"Tough on Crime, Tough on the Causes of Crime": Liberal Carceral Logics and the Reproduction of Settler Colonial Violence in Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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"TOUGH ON CRIME, TOUGH ON THE CAUSES OF CRIME": LIBERAL CARCERAL LOGICS AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SETTLER COLONIAL VIOLENCE IN WINNIPEG, MB, CANADA

by

BRONWYN DOBCHUK-LAND

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
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Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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Abstract

"TOUGH ON CRIME, TOUGH ON THE CAUSES OF CRIME": LIBERAL CARCERAL LOGICS AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SETTLER COLONIAL VIOLENCE IN WINNIPEG, MB, CANADA

by

Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land

Advisor: Dr. Lucia Trimbur

This dissertation illustrates how settler colonialism is reproduced in present-day Canada through the governance of crime, and how political struggles against policing, imprisonment, and colonialism are linked. It focuses on the politics of crime in the Province of Manitoba from 1999–2016, during which the left-of-center New Democratic Party (NDP) government engineered a significant expansion of the carceral state, overseeing unprecedented increases in policing and jail growth. In Manitoba, the vast majority of prisoners are Indigenous. This dissertation explores the logic through which the NDP integrated their support for policing and imprisonment into their “progressive” value system, packaging their carceral expansion as a project of protecting poor people from victimization. The central argument of this dissertation is that carceral expansion in Manitoba was made to fit into a “progressive” agenda by appealing to a contemporary colonial common sense: that Indigenous communities are suffering from the legacy of a colonial past, and that policing and imprisonment are necessary but not sufficient responses to violence that originates within those damaged communities. Through interviews with NDP politicians, political advisors, bureaucrats, policy researchers, and people who work at community-based organizations (CBOs) recruited to participate in crime prevention, this dissertation documents how colonial logic structured both the NDP’s crime-prevention programming, and their punitive tough-on-crime initiatives.
For my parents, Wendy Land and Victor Dobchuk
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Introduction

In the Canadian province of Manitoba, the vast majority of prisoners are Indigenous. At last measure in 2013/2014, 77% of admissions to sentenced custody in Manitoba were counted as Aboriginal, and this massive rate of Indigenous imprisonment has been rising for decades (S. C. Government of Canada, 2015b). The most common narrative about Indigenous mass imprisonment across Canada is that it is an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of Canada’s colonial past. In contrast, this dissertation identifies how settler colonialism is reproduced in the present through the governance of crime, and how political struggles against policing, imprisonment, and colonialism are linked.

This project focuses on the politics of crime in Manitoba from 1999–2016, during which the New Democratic Party (NDP) was the governing party. During their time in office, the left-of-center NDP engineered a significant expansion of the carceral state, overseeing unprecedented increases in policing and jail growth. The NDP government made the largest increases to policing budgets in Manitoba’s history (Province of Manitoba, 2005), earning its capital city, Winnipeg, the distinction of having the highest per capita rate of police officers in any Canadian city by 2014 (S. C. Government of Canada, 2015a). Between 2000–2014, the prisoner population in Manitoba increased by 113% (S. C.

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1 I use the term “Indigenous” because it is a political category that links Indigenous people across national borders. “Aboriginal” is the designation for anyone who is recognized by the Government of Canada to be Indian, Inuit, or Métis. Within this dissertation, the terms “Aboriginal,” “Indigenous,” “Native,” “First Nations” and “Indian” are used by interviewees and by other authors interchangeably. None of these terms account for differences between different Indigenous nations, clans, communities, or other ways of identifying with particular territories. Neither government statistics, nor my interview questions accounted for these differences. Failure to distinguish between Indigenous groups of people can be seen as an extension of the colonial tendency to disavow Indigenous claims to particular territories. In Winnipeg, different Indigenous individuals and communities have divergent views on preferred terminology that do not neatly reflect consistent political differences.

2 In Canada, “prisons” hold adult offenders serving sentences of two years and more, and “jails” hold adult offenders serving sentences less than two years and those who are being held while awaiting trial or sentencing (remand). Jails are Provincial/territorial jurisdiction, and prisons are federal jurisdiction. (Statistics Canada, 2016)
Government of Canada, 2015b). Manitoba’s prisoner population growth far exceeded that of neighboring provinces with similar demographics and violent crime rates, and which were subject to the same federal legislation. This suggests that carceral expansion in Manitoba has been neither an inevitable response to unusually high crime rates, nor a phenomenon outside of the control of the provincial government.

I explore the logic through which the NDP integrated their support for policing and imprisonment into their “progressive” value system, packaging their carceral expansion as a project of protecting poor people from victimization. Using the borrowed mantra “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime,” the NDP paired intensive policing in Winnipeg’s Indigenous-majority city-center neighborhoods with crime-prevention programming aimed at city-center Indigenous youth, and a closer integration of policing activities with social-service provision activities. For the most part, the NDP did not face opposition to its carceral agenda from its supporters. With this context in mind, I ask: by what logic does carceral expansion comes to make sense to people who understand themselves to be politically “progressive”?

The main argument of this dissertation is that carceral expansion in Manitoba fits into a “progressive” agenda by appealing to a contemporary colonial common sense: that Indigenous communities are suffering from the legacy of a colonial past, and that policing and imprisonment are necessary but not sufficient responses to violence that originates within those damaged communities. Through this logic, non-Indigenous people position themselves as benevolent responders to damaged Indigenous communities, never quite ready to manage their own affairs. I argue that this logic has structured both the NDP’s crime-prevention programming, and their punitive tough-on-crime legislation.

Through interviews with NDP politicians, political advisors, bureaucrats, policy researchers, and people who work at community-based organizations (CBOs) recruited to
participate in crime prevention, I document how this common sense circulates, and how resistance to it is made structurally difficult. I analyze the work of local NDP-affiliated policy researchers who invoke Indigenous damage and criminality in attempts to influence policy and attract resources to anti-poverty initiatives, while also advocating for more “community policing.” I illustrate how, in the name of “community policing,” NDP politicians and policy advisors have engineered increased police access to city-center residents through partnerships between social services, community organizations, and the police. I document the logics of bureaucrats in the Crime Prevention Branch who rely on a distinction between redeemable youth and punishable adults in order to make sense of their mandate to distribute funds to neighborhood-based recreation and supervision programs aimed at Indigenous youth at the same time as Indigenous communities remain structurally disadvantaged and increasingly policed. Within the diverse CBO sector, I highlight how organizations being asked to work more closely with the police negotiate what that means for the communities they work with, and how smaller Indigenous-run organizations struggle to maintain control over their definitions of the problems in their communities—while also trying to secure piecemeal funding from the provincial government.

At each of these sites, in different ways, the invocation of a colonial past works to reframe those interventions that constitute the reality of the colonial present, including policing, imprisonment, and the state-led management of Indigenous youth. In this way, liberal justifications for policing and imprisonment fit within patterns observed by critics of the Canadian politics of recognition more broadly, whereby the recognition of a colonial past is a condition of possibility for the reproduction of the colonial present (Coulthard, 2014; A. Simpson, 2016).
Context

Manitoba is not the only province with high rates of Indigenous imprisonment—in fact, the criminal justice system across Canada faces a crisis of Indigenous mass imprisonment. Indigenous people make up 4.3% of the Canadian population and 24.4% of the prisoner population (Correctional Investigator of Canada, 2015, p. 36). The Office of the Correctional Investigator reports that Aboriginal prisoners are more likely to be classified as “higher risk and higher need”; more likely to be held in segregation and maximum security institutions; disproportionately “involved in use of force interventions”; and released later in their sentences (Correctional Investigator of Canada, 2015, p. 37). The rate of Indigenous imprisonment is not slowing: between 2005 and 2015, the Aboriginal inmate population grew by 50%, and the number of Aboriginal women imprisoned grew by 200% (Correctional Investigator of Canada, 2015, p. 37). The proportion of Indigenous people imprisoned in Canada is highest in the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. In the Prairie Region, 47.21% of all imprisoned people are Indigenous (Correctional Investigator of Canada, 2015, p. 37).

There are more police per capita being deployed to the Prairie Region, and especially prairie cities, than any other region in Canada. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have the highest proportions of Aboriginal people in their populations (16.7% and 15.6% respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2011), and the highest per-capita rates of police officers in Canada (S. C. Government of Canada, 2015a). The Prairie Region is also home to the largest urban Indigenous populations. Winnipeg, Manitoba’s capital city, has a population of about

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3 In Manitoba in 2011, the rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal people in provincial jails as a proportion of Aboriginal population was the highest of any Canadian province, with an estimated rate of 1,377.6 Aboriginal people in custody per 100,000 Aboriginal people in Manitoba. (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2014)

750,000 people, and approximately twelve percent are Indigenous – the highest proportion of any Canadian city (Branch, 2008). Winnipeg was also home to the highest per capita number of police officers in a Canadian city in 2014 (Branch, 2008; Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, 2013). Carmichael and Kent (2015) have found that the size of minority population in Canadian cities is the most significant statistical predictor of “police strength,” or the rate of police officers per capita.\(^5\) In Manitoba, the vast majority of people serving time were arrested in its biggest cities—Winnipeg or Brandon (C. S. of C. Government of Canada, 2013b). This means that Indigenous imprisonment in the Prairie West is largely an urban issue. The arrests that take place on the streets of Winnipeg may not be as legible as part of ongoing settler-colonial conflict in Canada as are arrests that take place at sites of resource development blockades in non-urban areas. However, the scale and nature of policing and imprisonment of Indigenous people in Canadian cities requires them to be thought of as such.

Manitoba has the highest imprisonment rate of any Canadian province. Whereas the incarceration rate for Canada as a whole is 87 per 100,000 residents, Manitoba’s incarceration rate is 243 per 100,000 people (S. C. Government of Canada, 2015b). Both policing and jails have been expanding in Manitoba over the past fifteen years, and this has happened under a New Democratic Party (NDP) government. The NDP define themselves as a progressive alternative to a conservative tradition in Manitoba. In 1999, the New Democratic Party (NDP) was elected to power after ten years of Conservative Party government, during which social services were slashed and labor protections were attacked (Black & Silver, 2012). The Manitoba NDP is a left-liberal political party with social-

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\(^5\) In their study, Carmichael and Kent control for crime rates, poverty rates, median family income, unemployment rates, and percentage of female headed households; and “minority” includes percentage of visible minority, percentage of immigrant, and percentage of Aboriginal population (Carmichael & Kent, 2015).
democratic roots (Wiseman, 1985). They ran on a platform of reinvigorating health care, education, inner-city social services, universities, and the public energy sector, and of increasing immigration (Black & Silver, 2012). They also ran on a promise to take crime seriously, arguing that the previous Conservative government had not done enough to “make Manitobans safer and more secure” (Woolford & Thomas, 2011). The NDP approach to crime has been to advance punitive legislation that villainizes criminals; and to invest in crime prevention by addressing the “causes” of crime through limited social policies. As Woolford and Thomas (2011) observe, the Manitoba NDP united these logics under the banner of “an ‘integrated’ approach to dealing with individual risk factors that can lead to criminal behavior” (p. 120). They articulated their policy mandate as “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime,” borrowing directly from Tony Blair’s New Labour turn within the UK Labour Party.

While the Criminal Code of Canada is federally legislated, provinces are responsible for the administration of the justice system. During the NDP’s time in office, the federal Conservative government was often demonized as the real “tough-on-crime” bully that forced Provinces to comply with punitive legislation. This narrative was especially prevalent when the federal Conservative Party government introduced sweeping changes to the Criminal Code in an omnibus bill, Bill C-10, that was decried by local Winnipeg progressive think tanks for being costly and overly punitive (CCPA-MB, 2012). However, the provincial NDP government didn’t receive the same kind of scrutiny for their punitive policies, even though the rapid increase in Manitoba’s rates of imprisonment began well before the federal government introduced Bill C-10, and just a few years after the NDP took power in 1999.

Provincial investments in policing, provincial decision-making about policing priorities, and provincial decisions to expand jail capacity in response to overcrowding
concerns have contributed to the growth in Manitoba’s jail population. This dissertation illustrates how these policy decisions have either been targeted at Indigenous people, or have disproportionately impacted Indigenous people. I argue that NDP provincial decision-making about police priorities has ensured that Indigenous people are more heavily policed, that bail is more often denied, that bail breaches are more often punished, and that jails have more space to receive people accused of crimes than before the NDP took office.

Statistics Canada (2016) indicates that the rate of growth in the prisoner population was roughly equivalent to the rate of population growth until the early 2000s in Manitoba. However, from the years 2000 to 2014, the prisoner population in Manitoba increased by 113%, with the most significant growth occurring between the years 2005 and 2014. During their time in office, the NDP added 651 new beds in total to its seven provincial jails, representing a 52% increase in jail capacity. A recent news article noted that correctional officer is now one of the fastest growing occupations in Manitoba (Marcoux, 2015).

The growth in Manitoba’s jail population is largely attributable to growth in the remand population. Since 2000/2001, Manitoba’s remand population has increased 196.5% (S. C. Government of Canada, 2015b). In 2014/2015, seven out of ten people in jail in Manitoba were awaiting trial (S. C. Government of Canada, 2015b). This is the highest rate of remand of any province (Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Education Trust, 2014, p. 7). For example, Saskatchewan’s remand rate is 40% of the total jail population.

Political decisions within Manitoba Justice have directly impacted the high rate of people in remanded custody. In one of the few published studies that seeks to explain the remand crisis in Canada, Weinrath (2009) proposes that the most plausible explanations for

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ballooning remand populations across Canada are “increased time to trial and more vigorous suppression activity by the criminal justice system and its agents” (p. 376). In particular, Weinrath (2009) observes an increase in policing of administrative charges, which include offences like “fail to appear in court, fail to comply with conditions of undertakings or recognizances, and probation breaches, including violations of court-ordered curfews or for non-contact orders” (p. 359). This is a trend that is observable in Manitoba, where the NDP government instituted a zero-tolerance approach to bail violations which requires bail supervisors to lay administrative charges. (Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Education Trust, 2014, p. 2). This means that many people are remanded on minor breaches of conditions, even after their original charge has been withdrawn or dismissed. Manitoba’s massive investment in Crown prosecutors has meant that instead of people being held for short periods of time on remand, time-to-trial is increasing as the Crown more frequently pursues convictions for charges of failure to comply with a bail order (Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Education Trust, 2014, p. 2). In a 2011 press release, the NDP government announced that it had increased the budget for prosecutions by 165% since first taking office in 1999, “including the addition of 58 Crown prosecutors with another 43 to be added by 2016” (Province of Manitoba, 2011a).

The proposition that punitive decision making at the Provincial level helps to explain growth in remand populations was supported by interviews Weinrath (2009) conducted with inmates being held on remand in Manitoba:

“The inmate perception that there are now more AJ [administrative] charges provides additional evidence of a shift in criminal justice practices. If we couple these inmate views with available court and charge data, we can observe a more vigorous criminal justice surveillance of accused who are under some form of community supervision.” (Weinrath, 2009, p. 373)
In sum, Weinrath’s findings suggest that the most plausible explanations for the growth in remand populations are to be found within provincial-level political decision making, and not in changes in crime rates or federal legislation.

The NDP’s investments in policing also help to explain the growth in jail populations. In 2005, the NDP government boasted that it had made the largest investment in policing in Manitoba’s history, increasing funding for police by 13% over the previous year (Province of Manitoba, 2005b). In 2011, they had doubled provincial funding for police since they took office in 1999, amounting to a $126 million investment. This included 153 new police officers for Winnipeg (Province of Manitoba, 2011a). Between the years 2005 and 2015, the budget of the Winnipeg police service increased 80%, in no small part because of provincial funding.

Many of the increases in policing and policing innovations of the NDP were justified in terms of cracking down on young, city-center gang members. Among the NDP’s innovative policing strategies was a “warrant squad” dedicated to tracking down people with outstanding warrants, intensifying policing of probation breaches, and cutting people off of their welfare benefits if they had outstanding warrants (Province of Manitoba, 2012b). Of the warrant squad, Justice Minister Andrew Swan boasted: “their work gives families peace of mind, helps keep our communities safer and puts criminals behind bars where they belong” (Province of Manitoba, 2011b). These squads made it their mission to track down and arrest people with warrants even if they had not been reported for causing any trouble. These initiatives are an example of how the NDP went above and beyond reacting to criminal harm, and used aggressive policing and remand to control the lives and movements of young Indigenous men in the city.
This is reflected in the fact that during the NDP’s time in office, Manitoba earned the distinction of having the highest youth incarceration rate in Canada\(^7\) (S. C. Government of Canada, 2016a). In 2013/2014, 74% of youth in custody in Manitoba were Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2011). During a Canada-wide decline in the rate of youth being admitted to correctional services, Manitoba’s rate of youth incarceration rose 38% from 2005/2006 to 2010/2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012).

All of this build-up of carceral capacity happened during a time of falling crime rates. In 2013, Manitoba’s crime severity index was at its lowest since 1998. Toward the end of their time in office, the NDP tried to take credit for falling crime rates, suggesting that their intensive policing and imprisonment policies were responsible for reductions in crime. However, crime rates were falling across Canada during the same time, as was crime severity (S. C. Government of Canada, 2014), even though other provinces did not make nearly the same investments in carceral infrastructure. For example, in 2013, the province of British Columbia (BC) also reported its lowest crime severity index since 1998. Between the years 2000 to 2014, BC’s prisoner population decreased by 3% (compared to Manitoba’s 113% increase) and their overall incarceration rate dropped by 20% (compared to Manitoba’s 84.7% increase).

Between the years 2003 to 2013, the three cities that reported the largest drops in crime severity index were prairie cities: Saskatoon reported a 55% drop, Regina reported a 51% drop, and Winnipeg reported a 50% drop (S. C. Government of Canada, 2014). Despite declines, Winnipeg continued to report the highest violent crime severity index of all Canadian cities (S. C. Government of Canada, 2014). At last measure, Manitoba’s crime rate and violent-crime severity index has started to climb again (S. C. Government of Canada, 2014).

\(^7\)26 per 100,000 in 2014/2015.
Canada, 2016b). All of this suggests that the Manitoba NDP’s massive investments in jails and policing have not resulted in proportional reductions of crime or increases in safety. These investments have, however, ensured that poor and Indigenous people are more likely to be policed and imprisoned than before the NDP came into office.

Within the United States, there is a broad, scholarly consensus that a “tough-on-crime” policy approach does not reduce violence or crime (Jacobson & Chancer, 2010). Further, there is evidence that imprisonment and policing concentrated in particular communities generates more violence and insecurity in those communities (Clear, 2008, 2009; Rose & Clear, 1998). As local Winnipeg researchers observe, (Comack, Deane, Morrissette, & Silver, 2013) imprisonment is a “regular” fact of life in the lives of young Indigenous men in Winnipeg. Ruth Wilson Gilmore cogently describes the impact of a fact like this with reference to the roles imprisoned people are assumed not to play in their communities: “Only two or three [people] need to be removed. . . to produce greater instability in a community of people who, when employed, make, move, or care for things” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 16). Gilmore observes the effect on people’s material and emotional resources as community members are removed to the prison: “households stretch from neighborhood to visiting room to courtroom, with a consequent thinning of financial and emotional resources. . . . In other words, prisons wear out places by wearing out people, irrespective of whether they have done time” (2007, pp. 16-17). Imprisonment is destructive of prisoners and their communities.

Part of the work prisons do is to reproduce the particular racial divisions they rely on to make sense. In Manitoba, this involves confirming that Aboriginal people are dangers to their own communities, and to a broader Manitoba population. This discourse is emboldened by punishment, and it is buttressed by crime-prevention programs and community policing that promise in different ways to manage the imminent threat of
Indigenous youth, reproducing the same categories of “difference” on which punishment relies. This is how both criminalization and crime prevention are part of the reproduction of settler-colonial governance in the present.

Dissertation map

Each chapter of this dissertation documents how the common sense of Indigenous imprisonment and criminalization circulates in Manitoba. Chapter one is a literature and theory review that uses insights from settler colonial and Indigenous studies to anchor broader critical criminological critiques in place in the Manitoba context. I identify how the Manitoba NDP’s carceral expansion project is related to liberal carceral expansion projects in the United States and the United Kingdom, particularly through its reliance on place-specific liberal racial logics; and how non-profit community-based organizations can be thought of as expressions of this same logic, and as sites of resistance to it. While gender is not a category of analysis in this dissertation, I illustrate how my theoretical framework is informed by Black and Indigenous feminist scholarship which insists that state violence and interpersonal violence are interrelated and must be resisted in tandem.

I begin chapter one by framing crime and colonial harms in the context of the era of “reconciliation,” ushered in by the Canadian government’s apology for its role in the colonial project of Indian residential schools. During the residential school era, government and church authorities removed Indigenous children from their families into boarding schools for the purposes of forced assimilation. There, they were abused, killed, and stripped of all visible signs of Indigeneity. In the hegemonic explanation for Indigenous criminalization in the present, residential schools were the unfortunate source of the dysfunction that has been passed down through generations of Indigenous families, ultimately manifesting itself in Indigenous criminality. However, settler colonialism was not a single moment (A.
Simpson, 2016), and there is no point at which settler colonialism can be said to have ended. As Indigenous scholar Dian Million writes, there is ample reason to distrust the state-led promise of “reconciliation”:

It is not surprising that the reconciliation that indigenes are called on to trust as acts of justice do not actually stop the removal of Indigenous children from their families or stop the brutality against Indigenous women, or stop the social welfare interventions and criminalization that are endemic to Indigenous peoples and nations. Our imaginary for progressive moments is strained constantly by the ways in which the languages of victim and justice are fluidly mobilized by different political agendas. (Million, 2013, p. 23)

As Patrick Wolfe writes, settler colonialism is a structure that is “impervious to regime change” (Wolfe, 2011, p. 5), enduring for 500 years and adapting to different political projects. Similarly, Woolford (2013) observes that it doesn’t make sense to talk about what colonialism “is” or looks like, because it is “a process” that “spreads across regions and times in an often uneven and variegated manner, adapting to local networks that help lend it shape” (p. 172). Therefore the task becomes to identify those particular ways that colonialism is productive and repressive in particular times and places. To this end, I identify how the idea of reconciliation is mobilized in crime-prevention discourse, which promises to support Indigenous youth in their efforts to avoid becoming criminal, while flooding Indigenous communities with police. It is also mobilized in community policing, which promises the addition of friendly police officers to communities already inundated with unfriendly ones. The gentler, social aspects of the NDP’s crime platform—“tough on the causes of crime”—are part of its settler colonial logic.

Wacquant (2009) observes the integration of punishment and social welfare functions as a uniquely neoliberal phenomenon. However, racial projects throughout history have often relied on the threat of punishment paired with supposedly caring supervision. This is true for the settler-colonial context, where social-welfare interventions have been key parts of state projects of colonial harm. Within the literature about changes
to the governance of crime since the 1970s, there is interesting overlap between phenomena that have been identified as “neoliberal” and phenomena that I propose could be identified as “settler colonial.” For example, one of the features supposedly unique to the neoliberal governance of crime is imagining crime as something which shouldn’t be just be responded to, but which can be prevented through the management of at-risk individuals and through the regulation and policing of manageable (local) spaces. This mirrors the dominant explanation for Indigenous over-incarceration and for state intervention in the lives of Indigenous people throughout the course of Canadian history: that the failure to properly integrate Indigenous children produces a threat to safety and stability of non-Indigenous society. Therefore, I treat neoliberalism and settler colonialism as coexisting, not discrete logics to be uncovered.

Chapter one also includes a focus on the racial politics of the left-realist school of criminology which was an indirect influence on the Manitoba NDP government, through its influence on Tony Blair’s New Labour Party and its expression in the mantra “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime.” Within realist criminology there is a policy prescription for improving relationships between the police and racialized communities. Drawing on radical and counter-colonial criminologies, I ask whether policing and crime prevention can be renovated as long as they rely on logics that do not account for colonial harm.

Finally, chapter one provides a review of literature about what has been called the “non-profit industrial complex” (NPIC) in the United States, and what is referred to as the community-based organization (CBO) sector in this dissertation. CBOs in Winnipeg have been recruited by the Manitoba NDP to deliver community-based crime-prevention programming. I explore the possibilities and pitfalls of community-level responses to crime,
and the structural limits of the CBO sector’s ability to address a range of harms in the lives of its community members.

In chapter two I detail the methodology of this dissertation, describe my interview respondents, reflect on my positionality and political motivations in relation to its subject matter, and provide an analysis of local trends in knowledge production that I am writing against. I highlight the tendency of local research to dwell on damage in Indigenous communities, and to construct Indigenous criminalization as a result of that damage. Settler colonialism is not a condition faced by Indigenous people in isolation: it is a relationship that implicates non-Indigenous people. It is a system of power in which (some) non-Indigenous people dominate and benefit from the dispossession of Indigenous people. Yet, non-Indigenous people often write themselves out of this relationship by locating colonialism in the past, often so they can position themselves as “helping” Indigenous communities in the present. This is a tendency I wish to challenge methodologically.

By making connections between settler colonial logic and the discourses of crime control and crime prevention, I’m attempting to reframe criminalization as a power struggle. Doing this requires identifying non-Indigenous people and people in power as subjects who should be researched. By studying people with state power, I am making a deliberate methodological move to “study up.” In chapter two and throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how research about the criminalization of Indigenous youth can be refocused away from questions that imply that Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth are responsible for their imprisonment, toward research about the social, political, and cultural forces involved in constructing them as “jail-able” populations (J. Schept, 2013).

In chapter three, I elaborate on the context in which local, community-based research produces damage-centered narratives in Winnipeg. I name and describe the
Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) “school” of research. The CCPA School is a group of local progressive researchers with ties to the Manitoba NDP who produce research about “inner-city” Winnipeg for policy makers, in order to provide evidence that government investments in poor and Indigenous communities is necessary and effective. As Tuck (2009) observes, the promise of damage-centered research is that it may help to mobilize outside attention and resources for the damaged community. However, this theory of politics imagines that change happens through a combination of relationships of influence combined with carefully crafted ideas, rather than a view of politics by which communities imagine themselves as being able to organize in order to build the political power necessary to demand resources and sustain that demand. In the mean time, paradoxically, damage-centered research may help to construct communities as incapable of building that kind of power: “without the context of racism and colonization, all we’re left with is the damage, and this makes our stories vulnerable to pathologizing analyses” (Tuck, 2009, p. 415). Communities constructed as “weak” in order to win competitions for resources from the state are not in a great position from which to fight for self-determination over those resources. The production of damage-centered research feeds into the construction of Indigenous communities as permanent wards of the state.

I illustrate how the CCPA School of research contributes to the construction of crime as a “community” problem through their affirmation that solutions to crime must come from within Indigenous communities. Even as they highlight the “assets” of Indigenous communities, it is done so in service of the idea that those communities have the capacity to change. This “community” focus is one important way the expansion of policing and imprisonment is eliminated from view. Since policing and imprisonment do not originate at the community scale, they are not seen as viable targets for community-based action. However, CCPA School researchers do propose that community policing could be effective.
They construct traditional police as unwitting reproducers of a social order outside of police control, and they propose community policing as a proactive response to neighborhood problems where police could actively participate in community-led development projects (Comack & Silver, 2008). I illustrate how this body of research has been influential both on NDP social policy, and on the consciousness of people who work in city center CBOs.

In chapter four I detail how politicians and political advisors imagined being “tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime” would work, and I analyze three cases where their logic was directly put into practice. I highlight how intense supervision and imprisonment of “at-risk” Indigenous youth was deemed “for their own good” and for the good of their communities in the context of the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy (WATSS). I then focus on two examples of community-policing efforts where police were brought more closely into the workings of CBOs in order to improve communication and bridge the community–police divide. While the political vision of integrated suppression and prevention strategies is that they are a “holistic” approach to crime, these examples illustrate how police authority always outweighs other interests in a “partnership” with community. Through the hard-earned relationships between CBOs and their community members, police are granted more access to more people than they were before, and CBOs are left less able to defend those families from unwanted interventions. I provide examples of moments where community “partners” resist the logics that police brought with them to their “partnerships.” These moments suggest that the centrality of relationships to CBO work could be a basis on which to develop a critique of criminalization.

