among awardees. The organization oversees and provides research funding to largely

three different fields – the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural

Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and

Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) – and they have created policies to target "anti-

discrimination" and propose an "EDI Action Plan for 2018-2025" to foster a research

ecosystem in Canada that adheres to their EDI mandate (Tri-Agency, 2021).

Thus, Canadian universities had already been under external and internal pressure

to address the need for EDI practices when systemic racial discrimination rose to the

public's attention in 2020 to 2021. When mass protests occurred in Canada and the

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[1] A term that groups Canadian Government research funding agencies including Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

United States in the summer of 2020 as a response to the wave of BLM movements, most universities indeed addressed racial inequalities through public statements. The promptness of publishing these statements reflects a number of characteristics of universities as institutions. Due to the nature of higher education serving the role of fostering students and future academics, as well as attempting to maintain an image of progressiveness, it is one of the institutions besides the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focus heavily on their role of initiating social change. In Canada, for their public funding, universities' roles are also closely tied with governmental level initiatives such as Tri-Agency policies on equity and relies heavily on their mandate as the matter of funding is dependent upon adherence. This ongoing need to promote anti-racism, anti-discrimination, gender equity, and inclusion of disabled individuals has been strongly reflected in policy reforms and practices preceding the recent EDI insurgence in Canadian universities, but decades of efforts are often questioned as the need for equity practices persists (Four Arrows, 2023; Mohamed and Beagan, 2019; Morin and Bishop, 2023; Wijesingha and Ramos, 2017).

Subsequently, current literature on EDI focuses quite a bit on academic settings with attention to the need for furthering EDI policies and policy changes. Often literature on EDI in Canadian higher education examines how the practicality of such policy change is not always compatible in terms of truly acquiring equity and inclusion. For instance, within the professional field, Razack, Maguire, Hodges and Steinert (2012) state that despite their heavy endorsement of equity and inclusion, a majority of Canada's medical schools promote their programs predominantly on academic excellence and

service-to-society discourse. If and when diversity discourses are introduced, they reflect mostly as appeals to institutions' cosmopolitan sophistication rather than striving for practical and realistic portrayal of equity and inclusion. Likewise, their equity aspects tend to focus mainly on increased participation of Indigenous and rural students and do not necessarily focus on building "diversity" that covers broader aspects of creating an inclusive environment for all students. On the other hand, various medical fields in Canada have conducted research on EDI practices and their effectiveness. For example, Lee et al. (2024) conducted a survey to examine the EDI practices in postgraduate education for ophthalmology noting the need for improvements, and Peel and Lorello (2020), did a parallel study in the anesthesiology departments.

Furthermore, there has been some evaluative research to examine Canadian universities and their EDI policies. In 2017, research on the Quality Network for Universities (QNU) discussed gender equity, diversity, and inclusion, which was comprised of government representatives and private businesses (Edge, Kachulis, and McKean, 2018). More recently, Tamtik and Guenter (2019) conducted a policy analysis of EDI strategies in Canadian universities. They found that there is a considerable increase in how EDI activities have become a priority for policies related to institutional action plans and performance reports. However, they also pointed out that there is an inconsistency between how equity is defined in varying policy documents. On the other hand, Wolbring and Lillywhite (2021) argue that unlike EDI discussion of race and gender, research on disability and how it may impact students and staff with disabilities in academic settings was considerably lacking. Lastly, while they are often considered to be

a separate entity/office at many institutions, in the Canadian context, the discussion of Indigenous inclusion is significant due to the colonial context that also impacts ongoing racism on other minorities as well. As universities are also part of the settler colonial legacy, Canadian post-secondary institutions have made attempts to adhere to Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Call to Action*, and to indigenize (Gaudry and Lorenz, 2018). This process also raises questions, as in many instances they are separated from the main EDI initiatives. Furthermore, in recent research, Davis (2018) argued that there are significant challenges and differences in working as an academic in Canada as a Black woman. It was noted that the obstacles against women of colour are presented as much harsher in comparison to their white and men counterparts, reflecting that intersectional – gender and race – issues in the hiring process are still very much prevalent in Canadian universities.

Similarly, Dua and Lawrence (2000) state that Canadian universities have tried different strategies to construct anti-racist pedagogy to increase the number of Indigenous peoples and people of colour hired in faculty positions. Although this study was published more than two decades ago, the findings are still relevant in current society. Women in particular shared experiences where their teaching careers have suffered from systemic discrimination that was deeply rooted in the institutions. These discriminations included negative evaluations of teaching, difficulties in the tenure and promotion process, and being marginalized in their departments and institutions. Likewise, Dua, Razack and Warner (2005) state that Canada is ultimately located in the periphery within Western hegemony and based on a national mythology that it is innocent of racism. The notion of

multiculturalism and state policies have represented Canada as a place for immigrants and refugees in the post-World War II period. However, in reality, these policies actually constricted and marginalized new Canadians in a variety of social, political, cultural, and economic domains. Accordingly, the workings of such mythology portray Canada as a white nation where individuals are keen on believing that the Europeans built the nation, and the tales of such foundation erases or suppresses the details of the conquest, genocide, slavery and exploitation of the labour from Indigenous peoples and people of colour. Therefore, the connotations attached to "race" and "racism" are eminently tied closely to the larger transnational ideology of colonialism and imperialism, and reflected throughout institutions like universities and their practices.

Recent studies on EDI practices in Canada share concerns regarding their possible efficacy, as well as the process of constructing and implementing related practices and policies. These studies look at how universities come to be supportive of social issues, or at least performatively show support. In many cases, some of these studies were also closely linked to student protests on campuses, as often these protests are related to EDI-related social issues such as anti-racism. In their study, Berry et al. (2024) noted that in their comparison between student protests that occurred between Canada and the United States from 2012 to 2018, there were several similarities and differences found. For instance, in the United States, protest patterns follow the academic calendar, and these protests often deal with racialized issues. On the other hand, most protests in Canada occurred following provincial or local campaigns organized by student organizations on issues of economic security, such as public tuition. However, student

protests in Canada also focused on social issues such as anti-Black racism, militarism and war, and sexual harassment as well (Berry et al., 2024; Boren, 2019). This notion of student protests demanding current social issues be addressed coincides with the trend wherein Canadian universities are responding to social issues that are taken as the "hot topic" at the time, such as anti-racism movements like BLM and #StopAsianHate. Peers et al. (2023) note that EDI inquiry in Canadian universities needs to further address existing systemic barriers and gain better understanding of said barriers to achieve an environment that is conducive for all individuals in the institution to participate in tackling equity issues. Accordingly, Tamtik and Guenter (2019) found in their study that Canadian research-intensive universities – U15 – have a varying degree of involvement in the needs of equity-seeking students. Their analysis of 50 strategic documents from U15 Canadian universities from 2011-2018 found that while there has been a noticeable increase in institutional commitment in establishing strategic plans, there are evident inconsistencies in how equity is defined in institutional documents and policies. Overall, these studies shed important insight into the institutional EDI works in Canadian universities. However, while the studies are published in recent years, their data rather focuses on earlier years. My research, as it focuses on more recent data, will help close this gap in the literature.

Institutional Activism and Higher Education

In discussions of activism and social movement, there is a common theme that runs through definitions provided by different scholars. In general, it is agreed that activism is often geared to challenge the status quo, and it aims to bring reform in society

within areas such as social, political, environmental, and economic to list a few (McAdam, 1982; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2009; Tarrow, 1993; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1985). In activism, collective actions occur which include protests, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, and online activism including hacktivism in recent years (Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe, and Weffer-Elizondo, 2005; Tarrow, 1993; Tilly, 1985). On the other hand, definitions for social movement share similar characteristics as activism, but also encompasses a broader parameter that includes activism under its umbrella, and is considered as an organized effort that is non-institutionalized (McAdam, 1982; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2009; Tarrow, 1998). In parallel with these definitions, institutional activism discussed in my research follows social movements scholars (Pettinicchio 2012, Santoro and McGuire, 1997; Tilly, 1978) in defining institutional activism as a type of activism that involves individuals (i.e., insider activists) within organizations that work to promote activisms' agenda to encourage social change from within institutions.

Social movements have been an integral force in making social change in societies throughout the world. Often, these social movements emerged from shared experiences and events. A tactic that has been taken by social movement activists is to work within an institution wherein a challenge to the status quo is seen as necessary. However, the ways in which institutionalized activism operates have become another source of obstacles, as they face different types of challenges in comparison to other forms of social movements to achieve desired social change. Therefore, the institutionalization of activism relating to racial discrimination across Canadian universities is not new. In fact, institutionalization of social change occurred previously in areas such as race and gender in post-secondary

education settings. However, what is striking in these studies, whether the environment in which research is conducted is within Canada or elsewhere, is that they do reflect somewhat similar challenges.

In the United States context, Rojas (2007) argues that the outcome of Black Studies as a discipline is a result of the activists, and their political groups in the education field of the university such as deans, college trustees, program directors, and Black Studies scholars themselves working together. In this sense, Black Studies programs can be seen as a bureaucratic response to social movements that fought against discrimination specific to the Black population in the United States. Therefore, the success of programs like Black Studies not only reflects the actions of students and faculty in making desired changes but also represents administrators' decisions and efforts in reproducing political and bureaucratic tendencies of universities to make amends with what is asked of them. As a result, Rojas (2007) argues that the following questions should be considered: "How did a radical social movement turn into a stable academic discipline?"; "Why do Black studies programs exist in some universities and not others?"; "What conditions prevent or facilitate the growth of Black studies after a program is established?"; and "How was the Black studies profession created from other academic disciplines?"

Similar to the case of Black Studies in the United States, another discipline where institutional activism had a significant role is Women's Studies. While both Black Studies and Women's Studies are about one specific department as opposed to universities' general policies and practices, they provide an interesting perspective as both programs

are linked to social movements based on anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and *equity*. Moreover, the case of Women's Studies captures a position that many universities may face with the recent EDI implementations. In particular, the issue lies in the gap found between the practicality of long held bureaucracy and the notion of radical social change. Wiegman (2002) explains that there is a contentious conflict within the United States academy regarding whether Women's Studies reflects feminism as a "world changing" social force or merely an area that has been academically institutionalized and moved away from its role as political resistance. The author discusses numerous points of tension within Women's Studies. First, in the beginning, feminism in the United States academy entailed a set of practices which were considered to be renegade knowledge and/or illegitimate rather than being an organization. However, the transition was made so that in the present day, Women's Studies become a general system of education across the United States, teaching about recent issues within the study of women and gender, as well as adding on doctoral competency in the program. Therefore, there is a bit of a divide as newer students are taking feminism through school and not politics (Wiegman, 2002: 18). Moreover, another concern is that there is an ongoing anxiety over institutionalization and catering to institutional demands where academics adhere to bureaucratic, hierarchical, and careerist agendas, and how universities work as consumerist entities.

One aspect of institutional activism that stands out is that the physical location of the institution becomes the ground for operating social movements, as well as where social issues that need to be addressed are actively occurring. For instance, while Canadian universities are "actively" donning their statements and newly implemented

policies like badges of honour, they are also the environment in which systemic racism and discrimination are transpiring. Accordingly, Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) argue that in terms of how institutional activism operates on an individual level is notable as activists' understanding of institutional and cultural power is crucial in institutional activism. On a similar note, Schneiberg and Lounsbury (2008) state institutionalized activism occurs within institutions by mobilizing insiders as well as outsiders through utilization of existing networks and resources to propose alternative practices, and building upon existing institutional foundations to devise new systems (p. 658). This notion of insiders working through social issues also lead to a process witnessed in Canadian universities' EDI policy implementation as well as their public statements where officials – often presidents – in each university become the integral figures in leading *desired* and/or assumed to be *correct* changes.

Focusing on institutional activists, David Pettinicchio (2012) posits that the individuals who are at the forefront of implementing change from within institutions do so through policy reforms. They are often labelled interchangeably with sympathetic elites, institutional entrepreneurs, idea/issue/meaning entrepreneurs, elite mobilization, state-movement coalitions, and inside agitators to denote elite claims-making. Pettinicchio (2012) also points out that individuals with access to institutional resources and the decision-making process work on movement issues can be considered as "insiders" promoting "outsider" causes where policy response becomes "mobilizing" rather than "demobilizing." Thus, the role of insider activist is a critical one with institutional activism. This also leads to the question of the importance and efficacy of the

officers working in EDI offices within Canadian universities and whether they could be considered as insider activists. This discussion of insider activists in particular is relevant to this research to explore and examine the role of EDI officers in Canadian universities, and how their work in EDI can be considered as activism-driven and/or effective in leading social change.

Accordingly, there have been studies of the institutionalization of social change in university settings, and some of these studies are done in the Canadian context. One of the most notable studies was carried out by Henry et al. (2017a), which argues that the issue of racism and racialization in Canadian universities persists even after decades of promoting anti-discrimination at an institutional level. Although universities promoted equity under various titles other than EDI (e.g., anti-discrimination, anti-racism, etc.), for racialized and Indigenous faculty, changes in the proportion of racialized faculty are marginal, and diversity initiatives are often used as a means to deflect criticisms of the system. This reflects that while there are numerous policies and legal requirements involved, as institutionalized social change often follow similar formats, equity policies do not always work effectively or equally. Accordingly, in the process of social change, organizations like universities respond to given social issues according to their contexts, but as an institution they create constraints as well. As institutions operate within a long history of racism and colonialism in settings like Canada, there are unspoken rules and established status quo that play a significant role in shaping policies and practices (Mohamed and Beagan, 2019; Wijesingha and Ramos, 2017). Therefore, the role of leaders within Canadian universities whose tasks include producing social change may

consider a range of understandings of their goals, the strategies for achieving those goals, and the barriers to their success.

Methods

Universities provide a unique insight on the topic of institutional activism. Institutions such as universities are in between the public and private spheres in many cases. They are educational institutions where they themselves propose to be neutral, and externally, a similar conception is held by the public. The Canadian context provides an interesting insight as they are situated differently historically in comparison to universities in the United States where many studies on institutional activism within universities are conducted.

Unlike the widely held belief of universities being forward-thinking institutions that strive for more open-mindedness, there are layers of institutional, bureaucratic, as well as historic and traditional values, that hinder drastic advancement (Henry et al., 2017a; Henry et al., 2017b; Ray, 2019; Wijesingha and Robson, 2021). Among these characteristics, Canadian universities' long history of colonialism and settler colonialism provides a different perspective on the topic. Additionally, the funding structure of Canadian universities that is linked to government also provides a level of understanding as to how social change may be carried out in forms of institutional activism. Furthermore, while discrimination has been a repeated topic of discussion in universities' settings for decades, the issue persists. Thus, the question of whether the institutional activism performed within universities as institutions is meaningful in promoting social change would be best examined through information obtained through said universities.

To examine Canadian universities' EDI offices and their initiatives, my sample includes institutions listed under The U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities. The U15 is an association of 15 Canadian public research universities, and the "public" notion of these institutions provides a unique perspective, as there are strong external influences such as the government in decision-making processes. From this list, only English-speaking universities will be considered. This is because there are significant differences between English-speaking and French-speaking universities in establishing and implementing governance of their institutions (Wijesingha and Robson, 2021).

Another aspect that makes the U15 especially significant for this research is that they are labelled and self-promoted as institutions that have pledged not only to a research and education mandate, but to work collaboratively with federal policy makers. This is imperative as universities are institutions that focus on conducting research and producing research outcomes, as well as having policies and working on education mandates. It is appropriate to select these universities as subjects for this research as EDI initiatives in university setting provides a unique perspective. As discussed, from the list of universities listed under U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities (as of 2022), 13 English speaking universities are chosen for this research.[2] Furthermore, focusing on these universities which adhere to governments' demand on EDI requirements on federal level

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[2] University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, Dalhousie University, University of Manitoba, McGill University, McMaster University, University of Ottawa, Queen's University, University of Saskatchewan, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, University of Western Ontario

will allow understanding of how external forces such as government funding can influence and impact the workings of EDI offices within Canadian universities.

In Chapter 2, I conducted in-depth interviews with EDI leaders from English-speaking U15 Canadian universities. The reason for recruiting individuals that are specifically in the position of a "leader" role in each EDI office is that they are in positions to liaise between the office and other parts of the university – whether it is different departments and/or leaders of the university. The criteria and consequently search keywords consisted of determining individuals serving as the head of EDI office such as Associate Vice Provost (AVP), President, Director, or other possible titles they may hold. However, like searching for public statements online, there were challenges in searching for appropriate individuals as some universities' introduction to EDI offices in general was vague and/or lacking in detail. Another obstacle was to get response from selected individuals in EDI leader roles. In sum, seven responded to participate in the research, one declined, and five did not respond.

In many instances, a sample size of seven is considered a very small sample for qualitative analysis. However, there is also an opinion that in qualitative research, there is really no set number for sample size that is determined as valid and/or adequate (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022; Young and Casey, 2018). Rather, it is dependent on the nature of the research and the population that is to be studied, as in some cases, it involves particularly small or hard to reach populations (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). In fact, a small sample size can prove to produce important insights for social science (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006; Hennink and Kaiser, 2022; Young and Casey, 2018). In the case of this research

project, there are a very small number of EDI leaders at large in research universities in

Canada, especially since even if all the English-speaking U15 universities employed an

EDI office leader, this would only amount to 13 people across Canada. These leaders are

uniquely situated to set the goals of their offices, and they have a unique perspective on

the possibilities and constraints surrounding anti-racist social change. This sample, while

small, includes over half of these officers.

When reviewing data used for this research, it would be easy to focus on the fact

that there are just seven participants; however, this research is not limited solely to the

interview data. Rather, what I did to enhance the analysis and validity of the research was

to triangulate the interview data gained from seven participants with other data I have

gathered. Triangulation of data can provide a deeper understanding by considering the

intersection between data sets and further validate analysis (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius,

DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville, 2014; Donkoh, 2023). The data included in this research

include interview data, combined with 13 English-speaking U15 Canadian universities'

responses to both BLM and #StopAsianHate, and publicly available contextual data. The

contextual data is expressed throughout the thesis and consists of information such as the

involvement of federal level government institutions like Tri-Council in EDI

implementations, historical and cultural contexts of Black and Asian populations

immigrating in Canada, as well as other significant materials. This triangulation between

the three sets of data, in fact, agreed with each other to provide meaningful analysis that

coincides with how institutional barriers are still influential in limiting social change.

Indeed, seven participants' discussions on their goals and barriers as EDI leaders is one

aspect of this analysis. This research, as a whole, focuses on a case study, and is not limited to the sample size of seven participants. This is a case study of English-speaking U15 Canadian universities, and the actions that were taken by them in response to very significant anti-racism movements. Moreover, focusing on a small sample size and overlooking a topic due to this fact itself would be a limitation to future research.

Chapter 3 offers an analysis of online statements published in response to the BLM movements in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021. The statements published in reaction to BLM in 2020 will provide two important insights: 1) how social change occurring through institutional activism in universities is shaped through traditional status quo; and 2) how much of these narratives and framing of political events and social issues are comparable across each university. These statements were collected from public-facing university websites.

