The Hegemonic Threshold: Workplace Sexual Harassment and the Varying Degrees of Vulnerability in Canada

by Julia M. Hodgins

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Abstract: Canada has laws and mechanisms to process discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV). Concomitantly, its foreign policy has earned a worldwide reputation for championing human rights, in turn increasing immigration. These strands of policy, however, have not tackled workplace sexual harassment (WSH), suggesting drivers are possibly at the tectonic level of Canadian culture.

The government approaches WSH – a security issue with consequences reaching beyond the harm on victims – as an individual's behaviour event only, while research suggests a workplace environment's contribution. Nevertheless, its intersectional character – gender and racial – disproportionately impacts racialised immigrant women who face insurmountable barriers when seeking support and restoration. Incumbent mechanisms, provincial and territorial – albeit upholding federal mandates – display a limited ability to protect and serve justice. The outcome is systemic underreporting, obscuring criticalities. This article revisits the collective representations of male and racial privilege in Canada, perpetuated by social reproduction, that enable gender-based violence by articulating inequalities in the workplace.

Matthew Rycroft said that how a society treats its most vulnerable is always the measure of its humanity. This article claims that white-male privilege driving Workplace Sexual Harassment (WSH) in Canada is a colonial legacy impacting more intensely Non-Hegemonic Immigrant Women (NHIW). WSH prompts stress, confusion, self-blame, and embarrassment, affects work performance and isolates victims. Dealing with complaint paperwork requires inner strength and sharp cognitive abilities, temporarily compromised when stressfully tackling the 'burden of proof''. Realising that skin-colour, accent, and birthplace foster different treatment and regulates credibility of victims' invites to think about women coerced into enduring "hell'' with less English ability and shortened access to healthcare. How could this happen in feminist Canada, a land of great equality and a worldwide champion for human rights? What driver emboldens perpetrators' advances and deters victims from seeking restoration? This article focuses on female foreign-born citizens, permanent, or temporary residents active in the workforce, whose phenotype and speech are non hegemonic – also called racialised.

The analysis explores potential links between WSH and colonial heritage and seeks to close a knowledge gap, by focusing on NHIW speaking English as a second language with an accent, non-white (darker) skinned active in the Canadian workforce. Immigrant descendants are excluded since mobility and official language(s) command improve their social stance. Another goal is to provide input for policymakers discussing restoration resources and disaggregated data management. Under the light of sociological theories like Collective Representation and Social Reproduction and through a counter-hegemonic lens, the analysis draws from scholarship, textual sources, and open-source materials. While

posting a new reading on an established topic – stinging, controversial, risky – testing a historical link and advocating for a larger framework instead of the individualised approach, capable of comprehensively containing multiple social dynamics to understand WSH.

The Hegemonic Threshold: Workplace Sexual Harassment and the Varying Degrees of Vulnerability in Canada

Regardless of the proliferation of gender studies alongside corresponding equality advancements in policy in some countries, workplace sexual harassment (WSH) prevails worldwide. Canada has a reputation for championing human rights. However, its utmost incongruence shines under deep scrutiny; sustained domestic gender-based violence (GBV) in Canada contests its feminist foreign policy.[1] Women, peace, and security scholars suggest that feminist domestic policies should address incongruences and raise human security; such policies, however, unfold from definitions upheld in the national echelons. Vagueness of said definitions obscures underpinning power dynamics, thereby preventing accountability.[2] Undermined accountability ultimately normalises aggressions of all sorts as far as short of physical assault.

Several Canadian government agencies define GBV and WSH by focusing on the inflictors' behaviour and its impact on the receiver (victim) framing the event of harassing a victim as *bad apple*s' action, deliberately sparing any responsibility from the context that they, inflictor and victim, share.[3] This perspective is called *individualised* approach. For

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[1] Villegas, 2019, 678.
[2] Deschamps, 2015, iv.
[3] Hastie, 2019, 298-299.

instance, Woman and Gender Equality Canada (WGE)[4] – the Federal agency tasked to safeguard and advance gender equality – broadly refers to GBV in its texts, and attributes the root of WSH to "jokes and media," eroding seriousness and trivialising victims' struggles. In this regard, Thomas Ford's statistical model convincingly argues that humour displaces gender prejudice into a façade of social acceptability,[5] thus removing accountability. The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC)[6] and the Canadian Supreme Court (SC)[7] specifically refer to WSH using the *individualised* approach too. The multidimensional definitions of civil organisations, instead, include victims' struggles, environment, intent-effect, and implications.[8] These non-government definitions assume that environments become constitutive of perpetrators' actions, inasmuch those reproducing social assumptions about human asymmetry that enhance insecurity at the pace of intersectional factors conflate,[9] such as gender, ethnicity, origin, class, migratory status, number of dependents, networks of support.