The focus of chapter five is on the colonial continuities between crime-prevention programming in the present and past struggles for control over the management of Indigenous youth. I compare the discourse of crime-prevention programming from Manitoba government documents with discourses justifying residential schooling, and Child
and Family Services (CFS) interventions in Indigenous families during an era called the "sixties scoop." Then and now, adults were seen as “lost causes,” and children were and are considered the most important sites of outside intervention. I illustrate the material conditions under which the Crime Prevention Branch of the Manitoba NDP government reproduces this divisive logic, even as bureaucrats working within it understand its colonial nature. The Crime Prevention Branch of Manitoba Justice was removed from the Department of Justice and renamed the Department of Children and Youth Opportunities (CYO) by the NDP. The task of the CYO Department was to distribute scarce crime-prevention funding among a large sector of city center CBOs for youth-oriented programming. They were directed to act as if crime-prevention programming was one part of a broader set of supports for families—supports that did not exist in practice, such as adequate housing and increased, liveable welfare rates. Therefore, crime prevention has meant a narrow focus on youth recreation and supervision programs where youth are encouraged to participate in activities outside the home, but families are not offered the adequate material support that could help to create conditions under which they could better care for their kids. Meanwhile, increased attention to crime-prevention programming has been accompanied by a toughening of responses to people understood as “hardened criminals.”

In chapter six, I focus on those community-based organizations which have been tasked with delivering crime-prevention programming, and which have been asked to collaborate more closely with “community police” officers. I contrast the work of CBOs that treat the mostly Indigenous youth they are working with as problems to be “fixed,” with the work of CBOs that instead narrate their work as supporting youth in surviving a world that is working against them. Many of the people I interviewed at Indigenous-run inner-city CBOs, as well as some non-Indigenous CBO workers, described police as part of the harm of
ongoing colonial interventions in their communities. For them, it wasn’t “damaged” families that created most of the problems faced by Indigenous youth—it was the damage inflicted in the course of everyday life in Winnipeg. While research about the “legacy” of colonialism constructs Indigenous youth as “hopeless” and “lacking self-esteem” often due to the legacy of residential schooling, this distress was described by many Indigenous CBO workers as a product of contemporary aggravations and exclusions, not legacies of past events. I document how this understanding shaped the work and potential political efficacy of certain CBOs.

In the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (1991), the authors make the case for self-determination as the only meaningful antidote to Indigenous imprisonment:

> If Aboriginal people are correct, and we believe they are, part of the reason for the high numbers of Aboriginal people in correctional facilities is the fact that Aboriginal people still do not fully control their own lives and destinies, or the lives of their own children. Aboriginal people must have more control over the ways in which their children are raised, taught and protected. (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 509)

Still, the solutions being posed by the NDP government in Manitoba, bolstered by left-wing research and the community-based organization infrastructure, involve *more* intervention in Indigenous communities from outside systems. In this dissertation, I make the case that this pathological impulse to intervene is worthy of study, especially in light of how much research energy is devoted to the pathological nature of Indigenous communities themselves.
Chapter 1

Settler colonialism, liberal carceral expansion, and the politics of community-level responses to crime

Introduction

This dissertation analyzes how the problem of Indigenous mass imprisonment is defined and responded to at different sites in Manitoba: among local researchers, political strategists, and bureaucrats, and at the level of non-profit community-based organizations. The Manitoba New Democratic Party’s (NDP) project of carceral expansion under the guise of “progressive” ideals is not unique. Liberal carceral expansion projects in the United States follow similar patterns and rely on similar race-liberal justifications. In Manitoba, carceral expansion takes place within the context of a settler-colonial present, which shapes both the “tough on crime” and “tough on the causes of crime” prongs of the NDP’s response to crime. Policy responses like crime prevention and community policing dwell on violence within Indigenous communities, and systematically eliminate ongoing state violence from view. Community-based organizations recruited to participate in the management of crime struggle to address harms that don’t fit within narrow definitions of “crime,” while also trying to secure grant money for short-term, outcomes-oriented community interventions. In this sense, competing definitions of the problem of Indigenous criminalization are competing ideas about what kinds of violence are politically significant and require collective response.

My theorizing of the relationship between ongoing Indigenous dispossession, and the violence of imprisonment and policing in the lives of Indigenous people is informed by Indigenous feminist scholar Sarah Hunt’s challenge to Glen Coulthard’s work at a recent
Native American and Indigenous Studies Association conference (Hunt, 2015). Coulthard argues that colonial dispossession continues in the present, although in “modified form” (2014, p. 124). Specifically he suggests that violence “no longer constitutes the regulative norm governing the process of colonial dispossession” in “ostensibly tolerant, multinational, liberal settler polities such as Canada” (paraphrased in Hunt, 2015). Hunt responds by highlighting forms of violence not typically included in our accounting of “colonial violence”:

in order to buy into the notion that state violence “no longer constitutes the regulative norm of settler colonialism,” we have to view gendered violence, police brutality, carceralty of everyday life, deaths of kids in care and willful negligence of our communities as not politically significant. (2015, p. 4)

This criticism is also true when applied to liberal policy-makers. Liberal responses to Indigenous mass imprisonment do not recognize these present-day harms as colonial. Instead, interventions like crime prevention and community policing rely on a recognition of past harms suffered by Indigenous people as an explanation for present-day Indigenous criminality and discord between police and Indigenous communities. Through their acknowledgement of a colonial past, liberal policy-makers excuse themselves and the increased policing and imprisonment they make possible from being part of a colonial present. In this sense, the recognition of a colonial past is a condition of possibility for the reproduction of the colonial present.

In contrast with literature which constructs Indigenous criminality as part of a “legacy” of settler colonialism, I examine crime, criminalization, and crime-prevention interventions as constitutive parts of a settler-colonial present. As historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes: practices of power and domination must be renewed in order for such things as “legacies” to exist: “It is that renewal that should concern us most, even if in the name of our pasts. The so-called legacies of past horrors—slavery, colonialism, or the Holocaust—are possible only because of that renewal. And that renewal occurs only in the
present” (1995, p. 151). To this end, my analysis of carceral expansion in Manitoba brings Native studies and settler colonial studies frameworks to bear on critical criminologies, critical carceral studies (Brown & Schept, 2016), and literature about the non-profit industrial complex and community-level responses to crime.

**Liberal racism and liberal carceral expansion**

Within popular scholarly narratives, the rise of the mass imprisonment of racialized minorities is often described as having emerged as a result of the collapse of left political movements and the ascendance of right-wing politics beginning in the 1970s (Garland, 2001). However, some of the most significant booms in incarceration in the United States happened in the 1990s under Bill Clinton’s Democratic Party, and later in the United Kingdom under Tony Blair’s New Labour Party (Hall, 2011; Murakawa, 2014; Wacquant, 2009). In *Punishing the Poor* (2009) Loïc Wacquant explains this as a result of the ascendancy of a distinctly neoliberal logic expressed in new regimes of regulating poverty, which have required the expansion of the penal state. For example, Wacquant argues that the US shift from welfare to the more restrictive “workfare” under Bill Clinton made more people vulnerable to criminalization, and therefore required policing and incarceration infrastructure to expand to keep pace (2009, p. 19). According to Wacquant, the resulting socio-political landscape is one where the social welfare state and the penal state are inextricably linked and governed by a single logic structured around the disciplining and warehousing of poor people: workfare and prisonfare are not linked through analogy, but through “functional complementarity” (2009, p. 294).

Wacquant and others (Beckett & Herbert, 2008; Brown & Schept, 2016; Tonry, 1995) have argued that the rise of penality can’t be understood by studying criminality or the criminal justice system alone. For Wacquant, criminal punishment has less to do with
“crime,” and more to do with generalized social insecurity, redirected through the criminal punishment system (2009, p. 288). Wacquant’s analysis of the mobilization of the social welfare state for punitive ends gained significant traction among social scientists when it was first published. However, his explanation has also been met with important criticisms, some of which were summed up in a 2010 issue of Theoretical Criminology devoted to engaging with Wacquant’s work (Cheliotis, 2010; Harcourt, 2010; Peck, 2010; Piven, 2010; Valverde, 2010). Mariana Valverde has criticized Wacquant for theorizing at too large a scale to be able to explain how a seemingly coherent “neoliberal” political logic actually does the work of producing changes in social welfare and punishment. As a result of working at the scale of “the state” without enough empirical work, the complex decisions and challenges faced by social actors at smaller scales are missing from Wacquant’s theory of the rise of the penal state (Piven, 2010; Valverde, 2010). Therefore, he fails to account for the ways the unfolding of this agenda has been advanced, disrupted, and resisted in different ways in different places within a range of often contradictory ideologies and practices: “consequently, particular governing activities and specific governing technologies tend to be regarded as secondary, as on the surface, as local modifications that rarely affect the underlying structural set-up” (Valverde 2010, p. 118). Valverde calls instead for observations that do not presuppose “the state,” which she calls part of the effects of governance practices, rather than their initiators: “what Marxists like to call ‘the State’ only exists as the ever-shifting, fragile, site-specific product of governing activity” (2010, p. 118). To this end, Valverde fantasizes about a “theoretical ceasefire” where terms like “neoliberalism,” “state”, and “governmentality” are banned in intellectual work “until we know enough about what is actually going on in a large variety of different places” (2010, p. 120). In recent years, following this call, there has indeed been a proliferation of case
studies that do the work of identifying how carceral expansion projects are achieved in particular places.

In Judah Schept’s analysis of the left-wing politics of incarceration in a small Midwestern American town, he makes a distinction between those left-of-center administrations who take on the rhetoric of right-wing crime policy (“tough on crime”) in order to win votes, like Tony Blair and Bill Clinton; and the less examined politics and discourses through which the Left supports incarceration while purporting to do the opposite (Schept, 2013; Schept, 2016). He profiles a community that advocated for the expansion of a “justice campus” which was promoted in local discourse as a countermovement to punitive mass incarceration because it included a combination of social services and carceral facilities all in one place:

> the poor of the county could visit their loved ones in jail while also accessing the food pantries, housing and employment assistance, and social work offices that formed the important components of their safety net. In this vision, the justice campus would constitute a one-stop-shop for poor people, a bucolic strip mall of incarceration and social service. (Schept, 2013, p. 5)

In this case, the expansion of the carceral capacity of the state was achieved using the language of opposition to mass incarceration: the “justice campus” was understood by those advocating for it as a “welfarist policy initiative” (Schept, 2016, p. 81). As Schept observes, this is different from Wacquant’s account of the merging of the “left” and “right” hands of the state in ways that stigmatize and punish the poor. While those may be the outcomes of these policy initiatives, the rhetoric motivating them is about caring for the poor, not villainizing them (Schept, 2016, p. 54).

The improvement of jail and prison facilities to accommodate tasks beyond brute punishment and incapacitation has ensured the renovation of the idea of the prison throughout history (Brown & Schept, 2016; Davis, 2003; Kilgore, 2014). In *Prison and the Gallows* (2006), Marie Gottschalk demonstrates how opposition to the death penalty helped
to legitimate imprisonment by constructing life in prison as a “(comparatively) humane punishment” (Gottschalk, 2015, p. 807). The “improvement” of prison facilities for women has served as a justification for the construction of new women’s prisons across Canada (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). In charting rationales for jail construction across Canada, Piché (2014) traces how officials faced with decisions about the Canada-wide remand crisis have opted to expand the capacities of remand instead of letting people out on bail, because they are said to be dealing with a “changing offender profile” with more complex needs (p. 62).

Within the “changing offender profile” observed by jail officials and external advisors were multiple categories of people deemed to need not only punishment, but also special kinds of help that the jail could only accommodate if it grew:

Aboriginal survivors of Canada’s colonization project, women who turn to sex work, the drug trade and other criminalized means of subsistence to survive, individuals identified as having mental health and drug addiction issues, as well as youth who are said to be involved in gangs. (Piché, 2014, p. 62)

The incorporation of the multiple needs of “changing offender profiles” ensures that the jail is renovated to deal (or “(not) deal,” as Piché puts it) “with a wide array of complex social issues” (2014, p. 62). In keeping with the reliance on an image of a particular kind of offender, Schept (2013) observed the construction of a “jail(able)” population imagined as benefiting from the integration of security and welfare logics within the “Justice Campus”: a group of people understood to be poor because they are lacking in particular values and skills. These examples allude to the centrality of the construction of social difference for the success of carceral projects, even when that social difference is expressed as a concern for the needs of particular types of prisoners.

Of particular interest to my study is scholarship that documents how the liberal expansion of the carceral state relies on distinctly liberal forms of racism and racialization. Recent books by Naomi Murakawa (2014) and Elizabeth Hinton (2016) explain the build-up
of the law-and-order agenda in the United States as a project of race-liberal Democrats, in contrast to the often rehearsed narrative that the Reagan-era "war on drugs" was completely to blame. Murakawa traces how the criminal justice system was given new life and legitimacy in the US post-Civil Rights era by organizing itself to protect African American people from interpersonal racist violence. These efforts to improve the carceral state so that it could be “strong enough to control racial violence in the streets and regimented enough to control racial bias in the criminal justice administration” (Murakawa 2014, p. 3) meant more resources directed toward policing individualized racist attacks. As Murakawa explains, in the context of this political agenda, racism within the criminal justice system was understood to be “an individual whim, an irrationality” which could be controlled through “codified, standardized, and formal authority” in the form of race-neutral rules for the conduct of police and other actors within the criminal justice system (2014, p. 11). This had the effect of expanding criminal justice presence in the lives of African Americans, and emboldening criminal justice authority: “With each administrative layer to protect African Americans from lawless racial violence, liberals propelled carceral development that, through perverse turns, expanded lawful racial violence” (Murakawa, 2014, p. 26).

In Hinton’s (2016) analysis of the “war on poverty,” she identifies a “shared set of assumptions about African Americans, poverty, and crime” among policy makers from different parties and ideological backgrounds (p. 3). Among these assumptions were “the seemingly neutral statistical and sociological ‘truth’ of black criminality” (Hinton, 2016, p. 3). As Hinton illustrates, this logic undergirded both the anti-delinquency programs aimed at providing opportunities to low-income youth under the Kennedy administration, and Johnson’s expanded “war on poverty” which included “more aggressive and exhaustive supervision” of Black urban communities (2016, p. 3). These, in turn, laid the groundwork
for the national crime-control programs of Ronald Reagan, which focused on confinement and urban surveillance.

While Murakawa and Hinton unravel the race-liberal logics of state initiatives that grew the carceral state, others have documented the process by which liberal demands from grassroots organizers have also contributed to that growth (Bumiller, 2008; Hanhardt, 2013; Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2012; Richie, 2012; Spade, 2011). In the mainstreaming of social movements to build power among oppressed groups of people, demands for recognition have sometimes turned into appeals to protect the “vulnerable” in ways that ultimately embolden the claims of the carceral state to be a protector. For example, among wealthy gay people, demands of the state for protection against “hate crimes” has increased police presence in gay villages, which has sometimes benefited certain gay people, but puts many more at risk of homophobic and trans-phobic violence from the police (Hanhardt, 2013; Spade, 2011).

In her account of the politics of the feminist anti-violence movement in the US in the 70s and 80s, Beth Richie (2012) emphasizes the fact that the male violence experienced by the poorest Black women stems not only from the impoverished conditions of their neighborhoods; it also stems from the state itself, and from racist ideologies that prevent such women from being understood as victims. In Richie’s analysis, these women’s experiences show “the tremendous cost that resulted from the anti-violence movement’s deployment of a rhetorical strategy aimed at bringing legitimacy to the issue of gender violence" by appealing to state protection (2012, p. 16). This idea is explored in depth in a joint statement by prison abolitionist group Critical Resistance and the women-of-color feminist anti-violence group Incite! which details how “reliance on the criminal justice system has taken power away from women’s ability to organize collectively to stop [gender] violence and has invested this power within the state” (Critical Resistance-Incite!, p. 142).
The work of Richie (2012), the Incite! Women of Color Collective Against Violence (2009), and other queer and anti-racist feminists (Reddy, 2011; Spade, 2011) asks activists and scholars alike to consider what kind of authority is being emboldened, and at whose expense, when social movements make demands for protection from the state. They caution that, by demanding more or better police attention, social movements legitimate the policing function, which is structurally unsuited to protecting the most marginalized people from the multiple forms of violence they may face.

The carceral expansion project of the Manitoba NDP is recognizable in Murakawa’s account of the expansion of law and order in defense of African Americans, Hinton’s account of the racial logic underlying the twin policies of crime prevention and crime control, Schept’s account of the integration of security and welfare logics, and in left-liberal non-governmental organization (NGO) demands to improve policing in Indigenous-majority neighborhoods. These symmetries illustrate that the project of liberal carceral expansion in Manitoba is neither new nor unique. However, it is useful to trace the particular liberal intellectual genealogies of the Manitoba NDP’s logic, and the particular structures of racism within which it exists.

In the case of the Manitoba NDP, the liberal traditions they drew inspiration from were from the UK. When the NDP was first elected in 1999 after a long stint of Conservative party power, they borrowed large swaths of political platform from Tony Blair’s New Labour Party. Woolford and Thomas (2011) identify a mix of New Labour “Third Way” politics with more traditional social-democratic politics in the political platform of the NDP (p. 118). On the one hand, the NDP has a stated interest in addressing

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8 While the Manitoba NDP may cite the UK as the source of its social policy agenda, Peck (2001) illustrates how the UK Labour Party borrowed heavily from Bill Clinton’s Democratic Party. His analysis of policy transfer between the US, the UK, and Canada helps to explain how similar neoliberal social welfare regimes emerged in these places.
criminogenic social conditions, and on the other, they are punitive and vindictive in their efforts to make “criminals” and criminogenic communities responsible for violence in their midst.

In 1993, Tony Blair—not yet prime minister—wrote an article in the *New Statesman* called “Why crime is a socialist issue.” This is where he first articulated the notion that the Labour Party should be “tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime.” The Manitoba NDP wholeheartedly embraced this maxim. It is powerful in that it provides policy makers a rationale for rejecting the choice between punishing individuals and changing social conditions. Blair indicated that *both* could and should be done at the same time: individuals must be held responsible for the damage they do to their communities, and the state “must create the conditions for the establishment of safe and effective communities” (Matthews & Young, 2003, p. 6). Two different timescales are invoked in order to make being “tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime” make sense: 1) crime needs to be tackled in the long term through inclusionary policies, but 2) *in the here and now* it undermines the forces of inclusion and therefore must be combated with policies that can be seen as (temporarily) exclusionary, such as policing and imprisonment (Matthews & Young, 2003, p. 13).

Blair’s maxim was inspired by left-realist thinking. The idea of “realism”—which is juxtaposed against left idealism—is that we will always have “crime” and therefore we will always need crime control. According to its critics, left idealist criminology tended to “downplay the reality of ‘ordinary’ violence” (Currie, 2010, p.115 ), leaving it out of touch with poor people who suffer disproportionately high rates of criminal harm. Currie (2009) characterizes the left idealist position as tending to “avoid thinking about a criminal justice strategy at all beyond simple non-intervention” (p. 118). In contrast, a central purpose of the left-realist project was to work toward an articulation of crime *policy* on the Left. What
made it a "realist" criminology was the way it centered the criminal victimization of poor people in "the idea that crime (emphatically including 'ordinary' crimes in the streets and homes) should be taken seriously, not just as an intellectual category but, above all, as part of the lived experience of real people in real communities." (Currie, 2009, p. 113). Lea and Young (1984) observed that the dismissal of street crime as a “distraction” from more fundamental political issues meant that the realm of crime policy was essentially surrendered to the right wing. The goal of the left-realist intervention was to develop criteria for immediate policy responses in the here and now that were consistent with a broader, long-term political vision of democratic socialism. In the foundational left-realist text What is to be Done About Law and Order? John Lea and Jock Young (1984) argue that to pursue crime control and social order is to take the problems of working-class people seriously, as long as we keep the questions “whose order, whose discipline, and for what purpose?” central. Policy implications laid out in What is to be Done. . . ? include the minimal use of prison, and consensus-based policing (rather than military-style policing), within a broader policy agenda that sets out to meaningfully address relative deprivation and marginalization.

Preserving its core justification for punishment, New Labour interpreted and distorted the intent of left realism (Pemberton, 2007). Blair’s New Labour Party promised to address social exclusion through prevention, reintegration of the excluded, and “the delivery of minimum basic standards” in a range of policy areas (Matthews & Young, 2003, p. 11, emphasis theirs). Addressing social exclusion was seen as “the radical project of New Labour” because it was seen as gesturing to a series of “linked problems” that all had to be addressed in tandem rather than a single problem that could be addressed via a narrow set of reforms (Matthews & Young, 2003, p. 7). The policy rhetoric acknowledged the structural origins of crime. However, Pitts observes that, when it came to in translating the theory to
policy, the discussion of whole social structures was figured as a problem of linking up administrative bodies, and concern with social structure became a problem of social administration: “the concept of social exclusion carries with it the notion that the problem is that of inadequate management of society. The solution becomes managerial rather than transformative” (quoted in Matthews & Young, 2003, p. 15). Reflecting on New Labour social policy in 2003, Matthews and Young illustrate how a shallow version of “social exclusion” was made to stand in for the “tough on the causes of crime” half of Blair’s mantra. This is what Matthews and Young call a “weak” version of social exclusion: “the strong versions of this discourse emphasize the role of those excluding, whereas the weak versions involve focusing on the qualities of the excluded” (2003, p. 18), often blamed in New Labour policy on “poor parenting” in dysfunctional families (Mooney, 2003). Thus, a deliberately political and potentially transformative discourse about crime was transformed, as exemplified by the reframing of social exclusion, into a managerialist discourse.

While the left-realistic project can’t be blamed for New Labour’s butchering of its social welfare agenda, the commitment of realists to being “tough on crime” deserves critical attention. Lea and Young don’t see structural racism in their analysis—they advocate consensus-based policing as a defense against police bias. However, within left-realistic analysis, there is not much room to consider that, for poor people of colour, the police are often a major source of violence in their everyday lives.

In 1982, around the time of the first articulations of left-realistic thought, Paul Gilroy publicly debated Lea and Young in the pages of Marxism Today in light of the release of the London Metropolitan Police statistics about race and crime. At its core, this debate was about how leftists should conceive of race in relation to crime and criminalization, and the contours of this debate are relevant and familiar today. Lee Bridges and Paul Gilroy (1982)
questioned the accuracy of the race and crime statistics (given the general inaccuracy of crime statistics), and they highlighted the political project behind their dissemination: “the significance of the racial crime statistics did not lie in their accuracy but in the wider political support they engendered for the police in their continuing campaign to assert control over London’s black communities” (p. 34). Bridges and Gilroy criticized elements of the “white intellectual left” (referring directly to left realists, or those attempting to “take crime seriously”) who seemed to them to be explaining away these increases in policing.

Lea and Young (1982) responded by emphasizing the reality of high rates of Black crime in London, and suggesting that increases in policing in London are unfortunate responses to that unfortunate problem. For them, it was necessary to contend with the reality that deprivation and racial discrimination in Black communities leads to higher crime rates. They suggested that police are ill-equipped to address the problem of Black criminality, primarily because of “the dynamics of breakdown in police-community relations,” which police are responding to badly with military-style policing (Lea and Young, 1982, p. 39). For Lea and Young, policing can be recuperated in order to protect Black people from violent crime in their neighborhoods if the response were to repair relationships between police and Black communities. For Gilroy and Bridges, the police themselves are a source of violence and brutality in Black communities, and increases in policing would only intensify that reality. Later, Murakawa (2014) would document how calls to improve policing - in the case of the USA, through efforts to rid policing of discretionary racial bias - affirmed the legitimacy and power of the role of the police, which ultimately increased the threat of violence in African American communities.

This debate is reproduced in local, Winnipeg explanations for increases in community policing in order to address crime in Indigenous-majority neighborhoods. Police are constructed by local left-wing academics as unwitting “reproducers of social order”
(Comack, 2012)—a necessary, but not sufficient response to the “complex” problems facing Indigenous communities, suffering as Indigenous people are from the legacy of a colonial past. These academics propose that improving policing so that it is more “community-oriented” would be a desirable solution. In practice, as this dissertation illustrates, “community policing” has helped some people to feel more comfortable with the police, while making others less safe. “Community” policing has been added to existing forms of policing, enlarging the overall power of police in the city. This has created a situation where street-crime cops are still as violent as they were before, and now there are fewer community-level places for people to get help that aren’t police-affiliated. The debate between Gilroy & Bridges and Lea & Young (rehashed many times since 1982) raises the question: What does it mean to take violence seriously in the lives of people who are poor and racialized?

Reflections on social-movement organizing against gender-based violence have produced the important insight that defining “harm” in a way that does not include the threat of harm from the state leaves the most marginalized people victim to an expanding carceral state (Richie, 2012). This is a critical insight provided by the Black and Indigenous feminist theorizing that has informed abolitionist scholarship and activism in the United States. Left realist and other critical criminologies have not seriously contended with this body of feminist abolitionist scholarship, which doesn't fit with the “left idealist” non-interventionism realists have critiqued. Within this body of abolitionist literature, calls for the scaling back of the power of police and the criminal justice system are informed by a deep concern for and engagement with the multiple forms of violence faced by women of color. Rather than being unconcerned with harm and responses to harm (as left idealists are sometimes characterized by realists), Black and Indigenous feminist anti-violence scholarship and activism makes links between interpersonal, community, and state violence in order to chart responses that do not make any of these forms of violence worse.
This includes a strong prescription against reforms that could embolden racist and patriarchal forms of power like the police (Richie, 2013).

In Beth Richie's work (2013), she describes how poor, Black women are made vulnerable to multiple forms of violence as they bear the brunt of social disinvestment and cuts to social programs, while also suffering from male patriarchal violence within their own communities and at the hands of the state agencies they are supposed to be able to call for help. In this analysis, these multiple forms of violence can't be hierarchically ranked, and they are not additive - they are interconnected: "intimate partner violence against women is dialectically linked to conditions that force particular household arrangements that endanger Black women, including subordinated Black patriarchy" (p. 137). For Richie (2013), an analysis of state violence must also include a critique of the ways social welfare can be mobilized for surveillance in order to account for "the harm caused by those governmental and other public agencies that are officially authorized to offer services, monitor behavior, and maintain social order, but fail to protect Black women in vulnerable communities." (p. 139). In addition to social disinvestment, overt harm caused by state agencies, and patriarchal male violence, Black women must contend with being constantly scrutinized by social welfare agencies while being under-supported by them.

This analysis is similar to Indigenous feminist analyses of violence against Indigenous women in North America. Dian Million's work (2013) traces the emergence of Indigenous feminism in public discourse starting in the 1970s which was a feminism based in Indigenous women "articulating the intimate violence in their lives" (p. 28) and linking "this violence to the violent outcomes of a astill ongoing Canadian colonialism" (p. 28). Maracle (2003), Robertson (2016), Smith (2015), and Simpson (2016) are some of the many Indigenous feminist scholars who make links between the epidemic of sexual violence against Indigenous women in Canada and the United States and the ideology of conquest
which treats Indigenous land as free for the taking of white men, and treats Indigenous people on the land as violable and disposable. Central to Million's Indigenous feminist work is identifying "the violence inherent in liberal, racialized, heteronomrative law" (p. 28), and rejecting neoliberal moves to isolate responses to gender-based violence from responses to colonial violence. Like Richie (2013), Million (2013) takes violence in the lives of poor, Indigenous women seriously by identifying its rootedness in state violence:

"It is not my argument that there isn't a need to treat alcoholism and drug addiction or move to stop abusive behaviors. That is of utomost importance. What I do argue is that we should give attention to the biopolitical processes that are now abundantly available in the United States and Canada to 'heal' the Native from traumas that are actually outcomes of power relations that remain our relations with states." (p. 150)

In Canada in the present, sexual violence against Indigenous women continues to be a central concern of Indigenous feminists, and it has been exacerbated by the wilful neglect on the part of criminal justice agencies to take the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women seriously (Hunt, 2015; Razack, 2002). In this sense, police pose a threat in the lives of Indigenous women both in terms of violence they perpetrate, and the violence they systematically ignore.

One of the central questions in Richie's work is how the feminist anti-violence movement ended up being complicit in the build-up of prisons and policing in the United States (2013, p. 110). She argues that the race and class-neutral analysis of the white feminist movement was inadequate: "it failed to explain that for Black women who experience abuse along a continuum, that includes physical, sexual, and social mistreatment in their households, community, and from the state." (Richie, 2013, p. 110). Left realist analyses often centers a race-less, gender-less "working class" subject who suffers from criminal harm and could benefit from improved forms of police attention. Richie's findings are useful for an analysis of how a left realist theory of responses to
violence, absent an analysis of race and gender, can lend itself to strengthening police authority even if it only intends to improve it.