Public statements by university officials were also analyzed in Chapter 4, in this case including statements relating to the #StopAsianHate movement in 2021. Like statements in response to BLM in 2020, the importance of EDI prior to this time, as well as a yearlong – at the time – racial discrimination due to Covid-19 pandemic reaching its peak at the time led the issue to be discussed more widely by the public and various media outlets. Therefore, there was an enhanced public interest in the specific social issue of anti-Asian racism at the time. The collected data for #StopAsianHate is valuable in comparing how external political opportunities influence social change in institutions. Notably, the attention given to BLM was exponential in 2020, and while #StopAsianHate did gain momentum in 2021 online, it is questionable whether it had even a fraction of

attention in comparison to movements from the previous year. Thus, examining the

prevalence and content from statements on #StopAsianHate will provide a new insight to

how opportunities shape social change in universities as institutions.

In analyzing collected data, content analysis was used to collect information such

as dates of publication, online locations of published statements, and persons responsible

for publishing statements, among other characteristics. Then, thematic analysis will be

used in this research for its usefulness in identifying and interpreting patterns found in

qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun and Clarke,

2013; Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2017). More detailed discussion of

methodology used will be further explained in each chapter.

Outline of the Chapters

In the field of social movements, scholars have argued that social change via

social movements can successfully occur under ideal conditions with right amount of

resources, opportunities, as well as political, social, and cultural context among many

others. However, while social movements have varying degrees of potential in resulting

in their preferred social change, their strongest claims could be modified, reduced, or

even eliminated altogether as a part of the process to institutionalized changes through

policies and practices. On that note, the current practices of EDI offices in Canadian

universities portray an interesting dynamic within institutions in promoting social change

while interacting with different interlocutors in and out of the institutions. I found this

particularly interesting and important to examine as universities began to show support

for the wave of the BLM movements in 2020 by providing official statements to the

public. At first, the research's foundation was built on examining how these maneuvers such as publishing statements should be examined to see whether they hold meaningful values. However, significance in examining universities' public statements supporting social issues increased when another anti-racism movement #StopAsianHate in 2021 was receiving a much lower level of attention. From there, the question of whether EDI initiatives could be considered as institutional activism arose.

In Chapter 2, the focus of the research is examining how leading actors in EDI practices in Canadian universities could be considered as insider activists working within institutions and are part of institutional activism. To gain better understanding, this chapter is based on analysis of first-person accounts from equity officers across English-speaking U15 universities in Canada, through which I will analyze variation in the practice of goal setting, strategic planning, and perceptions of barriers to social change. Therefore, interview data will be examined for whether EDI leaders' responses to their versions of goals and agendas to achieve social change mimic those of social movements as universities' promotion and support of social issues and related movements have been the reasons for them to be considered to provide support of social change in a radical manner.

In Chapter 3, statements published in response to the BLM movements in 2020 will be examined. In this analysis, the main theoretical perspective is framing. The collected statements will be analyzed to provide insight on whether the texts convey qualities of the social movement's stance in promoting social change in response to social issues. Following this analysis, in Chapter 4, the statements in response to both the BLM

movements in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021 will be compared. The significant differences between the two movements in the Canadian universities' responses will be analyzed to provide insight on why and how sharing similar levels of institutional opportunities in responding to social issues yields such varying outcomes within such a short time in between the occurrence of two movements.

Overall, this research will contribute to the literature within the fields of sociology of education and of social movement theory. In the sociology of education, this research provides further insight that supports existing skepticism about the effectiveness of EDI practices. Additionally, this research contributes to the field of social movements theory by examining the obstacles and challenges faced in producing social change within an organizational setting. Further expanding understanding of constraints in social change, this research also looks at how obstacles present within organizations impact not only outcomes of social change, but also hinder the goals set by EDI officers. Thus, this research further proves that the barriers that stop more progressive social change in Canadian universities are still rooted in long-held institutional and cultural values.

CHAPTER 2: EDI Leaders in Canadian Universities – Mediators for Equity and Diversity

Introduction

As universities are continuing to be branded as "liberal" institutions that support social issues and movements, their work to eradicate discrimination has been in the spotlight as well (James, 2023; Zargarian, and Wilbur, 2005). As if reflecting such a claim, it is common for universities to now have stand-alone offices of high-level administrators and staff to address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). These so-called EDI offices are at once a source of promise for the reduction of systemic inequalities and a target of skepticism for those who think that bureaucracy does not have the power to produce meaningful social change. While EDI offices are very common, it is not clear how the goal of eliminating systemic inequities from their institutions is formed and performed. This chapter seeks to identify what these offices understand to be their purpose and vision, as well as their strategies for achieving those goals.

Some social movements scholars argue that organizations can, under the right circumstances, be effective agents to social change. For example, Raeburn (2004) found that corporations' policy shifts supported LGBTQ+ activists' goals. Thus, internal agents within institutions become actors that advocate for movements' agendas, and it is expected that officers within EDI offices are empowered to produce social change. However, other scholars are more skeptical, as existing literature on Canada's higher education suggests a rather pessimistic view of equity practices with a lack of actionable policy changes. Another theoretical framework suggests that insider activists (or inside

activists[3]) play a key role in advancing policy changes in institutions. Thus, this research seeks to identify and understand the goals of, and barriers faced by, leaders of EDI offices across Canadian universities in accomplishing equity practices. To better understand the topic, interviews with leaders of EDI offices ("EDI leader" hereafter) in English speaking U15 Canadian universities were conducted. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed in conversation with existing theoretical perspectives on institutional activism to answer the proposed research question.

Three sets of claims might help make sense of the conditions under which large institutions such as universities can make substantial social change. First, universities are indeed still traditional institutions, as even when they might be seen as forward-thinking, they are often tied to their long-held values in governance and practice. Second, while recent movements may be characterized for their proactive use of newer media platforms, these movements can still be examined using theoretical framework that is considerably traditional. Lastly, synthesis of these theoretical perspectives with the interview data in this research could provide a more developed understanding of the given topic. Therefore, using the interview data and institutional activism framework, I plan to investigate different and perhaps deeper ways of understanding how social change occurs in universities. Existing literature has focused on policy changes as a successful result of institutional activism. However, this study proposes to provide an understanding of how EDI agenda goals are set and identify their barriers. Moreover, through the lens of the

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[3] *Insider Activists* will be used hereafter.

insider activist framework, I plan to gain a better understanding of how EDI leaders and their goals are promoted and/or hindered by the institutional environment.

Institutional Activism and Social Change in Institutions

In discussion of institutional activism, existing mechanisms within institutions that (re)enforce discrimination are pertinent. To combat such a situation, within institutions like universities, the establishment of equity offices became prevalent. The research on how institutional activism occurs in organizations was done in various fields, including organizational theory in conjunction with social movement theories. These studies found that there are a multitude of processes that occur in initiating and carrying out activism in institutions. What is also important to note is that there are a number of situations where activism is called for to remedy the social issues occurring within institutions.

In the university context, there have been various studies that examined activism occurring within institutions, as well as several studies on equity practices in universities. Henry, Dua, James, Kobayashi, Li, Ramos, and Smith (2017a) examined Canadian universities and their equity practices. In this work, it was found that gatekeepers within universities often maintain existing institutional cultures. The authors argued that these gatekeepers engage in institutional resistance to change and create a gap between the goals and the actual experiences. Furthermore, it was found that equity committees, which are a version of current EDI offices, are perhaps successful in addressing the issues related to equity and possible solutions, but with a lack of mandate posed on these committees to implement proposed solutions, they also lack in power to enforce such plans. The authors concluded that the expansion of equity practices in the past few

decades focused on other forms of discrimination other than Indigeneity and racism, and therefore, established policies that are not adequate to address issues arising due to racism. While the study was not focused specifically on the form of EDI office we see currently, the study still shows the obstacles equity-related offices faced in the past, and that in order to address racism, a reform was necessary.

Institutional Activism and its Legacy

Institutions tend to be portrayed as the opposite of movements and activism in many cases. Throughout modern history in Western societies, institutions such as governments, schools and corporations have been the targeted audience for movements to convince and win over. There have been many studies that focused on social movements occurring in university settings. Some research focused on student activism by examining concepts like academic opportunity structure in fostering student-led activism on campus (Brower and Upchuarch, 2023; Reger, 2018). On the other hand, there are studies on student activism occurring in neoliberal university settings (Rhodes, Wright, and Pullen, 2018), and how institutional response, accountability, and policy shape and sustain ongoing racism on campus (Cho, 2018; Cho, 2022).

In the case of this research, as the existing literature notes, universities play a role as the physical and metaphorical site that is always contentious when discussing social issues. From the institutional activism perspective, the current literature discusses how the internal agents within institutions become actors that advocate for movements' agendas. Accordingly, Pettinicchio (2012) argued that individuals who are at the forefront of implementing change from within institutions do so through policy reforms. They are

often labelled interchangeably with "sympathetic elites, institutional entrepreneurs, idea/issue/meaning entrepreneurs, elite mobilization, state-movement coalitions, and inside agitators to denote elite claims-making" (Pettinicchio, 2012: 501).

Stemming from resource mobilization theory and the political opportunity/process perspective, individuals who hold knowledge of target organizations have been considered a valuable asset in advancing social movements (Edwards and Kane, 2014; Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy and Zald, 1977a; McCarthy and Zald, 1977b; Raeburn, 2004). These individuals are considered as both a resource and an opportunity within target organizations to further the goals and agenda of given movements. There have been studies on how institutional activism progressed with the influential institutional activists that advance their movement goals. Thus, in discussing the process of carrying out institutional activism, it is vital to discuss the role and influence of the institutional activists as well.

Insider Activists Making Change: Who Are They? What Do They Do?

The concept of the institutional activist consists of social movement participants that hold formal status within government institutions and attempt to achieve social movement goals by utilizing bureaucratic resources (Santoro and McGuire, 1997). The concept of insider activist was developed to distinguish movement actors that are part of the target organizations and can work towards movement goals from the inside. There are key features of being an insider activist and they include: being a full member of target organization; being highly dependent on resources of target organization; having reduced incentive to voice grievances; having high knowledge level of the target organization;

being effective in framing claims and goals towards target organization; having the ability to use knowledge of values and culture of the target organization; having the ability to focus on lobbying, using knowledge of informal structure such as factions and friendship; and having the insight on how to threaten, using knowledge of critical resource routines (Briscoe and Gupta, 2016; Ragon and Reyes, 2023). Accordingly, insider activists are individuals who play a key role in policy change with their motivation, as well as their power and influence in the process of social change. Olsson and Hysing (2012) defined an *insider*[4] activist as: 1) an active member of a civic organization; 2) holds a formal position in the public sector; and 3) acts strategically from this position by using municipality resources as well as civic network resources to influence public decision making (p. 259). In the case of EDI leaders in Canadian universities, this definition applies with an alteration. In this version, instead of "civic" characteristics, a university context would focus on being an active and formal member of a university; holding a formal position in the university; and being strategic in their position and using available resources and networks to influence decision making within the university.

Olsson and Hysing (2012) further described categories of individuals that are linked to the concept of inside activists: 1) street-level bureaucrat; 2) policy entrepreneur; 3) policy broker; and 4) femocrat (Olsson, 2009a; Olsson, 2009b). From these categories, the *policy broker* is significant and pertinent in this study of analyzing the case of EDI practices in universities. A policy broker holds a rather neutral position as the individual

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[4] Olsen and Hysing (2012) uses the term "Inside Activist"; however, for the consistency of terms used in this chapter, "Insider Activists" is used.

mediates conflict between different advocacy coalitions and is often respected by all interested parties in the process (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999 cited in Olsson and Hysing, 2012). What is pertinent about the role of policy broker is that as a neutral role, they are to weigh in on which policy is better than others by considering factors that would benefit the institution, even if they are not completely in parallel with advancing the social change. Therefore, in this sense, policy brokers are on a different path than "activists," as they do not always choose the "good" policy. Olsson and Hysing (2012) argue that these policy brokers are unlike inside activists in that they are not as heavily focused on "political interests, power and policy making influence" (p. 262).

Perhaps, there should be a newer approach in how we define EDI leaders and officers in universities. While they are supporting and advocating for social issues and movements alike, the characteristics of their job are dipped in two different realms at once. As defined by Olsson and Hysing (2012) they are part of "organizations" as their job entails much more than just being an "activist" who holds a position in institutions. Rather, they work as a mediator, which consists of individuals who intervene between different parties to come to an agreement or a shared understanding on a given topic and/or issue. I argue that the defined three identifiers of insider activist and the categorization of policy broker interact together to provide a better understanding of the roles carried out by the EDI leaders as *institutional mediators* in Canadian universities. To summarize, EDI leaders as institutional mediators can be described as: 1) an active member of a university who; 2) holds a formal position in university/EDI office; 3) can

identify key issues in equity practices within university; 4) acts strategically from this position by using available resources and their network to influence universities and other interested parties' decision making; and 5) weighs in on decisions that are best suitable for the institution.

Canadian Context: EDI Initiatives in Universities

In the last decade or so, EDI offices and related practices became standard for Canadian universities. These entities have been portrayed as the major equity-seeking divisions within various types of institutions with comparably more radical ideas for social change. The heightened attention on EDI was obvious after the wave of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020, as it pushed equity to the forefront of campus administrators' minds, elevating existing commitments to eradicate racism and discrimination. However, the prominence of EDI offices on campus cannot be attributed to social movement activity alone. The research mandates set by the Canadian Government also put pressure on universities to secure equitable outcomes (Canada Research Chairs, 2022; Canada Research Coordinating Committee, 2024). In the early 2010s, Canada's federal government directed universities to provide an EDI plan that would follow provided guidelines to ensure that equity has been met at each university in terms of proposing and carrying out research (Canada Research Chairs, 2022). This established an even more institutionalized set-up of EDI offices on top of universities' long-standing traditional values which include status quo of hierarchical order. But are EDI offices capable of making social change? Often, the trend of establishing EDI offices and practices has been associated with the specific use of EDI where it holds activism-

like qualities, as it mirrors the values of social movements that fought and are currently fighting against discrimination of equity-deserving/ equity-seeking groups.

Therefore, I propose to gain a better understanding of the role of EDI leaders in Canadian universities through the proposed questions of: What are the stated goals of EDI leaders, and what do they see as the barriers to accomplishing these goals? How do EDI officers' perceptions of other actors within universities impact their strategies? Does it (or how does it) hinder their capacity to be an *insider activist*? These questions will be answered through analysis of gathered interview data and the theoretical framework of institutional activism.

Methods

To answer the proposed research questions, I conducted interviews with top EDI officers in Canada's English speaking U15 universities in the summer of 2023. As leaders of EDI offices, the interviewees can speak to their experiences as well as provide insights on the structure and workings of EDI practices. The decision to interview the top EDI officers in universities was because, in such positions, they will be part of the decision-making process as an advisor or otherwise to progress EDI practices and initiatives in universities. Furthermore, they will be in a position to provide a more complete picture of how EDI offices are utilized by the universities. Using thematic analysis, I will be examining the collected interview data to understand how it provides a further understanding to existing studies on equity practices in Canadian universities.

Sampling

To answer these questions, I conducted interviews with EDI office leaders from Canada's English speaking U15 universities. These universities are considered as the fifteen most research-intensive Canadian universities. These officers are the highest-ranking members tasked specifically with addressing EDI practices at their universities. Each EDI office had their own website that introduced EDI leaders, and an online search using keywords like "vice provost" and "president" that are directly tied to the position of top EDI leaders led to appropriate persons to interview. Throughout the search process, EDI leaders' emails were also collected, and recruitment initiation was made via sending emails with a letter of information and consent form. Out of 13 English speaking universities from the U15 group, which already limits the maximum sample size for this research to 13, seven universities responded to the call for participation and agreed to participate. In terms of the characteristics and/or differences found between participants who answered "yes" to participate in comparison to those who did not answer or declined to participate, there was no overlap. In terms of sampling, a sample size of seven is often considered to be too small of a sample for qualitative analysis. However, small sample sizes can generate valuable insights depending on research design (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006; Hennink and Kaiser, 2022; Young and Casey, 2018). In this research, there is a limited size of sample pool to start with, as there is a very small number of EDI leaders across the English-speaking U15 universities. These EDI leaders' roles include setting the goals of their offices and having a unique perspective on the possibilities and constraints surrounding social change. Therefore, while this sample size of seven can be

considered small, it includes over half of EDI leaders in research-intensive English-speaking Canadian universities and is still able to provide insight on the topic.

The interviews were conducted in the summer of 2023. Participants completed a set of preliminary questions via email before online interviews were conducted via Zoom. Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews were transcribed using Zoom's transcribing service, which were later vetted by the researcher. These transcripts were then coded using NVivo. The interviews consisted of discussing the overall roles of EDI leaders as well as their goals and challenges in the position. This was a significant part of the research as the findings from these discussions will facilitate better understanding and insight of whether the role of EDI leader indeed coincides with the understanding of institutional activists.

Analysis

I analyzed participants' responses to the questions regarding goals and challenges faced as EDI leaders with thematic analysis, which allows a researcher to incorporate insights from previous literature. Accordingly, to examine collected data and to answer the proposed research question, thematic analysis is the best fit for this research. This methodology is useful in identifying and interpreting thematic patterns found in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2017). The advantage of thematic analysis is that it is applicable across many theoretical frameworks. Moreover, thematic analysis allows codes to be used as the smallest building blocks to build further patterns like themes, while larger patterns can be used to determine a shared core idea found in

data. Themes become the tool by which the researcher can report their analysis and identify and interpret key features of data guided by a research question.

Then, to enhance the analysis and validity of the research I triangulated the interview data gained from seven participants with other data I have gathered including public statements in response to BLM and #StopAsianHate as well as contextual data on both movements. Triangulation of data can provide a deeper understanding by considering the intersection between data sets and further validate analysis (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville, 2014; Donkoh, 2023). In the end, all three sets of data complimented each other to provide a meaningful understanding of institutional obstacles present in universities that limits social change.

Findings

The question of whether we can consider EDI leaders in Canadian universities as institutional activists is a complex one. Unlike other agents that typically support social issues within institutions, the leaders in the EDI-specific offices within universities hold a rather unique position. These individuals are situated in a role that requires them to actively promote advantages for the bureaucratic system while also advocating for social issues – which are likely to be opposing bureaucratic and institutional status quo. Then, another question that is raised is whether EDI leader should be considered as a new role that is apart from both institutional activist and institutional agents? The findings from this research suggest that the role of EDI leaders should be carefully re-examined to consider the complex responsibilities they uphold. Moreover, the interview data gathered in this research suggests that, in fact, the required work of EDI leaders in Canadian

universities does closely resemble that of movement activists, but they do not quite meet the criteria to be considered institutional activists either. Therefore, I found that there should be another perspective that better encompasses the complex characteristics of EDI leaders to gain better insight on what their roles are in bringing social change within Canadian universities.