In Canada, women are five times more likely than men to experience sexual assault, with indigenous women being three times more prone than non-indigenous ones to suffer it.[10] In Canadian workplaces, in 2018, 52% of women declared experiencing WSH in their lifetime;[11] in 2020, one-in-four women and one-in-six men experienced it;[12] and, between January 2020 and January 2022 in the province of British Columbia, where 14% of

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[4] WGE Canada, 2022.
[5] Ford et al., 2008, 159-161.
[6] Canadian Human Rights Commission website, 2020.
[7] Janzen v. Platy Enterprises Ltd., SCR 1252.
[8] SHARE website, 2021.
[9] Hastie, 2019, 299. Sheppard, 2013, 262-264. Villegas, 2019, 682. Wright, 2020, 166-167. Boesten, 2014, 44-48.
[10] Canadian Women's Foundation website, 2021.
[11] Angus Reid Institute, 2018, 9.
[12] StatCan website, August 12, 2021.

Canadian population resides,[13] every second day a WSH victim requests legal support, 86% of whom are women. Non-hegemonic immigrant women, meaning women of non-white phenotype (NHIW) are disproportionately targeted.[14] That ethnicity and class – meaning 'privilege' – shape victimology should not be a surprise: hate crimes doubled in Canada during 2020, those targeting indigenous people more than doubled.[15]

Ethnicity and Gender shape power in Canada

Societies of all sorts, including nations and countries, are built upon what Emile Durkheim called Collective representations - that is, ideas of seminal function around which large collectives organise themselves, setting up foundational values from which laws, policies and commanding thoughts shape a society, in turn distributing power and agency amongst inhabitants, which ultimately configures privilege and allocates credibility. These collective representations are of tectonic value to cultures and are generally not discussed, becoming invisible echelons, ultimate roots of social institutions, traditions, beliefs, and behavioural patterns.[16] Since these representations are so deeply ingrained in society that they become of tectonic presence, hence not discussed, it begs the question of how they survive intergenerationally and geographically. Pierre Bourdieu's cultural and social reproduction explains that a society's educational system reproduces social hierarchies through social and cultural capital, perpetuating the dominant social order.[17]

In Canada, Tyrians and Trojans consider John Porter's theories vital to understanding Canada's social organisation; he contends that firstly gender and skin-colour

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[13] Statistics Canada website, 2022.
[14] Hastie, 2019, 301. "Jane," 3. And, Statistics Canada, December 2019.
[15] StatCan, March 17, 2022.
[16] Durkheim, 2009, 10-13.
[17] Bourdieu, 1973, 2018, 84

secondly divide labour in Canada.[18] Power persistently remains in white males who

instrumentalise misogyny and racism to their advantage. Thus, misogyny and racism

became collective representations,[19] and are seminal ideas that shaped the nation to the wish

of its founding elites. Porter defines the founding elites of Canada as charter groups, British

and French colonisers who self-allocated the authority to judge people's suitability into a

perpetuated "ethnic structure [later prohibiting miscegenation with] inferior races…"[20] (i.e.,

indigenous, immigrants from southern/eastern Europe and overseas). Northern European

ethnicity was associated with wealth to the extent of supporting the concentration of power

amongst men, White, charter group-members,[21] generally referred to as settlers. This

systemic and unquestioned white-male-settler privilege remained socially reproduced,

underpins citizens' interactions, and legitimises dominant attitudes towards non-hegemonic

peoples, meaning less-powered white women, non-white men, and non-white women.

Following this stratification, non-hegemonic immigrants have been funnelled into

low-income opportunities during the last century.[22] Also, the temporal labour program

managed by Employment and Social Development Canada still places nationals from

former colonies into low-paying positions. In 2019, immigrants accounted for 80% of

Canada's population growth,[23] two-thirds working in less-skilled jobs.[24] For instance,

agricultural workers sign a contract for a maximum of nine months, and caregivers, usually

non hegemonic women, sign a similar contract for a minimum of four years. The contract

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[18] Porter, 2015, 264-266.
[19] Scott, 2009, 34.
[20] Porter, 2015, 60-62.
[21] See note above, 231.
[22] Porter, 2015, 67-68.
[23] Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website, December 31, 2019.
[24] IRCC website, 2022.

stipulates that both groups can only work with one pre-designated employer; otherwise, they risk revoking their migratory status should they try to switch employers.[25]

This standard practice, called Designated Employer contract, raises the precariousness of workers' situation by compelling them to tolerate workplace transgressions if they want to complete their contract successfully and possibly receive a new contract later. It is relevant to mention that during the pandemic of Covid-19 this subset of the migrant population was declared essential by the Canadian Government, which led to exempt them from the travel ban implemented and to facilitate resources securing that they remain not infected before arriving and during their stay; at varying degrees provinces and territories implemented quarantine and vaccinations programs. However, the precariousness of their social placement and their limited agency did not change.