In contrast, the joint Critical Resistance-Incite! Women of Color Against Violence statement emphasizes the need to "place poor and working-class women of color at the center of analysis, organizing practices, and leadership development" (p. 144) in anti-violence social movements. As long as these women's stories are centered, it is difficult to imagine pursuing anti-violence strategies that support the expansion of criminalization. Left realists don't see it as their job to imagine an end to the criminal justice system: "left realists take for granted that we will, in every country, have a criminal justice system for the foreseeable future, and that accordingly one of our central tasks is to figure out how to shape those systems" (Currie, 2009, p. 117). In contrast, abolitionist-anti-racist-feminist scholars construct proposals for alternative responses to violence based on the knowledge that their lives depend on putting an end to those systems (Bassichis, Lee & Spade, 2011).

Gender is not a category of analysis of this dissertation, however Black and Indigenous feminist analyses have informed how I understand violence. A feminist conception of violence draws attention to the interlocking nature of violence at different scales. This is how, as Hinton (2016) writes, prisons, jails, and law enforcement institutions come to be understood as engines of American inequality; they do not simply respond to it, they are part of its actual production (p. 1). It is also where the impetus comes from to respond to violence in its multiple forms using "analyses and strategies to end violence that do not isolate acts of state or individual violence from their larger contexts." (Critical Resistance and Incite!, p. 144).

While the field of critical criminology has largely insulated itself from Black feminist critique, the criminological concept of "social harm" comes closest to addressing similar issues. In their survey of the study of "social harm", Hillyard & Tombs (2007) argue that
moving beyond the concept of crime would allow for an analysis that could grapple with a range of harms including:

"the deleterious activities of local and national states and of corporations upon people's lives, whether in respect of lack of wholesome food, inadequate housing or heating, low income, exposure to various forms of danger, violations of basic human rights, and victimization to various forms of crime" (p. 16).

They suggest that this analysis could be extended to the notion of a "harmed community" which could include "groups of people in some form of collectivity" who suffer similar harms (Hillyard & Tombs, 2007, p. 17). This is reminiscent of Gilmore's (2007) definition of racism as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (p. 28). In Gilmore's definition, collective exposure to harm is part of the process of racialization and the very power relations that constitute racism. In most critical criminologies, including left realism, left idealism, and the study of social harm, race is conceived as an optional category of analysis rather than part of the structuring logic of state violence and criminalization. This is how criminologies that do not center an analysis of the multiple forms of violence experienced by people of color wind up complicit in responses to harm that reify the category of "crime" and invest in renovating (and thus affirming) the power of the criminal justice system to respond.

For example, in the colonial context, state violence has been central to the production of "Indigenous" people as a category, and Indigenous people continue to disproportionately suffer from state violence, but it is not something which is part of a liberal anti-crime agenda. Liberal criminologies are "bound to the regulatory project of the state" (De Giorgi, 2014, p. 26), meaning that even if they are capable of imagining other types of harm, they consider the project of regulating criminal harm through the criminal justice system to be legitimate. As Alessandro De Giorgi cogently explains, liberal criminologies see the penal system as “reactive,” “a set of practices triggered by the
illegalities to which marginal populations are drawn by unequal access to material resources” (2014, p. 28). In contrast, a radical criminology takes penal practices to be “a constitutive element of capitalism” (2014, p. 28). To the degree that capitalism and colonialism are intertwined, this analysis helps us to see how liberal criminological rationality, while relying on the idea that it is attending to a legacy of past harm in the lives of Indigenous people, is actually constituting the conditions of contemporary colonialism.

Tamari Kitossa would place the left-realist tradition within what he characterizes as the fundamentally colonial field of criminology. He identifies criminology as bound up in the state’s definition of harm, “constructed as individual to individual” (Kitossa, 2012, p. 206), which has significant implications for locating systems of oppression outside its purview, like capitalism, colonialism, heterosexism, imperialism, and patriarchy:

the state’s drive to individualize the reaction of oppressed groups to exploitative social conditions. . . and thereby to negate collectivist prospects for recompense and social transformation—is maintained and perpetuated by mainstream criminological theory and research. (Kitossa, 2012, p. 207)

Therefore, Kitossa concludes that in order to have criminology work for “African Americans and other oppressed groups,” it was necessary to address “the problem of the analytical boundary that gave criminology its coherence” (2012, p. 210). That is, to take seriously the range of harms in people’s lives.

In contemporary Manitoba, the investment in state-drawn categories of harm has significant implications for whether or not state violence against native people is intelligible. Colonization, a foundational source of violence against Indigenous people, even when conceived as a discrete “event,” was never against the law. And a criminalizing logic is an important way of depoliticizing state violence:

Read against this larger backdrop then, we can begin to read the vast network of prisons in North America in terms of its ideological function relative to settler
colonialism: that is, the manner in which it functions strenuously to depoliticize this ongoing material violence and erect a strict separation between criminal control and conquest despite indigenous societies’ continued insistence that externally imposed coercive control over their members (for whatever reason) is an affront to the inherent right to self-government. (Nichols, 2014, pp. 448-449)

It is not utopian or idealist to suggest that one cannot account for the violence in the lives of Indigenous peoples without accounting for colonial violence (Agozino, 2003). Following from that, it is unrealistic to conceive of imprisonment and policing as being in and of themselves appropriate responses to such violence, and more realistic to consider them as part of ongoing violent interventions.

Settler colonialism and the carceral state

I situate the relationship between race and criminalization in Canada in the context of theories of the “carceral state” broadly, and within the framework of settler colonialism specifically. The concept of the “carceral state” links settler-colonial violence and the violence of the criminal justice system together with other state practices that rely on and reproduce partitioning and “othering.” Theories of the “carceral state” suggest that incarceration is only one expression of a range of state activities which can be understood as “carceral,” and that the production of “carcerality” in all spheres of social life is related to the production of race (Gilmore, 2007; Richie, 2012). Schept explains his choice of the term “carceral” instead of something like “incarceration” or “imprisonment” because it is a “concept that can speak to the strategies and linkages that connect incarceration to other spheres of state punishment and social control” (Schept, 2016, p. 17). Murakawa uses the concept of the “carceral state” to describe a political structure beyond the confines of the criminal justice system and criminal law. For her, the carceral state is “sprawling and adaptive, woven into the fabric of American political life” (Murakawa in Gottschalk, 2015, p. 805). In understanding the Western Canadian context, the concept of “the carceral state”
opens up space for imagining how criminal-justice punishment, colonial violence, and less explicitly violent forms of colonial discipline are linked together, for example through social programming that constructs Indigenous people as targets for “fixing.”

Settler colonialism is a distinct form of colonialism in that settlers displace Indigenous people from land, establish government, and stay. In this context, theorist Patrick Wolfe characterizes settler-colonial invasion as “a structure, not an event” (Wolfe, 2006), a structure which at no point in Canadian history can be said to have been dismantled. My research project looks to contemporary processes of racialization and criminalization in order to understand how the “structure” of settler-colonial invasion infuses political and social organization in the present. Theorists of the “carceral state” make connections between the production of race, and those activities of the state which construct material or ideological borders, partitions, or separations between different groups of people. For example, in the context of settler colonialism, the moves made by the state to claim land for the Canadian nation are the same moves which constitute “Indigenous” as a category of person: Indigenous people are those people who occupy the land in a way that is antithetical to the goals of the state. It is not that people of a certain race are targeted, Wolfe illustrates, it is that race is “made in the targeting” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). In the same move, at the same time as they are constituted as “Indigenous,” they are constituted as a threat to the state. Indigenous people, by virtue of existing and maintaining a degree of separateness from Canadian society, have continued to be threats to be displaced, moved, eliminated, and targeted for assimilation. Citing Deborah Bird Rose, Wolfe writes, “to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home.” (2006, p. 388).

A number of key distinctions between settler colonialism and other forms of colonialism help to explain how the settler-colonial present differs from the “post-colonial”
era elsewhere. As Veracini explains, while exploitative colonial power sought to build systems “to sustain the permanent subordination of the colonized” in order to use their labor (Veracini, 2011, p. 2), settler colonialism is a land-based project that “is characterized by a persistent drive to ultimately supersede the conditions of its operation” (p. 3). While an exploitation colony depends on a permanent and unbreachable distinction between the colonizer and the colonized, a settler colony depends on the idea that the colonized are dead or dying and therefore have no legitimate claims to territory: “in other words, whereas colonialism *reinforces* the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism *erases it*” (Veracini, 2011, p. 3). As Veracini and others have written, by the end of the “settler colonial trajectory, the settler colonial state claims to no longer be settler colonial” (Veracini, 2011, p. 3).

In Canada, this is reinforced by the proclamation of an era of “reconciliation” and official forms of “recognition” offered by settler-colonial governments. In 2008, Canada entered into a formal era of “reconciliation” with Indigenous people after an apology from the federal government for its role in the violent and deadly residential school system. This apology carried with it a distinct and deliberate temporality (A. Simpson, 2016; Trouillot, 2000): it placed colonialism in the past, and positioned the current Canadian state as no longer culpable after having apologized for particular past harms. In studying nation-state apologies for past wrongs, Trouillot (2000) describes how apologies “create pastness”: “wrong done in a time marked as past is recognized as such, and this acknowledgement itself creates or verifies a new temporal plane, a present oriented towards the future” (p. 174). Audra Simpson (2016) observes that the formal apology “whittles down and isolates harms to one thing—that thing that is recognizable” (p. 439): the tragedy of residential schooling. However, the apology does not carry with it any promises for a new relationship in the future, as the Canadian state continues to engage in the deliberate undermining of
Indigenous sovereignties, and the usurpation and destruction of Indigenous lands for resource development projects (Pasternak, 2015). The apology and the moment of “reconciliation” serves a distinct function in obscuring state violence, while focusing on the need for Indigenous people to heal themselves and their communities from past traumas. As Million observes, Canada “asks for a reconciliation between a victim and a perpetrator in the same moment that any actual political power for Canadian Indigenous peoples is continuously deferred to a future self-healing from capitalism’s present and ongoing violence” (2013, p. 12).

The most recent settler-colonial–studies scholarship makes an effort to specify that the settler-colonial analytic is not meant to be considered as the only or even the foundational structuring racial logic in a given time and place. In Alyosha Goldstein’s recent collection *Formations of United States Colonialism* (2014), his introduction asserts that in order to paint a full picture of colonial dynamics within the US, settler colonialism must be understood alongside the US reliance “on the ever-expanding dispossession and disavowal of indigenous peoples, global circuits of expropriated labor, economies of racialization, and its expansive network of military bases” (pp. 1-2). Moreover, Goldstein contests the periodization of studies of US colonialism, and in his body of work identifies multiple forms of colonialism and US imperial domination that have effects inside the USA (2014). Similarly, Iyko Day (2015) argues for a conception of an “ecology of power relations” (p. 113) to describe different forms of colonial domination within and across nation-states.

Clarifying the relationship between different forms of domination helps in making a distinction between how anti-Black racism and anti-Native racism work. This is important in order to articulate how racialized mass imprisonment is not the end point of the exact same social processes in Canada and the United States; or for Black people in Canada and the US, and Indigenous people in either country (A. Smith, 2014a). Whereas the logic of
anti-Blackness constructs Black people as property, Native peoples are seen as citizens-in-wait:

because of their child-like primitive state, they are not worthy of citizenship at the moment, they may eventually become citizens if they were to renounce their relationship to their Native nation and demonstrate the “maturity” required to become a citizen. (A. Smith, 2014b, para. 4)

Some Afro-Pessimist analyses of settler colonialism contend that the appeal to nationhood of Indigenous politics in the Americas reinscribes the logics of anti-Blackness (Day, 2015). However, as Smith and others have asserted, “Native peoples can,” under white supremacy, “claim a certain kind of nation; however, it is a nation that must disappear” (A. Smith, 2014b, para. 4). In history, settler-colonial dispossession has been both a project of killing Indigenous people, and a project of attempting to assimilate Indigenous people in order to attempt to extinguish their claims to separate nationhood. These dynamics are an important context for understanding that settler-colonial violence may be expressed both through imprisonment and through social programming aimed at the better integration of Indigenous youth into Canadian society.

Coulthard and Wolfe (Coulthard, 2007; Wolfe, 2011) have suggested that settler-colonial nations have entered a period where the character of violence has changed. Wolfe suggests that as the settler colonial project expanded westward and hit the literal edge of the frontier at the Pacific coast of the United States, that the frontier “turned inward”:

The settler colonial logic of elimination in its crudest frontier form, a violent rejection of all things Indian, was transformed into a paternalistic mode of governmentality which, though still sanctioned by state violence, came to focus on assimilation rather than rejection. (2011, p. 13)

This is similar to Coulthard’s assertion that colonial rule has shifted “from a more-or-less unconcealed structure of domination to a mode of colonial governmentality” (Coulthard, 2007, p. 15). However, projects of assimilation, especially when framed as “crime prevention,” are always backed by the threat of the brute force of policing, especially the
management of “at-risk” Indigenous youth. Aileen Moreton-Robinson proposes that contemporary settler colonial dispossession be thought of in terms of “a mode of rationalization. . . underpinned by an excessive desire to invest in reproducing and reaffirming the nation-state’s ownership, control, and domination” (2015, p. xii). This dynamic is at work in the warehousing of Indigenous people deemed “irredeemable” in prison, and the work of reaffirming the idea that Indigenous communities can’t manage their own affairs because of all of the work they have yet to do (healing, job training, learning how to parent) before becoming fully civilized. In analyzing the particular governing strategies of the NDP, I suggest that colonial power has not become less violent, but that responses to crime illustrate an approach which mixes brute force (“tough on crime”) with colonial governmentality (“tough on the causes of crime”).

Struggles for control over Indigenous youth have been a central, defining feature of Canadian settler colonialism. Throughout Canadian history, social-welfare interventions that forcibly removed Indigenous children from their parents’ homes in order to “civilize” them have been tools of destabilization and dispossession. This was true during the residential school era, and continued during the so-called “sixties scoop” during which at least twenty thousand Indigenous children were confiscated by child welfare services across Canada and moved into white families (Bennet, Blackstock, & De La Ronde, 2005).

This dissertation project was initially inspired by striking similarities between the discourse of present-day crime-prevention policy in Manitoba and past assimilationist policies directed at Indigenous people. This appears in the use of language that constructs Indigenous youth as unruly, immanent threats or failures in need of management. For example, whereas residential schooling was justified in policy documents of the time by the need to remove Indigenous children from the deleterious influence of their under-civilized parents (de Leeuw, 2009), present-day “crime-prevention” hubs known as Lighthouses (a
hallmark of NDP crime-prevention policy) emphasize the provision of “proper supervision” of children by people other than their families (Manitoba Department of Justice, n.d.). This takes on a particular valence because crime-prevention programming, including Lighthouses, is directed at predominantly Indigenous neighborhoods.

In other government documents, crime prevention is constructed as a task of teaching self-respect and discipline. Crime-prevention programming emphasizes keeping kids busy, training them for jobs (often jobs that don’t actually exist for them in this economy), and providing counseling, behavior modification, and education so that these potentially threatening youth can properly operate in the world beyond their home communities, which are imagined as dysfunctional. While these logics of child “saving” have been identified elsewhere at other points in time (Pisciotta, 1996; Platt, 1977; Rothman, 2002), in Manitoba they extend from a particular settler-colonial logic. As Sarah de Leeuw writes, “The production of Indians rested on a fundamental assumption that children could be molded and transformed from one state of being to another, namely from a colonially undesirable Indian to one who conformed to colonial expectations” (2009, p. 130). Thus, at the time of residential schooling, the Canadian state felt it had a moral responsibility toward Indigenous people because dispossession and displacement was inevitable. They had the responsibility to usher dispossession and displacement in a way that helped Indigenous people become acclimatized to European civilization.

These present-day crime-prevention interventions rest on ideological constructions of Indigenous criminality which are different from conservative villainizations of a criminal “other” who needs to be “cast out” of society. Instead, they fit with what Jock Young (2007) has called the “liberal othering” of the criminal and the poor. This model explains their conditions in terms of lacking the values or characteristics mainstream society is said to have, positioning such people as needing better integration into “society,” which is taken for
granted to be good. In the Canadian context, this type of othering intersects with a particular historical imagination which locates settler colonialism in the past and is therefore able to construct the present-day state and service providers as being in a benevolent relationship to Indigenous people.

In Manitoba, Indigenous-led community-based organizations (CBOs) have been recruited to participate in crime-prevention programming aimed at Indigenous youth, and to ally more closely with the police in the context of community-policing initiatives. This appeals to the demands of Indigenous organizations to be self-governing, and especially to govern the fates of their own children. However, Dian Million (2013) cautions against conflating these innovations with meaningful community control. She distinguishes between two meanings of self-determination, both of which are present in Winnipeg’s CBO sector:

One is an inherent Indigenous autonomy that honors “distinctive ways of looking at the world,” that makes these distinctions part of the partnership and critically recognizes that Indigenous peoples alone possess the right to decide. . . “what is best.” The other is a state-determined devolution of its own forms to allow for a neoliberal management and self-sufficiency. (Million, 2013, p. 4)

Million’s work in *Therapeutic Nations* (2013) is essential to understanding how state-led progressive projects that present themselves as “caring” for Indigenous people can perpetuate colonial harm. Such projects reframe suffering from colonialism as “a wound that is solely an outcome of past colonial policies,” and thus render self-determination “intertwined with state-determined bio-political programs for emotional and psychological self-care informed by trauma” (Million, 2013, p. 6). In the next section, I examine the dynamics of the large non-profit sector in Winnipeg, as it relates to crime prevention, community policing, social programming aimed at Indigenous people, and the politics of social change it makes possible.
The politics of non-profits and community-level responses to crime

It is at least partially against the weight of Indigenous resistance to outside management that the Manitoba NDP government has funded local, Indigenous-led social programming through community-based organizations (CBOs) (Silver & Toews, 2009). As the urban Indigenous population grew in Winnipeg, Indigenous organizations began to demand funding for their own initiatives, after being left out of formal city-center planning and social-service–delivery initiatives (Silver & Toews, 2009, p. 110). Today, Winnipeg is unique relative to other Canadian cities in terms of the size of the network of community-based organizations: “Winnipeg’s inner city has become home to what is likely the most creative and effective array of Aboriginal CBOs and grassroots leaders in the country” (Silver & Toews, 2009 p. 116). Policy-makers and employees at CBOs often imagine CBO programming to be distinct from past state-funded interventions in the lives of Indigenous people, because CBOs are supposedly more responsive to local needs and therefore less likely to reproduce the colonial dynamic of outside intervention (Silver, 2006). However, there remains conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations over control of resources, as most of the provincial funding for city-center CBOs still goes to non-Indigenous organizations working with primarily Indigenous clients (Silver, 2006, p. 157): “There are, in Winnipeg’s inner city, deeply held grievances about non-Aboriginal people delivering services to and for Aboriginal people, and thus earning good incomes from jobs built on Aboriginal people’s grief” (Silver, 2006, p. 156).

The local political justification for funding Indigenous rather than non-Indigenous organizations to work with Indigenous people has often involved constructing the activities of Indigenous CBOs as work that can only be done by Indigenous people. This is the context in which “healing” is often invoked as a centrally important task of Indigenous-run
organizations. In a book about Aboriginal-led community development in Winnipeg, healing is central to what is described by the author as an “Aboriginal approach”:

Many urban Aboriginal people have been badly damaged by colonization. They are lacking in self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of self-worth—the result of having internalized the colonial ideology—and are in need of healing. The healing has to begin at an individual level—community development is not possible without strong and healthy individuals—but it also has to take place at a community level—the creation of strong and healthy individuals requires their nurturing by strong and healthy communities. Stronger urban Aboriginal communities are being created by Aboriginal people themselves, through a wide-ranging network of urban Aboriginal organizations painstakingly created over the past thirty years. (Silver, 2006, p. 31)

However, as Dian Million observes about Indigenous social service organizations, at the same time as they have decolonizing potential, governments often interpret their work and fund it in a way that significantly depoliticizes issues of colonial conflict and packages them as projects of individual healing:

Healing from trauma begins to be narrated as a prerequisite to self-determination. If the Indigenous don’t heal, they may not be able to self-govern: in any case, they would need to heal to be self-sufficient. Self-determination became packaged in a deal wherein the Indigenous would heal from the past, the past dissolution of colonization while developing. This healing would occur while capitalist development might still displace one or require one’s land—a little like accepting being bandaged by your armed assailant while he is still ransacking your house. (Million, 2013, p. 106)

When individualized “healing” becomes a prerequisite for self-determination, Indigenous community organizations face a challenge as they make decisions about how to win resources while also attending to the range of harms in the lives of their community members. This is an enduring tension within the non-profit sphere between generating self-determined, community-level solutions to problems, and responding to the larger structural context in which those problems are generated.

CBOs can be understood both as sites of struggle for local and Indigenous control over the delivery of social programming, and as a manifestation of the widely observed trend toward state downloading of responsibility for social service provision to semi-private
organizations that have very little power or resources to effect structural change. This tension is highlighted in Goldstein’s history of community-based action in the US, where he situates it as part of a much larger trend in left-liberal politics experienced throughout North America in the post-war period (Goldstein, 2012). Goldstein recounts how community-based action in response to poverty was steeped in radical ideas like “the exercise of self-governance, the integrative purpose of citizen participation, and the negotiated tension between demands for self-determination and self-help” (2012, p. 3). However, he also highlights the contradictory nature of these strategies. In crafting community-based responses to larger structural problems, he observes that problems were reimaged as “solvable” and “manageable” at the community scale, which was both exciting politically—in that it incited people to take action—but also narrowed people’s senses of what scale of political action was possible and desirable (Goldstein, 2012, p. 6). He characterizes this dynamic as a tension between grassroots efforts to organize community-based power against capitalism (self-determination), and tendencies toward initiatives that treat poverty as a condition internal to communities to be overcome by those suffering from it (self-help), letting the state off the hook for failing to provide structural support. This tension between paradigms of self-help and self-determination can productively be used to analyze the politics of the community-based governance of crime in Winnipeg.

Many scholars have observed how the idea of “communities” has emerged, in the context of neoliberalism, as designating discrete entities imagined as responsible for their own problems. This is consistent with the discourse of individual responsibility, and coincides with the desire of the neoliberal state to get out of the business of large-scale coordinated service delivery. Brenner and Theodore (2002) trace the production of “communities” as governable units to the uncontrollability of neoliberal transformations happening at other levels. For example, in the context of globalization and financialization
of capital, the local becomes one of the only arenas where the state can actually exercise control, while “localities are increasingly being viewed as the only remaining institutional arenas in which a negotiated form of capitalist regulation might be forged” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 341). While the appeal of the local often emerges from a bottom-up demand, as communities have organized to reclaim more power and control over their lives in the face of large and ineffective institutions of the welfare state, the configuration of control offered by the neoliberal state to communities is often responsibility without power (Lietner, Sheppard, & Sziarto, 2008). Community organizations are given limited resources to address gaps in the provision of social services where they do exist, but are given no power or voice in changing how these services are implemented in their communities (Wolch, 1990). They are made responsible for absorbing the risks of and mitigating the effects of the inequalities generated far beyond their borders:

   The strategy of rendering individual subjects “responsible” (and also collectives, such as families, associations, etc.) entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc., and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of “self-care.” (Lemke, 2001, p. 201)

The discourse of “self-care” is nowhere more prevalent than in the idea of community control over crime. David Garland (1996) explains this shift of responsibility for crime resolution to communities by pointing to the erosion of what he calls one of the most fundamental myths of modern society: “the myth that the sovereign state is capable of providing security, law and order, and crime control within its territorial boundaries” (Garland 1996, p. 449). Garland identifies the language of “multi-agency approaches,” “activating communities,” and “creating active citizens” as part of the effort to mobilize action on the part of non-state agencies, and to raise a sense of duty among a broader range of actors to take on responsibility for crime control (Garland 1996, p. 453).
According to Garland, the failure of the neoliberal state to provide generalized security and well-being to a broad range of people in the form of social programs is compensated by “a willingness to deliver harsh punishments” (Garland 1996, p. 460). Loader and Walker (2001) call this a shallow and wide conception of security which renders it “dependent on the visible display of executive authority and police power” (p. 12). Garland documents the ambivalent tendency of the state to both retract from the responsibility for ensuring security—responsibilizing non-state agencies—and to make its presence known in the meting out of harsh punishments. Peck and Tickell (2002) emphasize that “only rhetorically does Neoliberalism mean ‘less state;’ in reality, it entails a thoroughgoing reorganization of governmental systems and state-economy relations” (p. 33). This reorganization is often described as a strengthening of the carceral state as social welfare support mechanisms are scaled back. Thus, the increasing marginalization generated by neoliberal economic policies comes to be increasingly punitively managed by a broader range of non-state agencies.

Woolford and Thomas (2011) use the idea of the shifts at the level of the state in the context of neoliberalism to describe how CBOs have become actors in responses to crime in Manitoba. They describe Manitoba NDP social policy as having blended social-democratic ideas with the “third way” politics of the British New Labour policy, making their politics broadly appealing. In this context, Woolford and Thomas describe the use of community-based organizations in as part of a fight against crime as a “deputization” of social services. Though the provincial government doesn’t have control over the Criminal Code or other important levers of criminalization, they need to appear to be “tough on crime” in order to get re-elected, and therefore they are increasingly reorienting service-provision organizations toward crime prevention.
This observation is reinforced by other research about the effects of the institutionalization of social movement goals in what has been dubbed the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) in the US. Gilmore (2009) observes that, in the context of a political landscape where non-profits must increasingly provide for the basic needs of increasingly desperate people, political issues become narrowed to program-specific categories that limit the range of activities non-profit workers can participate in, even if they have much more complex understandings of the politics their work (p. 46).

Dylan Rodriguez suggests that the NPIC is a corollary to the US prison industrial complex. Much like the questions I am asking in my dissertation, Rodriguez asks:

Why. . . does the political imagination of the US non-profit and nongovernmental organization (NGO)-enabled Left generally refuse to embrace the urgent and incomplete historical work of a radical counter-state, anti-white supremacist, prison/penal/slave abolitionist movement? (2009, p. 22)

He argues that the white political Left in the USA is fundamentally invested in the “logic of civil society”—that is, the legitimacy of maintaining “law and order” and “social peace,” which effectively requires and upholds the legitimacy of the policing of “racially pathologized communities” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 23). His essay is a caution about the potential for social justice movements to become incorporated into the non-profit structure, which “has helped collapse various sites of potential political radicalism into non-antagonistic social service and pro-state reformist initiatives” (p. 26). For Rodriguez, non-profits are structurally depoliticizing.

As mentioned above, Richie (2012) has documented the effects of this depoliticization on the feminist anti-violence movement where she observes that the scope of what is considered “violence” has been narrowed to interpersonal violence, eliminating from view the state violence that primarily victimizes the most marginalized African American women, and this narrowed scope therefore leaves them more vulnerable. She documents
how early Black feminist anti-violence organizing “was informed by the stories of women among us who were beaten, raped, stalked, kidnapped, harassed, humiliated, and degraded by individuals as well as by state-operated systems of domination” (Richie, 2012, p. 2). However, as it became institutionalized and professionalized, mainstream feminist anti-violence organizers made choices about how to make pragmatic and measurable gains in their organizing, which involved among other things appealing to lawmakers to take violence against women seriously. The resulting criminalization of certain forms of violence against women could be claimed as victories for some women, but left many African American women and their communities more vulnerable to additional forms of state violence. Richie argues this is one of the ways the feminist anti-violence movement has ended up emboldening the expansion of the penal state in the USA.

Paul Kivel (2009), makes a distinction between “social service” and “social change” as a metric for non-profits to assess their action. Kivel uses an example of the capacity of non-profit organizations to provide hope to small numbers of individuals whose social circumstances might be improved by the work of that organization:

When the staff of a housing agency enables three families out of a hundred in a community to get into affordable housing, or a youth program enables a handful of students out of hundreds in a neighborhood to get into college or into job training programs, buffer-zone organizations can honor the achievements of those who have made it, validate that the system does work for those who play their cards right, and pat themselves on the back for the good work they have done in helping a few succeed. At the same time, by pointing to those few who succeed, they provide a social rationale for blaming those who didn’t make it because they did not work or study hard enough. The focus on the individual achievements of a few can distract us from looking at why there is not enough affordable housing, educational opportunities, and jobs for everyone. (p. 135)

Similarly, community-based crime-prevention programming and democratizing “improvements” to policing can function to keep fewer kids from joining gangs, or generate more positive relationships with the police among some. However, this can serve to construct those who do not benefit from those improvements as somehow responsible for
their own imprisonment, even more so than before. For example, as Murakawa has observed, the more the policing and criminal justice apparatus was said to be stripped of its racial bias, “the more racial disparity was isolatable to ‘real black criminality’” (2014, p. 18). The more transformative potential is ascribed to a particular reform or social program, the greater the room is to place blame on those who do not benefit from the proposed transformation.