Goals Made by EDI Leaders

The goals of social movements often vary depending on the social issues. For some, it merely deals with gaining recognition, while others may seek more systemic changes in policies and practices. In different institutions, the goals defined to achieve social change may vary significantly from the ones defined by social movements that are specifically aimed to make social change for the chosen social issues. This is due to the fact that institutions try to preserve status quo and not built to promote social issues and bring social change like social movements organizations (SMOs). Thus, institutions that are advocating for social change work in a different manner than SMOs in general. Therefore, it would also be an adequate assumption that work done to create social change in institutions may look different as well. In the case of EDI offices and their leaders in Canadian universities, the findings from the interviews suggest quite streamlined answers. They are fulfilling roles that parallel those of activists in SMOs in a sense that their primary goal as EDI leaders is to achieve social change. Interestingly, it is also noted that the obstacles faced by EDI leaders, which are discussed later in this section, suggest that the goals are not merely based on what is to be achieved, but heavily

influenced by the challenges faced by EDI leaders to advocate for social change in their institutions.

In fact, to facilitate and progress on equity practices, identifying goals is an integral part of EDI leaders' role, and an important one as it steers the entire EDI office in a desired direction. The process of defining goals entails different aspects of EDI leaders' positions that consider various points of view within universities. First, EDI leaders must be in the position of being in the EDI office, as well as being a formal leader of the said office. Holding this position, then, subsequently provides more leverage to prioritize the social issue by providing explanations and persuading decision-making officials and stakeholders in the universities. Then, utilizing their resources, whether it is institutional or academic knowledge, EDI leaders construct a list of goals to achieve in relation to bettering equity practices and fostering diversity and inclusion on campuses. These resources also include their institutional knowledge on the challenges faced by the EDI offices in Canadian universities.

In the interviews for this research, participants were asked about what their goals are as EDI leaders. These goals were discussed in terms of short-term and long-term goals. However, as they discussed, the distinction was not necessary, as one weaved into the other, and it was unavoidable that the goals amalgamated together into setting a future direction of each EDI office. Regardless, when discussing the goals of EDI leaders, there were quite a few similarities in what they strive to achieve within their institutions. One of the most common goals discussed by the leaders is creating diverse and inclusive campuses. This entailed increasing the visible presence of diverse populations on campus

amongst students, faculty and staff. An EDI leader stated that "the long-term campaign I think is to really create a much more diverse campus, a much more inclusive campus, a much more equitable campus, which then if you translate it into practical things, we translate into the way we hire people." Although it might be considered an obvious goal of the EDI office, noting the long history of battle against inequity and discrimination in Canadian universities, this would certainly be a huge step towards social change and to undo the discriminatory impacts of racism and sexism within the university. Accordingly, most of the goals entailed changing the culture and furthering diversity and inclusion in universities. Another EDI leader commented that their goal is "increasing representation in the student faculty bodies, but also in the administrative staff… making sure that there's a strong understanding of the importance of inclusive spaces for research and learning." Additionally, one EDI leader pointed out that "change [should occur] to have the university [to] look a little more like the greater population… the university be reflective of the greater Canadian population and have it more closely mirror the workforce." In some cases, these goals were met as one EDI leader mentioned that "the institution agreed to advance a cohort hire of 12 Black academics. That brought our count of Black faculty members up to around 35." What these findings suggest is that the foundation of goals found by EDI leaders is to further the campus environment to be more inclusive, and then, eventually lead to eradication of discrimination. On one hand, these goals may be perceived as simple and/or obvious in nature. However, this also reflects that even after decades of implementing policies to improve anti-discriminatory practices in Canadian universities, the dominant goal of equity-seeking offices in the

2020s is to achieve diversity. This also leads to an examination of what has been so prevalent in Canadian universities' systems, practices, and culture that impeded the progress that was needed to improve the condition of equity practices.

Challenges Faced by EDI Leaders

As discussed in the previous section, many of the EDI leaders' goals regarding their offices consisted of furthering diversity on campus to represent the greater population of its community and broader Canadian society. The challenges defined by the leaders reflect that in most cases, EDI offices are largely dealing with three different obstacles: 1) building an environment for equity practices by promoting the importance of EDI to other stakeholders in the universities; 2) putting EDI as an important issue on the table of discussion as well as social change; and 3) how to adequately and effectively frame EDI practices to stakeholders. The findings from the interviews suggested that the obstacles often became foundations for goals as the EDI leaders were trying to navigate the most appropriate maneuvers to get through such challenges. Therefore, the comparison between the goals and obstacles was not distinctive, but interconnected.

Since this research centres around two events that occurred in early 2020s, questions were asked regarding the possible impact of these events – the wave of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements in 2020, and #StopAsianHate in 2021. The answers received for this question provide an interesting insight on why the obstacles that will be discussed later in this dissertation seemed to be overwhelmingly dominating the narrative of how EDI leaders set the direction and goals for their offices. From the interviews, it was found that despite my presumption prior to interviews that these events would have

been advantageous for EDI offices, the discussion proved otherwise. While the need for

and importance of EDI had been established long before the summer of 2020, the

insurgence of global movements did act as catalysts. Accordingly, universities'

organizational ability to address the issue of anti-Black racism was strongly present at the

time, with the heightened social and political awareness in society along with different

levels of governments being akin to support the movement as well. Therefore, universities

and EDI leaders utilized available resources and opportunities to their advantage to apply

any possible opportunity gained with the BLM movement in 2020 to further their goals.

However, throughout the interviews, participants noted that the movements that occurred

in the summer of 2020, such as the wave of *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) movement, have

not had any direct impacts on how EDI offices are operating. Most agreed that these

events proved to be some sort of an accelerator to the EDI initiatives. One EDI leader

explained that in 2020, "there was a major global catalyst; however, the need for an anti-

Black racism at my institution has existed well before 2020." Despite most participants'

opinions that movements in 2020 may not have led to any direct policy changes/reforms,

the heightened attention given to anti-discrimination movements has amplified

recognition of the importance of the EDI office and its role within campuses. One EDI

leader specified that there has been "increased utilization of the office and I was saying

that there was increased investment in our offices." Therefore, while there was no direct

impact on EDI practices and initiatives, it did increase the importance of EDI offices

within the institution. This finding makes sense considering the magnitude of social and

political impacts the BLM movements had, and it would be considered as a positive effect

of the movements, but what followed such a catalyst posed challenges to EDI leaders and their offices.

In some cases, institutional activism could benefit from external movements to maximize available opportunities, but the potential can only last for some time, as it is inevitable that the attention given to the movement is either lost or no longer opportune. Consequently, such attention had its downside as well. In the case of EDI offices in Canadian universities, the opportunities arose from what was described as an *accelerator* that derived from the wave of the BLM movement in 2020, and the attention did not last long. In fact, one EDI leader mentioned that there is a sentiment regarding equity practices where people "are back outside [after the pandemic] and in their lives and whatnot. What's the big deal?" Thus, not only the short-lived attention is due the topic being dated, but also reflect that the limited social interactions aided the BLM movements to be one of the few issues that people could give their attention at the time – the beginning of the pandemic period. Additionally, the waning attention on EDI is linked to other challenges as well. An EDI leader continued to explain that the "biggest obstacle is a financial resource. Another big obstacle is willingness. Again, everybody was willing in 2020," reflecting that lesser attention on the issue is connected to more fundamental opportunities such as funding for EDI-related initiatives. Therefore, what was once an accelerating factor of equity practices and utilization of EDI offices becomes a challenge to overcome and becomes part of new goals for EDI leaders to combat such disparities created during and after the BLM movements' heightened attention.

These challenges brought up within the discussion of the impact of the BLM movements in 2020 preludes to the further discussion on the challenges faced by the EDI leaders in Canadian universities. First, EDI leaders are constantly in a flux of bringing the importance of equity and EDI practices to the table within their institutions. Second, as they are bringing the social issue to the stakeholders' attention in the universities, EDI leaders are trying to accomplish the best means of influencing for possible institutional change. Lastly, to keep EDI on the radar as an important social issue, EDI leaders are constantly maneuvering to find the best way to frame the narrative for promoting equity practices by analyzing and adapting to the changing sociopolitical climate through use of language.

Promoting Equity in Universities

The position of the EDI office within a university setting is contentious and complex in many ways. As the current literature on institutional activism discusses, internal agents within institutions may become actors that advocate for movements. In the university setting, EDI offices and those who lead and occupy positions within are crucial in institutional activism. There are several aspects of the EDI office that work to advocate for movements as it communicates and liaises with communities within and external to the university. This relates to the notion of EDI leaders working like mediators, acting strategically from this position by using available resources and their networks to influence universities and other interested parties' decision-making. In many cases, EDI leaders expressed in the interviews that there is "an interactive kind of process that goes on, between members of the university community at large, often members of equity

deserving groups." They further noted that even within the university community, there have been individuals "who have been increasingly vocal and wanting to hold universities to account for, you know, the responsibility to make universities more welcoming and inclusive places and spaces…often outside university campuses as well." Furthermore, EDI leaders have discussed their roles to be aware and to advocate for different levels and groups within the university community. This includes being conscious of different equity-deserving groups around campus. One EDI leader expressed how they have to be mindful of "the different kinds of barriers that different groups are experiencing so that we can create the right interventions for different groups." Accordingly, they further discussed how important it is "to be much more nuanced and disaggregated in the way that we approach our broader EDI work and then also doing that in a way that works in parallel with but not subsuming Indigenous." This reflects that EDI leaders are not just working to advocate for a social issue to progress it further, but also must consider various vantage points that are involved in the social change. Furthermore, as such a process requires delicate measures, EDI leaders need to incorporate institutional knowledge as well as their academic and professional experiences to better target stakeholders and decision-makers to make the much-needed social change in the institution.

The challenge of having to mediate between different groups is also apparent when EDI offices must converse and collaborate with other members of the university. The challenge is rooted deeper than the disagreements itself, but there is a challenge in

understanding the depth and importance of why equity practices matter in universities. This was evident when one of the EDI leaders identified that they find:

> [T]here's a fundamental, unevenness in the level of understanding across different parts of the university of what equity, diversity and inclusion mean. And also, I think there's, there's still a learning curve to be had about whether or not the pursuit of EDI stands to undermine the concurrent pursuit of excellence.

This reflects that, essentially, there are inconsistencies in the knowledge and understanding of the importance and need for EDI even after years of going through numerous versions of anti-discrimination practices on campuses. Additionally, these challenges put EDI leaders in a position to actively mediate to attempt to create greater possible leverage with the stakeholders by trying to discourage less-than-ideal perspectives on EDI practices, which require an important process to "explain that in certain cases it may require the different distribution of resources or opportunities, as a matter of recognizing past injustices or barriers. Or current barriers and ongoing injustices." This reflects the further challenges that arise from having to mediate between different stakeholders within the institutions, as they require both a high degree of knowledge on bureaucratic mechanisms as well as academic/professional knowledge from EDI leaders.

Influences for Institutional Change

One of the differentiating factors of institutional activism from other types of social movements is the role of insider activists. The core of the concept of insider activists lies in that these individuals have the capacity to influence decision-makers who

have the power to implement changes within institutions. As such, in the context of Canadian universities, EDI leaders become the important cogs in leading policy reforms, and that involves using both their academic and professional knowledge to influence decision makers to rethink or consider equity, diversity and inclusion as an issue that requires social change. In the context of EDI, one aspect that is critical in Canadian universities' anti-discrimination policy change is still rooted in its colonial history. In a reflection of how insider activists have an influence on social change, EDI leaders in Canadian universities challenge institutions to fight against the institutional status quo based on past colonialism as well as settler colonial ideals. This is particularly important in the work of EDI offices, as social issues such as racism cannot be addressed without acknowledging the colonial history of Canadian universities. This is reflected in their work as one of the EDI leaders described universities as "institutions that are a part of the colonial foundation of the country." Another EDI leader discussed how some of the EDI perspectives do not necessarily "work in our colonial understanding of what an institutional structure is." Similarly, an EDI leader explained how ongoing effort and work is needed with values that are "Eurocentric, and in Canada, … Anglo values and practices and traditions. And so, and colonial traditions as well." This reflects that other challenges faced by EDI leaders are interrelated to one another as they have to make an impact in making stakeholders understand the interconnected nature of the bureaucratic structure hindering equity practices behind needed social change.

The sentiment of difficulty in changing institutional values is also expressed when participants were further discussing other obstacles EDI offices face. As universities have

long histories and are traditional in their foundation, changes do not occur instantly nor do the necessary structural changes settle into the institution immediately. Therefore, EDI leaders struggle to navigate the role of the EDI office. One EDI leader shared that there is also an obstacle of having to figure out where the EDI office stands within their university to figure out where they fit "in the governance process, governance structure, big G governance, not just little G, of the university." This adds to the role of EDI leaders in a sense that not only are they working on furthering equity practices, but their work is to validate and situate the EDI office within the institution as a necessary component. On the other hand, several EDI leaders discussed how there are many moving parts and processes that are necessary in making change within a university. As mentioned earlier, the long history and tradition of universities is the biggest obstacle, and it is reflected in its size as an institution as well. However, the struggle is also embedded in the fact that regardless of how traditional and large an institution university is, stakeholders who are expecting to see changes happen will seek for them to happen instantly. One EDI leader shared that as their university is:

> [A] very old university and a big university and so when you want to change something you have to communicate that with everybody, you have to work with them to explain why the change is important, you have to find out from them what change they need. So, change is slow and that is a barrier because things need to happen faster. People want things to happen faster. Our communities want those things to happen faster.

Similarly, another EDI leader explained the obstacles based on universities being an older institution as "most universities have been around for at least 60 years in the case of U15 universities," and they added that on top of universities being old, their history and public image can also be an obstacle as "the overarching obstacle is that the history of the university… this kind of myth of objectivity and procedural neutrality." This goes in hand with the notion of upholding traditional values in universities and preserving status quo, despite the fact that the "myth of neutrality" mask the inequity persisting in universities. On the other hand, there are other obstacles that are institutional in nature, as an EDI leader stated that there is a "need to constantly put issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization on the table," and another EDI leader also stated that "you have to have a strategy that's palatable for the institution," reflecting that not only do they need to continuously advocate for their agenda, but they have to be tactful in how they present the issue on the table. This is particularly interesting as when discussing challenges faced after the BLM movements, there was a discussion of bringing the attention back to the social issue after that accelerating effect has depleted.

Barriers in Language

One of the significant portions of any activism, including institutional activism, is how the movements and/or issues are framed and presented to stakeholders. The language in framing is critical and holds a complex position as EDI leaders have to advocate for social change while also catering to the needs of more bureaucratic and status quo notions of how more traditional institutions operate. Therefore, language plays an imperative role in advocating for EDI-related initiatives. As there are different groups and different issues

that are dealt with by EDI offices, the consensus on how language is formulated to communicate messages becomes significant to further endorse social change. What was revealed throughout the interviews is that there are careful considerations as to which words and phrases would work best for the "most" people, as the EDI office does not only target one specific group of individuals as its audience. This was evident in EDI leaders' discussion on the language of EDI as well. Language in advocating for their own EDI initiatives requires an intersectional process and the term "EDI" itself was also a contentious area for most.

Consequently, EDI leaders have addressed how there is a general sense of challenge in choosing how the language of EDI is presented to their audience. One EDI leader indicated that consistency in language may be helpful by stating that "by just continually changing the language, I don't know if that helps us." This reflects that how the language is perceived by the audience needs to be considered when formulating specific language to disseminate a social issue and its importance. This EDI leader's statement is significant in the sense that deciphering what is *helpful* or advantageous is an integral part of their position. They also mentioned in regards to the term "EDI" that "the only weakness is in when we get distracted by concerning ourselves with the acronym being a problem at all." This further reflects that while the audience's response to language is important, it is also important to consider the decision of when to use certain language, even when it might mean facing repercussions. Similarly, in terms of dealing with repercussions of utilizing certain language, when EDI leaders are advocating for

anti-discrimination in different forms, they must be attentive to how language is changing throughout time and context. In this sense, an EDI leader stated that:

> [T]his is an evolving language…for us, rather than as the office of EDI being the purveyors of this language or the originators or the creators, we work with the, you know, the university community, but we also work in tandem with the larger community, meaning that we go beyond our university.

In a similar notion, another EDI leader stated that "there is a challenge, an important challenge around, you know, how language is accepted by particular groups. Some language is a little bit more palatable and feels less threatening to particular groups." The need to formulate and adapt to the contextually appropriate language is critical as EDI leaders further discuss how "readiness to use the language of anti-racism, to define a program or to title a particular position would have been seen as somewhat, you know, threatening or alienating, and so our job in the equity office then is to navigate and help negotiate." Thus, it is a vital part of EDI leaders' role in that they are constantly negotiating changing circumstances including the decision-making process of how to best articulate social issues at hand.

Accordingly, in a parallel opinion, an EDI leader stated how the process of negotiating language is found in the process of branding EDI, as the term itself does have negative connotations, they discussed how "the weakness is that people don't like EDI…the disparaging acronyms now with DIE." This need for negotiations and considerations for how language is perceived negatively is shared by other EDI leaders, who also shared how there is a lot of consultation held when formulating language in

regards to EDI in their university. They specified that after these consultations, they are "trying to really make sure the language is reflected back to the community so that what is shared is accessible and meaningful to the community, that the work is intended to serve and then also before anything gets finalized. So, there's consultations at various points." The statements from the two EDI leaders reflect an interesting part of the negotiation they have to go through in the decision-making process. While there is feedback that the acronym of EDI connotes a heavily negative subtext, the decision to continue the use of the term is a double-edged sword in that utilizing what is "accessible" and understood by greater population while acknowledging that it does not necessarily represent the core of the chosen social issue.

During the interviews, most EDI leaders mentioned that as far as the political spectrum goes, EDI initiatives are often targeted and criticized by both ends of the political spectrum. Continuing from previous discussion, that in fact language, especially on the use of the term *EDI* itself, has been on the table for many discussions as it has been adapted by universities. An EDI leader explained how they can see "an appeal from the institution's perspective to develop some kind of more standardized language." However, they further elaborated that "any language that gets chosen will be highly scrutinized." This notes one of the most critical obstacles of EDI leaders' work: that they will be dissected and tested for the language they use even when they attempt to take every precaution to satisfy all those that are involved. Another EDI leader shared other possible terms that could replace EDI, such as:

"Anti-racism and anti-oppression. And I think that would satisfy. You know, a local 10% of the population, but I don't know that anybody else will be coming around these offices to try to engage with us at all. So, there is a kind of naivete about how institutions work. There's a naivete about how decisions get made, about institutional politics, and the fact that you have to have a space in these institutions before you can begin to do that work."

This reflects that utilization of the term EDI is not an easy decision as some may criticize, but entails a more complicated context where EDI offices and their work are catering to a broader audience with different levels of understanding of how equity works.