Interestingly, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) defines immigrants in largely economic terms: "they contribute…to… the economy, they …buil[d] [Canada]… [represent] …potential for …growth and prosperity."[26] Another relevant definition is that of 'immigrant' by Statistics Canada, "a person …landed… or permanent resident,"[27] which automatically and structurally excludes the temporary foreign workers depicted above, alongside denying them to contribute with their sentiment and opinion to censuses or surveys.[28] Provenly, ethnicity and origin directly impact migratory status, limiting wealth expectations and social placement, and ultimately articulating asymmetry to

[25] SOR/2002-227, 2022. And, Community Legal Assistant Society and SHARP program, Sexual Harassment Legal Advice, Response, and Prevention for Workplaces
[26] Mendicino, 2019.
[27] StatCan, July 22, 2021, https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/concepts/units.
[28] Galtung, 1969, 170-175.

the favour of employers and the detriment of temporary foreign workers often coerced into

enduring abuse, the accounts of which will indeed remain uncaptured whether in statistics,

or even anecdotal records. Factoring gender in this context will only increase

precariousness, discussed later.

Intersectionality embedded

The echelons of a country are first-hand informers of dominant social patterns,

specifically because are the first institutions deriving from the foundational ideas of a

nation, and Canada's echelons transpire systemic discrimination, particularly pronounced in

gender violence. Reports from the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF),[29] law enforcement, and

the federal government speak of systemic inequality,[30] hedged by incongruences between

policy and behaviour. Thirteen leaders are in the pillory for WSH,[31] suggesting that

hierarchies shape interactions,[32] while perpetrators assert territorial dominance via power

filtered through structural inequalities.[33] However, The bad-apple argument falls short as

the CAF epitomises the 'controlled' environment. Furthermore, systemic inequality and

discrimination in Canadian institutions and workplaces – civilian and military – can be

directly attributed to colonialism.[34] Concomitantly, the mutual articulation of hierarchies

and WSH raise human insecurity. GBV ranges from WSH to atrocious police brutality,[35] a

gendered continuum of violence,[36] which assertively defies any denial of gender inequality

in Canada.[37] Overlapping hierarchical asymmetries also inform WSH's intersectional

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[29] Defence Canada, April 2022, v.
[30] Cotter, 2018. Perkel, 2017, CBC News. StatCan, May 25, 2021.
[31] Burke, CBC News, April 20, 2022.
[32] Deschamps, 2015, ii.
[33] Hastie, 2019, 302.
[34] Canada, "MNDAPSR," v-vi, viii, 21.
[35] Dodd, The Guardian December 6, 2021. Reynolds, The Irish Times October 20, 2021.
[36] Cockburn, 2004, 43. And Boesten, 2014, 121.
[37] Christy, 2019, 93-94. And, Neville, Australia Business News, March 13, 2018.

character.[38] Furthermore, GBV reproduces intersectionality;[39] its redeployment marginalises NHIW's accounts and contributions, ultimately erasing them from the records.[40] Structures share responsibility for WSH against NHIW. Solidly documented effects of job precariousness raise risks, inhibit victims' expressiveness, and limit victims' access to restoration.[41] This persuasively suggests that NHIW's identity undermines their credibility based on their placement along the identity hierarchies.

Ethnicity in the Workplace

Social stratification by gender and skin-colour configures multiple disadvantages; for instance Afro-Canadian women disproportionately experience poverty, homelessness, sexual assault, etc.[42] For one thing, ethnicity multidimensionally blends skin-colour with birthplace, English fluency, and accent, turning these dimensions into ethnic markers.[43] Consequently, accents trigger linguistic stereotyping in a ranking where British, American, and Australian accents are deemed the most pleasant.[44] Conversely, scholars found that "ethnic" accents resonate as markers of "disentitlement and inequality,"[45] a response known as glottophobia, which is prevalent in Canada.[46]

Furthermore, the emphasis on accent conceals birthplace stratification: a native anglophone accent signals 'hegemonic person', while a non-native, 'non-hegemonic.'[47] A

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[38] Hooks, 2009, 244. Browne and Misra, 2003, 491-492, 502. Cotter and Savage, StatCan, December 5, 2019, Berdahl and Moore, 2006, 426.
[39] Boesten, 2014, 43-45.
[40] Carbado, 2013, 303-310.
[41] Hastie, 2017, 34-35. Perry, 2020, 333. And, Villegas, 2019, 675-678.
[42] Dryden, 2021, E55.
[43] Dovchin, 2020, 5.
[44] Ro, BBC, June 3, 2021.
[45] Dovchin, 2020, 3-4.
[46] Weirich, 2022, 4-7.
[47] Pendakur, 2010, 313-314, 318. Porter, 2015, 56-58.