In Soo Ah Kwon’s study of non-profit efforts to draw youth of color into community-organizing projects, she found them to be “embedded in strategies to prevent potentially ‘at-risk’ subjects from engaging in the potentially risky behaviors of juvenile crime and sex, by allowing youth to participate in community programs that provide more wholesome supports and opportunities” (2013, p. 4). Much like my observations about services directed at Indigenous youth in Winnipeg’s city center, Kwon found youth of color in Oakland to be “constructed and understood as an ‘at-risk’ population in need of intervention, whether that takes the form of care or punishment” (2013, p. 8). Crucially, she illustrates how this is part of the same logic “by which certain populations are no longer deemed ‘at-risk’”—rather, they are considered risky—“and their physical banishment or punishment is thus legitimated by the state before they even engage in delinquent behavior or commit a crime.” (Kwon, 2013, p. 8). In her observations, for youth who did not participate in youth programming aimed at them, their “failure to participate” was part of the discursive justification for their criminalization and punishment (Kwon, 2013, p. 9).

Elizabeth Brown (2009) explains what she calls the “two-track” approach to juvenile justice in the USA with reference to two early modern ideas about “childhood” that emerged together: “that of the innocent child unmarred by social history and that of the unruly child whose proximity to nature necessitates training in the refined sensibilities of modern society” (p. 102). Youth justice systems are often constructed as being oriented toward
paternalistic notions of “helping” and “supporting,” in contrast to the punishment orientation of mainstream justice systems. However, who gets to count as “youth” and therefore “supportable” instead of “punishable” is always socially constructed, and many have observed racism at work in the policing and sentencing of youth of color as culpable adults (E. Brown, 2009; Hogeveen, 2005) Therefore, within discussions about youth justice, the category of “youth” is dynamic and in part produced through the type of intervention imposed on a person.

In Hogeveen’s analysis of 2002 changes to Canada’s Young Offenders Act, he illustrates how the bifurcation of offenders into “petty” (and therefore supportable) and “serious” (and therefore punishable) also fell along an axis that created two distinct spaces of justice (2005). On the one hand, new federal policy emphasized “community-based experiments” as sites for dealing with “first time and non-serious offenders,” while “serious and violent” youth offenders were to be met with “traditional carceral modes of intervention” (Hogeveen, 2005, p. 74). Hogeveen observes that the trivialization of “petty crimes” within the discourse of the new YCJA did the work of drawing attention to “more serious crimes.” Importantly, he observes that the “punishable” young offender “invoked to justify high rates of incarceration” is not likely to be a white middle class Canadian (Hogeveen, 2005, p. 82). While this bifurcation was upheld in talk about the new Youth Criminal Justice Act, Hogeveen observes that in practice “the line separating the petty and serious offender is difficult to locate” (2005, p. 77), and that the overall strategy has the tendency to lead more youth into punishment rather than community care. In other words, while the bifurcation between petty and serious offenders helps people to make sense of punitiveness in a seemingly progressive context, the overall outcome is that there is more punishment, and that the distribution of punishment continues to be racist.
E. Brown (2009) has observed that the “prevention” orientation of juvenile justice is usually reserved for white offenders, while the discourse of holding youth “accountable” is more often directed at youth of color. She analyses the meaning behind this bifurcation:

Prevention suggests a juvenile who is amenable to treatment, while accountability evokes a juvenile whose predispositions defy interventionist treatment. Historically, racialized logics that assert dual conceptions of the ability of humans to engage within the political body of state power have been used to justify slavery, Jim Crow laws, and violent racial segregation. (Brown 2009, p. 117)

Together, pre-existing racial logics, a securitizing imperative, and a “community” scale of action produce conditions that naturalize carceral intervention for some, alongside prevention or support interventions for others. The result is that some get helped, but the conditions under which others are made more vulnerable to violence are left untouched or even intensified. As Richie says of the feminist anti-violence movement, “the elements of progress that benefit some women (the everywoman who has social privileges) simultaneously disadvantage others” (2012, p. 97).

Efforts at “community policing” have relied on and reproduced similar bifurcated outcomes as other community interventions organized around security. Consistent with left-realist policy prescriptions, local “progressive,” NDP-affiliated policy researchers have proposed that work needs to be done to “bridge the community-police divide” in Winnipeg’s center city (Comack & Silver, 2008). This, they argue, is the true antidote to the import of American-style zero-tolerance policing and other punitive policies they observe in Manitoba. They imagine that the police and the community could work together in partnership on “a wide variety of neighborhood revitalization issues” (Comack & Silver, 2008, p. 4). Instead of being “an outside force engaged in conflict,” they would be “a community force engaged in rebuilding” (Comack & Silver, 2008, p. 4). Unfortunately, this is not usually how community policing has worked out in its long history of attempted implementation across Canada and the United States, where problems with defining who is
“in” and who is “outside of” the community become central to the practice (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988).

This divisive experience of community policing is corroborated by recent grassroots research about the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS), which is a revitalized promise of “community policing” in the context of ongoing conflict between the police and Black Chicago communities. The “CounterCAPS” report (We Charge Genocide, 2015) identifies Chicago’s community policing strategy as a mechanism of drawing white gentrifiers into the task of policing their new neighborhoods. The activist group We Charge Genocide argues that a more appropriate meaning for the CAPS acronym is the “Community engagement Arm of the Police State.” In their observations of community consultations with the police, activists observed that community policing, in practice, was “the superficial involvement of select community members in providing police with legitimacy” (We Charge Genocide, 2015, p. 3). Select community residents were invited to participate in surveillance of “problem buildings,” and to participate in information gathering in order to evict tenants “seen as undesirable” (We Charge Genocide, 2015, p. 4).

In previous research in Winnipeg, Dobchuk-Land, Toews, and Silver (2010) describe how responses to crime organized at the neighborhood level in Winnipeg’s city center have given some previously disenfranchised groups a sense of power and control over their lives as they benefit from closer relationships with the police. However, this sense of empowerment has come at the expense of other groups—the poorest Indigenous people—who have been made less secure by the close police ties of others. For example, residents in one inner-city neighborhood organized a “tip line” through which the residents committee could receive anonymous reports of crack dealing in the neighborhood, which they would then compile and pass on to the police, through neighborhood residents who were more likely to be believed by the police. This was part of the same process by which a white-
dominated residents committee slowly evicted “crack houses” where poor Indigenous people lived in order to clean up the neighborhood (Dobchuk-Land, Toews, & Silver, 2010). Improved relationships to the police produced differentiated conditions of security for different groups of people.

To root a safety-and-security strategy in “community” forces the question of who is “in” the community and who is “out” of it. Where security is concerned, it is not surprising that those considered “criminal” are often the ones cast out (Crawford, 1994). As non-profit neighborhood organizations are called on to provide services and manage risk and safety in their communities, it is important to recognize the intersection of the narrowing focus of the crime problem to the community scale, and the development of responses that cast out individuals instead of addressing larger structural conditions of insecurity.

Conclusions

In a recent reflection on the relationship between criminology and the field of prison abolition scholarship, Schept and Brown (2016) observe that criminology has been slow to incorporate insights from an increasing body of critical scholarship about criminal justice from history, geography, critical ethnic studies, and other disciplines. They suggest that much of criminology’s investment in the criminal justice enterprise itself makes it a less than ideal place to imagine worlds beyond prisons. They implore criminologists to participate in a broader, more interdisciplinary field of “critical carceral studies” in order to challenge some of the logics—such as the definition of harm, and the investment in punitive state responses—that criminology has trouble transcending.

To this end, understanding the project of carceral expansion in Manitoba requires understanding it in the context of settler colonialism, where the governance of crime through increasing punitiveness alongside social programming aimed at Indigenous youth
is rooted in a particular history of managing the threat of Indigeneity. The local Winnipeg network of non-profit organizations is at once rooted in histories of Indigenous self-determination and bound up in contemporary patterns of the neoliberalization of social services. The experiences of non-profits elsewhere provide clues as to why the non-profit field in Manitoba may be structurally unsuited to resisting carceral expansion, but also suggests that the field may contain within it knowledges and insights that could inform broader political organizing.
Chapter 2

Methods and counter-colonial methodology

Introduction

Social research about the “over-representation” of Indigenous people in Canadian jails and prisons often confirms the view that “broken” Indigenous communities are at the root of the problem. This research often invokes “brokenness” as a justification for policies and programs directed at fixing Indigenous communities rather than addressing ongoing processes of dispossession and systems that criminalize large numbers of Indigenous people. In this chapter, I discuss my methodological decision to turn my research gaze away from Indigenous communities, toward the people and the social forces that have come together to facilitate the expansion of policing, imprisonment, and social welfare interventions in ways that (intentionally or unintentionally) target Indigenous people. Instead of treating the imprisonment of Indigenous people as an inevitable legacy of past colonial harm as much of the existing research does, I argue for observing it as a central part of an ongoing colonial relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

In Part I of the chapter, I describe the methodology of my dissertation. I discuss my research sites, my research subjects, and how my relationship to my research topic has shaped this project. In Part II of the chapter, I discuss my methodological choices with reference to politics and epistemology in settler colonial studies; and through a description of local methodological traditions I am intervening in and writing against. I analyze existing local research with reference to Eve Tuck’s caution against “damage-centered research” and Dian Million’s genealogy of social research that constructs Indigenous people as needing “therapy” and “inclusion” rather than social and economic justice (Tuck, 2009; Million, 2013). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith so thoroughly documents in Decolonizing
Methodologies, research is an ongoing site of imperial conflict for Indigenous peoples:

“Research within late-modern and late-colonial conditions continues relentlessly and brings with it a new wave of exploration, discovery, exploitation and appropriation” (2012, p. 25). I provide examples of how “damage” and “trauma” can be ascribed to Indigenous communities through social research in ways that justify outside intervention, rather than the transfer of power or resources to Indigenous communities themselves in order to address problems as they define them and in ways of their choosing. I suggest that non-Indigenous researchers can resist the colonial tendencies of social research by researching our own non-Indigenous communities. Because colonialism is an ongoing relationship, not a condition faced by Indigenous people in isolation, it follows that non-Indigenous people and people in power must also be studied in order to fully understand the dynamics of settler-colonial conflict. To this end, my dissertation profiles researchers, bureaucrats, New Democratic Party (NDP) politicians, and community-based organizations who (in different ways) define and respond to the problem of Indigenous criminalization in Winnipeg.

Methodology

The goal of this project was to analyze crime-prevention policy and programming in inner-city Winnipeg at four distinct but interrelated sites: among researchers who produce policy-oriented knowledge about inner-city Winnipeg; among bureaucrats who administer crime-prevention funds and programs; among politicians and policy-makers who shape the language and priorities of the New Democratic Party (NDP) government’s crime and crime-prevention policies; and among people who work at community-based organizations who deliver programming funded under the government’s “crime-prevention” mandate. In total, I spoke to forty-nine people: seven in the context of informal, unrecorded exploratory conversations, and forty-two formal interviews which were recorded and transcribed.
The following broad questions structured my inquiry: How do policy makers, researchers, and activists from community-based organizations (CBOs) define crime prevention? How do policy-makers understand the causes of crime and what do they fund as “crime prevention”? How do people working in CBOs understand the causes of crime and how do they interpret and enact “crime prevention”? How do policy-makers and people working at CBOs link crime prevention to incarceration? How do policy-makers and people working at CBOs racialize crime-prevention policy and programming? My goal was to identify and comprehend how these people—with varying degrees of power to shape the policy and programming landscape—understand crime problems in inner-city Winnipeg, and why they choose to respond in the ways they do.

My field work started during the summer of 2013, when I conducted seven unrecorded exploratory interviews with key policy advisors in the Manitoba government in order to inform the structure of my project. These policy advisors interviewed with me “off the record” in order to be able to disclose details of policy decision-making processes and rationales. These interviews helped me to understand the key ideological dynamics at play within government. During the summer of 2014, I conducted semi-structured interviews with forty-two people, and I attended three crime-prevention policy-related events where I conducted ethnographic observations, which informed my interview questions. I started each interview with a broad set of themes I wanted to cover and a set of interview questions that would guide me in those directions. I added and subtracted questions based on who I was interviewing and where the interviewee wanted to take the interview. I was aware of the fact that my preconceived notions about what was important about crime-prevention programming may not be correct, and therefore I allowed interviewees to take interviews in
unexpected directions. All interviews were recorded, and I took notes throughout. Once the interviews were transcribed, I read them through, developed broad thematic categories to organize my writing, and went back to review each in terms of those themes. In addition to conducting interviews to determine how people understand their work in relation to the task of “crime prevention,” I analyzed government crime-prevention pamphlets and public awareness materials, and Manitoba government news releases in order to document the official narratives about the crime problem, crime prevention, and jail and police expansion as advanced by politicians.

My interview sample was comprised of key people I had identified in advance based on my preliminary research, and people who I was referred to by interviewees. I took suggestions from my preliminary interviewee list about who to contact, and built a broader list of contacts through snowballing, and through the discovery of important distinctions within the categories of people I had initially intended to interview. For example, I discovered that frontline CBO workers often have different understandings of the work of their organization than their managers, so I endeavored to gather both perspectives. For another example, after one particularly fruitful interview with a CBO worker who was also an NDP party activist, I extended my interview sample to include other political party activists in order to get information about the history of the party and how they have formed and re-formed themselves in order to get re-elected.

My access to policy-makers and politicians was aided by personal connections. My parents have both either worked for or volunteered for the NDP since the 1970s. They have many friends and acquaintances in the civil service and within the NDP ranks of politicians and political staff who were willing to talk to be because of those trusted connections. I also

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9 See APPENDIX for a full interview guide.
have relationships with people with whom I used to do activist work and who are now working in government. These connections made it possible to access these key figures, and in some cases, made me privy to the strategic analysis behind certain policy platforms. However, I do not believe that my connections gave me any special insight into the “backstage” political analysis of the Premier of Manitoba himself, who acted a true politician throughout my interview with him as he masterfully stuck to the official “line” of his government.

By the end of the formal interview phase of the project, I had interviewed twelve frontline workers in CBOs, fifteen people in management positions in CBOs, five bureaucrats, two political strategists, one key politician (the Premier of Manitoba), three community-based policy researchers, three NDP party activists, and one community-police officer. This distribution roughly reflects the numbers of people involved in each stage of crime-prevention work. There are far more people who work in CBOs delivering crime-prevention programming than there are people designing crime-prevention policy, however they have significantly less influence than the two political staff who work to shape government priorities and planning. This is mirrored in the organization of my dissertation, where the political visions and activities of politicians and bureaucrats are dedicated two chapters, and the work of CBOs is dedicated one chapter.

The interviewees I refer to as “policy-makers,” “policy-advisors,” and “political strategists” are people who have had direct influences on the development of the policies I discuss in my dissertation. Three people who I classify as “policy-makers” are political staff who were drawn from the NDP membership, and who research policy and make policy recommendations directly to political offices. One of the key political strategists I interviewed is a university-employed criminologist, and another is a high-ranking bureaucrat. Neither the criminologist nor the bureaucrat articulated a particular allegiance
to the NDP or membership in the party, but they have had significant influence on NDP crime policy.

CBO directors or managers are people who oversee the operation of a CBO, serve on committees with the directors of other CBOs, seek out and apply for grants to keep the CBO running, and serve as the public face of the CBO at community events or in meetings with various levels of government. All of the directors of the Indigenous-run organizations I studied were female, which adds up to six female directors at six Indigenous-run organizations. This is reflective of the fact that Indigenous women across North America have been leaders in Indigenous community organizing (Million, 2013). These women tended to be older than the directors of non-Indigenous run CBOs I studied, and they described deep roots in the communities where they work. In contrast, the directors of the non-Indigenous-run CBOs where I interviewed were made up of three white men, two white women, and one Black man. CBO front-line workers are people who are directly responsible for running recreation, art, and education programming, doing outreach work with “at risk” youth, or running community-based restorative justice programming. All the front-line workers I interviewed were female, with the exception of two of the three restorative justice workers I interviewed who were Indigenous men.

Of my forty-nine interviewees, seventeen self-identified as Indigenous. I interviewed three Indigenous people who were bureaucrats whose files were related to crime prevention, four Indigenous people in CBO management, ten Indigenous frontline CBO workers, and no Indigenous people in the positions of policy advisor or politician. At the time I was interviewing there was one Indigenous NDP Member of the Legislative Assembly with a portfolio relevant to my dissertation and he was unavailable for an interview. I studied the work of his department, the Department of Children and Youth Opportunities, and I analyze it in Chapter 5.
While gender is not a category of analysis in my dissertation, my interview subjects were reflective of the fact that the division of labor between government and the CBO sector is gendered and racialized (Silver, 2006). CBO frontline workers and directors are overwhelmingly female and more likely to be Indigenous, and politicians, political advisors, and party activists are gender-balanced but overwhelmingly white. Out of the twenty-six CBO workers I interviewed, nineteen were women and nine were Indigenous women. Of the six male CBO workers, two were Indigenous, and two were Black. In contrast, all the politicians, political advisors, and NDP party activists I interviewed were white.

The racialized and gendered division between the CBO sector and the formal political sphere is also representative of class differences. In addition to being overwhelmingly female, workers in the CBO sector are notoriously underpaid and precariously employed in positions that depend on short-term grant-based funding, and are not usually unionized. The Indigenous-run CBOs I studied were more likely to value “experiential” qualifications in their workers over formal qualifications such as university degrees in social work or counseling which also contributes to the large pay gap between formal political work and work in community organizations. One of the central tensions I highlight in my dissertation is the political struggle over the definition of problems in Indigenous communities. To the extent that this struggle plays out as a conflict between CBOs and the NDP government, the demographic characteristics of my interviewees highlight the racialized, gendered, and class-based dimensions of this power struggle.

In addition to interviews, I conducted ethnographic observations at two events, and attended a third event that was incorporated into my understanding of the project, but which I did not systematically observe. The first was the official announcement of a community-development project in North End Winnipeg, an Indigenous-majority neighborhood, where politicians, residents, and people representing community-based
organizations came together to describe the types of changes they anticipated in the North End as a result of this development. An old hotel that housed a bar and single-room occupancy (SRO) suites was being converted into a “community development” hub, and the changes this would bring were described in terms of the different types of people who would be attracted to the area. The Premier used the slogan “from beer bottles to books” to describe the changes afoot. While this event doesn’t make it into my dissertation, it happened at the beginning of my fieldwork and affirmed my sense that the NDP government saw their crime-prevention project at least partly as a project of building spaces for some core-area Indigenous residents (those who would pursue school) while destroying the spaces of others (those who would choose to drink).

The second event was a meeting of UMOJA (the Swahili word for “unity”), a coalition of immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations, the provincial government, and the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) who have a mandate to work to improve relationships with “new Canadians.” This meeting provided insight into the conflicts that arise in the context of community-policing efforts.

The third event was a Full Moon Ceremony that I was invited to by the director of an Indigenous-run restorative justice organization where I had conducted three interviews. It was not appropriate to use this event as a source of research observations. However, my having been welcomed into that ceremony shaped my understandings of the character of demands of Indigenous organizations who are not usually demanding to operate without the involvement of non-Indigenous people (everyone was warmly welcomed in the ceremony), but are rather demanding to be able to dictate the terms of their operation.

Each invitee is asked to bring a set of items to a Full Moon Ceremony—one of which is a piece of cloth with a specific size, colour, and fibre. I went to a North End, non-Indigenous run fabric store prepared to articulate what I thought was going to be a
complicated request. They received my request as if it were routine, and produced the exact piece of fabric I needed, commenting casually that it must be for a Moon Ceremony. This is one small example of many that assert that the city of Winnipeg is Indigenous space, where Indigenous people are alive and thriving, not dead or dying.

**Positionality statement**

My position in relation to this research has shaped my questions, my understanding of the problem, who I was able to access for interviews, how I interpreted my findings, what I choose to share, and what I choose to keep private, and it will ultimately shape how I distribute my research findings. I have taken guidance in developing this research project from a local Indigenous activist who—when speaking of the “white savior complex”—told white audience members to figure out what their communities needed to work on and to do that work instead of trying so hard to save Indigenous communities. That invocation, which I heard when I was relatively young, has shaped the observations I have made since then about how the non-Indigenous role in maintaining colonial domination is often buried, made invisible, or concealed.

Non-Indigenous people in Winnipeg sometimes talk about their need to “decolonize” their attitudes, which usually means to eliminate their biases. Or, non-Indigenous people talk of leaving Indigenous people to work on “colonialism” issues so as not to appear to be a white savior from the outside—the result of which is to treat “Indigenous issues” as issues which originate within and will be fixed solely by Indigenous people. I have observed this narrow vision of decolonization at play in mainstream, primarily non-Indigenous thinking about policing and imprisonment. I found through my research that while many “progressive” non-Indigenous people insisted on allowing Indigenous organizations to develop their own versions of crime-prevention programming, there was little to no
acknowledgement of the fact that the proliferation of police into those same areas may work against those efforts. The criminal-justice form of settler-colonial domination has become deeply naturalized. I see the intellectual project of highlighting ongoing settler-colonial domination through the criminal justice system as part of the political project of provoking settler reflexivity and action.

In my own personal history, my experience attending a core-area, majority non-white high school in Winnipeg has also shaped my political and academic commitments. I went to a high school that was split into thirds: I belonged to an “alternative,” mostly white and middle-class program called the “flexible-learning program”; in another hallway of the school was the “regular” program, made up of mostly poorer white and poorer Indigenous people; and then there was the English as a Second Language program, which received refugees primarily from Sudan, the Congo, and Iraq. The racial divisions were acute, and I was very aware of our power and privilege relative to the other students in the school. Many people I attended the flexible-learning program with went on to do “social justice” related work, which they say is informed by their experiences in high school. Many are now employees at community organizations, lawyers, inner-city educators, and activists in various causes. In my circles, going to Gordon Bell was a badge of honor, something that indicated that you were street smart, and those experiences benefited people in the flexible-learning program. For others, I have heard since high school that the experience of going to Gordon Bell was often one of fear and unsafety. It is my sense that the “diversity” of the school was of significant benefit to the white students whose encounters at a safe distance with “others” in circumstances different from our own confirmed our whiteness, including our sense that we are people who can and should act to “better” the lives of others.

As a result of my attending that high school, I feel more of a proximity to and familiarity with police violence and gang violence than other upper- or middle-class people
who did not attend that school, but I also understand that throughout my schooling through to the present I have benefited from that proximity while bearing none of the consequences of actually experiencing it myself. This awareness has continued to inform my work, as I try to find ways to talk about the inner city without participating in the extractive industry such research involves. This, of course, is impossible and I will ultimately build a career out of the description and analysis of police violence and other forms of structural violence. My response to this position will be to continue to try to share this research in a popular-education capacity, instead of hoarding it. I also acknowledge that the impact of this research on the local politics that informs it will depend significantly on the relationships I am able to build and maintain with people who are doing the work I write about, and people who wish to act to move politics in a different direction. I would like for this work to be part of an ongoing conversation, and I seek to build relationships that will hold me accountable to its analysis and conclusions while also pushing it to change and be repurposed in order to fit the political context.

My decision to study people with power instead of the clients of crime-prevention programming is an attempt to work against the grain of local research about Indigenous communities, which relies heavily on constructions of damage, and through its policy prescriptions perpetuates an individualized and depoliticized vision of healing and decolonization. Indigenous incarceration is understood almost exclusively as a product of the “legacy” of colonialism in the past. This explanation pretends to signal the social structural origins of the criminalization of Indigenous people, but it nonetheless locates those structures in the past, with the present-day legacy living on psycho-socially through Indigenous communities alone. This view ultimately absolves people with power and systems in the present of their responsibility in producing and reproducing present-day conditions.
As a non-Indigenous researcher, the ethical orientation of my research is toward decolonization. My understanding of decolonization is informed by Indigenous researchers who construct colonization as an ongoing structure of domination in the present (Coulthard, 2014; Goldstein, 2014; Hunt, 2015; Million, 2013; Razack, 2002; Simpson & Smith, 2014; Walia & Smith, 2013; Wolfe, 2006). If colonialism is an ongoing relationship of domination, then the "colonial context" in need of description and analysis includes not only Indigenous suffering and Indigenous resistance, but also non-Indigenous people who are part of the reproduction and adaptation of colonial domination. These people also need to be explained and acted upon, and I argue that this should be the focus of the non-Indigenous researcher. Non-Indigenous researchers can and should write about colonialism because we are implicated in it, and we should foreground Indigenous analyses of their lives, but we should not seek to understand Indigenous people’s lives instrumentally in order to “fix” them. One way to understand how a non-Indigenous researcher can operationalize an ethical orientation toward decolonization is to practice knowing and intervening in non-Indigenous communities in ways that help to open up possibilities for Indigenous people to win the power to govern their lives. Therefore, my methodological choices stem from my commitment to writing against research that reproduces the idea that Indigenous people need outside management.

In turning my research gaze to the systems that “criminalize” and the people in those systems, I am cognizant of the fact that the large-scale criminalization of Indigenous people can’t be explained fully either through an exclusive focus on Indigenous people and their behaviors, nor an exclusive focus on the expansion of the criminal justice system—the two exist in relation to each other, not in isolation (Young, 1987). However, I am also writing to intervene in a particular hegemonic understanding local to Winnipeg that almost
completely eliminates the expansion of the criminal justice system from view as part of the explanation for the fact that 75% of people imprisoned in Manitoba are Indigenous.

In making the choice to study non-Indigenous people in order to illustrate dynamics of colonialism, I also reflect on Audra Simpson’s practice of “ethnographic refusal” (2007). In her research about her own Mohawk community, she practices (in the words of Andrea Smith) a “conscious refusal to reveal excessive ethnographic detail” which is an assertion of the right of Indigenous people “not to be known” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 213). Andrea Smith writes about this ethnographic refusal when she analyses tendencies within Native studies that reinscribe colonial dynamics. She emphasizes that the goal of Native studies has often been taken to be “to make Native peoples appear, and hence make them more knowable,” identifying the centrality of this knowledge quest to colonial domination: “the quest for the knowable racialized subject is part of colonial and racial discourse itself” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 214). This tendency operates in the research about inner-city Winnipeg that I am writing against, which takes its “duty” to truthfully and fully expose the degree of damage in Indigenous communities. In my methodological choices, I suggest that Simpson’s “ethnographic refusal” could be met from the other side by non-Indigenous scholars willing to probe and expose logics and strategies of domination and rule—to make knowable the often-naturalized logics of domination. In response to Tuck’s invocation to not think of Indigenous communities as broken, I ask: What would it look like for non-Indigenous people to try thinking of ourselves as broken? To come to terms with the fact that the intergenerational trauma of colonial conquest is not only inscribed in “damaged” Indigenous communities, but also in normalized patterns of relating to Indigenous people on a personal level and through the reproduction of institutions that produce Indigenous death and dispossession. To pathologize is to depoliticize, so I wouldn’t take that metaphor too far. But if there is going to be an insistence that Indigenous people have “internalized”
colonialism in a psychological sense, there should also be an acknowledgement that non-Indigenous people have also internalized it, and continue to express it in our deeply engrained notion that we have a right to manage, intervene, and opine on the problems of Indigenous communities. These acknowledgements stem from the understanding that white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism “structure all of society, not just those who are ‘racialized’” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 208).

The risk in redirecting the gaze away from Indigenous people toward non-Indigenous people is in the decentering of Indigenous voices and analyses, and the deferral to the experiences and analyses of those with power. Smith describes this problem as “ethnographic entrapment”—the trap of the self-reflexive settler who is suddenly again at the center of studies of colonialism (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 215). This “white subject” operates through confessions of privilege that do not lead to “political projects to dismantle the structures of domination that enable privilege” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 215). Smith cautions against the trap of confessions as political projects in and of themselves, confessions that may actually help to “reinstantiate the structures of domination it was supposed to resist” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 215).