It would be ideal that language used to frame EDI and EDI offices work favourably for universities and this is also reflected in constant negotiations EDI leaders have to make. In such scenarios, EDI leaders utilize their knowledge to come up with the best strategies to target their stakeholders. This process integrates numerous obstacles that were mentioned in previous sections in the negotiation process. One EDI leader shared that "big businesses, corporations, they are using the acronym and that is where we can ensure that the work that we are advancing is non-threatening to government bodies who are worried." This reflects that EDI leaders are using the knowledge and resources they have in order to find the most suitable language to advocate for their office and initiatives to reduce resistance, noting all other challenges they aforementioned. However, they are also considering the best options by weighing the pros and cons of the chosen language, as another EDI leader added that the strength of using the term EDI is that "it allows you to be broad enough to begin to look at the question of equity, of diversity and inclusion in

a broader context." Thus, even when the term may lead to backlash, there is also an importance in finding a way to frame this social issue in the most approachable manner, and most importantly, the most well-received one that is as widely used and accepted. Similarly, a number of other EDI leaders shared that the use of *EDI* is indeed a broader umbrella term and "to use that sort of language in institutional documents where now we can because the leadership is seeing that a broader setup of communities is expecting this and quite frankly it's leveraged by the fact that you have the government for example creates an anti-racism strategy." Noting that although some language might not always yield a positive response, they are effective in EDI offices' contexts, especially if and when the governing power that is responsible for funding the institutions are opting to use the specific language. Reflecting this, another EDI leader described how language and its impact can depend on how other institutions are utilizing it, and shared that:

> [I]f the government is using the language of anti-racism, then surely we can. If they try, if the tri-agency funding body is using it, then surely it's, we're reacting to what's happening both internally so it's, we're reacting to what's happening both internally and externally in terms of the forces on, in challenging us to think about the language that we use.

Therefore, in making sense of why universities continue to use such a contentious term as *EDI*, as one EDI leader put it, they can "see that that's an appeal from the institution's perspective to develop some kind of more standardized language," and the term EDI fits this role quite well despite the criticism and possible negativity around it. Another EDI leader further explained why terms other than EDI that might seem more

appropriate for some individuals may not be appealing for more people, as they stated "[i]f we called ourselves offices of anti-oppression, and decolonization…I think EDI does what it was designed to do, which was to put the majority population at ease and get them." They also further identified that the context of language matters as "what sort of language is being used in the human rights code, what sort of language is being used in human rights legislation, you know, federally, those things matter."

Discussion

The question of how institutional activists carry out their roles has been studied in various types of institutional settings (Olsson and Hysing, 2012; Pettinicchio, 2012; Ragon and Reyes, 2023; Santoro and McGuire, 1997). Noting that their role is significant in institutional activism, this research aimed to gain a better understanding of how the role of EDI leaders in Canadian universities in implementing and furthering equity practices is comparable to that of institutional activists. Throughout the analysis of collected interview data, it was found that EDI leaders in Canadian universities are often situated at the intersection of identifying the importance of social change and adhering to bureaucratic requirements. Moreover, during such processes, EDI leaders are in a tight spot where they are constantly having to engage and weigh the importance of different parts of the process in initiating, administering, and managing desired social change. The notion of utilizing the "insider activist" as a distinct typification of how EDI leaders are evaluated needs to be reconsidered because it limits the scope of their role and leads to constrained understandings of their roles in traditional institutions like universities and undermines the challenges they face. There is a complex process that goes on in their

roles to consider advancing social change while following an institutional mandate in mediating between stakeholders. This was evident in how they defined their goals as EDI leaders and identified barriers associated with accomplishing the said goals.

Throughout the interviews held for this research, there were both expected and unexpected answers from the participants. The discussion with EDI leaders and what they shared in terms of their roles in producing social change – enhancing equity in universities – reflected that they are playing multiple roles while having to face internal and external influences and audiences. As EDI leaders discussed, one of the most significant roles they have to play is liaison between multiple groups that have EDI initiatives as their interests. There is also an ongoing negotiation as to how they are to engage with other parties who want the direction of EDI work and its approaches to be either more progressive or conservative. The ways in which universities are fighting challenges were apparent through the goals that were defined for EDI offices and their directions. The goals proposed by EDI leaders tend to be a bit more progressive and hope for speedier progress in making institutional changes that will lead to equity, diversity, and inclusion practices. However, the process of defining and achieving such goals is closely tied to the obstacles they faced as well, and in fact, these obstacles were inherently interconnected to each other as much as they were tied to the goals. First, there is a notion of having to adhere to different stakeholders' levels of interest and understanding in the importance of EDI practices in universities. Second, EDI leaders are in a spot where they are constantly having to put the importance of EDI on the table for it to be perceived as an important part of the universities. Lastly, the continuous process of

having to negotiate and evolve the language used to promote and frame the importance of EDI narratives is tied to the previous challenges, as language serves a vital role in convincing the stakeholders such as board members and highest officials, and keeping the topic up to date with changing language. Furthermore, in certain aspects, EDI leaders have to do their diligence in making sure that universities reflect the public's needs and demands while trying to preserve their "integrity" as long-standing institutions, and some of the goals defined as institutional by participants do reflect that. These institutional goals are not necessarily "negative" or "disadvantageous" per se, but they do reflect the core of universities' institutional foundations with traditional values and influence the progress in making change.

Institutional or insider activists are a vital part of institutional activism as they play a significant role in setting the agenda, progressing goals, and liaising with the interested parties. The roles of EDI leaders resemble that of insider activists in many ways, but there are also complexities in equating them. I argue that there needs to be a modification to better examine and understand the roles carried out by EDI leaders in universities. While their position is that of eradicating discrimination and working towards bettering equity/diversity, it should also be considered that their affiliation to the institution could be an obstacle in proposing radical social change. In that sense, considering the data gathered through interviews on the role of EDI leaders, I find that it is necessary to define a new term to better encompass their role of negotiating and mediating between different stakeholders in universities, community, and the constantly changing sociopolitical environment when it comes to progressing EDI initiatives and

practices, as well as the EDI office and its importance. Therefore, I argue that their role should be reframed as *institutional mediator* rather than insider activists. This concept strives to conceptualize the traditional notion of insider activists but further encompasses the institutional nature of their responsibilities. Some characteristics of EDI leaders in this research to note are that they are indeed active members of universities, and hold formal positions in their universities/EDI offices. These two conditions are crucial in EDI leaders acting as institutional mediators as it gives them the ability to influence other stakeholders in the institutions as well as overseeing EDI offices. Therefore, additional qualifiers of being institutional mediators include: identifying key issues in equity practices within university; acting strategically from this position by using available resources and their network to influence universities and other interested parties' decision making; and weighing in on decisions that are best suitable for the institution.

The work that EDI leaders are performing in their position is critical in furthering equity practices in Canadian universities. However, there is a need to reframe and perhaps realign the work that they do so that there is a better understanding of their roles in advancing social change in universities. The concept of insider activists certainly advanced our understanding of institutional activism in the social movement literature. However, the work EDI leaders are required to perform should consider the institutional responsibilities they hold, and not doing so would be undermining their work. Therefore, EDI leaders' roles should not be evaluated only based on the outcome of (un)successful movement goals, as it is partial to the whole of their work. This is because EDI leaders work requires a multitude of mediations between stakeholders that inevitably requires

them to conform and negotiate, and during that process, not all outcomes will be

favourable or as radical as is expected by social movements.

**CHAPTER 3: Framing a Successful Movement – Canadian Universities'
(un)Successful Framing of the Black Lives Matter Movement**

Introduction

Throughout recent decades, universities have been considered to be supportive of

social movements and addressing social problems. In this chapter, I propose to test this

claim by using one of the social issues that universities have been most active in

responding to by publishing statements. I plan to examine Canadian universities'

statements published in response to the *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) movement in 2020 to

gain insight on whether these statements are consistent with what framing literature has

identified as social movement framing. Further, I evaluate whether the work universities

are doing on social change goals could be rightly interpreted as being part of a social

movement.

The 2020 wave of the BLM movement received some of the most attention given

to a social movement in recent decades. From those in the political realm to private

individuals in many parts of the world, response to the movement has been varied. The

most notable and general reaction from institutions during the surge of BLM movements

was to provide their audience of interested parties with official statements in supporting

the BLM movement. These institutions included, but are not limited to, governments,

corporations, not-for-profit organizations, and universities. In many cases, the online

sphere became the domain for these institutions to express their stance on BLM.

Following the trend, Canadian universities started to share their statements to the public

via posting on their respective official websites. Donning their badges as higher education

institutions, messages often related to their position while focusing on voicing the need to eradicate anti-Black racism. Then, as the BLM movement was directly tied to equity and diversity issues, it was perhaps an obvious step for universities to take to support the movement. Universities, strictly speaking, are not social movement organizations, but they do claim to advocate for social change and enact related goals and may express activist ideals. However, can universities be considered part of a social movement? I propose to examine statements published in response to BLM movements in 2020 by Canada's U15 English speaking universities.

Framing theory is useful in understanding mechanisms of how movements mold their images to their activists and the public. Given that universities' goals are often laid out in their public statements in response to social issues, it would be appropriate to apply framing theory to gain better understanding. As universities make public statements that respond directly to social movements and express the institutions' desire for social change, it then makes sense that we would want to understand whether these statements frame their claims in a way that effectively produces meaning around a social problem and articulates a clear and coherent vision for social change. I propose to examine whether these statements can be considered as a part of framing social movement goals, and then analyze the statements to see how they may or may not be effective in setting the terms for social change within these public institutions. As universities carry institutional activism characteristics, the query of theoretical tools should also be considered. Therefore, in analyzing universities' responses, reactions, and adaptation of movements, I propose to answer the question of whether the claims universities make are consistent

with framing theory. Framing theory tells us what social movement statements look like and accomplish, and I plan to test whether this aligns with the criteria offered in framing perspective.

Framing Social Movements

Social movements are impacted by internal dynamics as well as external forces. Social movements theory provides insights on how multiple aspects of social movements can be understood. The framing perspective is valuable in understanding how the meanings of movements are composed and communicated. Deana Rohlinger (2002) describes framing as "a process of constructing and defining events for an audience through the control of the agenda and vocabulary" (p. 480). This process in any movement is crucial as it determines how movements are perceived by their audience as well as by possible alliances. In fact, the description of given social issues and/or social events reflect a multitude of narratives that are told from a variety of vantage points. The framing perspective is a fitting tool to examine how social movements are "framed" with an intention to determine what is relevant and irrelevant (Snow, 2007). Therefore, setting the frame of movements in a desirable way – from the movement or participant's viewpoint – is significant in leading to the success of a movement's cause. The framing perspective then looks at how a movement conveys certain aspects of social issues, rather than providing a balanced or holistic perspective. Consequently, framing serves a function of providing focus, articulating and transforming the initial characteristics of the movement (Hunt, Benford and Snow, 1994; Zald, 1996).

Core Framing Tasks: Constructing Effective Frames

From the framing perspective, constructing an effective and impactful frame is one of the key qualities for successful movements. Benford and Snow (2000) provide an overview of how framing has been interpreted by scholars over the decades. They describe "core framing tasks," which deal with composing a shared understanding for events and/or issues that movements consider to be in need of change, defining who is at fault, defining possible solutions, and encouraging others to join to make change. Snow and Benford (1988) describe three different types of framing: 1) diagnostic framing; 2) prognostic framing; and 3) motivational framing. First, diagnostic framing works as an initial stage for movements' framing. As a social movement's goal is to bring changes to a social issue, this first stage aims to identify the source of the issue. Second, prognostic framing refers to the process of defining solutions to the issue at hand, planning for changes, and constructing strategies for such plans. Lastly, motivational framing is the final stage of the core framing task where movements are setting a "call for action" to motivate other individuals to join their goal of making change. This process of constructing movements' framing is particularly useful in distinguishing whether or not universities' statements from 2020 in response to BLM were effective (Benford, 1993; Snow and Benford, 1999; Snow and McAdam, 2000). At first glance, these statements that are presented do resemble many qualities of social movements' agenda. However, there is a meaningful difference that should be deciphered to understand whether universities' engagement with BLM in such a manner can include them as being part of a social movement, or if it should be defined as something else.

Sending Messages Through the Online Sphere

The media plays an integral role for social movements in several ways. In fact, the relationship between the two is reciprocal and symbiotic. This is significant especially because journalists that are part of large media corporations have the power to write about movements, and movements are a great source of news that cannot be missed in producing interesting, current and/or popular news stories. William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld argue that activists look to the media to "[s]end my message" while journalists look to activists to "[m]ake me news" (1993: 115). Yet, it is difficult for movements to get their message delivered to the general population through mass media because the mass media are powerful organizations that can select which issues to cover and how to cover these issues (McCarthy 1994; Noakes and Johnston, 2005; Rohlinger, 2002; Staggenborg, 2012: 48). The media seeks to depict movements in ways that generate the most attention from the viewer (Corrigall-Brown and Wilkes, 2012; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Rohlinger 2002). Therefore, they will likely focus on certain characteristics of events or participants which are usually dramatic and sensational in nature, and thus create greater attention. However, with recent social movements, the dynamic between the media outlets and social movements has shifted due to the introduction of social media and proliferation of the virtual space to be utilized as an extension of traditional media platforms (Papacharissi, 2002; Papacharissi, 2008). As movements, regardless of their size, have gained the potential to deliver their own messages, the notion of having to depend on traditional media has been altered (Guha, 2015; Horeck, 2014; Megarry, 2014; Meyer, 2014; Veenstra, 2014).

Institutions like universities began to use their own online platforms (i.e., official websites and official social media handles) as a dominant method of sending messages to announce their stance in social and/or political events. In this sense, a university's website serves two functions: 1) university websites, and more specifically certain pages such as the president's office, work as professional and official outlet; and 2) it allows a university to publish their own voice without having to go through other media channels. In fact, it is now standard to see what were formerly known as traditional media outlets such as news channels turn to official websites and subsequent statements made by institutions to make news. Moreover, in relation to the first function mentioned, as official websites symbolize the genuine voice of the institution, it cuts the time for other media outlets to take extra steps to attain opinions from institutions involved in social issues and/or social events. Therefore, these official statements published by universities are valuable in that they reflect both the official nature and how immediate the institutions are responding to current events.

Considering that universities have taken steps to publish statements in response to the 2020 wave of the BLM movement, such an act is often considered as activist-like and being part of the movement. However, can universities be considered part of a social movement? Are the claims universities make regarding the BLM movement consistent with framing theory? Framing theory tells us what social movement statements look like and what they attempt to accomplish. In this paper, I propose to test if these statements are indeed part of social movements.

Methods

To answer the proposed research question, I examine public statements published online by Canadian U15 English speaking universities in Summer 2020. The wave of statements poured out during this time is an appropriate measure of universities' willingness to engage with social movement goals. Using thematic analysis as a method of analysis, I will be examining the collected data to understand how they align with the theoretical framework – framing theory – in answering the proposed research questions.

Sampling

The data used for this research is online public statements published by Canada's U15 English speaking universities in response to BLM movements from the Summer 2020. The primary source of the web-based data was collected through Google's Boolean search feature using specific keywords. These keywords are used to pull up statements provided by each university in response to the same social issue – BLM in 2020 – as well as to keep consistency within the search process. The keywords included: 1) the names of each university; 2) the specific title of the persons making the statement (i.e., "Dean," "President," "Provost); and 3) specific topics related to the statement such as "BLM," "Racism," "Anti-Racism," "Anti-Black Racism" and "Discrimination" were used to further refine the search. "EDI" in particular was not included in the search, as searching using the keyword "EDI" produced broader search results, which did not entirely capture universities' responses specific to BLM. Therefore, the search was to focus on official statements made by Canadian universities by the highest officials of each institution. This was done because most presidents or other highest officials would not have statements attached to EDI offices, but to their own office or official communication channels. These

search results were then further defined using a specific date range to reflect the timely

response from universities on the movements. The date range selected was May 2020 to

September 2020.

Table 1. List of 2020 Statements in Response to the Wave of BLM Movement

Name of University	Statement Signed-by	Publication Site	Publication Date
University of Alberta	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of British Columbia	President	University's Website	June 02, 2020
University of Calgary	President	University's Website	June 24, 2020
Dalhousie University	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of Manitoba	President	University's Website	June 02, 2020
McGill University	Principal and Vice-Chancellor	University's Website	June 02, 2020
McMaster University	President	University's Website	June 25, 2020
Ottawa University	Professors from Sociology/Anthropology Department	Department's Website	June 05, 2020
Queen's University	Provost	University's Website	June 08, 2020
University of Saskatchewan	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of Saskatchewan	President	University's Website	June 17, 2020
University of Toronto	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of Waterloo	Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of Waterloo	Media Relations	University's Website	June 06, 2020
University of Waterloo	Media Relations	University's Website	July 16, 2020
Western University	Official Account	Official Twitter/X	May 31, 2020

In total, 18 statements were collected for this research. From the search results,

there were several different statements that were found depending on university. A few

institutions had more than one statement, while others had publications made by an

individual that was not the highest official of the institution. The selection process of each

statement is related to the keywords and search date range. In the cases where there are

multiple statements from one university, the statement that was published at the earliest

date and that was signed by the president, provost or any other highest official of the

institution's title was chosen. However, there were two exceptions to this selection

criteria. University of Saskatchewan had an initial statement that was made on June 1,

2020, which was quite brief in comparison to other universities' statements that included

elaboration on their future plans on eliminating racism. Therefore, a follow up statement

that was made linking back to the initial statement on June 1st was published on June 17,

2020, and as this statement held more details on future commitments to combat racism,

this statement was included as well. University of Waterloo also had multiple statements

that came up in the search results, and the timing of these statements also coincided with

events that were ongoing on the campus at the time, such as their "change.org" petition

on racism. This particular statement was chosen to be included in this research as it does

pertain to issues of anti-Black racism that occurred on campus and is part of other series

of statements published during this time in response to an ongoing anti-Black racism

issue. Therefore, all three statements were selected for this research as it fit the criteria for

selection the most. This was to reflect both the importance given to the BLM movement

by the university through the engagement of the highest official, as well as promptness in

response. With the exception of one case – Western University – where there was no

apparent official university website publication present, social media results were

excluded. This is to avoid redundancy due to the fact that social media posts most often

redirected the followers of accounts to the website publication of the statements.

Analysis

To examine collected data and to answer the proposed research question, the

analytic method used is thematic analysis. This methodology is useful in identifying and

interpreting thematic patterns found in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2017). The advantage of thematic analysis is that it is applicable across various theoretical frameworks. Moreover, thematic analysis allows codes to be used as the smallest building blocks to build further patterns like themes, while larger patterns can be used to determine a shared core idea found in data. Themes become the tool by which the researcher can report their analysis and identify and interpret key features of data guided by a research question.

In this research, using the found themes as building blocks, three groups of findings were analyzed. These findings are connected to framing theory's core framing tasks. Data was then examined to find the presence of connections to each stage of the framing process – diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational – found from Canadian universities' statements. The software used in data analysis was NVivo which allows multilevel qualitative analysis that correlates how thematic analysis would work in micro to macro levels of building blocks from codes to larger patterns.

Findings

In framing theory, concepts of core framing tasks provide an understanding of the important components found in the framing strategies that are used by social movements to endorse their activism. The three stages – diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational – of framing theory examine the specific contents that are included in social movement framing (Benford and Snow, 2000). The sections below examine findings from the statements published by Canadian universities in 2020 to respond to that year's wave of

the BLM movement. These findings offer a better understanding as to whether the

contents of these texts can be considered as social movement activism.

Diagnostic Framing: Defining BLM as an Important Social Issue

From the core framing tasks, diagnostic framing aims to identify the social

problem clearly. In this case, Canadian universities identified the problem as anti-Black

racism. Canadian universities then employed a few different schemes in their statements.