Spanish accent, for example, provides evidence of a two-fold risk triggering both unwelcome gendered behaviours and judgments of English-ability.[48] Women's non-hegemonic markers, therefore, function as thresholds, however unfixed, upon which some men explore gender transgressions of diverse 'size' in the workplace. Ethnic distance is added to this soft-violence in order to legitimate a double hegemony – male and white.[49]

Workforce Hierarchies

The North-American workforce is no longer predominantly white and male.[50] Public and corporate policies attempt to address discrimination but unwritten rules linger.[51] By default, hierarchically organised workplaces are cogently explained as inequality regimes, environments that legitimise systemic power and privilege disparities rooted in social cognition.[52] We all "know" that in the workplace we are not equal, there is leadership and workers, the former with larger agency, decision-making and rewards; the latter with all those smaller but generally more workload, and more effortful tasks. In Canada 27% of companies have a gender-balanced board, however, there are more male CEOs called "Michael" (7) than female CEOs (6)[53], and the female Canadian workforce reaches only 35%, eloquently depicting female power in the corporate world.[54] Consequently, workplace inequality regimes withhold women's advancement by limiting their economic and directive power.[55] As foreign migrant workers are not included in official Canadian metrics,

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[48] The author's mother language is Spanish.
[49] Kelshall, 2021, 104.
[50] Taylor, 2016, 216.
[51] .National Post March 19, 2017. And, Matulewicz, 2015, 413.
[52] Acker, August 2006, 443,452.
[53] EQUILEAP, 2022, 24.
[54] Ibid., 16.
[55] Sheppard, 2013, 281.

their agency and sentiment are less relevant and credible in the workplace, exponentially increasing their vulnerability by making their position more precarious.

Notwithstanding, on the one hand, research shows that female numerical superiority does not outweigh male-dominance; discrimination starts with the job application, possibly connecting to the validation of foreign credentials.[56] Also, NHIW's income shows sustained decrease over the last two decades.[57] Comparatively, for every dollar paid to hegemonic men in Canada, hegemonic women received 0.67 and non-hegemonic ones 0.59. Notice the intragender-ethnic gap: non-hegemonic women receive 0.08 less than hegemonic ones (see Figure 1).[58]

Concomitantly, environmental tensions rise following the mutual enablement of social asymmetries and professional competition within workplaces. NHIW's skills and stories are systematically questioned; their relative lower compensation consistently declines while facing daily workplace threats. For Hastie, WSH is a tactic to drive females out of the workplace,[59] looping back to the forementioned territoriality. Workplace hierarchies and WSH thus emerge from underpinning male privilege patterns that regulate "material and social power."[60] The inequalities interwoven in WSH are coextensive with privilege. Similarly, these inequality regimes regulate trust to the detriment of NHIW who fear disbelief and reprisal when complaining about being harassed. WSH then turns into an internal conflict within which the referent object depends on each actor's stakes: the

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[56] Nangia, 2021, 151-152,159.
[57] Pendakur, 2010, 318.
[58] Block et al., December 2019, 12.
[59] Hastie, 2019, 301.
[60] Hester Lessard quoted in Kaitlyn Matulewicz, 2015, 26.

perpetrator's privilege, the victim's integrity, and the employer's liability. Undoubtedly, misogyny- and ethnicity-based inequality regimes breed pronounced insecurity for NHIWs.

TABLE 5 Employment income by racialized group: Canada, 2015				
	Average employment income		Earnings gap: same gender		Earnings gap: non-racialized men
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Women
Non-racialized	56,920	38,247	1.00	1.00	0.67
All racialized groups	44,423	33,304	0.78	0.87	0.59
South Asian	46,974	32,336	0.83	0.85	0.57
Chinese	49,470	37,785	0.87	0.99	0.66
Black	37,817	31,900	0.66	0.83	0.56
Filipino	41,563	34,065	0.73	0.89	0.60
Latin American	42,651	30,044	0.75	0.79	0.53
Arab	42,154	28,548	0.74	0.75	0.50
Southeast Asian	41,656	31,537	0.73	0.82	0.55
West Asian	40,405	28,982	0.71	0.76	0.51
Korean	41,229	29,765	0.72	0.78	0.52
Japanese	59,824	37,196	1.05	0.97	0.65
Visible minority, n.i.e.	44,583	35,294	0.78	0.92	0.62
Multiple visible minorities	44,582	34,044	0.78	0.89	0.60

Source Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016213.

Canada's Colour Coded Income Inequality / 12

Figure 1: Screenshot from source.

Security

Poststructuralism posits that active agents produce security – or insecurity – following specific political commitments.[61] Cultural content becomes a weapon that perpetuate power hierarchies by enabling structural violence, through unaddressed attitudes which eventually escalate into WSH. Canadian culture 'gives-a-pass', acquiesces to misogynistic behaviour traded via jokes, unwelcomed advancements, and glottophobia – the emotional rejection of foreign accents. These cultural elements consolidate and normalise racial and misogynistic structures. Socialisation through education at home, community and public spaces, and the school compels children to uphold that social order by rewarding toxic masculinity, ultimately internalised as

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[61] Beier, 2016, 112-113.

natural. Also, privileged – hegemonic – women benefit from a double-standard, one for them and another for non-hegemonic women; this pattern de-personalises violence, making it structural and cultural, invisibilising NHIW even more. Rafia Zakaria calls this the "outspoken [power] division" between White and Black, Brown, Asian feminists.[62] Zillah Eisenstein finds similar disparities when studying Ida Wells' work.[63]

Crucially, disparities beget tensions that become chronic stressors undermining workplace safety,[64] eventually fostering and nesting transgressions of all sorts, a prevalent pattern in Canadian workplaces. The Mental Health Commission of Canada estimates that a third of short- and long-term disability claims are mental health-based.[65] While granular information, aggregate or not, is privacy-protected, it is safe to assume the high prevalence of WSH and its disproportionate effect in NHIW in Canada.