I have attempted to address this tension in a two ways. First, while the purpose of my research is to highlight the subjectivity of the non-Indigenous colonial actor, I attempt to do so in a way that situates this subjectivity in the context of broader processes and institutions. The subjectivity is centered only insofar as it informs our understanding of how these processes and institutions are reproduced, so that we may more effectively challenge them—and so that we may recognize that settler subjectivities can’t be changed on an individual level without also attending to the social structures that give them power. Second, as much as possible, I use Indigenous theorists to structure my analysis, and to treat non-Indigenous interviewees and analyses as the objects of my study. This is a
reversal of most research that uses non-Indigenous analysis in order to “explain” how Indigenous communities think and act. Instead, I treat non-Indigenous political actors as the subjects that require explanation. I have tried to use the analysis of my Indigenous interviewees as theory to inform my own analysis. I am more likely to question the interpretation of an experience of someone with a similar background as me than I am to question the interpretation of an experience of an Indigenous person.

That said, I try to apply Tuck’s conception of “complex personhood” to my interpretation of all interviewees. Tuck calls for a research framework concerned with “understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (2009, p. 416). Quoting Gordon she asserts that this means “conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people’s lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning” (Gordon, 1997, p. 5; quoted on Tuck, 2009, p. 420). This means that I do not want to fall into the same trap as the research I criticize, which suggests that Indigenous people’s perspectives have a “truth,” authenticity, or correctness just by virtue of being held by Indigenous people. All my interviewees espoused contradictory and confusing positions—as everyone does. Furthermore, some of my Indigenous interviewees are in positions of relative power—as bureaucrats or managers of CBOs—which gave me cause to analyze their interpretations of their experiences because they hold certain forms of institutional power. I try to situate the analyses of all my interviewees in context. This often meant comparing people’s beliefs against their actions, and being explicit about the relationship between the beliefs of the people I was interviewing and their capacities to enact those beliefs, as well as their position in relation to power and resources. In this context, the contradictions of politicians, policy-makers, and police officers are treated as more important and are given more scrutiny than the contradictions of frontline workers in CBOs.
My goal as a researcher is to inform strategies for dismantling power by mapping out how power is produced, exercised, maintained, including the mental hold it has on people, which shapes people’s ideas about how they can be effective political actors and to what ends. As a non-Indigenous person, this research direction reflects my attempt to study who and what I know, and to encourage critical reflection among a group who I consider my peers: other non-Indigenous people engaged in trying to “help” or “fix” Indigenous communities in ways I am trying to problematize. I also hope to provide analysis and information to an audience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike who are resisting colonialism: information about how power works and how decisions are made in the province. This differs substantially from the bulk of inner-city research in Winnipeg which aims to translate the knowledge and experience of Indigenous and inner-city communities into policy reform, and is therefore aimed at a policy-making audience. The way I locate the “anti-colonial” in my criminology, therefore, is in the effort to decode practices of power—both their logic and the material processes that shape their articulation—in order to inform efforts to build counter-power. In the next section, I discuss my methodological analysis in relation to Indigenous critiques of research about Indigenous people, and provide a description of the local methodological traditions I am intervening in.

**Indigenous Critiques of Research about Indigenous People**

In a 2009 letter to other Indigenous researchers published in the Harvard Educational Review, scholar Eve Tuck, who is Indigenous (Unangax), cautions against the production of “damage-centered” research. Tuck observes that damage-centered research is often used to explain present-day problems in Indigenous communities by invoking the past: “it looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy” (2009, p. 413).
This is based on “a theory of change” that attempts to establish “harm or injury in order to achieve reparation” (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). Tuck’s identification of a “the theory of change” at the core of most social research is important:

The implicit theory of change will have implications for the way in which a project unfolds, what we see as the start or end of a project, who is our audience, who is our “us,” how we think things are known, and how others can or need to be convinced. (2009, p. 413)

Thus, Tuck argues that for many well-meaning researchers, a reliance on a problematic theory of change can lead to damage-centered research. She identifies in particular a common implicit theory of change as “Testifying to damage so that persecutors will be forced to be accountable” (p. 414). The trouble comes when this picture of damage comes to encompass the entirety of outsiders’ perceptions of Indigenous communities: “our communities become spaces in which under-resourced health and economic infrastructures are endemic. They become spaces saturated in the fantasies of outsiders” (Tuck, 2009, p. 412).

This conception of “damage-centered research” is useful for understanding trends in research about inner-city Winnipeg. The fantasies of “brokenness” held by outsiders are endemic in progressive narratives about inner-city Winnipeg. The most influential existing research about crime and Indigenous people in inner-city Winnipeg relies heavily on testimonies of damage from Indigenous people. Importantly, the audience for this research is not Indigenous communities themselves. Instead, most researchers see themselves as mobilizing narratives of trauma and damage in order to describe just how bad things are, in order to get the attention of people outside Indigenous communities.

Tuck’s letter addresses Indigenous researchers who participate in producing damage-centered narratives, acknowledging that this is not just a strategy taken up by non-Indigenous researchers: “many communities engage, allow, and participate in damage-
centered research and in the construction of damage narratives as a strategy for correcting oppression” (2009, p. 414). The promise of damage-centered research is that it may help to mobilize outside attention and resources for the damaged community. However, this theory of politics imagines that change happens through a combination of relationships of influence combined with carefully crafted ideas, rather than a theory of politics where communities imagine themselves as being able to organize in order to build the political power necessary to demand resources and sustain that demand. At the same time, paradoxically, damage-centered research may help to construct communities as incapable of building that kind of power: “without the context of racism and colonization, all we’re left with is the damage, and this makes our stories vulnerable to pathologizing analyses” (Tuck, 2009, p. 415). Communities constructed as “weak” in order to win competitions for resources from the state are not in a great position from which to fight for self-determination over those resources. The production of damage-centered research feeds into the construction of Indigenous communities as permanent wards of the state.

The invocation of the idea of “trauma” to describe the present-day impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities sometimes serves to promote a damage-centered narrative. In Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an age of Indigenous Human Rights, Dian Million constructs a genealogy of the term “trauma,” tracing its early strategic use by Indigenous feminist activists and its later cooptation into a depoliticized discourse of human rights (Million, 2013). She describes how trauma was invoked by Indigenous feminist activists to draw attention to the inter-personal impact of the structural political issues that gained attention during the peak of American Indian Movement (AIM) activism in the 1960s and 1970s. She writes about the struggles of Indigenous feminists to have personal, bodily, and emotional trauma be part of political discourse in the space of an Indigenous politics dominated by land rights and treaty negotiations. Early Indigenous
feminist thinkers made links between settler-colonial entitlement to land and sexual assault of Indigenous women’s bodies, linking systemic violence to interpersonal violence. To talk of “trauma” in this context was to demand accountability from male political organizers, insisting that they attend to the internalization of colonial dynamics and their expression in the domestic sphere.

Million then traces how “trauma” became interpreted and repackaged in neoliberal, medicalized and individualized ways, which has been seized upon by those who would rather imagine “treating” Indigenous communities than participating in transformative political change. She considers how the idea of colonialism-induced “trauma” entered the global sphere of human-rights discourse and therapy and became detached from its political moorings in the project of self-determination. In a depoliticized context, outside authorities talk of Indigenous trauma as a barrier to full expression and participation in society as capitalist subjects, or as a precondition to a self-determination that is always “in waiting.” Indigenous peoples are constructed as incapable of what it is they desire and demand because of their trauma. That narrative makes space for outside institutions to position themselves as helping in the “healing” process.

Million’s work is essential to understanding how this is made possible through discourses that appear to be caring. Through these discourses, suffering from colonialism is reframed as a therapeutic problem or “a wound that is solely an outcome of past colonial policies,” and self-determination becomes “intertwined with state-determined bio-political programs for emotional and psychological self-care informed by trauma” (Million, 2013, p. 6). Million writes that through the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the recognition of Indigenous problems through the lens of trauma due to past harm rather than that of personal trauma as a function of structural violence, Aboriginal peoples “seem to become the subject of a humanitarian project” (2013, p. 6),
rather than seen as colonized subjects. Within the context of research about crime in inner-city Winnipeg and violence, criminalization is made into a problem of crime, which is constructed as an inevitable result of colonial trauma. This is how criminalization is depoliticized and made into a service provision issue.

_Damage and depoliticization in local research_

Tuck and Million provide good starting points for analyzing how the problem of the criminalization of Indigenous people in inner-city Winnipeg is constructed through research. Two Winnipeg-based books have been particularly influential in shaping how people involved in community-based organizations, policy-makers, and a broader public have come to understand these issues: _Racialized Policing_ by Elizabeth Comack, and _Indians Wear Red_ by Elizabeth Comack, Jim Silver, Larry Morrisette, and Lawrence Deane. These books, I argue, are prime examples of how “progressive” research about crime and colonialism naturalizes carceral expansion. Both books are committed to a theory of political change that sees community-based responses to community problems as paramount. While they signal to the larger structural context that must change in order for communities to change, they do not carry this analysis into their policy prescriptions, instead focusing on what can be realistically achieved in a community-level response. In the next chapter, I analyze the conditions under which this type of research takes place in Winnipeg, and I trace its influence on policy and on the workings of CBOs. In this chapter, I focus on how emphasizing community-level solutions is one of the key ways problems facing Indigenous communities come to be imagined as problems that _originate_ in those communities themselves. I illustrate how the authors of these books fixate on damage done to Indigenous communities as the source of the problem of expanding criminalization,
helping to articulate a politics where that expansion is seen as a natural and necessary but not sufficient response to consequences of historically damaged Indigenous communities.

The book *Indians Wear Red* was written by four authors: two with long lists of credentials related to community-based research about community development (Jim Silver and Elizabeth Comack), and two Indigenous community leaders who have worked with ex-prisoners through Indigenous organizations (Larry Morissette and Lawrence Deane). The book’s title is a reference to a quote from one of the founders of the Indian Posse, a gang that has been active in Winnipeg and in Manitoba’s jails and prisons since the 1990s. The authors set out to provide a broad Manitoba audience with a compassionate analysis of the origins of Indigenous street gangs, and to mobilize support for the infusion of resources into Indigenous communities in order to tackle the gang problem. It explains the origins of gangs in Indigenous communities with reference to a colonial past, without blaming gangs or Indigenous communities; and it acknowledges imprisonment and policing as necessary but not sufficient responses to the problem of Indigenous gangs. It captured the imaginations of a lot of Winnipeggers looking for a progressive narrative within which to understand gangs, winning a Manitoba book award for a non-fiction book in 2014 (Fernwood Publishing, 2014).

In *Indians Wear Red*, the emphasis on the community scale is built into the frame of analysis the authors use to describe the inner city. In the introductory chapter, the authors introduce the concept of the inner city (and Winnipeg’s North End in particular) as a “colonized space.” What they mean is that the way the inner city looks today is because of colonialism—because it is a set of majority-Indigenous spaces, and Indigenous people have been colonized, the North End is a colonized space: “colonialism and its effects have contributed to the grinding, racialized poverty of inner-city communities such as Winnipeg’s North End, a quintessential ‘colonized space’” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 17). There is no
analysis of how the "colonized" space of the inner city is produced by relationship to other spaces in the city; there is only comparison between the degenerate conditions of the inner city and the relatively wealthy places elsewhere:

Aboriginal people living in Winnipeg’s North End today thus confront a daunting range of challenges and adversities—inequitable incomes, high rates of unemployment, poor-quality housing, very poor health conditions, low rates of formal education, family instability, inadequate access to affordable healthy food, and relatively high levels of crime and violence. This is what colonialism looks like today. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 59)

The “colonial context” throughout the book is a proxy for “concentrated racialized poverty,” which is what the authors say they mean by colonization. For example, they describe the structural impact of hydro-electricity development in Northern Manitoba, which forced the migration of a wave of Indigenous people from reserves into Winnipeg’s inner city. They acknowledge that this migration happened at a particular historical moment of economic restructuring where the labor market was changing. However, even though these structural factors are invoked, the ultimate description of the “colonized space” centers on the legacy of colonialism that lives on in Aboriginal people not in any other system: as Aboriginal people moved to what would become the “inner city,” “the continuing legacy of colonialism permeated and defined the space”:

Its colonized character took a particular form in the 1960s and 1970s. A decade later it had become significantly worse; the damage done to Aboriginal people had, in many cases, taken on a cumulative and inter-generational character. This damage—which includes the internalization of the colonizers’ false claims of Aboriginal inferiority, leading in so many cases to a lack of self-esteem and of self-confidence, and a sense of worthlessness and even hopelessness about the future—is constantly reinforced by the impact of racism, in its various forms, and by the difficulty of finding well-paid employment to make ends meet. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 51)

Poor housing, and a lack of access to food and good jobs are acknowledged as structural factors that help to produce these spaces. However, an analysis that fails to ascribe a role for people from the outside of the inner city—and the power they exert—in producing such conditions makes police and their effects both invisible and inevitable in this research.
The focus on the community scale eliminates from view the broader scales at which the colonial relationship is negotiated, leaving “colonialism” to be “seen” only as something that happens to Native people. In this context, it is easy for a colonized subject to be transformed into a depoliticized “therapeutic subject” in the way Million describes. This happens in part through the discourse of “trauma.” Alongside Comack et al.’s characterization of Winnipeg’s inner city neighborhoods as "colonized spaces" (because of the colonized people who inhabit them), these authors developed the concept of “trauma trails” of colonialism in order to describe the impact of the legacy of colonialism in the lives of Indigenous people. They describe “trauma trails” as like ripples on a pond, emanating from a foundational traumatic experience (Comack et al., 2013). The medium through which those ripples are carried is absent from the analysis—in other words, the variable nature of a society which either supports the reproduction of the effects of a colonial legacy or tries to work against them is not considered. The result is that non-Aboriginal people are virtually non-existent in the narrative about the present day impact of colonization. Solutions center around what Aboriginal communities need to do to heal from trauma: “Solutions lie not in the search for ‘quick fixes’ but in decolonization: reconnecting Aboriginal people with their culture and building communities in which they can thrive, aware of and proud of their identity” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 59).

Informally, I know that there are young Indigenous people who read this book and draw inspiration from it. Based on conversations I’ve heard, it sounds as though it is powerful to understand the way the North End looks today in terms of a history or a legacy that can be explained, rather than just as a space where inexplicably “degenerate” people live. However, what kind of politics does this narrative enable? The book emphasizes Indigenous-led solutions, and in that way it affirms that Indigenous people have to be at the forefront of change in the inner city. But it positions non-Indigenous people in terms of
supporting those efforts—walking alongside Indigenous people who want to change their communities in a way that confirms that it is still their communities, and not ours, that are “the problem.” Within this narrative, decolonization is defined as a process of healing that seemingly only applies to Indigenous people, a process:

of coming to understand that the pain and misery that so many Aboriginal people have experienced and continue to experience are not a function of individual failings, but rather are the product of a historical process that caused great damage by severing almost all Aboriginal people, often forcibly, from their ways of being. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 3)

The idea that Indigenous people are the only ones who have internalized the damage of colonialism is an example in and of itself of the deep-seated internalization of the belief in racial innocence and inculpability on the part of non-Indigenous people. The perpetuation of narratives in which non-Indigenous people write themselves out of a history of damage to Indigenous communities is itself pathological. Within this narrative, the only people who are being asked to take responsibility are Indigenous people. While it is of course true that Indigenous people must be (and are) the architects of their own resistance, that doesn’t mean that non-Indigenous people will be excused from the political process of decolonization, which will require non-Indigenous people to back off, divest from the jobs and organizations through which they profit off of Indigenous poverty, and surrender the very advisory and helping roles that help to affirm them (us) as settler subjects. To call the North End a colonized space in the present without naming a colonizer, or an occupier, is problematic. One of the tasks of a counter-narrative about inner-city Winnipeg is to put the “colonizer” back into the study of colonization. This is not incompatible with Indigenous-led change and research and knowledge production. Rather, it is to suggest that, in order for decolonization to happen, Indigenous communities are not the only communities that need to change.
One of the ways readers of this research are precluded from imagining that Indigenous people could be the architects of their own futures is through a narrative that constructs their dysfunction as being so deeply rooted that the people living it understand it as “normal.” This is the major focus of chapter three of *Indians Wear Red*, where the authors detail the tragic circumstances that have, in their analysis, become “normal” for Indigenous young people living in the inner city. This is attributed again to a “legacy” of colonialism, which is only a thinly veiled way of characterizing a community as dysfunctional and then excusing it as not being their fault: “because of colonization, Aboriginal youth like Tyler have grown up in conditions in which ‘normal’ has taken on troublesome proportions” (Comack et al., 2013, pp. 8-9).

What they are describing is not people for whom these conditions are “normal,” but people who have come to understand their conditions as “acceptable,” or who, through interaction with the rest of the world, have come to understand their social position as one they were somehow destined to occupy. Indigenous people are not cut off from society in the inner city, and this is indicated by the anecdotes Comack et al. use to assert that Indigenous inner-city residents have a different standard of normality. For example, “Karl commented, ‘like, normal for me is seeing somebody get beat up because that’s the way I grew up, eh?’” (2013). Quotes like this exhibit self-awareness on the part of Karl that his experience is not normal for everybody, and therefore not normal at all. In fact, he is articulating his experience in relation to other people’s “normal.” Another interviewee’s recollection of bad times in her past is taken to be an example of the inability of Indigenous people to see beyond the circumstances of their own communities: “Cheryl, twenty-two years old, said, ‘When I think back on my life I don’t really remember much as a kid or any happy times. I just remember mostly the hard times and struggling and stuff like that.’” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 67).
Throughout the discussion of the troubling “normal” that is said to characterize Indigenous communities, the authors use the refrain: “this is what colonialism looks like today” to reinforce the idea that colonialism looks like damaged Indigenous communities. For example, they make the choice to describe sex workers in terms of desperation rather than survival:

The drugs are used to dull the pain caused by this line of work, but each time a street sex worker spends $20 on a flap she has to go right back out again to make the next $20. The drugs contribute to her being trapped in this vicious cycle. This is what colonialism looks like today. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 110)

The authors hold onto this idea that these depressing circumstances are considered “normal” by the people who live them, while also articulating Indigenous gangs in terms of a form of resistance to colonial circumstances. Resistance implies an awareness that the conditions under which you are living are not inevitable and need to be pushed back against. Aboriginal gangs are described by the authors as “a normal response to conditions produced by colonialism” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 71). While they acknowledge that gangs are a “destructive” strategy for resisting injustice, their gang organizations can be explained in terms of the fact that they had “grown up in appalling conditions and instead of passively rolling over and accepting those conditions, they acted, they resisted” (p. 76).

The title of the book Indians Wear Red comes from an exchange one of their interviewees recounted about the founding of the Indian Posse street gang. It was founded by two brothers, Richard and Danny Wolfe:

The Wolfes, actually they came around and then, you know, first it was just like, ‘What do you think it is, bro? Do you wear this one or this one, a red rag or a black rag?’ ‘I fuckin’ wear a red rag. Fuck. We’re Indians. Indians wear red.’ . . . And the next thing you know we’re in a fuckin’ gang. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 75)

The discussion of the dysfunctional "normal" that Indigenous people have become accustomed to, combined with the resistance they exercise in the form of street gangs, becomes especially confusing in the moments of the book where interactions with other
systems and institutions are expressed in the narratives of the interviewees but not followed up by the authors. For example, in one paragraph from the chapter “The Trouble with Normal,” Comack et al. describe students being expelled from school as being a product of “the chaos in their lives”:

For some of the young women it was pregnancy that interrupted their schooling. . . for many others, it was because the violence they encountered at home and on the streets spilled over into the school setting. Several were expelled from school or fighting. In Raymond’s view: ‘school to me in the North End, it’s like Survivor. Do you ever watch the show Survivor? It’s like, you know, you start with a lot of people when the school year begins and then you know everybody and then by the end of the school year there’s only some survivors, everybody else gets kicked out. (2013, p. 69)

Despite the fact that there is a public school present in this story—a school that appears to be routinely expelling Indigenous students—the unfortunate behavior of Indigenous students themselves is at the center of the story. This is especially confusing because these authors, in other work, have written about how inner-city schools do not serve Indigenous students. In a 2002 study led by Jim Silver, he found that the high school graduation rate for Indigenous young men in the city was 50% (Silver, Mallett, Greene, & Simard, 2002). In that research, he talked about the schools as needing to change, rather than the students themselves. This is lost in the book’s narrative about gang members. Their troublesome behavior seems, to Comack et al., as reason enough to refocus the analysis of what is not working back onto them.

The imputed passivity and neutrality of institutions that the young people in this book encounter extends to the few moments where the authors address the criminal justice system. Following the description of the violence in the lives of these young people that spilled into the school, the authors naturalize the police presence: “not surprisingly, fighting and doing crimes prompted the attention of the criminal justice system. . .
incarcerated together, the youth formed close networks and made contacts that reinforced a criminal lifestyle” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 71).

Key to these descriptions of life in the inner city is what is being made normal and natural—to the analysts—and what is being made worthy of analysis and intervention. While colonialism is described in one part of the book to be “among other things, a story of the institutionalization of Aboriginal people” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 17), in all other parts of the book incarceration is described as inevitable. When police and jails or prisons appear in the book, the authors are quick to absolve them of any responsibility for responding in the ways that they do to these fundamentally damaged people. They go to great lengths to be clear that both they and the gang members they interviewed see imprisonment as necessary:

Certainly, some individuals ought to be imprisoned for the safety of the broader community. Street gang members themselves acknowledge this. As one of the men we interviewed in an earlier portion of this research project told us: ‘I’m a gang member. I do what I do. I am what I am. There has to be laws for people like me.’ (Comack et al., 2013, p. 139)

In a precursor to their 2013 book, Comack et al. (2009) describe imprisonment and policing as necessary, but not sufficient: “We should continue to send violent offenders to prison. But we shouldn’t fool ourselves into thinking that the problems in the North End will be solved by this means” (Comack et al., 2009, p. 140). The progressive narrative of the past as having done damage to communities can go hand in hand with dehumanization through discourses of criminality that make expanded nets of social control seem necessary in the present. I continue a discussion of Indians Wear Red in the next chapter, where I discuss the policy implications of so-called community-based research, and the conditions under which it is produced.

Elizabeth Comack’s 2012 book Racialized Policing is another example of the knowledge produced by a research focus on damaged Indigenous communities. Comack
argues for reframing problems in the inner city away from attention to the practices of the
criminal justice system, toward attention to broken and damaged Indigenous people and
their poverty. If the problem is framed as originating within crime, violence, and street
gangs, then “law and order” makes sense. However if the problem is reframed:

as being rooted in the impoverished social and economic conditions in these
communities, then crime, violence, and street gangs become symptoms of a deeper
problem that require solutions beyond ‘fighting crime’ to ameliorate them. (Comack,
2012, p. 231)

This statement summarizes Comack’s conviction, rehearsed throughout the book, that,
while policing needs to be adjusted in order to account for damage in Indigenous
communities, the real focus of the problem of criminalization needs to be on Indigenous
communities themselves.

Comack’s account of how and why Indigenous people continue to have violent
encounters with the police throughout history is a good example of the hegemonic narrative
about the “legacy” of colonialism and its impact on criminalization in Canada. She
characterizes the role of police as unwitting reproducers of social order. Therefore, the
central problematic in her book is not the role of police themselves, but the fact that police
are “encountering” already-damaged communities. Because police are not equipped to truly
solve the problems of these damaged communities, they end up reproducing an order in
which those communities remain marginalized:

Colonialism is evidenced by the desperate living conditions in many First Nations
communities, where basic necessities such as potable drinking water and adequate
housing have taken on the status of a luxury that seems out of reach for too many
Aboriginal families. It is also evidenced by the racialized poverty and a culture of
despair that characterizes life in inner-city communities. . . . It is within this colonial
context that police are assigned to do their job—a challenging job that involves much
“dirty work” as officers are called upon to deal with all manner of troubles, including
people who are in crisis, hurt, sick, intoxicated, angry, and sometimes violent.
(Comack, 2012, p. 219)
Because policing is only a problem when mixed with troublesome Indigenous communities, Comack proposes that police can be part of the solution to problems in Indigenous communities: “Police alone cannot solve the problems that trouble Aboriginal communities and their residents. But policing can be part of a long-term solution that involves decolonization and community mobilization and revitalization” (2012, p. 234).

Central to Comack’s prescriptions for the damage faced by Indigenous communities is 1) the work of inner-city CBOs who, due to their close proximity, can best attend to damaged Indigenous communities; and 2) the deeper integration of police into inner-city communities so that they may do “community mobilization” instead of “racialized policing”: “community mobilization involves working in close partnership with community-based organizations and social service agencies engaged in a wide variety of neighbourhood revitalization initiatives” (Comack, 2012, p. 233).

Comack’s suggestions for a “community policing” role for police come after a long history in her book about how the police have acted as handmaidens to colonial dispossession in Canada’s history. She describes how the first police in Western Canada—the North West Mounted Police (NWMP)—stood guard on the edge of reservations to make sure Indigenous people didn’t leave to bother nearby settlements or gather rations beyond what they were accorded by the state. Importantly, her conception of colonialism is past: one of the most significant racial projects undertaken by the Canadian state was the colonization of the Aboriginal population. If we are to understand the wider, racialized context in which Aboriginal-police relations occur, we need to attend to this historical project of colonialism. Indeed, it was within this particular context that Aboriginal people’s encounters with the police first occurred. (Comack, 2012, p. 23, emphasis mine)

Throughout her book she acknowledges that police still play a role in “containing” Aboriginal people in the present, through their work maintaining an unequal social order. However, this analysis does not impact her policy prescription for more community policing
in the present. Prescribing “community policing” as a response to bad relationships between the police and Indigenous people is akin to saying that the NWMP would have been a desirable presence if they had worked with Aboriginal communities in order to help them adapt to the onslaught of colonization, instead of penalizing them for adapting too slowly.

This is consistent with the fact that dominant conceptions of “security” aren’t fundamentally challenged in *Racialized Policing*. Rather than explore how settler-colonial conceptions of “security” rest on the dispossession of Indigenous people from land, “security” is assumed to improve if it can be carried out by “the community.” The focus of the research is how to do “security” better. In this context, the community scale is imagined as a better, more-accurate arbiter of what counts as security. Comack sees “community policing” as being part of “Aboriginal community development.” Much like “community development” is meant to “benefit those who have been marginalized from the current economic system” (Comack, 2012, p. 232), Aboriginal community development is aimed at “attending to the devastating effects” of colonialism on Aboriginal people:

> Aboriginal community development is aimed at decolonization, or the process of undoing colonialism by attending to the devastating effects that it has wreaked on Aboriginal people, in terms not only of their material circumstances but also their identity. . . . By adopting a holistic approach that focuses on strengthening the individual, the family, and the community, Aboriginal community-based organizations aim to move Aboriginal people out of and beyond colonialism’s straitjacket. (Comack, 2012, pp. 232-233)

She goes on to describe the role of non-Indigenous people: “as allies, walking beside and not in front of or behind Aboriginal people in *their* quest for change” (Comack, 2012, pp. 232-233, emphasis mine). Again in this book as in *Indians Wear Red* (2013), crime and decolonization are constructed as Indigenous “community” responsibilities in a way that eliminates from view the relationship of inner-city communities to the rest of the city, where the levers of power lie. This is one of the ways that critiques of police and prison and jail expansion do not naturally arise within the paradigm of “pragmatic, community-based
solutions”—and why improving relationships with the police is perceived as a more realistic pursuit. In this narrative, policing and the removal of people from communities into prison and jails is not imagined as part of the “social disorganization,” it is imagined as part of the solution.

The last line of Comack’s book absolves police of almost any responsibility for the brutal violence she documented elsewhere in her book: “A fundamental problem exists in Aboriginal-police relations—a problem rooted in colonialism, poverty, and social exclusion” (2012, p. 234). Even in the context of a systematic analysis where colonialism is cited as the root of the bad relationship between Indigenous people and the police, the definition of colonialism (as past) and the definition of the police problem (as insensitive to damaged Indigenous communities) promotes the idea that the solution for Aboriginal communities is to bring police closer in, rather than working to push them out.

Comack’s prescriptions in this book fit squarely with the Winnipeg Police Service’s stated orientation toward “crime prevention through social development”: both see a role for an expanded, more deeply integrated police service in the process of “community development.” Comack argues that police could work in a preventive capacity by working closely with community members in a way that would “enable police to know where the problems are, and to intervene, at least in some cases, before problems occur.” (Comack, 2012, p. 234). Even ignoring the questions of whether or not this type of policing is possible, effective, or desirable, Comack’s book is an example of how a critique of racism in policing can be held alongside a call to expand policing. When taken with Indians Wear Red, these books are examples of how the acknowledgement of colonialism in the past can help to naturalize carceral control in the present.