The first narrative found in statements consisted of identifying the social issue at the root

of that year's wave of the BLM movement – anti-Black racism. One of the most

noticeable characteristics was to make sure that the purpose of published statements was

to announce the institutions' acknowledgement of and stance on the issue. Therefore,

most of these statements used the ongoing BLM movement as their starting point. Some

universities directly used the death of George Floyd along with BLM to make a point. For

instance, McGill University mentioned the "tragic death of George Floyd one week ago."

In most cases, universities have used the BLM movement in a more general sense in their

statements to identify anti-Black racism as a social issue needing change beyond the

death of George Floyd. By identifying anti-Black racism as the social issue, universities

framed BLM as a movement that fostered a better understanding of the social problem, as

well as created motivation for change to eradicate racism within universities.

Accordingly, to further cement the importance of addressing the needed change against

anti-Black racism, there is a significant weight given to the importance of utilizing BLM

as the focal point. In most cases, it was evident that many universities directly referred to

the BLM movement through varying sentiments. For example, McMaster University

indicated that "[t]he Black Lives Matter movement has helped us all better understand the pain that Black communities are facing and the need to find real and concrete ways to correct the systemic racism and racial inequity that exists across our campuses,"; University of Manitoba's statement indicated that "[r]acism is challenged every time we acknowledge that Black lives matter;" and University of Saskatchewan mentioned that "[a]s Black Lives Matter protests locally and globally have shown, words alone are an insufficient response."

When the Black Lives Matter movements occurred in 2020, the attention gained was occurring in a unique environment. Unlike former movements where engagement with other activists in physical settings like marches on the street and occupying spaces was not necessarily "unique," it became as such due to lockdowns across most countries around the globe as the Covid-19 pandemic worsened. Unlike typical circumstances where universities would deal with students, faculty and staff joining the march on campus, where physically it is considered as part of universities, the summer of 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown was distinct in comparison to previous social movements. Therefore, to bridge such a gap, and to identify the social issue as one that universities needed to address and fight for change, Canadian universities connected the wave of BLM movement in 2020 to their own institutional equity and diversity agenda to fight racism and discrimination. In this sense, the attention given to BLM has created an environment wherein universities are in a "tight spot" where they are expected to express their position on anti-Black racism with heightened attention given to the movement.

To pinpoint the source of the social issue of anti-Black racism in the context of Canadian universities, another aspect of these statements that stood out was that they included numerous EDI related sentiments which focused on the following: colonialism, discrimination, racism, and systemic issues. On the issue of colonialism, Canadian universities made a direct connection with the equity issues occurring on campus due to colonial ideology to the anti-Black racism and BLM movement. Accordingly, these discussions of equity-related issues were often tied with pointing out Canadian universities as institutions of higher learning in context of settler colonialism. Through this process of further aligning their own position with the BLM movement, they make further observations in their statements regarding the universities' own role in proliferating systemic racism by emphasizing their role as a higher education institution. Indeed, the discussion of "racism" was most prevalent in all statements, as the social issue they are responding to is focused heavily on racism out of all other forms of discrimination. On the other hand, the discussion of anti-Black racism also coincided with universities' curriculum, learning, and working environments of campuses. While identifying the social issue and their own role in (re)producing it within institutions, there was a connection to racism and universities' intention to commit for equity as well.

Accordingly, a prominent type of narrative found in statements was an emphasis on the notion of condemning systemic racism occurring within universities. This further identifies the social issue of anti-Black racism and how it is relevant to the context of Canadian universities. Mentions of systemic issues focused on the history of universities. For instance, in their statement, Dalhousie University stated that "[t]he recent racist

incidents remind us of our own institution's history." Some universities used this opportunity to connect the systemic issue with how the institutions are going to make change. In McGill University's statement, they discussed "how" as they addressed their audiences' concerns regarding "What has McGill done, and what will McGill do to confront systemic racism? This question is important. My goal here is to respond to our community by sharing relevant information." There were also sentiments regarding how the university will continue to monitor racism occurring throughout the institution, as Queen's University's statement included "I join the Principal in encouraging all members of the Queen's community to reflect on their own bias and to remain vigilant, and to call out racism when they see it."

Reflecting on the responsibilities of ongoing systemic racism on university campuses based on their institutional foundations, there was an abundance of sentiments regarding the admission of racism within universities. Often these discussions entailed linking the BLM movement with historic and current events/incidents which occurred due to racism. By connecting BLM with an admission of racism on campuses, some statements identified the source of the social issue in universities' context that goes beyond recent or current occurrences and reflects on the racist history of the institution. University of Calgary stated that "[r]acism is real – in society and on our campus – and we must do more." Accordingly, some universities referred to well-known racist incidents that occurred within their institution. Queen's University's statement alluded that "[r]acism exists in many forms throughout society, and Queen's is certainly not immune," and similarly, UBC stated that "UBC itself is not immune to racism and injustice."

Besides these direct admissions of racism on campus, there were also discussions of more systemic issues that reflect ongoing racism on campus. For example, McMaster University mentioned that "[w]e must address the underrepresentation of Black faculty members and advance inclusive excellence in teaching and research across all academic programs." Additionally, in some statements, universities have voiced their stance on condemning past, current and future racist behaviours and incidents on campus. In doing so, University of Alberta stated that they "condemn anti-Black racism and stand with Black communities in demanding justice and progress on equity for racialized members of our society." In a similar fashion, University of Calgary stated that, "[w]e need to acknowledge, confront and overcome conscious and unconscious bias. We need to take collective – and individual – action." On the other hand, some universities, like University of Toronto, directly used the word "condemnation" by indicating that "[o]n behalf of the U of T community, let me repeat in the strongest terms possible our condemnation of anti-Black racism and discrimination." Accordingly, University of Waterloo also insisted that "[w]e have expressed that the University of Waterloo condemns and acts to eliminate racism on campus."

Overall, my analysis of statements published by Canadian universities in response to BLM movements in 2020 shows that, like larger social movements, institutions did identify the social issue at hand clearly. As universities define the core social issue of anti-Black racism from the BLM movement, universities took a further step and placed themselves within the systemic racism occurring within institutions. The "diagnosing" of their own role and ongoing racism on campuses does resemble the diagnosing process

performed by typical social movements. The other parts of the framing process will be further analyzed in the next two sections to understand whether or not universities' statements do truly fit the framing process of social movements.

Prognostic Framing: Identifying Solution and Making Commitment

Prognostic framing seeks to identify solutions to the diagnosed problem. In their statements, universities not only identified anti-Black racism as the problem but also outlined actions they were taking and planned to undertake to make practical changes to eliminate racism on campuses. My analysis found that there is a range to the willingness of Canadian universities to bring social change. These commitments for social change then provide a prognosis of identified social issues, from general to more specific commitments. In doing so, extending from the discussion of equity-related items, universities have provided various support-related sentiments while presenting possible solutions to the social issue of anti-Black racism which may result in actual social change. In support-related sentiments, the most prominent attribute was that the universities were attempting to provide actionable items/approaches. These mentions of actionable sentiments included working on advocating for equity.

From the statements, it was evident that there were some commitments and plans that were more generic and ambiguous in comparison. While each university uses carefully crafted diction and syntax in their public statements regarding their commitments in response to racism-related social issues, in some cases, the words are also crafted in a sense that they do not necessarily promise any new changes or policy reforms either. The focus is more on the possibility of promoting and enhancing the

existing equity-related practices already in place, and not specific in their goals, desired outcomes, or time frames (i.e., when it will be implemented and/or when they foresee the plan to be executed). For example, University of Toronto stated that "Office of the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity, and the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office will soon be announcing important tri-campus initiatives in which all members of the University will be invited to take part." Similarly, instead of providing more detailed information on existing support systems, Dalhousie University noted to their audience "[p]lease know that, even under these pandemic circumstances, there are services and supports available for our community ~ listed below. Please reach out if you need support." Again, this is piggybacking on existing infrastructure and practices without any specific plans to tackle the social issue of anti-Black racism raised by BLM movements.

On the other hand, a type of narrative that strengthened statements was to provide specific commitments on bettering the discriminatory environment at each university. These commitments were specific in that they were clearly targeting the social issue, provided possible solutions that were related specifically to the given social issue, and in some cases, they provided an appropriate timeline to have offered solutions to be implemented. First, some universities, adhering to the goal of BLM movements, focused on the Black population on campus. For example, McGill University promised to:

> "enhance outreach to and support for Black students; work toward more effective recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty from the most underrepresented groups (i.e., persons who are Indigenous, Black, and/or living with a disability); and conduct critical research into the University's ties to slavery and colonialism."

Waterloo University was more specific in their plans, particularly targeting Black students, faculty and staff by proposing a specific timeline that is also timely to:

 "direct financial support to groups doing anti-racism work on our campus… We will create space for Black campus community members to come together for support, collective care and action…We will create online resources for those impacted by anti-black racism, and for allies seeking learning and action opportunities; and an invitation for community members to suggest additional resources… We will embed goals related to anti-racism in the institutional equity plan and commit to accountability across the institution beginning Fall Term, 2020."

In a number of cases, universities made an effort to link the existing equity practices (i.e., EDI practices) and the equity office with the issue of anti-Black racism. Universities used their existing infrastructure as a foundation to provide future plans to bring social change. Most universities mentioned an EDI office or a similar equity-related office and/or strategic plans that were already in place prior to the wave of BLM movements in 2020. McMaster University made connection to their existing supports and the foundation of Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) and its EDI practices and stated that they will be "[b]uilding additional capacity in the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO), including the hiring of an Anti-Black Racism Education Coordinator to deliver anti-Black, anti-oppression education and training opportunities. Establishing an employee resource group to support community-building, as well as facilitate the advancement of career and leadership development of racialized staff." Similarly, other universities

anchored their existing EDI offices and practices to further elaborate on their future endeavours to enhance anti-discrimination works – though it must be noted that this is not specifically geared towards anti-Black racism. University of Calgary asked for input anonymously and stated that "[m]y office, along with the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Protected Disclosure (ODEPD), will work on the input." University of Saskatchewan noted that "[g]uiding our continuing efforts to dismantle racism and discrimination will be our Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Action Plan, which faculty, staff and students have been working to develop over the past year."

These items are indeed promising in terms of aiding the goals of the BLM movement within institutions. They are specific to a degree in that universities do mention specific populations to be considered and are relevant to the issues by advocating for the Black population on campus during the surge of movements against anti-Black racism presented in the statements. Moreover, some promises and plans like the one outlined by University Waterloo with a Fall 2020 date had a more focused deadline. However, not all are as easily measurable, as most of these commitments are based on existing infrastructure, such as EDI offices and EDI practices. As found in quotes derived from the analyzed statements, many of these plans include "enhancing" existing programs, or "adding" to existing practices. Specifically, adding or enhancing existing resources, practices and infrastructure relates to prognostic framing in a sense that changes are being made. However, these commitments are not geared specifically to make changes to the specific social issue that is being represented in these statements.

As noted, while most of these statements focused more directly on BLM and anti-Black racism, there were some universities that addressed anti-Asian hate, as well as other race and ethnicity related discrimination. These universities expanded the social movement goals beyond the BLM movement, which broadened the scope of the social issue. In 2020, with the wave of BLM occurring during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, some universities included discrimination towards Asian descendants residing in North America. UBC – alone – noted that "[o]n behalf of the University, I condemn and denounce all incidents of anti-Black and anti-Asian racism and the continued racism and oppression that is directed at Indigenous communities." Accordingly, the UBC statement noted that:

> "[o]ver the coming weeks…Meet with the Black Caucus and the Asian Canadian Community Engagement Group…Fulfill commitments within the Inclusion Action Plan for the recruitment, retention and support of Black students, staff, and faculty… We will host a virtual town hall to elevate voices that are traditionally silenced in our institution and to monitor progress."

This statement tied the importance of BLM and anti-Black racism with anti-Asian racism. Although UBC was the only university to address another form of racial discrimination that was going on concurrently, there were efforts made by universities to address a more all-encompassing narrative on the fight against discrimination. Universities made their statements more universal to pitch their stance against racism and discrimination, and some further included the Indigenous population. University of Saskatchewan stated:

"[a]s we continue with our goals to be the best place we can be with and for

Indigenous students and their communities, to provide ongoing support to the

2SLGBTQ+ community on campus, and to be a welcoming place for all people of

colour and of all religious faiths, we also know we can do more."

Similarly, Western University mentioned that "[v]iolence against Black, Indigenous and

racialized peoples are pervasive – Canada is not immune. Resistance against racism is

critical to move society – and our campus community – forward." This finding indicates

that while a social issue is identified, universities can expand their goals to be more

inclusive and mention social issues beyond anti-Black racism to promote their stance.

Findings in this section reflect that like diagnostic framing, Canadian universities

have attempted to follow the process of prognostic framing. There is some contrast in that

while diagnostic framing was done in a very clear manner across statements, prognostic

framing varied. Some universities were setting generic and non-specific plans in

statements, while other universities were providing detailed commitments that are

focused and attentive to anti-Black racism specifically.

Motivational Framing: Issuing a Call to Action

From the statements published by Canadian universities in 2020, the final

component of core framing tasks – motivational framing – was rather weak or did not

exist. Motivational framing in this context aims to identify opportunities for various

university community members to collectively participate in anti-Black racism

movement. However, the messages included in the statements focused heavily on

presenting to their audience the things universities are doing, rather than calling on

individuals for a collective participation. As seen in previous findings, there is quite an abundance of evidence that shows how universities provide context to BLM through making connections their campuses, but they do not necessarily coincide with creating motivational sentiments. Although it can be related to more specific commitments that are planned in the future, they still are not necessarily calling for a strong "severity and urgency" for individuals to participate.

If universities are participating in social movement activity, one would expect to see framing strategies that support collective action or that even issue a call to action by community members. If the statements made by universities were to include adequate and meaningful motivational framing, statements would include providing virtual or physical space for collective discussions, or would otherwise facilitate participation from students, faculty, and staff to join in finding actionable solutions to eliminate anti-Black racism. Furthermore, there would be more specific articulation and connection made in statements to various groups on campus, including anti-Black racism groups comprised of individuals external to the typical EDI offices and practices set out by universities. However, calls for collective action are notably absent from university statements. Therefore, for universities' statements to have meaningful motivational framing, there needs to be a presence of promoting participation, as well as inviting community members to partake in the process of creating plans for social change and finding solutions, rather than just presenting what they have decided to the community.

Rather than offer opportunities for collective participation in social change, university statements articulated a vision in which bureaucratic offices or leaders would

facilitate changes. As seen in previous findings, universities' plans focus on planning to hire more anti-Black racism coordinators in EDI offices on campuses, and building additional capacity and/or enhancing existing resources are heavily centered around the bureaucratic infrastructure found around existing offices.

Therefore, I found that most statements analyzed in this research did not include adequate motivational framing and tended to focus more on "defending" the stance of EDI practices from each university, which reads more like a report to be presented for approval. This lack of motivational framing indeed questions the "goals" of these statements – if they are social movement statements, should they not also focus on mobilizing social change further? As found in the previous section discussing prognostic framing, many promises for change and plans are based on existing bureaucratic infrastructure – EDI offices and practices. In this sense, rather than a call for collective action, universities pointed out a particular office within their bureaucratic infrastructure as being responsible for making social change.

Findings from the statements published by Canadian universities can be summarized as having largely two trends found in shared narratives that follow what Snow and Benford describe as diagnostic framing and prognostic framing. First, universities reacted to the BLM movement in 2020 by making the social issue relevant in the context of "Canadian universities" by anchoring historic and bureaucratic barriers that (re)produced anti-Black racism, and other broader forms of racism/discrimination on campus. Through this diagnostic framing process, universities have defined the social issue that needs attention, as well as the causes of the social problem in their institutions'

contexts. Second, after identifying the social issue, anti-Black racism, Canadian universities listed possible solutions to the issue. The level of commitment and specific plans of action varied across the universities, and questions remain as to whether generic and non-specific plans are meaningful. Lastly, universities lack in one of the pertinent processes in framing – motivational framing to recruit and encourage others in the university communities to join in making social change. While different universities made varying levels of commitment to enact changes, there were no cases of universities utilizing these statements as opportunities to foster collective action among students, staff, and/or faculty. The commitments were always in a form of bureaucratic responses, such as providing counseling, offering to hire more Black faculty, or establishing/expanding EDI offices. Thus, I cannot characterize any of these statements as using motivational framing. The overall implication of this finding is that universities see themselves as the targets of activism like BLM, rather than as participants in the activism. The statements designate university leaders as the appropriate managers of the problem of anti-Black racism on campus. However, in a more practical sense, they do not try to motivate others to participate in this social change.

Discussion

This chapter analyzed Canadian universities' statements in response to the BLM movement in 2020 to answer the proposed research questions by examining whether universities can be considered part of a social movement, and whether the claims universities make regarding the BLM movement are consistent with framing theory. As aforementioned, framing theory tells us what social movement statements should

encompass to be meaningful. Despite the criticism that universities receive, that they are activists, the findings from this research note otherwise.

Findings from the statements demonstrated that some portions from the "formula" of core framing tasks are present. First, most statements identified the social issue of the BLM movement clearly. Universities addressed the issue of anti-Black racism, and in some statements, they went further to situate themselves as part of this ongoing systemic racism. In this diagnostic framing process, Canadian universities were identified as part of the social issue presented through BLM – anti-Black racism – by referring to past historic connections in terms of racism and discrimination by referring to colonialism and the need to fight against colonial practices that persist in the institution. Second, statements delved into universities' plans and solutions to the identified social issue. In this process, universities referred to existing EDI practices to indicate that they, as institutions, do not support discriminatory practices and are working to make change on the issue. This often worked as a prelude to the second part of core framing tasks – prognostic framing. The prognostic framing process was done in a few different ways: 1) supporting sentiments for different groups of racialized and equity-deserving groups on campus; 2) admission of past and present racist behaviours that occurred on campus; 3) current and future commitments to eradicate discrimination on campus. Lastly, while universities have succeeded in identifying the social issue and provided some specific plans towards solutions, the statements lacked motivational framing to recruit and include university community members to be part of constructing plans for solutions and social change. Rather, these statements missed the call for collective actions and provided bureaucratic

solutions that rely on specific offices, such as EDI offices, to take on the responsibilities for creating change.

The lack of motivational framing is linked to the lack of a call for collective action. As collective action is a central component in social movements, scholars like Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe, and Weffer-Elizondo (2005), Tarrow (1993), and Tilly (1985) put emphasis on the importance of collective action in influencing social movements' outcomes. Therefore, while individual activity is valuable, the call for individuals to self-reflect or challenge themselves is not the same as framing that attempts to motivate collective actions towards social change. Therefore, encouraging individuals to be familiar with suggested resources is not enough to be considered "collective." One of the most "collective" solutions suggested in statements was about providing an avenue for a town hall. However, it also leads to the question of "then, what?" It is not enough to simply hear from the campus population without further encouraging them to collectively work together to be part of the activism to reduce racial discrimination. Moreover, encouraging others to be aware of the issue is also done on a very individual level, instead of calling for collective action. The suggested solutions mentioned in the statements paint a picture where it does make universities sound like they are doing more to progress change, but all the resources that are provided in the statements are prepared for individual consumption, and it is not a product of back-and-forth feedback on the current social issue. These resources are often pre-made and formulaic, so then what will come after? – will there be further steps in consultations and/or new resources to be created as a

result? A better execution of motivational framing would reconsider these findings and would encourage collective actions more effectively.