A phallocratic culture blending patriarchy, economics, and ethnicity is reproduced in the workplace and furthered by a resurgent wave of misogyny.[66] Unquestioned privilege makes insecurity more acute for NHIW, even within 'controlled' environments.

Towards restoration

In Canada, basic healthcare is provincially accessible,[67] extended healthcare – i.e., mental health – is part of the compensation offered by employers. Claims for workplace injury are reimbursed by the Workers Compensation Board, covering short- and long-term disability when it results from significant stressors. The mental health cost – i.e., medical

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[62] Zakaria, 2021, 10-12.
[63] Eisenstein, 2004, 124-126.
[64] CSA-BNQ, "Psychological health and safety in the workplace," 8.
[65] MHCC website, "Workplace Mental Health."
[66] Cockburn, June 2010, 140. And, CASIS, 2019, 6.
[67] Canada Health website, March 25, 2021.

leave and productivity loss – surpasses $50 billion in Canada annually. In 2011, absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover cost employers $6 billion CA.[68]

Federal support for WSH tends to be inefficient, unavailable, dispersed, and inadequate.[69] Non-profit and community-based organisations spearhead the support, primarily via donations and municipal grants. With budgets directly linked to annual case counts, underreporting significantly affects resources. The true dimensions of WSH against NHIW remain unknown owing to fear of reprisal[70] – dismissal, isolation, deportation – and disbelief.[71] Victims need financial help to manage restoration, leave for medical services, and assistance with the complaint process. Without sound policy intervention, such demand only worsens. Experts agree that vulnerability drives underreporting;[72] two implications follow. First, poor or unhealed women's distress resulting from WSH compromises functionality – self-confidence and cognitive skills – edging victims into a cycle of pain, isolation, unemployment, and poverty. While unhealed, non-hegemonic victims likely return to their homeland, quit and seek other employment, hegemonic victims – citizens, cis-heterosexual, Caucasian, urban, non-disabled, regularly employed, with post-secondary education – find resources to voice their struggles, and sometimes start adjudicative processes.

Second, healthcare reports exclude systemic racism and ethnicity-based data,[73] cases assessed in unions, human resources, and awaiting court hearings are confidential, and

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[68] MHCC, WMH.
[69] Deschamps, 2015, vi.
[70] Hastie, 2017, 33.
[71] Deschamps, 2015, iii. Hastie, 2019, 300-301.
[72] Wright, 2020, 167. Deschamps, 2015, 28-30. Perry, 2020, 343. MacKay, December 2020, 224-225. Cotter and Savage, 2018.
[73] Statistics Canada website, Census 2016 Update. And Dryden and Nnorom, January 11, 2021, E55.

settlement agreements include non-disclosure caveats; all resulting in limitations that obscure critical disparities, one of its primary outcomes is the upholding of hegemony,[74] white-male-setller arguably. The Human Rights Commission of British Columbia has initiated a dialogue on data collection,[75] seconded by relevant non-profit organisations aiming to deepen the understanding of structural disparities driving discrimination and WSH since regular recording procedures favour the accounts of male-dominated leadership over less privileged victims.[76]

Deterrence

Sadly, NHIW cannot aspire to the same justice as hegemonic women. The former often face economic struggles, and the limited support they can grasp intensifies the challenges of countering the lingering impact of the Canadian colonial system, in a deterring effect. Restoration relies on bringing a complaint forward, but complaint and adjudicative procedures offer obstructions deriving from insurmountable challenges, namely language and comprehension of the lengthy and overwhelming process. Also, the victim may be uncertain of being targeted due to cultural differences; plus, be unable to complete forms, receive help with them, or financially afford to complete the process; finally, the verdict may spare culprits from accountability. Thus, owing to a convergence of multiple issues, victimised NHIW 'logically decide' not to complain unless the issue is significant, unintentionally and problematically perpetuating subtle forms of WSH. Fears of reprisal, potential dismissal, deportation, and exacerbating feelings of disentitlement and

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[74] UN General Assembly, "Report of the Working Group of Experts of African Descent on its mission to Canada." 2017, 5. And, Stirling, 2020, 2'50"-3'20".
[75] Human Rights Commissioner of British Columbia, September 2020.
[76] Criado-Perez, 2021, 139.

vulnerability strengthen this deterring effect, invalidating the accounts of NHIWs who feel

unsupported by justice outreach and by their employer. While these happen to most victims,

it is more acute for NHIW. A direct relationship exists between job precariousness and

access to justice and restoration.