Conclusions
In this chapter, I argue that if non-Indigenous people are to meaningfully contribute to political transformation, we need to contribute to narratives that don’t allow us to write ourselves out of the story of colonization. I suggest that non-Indigenous researchers can be beneficial to decolonial movements by using their positions to expose the workings of deliberately obscured power relations.

My dissertation project has been significantly informed by a desire to intervene in the local, hegemonic discourse about Indigenous criminalization in Winnipeg, which I characterize as contributing to the reproduction of colonial definitions of “the colonial problem.” In this chapter, I illustrated how decisions about social research have significant implications for how the settler-colonial relationship is understood and responded to. I analyzed trends in local research that dwell on damage in Indigenous communities as an explanation for their criminalization, eliminating from view the role of policing, imprisonment, and ongoing colonial control. However, a focus on this narrative risks characterizing it as the only narrative about criminalization and colonial control in Winnipeg, which is far from accurate. Bridget Rose, an Indigenous director of an Indigenous social services agency, has been a major voice in a counter-narrative about policing in Winnipeg. Rose works in the inner-city CBO sector, but she is critical of the language and discourse that informs the bulk of non-Indigenous CBO work:

Their ideology is all about their liberalism—I think still based on that “well gee, you know they just haven’t become us yet enough,” you know? I mean we want the same things for our family. It’s not that we don’t want jobs, we don’t want our kids to go to jail, we don’t want any of those things to happen—we don’t want our kids killing ourselves—we want the same thing, we want that mino bimaadiziwin, that good

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10 Bridget Rose is a pseudonym.
11 Anishnaabe concept meaning “the art of living the good life.” This definition comes from Leanne Simpson who explains multiple ways of understanding this concept in Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back (L. Simpson, 2011, p. 26n9)
life. But how we get there can look differently. . . we need to be in charge of our own destiny. (156, p. 20)

One of the anecdotes Rose used more than once to illustrate her frustration with the focus on “damaged” Indigenous communities is a video project made by participants in an inner-city neighborhood-center media project called Just TV that receives crime-prevention programming funding. She described this video as being about gangs: “you know, youth in Winnipeg talk about gangs” (156, p. 17). In her description, the video focused on interview after interview where young Indigenous people talk about why they got involved in gangs, and why gangs happen: “and it’s all about you know, they repeat that lie that it’s because of they had shitty parents. Everybody had shitty parents!” (156, p. 17). She made connections between this video’s frame and the statements of damage made by Indigenous people to the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which, on a national scale, was structured to have Indigenous people share narratives of hurt and damage without actually holding any perpetrators accountable. Through these narratives, Rose says, youth get told their families are messed up, and this becomes an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to insert themselves into solutions, which for Rose is fundamentally connected to the refusal to actually believe Indigenous communities could act in their own interests, an attitude rooted in dehumanization: “not recognizing our full humanity and our full right to act on our full humanity” (156, p. 19).

Indigenous people around the world have decried the “expertise” produced by non-Indigenous peoples about their communities, expertise used by non-Indigenous people to better govern Indigenous people (L. T. Smith, 2012). Many “progressive” non-Indigenous researchers see themselves as responding to these concerns when they circumscribe the role of non-Indigenous people to the category of “allies.” While it is true that non-Indigenous people should not be evaluating what healing means within Indigenous communities, that
does not mean that we can absolve ourselves of responsibility for the conditions under
which that healing happens. As Dian Million writes, the process of “healing” is part of a
layered political project on the part of Indigenous communities, rooted in self-determination
over land and resources. When disconnected from that project—which implicates
everyone—the struggle for decolonization becomes reconstituted as a superficial
therapeutic process, a maneuver which also helps to perpetuate the myth that non-
Indigenous people don’t have a role in the political struggle for decolonization.
Chapter 3

From the social gospel to the CCPA School of social research

Introduction

We have more money going into so-called social development using you know western kind of medical-based models, and they're working on kind of an assimilation agenda. So when you think about residential schools, you know these things have not stopped, they've just been morphed into different systems. And the consequences are the same. They just need us to be poor, oppressed, and in need of fixing. It's a system, we're an industry, and that's a crime.

— Indigenous activist and community-based organization director in Winnipeg (156, p. 5)

In order to understand how the expansion of the carceral state is naturalized, we need to study the mechanisms by which non-Indigenous people continue to construct Indigenous people as always in need of outside intervention. In this chapter, I propose that one such mechanism is an influential body of “community-based,” policy-oriented literature about inner-city Winnipeg. Alongside politicians and policy makers, bureaucrats, and employees of community-based organizations, a group of researchers in Winnipeg have played an important role in shaping the particular political context in which some forms of carceral expansion have come to be understood as “progressive.” These researchers form a coherent “school” of research—the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) school—with a shared set of assumptions, methods, and goals.

The CCPA School of research fits into in a long tradition of social research based in local helping organizations through which non-Indigenous people have come to “know” Indigenous people as “problems” in need of fixing. Through this knowledge production, non-Indigenous people also confirm themselves as people who know what is best, and must take
on the burden of doing the “fixing.” Tracing the biography of JS Woodsworth from social gospeller, to social researcher, to leader of the political party that later became the NDP, I argue that the Left’s history of social-democratic racism lives in the present and must be reckoned with, because it is an essential part of understanding how apparently caring interventions fit into the settler-colonial project, and are connected to carceral expansion.

In the present, the CCPA School of social research has been particularly impactful because of its relationship both to the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the community-based organization (CBO) sector. This research has had a significant impact on how people define social problems in inner-city Winnipeg, and has set parameters for a narrow vision of change that has influenced how people working in the inner city believe they can respond to social problems. Specifically, in the pursuit of pragmatic, community-based solutions to community problems, proponents of such models construct Indigenous criminalization as a “community” responsibility with community-based solutions. This is one of the ways that the expanding presence of police in Winnipeg’s city center is naturalized.

Following Eve Tuck’s invocation to identify the “theory of change” (2009) implicit in social research about Indigenous communities, I highlight the “theory of change” that informs this large body of research by making explicit the political assumptions embedded within it.

*Social research, social reform, and social-democratic racism*

The “community-based research” that dominates knowledge production about Winnipeg’s city center comes from a long tradition of “progressive” research that has sought to know the problems of the inner city in order to fix them. The precursors to the inner-city community-based organizations (CBOs) that today focus on meeting the needs of Indigenous families were community organizations focused on integrating earlier waves of
immigrants into Canadian life. In that context, the classification of different “types” of immigrants, rated according to their likeliness to succeed in assimilating into Canadian society, was central to the community work of early social democrats.

The biography of JS Woodsworth provides one particularly clarifying case study to understand the connections between the history of social research and social reform, the NDP, and present-day, community-based research. Manitoba social democrats remember Woodsworth as a tireless social justice activist, advocate of the poor, politician, and father of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the political party that united farmers and urban industrial laborers in the Prairie West, and which would later become the NDP. He is memorialized in Winnipeg in a couple of key ways that tie into this dissertation project: the government building that houses Manitoba Justice and the Children and Youth Opportunities Department is called the “Woodsworth Building,” and one of the most prominent youth-serving community organizations in Winnipeg’s inner-city, the Community Education Development Association (CEDA), is housed in the building where JS Woodsworth ran the All People’s Mission where he provided social services for incoming immigrants to help them adjust to life in Canada in the first decade of the 20th century. His name is cited often by CCPA School researchers and NDP members as an important part of their intellectual and political lineage. Today, the provincial NDP gives out a JS Woodsworth Award for community activism, and the federal NDP gives out a JS Woodsworth Award for anti-racist activism.

“Turning strangers into neighbors” was the maxim that was used by Woodsworth to describe the project of reforming immigrants so that they may become Canadians. He outlined this project in his book 1909 book, *Strangers Within Our Gates* (Woodsworth, 2015), which was said to have been informed by his experiences working at the All People’s
Mission. The opening paragraph foreshadows the project of “ranking” civilizations that
Woodsworth undertakes in the book:

Perhaps the largest and most important problem that the North American continent
has before it today for solution is to show how the incoming tides of immigrants of
various nationalities and different degrees of civilization may be assimilated and
made worthy citizens of the great Commonwealths. (Woodsworth, 2015, p. 3)

This book is part of the intellectual and political lineage claimed by CCPA School
researchers, and it operates on the same theory of change. Throughout the book,
Woodsworth tells the story of the difficulties faced by immigrants in order that the readers
should care about them. In its time, it was considered to be an anti-racist book because it
was intended to historicize and contextualize the different practices of potential new
immigrants. Woodsworth was not blaming the immigrants he was describing for their
inability to fit in, he was merely explaining why it was that that was the case, with
reference to their own characteristics. Woodsworth uses the language of so-called racial
uplift in his book. He describes racial groups such as Syrians and Armenians who need
“uplifting,” in contrast to Jews who are “industrious and ambitious” and “bound to succeed”
(p. 159).

Central to Woodsworth’s work was describing the character of the differences of
different immigrant groups so that we may better understand how they can be made to fit
into Canadian society. Of other groups, he laments the fact that they will never be able to
fit in, which he is careful not to blame on them. For example, of Sikhs, Woodsworth writes:

opinions differ as to the cleanliness of these Sikhs. They have certain religious
ablutions, about which they are very punctilious, but since coming to this country
they have lived herded together in the most wretched fashion. Poor people! This may
have been their misfortune rather than their fault. But their standards of living and
manner of life and thought are far different from ours. However estimable they may
be in India, they are sadly out of place in Canada. (2015, p. 189)
In a brief end-section about “Indians,” Woodsworth writes of his support for the residential schooling project. Quoting expert Reverend Thompson Ferrier, Woodsworth writes that it is the duty of the Church and the State to “set the Indian on his feet” (p. 193):

Mr. Ferrier thinks that the main hope lies in giving the young generation a good, practical training in specially organized industrial schools. . . the Indian of to-day is very much nearer to the civilized white than to his pagan ancestor. . . The Indian is in a transition stage from his old-time to his modern environment. (pp. 193-4)

*Strangers Within Our Gates* was a project of research anchored in Woodsworth’s community work which was intended to inform further social policy. The title implies a twofold project. In order to turn strangers into neighbors the strangers first had to be properly identified. Social-science research that focused on coming to know immigrants and the poor thus proliferated alongside social reform movements.

Woodsworth’s All People’s Mission focused on the provision of facilities for “the assimilation of foreigners and a decent social life for the young and old of Winnipeg’s North End” (Valverde, 2008, p.191). Social reforms which improved immigrants’ economic conditions or educational capacities were considered necessary but not sufficient. In the words of social historian Mariana Valverde:

If blacks and East Indians were undesirable immigrants it was not because they had no capital and no schooling (many British immigrants were poor and unskilled), but rather because they were ‘savages,’ that is, people who could not control their sexual desires and thus were unlikely to lead orderly and civilized lives, saving for rainy days and postponing gratification. (2008, p. 105)

While not so blatantly evangelical as some of the other church-based reform organizations, the work of the All People’s Mission still hinged on the construction of an “other” to be assimilated. In this way, social gospel projects relied on the simultaneous use and constitution of “difference” in order to give them meaning. In the time of Woodsworth’s All People’s Mission, Valverde observes that coercion and protection were two sides of the same coin:
no clear distinction between the work of providing help for those in need—single women needing a place to stay, immigrants requiring basic survival information—and the work of controlling, regulating, and even deporting those deemed undesirable because of their sexual irregularities or because of their ‘race.’ (2008, p. 128)

*Strangers Within Our Gates* and the early Methodist reform projects prioritized mission work within Canada ahead of foreign mission work. However, the “foreign” or “other” was still central—there could be no mission work without people who were constructed as needing help, healing, or treatment in order to properly integrate them into the body politic. Tracing a line to the present, the building that once housed All People’s Mission is home to the Community Education Development Association, a community-organization that is partly run by Indigenous people and primarily serves Indigenous youth. One of the cofounders of this organization started as an inner-city activist and later became an NDP Premier of Manitoba.

When JS Woodsworth finished his work with the All People’s Mission in 1914 he went to work for the Canadian Welfare League as the head of the Bureau of Statistics and Research. Another Methodist minister of his time was quoted as saying “the perfect sociology, perfectly applied, will realize the Kingdom of God on Earth” (quoted in Valverde, 2008, p. 54). In Western Canada, the discipline of sociology was born deeply intertwined with Methodist teaching. JS Woodsworth was part of the first sociology department at what is today known as the University of Winnipeg (and was then Wesley College), where the first lectures were given by the Methodist Board of Temperance and Moral Reform (Valverde, 2008, p. 54). This Methodist teaching “combined both practical and theoretical concerns” and was the basis for definitions of the scientific study of social problems in Western Canada. In order to properly carry out philanthropy, philanthropists felt they had to know the poor: “this investigation began with the kitchens, clothes, and cupboards of the
poor” and moved to their innermost selves, studies of their morality and vice (Valverde, 2008, p. 21).

To our present-day eyes, city social surveys of the era seemed a combination of “moral judgements and sociological statistics” (Valverde, 2008, p. 44), including categories like cleanliness and manners. The discourses of social science and morality were not contradictory or separate during the time because the practices of moral reform and science were considered one in the same (Valverde, 2008, p. 45). To do science was to do moral reform. While there was a degree of specialization and separation among the agencies carrying out these projects, moral reform, social reform, and social science were inseparable projects (Valverde, 2008, p. 47).

Making social and moral reform scientific and social work professional was encouraged by the church, and was part of the project of packaging these efforts as appropriate tasks for the state. Through science, social reform could shed some of its “moral” weight. Valverde traces a detailed history whereby social purity and social reform activists, while working through private philanthropic agencies, worked “with a view to influencing state legislation and policy, as well as setting up pilot projects in public education and rescue work that might then be taken over, or at least funded, by the state” (2008, p. 52). Explicitly moral work is and was difficult for the state to undertake successfully (Valverde, 2008, p. 25), however its professionalization and legitimation through social science was part of the work church and social reform organizations did in order to activate the state in these areas.

Despite the fact that Woodsworth’s brother was the principal of an Indian residential school, the subject of Canada’s “Indians” is rarely mentioned in his work about urban social-gospel work. Indian people were understood during his time to be fundamentally non-urban, and they were also assumed during that time to be
“disappearing.” However, Woodsworth’s research and interventions on immigrants laid the foundation for later “development” work with Indigenous people when they started moving back to the land where cities now stood in the 1950s.

Many within the contemporary NDP consider Woodsworth’s racism to be irrelevant to the present because it was a product of his time. However, well after Woodsworth, the CCF carried out harmful social welfare interventions in Indian and Métis communities in Saskatchewan that were not unrelated to governing ideologies of early mission work. In a published interview with Dr. Allyson Stevenson about her as-of-yet-unpublished dissertation (rev_anthro, 2016), she describes how the CCF engineered the forced separation of Indigenous children from their families through social welfare legislation during their time in power in Saskatchewan: “the CCF in Saskatchewan sought to address the ‘Indian and Métis problem’ through a very coordinated social welfare approach with the goal of integration” (rev_anthro, 2016). She describes their policies and programs as being a combination of “the settler-colonial removal mentality laced with the social-gospel desire for uplifting and social engineering.” She observes that the “seemingly benign” work of “integration” accelerated in Saskatchewan after 1951 when Indian and Métis people were integrated into provincial health, welfare, and educational jurisdictions:

rather than recognizing Indigenous rights to land and self-determination, social welfare experts approached colonization effects (poverty and ill health) through what I call ‘technologies of helping’ by secular/therapeutic professional social workers (Stevenson in rev_anthro, 2016)

In her interview, Stevenson emphasizes that she supports many of the anti-capitalist critiques of the early CCF but that she wants to provide “an Indigenous critique of the

\^[12] A nation of people made up of European and Indigenous ancestry who originate from around the Red and Saskatchewan Rivers in what is now Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

\^[13] Saskatchewan is the prairie province neighboring Manitoba to the West. Saskatchewan and Manitoba share a regional history, and many of the same demographic characteristics.
settler-colonial prerogative of the men and women who made up that party at this time” (rev_anthro, 2016). The CCF has a history of not acting in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. Stevenson provides concrete examples of political organizing for land justice undertaken by the Métis at the very same time the CCF was articulating a politics of alliance between farmers and laborers to share benefits from profits accrued from lands and resources, with no mention of the Métis people. She asks: Where, in the manifesto of the CCF, “or the society that it envisioned, is there a space for Indigenous peoples?” The “colonial legacy of the CCF” (rev_anthro, 2016) is reproduced in the present through NDP social policy. Consistent with the past, present-day social research about urban Indigenous people remains central to the social construction of Indigenous communities as needing “fixing.”

During the 1950s, changes to the Indian Act combined with Hydro Development in Northern Manitoba displaced thousands of Indigenous people from rural reserve land to southern Manitoba cities like Winnipeg. As Evelyn Peters observes, this presented a problem for the interconnected projects of social research and social welfare because there did not have preexisting categories through which to understand Indigenous communities in urban centers. Not knowing who they were made it difficult to know how to intervene:

The negative perception of growing urban First Nations populations put increasing pressure on governments to respond. Before government agencies could formulate responses, they faced the challenge of defining the nature of the population toward which government programs should be directed, and the nature of the problem that required remediation. . . . First Nations urbanization challenged government agencies to define the meaning of First Nations urbanization and the nature of the urban First Nations population. The definitions that emerged through this process proved revealing. (Peters, 2002, p. 80)

Peters documents the process by which researchers on behalf of government struggled to develop concepts that helped make Indigenous people knowable so that they may be rendered governable:
The invention of the population category of ‘urban Indian’ introduced new possibilities for administration and provided a rationale for the involvement of government departments not historically associated with the administration of First Nations affairs. (2002, p. 81)

Dominant constructions of urban Indigenous people in early social research explained the difficulties they faced upon arriving to the city in terms of a culture clash, which helped to affirm their existence in the city as fundamentally out of place. Peters identifies the invocation of “culture as therapy” in early Indian and Métis Friendship Centers, designed to help First Nations people better “integrate” into the city as they moved from reserves. Peters notes that First Nations culture was not valued for anything beyond “its role in facilitating the initial adjustment of migrants” from reserves to cities (2002, p. 84). The value of Indian and Métis Friendship Centers was understood narrowly as connecting bridges between foreign Indigenous “cultures,” and eventual inevitable integration into Canadian society.

Not only did community organizations previously set up to help assimilate immigrants take over the task of helping Indigenous people adjust to city life, but the actual federal government bureaucracy charged with assisting in this transition was also one built around citizenship:

While reserve Indians had historically been administered by the Department of Indian Affairs (later termed the Indian Affairs Branch), the Citizenship Branch of Canada, an agency customarily in the business of aiding international immigrants, was to take precedence for policy and program development for First Nations people in cities. In this way, the Citizenship Branch introduced new programs, services, and administrative structures that were associated, not with the historic responsibility of the Crown for aboriginal peoples, but with efforts at integration and the forging of new citizens. (Peters, 2002, p. 82)

The process through research of constructing Indigenous people as fundamentally “out of place” in the city was central to justifying state involvement in their lives. Later, the categorization of the “urban Indian” prompted a struggle not over whether or not there were problems of adjustment to urban life, but over who should be responding to them. By
the 1960s, Peters traces how the Indian Affairs Branch of the federal government had become increasingly involved in providing “integration” services to First Nations people in Canadian cities. When First Nations organizations began to provide their own programs, conflict arose: “The Indian Affairs Branch could not reconcile First Nations control over their own service delivery in the city with its longstanding definition of First Nations people as either wards or as ordinary citizens” (Peters, 2002, p. 83). The sense that Indigenous people can’t run their own affairs persists in the present. Inner-city activist Bridget Rose sums up this distinction:

if you hold people in systems of oppression for periods of time, then there’s some natural outcomes of that, eh? Gangs, and all the other social indicators that we have. And then the other—and then the ruling elite, or the people with privilege never ever can see their complicity in this or how they benefit from this and they say well what can we do to kind of fix it, what are our solutions? . . . because they don’t fundamentally believe that we are human enough to do that.” (156, p. 5)

The validation of this difference in social science is as central to social welfare interventions today as it was in the past.

Dylan Rodriguez (2009) characterizes two fundamental requirements of the white colony in the context of settler colonialism as: “the extermination of indigenous human societies, and the political-cultural naturalization of that very same (deeply unnatural) process” (p. 38). Eliminating from view the possibility of Indigenous self-determination as a response to challenges faced by Indigenous communities is one of the ways the settler colonial order is naturalized. This is achieved not only through the repression of Indigenous self-determination in the city, but through the proliferation of “solutions” to problems in Indigenous communities that center a benevolent state, and thus help to create a “common sense” that “normalize(s) the rule of settler colonialism” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 6). Local policy research about city-center Indigenous communities is a key site in the shaping of local common sense in Winnipeg.
The CCPA School of social research

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a national, left-of-center policy-research organization based in Ottawa. The CCPA-Manitoba office was established in 1997, which roughly coincided with the election of the New Democratic Party (NDP) to Manitoba government in 1999 (Land, 2014). There was significant overlap between those who were involved in organizing for the NDP election victory, those who went on to become political staff and politicians in the NDP government, and those who formed and now direct the CCPA-Manitoba office. In its own materials, the CCPA-Manitoba describes its political agenda as “a research institute... to support alternative public policy that challenge[s] the principles of privatization, shrinking welfare state and individualism espoused by right wing research institutes” (Land, 2014, para. 4). They see themselves as doing research for change. In a reflection about their beginnings, a CCPA-MB author writes that they didn’t want to “just publish things to be left to gather dust on a shelf. We wanted to be politically engaged: we wanted our research to make a difference” (quoted in Land, 2014, para. 3).

Their political engagement is focused on producing policy suggestions that could be reasonably adopted by the provincial government, which means they have a particular investment in ensuring the success of a government they can influence—the NDP government.

Since its establishment in 1997, the CCPA-Manitoba has produced hundreds of research reports about issues facing the Province as a whole. In addition to reports about a range of policy issues, it publishes “Fast Facts,” short email blasts that go out to a large list of subscribers in response to current events that reframe them in terms of their policy relevance. In the past ten years the focus of the CCPA-Manitoba has increasingly zeroed-in on racialized poverty in inner-city Winnipeg. Starting in 2004, they have published a yearly...
“State of the Inner City Report” that focuses on inner-city issues, highlighting the successes of local community-based organization (CBO) responses to poverty, and making the case that they should receive more government funding.

The CCPA-MB also serves as the administrative branch of the Manitoba Research Alliance, a network of researchers which has received three consecutive federal research grants worth over $1 million each to study Community Economic Development “in partnership with Aboriginal people in Manitoba” (Manitoba Research Alliance, n.d.). The first grant was called “Community Economic Development in the New Economy,” which focused on the impact of neoliberalization on “disadvantaged communities” and “the potential for Community Economic Development (CED) approaches to capitalize on the opportunities and minimize the dislocations of the New Economy.” Its subsequent grants have become progressively more focused on inner-city Winnipeg. Its next large grant was for a project called “Transforming Inner-city and Aboriginal Communities.” That project was dedicated to “solving the complex problems of poverty and social exclusion in Manitoba’s inner-city and Aboriginal communities,” and to “produce original work that is rooted in the community experience and is accountable to the community” (Manitoba Research Alliance, n.d.). At that point, part of its mandate became to “produce concrete deliverables for community organizations” and “build local capacity.” The current grant held by the CCPA-MB is called “Partnering for Change: Community-Based Solutions for Aboriginal and Inner-City Poverty.” In the description of this grant, it is clear that their focus has narrowed in on urban Aboriginal poverty:

Manitoba’s Aboriginal population is projected to grow by 45% by 2017 … these projections are worrisome given the high rates of unemployment, inadequate housing, and crime and violence experienced in these communities. (Manitoba Research Alliance, n.d.)
They indicate that while their previous grants sought to understand effective community-based responses, the current grant seeks to document their progress. It promises to:

Investigate through time the impact of promising community-based solutions—such as innovative housing, education, employment and safety strategies, and personal and community empowerment—to determine how they can be expanded and made sustainable at the institutional and policy levels. (Manitoba Research Alliance, n.d.)

The priorities and planning department of the provincial NDP government signed on as a partner on this CCPA grant because of its own interest in having progressive policy developed and publicized. This means that the success of the CCPA grant proposals has relied on their having connections to a sympathetic NDP government as a partner applicant.

In sum, the CCPA-Manitoba is committed to “community-based research” for community transformation, and “community” has come to be a proxy for “inner-city” Winnipeg in much of their research. As a policy-alternatives organization, they are interested in packaging their findings in terms of policies that could reasonably be adopted by a provincial government. While their research often includes a structural analysis of the broader conditions at work to produce poverty and inequality, their policy orientation directs them toward smaller-scale solutions. They draw legitimacy from their connections to the inner city and their commitment to the principle that inner city residents are the experts on their own lives.

While the type of research of the CCPA-Manitoba may not appear unique in and of itself, the degree to which it has shaped public consciousness about inner-city Winnipeg is unique. In other words, their ideas alone are less important than the social relations in which they have gained influence. The CCPA School has come to define the “progressive” narrative about inner-city Winnipeg in ways that have had a significant impact on a broader public’s understanding of how the “inner city” came to be, what it looks like in the
present, what it should look like in the future, and how we should make a future vision possible.

One reason for the relative influence of the CCPA School is the fact that, unlike in other larger cities, there is very little social science research about Winnipeg, and even less about the city center and Aboriginal people. While the CCPA mostly publishes policy reports, the Manitoba Research Alliance (whose grants it administers) is a broader network of scholars who publish in academic journals or with academic presses, while still remaining true to the research orientation of the CCPA. This means that students or journalists looking to understand problems in inner-city Winnipeg, or CBO workers looking for information for grant-writing material to justify their programming, have very little to choose from except research produced by the CCPA and its associated researchers. This research appeals to such people’s common-sense ideas about the need to “do something” about problems in the inner city.

More important than the relative absence of research about inner-city Winnipeg, or the CCPA’s pragmatic policy orientation, is the connections CCPA School researchers have to the NDP government. The CCPA-Manitoba was born out of the same organizational networks as the provincial NDP when it was first elected in 1999. Both the CCPA and the key politicians who have formed the NDP government since 1999 (including the current Premier of Manitoba) have origins in the left-wing coalition for social justice of the 1990s, CHO!CES. In the early 1990s, CHO!CES did a lot of work to highlight the destructive policies of the Conservative government in power at the time. They conducted awareness campaigns around public-sector cuts, supported labor pickets, and organized elaborate, alternative provincial-budget exercises for almost ten years leading up to the NDP’s election in 1999. The work CHO!CES did to organize outside of government laid the foundations for the relationship between the CBO sector, the CCPA as a policy-alternatives
organization, and the NDP government. Those who went on to form the CCPA came out of a deep political sense of how destructive the Manitoba Conservative Party government had been. Once the NDP got into power in 1999, it restored millions of dollars to health care and education that had been slashed over the previous decades, and it restored money to city-center non-profit organizations that had been starved under the Conservative government. This helps to explain the CCPA-MB’s attachment to the NDP—from their vantage point, the province is a lot better off under the NDP than it had been before (a position I do not dispute). It also helps to explain their affinity for the NDP in terms of their direct personal connections to the people in government.

One interviewee recounted how, once the NDP took power, a lot of people who were very involved in CHO!CES ended up getting jobs in government: “and so most people were you know NDP or at least friendly” (107, p. 6). For example, the two major architects and organizers of the grassroots Alternative Budgeting campaign went on to be key figures in the NDP government and in the CCPA respectively. Greg Selinger, NDP Premier of Manitoba until 2016, started as the director of a North End community organization (housed in Woodsworth’s All People’s Mission building), went on to become the provincial finance minister under the NDP government and then Premier of Manitoba. Another key player in CHO!CES went on to be on the CCPA-MB board and the primary author of their grants, as well as to hold an advisory position to the NDP government and an office in the legislature. The personal connections between the CCPA-Manitoba and the government have meant that at many important junctures, the CCPA has had a direct audience with the government—not necessarily because their personal connections oblige when they ask (although that has been the case at times), but also because those personal connections provide information about how to navigate government lobbying in a way that maximizes its influence.
The CCPA School has been made relevant both by its connections to government, and through its connections to inner city organizations. One of the ways its researchers have institutionalized their influence on inner-city politics and development is through the creation of the Urban and Inner City (UIC) Studies program at the University of Winnipeg. The UIC program is a small department with two faculty members, both of whom belonged to CHO!CES: one faculty member, Heather Jones\textsuperscript{14}, has worked both in the policy and planning office when the NDP was elected in 1999 and later, upon her disillusionment with government, as a founding member and director of the CCPA-Manitoba; and the other, Jim Silver, is one of the founding members of the CCPA-Manitoba and now sits on its board.