The statements from 2020 published by Canadian universities do raise the question of whether these documents can be considered as framing social movement goals. In some ways, these statements "resemble" qualities of social movement statements in the construction of frames. In terms of "qualifying" the necessary processes of core framing tasks, these statements fulfill some requirements in framing social movement goals according to framing theory. However, there is a lack of motivational sentiment or encouraging campus community in making social change, which does take away the key component of framing social movement goals. What then is the verdict? Can universities' actions of providing public statements on ongoing social movements for well-established social issues be considered as framing social movement goals?

To conclude, it would be a mistake to say universities are part of social movements, even when they offer statements that include diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and specific commitments to social change. Largely, this is due to the fact that they lack the motivational framing that is the hallmark of social movement activism. Rather than being social movements, the framing strategies found in Canada's U15 universities demonstrates that they are the "target" of the movements. They are not the social movement actors; in their statements, they admit their role in perpetuating the social issue and offering bureaucratic solutions, which is what a target might do. In fact, if they were truly a part of the broader social movement, they would implement motivational framing. The implementation of motivational framing in Canadian

universities' statements endorsing social issues could improve by looking into more successful cases of previous institutional activisms found in university settings. For instance, in the United States, the success of institutional activism for Black Studies and Women's Studies. The result of these two programs reflect that universities and their administrators actively engaged with students and faculty to listen to their concerns, further raise awareness, and make practical and bureaucratic social change. The key is that this kind of social change allows universities to adhere to the needs of people who are interested in social change, raise the reputation of the university, and possibly gain financial benefit from expanded programs. Therefore, in the case of Canadian universities and their statements in response to BLM movements, it is evident that institutions need to put forth greater effort to engage their students, faculty, and staff in vocalizing their concerns regarding social issues and producing social change through their participation.

Overall, universities use these statements to align with social movements and even go further to identify their own roles in systemic inequality. To propose social change, they provide various levels of commitment; however, they did not mobilize campus communities to take part in this activism to create the social change they suggest. Again, this is consistent with what a target of a social movement would do, not an active social movement participant.

CHAPTER 4: (un)Equal Opportunities for Equity and Diversity – Analysis of Canadian Universities' Response to Anti-Racism Movements, 2020-2021

Introduction

Universities' engagement with social movements and social issues has been at the centre of criticism for decades. Universities carry the image of being engaged and responsive to current social issues. However, the question is, do they actually respond to current social issues as directly, promptly, and effectively as they are accused of doing? Often, universities' engagement – positive or negative – is studied through the institutional activism approach. However, as universities are also a form of institutions, the workings of engagement with social issues should be examined through mechanisms of such entities. To gain a better understanding, scholars like Raeburn (2004) proposed to engage perspectives from social movements theory and organizational theory to provide an understanding of how social change occurs. As much as universities are assumed to have high levels of engagement with social issues, they are known to have existing infrastructure to provide support to eradicate discrimination. Notably, such capacity is represented by the presence of offices in some variations to promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within campuses. Often, such presence equates to instant support for numerous social issues. To further understanding on this topic, in this chapter, I propose to answer the question of whether institutional capacity, such as EDI offices, is equipped to support all forms of activism equally. I plan to examine Canadian universities' statements published in response to the *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) movement in 2020 and

#StopAsianHate in 2021 to gain insight on whether these statements reflect the argument that institutional capacity can support all types of equity activism.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 2020 wave of the BLM movement gained an exponential amount of attention around the globe, and Canada was no exception. Universities also followed this trend and published official statements to address the social issue. What makes this study particularly interesting is its strong comparison to the case of BLM movements in 2020. The #StopAsianHate movement in 2021 is similar to BLM in its focus on raising cultural awareness of the gendered violence of racism. The movement was formed in response to the 2021 Atlanta spa shootings, in which eight people were killed and a ninth injured. As six of the eight murder victims were Asian-American women, this movement drew attention to the racialized gender violence that victimizes Asian women.

In the beginning of my research process, I predicted that the outcome of findings from both movements would be similar as they share many characteristics, occurred shortly after one another, and due to the fact universities hold relatively constant capacity in promoting equity and diversity. However, the characteristics of statements published for each movement differed at varying levels; while both movements aimed to combat severe forms of racism, the outcome differed considerably. Therefore, analyzing statements from both movements would provide an insight to whether different movements acquire the same level of support from universities given that there are existing capacities to address such social issues.

The discussion of opportunities has been one of the critical components in studies of social movements. Institutional opportunity, synthesized by Raeburn (2004), amalgamates the well-utilized political opportunity theory and the theory of isomorphism from the field of organizational theory to better understand the impact of existing and available capacity in institutions to further social change against discrimination. Therefore, using the defined concepts of institutional opportunity, I propose to examine the meaning of differences found in universities' statements regarding BLM in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021. Additionally, as the institutional opportunity perspective informs us of what types of opportunities exist in organizations, how to identify them, and how they work, I plan to answer the proposed question by examining examples of understanding of how opportunities interact to create social change.

Institutional Opportunities to Make Social Change

In discussion of social movements, and especially with the topic of "successful" movements, opportunities that can aid in positive outcomes have been a large part of social movement studies. Since its foundation, political opportunity, or political process theory, examined the notion that the existence of a movement and its participants are reliant on the existence of political opportunities (Alemam, 2005; Cress and Snow, 2000; Gamson and Meyer, 1996; McAdam, 1999; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996; Meyer, 2004; Meyer, 2007; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Meyer and Whittier, 1994; Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996; Staggenborg, 2012). These opportunities could arise out of a number of different circumstances, including an increase in "political pluralism, decline in repression, division within elites and increase

in political enfranchisement" (McAdam, 1999: 50-51). The main premise of the political opportunity theory is that participants will use the available opportunities and take advantage of them to carry out successful movements (McAdam, 1999; Dyke, and Cress, 2006; Tarrow, 1996; Tarrow, 2012). Therefore, identifying, attaining, and utilizing the found opportunities to their best potential is significant in positive movement outcomes. Political opportunity theory is useful in understanding how movements work for positive outcomes and has been applied in various movement contexts. As movements often target institutions to make social change – both public and private – based on existing opportunities, researchers have examined how opportunities in institutions aid movements' outcomes. To further understanding of opportunities for social movements agendas yielding positive outcomes in institutions, scholars like Raeburn (2004) have incorporated theoretical frameworks from organizational theories with political opportunity theory to gain better understanding of how activism occurs in institutions.

Opportunities for Institutional Activism

Raeburn's application of the political opportunity theory and organizational isomorphism resulted in two distinctive theoretical insights. One of them is the framework of meso-level institutional opportunities that consist of four concepts: 1) structural templates; 2) organizational realignment; 3) allies; and 4) cultural supports. Each component works in part to create the most desirable or positive outcomes in institutional policy to support movements. First, *structural template* is connected to various institutional factors such as "pre-existing employee resource groups," "recognition of network," "access to a budget," "presence of a diversity office," and "a

diversity council or task force" (Raeburn, 2004: 160). This type of opportunity is directly related to EDI practices in universities as the existence of EDI or other forms of equity and diversity offices work as opportunity. The second component of meso-level institutional opportunity is organizational *realignment* which entails the impact of change in the formation of management, such as "elite turnover that results in a new CEO; changes in the composition of the board of directors or in the policy status of the organizations represented on the board; and acquisitions of or mergers with other companies" (p. 165). The significance of realignment lies in the fact that these changes can lead to the incoming of more sympathetic elites and/or organizations to focus on social issues, which can alter the dynamic of decision-making power in favour of or beneficial to movements. In the context of this research, realignment manifests through the highest officials of universities as they serve the role of elites who have the decision-making power. Their presence of openness to social change and acknowledging social issues, as well as their decision to respond and how to respond, works as institutional opportunity. The third concept is the availability of *allies,* which works as organizational opportunities for movements. These individuals can be influential, close to elites, and "organizational challengers" who serve the role of coalition partners (p. 171). In a university's context, these individuals could be the EDI officers or any other individuals who work for equity and diversity practices and offices. They are not coalition partners *per se*, but they are influential in that they can diffuse information, advocate, and be influential by providing advice to elites – decision makers (i.e., president) in universities. Lastly, *cultural supports* involve ideology and interpretation within target organizations

that facilitate changes in policies related to given social issues. In particular, it involves how the presence of diversity-embracing corporate culture within the institution will enhance empathy with challengers/activists.

Raeburn (2004) applied the notion of opportunity from social movement theories, and concepts of isomorphism from organizational theories in her work to examine how activism in institutions and its outcome depends heavily on the established capacity within the organizations. Stemming from the question of why there is such strong homogeneity across organizations, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describes three types of organizational isomorphism: 1) coercive isomorphism that is based on "political influence and the problem of legitimacy"; 2) mimetic isomorphism "resulting from responses to uncertainty"; and 3) normative isomorphism "associated with professionalization" (p. 150). The defined concepts of isomorphism have been applied to various types of organizations to understand the homogenous nature found across a number of different institutions including universities (Barreto and Baden-Fuller, 2006; Fay and Zavattaro, 2016; Mizruchi and Fein,1999; Seyfried, Ansmann, and Pohlenz, 2019). Raeburn (2004) found that isomorphism applies to macro-level institutional opportunities leading to favourable policy outcomes. While isomorphism on macro-level can provide some insight on institutional opportunity, as EDI offices are a part of institutions that are nested within the larger structure, institutional opportunities discussed at the meso-level provides an analysis that is more adequate. However, one particular insight made in Raeburn's discussion of mimetic isomorphism that is interesting in connection to this research is the discussion of new communication technology (2004). The author noted that the use of

new communication technology further facilitates benchmarking and contributes to mimetic change, especially in terms of "diffusion of innovation" across institutions and furthering adaptation of policies and practices (2004: 140). In this sense, the diffusion of university statements via their websites reflects how universities can, on a larger scale beyond EDI offices – at a managerial/decision making level of universities – incorporate newer communication technology.

Since Raeburn's (2004) synthesis of institutional opportunity, there have been more studies on activism in institutional settings and opportunity. Briscoe and Gupta (2016) discuss how the opportunity structure for activism in organizations is often based on several environmental factors including organizational culture and ideology, organizational leadership, and formal organizational structure. Furthermore, they argue that the opportunity structure is in fact influenced by both external reasons, such as industry conditions, as well as internal reasons like executive values. Thus, as institutions are incorporating activism, there are several external factors that are significant as well. Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) discuss how organizations in a shared industry come together to build momentum, and that governments as institutions that regulate policy and implementation play a significant role in legitimizing social issues and needed social change. As organizations weigh the pros and cons of activism, there is a related discussion of an emulative nature in how activism unfolds. Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) provides an insight on how there are "mimetic influences" where there is a need for institutions to borrow certain behaviours to not fall behind in the industry. This also coincides with Canadian universities' use of online websites as a tool to diffuse their

statements on social issues. In a slightly different notion, Girschik, Svystunova, and Lysova (2022) discuss how the promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) often takes the form of adapting existing rhetoric that adheres to the values of institutions' business logic to avoid opposition for upper management. Similarly, King and Pearce (2010) state that it may be necessary for social movements occurring in organizations to be less contentious and political in nature to be successful, and as a result these movements tend to reframe their advocacy works to meet the demands of an organization's agenda. Further reflecting the necessity for activism to adapt to institutional values, Hellerstedt, Uman, and Wennberg (2024) outlined in their study about how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) activism in organizations has shifted its form. They argue that in the beginning, DEI initiatives were grounded in a moral responsibility stemming from 1960s social movements, but later transitioned towards a business case which is rooted in the economic benefits of implementing DEI, and a power activism logic where stakeholders and nongovernmental bodies coerce corporations to integrate DEI initiatives. Under this model, universities fit into all three logics as they try to find a balance in incorporating all three to meet the need from an institutional point of view while also trying to fulfill the mandate from their audience and stakeholders, such as students, faculty, staff, board of directors, and bodies that are responsible for funding including the governments. This last study reflects that EDI offices and practices are a product of a multitude of intersecting interests within institutions, which relates closely to the next theoretical framework that is applied in this chapter.

What is pertinent in the study by Raeburn (2004) and other aforementioned scholars on institutional opportunities is that there are varying factors that create opportunities as well as remove them. There is an interactive notion amongst pre-existing and new changes in institutions in multiple ways to produce opportunities. Therefore, the question is raised regarding whether the existing institutional opportunity framework is adequate to understand all responses to social issues made by institutions such as universities.

#StopAsianHate

To better understand how different anti-racism movements are supported differently in Canadian universities, I am comparing two anti-racism movements in this research. One is the BLM movement that occurred in 2020, as discussed in Chapter 2. In comparison, #StopAsianHate in 2021 will be examined. I am proposing to compare these two movements because they: a) are both anti-racism movements; b) occurred relatively close to one another in a temporal manner that both movements likely shared same level of existing capacity of supporting anti-racism in Canadian universities. This comparison is pertinent in this research as I am attempting to investigate similar social issues based on racism, and whether the institutional opportunity framework could provide equally enriching explanations to the responses given to each social issue.

Therefore, it is critical to understand the background of the social issue as well. On March 16, 2020, the killings of eight individuals in Atlanta, Georgia caused an uproar in Asian communities across North America. The mass shooting resulted in a total of eight deaths, and of those deceased, six were women of Asian descent (The Associated

Press, 2021; Chen, 2022; Treisman, 2021). Soon after, the public began to show their support for Asians with #StopAsianHate on various social media platforms. In some cases, there were in-person rallies as well. The deaths in Atlanta came as a shock to many, but this was not a new social issue, as a drastic increase in racism towards Asians and people of Asian descents occurred soon after the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, when it was first labelled as "Wuhan virus" and consequently made ties back to China and Chinese as the origin of the virus itself (Baylon and Cecco, 2021; Liu, 2021; Pearson, 202; Zussman, 2021). Therefore, the ongoing anti-Asian racism and series of verbal and physical attacks that occurred since the beginning of the pandemic reached its peak by 2021, and what happened in Atlanta ignited Asians in the US and Canada to respond more profoundly. The process of how #StopAsianHate began is parallel to the BLM movements in 2020, namely that both movements stemmed from ongoing racism that started prior to the violent deaths that occurred in 2020 and 2021. However, the impact of each movement differed. In 2020, BLM movements were labelled as "global" movements as in-person rallies in support grew outside of North American parameters. As far as #StopAsianHate goes, while the use of the hashtag spread widely on social media platforms, the in-person rallies were mostly physically limited to the US and Canada in comparison to the BLM (Kretzel, 2021).

Accordingly, in Canada, there are different historical and cultural contexts embedded in foundation of immigrants depending on their race and ethnicity. In particular, between Black immigrants and Asian immigrants, there are historical and cultural contexts that need to be addressed in order to understand the differences found

between the response to BLM and #StopAsianHate by Canadian universities. In particular, with the model minority myth, racism experienced by Asians is often underestimated and taken lightly (Chen, Chang and Shih, 2021; Chou, 2008). The experience of Asian women immigrants' experiences was noted by Ng (1996), suggesting that in Canada, Asian immigrants, immigrant women in particular, go through a labelling process that is heavily institutionalized. Asian immigrant women are institutionalized based on the process of documentation necessary to enter the paid labour force, and then, their labour power is considered as commodities. Accordingly, Chen (2022) states that in a western settler colonial society such as Canada, Asians were exploited for their labour, then considered to be threats as well. Chen (2022) further argues that while racist laws are not carried out in current Canadian society, dehumanizing notions persist, as while universities rely on Asian international students' tuition to mitigate cuts in public funding, they do little to acknowledge and/or support their Asian students during the peak of anti-Asian racism. Accordingly, accumulated historical context of anti-Asian racism being undermined is critical to be noted in better understanding the lack of responses to #StopAsianHate movement by Canadian universities.

This research stems from the inquiry regarding why certain activism generates more enriched engagement from institutions like universities in comparison to others that may get lower engagement from the institutions. It is not an unusual phenomenon for institutions to be attentive to current social and political events. In fact, audiences and consumers alike expect institutions like universities, governments, private corporations, and other forms of organizations to be responsive and prompt in their "stance" on the

given issue. As there has been a growing impact of activism on institutions from internal and external forces, scholars have begun to examine how the process can be studied from various perspectives, including institutional/organizational approach, sociology of economy and business/management. It is prevalent enough that the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is commonly used in conjunction with Corporate Activism (CA) in discussions of the workings behind activism in institutional settings. However, a large portion of discussions on activism in institutions is based on corporations and business models, whereas the institutional opportunity framework developed by Raeburn (2004) also provides an insight as to how and why certain examples of activism may be more successful in making universities more responsive and engaged.

Therefore, in this research, I propose to examine how the theories of institutional activism argue that organizational capacity is necessary for policy change to occur. However, once this capacity is established, does it support all forms of activism equally? Does institutional capacity such as an EDI office built to reduce racism apply to all kinds of racism? Or are they better equipped or selective in addressing some forms of racism more than others?

Method

To answer the proposed research question, I examine public statements published online by Canadian U15 English speaking universities in Summer 2020 and 2021. The wave of statements poured out during the BLM movement in 2020 is an appropriate moment of comparison to the anti-racism movement that occurred the following year, #StopAsianHate, to understand whether having capacity such as EDI offices in

universities would garner the same level of support for different anti-racism movements. Using content analysis and thematic analysis as methods of analysis, I will be examining the collected data to understand how they align with the theoretical framework – institutional opportunities – in answering the proposed research questions.

Sampling

The data used for this research is online public statements published by Canada's U15 English speaking universities in response to BLM movements from the Summer 2020. The primary source of the web-based data was collected through Google's Boolean search feature using specific keywords. These keywords are used to pull up statements provided by each university in response to the same social issue – BLM in 2020 – as well as to keep consistency within the search process. The keywords included: 1) the names of each university; 2) the specific title of the persons making the statement (i.e., "Dean," "President," "Provost); and 3) specific topics related to the statement such as "BLM," "Racism," "Anti-Racism," "Anti-Black Racism" and "Discrimination" were used to further define the search. Then these search results were further defined using a specific date range to reflect the timely response from universities on the movements. The date range selected was May 2020 to September 2020.

Accordingly, the search for data related to #StopAsianHate in 2021 followed a similar process. The keywords included 1) the names of each university; 2) the specific title of the persons making the statement (i.e., "Dean," "President," "Provost); and 3) specific topics related to the statement such as "#StopAsianHate," "Racism," "Anti-Racism," "Anti-Asian Racism" and "Discrimination" were used to further define the

search. Then again, as with the previous movement, these search results were further

defined using a specific date range to reflect the timely response from universities on the

movements. The date range selected was March 2021 to September 2021. In order to keep

consistency of the search results, while there may have been statements in regard to

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21, 2021, these

were not included unless they mentioned #StopAsianHate or the killings that occurred in

Atlanta, Georgia.

Analysis

In order to answer the proposed research question, the main component of

analysis in this research will be centred on the following rubric to examine strengths and

weaknesses of statements for the BLM and #StopAsianHate. Utilization of this rubric will

lead to a better understanding of what characteristics of statements make such stark

difference in responses between the two movements. In the data, there were largely two

patterns: statements that were strongly supporting the social issue; and statements that

lacked significantly in their strength to support the social issue. Therefore, drawing from

these two patterns, smaller building blocks were defined by borrowing from the concept

of 5Ws, which represent each component making up the statements.