Furthermore, the conflation of an individualised approach on WSH with the

adversarial justice system in Canada poses another deterrence layer.[77] Trials require two

adversaries arguing upon evidence and cross-examination. One, the alliance

perpetrator-employer with paid legal advocates; the other, NHIW, often without an

advocate, resulting in the victim's re-traumatisation.[78] Often, the defence proceeds by

victim-blaming, deflecting attention from harassing behaviours onto questioning a victim's

motivations and credibility based on "myths [about women's] sexuality."[79] The Court is

manipulated towards a specific verdict that preserves male-white hegemony.[80] Hastie names

the victims' incapacity to reach justice as "capability security,"[81] a cultural capital

asymmetry of not understanding the system, language barrier or not, and combined

resources, the ability to convert knowledge into justice. Finally, ff victims have a strong

case; they often settle extra-judiciary under enforced confidentiality, which is unusual for

NHIW. Structural violence is deterring NHIW from seeking support and justice, which

instrumentalises systems, forms, and protocols. Impersonal power mediated by stratified

privilege becomes invisible, resulting in underreporting cases. Instead of deterring victims

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[77] Somerville et al., 2018, 18.
[78] Quebec's civil law-based is still prone to biases owing to individualized approach. Galardo, 2017. And, *SkyNews,* March 21, 2021.
[79] Sheppard, 1995, 264.
[80] Hastie, 2019, 310. Jones et al., 2021, 637. And, Drucker et al., 2018.
[81] Hastie, 2017, 26.

from speaking and acting, society should deter perpetrators and employers from harming and concealing.

The *Hegemonic Threshold*

Judith Squires contends that when profoundly masculine political theory assumes itself impartial, it silences nonconforming perspectives, namely females and other alterities.[82] Political theory primarily focuses on power interactions, unreeling entitlement and privilege through official definitions and policies filtered via gender and ethnic hierarchies. WSH is neither strange nor shy to express such hierarchies. Porter has observed the exclusion of women and other ethnicities from the economic and ruling elite.[83] That power in Canada is still distributed amongst equals – meaning men, white, British-and-French – reveals the connection between wealth with gender and ethnicity, which discloses the founders' values. Founding groups of equals that later alienated un-equals has been also observed in the US. Heather Cox-Richardson critically articulates that "freedom depended on racial, gender, and class inequality."[84] Alongside power, membership inclusion, and empathy for struggling women, are still administered in Western culture according to subjects' proximity to the northern European ideal of whiteness, as evidenced in current mediatic episodes.[85]

The "historical-political-economic order"[86] of racism and misogyny transplanted by colonisers shaped male-racial privilege in Canadian society. This "modern/colonial gender

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[82] Squires, 2000, 20.
[83] Porter, 2015, 264-265.
[84] Cox-Richardson, 2020, 15.
[85] Alan MacLeod's Twitter feed. And, Taylor Allen, Axios Philadelphia April 13, 2022.
[86] Espinosa, 2016, 146.

system,"[87] as Lugonés persuasively explains, generated interwoven categories of race-gender that constructed womanhood co-constitutively. Fragile hegemonic women deserve protection, while non-hegemonic women, often defined as subhuman, do not.[88] The latter were either hypersexualised or desexualised, signalling non-eligibility for intermarriage with the hegemonic group of males. This conceptual association of ethnicity with non-eligibility for marriage undermines NHIW's membership in Canadian society, making them more vulnerable to abuse and injustice. Equally historical are the patronising attitudes from hegemonic women towards NHIW. Amongst the assimilation policies, the Department of Indian Affairs tasked White wives to teach indigenous women sewing and bread-baking.[89] As a product of the post-Enlightenment, western-centric feminism constitutes an extensive layer of coloniality,[90] the oppression of brown women, and intra-gender inequality becomes another collective representation. This is decolonial feminism's raison d'etre.

A Hegemonic Threshold then emerges. Charter-white-males are at the top. Asserting who follows them hovering over the line, whether hegemonic women or non-hegemonic males, might be challenging since gender and race are social shapers; class addresses such controversy. While poor non-hegemonic men are generally constructed as threats, this construction accentuates concerning hegemonic women; hegemonic women are warned of the threat that brown and black men constitute. Similarly, poor hegemonic women hold limited social capital, due to their class placement. At the bottom are

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[87] Lugonés, 2016,14.
[88] Espinosa, 2016, 153.
[89] White, 1987, 138.
[90] Espinosa, 2016, 155-156.

non-hegemonic women, oppressed by non-hegemonic men, hegemonic women, and charter men. Notably, hegemonic women's privileged position in the Threshold provides them a sense of security by co-opting them into oppressing NHIW.

Where does the *Hegemonic Threshold* come from?

The arrival of European settlers reproduced patriarchy stemming from the heteronormative and misogynistic Judaeo-Christian traditions interwoven with a doctrine of racial superiority. Race, a European construct lacking scientific foundation,[91] produced an asymmetry strategically instrumentalised to justify colonisation. This content was disseminated through law and religious narratives, reproduced in education and morals. Laws are the spirit of social contracts, cultures' substance, foundational definitions, policies, and systems all develop from foundational laws. The Doctrine of Discovery, the Royal Declaration of 1763, and the Indian Act applicable since 1876 are the leading shapers of present Canadian culture.