The Urban and Inner City Studies program at the University of Winnipeg was established by Politics Professor Jim Silver in 2009. Professor Silver is one of the key figures in CCPA School of social policy research about inner-city Winnipeg, and his personal history and political connections are at the center of its development and influence. A non-Indigenous Marxist activist and political scientist by training, he became interested in poverty in Winnipeg’s inner city in the early 1990s while conducting interviews with community organizers for an article he was writing for Canadian Dimension, a local socialist magazine. Since the 1990s, he has done an impressive amount of research and publishing about inner-city Winnipeg. He has published over ninety commentaries or reports for the CCPA-Manitoba alone since 1997, on topics ranging from Aboriginal-led community development, Aboriginal high school education, Aboriginal adult education, inner-city housing, inner-city safety and security, downtown redevelopment schemes, and more. He promotes the idea that Winnipeg is home to a particularly “complex” form of racialized poverty that will not simply respond to higher incomes, and

\textsuperscript{14} Heather Jones is a pseudonym.
that the knowledge and experience of those in poverty should guide solutions to their poverty. Silver exercises a significant amount of influence over the direction and orientation of CCPA School research more broadly. Through the creation of the UIC department, he has ensured the institutionalization and reproduction of that orientation in a university setting.

The UIC department is located in Winnipeg’s inner-city North End neighborhood where a high concentration of Indigenous people live, far from the more central (but also “inner-city”) University of Winnipeg campus. Silver pushed to have the campus located there in keeping with the idea that the city needs spaces that are structured to honor the expertise of poor and marginalized people. This was informed by his cumulative research, where he heard repeatedly from Indigenous people that they do not feel welcome in non-Indigenous spaces, and therefore often choose not to access opportunities that are technically or formally available to them (Silver, 2006). As Silver describes it in an interview, the idea of the UIC program is to train people from the inner city to go back and contribute to their communities:

We always thought in terms of a circle, so people come from the inner city, they have a whole bunch of experiential knowledge which we value, they come and they take our courses which can build on their experiential knowledge and then they go back into the inner city and they become the forces of change in the inner city, so it’s not somebody coming from the outside, it’s, it’s a rebuilding-from-within model. (104, p. 8)

Indeed, the UIC program has had a tremendous impact on those who have attended it in its short history. Many more Indigenous students attend University now than would have before because of the program, and many who attend talk of feeling as though they “didn’t belong” in university until they got to UIC. At the time of this writing, a group of UIC graduates has been at the forefront of organizing and publicizing Red Rising Magazine (“Red Rising Magazine | Real Indigenous Voices”), a publication by and for urban
Aboriginal young people that features poetry, writing about social justice, art, and reflections on life on- and off-reserve.

In the first issue of *Red Rising*, there is a full page black-and-white picture of Jim Silver in the style of a screen-printed graphic with the words “Obey Silver” framing his face—referencing Sheppard Fairey’s “Obey” graffiti and the 2008 Obama campaign “hope” posters. On the page opposite the graphic is a write-up about one of the North End community projects Silver has led through his connections to government, the transformation of a hotel and single residence occupancy (SRO) building and bar into a “community education hub.” The inclusion of that graphic and the profile of that community project in the context of a magazine otherwise dedicated to the voices of Aboriginal young people points to how influential and generally well-respected Jim Silver is in the world of inner-city education and community-based service provision, especially by his students in the UIC program.

Silver sees the Urban and Inner City Studies program, the CCPA, and the Manitoba Research Alliance as strategically interconnected in the process of making change in inner-city Winnipeg:

> Part of what we do is capacity building in the sense of creating the people who are going to carry on doing this work. What Urban and Inner City Studies does is, I hope is to create the people who are, you know, the community workers and so on. But what CCPA and the Manitoba Research Alliance does is to create the intellectuals who are engaged intellectually which is every bit as important. (104, p. 29)

In keeping with the goal of creating “community workers,” the UIC program contains courses about community organizing, community economic development, and practicums working in community-based organizations.

The teachings of the UIC program and the research disseminated by the CCPA School promote a vision of change that suggests that the responses to problems in the inner city that they promote are effective because they are developed “by the community,” and
they are influential because they are effective. What is concealed in this simplification is the political model on which the CCPA School is operating, a model which requires that a sympathetic government be in power in order to “listen” to their concerns. This produces an ongoing tension in their work between their allegiance to the NDP on the one hand, and their stated commitments to “community-based research” which is supposed to simply echo the desires of inner-city residents, rather than shape them. This tension often expresses itself in the desire of CCPA School researchers and organizers for inner city residents to "get political”—that is, political enough to recognize that they should support the NDP and lobby it, but not so political that they should act in opposition to the sphere of electoral politics.

Jim Silver and others within the CCPA School lament the fact that many young people who work in the NDP-funded inner city CBO sector don’t understand “how bad things were” under the Conservative Party government, and thus take the NDP government for granted. They see evidence of this phenomenon in both “apolitical” CBO-sector workers, and in people like myself who criticize the NDP for the work it does to make carceral and neoliberal policies palatable to progressives. CCPA proponents often express this frustration alongside a lamentation of the loss of organizing know-how and political sensibility since the NDP came to power and CHO!CES dissolved. Jones describes the decline of community organizing post-CHO!CES:

And then the need wasn’t as great right? So unfortunately that’s what happens and so that kind of just, then it just, you know the life of CHO!CES just ended because of the political environment. . . that’s when we really started to get this sort of slipping in terms of the politicization of community work right? (107, p. 6)

Through interviews with Silver and Jones I learned that their view of what counts as “politicization” in community work is significantly oriented toward lobbying the NDP and making sure they stay in power. Jones understands her work articulating the policy needs
of the inner city as being “political,” which she counterposes against what she perceives to be a vague sense among young people that “community building” will fix the inner city:

All that sort of nice stuff we talk about when we talk about community development. . . . I also see, see everything that drives what I do is far more political. Like it’s not sort of this benign nice idea of building community. (107, p. 2)

In her view, the CCPA is the research arm of a larger lobbying group of organizations. For example, she talked about the work the CCPA did to “do the math” related to a campaign to raise rental allowance for people on income assistance, as well as their campaign to lobby the government for an increase in social housing units. The CCPA did the necessary research and brought that research to a coalition of inner-city organizations that lobbied and were ultimately successful in getting the government to promise both an increase in the number of social housing units and an increase in the rental allowance for people on EIA (107). Central to their organizing strategy was meeting with the Premier and key ministers where they presented their research. In their vision of how political change happens, maintaining direct lines of communication with the government is of utmost importance. While they would say that those meetings are not “easy” to get, they are certainly only possible because of pre-existing connections to people in government.

The frustration of CCPA School researchers with the lack of appreciation of the NDP within inner-city community organizations shapes their research mandate. While they are committed to centering the experiences and voices of poor and marginalized inner-city residents, they also package those experiences in ways that highlight the importance of particular government interventions in their lives. The CCPA-Manitoba’s annual *State of the Inner City Report* is a good example of the political work the CCPA has done to raise awareness about particular issues at work in the inner city, and put forward particular solutions. The *State of the Inner City Report* is currently in its 11th year. Jones explained its origins to me in terms of her experience in the 1990s when the Conservative government
was making major cuts to the inner city, people were losing their jobs, and neighborhood organizations were closing. There was still community organization activity, “but it wasn’t the same level of activity because there was just no funding for anything” (107, p. 4). After the NDP’s second election victory in 2005, she wanted to use her role as director of the CCPA to draw attention to how much community organization activity had picked up since the NDP’s 1999 accession to government. In this context, she hoped the *State of the Inner City Report* would highlight the work of the government to that end:

[T]here’s a lot going on right now and government’s got a big role in that and so [we hoped to show] how important the funding is. So to be able to illustrate the things that were going on, still you know, and so to show you know the capacity building that was being built and all that, but still recognizing where there were challenges so that we would continue to push government cause it wasn’t enough, like there wasn’t enough. (107, p. 4)

She was also thinking about the *State of the Inner City Report* in terms of its long-term strategic use. As the period of NDP rule would eventually one day come to an end, she thought, “it would be really useful to document all of this so that once it’s all gone people would have something to show . . . we didn’t do that in the 90s” (107, p. 4). This CCPA director saw her work as documenting the effects of NDP policy change and funding in order to be able to push for more. She sees the NDP’s time in power as a victory in the sense that there is a lot more money flowing into the inner city than there had been before.

However, she laments that now they need to work on politicizing people:

[O]ne of the big, one of the important things again of the work that’s happened you know since the NDP has been in power is the fact that there is money in the community that enables it, it’s just that we need, the piece that we really need to push on now is the politicizing people more. (107, p. 38)

While both Silver and Jones hold a wider view of political organizing in the way they talk in informal conversations, when it comes to talking about creating change in the inner city, their practice rests firmly on a taken-for-granted relationship to the NDP. In my interview with Silver, he expressed the sentiment that when people in the inner city
organize politically, they get what they want. In the same breath, he articulated a view of organizing that was—in his own words, upon reflection—about influence, and not power: “If we take an issue and we organize around it the Province will say to themselves well a) these are our friends and b) we want to get them off our back” (104, p. 2). The implicit theory of change within their research is one of building influence and lobbying for realistic change, not one of building power.

In their view of political change, they adjust their policy prescriptions in order fit within demands that are “realistic” within the scope of government. This was evident in their social housing campaign, as Jones articulated:

The thing like with the number of units with social housing, it was nowhere near enough and we never pretended it was enough, but you know this is at least a start. And the reason why we started doing that, and some people criticized us about that, they thought that we weren't going big enough. But our point was that you say that it’s not enough, but if you don’t put some sort of a realistic target then you’re just going to be dismissed. And so, so we felt that that was an important thing to do to recognize that you know we need this much but we recognize that’s not going to happen, so as a starting point we want you to commit to this much, so at least then you’d get some sort of a commitment, otherwise they won’t commit to anything and then you’re back at square one right. (107, p. 12)

Silver’s view of politics rests firmly on the existence of a responsive, social-democratic government. His view of politics is one where Aboriginal-led social change is accompanied by a strong state. Therefore, when he has disappointment with the NDP it is not because he sees a problem with a dependent relationship between community organizations and the state, it is because the state isn’t being bold enough. In this part of the interview, he is recounting the way he addresses his friends in government:

We argued for you know rebuilding the North End with Aboriginal people taking the lead in rebuilding the North End. But in saying that, we’re saying you need to be a genuine social-democratic government. It needs a social-democratic response where the state comes in with serious money over a long period of time and the community takes the lead, Aboriginal people in particular take the lead and they rebuild their community in ways of their choosing. That’s the solution to the problem. (104, p. 5)
Silver doesn’t have an optimistic view of the future of the inner city, not because there is no political power being built, but because he sees the government as not living up to its potential. At a few points in my interview with him, he acknowledged that the work they were doing through the various institutions and networks of the CCPA School was not making systemic change: “One of the things that I worry about and I’ve talked with some others about is that, 30 years from now, there could be somebody else here having exactly the same conversations and exactly the same kind of context because we are not, we’re not making systemic change here” (104, p. 15). He is interested in new ideas and new perspectives, but extremely unwilling to concede to new generations of thinkers and activists who do not see the value in maintaining a close relationship to the NDP: “It’s my opinion that people working in the inner city benefit significantly from an NDP government being in office, but they are not fully aware of that and not sufficiently appreciative of that.” (104, p. 15)

In order to illustrate this lack of appreciation, Silver recounted a recent meeting between some inner-city community-organization employees and community leaders from the North End, many of whom were Indigenous. The meeting came after a long lobbying campaign for the government to redevelop the Merchant’s Hotel—the former hotel, SRO, and bar that was being transformed into a community education hub. At this meeting, the government announced they were going to fund the redevelopment of the Merchant’s Hotel. They decided to do a go-around to everyone in the room in order to give them a chance to respond. In Silver’s telling, he was the only one who thanked the NDP government, “because they did a lot of heavy lifting on the inside, you know preparing our business plan to go to priorities and planning, like this wouldn’t have happened with any other government in office, absolutely it would not have happened. But I was the only one that said that” (104, p. 6). In reasoning why people around the table didn’t feel the need to thank
the government (perhaps for something they felt they were entitled to), he posited that it could be because people don’t have very many reasons to trust government. Implying that he was talking about Aboriginal people, he commented that they don’t trust the justice system, Child and Family Services, or schools, so “maybe it would logically follow that they don’t trust the political system” (104, p. 6). But still, in his view, respect for the NDP was essential. He closed the anecdote by reiterating how important it is to acknowledge the good things the NDP has done in office: “It is important. It’s really important.” (104, p. 6)

The CCPA School brand of research was developed in order to intervene in policy debates, and it does have an impact on government policy, largely because of the connections described above. However, when talking about the NDP government’s policies on policing and imprisonment, the authors of CCPA research lament the fact that the NDP is merely responding to a punitive electorate:

They have accepted existing public perceptions as being the borders within which they have to operate and that means this sort of, what I would claim to be simplistic but perfectly understandable get-tough-on-crime responses to these kinds of terrible frequent incidents. . . and there’s no real organizations in the community that are putting pressure on this government to act differently on crime issues. (104, p. 1)

While they’ve made it their business to facilitate organizations and knowledge in order to mobilize around other anti-poverty issues so that the NDP can act in a way that benefits people in the inner city, they are prepared to apologize for the NDP’s policies in that area because there is no mobilization which would force them to do otherwise: “So you know the only narrative that’s out there is the ‘lock them up’ narrative, like there’s nobody making the case for a different approach and then you get this kind of stuff” (104, p. 2). Whereas they have taken up so much space making the case for different approaches to other inner-city social-justice issues, this is one that they are prepared to leave to others. They acknowledge that, on crime and criminalization, “this government doesn’t have a coherent, well-thought-out approach to these kinds of issues” (104, p. 2), but they are not prepared to
help the government to produce a coherent, well-thought-out approach even though that is their stated organizational goal.

As researchers who concern themselves with the lives of inner-city Aboriginal people, in the context of a city with the highest per-capita number of police officers in Canada, in a province where 75% of incarcerated people are Indigenous, what does it mean that the CCPA School of research doesn’t see policing and prison and jail expansion as a political priority? When I asked Jones about why criminalization doesn’t factor more into her politics and writing about the inner city, she said, “I don’t know, I don’t disagree with anything you’re saying. . . it’s just sort of where you kind of choose to focus your energy” (107, p. 33). In Jones’ view, her anti-poverty work is more foundational because she sees criminalization as a function of poverty. We discussed this further in our interview:

Q: I want to ask about, explicitly about the politics of crime and criminalization and it’s my sense that that’s not super, that hadn’t been super on the forefront of CCPA work, the agenda or even the mindset of people on the Left in Manitoba.

A: Yeah that’s probably true. . . I guess, I think the way, the reason I, and it’s not that it’s not in people’s minds, but I guess, and I can only really speak for myself ‘cause for me it all goes back to the question around poverty and equality you know like all that stuff and I guess I am just a believer that those are the areas that we focus on. You know, racism. You know? But I guess I don’t, I mean I’m not sure exactly what you’re asking, but I guess I don’t always just think specifically around you know criminalization. (107, p. 29)

This reflects the CCPA School’s general position on crime control, which is that policing and imprisonment are unfortunate but inevitable responses to crime, which is a problem rooted in Aboriginal communities themselves because of the legacy of colonialism. Jones expressed that she doesn’t see criminalization as a “core” issue. She acknowledged that it’s not as if people in the inner city don’t think about criminalization, it is just not really something they as researchers focus on. This question came after a long conversation about the interconnected nature of a number of different social problems facing the inner city, and her frustration with the lack of political analysis of people working in the CBO sector. Still,
there is a big blank space in CCPA thinking when it comes to understanding police and imprisonment as core parts of the systems of racism and poverty she concerns herself with. She treats criminalization as another sub-category that people may or may not wish to study: “People I guess kind of pick and choose where they put their emphasis” (107, p. 32).

I asked Jones whether, in her teaching work with young people in the UIC program, or in her interviews, people talk about imprisonment and policing. Interestingly, she said yes, all the time, kids talk about their fear of police. But she quickly turned the conversation to gangs, which she said kids also fear. She then went on to lament that “education is their hope to get out of that, to stay away from it,” but that people are still very skeptical that education is going to make a difference in their lives “because their parents have had such bad experiences with education and you know the whole residential school thing and all that” (107, p. 34). This illustrates the CCPA School’s lack of attention to the expanding carceral state, even while they focus on crime.

In most cases, CCPA School research about crime confirms their ideological position that the problem of Indigenous criminalization is one of damaged Indigenous neighborhoods. For example, in 2008, CCPA researchers Elizabeth Comack, Laurence Deane, Larry Morrissette, and Jim Silver sat down with former gang members to talk about how, practically, the gang problem in inner-city Winnipeg could be addressed: “Collectively, our experience tells us that if meaningful change is to occur in the North End, it cannot be imposed from outside the community” (Comack, Silver, & Deane, 2009, p. 2). This CCPA report later became the book *Indians Wear Red* (Comack, Deane, Morrissette, & Silver, 2013). The researchers acknowledged that Indigenous communities would need “support from the outside,” but that the direction of change must be based on “the knowledge and insights of those who live in that community” (2013, p. 2). The researchers rejected the idea that gangs should be seen as a *behavioral* problem:
This [social] deterioration has to do with broad socio-economic forces over which those who live in the North End and broader inner city have little control. Because the disintegration of family and community in the inner city presents itself as behavioral problems, there is a strong, common sense tendency to blame those engaged in the bad behavior. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 13, emphasis theirs)

Instead, they propose that gangs be seen as a neighborhood problem. The paper ultimately calls for “rebuilding families and communities.” In CCPA discourse, the liberal rehabilitative ideal is applied to the community in place of the individual, but the logic remains in place. What starts, in almost every statement made in this research, as an intention to get at questions of social exclusion ends in a call to renovate family and community life. The problems originate in the neighborhood: it is the neighborhood that is dysfunctional. Not the state, not capitalism, and not colonialism. They continue:

> The gang problem is being reproduced by the social conditions that prevail in the North End. It is those conditions that create the street gangs and the gangsters. The problems continue to be reproduced because the machine that produces them—the North End and broader inner city with all its poverty and related conditions—remains hard at work, churning out its inevitable products. (Comack et al., 2009, p. 6)

The disorganized inner-city “community” is constructed in CCPA School discourse and NDP policy as an entity that needs to be improved. It is imagined as needing better integration into the rest of the city, rather than as a particular type of space which is produced by its dynamic relationship with the rest of the city and other larger systems outside of its bounds.

One of the ways the focus on damage in Indigenous communities is affirmed in this work is through researchers’ stated commitments to telling the truths and the stories of their participants. This is also used as an explanation as to why Indians Wear Red focuses more on the personal experiences of Aboriginal people than the structural factors that shape their experiences: “while our primary focus is on the personal stories of Aboriginal people, we are aware that structural realities have contributed significantly to shaping...
their experiences” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 34). As these authors tell it, the stories of the people they interviewed were just too awful not to tell:

The men and women interviewed have done some terrible things. They have committed many crimes. They have been engaged in violence. They have been destructive, to others and ultimately to themselves. We have been deeply concerned about how to depict these street gang activities, and even whether to do so.” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 34)

The authors express fear that these stories may be read through a conservative, unforgiving lens, and that they don’t want the stories to reinforce stereotypes. However, they go on to explain that they chose to tell the stories anyway because of an ethical commitment to truth-telling: “as researchers, we are ethically bound to tell the truth as much as we are able to understand it” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 34). Additionally, they tell the “truth” of damage in the inner city because in their view this is the only path toward finding solutions: “It is our commitment to finding such solutions that has led us to try to understand, from their perspective and to the extent possible, what ‘normal’ has come to mean for these Aboriginal men and women” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 34)

Just as Tuck identifies, a damage-centered narrative is often justified in service of a particular political process which promises to generate resources and attention for the area or community being profiled:

We also believe that the pain and suffering that lie at the heart of the street gang story—and which have their origins in the process and the impact of colonization and of racialized poverty—call for a full and open discussion if we are to find solutions to the problems that produce street gangs. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 34)

This narrative conceals the choices they have made about who to interview and which questions to ask. They don’t dwell on the excitement or joy or exhilaration that may come from street gang activity because it is not part of the narrative they have decided to construct. They don’t profile interviews with people who do not narrate their experiences in terms of damage.
While they are careful never to blame dysfunction on Indigenous communities themselves, they maintain that Indigenous dysfunction is at the root of the gang problem. For example, at the beginning of the book they reference two Indigenous advisors—Eric and Sharon Courchene—who both had a lot of experience working with Indigenous young people and gang members in particular. While the Courchenes are quoted as offering explanations for young people’s gang involvement, they do not speak of gang involvement in terms of bad behavior. However, the authors of *Indians Wear Red* do so deliberately, as if to assuage a potential audience that they anticipate not being capable of reading about gangs without an agreed-upon base level of disdain, established on the very first page of the book: “We do not approve of much of what the street gang members have done, and what some are still doing. But we think we understand why they have taken the path that they have taken” (Comack et al., 2013, p. 1).

Reduction of systemic problems to the community and individual scale often comes not in the analysis of the researchers, but in their prescriptions for change. In the conclusion of *Indians Wear Red*, the authors affirm the systemic nature of the problem of Indigenous street gangs and the inutility of superficial solutions. They use an analogy that I heard repeated by many different interviewees in the course of my interviewing in inner-city CBOs:

> Programs focused on saving or assisting or altering the lives of street gang members are the equivalent of the proverbial tale of pulling some people to safety from the river, without going upstream to find out why people keep getting pushed into the river in the first place. The roots of the street gang problem run deep, they are systemic. Effective solutions must address that reality. (Comack et al., 2013, p. 140)

After affirming the systemic nature of the problem, the “solutions” they articulate are focused squarely on fixing damaged communities.

As mentioned, Silver, Jones, and others within the CCPA decry the lack of “politicization” within the CBO sphere and among young activists. However, the research
they produce often conceals the political nature of their work. There is a tension in the research they do between their stated desire to generate political consciousness in favor of a strong social-democratic state, and their desire also to present “community-based solutions” and “solutions that work” in what they see as a strengths-based approach to demonstrating the capacities of people in the inner city. Their commitment to appearing to be community led (while in fact having their own set of political priorities) means both 1) that their politics are often concealed in their work, contributing to the idea that their ideas succeed simply because they are “solutions that work”: and 2) those political issues that they do not deem to be priorities (like the expansion of policing and imprisonment) don't make it onto the research agenda and therefore don't appear to be concerns of the community, when in fact it is just that the researchers’ priorities have led them to leave out certain questions.

One way the politics of the CCPA gets buried is in their claim to have their research agenda directed by people “in the community.” In interviews with CCPA School researchers, I asked whether they thought that their focus on the community scale may be contributing to the idea that it is Aboriginal people who need fixing, rather than the legislation and political systems that systematically disempower Aboriginal communities. Silver acknowledged that that idea may be a shortcoming of their work, but he responded that if that’s what their work seems to be saying, then it is because “the community” has generated those ideas themselves:

We do what we do because we take a strength-based approach and because we try to work with people in the community. And when we do that, when we genuinely work with people in the community you know we’re kind of honor-bound to stick to the kinds of things that they want to do, the kinds of things that come out of the community and they are interested and people like me have also become interested in practical solutions. (104, p. 4)

However, in describing the process of developing the priorities for the *State of the Inner City Report*, Jones described a process both of documenting existing work being done in the
inner city, highlighting community priorities, and also exerting influence on the direction of future work. The idea of the model, as she put it, was that there were organizations around the table who would identify what they wanted research on, and the CCPA would put out the report: “So the challenge was always respecting that the idea is to come from the community but also inserting something right” (107, p. 9). This “something” that they “insert” is where their own politics and affiliations come in, as they would with any community-based researcher, and as they should: “And so it was like you know the ideas yes came from the community, but there was always a way to try to then move it to the sort of the next level to have the political analysis and then policy ideas coming out of it right so” (107, p. 10).

There are other positions and politics within the inner city that further highlight the political decision-making involved in “community-based” research. For example, in an interview with Bridget Rose, the Executive Director of an Indigenous-run CBO, she expressed a political commitment to not telling the Indigenous people that use their services that they are the source of the problems in their lives:

One of the things that I’ve learned in like thirteen years of kind of creating a bit of a breach head in terms of some sort of social sovereignty over our own people is that we implemented—we tell everybody that comes in here that they’re not the problem. They’re just not the problem. And from that—they’re not clients either. We reclaim kind of kinship systems, not client-caregiver kind of unnatural relationships. And when I say this, these are hard ideologies to break, cause a lot of people come through those systems—the social work system, the whole social service system—so you come in here with these crazy notions—some people think people are clients, you know? I don’t even know what that word means, it just seems to be a system of othering people, of dividing people and labeling people. (156, p. 6)

In the above quote, Rose acknowledges that there is “unlearning” to do—that people who have been deliberately socialized as wards of various social services need help out of those mindsets from their peers. This is very different than non-Indigenous people taking those mindsets for granted as a source of “community expertise” which is then used to affirm the
importance of outside social service interventions in Indigenous communities. When I asked Rose about what she thought about the emphasis on “pragmatic solutions” that dominates inner-city community-development work, she commented that this orientation lends itself to assimilationist interventions: “Isn’t that almost self-serving in a way, hey? Well you mean like ok I’m no longer radical so I’m not gonna put any energy into that but I’m still looking at practical solutions so then I’m going to build systems of helping and you know assimilation” (156, p. 33). She describes her work in a CBO as explicitly political, and she critiques community-based research and the governing ideologies of other community-based organizations for encouraging their clients otherwise:

It just really sets up and perpetuates that system that we’re always in need of white supremacy, and that perpetuates everything in the first place. So these systems are embedded in our relationships in so many ways that just keep the systems going. (156, p. 8)

Bridget Rose analyzes the CBO sector in the context of broader struggles for self-determination. In contrast, the CCPA School prefers to describe their work to the public in terms of being “community led” rather than carrying out any particular political project.

In their commitment to developing the capacities of the inner city, the CCPA School often downplays failures or contradictions and plays up successes, all the while trying to emphasize that those successes were generated from the inside by people who are most impacted. Sometimes they are so committed to doing strength-based community research that they deliberately fail to publish about their own roles in the successes of the inner city, further obscuring the politics at work in their vision of inner-city change. This came up in only one example, but I can imagine it has happened in other examples because of the way they write about the community’s successes, combined with the fact that there is very little sense in the community-based organization (CBO) world (based on my interviews) that change happens through strategic political action—rather, most people I interviewed had
the sense that certain initiatives happen or don’t happen because they are “effective” or “evidence-based.” In my interview with Silver, he talked about the success of “turning around” Lord Selkirk Park, a public housing development in Winnipeg’s North End. His research and political maneuvering led to the establishment of an adult learning center right in the middle of the housing project, so that people who were on social assistance and wanted to get their grade 12 could do it near home. In Silver’s view, this was very transformative for the entire public housing development. In one of his books, he documents the community-generated ideas that led to this project, and the effects it has had on the Lord Selkirk Park community. He describes how and why he concealed his own role in its success:

Anyway like it doesn’t come out in my writing because it wouldn’t be appropriate to write in this way, but, but I was a really critical figure in all of that, precisely because I had a political understanding. And so I was able you know once I you know got to know people and they came to accept me and respect me and so on, I was then able to push things a little bit further and I, and I knew people in the provincial government and I knew a little bit about how to exert pressure and so on. I mean we would never have achieved that what we did achieve if there hadn’t been someone there who had that kind of whatever political savvy I may have, which is more than the average community development worker. So they tend to you know, like they would have, they would have limited themselves to working with people in the community, knocking on doors, getting to know them, having barbeques, doing a clean up the neighborhood, building a sense of community, all of which is really kind of foundational. (104, p. 14).