Table 2. Characteristics of Strengths and Weaknesses in Statements

	Stronger	**Weaker**
Is there a statement?	Statements are published on the social issue	Not having statements on the social issue
When	Statements are published promptly to address the social issue	Statements are published in delayed manner
Who	Statements are signed by the highest officials of universities (i.e., President, Vice-Provost, Dean, etc.)	Statements are published by individual(s) or office(s) other than highest official in the universities

Where	Statements are published on official university website that is tied to the highest officials (President's news, etc.)	Statements are published on location other than that of official university website that is tied to the highest officials (President's news, etc.)
What	Addresses the social issue with specific description of vital event(s) or person(s) involved	Some acknowledgements are noted about the social issue, but not discussed in detail
How	Provides a possible solution to the social issue by providing specifically defined goals	There are little to no discussion of possible solution to the social issue

Overall, the rubric is derived from thematic analysis of gathered data. Thematic analysis, like other types of content analysis is appropriate for studying "human communication such as books, magazines, websites, songs, poems, or paintings" (Babbie and Benaquisto 2002: 295; Barringer, Foard, and Neubaum 2005: 664; Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken 2002:588-90). In this research, online statements' features, such as date of publication, person who signed the statement, specific webpage of publication, presence of images as well as other possible features, will be examined as a part of analysis to answer the proposed research questions. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), I analyze collected data using thematic analysis. This methodology is particularly useful in identifying and interpreting thematic patterns found in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Clarke and Braun, 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2017). By examining the thematic groups found in the data, the strengths and weaknesses rubric was created, which reflects the advantage of thematic analysis: that it is applicable across various theoretical frameworks and patterns can be used to determine a shared core idea found in data. Defining and examining statements for their strengths

and weaknesses will provide deeper insight and understanding of why certain social issues are given more engagement from Canadian universities over others.

Findings

Despite multiple universities having similar structures of robust systems of institutional supports for social change, the evidence does not suggest that these institutional opportunities produce similar outcomes for the BLM and #StopAsianHate social movements. The findings in this research reflected a significant gap in universities' responses to the wave of BLM in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021. Furthermore, while it was first presumed that there would be similar outcomes in responses between the two movements with similar equity practice capacity, whether this phenomenon could be explained by institutional opportunity framework is questionable.

How opportunities are presented in institutions is pertinent in understanding what types of opportunities are useful and how they work with each other to create synergy. Additionally, how pre-existing capacity in target organizations such as universities lead to social change will provide further insight. Thus, the sections below examine findings from the statements published by Canadian universities in 2020 to respond to that year's wave of the BLM movement, and in 2021, in response to #StopAsianHate. This chapter will examine how the contents of these texts offer an understanding of how institutional capacities, such as EDI offices, can respond to different social movements on a same level.

What Makes Statements Impactful? Defining Strengths and Weaknesses

The stark difference between responses to the wave of BLM movement in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021 is found in the level of engagement within universities' statements. While it is somewhat true that any response to social issues is better than none, noting that universities have worked for years to provide equity policies and practices, it is rather surprising to find that even similar issues dealing with anti-racism have such differing reactions. In short, I find that responses to the BLM movement contained much stronger statements, whereas #StopAsianHate did not garner as much strength in their statements.

In this research, strengths and weaknesses of statements in response to social issues are defined through five different categories following 5Ws: 1) *When* – timing of statements; 2) *Who* – person(s) responsible for statements; 3) *Where* – statements are published; 4) *What* – defining and discussion of social issues; and 5) *How* – providing possible solution to the social issue. First, the timing of responding to the social issue is crucial in making a strong statement, as it reflects the promptness of universities' motivation to acknowledge the issue. Second, who makes these statements "official" when published is significant, and by official, it connotes when statements are signed by individuals that are considered as the "faces" of universities. These individuals are often held accountable for most public statements provided by universities when they are received critically. Third, the media outlet or online location where statements are published is important, as it adds another layer which reflects the "official" face of the university attached to the publication. In this case, if and when statements are published on a university's official website, and more specifically on webpages that are designated

for communication *from* the highest officials such as president of the university, enforces greater validity. Fourth, the contents of the statements matter and, in particular, their ability to address the given social issue is imperative. The discussion of the social issues in statements and how they are portrayed determines the quality when it is done meaningfully. Strong statements will discuss social issues by providing clear and in-depth descriptions of vital event(s) or person(s) involved. Furthermore, the discussion of social issues will entail its relevance in the context of university's environment – in relation to student, faculty, and staff populations. At large, the discussion also would include the greater university community, where the statement provides supporting sentiments for anyone who is impacted by the social issue. The fifth and last element of strong statements would provide possible solutions to the social issue. There would be specifically defined goals, clearly articulated processes to meet the proposed goals, and goals are practical and measurable, with a plan to show differences of before and after.

On the other hand, weaknesses in statements are characterized mostly in opposition to strengths. First, one of the most distinguishable characteristics of weak statements would be no statements. While there are other qualities in statements that add to their weakness, a lack of publication raises questions which reflect that the institutions do not feel that the social issue is noteworthy enough to be addressed. Second, a characteristic of weak statements entails delayed timing of publication. They are not prompt and take several days or even weeks to respond to the social issue. Third, statements that are published by individual(s) or office(s) other than representative of the highest official – i.e., the face of the university – would be considered weaker statements

in comparison to strong ones. Fourth, where statements are published is also not as "strong" in that they are not always posted on websites directly connected to the highest official of the university. Fifth, if and when these statements are published, there are some acknowledgements of the importance of the social issue and/or a description of the social issue, but this is not done in a detailed manner. Discussion of the social issue is limited with little or no reference to vital event(s) or person(s) involved. Accordingly, these statements have few or no support sentiments mentioned. The sixth and last characteristic of weak statements is that there is little to no discussion of possible solutions to the social issue. There is little to no mention of goals for social change, and there is an obvious lack of clarity on how they will promote social change.

The data of published statements by Canadian universities from 2020 and 2021 were analyzed for their content, including features that are more immediately recognizable. All 13 universities published statements in responding to at least one of the two movements. Upon analysis, there were clear patterns found between statements in response to the BLM movement in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021. First, the characteristics of *when*, *who*, and *where* were strongly exhibited in statements responding to the BLM movements. In terms of *when*, as shown in the chart below, most statements in response to BLM were published a few days to a week after the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Furthermore, in relation to *who* was responsible in publishing these statements, they were often signed by the highest officials of the universities that are responsible for decisions made within the institutions. Likewise, *where* statements were

published online reflects strength in that they were done through an official university

channel – bearing their official domain, if not official verified social media account.

Table 3. Summary of 2020 Statements in Response to the Wave of BLM Movement

Name of University	Statement Signed-by	Publication Site	Publication Date
University of Alberta	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of British Columbia	President	University's Website	June 02, 2020
University of Calgary	President	University's Website	June 24, 2020
Dalhousie University	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of Manitoba	President	University's Website	June 02, 2020
McGill University	Principal and Vice-Chancellor	University's Website	June 02, 2020
McMaster University	President	University's Website	June 25, 2020
Ottawa University	Professors[5]	Department's Website	June 05, 2020
Queen's University	Provost	University's Website	June 08, 2020
University of Saskatchewan	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020[6]
University of Toronto	President	University's Website	June 01, 2020
University of Waterloo	Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism	University's Website	June 01, 2020
Western University	Official Account	Official Twitter/X	May 31, 2020

One of the critical differences between statements in responses to the BLM

movement and #StopAsianHate is that significantly fewer universities responded to the

latter. A little more than half of the universities responded to #StopAsianHate in some

form of statements. From the 13 English speaking U15 universities, only eight

universities made statements specific to anti-Asian racism in March 2021. In comparison,

statements for #StopAsianHate significantly lack the characteristics for strong statements,

even without delving into analysis of contents. However, while the weaknesses found in

statements for #StopAsianHate are palpable, analysis showed that not all findings were

pointing to weakness, but there were some strengths as well. One strength found in

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[5] Sociology/Anthropology Department
[6] Follow-up statement on June 17, 2020

response to #StopAsianHate is that overall, considering timing – *when* – of publication, statements were mostly published in a timely manner. The Atlanta mass shooting occurred on March 16, 2021, and most statements were made within a week or so of the event, with the exception of the statement from the University of Calgary's Psychology Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which was made in April 2021. This reflects that universities, when they responded, were prompt in doing so to acknowledge the importance of the issue.

However, the answer to the question of *who* published these statements reflected weakness, as only three – UBC, University of Saskatchewan, and University of Toronto – were signed by the president of each university. The weakness was particularly evident as the five statements were published by offices related to equity. Thus, there is a general sense of providing cultural support to racial discrimination, but findings suggest that there is a lack of, or lower level of engagement with anti-Asian racism in particular. While the other five statements are meaningful in that they did find it important enough to respond to the social issue, they do not have as much strength as the statements for the BLM movements with lack of support from highest officials like the presidents. Accordingly, in terms of *where* these statements are published is closely linked to *who* published them. For the few statements that were published by the highest officials of the universities, they were published in the official domain linked to the official university website connected to such officials responsible for the statements. However, a majority of the statements responding to #StopAsianHate were published by channels other than the highest officials and they were indeed published on university webpages other than those

connected to such officials. Most statements that were published through channels other than highest officials in the university were closely related to equity practices – i.e., equity offices of university, equity offices in departments. This reflects that, to a certain degree, at least some parts of universities find the social issue to be significant to be addressed. In particular, this reflects some – limited – capacity of acknowledging equity issues and established infrastructure to support social change. Therefore, just by examining the first four characteristics of strength and weakness – presence of statement, *when*, *who*, and *where* – of the statements shows that there is a stark difference between the responses to both social issues.

Table 4. Summary of 2021 Statements in Response to the #StopAsianHate Movement

Name of University	Statement Signed-by	Publication Site	Publication Date
University of Alberta	Interim Dean of Arts	Department's Website	March 26, 2021
University of British Columbia	President	University's Website	March 20, 2021
University of Calgary	The UCalgary Psychology Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Blog	Department's Website	April 12, 2021
Dalhousie University	N/A	N/A	N/A
University of Manitoba	N/A	N/A	N/A
McGill University	Department of East Asian Studies	University's Website	March 21, 2021
McMaster University	The Race, Racialization and Racism (R3) Working Group President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC)	University's Website	March 18, 2021
Ottawa University	N/A	N/A	N/A
Queen's University	Human Rights and Equity Office	University's Website	March 16, 2021
University of Saskatchewan	President	University's Website	March 22, 2021
University of Toronto	President	University's Website	March 19, 2021
University of Waterloo	N/A	N/A	N/A
Western University	N/A	N/A	N/A

However, the difference between the movements is even more drastic when we examine *what* and *how* in these statements. As far as identifying *what* the social issue is in their statements, as seen in Chapter 2, the majority of statements responding to the wave of BLM in 2020 showed that they were successful in defining the social issue and providing possible solutions. Although the statements lacked an integral part of framing strategy to recruit and further motivate participants, they did engage with the audience by providing a plan to make social change. For both *wha*t and *how* of strength in statements, universities well defined the social issue and their plans to make social change in relation to the BLM movements. For example, in addressing social issues, McMaster University noted that "[t]he Black Lives Matter movement has helped us all better understand the pain that Black communities are facing and the need to find real and concrete ways to correct the systemic racism and racial inequity that exists across our campuses." On the other hand, in the university statements that were published in response to #StopAsianHate, most universities did focus on identifying the social issue of anti-Asian racism. For instance, the statement from University of Alberta noted that "Indeed, anti-Asian racism, scapegoating, and targeted violence against Asians have all been on the increase over the past year, and these are not problems to which our campus community is immune. While protests declare 'racism a virus' and challenge us to 'Stop Asian Hate', our campus community needs to reflect on how we can use our teaching, research, and institutional processes to work for change." Similarly, other universities such as University of Saskatchewan noted that the anti-Asian issues "are pervasive and occur in Canada as well. Racially motivated hate crimes are horrific and saddening, and they have

become more acute since the beginning of the pandemic." What is different in defining the social issue in #StopAsianHate in comparison to the BLM is that there is a lesser amount of detail and contextualization. As seen in the statement made by University of Saskatchewan, there is not much detail captured to provide a background for such heightened anti-Asian sentiments that came to dominance, as well as the further context of the killings that occurred in Georgia.

The difference found between the responses to the two movements is most stark in terms of noting *how* to make social change. In the statements responding to the BLM, universities addressed the systemic issues that perpetuate anti-Black racism are also well connected to how the social issue is defined. Accordingly, when proposing possible solutions to social issues, universities offered various plans. For instance, the University of Toronto stated that the "Office of the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity, and the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office will soon be announcing important tri-campus initiatives in which all members of the University will be invited to take part." This reflects that universities are trying to showcase their willingness to commit to social change beyond just publishing statements in response to the social issue at hand. In contrast, the plans of *how* they will implement social change to combat anti-Asian racism are much weaker in universities' statements. With the exception of a couple of statements, most statements responding to #StopAsianHate were brief in length. The content mostly dealt with briefly acknowledging the anti-Asian racism that was going on and sometimes included supporting sentiments for Asian communities. On that note, the shorter length reflected that not as much detail in different components of the statements

were included in comparison. When making reference to possible solutions, they were not necessarily newly developed to fit the need of eradicating anti-Asian racism. Rather, statements included existing resources on anti-racism initiatives in general. For example, University of Saskatchewan's statement included "I want to restate our commitment to diversity and inclusion at USask, and remind everyone of our institutional statement and commitment to actions to dismantle structures, policies and processes that contribute to creating inequalities faced by marginalized groups." Others like University of Toronto also provided links to existing resources rather than defining more specific solutions for social change.

Institutional Opportunities ≠ High Level Engagement for All

The institutional opportunity theory posits that the available opportunity created from existing infrastructure built in institutions would aid in greater social change. In fact, it is argued that the greater the opportunity, the better the outcome in social change. As such, Raeburn (2004) argued that the existing opportunities found in institutions will likely lead to a greater support for social issues. In that sense, it is important to note that universities are mostly equipped with varying levels of opportunities as discussed by Raeburn. At both macro – *isomorphism* - and meso level - 1*) structural templates; 2) organizational realignment; 3) allies; and 4) cultural supports* – universities generally have capacities of equity practices and offices. In general, universities' EDI offices represent various opportunities in infrastructure, with members in EDI offices who support and work towards making social change, where allies are found in the university population including students, faculty, staff and other members of the community, and

there is cultural support for acknowledging social issues and promoting social change. These equity related practices and offices (and/or previous iterations of them) existed for years before the BLM in 2020. Therefore, the occurrence of the wave of BLM movements in 2020 likely would have added to the importance of equity. However, just a shy of year after, #StopAsianHate reflected a decline in support of social issues pertaining to anti-racism, despite what is proposed by institutional opportunity. The analysis of data from the statements in response to the BLM movement and #StopAsianHate in this research reflected that even with the presence of quite well-established infrastructure for equity practices in universities, the outcome for each anti-racism movement differed significantly.

However, one of the reasons that makes the comparison between the BLM movements and #StopAsianHate interesting is that when found, there was similar strength in the statements made. While weakness for statements in response to #StopAsianHate dominated, in the few cases where strong statements were presented, they demonstrated many similarities. For instance, the statements published by presidents of universities exhibited stronger characteristics in making foundational remarks in response to Anti-Asian racism. From the statements made by the highest officials in the university, empathetic and supportive sentiments were found. For instance, the statement from UBC included "I heard you when you told me that statements are not enough. I agree. You explained that you have been profoundly affected by the rise in hostilities and violence directed at the different Asian communities." Accordingly, the presidential statements with "strengths" in characteristics addressed social issues more clearly and in the context

relevant to the university. For example, University of Toronto stated that their statement

is "[t]o all members of the diverse Asian communities on our three campuses." Noting

their Asian population within and surrounding communities, they made a point of

connecting the social issue to their own context. Moreover, the statement from U of T

stated that "as members of our community join countless others in grief and outrage at the

mass shootings in Atlanta, Georgia earlier this week, in which six Asian women were

among the murdered." They were addressing the social issue in a more direct and

descriptive manner to acknowledge the deaths involved, as well as how it was targeted

towards Asian women as a racialized, gendered group. Following this pattern, the

statement from UBC included more detail of the tragic event by noting that:

> "to mourn the deaths of eight people murdered in an act of senseless violence in
>
> Atlanta, Georgia: Soon Chung Park, age 74 Suncha Kim, age 69 Yong Ae Yue,
>
> age 63 Paul Andre Michels, age 54 Hyun Jung Grant, age 51 Xiaojie Tan, age 49
>
> Daoyou Feng, age 44 Delaina Ashley Yaun, age 33."

What is noteworthy from UBC's statement is that they not only described the social issue

and the event in detail, but also contextualized it in the significance of the social climate

at the time: "[t]he more recent wave of anti-Asian rhetoric and violence amplified by

COVID-19 is the latest chapter in a long and tortured history." This is significant as even

though anti-Asian hate is not a "new" discriminatory behaviour, the context in which it

had escalated exponentially at the time was one of the important socio-political events

that raised concerns in our society.

Additionally, aside from the statements made by highest officials, other statements that are not published by highest officials in response to #StopAsianHate also exhibited strength in their statements. Like the statement made by UBC's president, McMaster University's statement made by PACBIC[7] went into details and contextualized the issue of anti-Asian racism by stating that the social issue "has become even more apparent this past year during the COVID-19 pandemic where the number of anti-Asian hate incidents have dramatically increased across the U.S.A. and Canada." Comparably, the statement made by Queen's University's Human Rights and Equity Office acknowledged the significance of the social context of Covid-19 pandemic by noting that "[i]n the early months of 2020 as the novel coronavirus spread, overt discrimination and acts of racism towards Asian communities spiked as people associated COVID-19 with people of Asian descent." Accordingly, connections between the social issue and its impact on the learning environment are made in the statements. For instance, University of Calgary's statement made by Psychology Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Blog noted that "[w]e acknowledge that making a statement is not enough. We need to actively counter intersectional racisms in all our teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and community engagement and partnerships."

On that note, while the statements in response to #StopAsianHate do display some strength in their characteristics, there are significant gaps in the quality of responses released. The findings reflect that while there are occasions where universities did

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[7] The Race, Racialization and Racism (R3) Working Group President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC)

provide meaningful statements in response to #StopAsianHate, the differences found in comparison to the wave of BLM movements the previous year is critical. At the beginning of the research, I presumed, as Raeburn (2004) argued, that institutional opportunities existing in universities would lead to both social issues of anti-Black racism and anti-Asian racism producing responses at a similar level. However, the data analysis demonstrated that this was not the case, and in fact, the premise of greater institutional opportunities garnering greater social change was not always the case.