The Doctrine compounds diverse papal bulls approving claims to Africa and the Americas over land, possessions, and soulless pagans – anyone non-European and Non-Christian – also entitling " 'pure' Europeans …[to] determine what is right."[92] The hegemonic connection between wealth and religion stems from the Doctrine stating that "what benefited the European colonial powers would benefit the church."[93] Later, the Declaration came to define "Indians" legally, ruled land negotiations – still –[94] and influenced the Indian Act. Charter-groups' hegemony stems from the lingering effect of

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[91] Manrique, 1999, 19-20.
[92] Charles and Rah, 2019, 5.
[93] See note above, 16.
[94] Fenge and Aldridge, 2015, 3-4.

these European-made regulations. The British and French valued the trinity of patriarchy-ethnicity-wealth, commonalities that eventually turned into collective representations in Canadian society.

European heteronormativity starkly contrasted to Canadian pre-colonial gender and labour patterns flexible enough to negotiate and exchange tasks,[95] generally criticised by missionaries and explorers.[96] Catholic and Christian European churches' partnership used religious indoctrination and morals to mould indigenous women's behaviour, confining them to the household.[97] Victorian morals amplified similar values via education in a system primarily managed by churches.[98] Evangelisation disarticulated indigenous communities to secure domination, favouring mercantilism and later capitalism.[99] Canada remained under British rule until 1867, 'policymakers' then were not statesmen but officers of, or sponsored by, the Hudson's Bay Co. Their endorsement drove evangelisation under a religion-wealth inspiration, which secured domination of indigenous. To that end, policy changes spearheaded by religious leaders and white women affected gender placement, setting white women above non-white ones.[100]

Intra-gender inequality is the surviving outcome of the deteriorating role of indigenous women from pre-colonial times,[101] the latter's role went from "as useful as men,"[102] to "useful homemakers" whenever married.[103] This change derives from the

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[95] Leacock, 1958, 204.
[96] White, 1987, 77.
[97] See note above, 83-84.
[98] Stevenson, 1999, 55-56.
[99] Williams, 1994, 211.
[100] VanKirk, 2001, 189-191.
[101] White, 1987, 81.
[102] VanKirk, 2001, 188.
[103] White, 1987, 172.

images of indigenous women produced by explorers, fur-traders, and missionaries.

Indigenous females' economic role, free agency, and sexuality were deemed "reproachable"

by Victorian standards,[104] fostering policies – and attitudes – aimed at inducing European

gender scripts on them. This moral questioning continues in contemporary Canadian culture

arguably.[105] The sexuality of non-hegemonic women is (re)constructed along these racial

lines, marking fundamental differences. Hegemonic women incarnate purity and are

eligible for marriage and reproduction,[106] non-hegemonic women are either desexualised,

associating them with manly stamina good for hard-working,[107] or hyper-sexualised with

overpowering animal sexuality.[108] It is safe to assume that since the above collective

representations have not been rejected – not even disputed despite recent advancements –

these perceptions prevail in the still-functioning Department of Indian Affairs.

Intersubjectivity and Collective Representations

An objection to this analysis posits that colonisation is distant in time, and its

influence wanes under the multiple cultural heritages of the current Canadian social fabric.

Sociology has established, however, that culture instead stems from collective

representations that remain being socially and culturally reproduced. Also, ongoing issues

such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and the

discovery of unmarked gravesites on the grounds of Indian Residential Schools,

demonstrate that the colonial heritage has not ebbed: it "invisibly construct[s] …social

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[104] See note above, 78.

[105] Sheppard, 1995, 274-275.

[106] Eisenstein, 2004, 86.

[107] White, 1987, 91.

[108] Espinosa, 2016, 153-154.

life."[109] In doing so, environment – culture – functions as a safety network emboldening WSH and other GBV, legitimating aggressions by the intersectional power of gender, race, and class.

Persuasively, intersubjectivity posits a suitable explanation by which the colonial heritage of gender and racial hierarchies subsist in Canadian culture, underpinning social relationships. Values of male hegemony widely practised in Europe in the modern era combined with notions of racial superiority amalgamated in a narrative of hegemony were instrumentalised to justify colonisation and garner population's support, first in the European metropoles and eventually the Canadian state. Amalgamated values became the collective representations, which remain available at the very tectonic level of culture as contained in the laws that charter-groups established and imposed on indigenous and newcomers.

Assumptions about differences and hierarchies between men and women, related to the perceived moral stance and abilities of non-white ethnicities, survive within layers of traditions, histories, and policies hosted in the shared knowledge, the social cognition.[110] This acumen of information remains available in our intersubjectivity, conforming to a mental representation of the world we share,[111] akin to a data warehouse from which diverse modules or pockets extract standard information. Said acumen, deriving from the substance of society, drives socialisation. Family, school, and community reproduce that acumen as mainstream, with the power to regulate behaviours and decisions morally.[112] Social

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[109] Carbado, 2013, 307-308.
[110] Manrique, 1999, 19.
[111] Quintanilla et al., 2014, 18-22.
[112] Bourdieu, 1990, 95.

reproduction affirms the cultural content weaponised in structural violence, suggesting that social cognition sustains the internalised scripts developed in the early images by fur-traders, missionaries, and explorers. Those structures and inequalities ignite specific attitudes toward NHIW in the workplace, making them more prone to be targeted by perpetrators, disbelieved by employers and authorities, thus deterred from seeking restoration.

Furthermore, as many NHIW come from former colonies, their 'colonised' heritage feeds feelings of destitution and disempowerment, easing their assimilation into hegemonic cultures within underprivileged patterns. For example, NHIW may tolerate white feminism's oppression. Albert Memmi analyses the short- and long-term psychological effects that colonialism imposes as freedoms were destroyed and images of laziness, lack of capacity, amongst others, were – and still are – constantly projected on formerly-colonised populations. Oppression is internalised under fear of punishment.[113] Conversely, the intrinsic human need for validation and membership may support deterrence, NHIW may decide not to complain – underreport – fearing isolation, loss of job and migratory status, and seeking inclusion.

Repeating these internalised scripts is inertial, as these are already present in the culture Hegemonic and non-hegemonic individuals are born and socialised within social structures. The latter bears the brunt of systemic phallocracy and white feminism.

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[113] Memmi, 2003, 134-140.

Conclusion

While in social sciences, security, international relations, and history answers are hardly absolute, support for connecting white-male privilege in Canada with the colonial legacy abounds. Societies are organised around fundamental values, collective representations, functioning as seeds from which ruling elites distribute power, allocate membership, ascribe privilege to make judgments and decisions; these two, in turn, reinforce the values from which they stem. A narrative of gender and racial superiority was conceived to facilitate the domination of Canada. Since instrumentalised values and beliefs remain at the tectonic level of Canadian culture, other cultural influences are assimilated under its dominance, preventing ideas, policies, and a culture of equality from permeating our social cognition.

As Canadian culture rewards the exertion of white-male privilege by sparing accountability or coercing confidentiality, underpinning misogyny and racism populate behaviours and structures. WSH, GBV, and discrimination draw legitimation from our intersubjectivity that nests imagery, myths, and stereotypes of colonial origin about the identity and entitlement of hegemonic and non-hegemonic persons. Thus, jokes, media characterisations, and relational attitudes – i.e., sexist and racist jokes – are not the root but low-hanging fruit from our social and cultural reproduction.

Internalised scripts of privilege and the articulation of oppressions fostered by collective representations produce disbelief in victims, correlated to vulnerability in their workplaces and the health and justice systems, alongside those system's limitations aid to deter NHIW from raising complaints or initiating restoration and adjudicative processes,

resulting in a persistent and pernicious underreporting. WSH becomes a mental health issue for the victim, a liability for the perpetrator and the employer, and a safety issue in the workplace. Until the fear of reprisal, loss of a job or migratory status, and the emotional costs endured by victims are addressed, the accurate dimension of cases will not be visible, turning the personal into political.

Two factors make NHIW more vulnerable. First, rewarding misogyny and racism by articulating inequalities to uphold dominance and foster an environment of insecurity. Second, NHIW's multiple overlapping identities, namely country of origin, ethnicity, skin colour, English-ability, accent, low income, less education, family demands, migratory status, temporary contracts, etc.

Security is a continuum, seeing it through a binary-lens leaves matters unattended, as it interlinks multiple levels and actors, such as victims, workplaces, families, communities, state, intra-state. Interlinking prompts an overspilling of issues, which enables diverse threats that compromise individual and collective safety (i.e., InCel movement).

This analysis shows that WSH against NHIW is a cross-border issue affecting justice, health, immigration, and the economy, at varying degrees across the social fabric. Data collection is an essential factor in the societal management of WSH; deterrence drives underreporting, and intersectionality galvanises both. Gathering disaggregated demographic data will uncover criticalities and intersectional patterns unspotted, resulting in, given a political willingness, improved support, and a more equitable justice system. Focusing data collection on victims' suffering and encouraging counter-hegemonic lenses will primarily benefit that process.

The knowledge gap between WSH and colonial patterns ultimately correlates with privilege and entitlement – the Hegemonic Threshold, which pervasiveness shapes an environment of insecurity harming NHIW more than hegemonic immigrants and non-immigrant ones as it precludes disclosure, limiting their access to support, ultimately hindering restoration. Consequently, socially reproduced privilege perpetuates a vicious cycle of invisibility, denial, and unhealed harm.

To auscultate the contours of WSH in Canada, advance the knowledge, and, crucially, produce evidence-based policy capable of dismantling dangerous collective representations, this analysis recommends: i) incorporating a counter-hegemonic lens, from discovering to reporting and disseminating; and ii) a trans-state lens, as both roots and effects overspill borders. Thus, it is imperative to find innovative approaches to dismantle this structural violence, facilitating a long-term culture of restoration and pre-emptive security.

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