Discussion

The process of how activism pans out in settings like universities creates complexities as the social and political environment in which universities are situated is a rather unique one. In comparison to non-profit organizations and business corporations, universities gain tuition from students to run the institution, and yet publicly funded organizations. As they are educational institutions, their values in teaching are under scrutiny, as they are assumed to be equity-seeking. Therefore, institutional opportunities in bringing social change are intersectional in nature, and various levels of bureaucratic hurdles are considered by internal and external activists. Following the institutional opportunity framework by Raeburn (2004), this theoretical approach might suggest that Canadian universities would respond to both anti-Black and anti-Asian racism similarly as they are: 1) both dealing with a type of social issue – racism; 2) they occurred so closely in temporal sense that the institutional capacity in dealing with each social issue would not be too distinct; and 3) existence of EDI initiatives and capacity should enhance the engagement with social issue based on discrimination, and not reduce. However, the

findings in this research reflect that institutional capacity alone is insufficient in leading to social change in universities. In fact, there are various external factors that intersect with institutional capacity to create synergy to needed social change. These external factors include: 1) government or other governing entities exerting powers; 2) attention given to social issues outside of institutions; 3) universities communities and their interest in social issues; and 4) institutions imitating each other when one form of response to a social issue is deemed "successful."

In the case of #StopAsianHate in 2021, there was already an external intervention from the government to implement EDI offices, plans, and initiatives. This was well reflected with the wave of BLM movement that came a year prior. Canadian universities in 2020 showed that they were motivated to engage with the social issue in as meaningful a way as possible with their strong statements. The established infrastructure within universities to promote, create, and implement equity practices was founded within universities for years. Thus, as discussed in previous chapters, there was already a pre-existing groundwork in place for universities to take on responsive actions during both BLM in 2020 and #StopAsianHate in 2021. However, findings in this research suggest that despite having foundational resources during both movements, the outcome (i.e., public statements) differed significantly. The question of why there was such a difference is inevitable. Borrowing from the institutional opportunity perspective, Canadian universities all had certain levels of institutional opportunities to respond to social issues based on discrimination of different kinds. This is more obvious after the support and response to the wave of BLM movement a year prior – that there is a recognition for

ongoing racism and its consequences in killings that occurred. However, if opportunities are to have a greater impact when added up, there are missing aspects in #StopAsianHate that led to lower levels and types of engagement that transpired, and unfortunately the institutional opportunity framework does not provide a full picture as to why there is such a stark difference between responses to the two social issues.

There are several factors external to the institution to consider from a perspective that regards what occurs before, during, and after movements as opportunities. One is the attention given to the issue in physical settings as well as the online environment. In comparison to the BLM movement from a year prior, it should be well noted that Anti-Black racism has been a major social issue all over the globe for centuries, and the more recent insurgence of BLM is not only a reflection of recurring issues from 2020 and on, but a cumulative outburst after countless deaths. Therefore, the amount of attention given – including media attention – to each social issue and movement may differ, and this could translate into various opportunities – or lack thereof. What, then, are some possible explanations as to why there are such differences aside from institutional opportunity framework? In the case of BLM, when the issue arose in 2020, there were both physical and virtual protests, and where the Prime Minister of Canada marched side by side with his fellow citizens on the streets despite heavily enforced social distancing and lockdowns (Tasker, 2020). However, when the #StopAsianHate movement started, while the deaths in Atlanta ignited virtual movements using a hashtag, similar to the Blackout Tuesday that occurred in 2020 as a collective action against police brutality after George Floyd's death, it did not lead to significant physical action like the marches in 2020 for BLM.

These differences then act as a critical (re)enforcement on institutions to react and respond, which is reflected through the dissimilarity in characteristics of Canadian universities' statements in 2020 and 2021.

The amount of media attention on each movement in traditional formats could also be another possible explanation to the differences found in quality of responses. As previously mentioned, the fact that the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, side-by-side with protestors on the streets during the march organized by BLM movements organizers was significant and symbolic enough to gain heightened attention in traditional media outlets such as news stations across the nation and around the globe. As media, especially in traditional forms, work to cater to the needs of their audience, they tend to focus on more sensational items, and the Prime Minister's support would fulfill such a need.

Another possible explanation that is tied to both the amount of media coverage and differences in the levels of interest given between the two movements could be also tied to historical context. As Canada's history is heavily embedded in colonialism, there have been some efforts to relieve racism and inequality faced by Indigenous populations. This includes universities; as institutions, these organizations have made attempts to showcase their support for eliminating inequity faced by Indigenous students, faculty, and staff even before official EDI offices and plans were initiated by governments. However, other racialized groups such as Asians, East and Southeast Asians in particular, have a shorter history in Canada in comparison to, for instance, Black populations where migration started in as early as 1600s (Government of Canada, 2024). Historically,

migration of Asians including Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinx and South Asians started in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chen, 2021). Thus, without significant media coverage like that gained by BLM movements, #StopAsianHate may not have had enough of the "push" it needed to gain an equal amount of responses, as there is less cumulative history of discrimination towards Asian populations in Canada that has gained spotlight in comparison.

One of the most significant differences in statements is that as some equity offices within universities and departments have expressed their stance on #StopAsianHate, it is indeed an issue that is taken seriously, but with less of an official face as most statements were not signed by leaders of the institutions such as the president, dean, or provost. The statements that were signed by presidents from UBC and University of Toronto both share distinct and crucial similarities. The location of both universities, Vancouver and Toronto respectively, are the few cities in Canada that participated in in-person rallies to fight against anti-Asian racism. Furthermore, these two cities are known for their diversity and specifically significant Asian population (Statistics Canada, 2024). In fact, Vancouver was also named as one of the cities that experienced an exponential report of anti-Asian hate crimes during the first few years of the pandemic (Pearson, 2021; Premji, 2023). However, the institutional opportunity framework alone is not capable of encompassing the external resources that movements might utilize to gain greater attention and response from institutions like universities. The physical proximity of activism to institutions and stakeholders is an important aspect in gaining institutional opportunity to make social change, and this is also reflected in the content of statements.

For instance, UBC was the only university to mention the anti-Asian hate and related crimes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to discuss the Atlanta mass shooting as well as providing sympathetic condolences to the victims by naming all eight individuals, and to discuss the gendered nature related to anti-Asian hate crimes as well. Other universities have discussed these issues in one or two in combination, but did not mention all of them, which made UBC's engagement through their statement stand out. This reflects the workings of the university, with both the internal – the decision of the president to make the statement – and the external – through the makeup of UBC's surrounding community with Asian population – opportunities coming together. However, the additive notion of opportunities leading to a greater outcome is not always applicable when we consider the findings with University of Saskatchewan, as they lack in one of the significant factors UBC and University of Toronto share – large Asian communities surrounding campuses.

Lastly, the similarities and differences found in statements in responding to both movements could be embedded in the institutional tactics used to adequately manage social issues. As mentioned in Chapter 2, universities work as target organizations of movements and calls for relevant social change. However, while EDI offices are nested within universities, they are not so completely aligned with social movement practices as to be considered part of such movements, though they have shown support for movements such as the wave of BLM in 2020. Applying Raeburn's macro-level opportunity theory, mimetic isomorphism in particular, the findings show that universities and EDI offices alike have adopted online communication for the diffusion of information and their positions on social movements and social issues. Likewise, this is evident in

how statements for both the BLM movement and #StopAsianHate were posted on universities' websites to be accessible to a wider audience and in a timely manner. Moreover, mimetic isomorphism could provide an explanation as to the findings of how narratives and frames created in the statements are parallel to each other. The perceived importance of social issues by universities might lead institutions to be more likely to copy each other when certain responses are deemed more successful, and thus, imitating effective models would be critical in not "falling behind" in upkeeping universities' images as progressive and equity supporting institutions.

The dissimilarities between the two movements found in this research then raises the question on whether having the capacity of EDI offices and practices in Canadian universities works equally on all types of activism. This research indicates that while institutional opportunities do exist and universities do have the capacity to advocate for equity and diversity through EDI offices, there are an unequal number of constraints that are differently applicable to each institution depending on the social issue. Ironically, these barriers are ultimately rooted in an institutional nature as they are conditional and closely tied to the changing climate in which activism and subsequent social issues occur. Some social issues will be successful as they align with the need and benefit of the university, while others may need more effort to be deemed important or may not be picked up at all depending on the breakdown of the population that occupies universities and surrounding communities. Additionally, the notion of activism in organizations, especially EDI, tends to rely heavily on a performative nature to cater to various stakeholders. Therefore, even when the social issue is considered to fall under EDI

initiatives, its importance will be differently weighed by the institution. This research can therefore pave the way to future research with other social issues. In particular, with the number of social issues that have occurred since 2021, there are exponential possibilities in the expansion of analyzing how existing capacities for equity practices and offices will yield unforeseen outcomes in responses from universities. Furthermore, with the recent demand in divestment of universities from students in response to current socio-political issues going on around the world, it would be even more fruitful to expand analysis to gain understanding of how universities respond with different levels of engagement depending on the social issue.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices in organizations has become the norm in recent years. Indeed, it is not a particularly progressive or radical action from universities to establish EDI offices and officers. These offices are tasked with reducing social inequalities within these organizations. However, as the prevalence of EDI offices grew, their effectiveness has been questioned by scholars and activists on the left, at the same time that it has been vastly overstated by pundits and activists on the right (James, 2023). Is either of these views correct? Outsiders point to EDI offices' mandates to enact social change, but there is abundant evidence that racism and sexism persists within universities (Four Arrows, 2023; James, 2023; Milian and Wijesingha, 2023). EDI offices do share a number of qualities with social movements in terms of how they might promote social change, and promoting EDI practices could be considered as a form of institutional activism. To gain a better understanding of this question, my research has been designed to examine how EDI offices and practices are comparable to that of institutional activism by examining the roles carried out by EDI leaders in Canadian universities, as well as publicly published statements in response to anti-racism movements.

The findings from this research suggest a few things. First, in "EDI Leaders in Canadian Universities: Mediators for Equity and Diversity," the interviews with EDI leaders across Canada's English speaking U15 universities show that their job is not as straightforward as making comparisons and affirming that they are insider activists or not. In fact, their role is complex and is at the centre of various intersecting interests and

concerns from numerous individuals within the university communities. The goals EDI leaders discussed in their interviews reflect that these proposed objectives of their offices are often shaped and constrained by the obstacles they face within universities to progress social change. Thus, while actively advocating for social change in the area of anti-racism, they are constrained as an official hired by the institution to be mindful of what benefits the university in the process. The role EDI leaders carry is parallel with that of mediators in that they have to consider all variables in the process of social change and have the ability to mediate between involved stakeholders from their official position. The new concept of institutional mediator and its characteristic as being able to facilitate conversations between stakeholders is key to their role, instead of labeling them as activists and criticizing them solely for not making fast radical changes.

In "Framing a Successful Movement: Canadian Universities' (un)Successful Framing of the Black Lives Matter Movement," the statements published by Canadian universities in response to the wave of BLM movements in 2020 were examined. To examine whether the contents in these statements share the characteristics of social movements, a framing perspective was utilized to analyze each statement. The findings suggest that while there are many qualities of universities' statements that mimic those of social movements, there is also a critical quality that was missing – *motivational* sentiment. In these statements, it was often easy to find qualities that resemble institutional activism. Universities made sure that they were responding promptly with the highest officials signing the statements and identified the social issue while providing support and possible solutions. By reading statements that included all these qualities,

what sets them apart from social movements' narrative is that these statements are missing the quality of encouraging others to be part of the social change. In this sense, universities are the target of social movements, rather than being a part of them.

Lastly, in "(un)Equal Opportunities for Equity and Diversity: Analysis of Canadian Universities' Response to Anti-Racism Movements, 2020-2021," statements in response to the BLM movements in 2020, and #StopAsianHate in 2021 were compared. This part of the research began from an inquiry that stemmed from finding that the response and attention received for #StopAsianHate considerably lacked in strength in comparison to the previous statements related to BLM. Noting that they are both anti-racism movements, the preliminary assumption that the movement occurred later in time would receive as much if not more attention from the momentum was refuted. The findings suggest that while there were similar capacities of institutional opportunities to address social issues between the two movements, there was a significantly lower level of response and engagement with #StopAsianHate in 2021. The difference was striking as there was a considerably low number of statements to begin with, and the characteristics of statements that were made also exhibited weaknesses. Indeed, very few statements made in response to #StopAsianHate paralleled the quality and strength of statements in response to the BLM movements. Some characteristics of universities that has strong statements for #StopAsianHate included things like the community in which they were situated – UBC for example had a very strong statement and they are situated closely to a large Asian community, which would have garnered expectation of enriched engagement from the university. However, the lack of physical movements occurring, and

consequently less attention from the media, could be the external reasons that added to a lack of response for #StopAsianHate by the Canadian universities.

Overall, EDI practices and offices in Canadian universities do serve their function of promoting equity and eradicating discrimination on campuses. However, to address the question of this research, these offices are not part of social movements. In fact, the design, system and processes involved in these offices are part of the institution and adhere to the rules and regulations that are imposed as they are situated within the organization. To not undermine the work that goes into running EDI offices or the role of EDI leaders, the analysis on the efficacy of EDI practices and their outcomes needs to be realigned. As discussed in the chapter, "EDI Leaders in Canadian Universities: Mediators for Equity and Diversity," like EDI leaders being mediators, the EDI offices are situated within the institutions, and act as the office that works between the social issues/social movements occurring, and the institutional decision makers. This is the significant factor to be considered as social movements are not situated within a systemic institution and do not have to maneuver through various obstacles that are part of institutional system. The EDI offices' obstacles are inherently bureaucratic in nature, and the restrictions they face in the process of making social change also include navigating the institutional status quo and regulations. Moreover, one of the obstacles that is particular to EDI office and EDI leaders is that they have to be mindful of what is also beneficial to the institution while making progress toward social change within the institution, which is not necessarily the case with SMOs, where the goal is to focus on advancing their agenda.

Nonetheless, the question of whether EDI offices in Canadian universities create meaningful change remains. Noting that EDI offices are processing bureaucratic attempts to reduce racial inequality, can we expect them to have a significant impact on eradicating and/or reducing racism? In my view, as shown in the three phases of my research, the concept of anti-racism as well as the goal of eradicating racism often is seen as "radical" in university settings. Also, it is expected from universities to produce radical change. However, as it is with many parts of our society, changes do not usually proceed in the most "ideal" manner where progress occurs in a rapid or instantaneous manner. That is, as seen with the interviews with EDI leaders in Canadian universities, moving forward with social changes within traditional institutions like universities is met with pushback, even when such institutions are considered to be forward-thinking and liberal. Accordingly, the public statements on BLM reflected that universities are indeed aware of the importance of anti-Black racism as a social issue, while on the other hand, their response to #StopAsianHate does lead to wondering what makes universities be selective of social issues. What I have noted is that these findings indicate that there are definite areas of improvement with current EDI practices, but also that the mere existence of EDI offices is an important cog in acknowledging social issues and making possible social changes.

Numerous criticisms suggest that EDI offices in universities are performative, and that they do not produce "real" social changes (Four Arrows, 2023; Henry et al., 2017a; Henry et al., 2017b). However, I argue that EDI leaders and EDI offices should be considered as entities that mediate and facilitate social changes within institutional and systemic mechanisms in universities. In that sense, EDI leaders and EDI offices are

important roles for social change in universities. While critiques towards the offices and their practices are valuable, it should be noted that without such a foundation, addressing social issues would be even more difficult and met with even more unmediated challenges. Furthermore, in times when there needs to be a prompt acknowledgment and response to newly arising social issues, EDI offices and leaders become an instrumental part in the process. While a critique of EDI work is that it is performative, it is still crucial to sustain current EDI capacities to keep the momentum of making progress toward social change, even during recent times of "closed door" opportunities. I find that EDI offices should be deeply embedded – even in a bureaucratic manner – within institutions, especially in institutions like universities that are held accountable and are constantly asked to address social issues and lead to even the smallest social change.

Overall, this research contributes to the sociology of education literature by supporting its skeptical view on the effectiveness of EDI efforts within universities, while providing original insights on how universities' EDI practices fall short of their stated goals in reducing racial inequality. In addition, it makes contributions to social movements theory's understanding of organizational activism. This research expands understanding of the constraints on social change within organizations, and how these barriers impact both the outcomes of efforts to reduce inequality, and the goals proposed by EDI leaders, while restricting claims-making rhetoric. Therefore, this research shows that barriers embedded within universities based on institutional and cultural values are still the main forces in delaying and hindering more progressive social change.

Future Research Directions

This research proposed to provide an insight on the workings of EDI practices and how they are comparable to institutional activism. However, this research is not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the workings of EDI offices in Canadian universities. Accordingly, one constraint of this research is embedded in the size of its data. While the decision was made to set the parameter and scope of the research, this could also be expanded to yield more insight in the future. For instance, instead of focusing on English speaking U15 universities, this could be expanded to include French speaking universities as well. On the other hand, expansion to include non-U15 universities would also start a fruitful conversation, as this group of Canadian universities may or may not have an impact on how they deal with the given sociopolitical issues.

As EDI offices become a norm in universities and post-secondary education institutions in general, there are growing inquiries on their effectiveness and forthcoming possibilities. Therefore, while this study focuses solely on the impact of sociopolitical events which occurred in 2020 and 2021, there are uncounted opportunities to expand this research further. For instance, an interesting inquiry would be to compare the response to the BLM movements in 2020 with the statements made in response to the death of George Floyd in 2020. It would also be a great insight to gain a deeper analysis in comparison to more recent social issues that were raised in Canadian university settings in responses to more current social issues such as the war in Ukraine and war between Israel and Palestine. These are particularly important, as very active on-campus student protests have generated a lot of attention from the media and from the political realm, which is distinct from the BLM and #StopAsianHate that occurred during the pandemic

period that hindered student protests on campuses. In particular, the contrast found between Canadian universities' responses towards support for Ukraine and pro-Palestine protests led by students may produce further insight on institutionalized responses towards demand for social change/divestment. This comparison would provide further insight on the progression of how universities' responses to social issues have evolved (or not), and possible changes in the workings of EDI offices throughout the last decade. Moreover, as EDI practices are further spread throughout different industries, institutions in both private and public realms, they are not always welcomed or taken as positively as they were in previous years. The question of the longevity and importance/significance of EDI initiatives and existence is critical at this time and in the future. This is especially pertinent in the current climate where EDI offices and their agendas, initiatives, and practices are being questioned heavily. In a recent statement, University of Alberta announced that they will be "rebranding" their EDI initiatives. In the interview held in January 2025, the president of University of Alberta, Bill Flanagan, stated that the rebranding of EDI will be done through giving it a new name ACB (access, community and belonging) explaining that the reason for this change is due to the fact that "some language around DEI can be seen some to be polarizing" (Baig, 2025). Additionally, Flanagan added that while the name change is occurring, not much of its fine print will have "dramatic" changes. However, this particular note regarding name change is not comforting. During the interviews in this research, participants noted that there is a lot of deliberation on the importance of crafting the "right" language in advancing EDI and consequent efforts made. In the interviews, most participants noted that even with the

negative feedback from both political spectrums, using EDI in the title had its own benefits, and to discard such impact is also another possible red flag in the future direction of the offices as well. Therefore, to note that there will not be a dramatic shift after making a public name change sounds contradicting. Thus, this statement raises questions regarding the future of EDI offices in Canadian universities and should be further monitored.

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