When I asked why he didn’t write himself into the story, he said it “would have sounded like boasting. I would have to say I played a real important role” (104, p. 14). His commitment and sensitivity to the fact that community development should not be about outsiders imposing their ideas on a community, and should be centered on building the capacity of people within the community, means that as a researcher he is making strategic decisions about what information to share in order to bolster that image. There isn’t necessarily anything wrong with this when researchers are being upfront about their research being part of a broader political strategy. However, this research is presented as if
it is a documentation of community capacity, when in fact other communities could really benefit from the knowledge of how this project got done only because of the presence of someone who could relate directly to the government.

The decision to write the story of the Lord Selkirk Park adult education center in this way is an example of how CCPA School research is oriented at policy-makers, and not at the community itself. Silver sees his research as informing policy-makers about what they should fund and why—a context in which his own role in the development of the project is irrelevant. However, community organizers aren’t being let in on how policy makers came to fund the project, which means it can’t be a template for future organizing. The reality that CCPA School policy research is influential because of their connections to government clashes with the image they are trying to project of a set of community-led projects and organizations that are successful because they are community led.

In my interviews with people who work in CBOs, many people around my age who worked in the CBO sector proudly stated that they were non-partisan, and that because they were doing good work, they were confident that any government would fund them. A few people explicitly credited this insight to the CCPA School research that has documented the successes of their organizations. This is politically naive, as the work of the CCPA has demonstrated. But, paradoxically, it is also a sentiment that is in part produced by the way the CCPA frames its task in terms of identifying “solutions that work.” Thus, the CCPA School both projects the image of echoing community voices while using those voices in order to make demands for particular policy reforms from a particular government.

This has shaped all research about the inner city, including research about crime. In my interviews with both Silver and Jones, one of their arguments for not doing research about the NDP-led expansion of policing and imprisonment is that it is not a priority people in the inner city have identified to them. They have written about crime itself, and crime is
often mentioned when they write about poverty (as a natural outcome of failing to address poverty). At the same time, they talk about their role as aiding in the politicization of the communities they are working with, and to this end they have made deliberate ideological choices to highlight the need for (among other things) community-economic development, adult education, and public housing—all important services to fight for in the inner city. While it is very important to have people on the Left willing and able to articulate their concerns in terms of policy reforms, when that becomes the only form of engagement with politics, the research and political vision of the broader community suffers.

**Conclusions**

While there is no doubt that the CCPA School has made important interventions in previously hegemonic forms of knowledge about inner city Winnipeg, the failure of the Manitoba Left to take seriously the expansion of the carceral state under the NDP government requires a serious self-evaluation of how we understand our commitments to social justice, and our place in the colonial relationship. For example, if the contemporary Manitoba Left wants to claim its legacy in JS Woodsworth, they could stand to use it as an opportunity to explore the persistent threads of liberal racism in their contemporary social-service orientations.

The CCPA School’s research approach and politics are an important context in which both government policy and CBO-worker consciousness is developed. Their research about Winnipeg’s inner-city continues to position non-Indigenous people as “helpers” in a process in which only Indigenous people are imagined as needing to change. This is part of a range of “genocidal logics that disappear Native peoples into intellectual and political projects that assume the continuation of rather than the end of settler colonialism” (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 10).
The history, context, and present research of the CCPA draws attention to the fact that “community-based research” and “research for social change” is and always will be political. The CCPA School fits within a specific lineage of social research for social change in Winnipeg. Tracing the historical context of social research about Indigenous communities in Winnipeg helps to highlight how this kind of research has tried to shape narratives about Indigenous communities over time, and how it shapes the political imaginations of people who work in CBOs in the present.
Chapter 4

Community policing and the integration of crime prevention and suppression

Introduction

Ideology is always contradictory. There is no single, integrated “ruling ideology”—a mistake we repeat again now in failing to distinguish between conservative and neoliberal repertoires. Ideology works best by suturing together contradictory lines of argument and emotional investments—finding what Laclau called “systems of equivalence” between them. Contradiction is its metier. Andrew Gamble characterized Thatcherism as combining “free market”/“strong state.” Many believed this contradiction would be Thatcherism’s undoing. But, though not logical, few strategies are so successful at winning consent as those which root themselves in the contradictory elements of common sense, popular life and consciousness.

— Stuart Hall (2011, p. 18)

New Labour’s populist vision for crime control was that they were “tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime.” The Manitoba New Democratic Party (NDP) took on this mantra for in order to justify their unprecedented jail and policing expansion. In their crime policy, this was operationalized through punitive, suppression-oriented initiatives like intensified policing and warrant execution sweeps; community-based recreation programming repackaged as “crime prevention”; and attempts to integrate prevention and suppression. Interviews with NDP politicians and political strategists and press releases from the NDP’s time in office illustrate often contradictory justifications for the punitiveness of NDP crime policy in the face of criticisms that their carceral expansion projects did not fit with their liberal values. In what follows, I analyze the logic deployed by politicians and political strategists to make sense out of the integration of prevention and suppression, even as community constituencies being recruited to participate in crime prevention reported that intensified suppression was damaging to their efforts.
In this chapter, I profile three initiatives that offer insight into this logic at work: the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy (WATTS), the Block by Block community safety and wellbeing initiative, and the work of community-liaison police officers. Within each of these initiatives, police suppression is characterized as benevolent and beneficial to the communities where it is being applied, by virtue of being integrated into crime-prevention efforts. In each case, police face resistance to this characterization from community organizations who do not share the police definition of safety and security problems in their neighborhoods. I argue that while the integration of prevention and suppression may make sense to some audiences of the NDP as a “holistic” response to crime, it does not work for communities who consider “criminals” to also be community members.

*Explaining the integration of suppression and prevention*

The carceral expansion undertaken by the NDP has been unprecedented. The Manitoba government regularly emphasized this fact in press releases and announcements aimed at a general public, as in their 2005 proclamation that they had legislated the largest-ever increase in police funding in Manitoba history (Province of Manitoba, 2005). At the same time, government actors significantly downplay these developments when talking to NDP party members and supporters who question how carceral expansion fits in with a progressive set of values. Many NDP political strategists I interviewed talked about the challenge of balancing the expectations of different constituencies in order to stay in power. Often, they also talked about their own struggles to make sense of these policies. The result is that explanations from within the NDP are often contradictory. However, this set of contradictions served its purpose, and garnered support from a wide range of constituencies for a set of policies that at once emphasized both that crime was a problem that originated
in poor communities because of social disadvantage and a lack of opportunity; and that those communities needed to be heavily policed—for their own good.

In my interviews with politicians and policy advisors, there were two competing and often contradictory explanations for their policy choices and political visions. On the one hand, interviewees spoke of an awareness that the NDP’s project of carceral expansion was simply a political compromise in order to get re-elected. On the other hand, they were proud to describe the ways that their particular brand of punishment was progressive.

Senior policy advisors within the party talked about capitulating to a right-wing discourse on crime control in order to allow them to stay in power and do the other good things they have done, such as continue to fund social services like health care and education at levels that have not been maintained by other provinces. On the crime issue in particular, many interviewees commented that they were acutely aware that, as an historically left-wing party, the NDP could lose an election on the perception of being “soft on crime,” but also that they could never win on the crime issue. Everyone acknowledged that a lot of what was done to be “tough on crime” was “political,” in the sense that they did it in order to let the public know that they were taking crime seriously and to “inoculate” themselves against further criticism from the Right. In this sense, political strategists who described themselves as “left-wing” would distance themselves from particularly vindictive NDP crime policies. Many times, Justice Minister Andrew Swan, who was Minister from 2009–2014, was described as a “rogue” Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), and as someone who was uniquely responsible for the “worst” NDP crime policies. Many NDP supporters told me that Swan wasn’t a “real” NDP-er, that he belonged instead in the Conservative party.

However, Justice Minister Gord Mackintosh (who preceded Swan) was equally engaged in carceral expansion, as was Justice Minister Dave Chomiak, and both laid the
groundwork for much of the work Swan was able to do. For example, Mackintosh introduced the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act (SCNA) in 2001, which allows landlords to evict tenants who have been reported to be using their housing for illegal purposes (Province of Manitoba, 2001). In the press release announcing the introduction of the legislation, the government promised that it would provide “safe and effective ways to help shut down drug dens, booze cans, sniff houses and prostitution dens” (Province of Manitoba, 2001). This legislation was heralded by many NDP supporters as providing a mechanism by which communities could take control of safety in their own neighborhoods, which is how the government marketed it: “we believe it’s important to work in partnership with the local community and residents in providing them with effective tools to take back their neighborhoods” (Province of Manitoba, 2001). It allows residents to more easily report “problem houses” without having to file police reports, routing such complaints through the civil rather than criminal courts. In practice, it has meant that entire families are evicted (in an incredibly tight housing market), often on the basis of the actions of some family members, and often at the height of instability or crisis in their family lives. NDP supporters and political strategists hold up this legislation as emblematic of the community orientation of NDP responses to crime at their best, even though it is a punitive measure that targets the poorest of the poor.

In another initiative undertaken by a Justice Minister other than Andrew Swan, NDP Justice Minister Dave Chomiak spearheaded an “intensive anti-gang project” combining supervision, “swift consequences,” and collaborative community services. The “Spotlight” initiative is described as “helping youth deal with substance abuse, stay in school or find a job” (Province of Manitoba, 2006b). While these goals are appealing, they were used as a justification later in the same year to double the size of the Gang Prosecutions Unit in Manitoba in order to achieve more guilty pleas (and imprison more
gang members), to expand the program to put police in schools, and to fund more police and probation officers in order to enforce the bail and probation conditions of “high-risk” gang members more intensively (Province of Manitoba, 2006a).

Justice Minister Andrew Swan was nonetheless responsible for some particularly punitive legislation. For example, in 2012 with Swan as Justice Minister the NDP announced that it would “discontinue, reduce, or deny employment and income assistance benefits for people with outstanding warrants for serious crimes” (Province of Manitoba, 2012b). Swan was also responsible for introducing legislation that would deny Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) medical benefits to people convicted of car theft (Brandon Sun, 2011). However, Swan was also a proponent of the community programming the NDP saw as a “complement” to suppression, including the Lighthouses community center program, and the Turnabout program that monitors and attempts to support children under 12 who break the law (analyzed in chapter five of this dissertation): “Lighthouses and Turnabout are part of Manitoba’s youth gang reduction strategy, a three-pronged approach that balances prevention with investments in improved policing and tougher laws” (Province of Manitoba, 2011a).

In the same 2011 press release announcing funding for community-based anti-gang initiatives, the NDP government boasts that it has “more than doubled” funding for police since 1999, and increased the budget for prosecutions by 165 per cent, which has helped to result in 1404 gang convictions since November 2003. In short, punitive legislation and carceral expansion, as well as the integration of suppression and community-based crime prevention, have been themes throughout the NDP’s time in office and are not attributable to any particular NDP Minister of Justice or Premier. Still, NDP supporters and political staff remember this history selectively.
When confronted with examples of NDP crime policy, political strategists told me that the “good” stuff the government was doing to support criminalized people was done under the radar—for example, supporting a housing development for former gang members—and that they didn’t make initiatives like this public because they would appear “soft” on crime in the eyes of the public. One senior policy advisor told me that the NDP can’t be seen to be “doing good things for bad people” in the eyes of the public. The attitude of the people in government who I interviewed was that they could only react to public opinion; they couldn’t shape or influence it. The possibility that they could explain themselves to the public, or that the public could be educated, was hardly considered. One policy advisor commented to me that the audience for those supportive initiatives would be the inner city, but that the NDP could already count on the support of city center neighborhoods, and so it didn’t have to work as hard to appeal to them. They talked as if they were bound by a public that wanted them to be “tough on crime” for the most part, but that was slowly warming to the idea that maybe kids in the inner city needed opportunities like sports programs too.

Another interesting disposition of policy advisors describing NDP crime policy was to talk about the provincial government as relatively helpless and haphazard. One policy advisor described staying in government as scrambling around trying to keep the government ship afloat, trying to conserve what good the government was already doing, and not having room to think about redirecting the ship or steering it even a little off course. When talking about crime policy, policy advisors distanced themselves from the outcomes of the criminal justice system by saying that the NDP government didn’t actually have much power over it, despite the government’s significant efforts to exert such influence. They described the growth of jail populations as unfortunate but inevitable, spurred by almost natural forces. In one statement, the head of Manitoba Corrections said
that the NDP government wasn’t technically expanding the capacity of one of the jails they were rebuilding, but were rather replacing existing beds through renovations at a rate that accounts for population growth. Referring to Dauphin correctional center, he said: “We are just replacing the beds at Dauphin, but we’re replacing them with the acknowledgement that if we were building Dauphin today we would be building it for 180 beds not 80 beds.” (79, p. 21). This suggests that he thinks about jail expansion not as a political decision about how to resolve the jail overcrowding crisis, but as an inevitable response to a natural growth in jail populations. Policy advisors talked about the criminal justice system as kind of a black box that politicians had little control over, because the decisions of judges and police officers couldn’t be shaped by political will alone. These proclamations were striking because of how much they contradicted the concerted efforts of the Manitoba NDP to be tough on crime—and appear tough on crime—and the significant evidence (in the form of skyrocketing jail populations) that this was a realm that was in fact heavily impacted during their time in office.

In an interview for this project, I asked the Premier of Manitoba about increases in policing and jail capacity, and he lamented the fact that crime in Manitoba was a “wedge” issue, meaning the opposition Conservative party tried to portray themselves as tough on crime and the NDP as soft on crime in order to spur divisions within the NDP, and to draw a sharp distinction between the two parties’ platforms. However, he and his closest policy advisors were also genuinely proud of what they described as being new and improved forms of policing, jail construction, and crime-prevention programming. For example, when talking about policing, my interviewees went to great lengths to assure me that the government was uncomfortable with expanding the police budget year after year. This was especially true of the political staff who I know from other contexts who felt the need to assure me of their left-wing credentials. One policy advisor told me that nearing the end of
the NDP’s time in office, in 2013, they conceded to police demands for more funding on the basis that the police agreed that their new money would only be used to fund community police officers, or crime analysts, who don’t patrol but who claim to make the distribution of police power more precise and scientific. They also cited the success of policing initiatives like the School Resource Officer program, which puts “friendly” police officers in inner-city schools, or the dedicated community police officers who visit youth-serving agencies in plain clothes in order to develop relationships with inner-city youth. After years of expanding the budget to put more regular police officers on the streets, the NDP have adopted the idea that new, less “traditional” forms of policing are key to protecting poor people. In response to being confronted with the NDP record on jail expansion, Premier Selinger said:

Well at the adult level there has been more jail cells built, no question about it. I did want to say something about policing though. The last policing commitments we made were very much on community policing, and police in the schools which is a prevention approach and we’re getting good results out of that. (154, p. 3)

They are also committed to the idea that their jails, which have been expanded to make room for more programming, are different from “traditional” jails. In response to the idea that jails in Manitoba are warehousing Indigenous people, Premier Greg Selinger said:

Look I understand that argument and I agree with the argument to this extent—if you[re] just building traditional jails and just doing traditional policing where everybody is the enemy and people are being warehoused in jails which often they are, it’s not a very productive use of your money, it’s extremely expensive and it doesn’t get you much except more of the same. (154, pp. 13-14)

The qualitative difference of the innovations the NDP was proud to claim as their own from so-called traditional approaches is, however, difficult to discern. Below, I describe and analyze three such programs: the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy (WATSS), the Block by Block program, and the funding of community police officers within the Winnipeg Police Service. As will be evident, their implementation was not as non-traditional as progressive NDP supporters have argued.
Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy (WATSS)

WATSS was an early, very successful crime suppression strategy that focused on suppression, but drew on critical support from community partners. Because of its success, the academic advisor who developed it is now a key government advisor. This advisor has since helped to develop the Block by Block program, and the Spotlight gang suppression strategy, modeled after WATSS. Politicians I interviewed or talked to informally referred often to the auto-theft–suppression strategy as a good articulation of the provincial government’s position on suppression activities: the NDP is not against suppression per se, but rather against suppression alone. For example, within the WATSS strategy, police and probation officers practice zero tolerance with kids “at high risk” of stealing cars, but they pair this approach with “opportunities” offered to offenders by social services and community organizations to “take a different path,” usually by engaging in some sort of job training. In other words, the NDP sees a place for suppression within a “comprehensive strategy,” and WATSS is their shining example of how successful that strategy can be. Most short-term government responses to crime don’t get the dramatic results the WATSS strategy did, and NDP politicians and policy advisors continued to try to replicate its astronomical success in other ways until the end of their time in office.

Between 2003–2008, Winnipeg had the highest rates of vehicle theft in North America, peaking at 1,932/100,000 residents in 2004 (Linden, 2010). In 2006, 1 in every 5 Criminal Code offenses was an auto theft, and the vehicle theft rate in Winnipeg in 2006 was 67% higher than the rate in the next highest Canadian city (Linden, 2010). In a report about the policing strategy, the author and strategy engineer claimed: “most Winnipeg residents had either been directly victimized by auto theft or knew someone who had been victimized, and personal accounts and media reports made it clear that the public felt
vehicle theft was a major problem” (Linden, 2010, p. 2). By 2009, the actions of the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy had yielded a 76% decrease in the rate of auto thefts (Linden, 2010).

A moral panic around car theft emerged in Winnipeg, largely because it was a problem that afflicted people all over the city and randomly, which made it different from—and more “scary” than—gang-related violence, which was also causing havoc in the city center during that time. One could be a victim of car theft no matter what end of the city one lived in. Accounts such as this one highlighted the seemingly uncaring nature of auto thieves:

In 2007, two people were killed by drivers of stolen vehicles and in one highly-publicized case, an early morning jogger was seriously injured after being deliberately run down by a youth driving a stolen car. In one 16-month period in 2007/2008, 8 drivers deliberately tried to run down police officers with stolen vehicles. Vehicle thieves also frequently attempted to ram police cars. Some youth engaged in other dangerous behaviors such as jamming down vehicle accelerators and launching driverless vehicles down city streets and into parking garages. (Linden, 2010, p. 1)

The apparently irrational nature of the problem also confounded people and made them scared. Cars weren’t being stolen for parts. The cars that were being stolen were being targeted because they were easy to steal—for example, there was a particular make of Chrysler that became a known target. The cars would be taken on joyrides and then ditched somewhere, often to be recovered later, sometimes damaged but not always: “the primary motivation for stealing cars is excitement, not money. . . interviews with young offenders found that they stole cars for excitement and to show off for their peers and that they were very committed to continuing to steal cars” (Linden 2010, p. 3). The people who were stealing cars were mostly Indigenous youth, and the data collection that preceded the WATTS strategy found that car thieves came from inner-city Winnipeg where “vehicle theft was an important part of the youth culture” (Linden, 2010, p. 2). During my time spent in
high school in inner-city Winnipeg right around the height of this panic, people bragged about stealing cars. It was a particular kind of crime that scared rich, white south-end Winnipeg residents as much as it thrilled the young people who were doing it. The “recklessness” of the car thieves illustrated for many a disregard for private property and civility codes.

Importantly, car theft was costing Manitoba’s public insurance company millions of dollars every year, which helped to make it a priority issue for the provincial Government. The “comprehensive strategy” that the government developed was a combination of “target hardening” (placing immobilizers in cars that were easy to steal) and intensive monitoring and supervision of youth “in neighborhoods with high levels of involvement in vehicle theft” (Linden, 2010, p. 4), meaning youth who were selected based on the neighborhoods they lived in, and not the neighborhoods where they may steal cars. The strategy divided youth into four categories: youth at risk of offending, youth in the early stages of involvement in car theft culture, repeat thieves, and youth who were at very high risk of reoffending.

At the lower risk levels, schools and teachers, school resource officers, and community groups were recruited to deliver programming meant to discourage kids from becoming involved in car theft. At the higher risk levels, youth were subject to intensive monitoring referred to as “focused deterrence.” These “Level 3 and 4 offenders” lived in their communities under strict conditions of release: “Youth were contacted in person every day by probation officers or police and contacted by phone every three hours. Youth who violated their conditions of release were apprehended by the police so they did not have the opportunity to reoffend” (Linden, 2010, p. 5). The architect of this plan summed up their commitment to deterrence through ensuring certain and swift arrest responses: “You sit on high risk offenders and you know just basically wait for them to do something bad and then lock them up or first of all threaten to do that” (108, p. 4).
Interviewees who designed the suppressive “focused deterrence” component of the WATSS program constructed it as humane because it only targets the highest-risk children, and as for the children’s own good, given that they will be put away on small breaches before they’ve had a chance to get arrested on more significant charges: “In the long run again it was actually keeping them out of jail, so it was actually giving them better lives that it was temporarily taking away” (108, p. 8). Within this rationale, jail was being used as a strategy to keep kids out of jail. It was also very important to this advisor that the police were not engaging in random stops and searches in the context of this plan—instead, they targeted people who “really deserve to be targeted” because of their prior involvement in crime.

When the Premier recalled the WATSS strategy, he highlighted how important it was to him that it not just be about suppression:

We had to reduce auto theft levels, it was a major pressure point. But it was about different levels of intervention—starting with monitoring them on a regular basis to make sure they were compliant with their release conditions, but also finding ways to move them out of auto theft into more productive activities where they could find a way to make a living and get an education and opportunity. I remember very specifically having a very large conversation with the designers of that program and treasury Board where we spent a lot of time and they assured us that it wasn’t just about suppression, it was also about the redirection of young people’s lives (154, p. 8).

A top bureaucrat at Manitoba Corrections described what that looked like:

We were using suppression pieces—we were supervising them, if they were breaching they were going back into custody, but we were also saying to them while we’re doing all this: you have another option, there is another way. And we had intervention programming in place and we had prevention programming in place through partners in the community. (79, p. 3)

Within this discourse, the more choices the government ostensibly gives to kids, the more their choices refrain from becoming criminals are treated as theirs and theirs alone.

However, the choice being described here is that youth could either participate in the
alternatives set out for them, or they would be locked up. Participation in the “alternatives” under these conditions is coerced.

This is especially so when the head of Manitoba Corrections explained how this logic has since been applied to anti-gang strategies run by Manitoba Justice:

Like, what we do for instance with our high-risk guys is we actually enroll them, right? So when they’re coming into a high risk program we bring them in and we say to them with the police: we’re enrolling you, you’re now a member of this program, here is what it means, here is how the work is gonna get done, and we’re gonna keep our promises—if we say we’re gonna be checking your curfew, we’re gonna be here checking your curfew, we’re gonna be knocking at the door at two in the morning. And it’s rigorous, but if you find this isn’t how you want it to be, well, you know, after three months if you’re tired of this, let’s talk about other options for what we can do with you, right? So the whole idea is, always trying to move towards creating a circumstance where an individual is ready to change, or if you enhance their readiness for change and then you are able to move in with processes and approaches that will facilitate that. (79, p. 10)

The intensive monitoring of “high risk” individuals in the context of WATSS was often framed as being in the best interests of those being monitored. In one interview, I asked the person in charge of designing the strategy whether he thought that the degree of monitoring was inhumane. In the course of the interview, he rejected that idea, reinforcing the idea that these kids were being given options in the course of being monitored.

However, the question clearly bothered him because he sent me a follow up email later about an anti-gang strategy modeled off WATSS:

I had one other thought concerning your question about the harshness of programs targeted at high-risk offenders . . . . The program does place those selected under a higher level of scrutiny. However, [the anti-gang program] and WATSS were both primarily probation-based (i.e. most of the contact with those in the programs is made by probation officers rather than by police officers and the programs are managed by probation rather than by police) and the focus is on providing pathways out of a criminal lifestyle. Both programs had much more favorable ratios of probation officers/clients than normal programs and as I mentioned the meetings with the offenders were designed to deal with the issues that led them into crime and with working on educational and employment opportunities. I did mention to you that they can avoid meeting with probation if they are working or getting training. The probation officers working on GRASP have even used their personal funds to arrange dinners where the offenders could bring their partners/spouses to a social event where the P.O.’s [probation officers] did the cooking so their main efforts
are on change rather than on putting them back into prison. (personal correspondence, Interviewee 108)

He emphasized that the intentions of the anti-gang and WATSS programs were good, and that this made the “unpleasant” monitoring ok. The goal was to help kids make better sets of choices within the circumstances where they found themselves. We had already covered the topic of colonialism in the course of the conversation when he described to me the profile of the car thieves, which is a list of demographic markers commonly used to refer to Indigenous people:

The kids had the background of every delinquent you’ve read about pretty much. They were all disadvantaged in a whole bunch of ways. A number of them had Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, family impoverishment, lower educational accomplishments, lack of employment, unstable family situations, so it’s just the picture of delinquent kids. (108, p. 7)

I asked him whether he ever thought about this intensive monitoring as a kind of colonial incursion, and he described the logic in which he thought it was, in fact, the opposite of colonial:

If you can, if you can do something that in the end is going to allow somebody’s life to become stabilized and normalized... you know if the intent of the program and the way that its carried out is done ethically and compassionately and, and if the goal is really you know not to send people to jail forever but to stabilize their lives and get them, get them functioning and living in the same manners as the people in the rest of the city, I don’t have any issues with it... [I know the deputy police chief and the chief and the guy who runs the jail system,] and I mean I don’t have any fear that any of these people are trying to do ill and engage in colonization, in fact, it’s the reverse, it’s trying to do whatever can be done to help the community, help largely young people have better lives. (108, p. 26)

He went on to invoke Indigenous victims when considering what would happen if they didn’t pursue this strategy that worked so well to reduce offending:

Okay so the other option is that we recognize that we have a strategy that would actually work and we say no because we don’t want to, we don’t want to monitor all these, all the most violent gang people in Winnipeg. Because we’re afraid of the, you know we’re afraid that we might hurt them somehow or you know I have more trouble with that because the other side of Aboriginal people in jail is that the people who are victimized are typically Aboriginal. (108, p. 27)
It is very difficult to argue against this discourse of victimization, except to point out that Indigenous people are also being victimized through their imprisonment, or the imprisonment of their loved ones.

Two parts of the WATSS strategy are relevant here. One part is the unquestioned pegging of crime-prevention programming language like “providing youth with opportunities” to intense programs of supervision and control. Within the WATSS program, providing kids with other opportunities wasn’t enough on its own; it had to be enforced with compliance measures. Both WATSS and the anti-gang strategies rely on community partners in order to deliver the supplemental programming described as “opportunities”; however both of these strategies most often generated more resources for the police, but not for community partners. The second relevant part is the collaboration between police and “different segments of the community.” Within WATSS, the police used community and school relationships in order to deliver messages of deterrence. At the same time, the intense suppression side of police behavior continued without any community involvement. This pattern continues in the next two examples of police-community collaboration.

*Block by Block*

The most recent vision the provincial government has for integrating crime-prevention and suppression activities relies even more heavily than WATSS on the participation of Winnipeg’s large network of community-based service-provision organizations. The hope of politicians and policy makers seems to be that bringing the activities of police in closer proximity to the activities of community organizations will lend community-policing activities legitimacy in the eyes of residents who have relationships to those community organizations. In the context of the Block by Block initiative, the government has mandated the participation of community organizations, welfare agencies,
health authorities, schools, and the police in order to improve inter-agency communication about families who are involved with multiple state systems and are therefore constructed as safety risks. The purpose is to target the most troubled families within a twenty-one block area in a north-end city-center neighborhood in Winnipeg. The Premier described this strategy as “an attempt to move away from policing being separate from prevention” (154, p. 12).

During the summer of 2014, Block by Block was still in the planning stages, so what I present here is much more about the vision being articulated and the dynamics of interaction between the different partners than it is about the outcomes of the initiative. I interviewed both the advisors who had developed the plan—the same people who had been in charge of implementing WATSS—and the woman in charge of facilitating collaborations with community organizations “on the ground” in Winnipeg’s North End.

From the perspective of the initiative’s architects—a criminology professor and the head of Manitoba Corrections—Block by Block was a crime-prevention initiative. It was adapted from a strategy that had resulted in a significant reduction in crime in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, a small northern city with a high concentration of Indigenous residents. In the context of the Prince Albert strategy, police worked together with social services in order to concentrate resources on families considered to be in serious crisis. One of the central “innovations” of this strategy was that it was supposed to facilitate information sharing between bureaucracies that typically have rules to protect the confidentiality of the families they deal with. Within the Prince Albert strategy, the information about families who were deemed by various agencies to be “in trouble” was shared between health services, Child and Family Services (CFS), and the police in order to coordinate a response.
In separate interviews, the two architects of the program shared the same anecdote with me in order to illustrate why they thought Block by Block was necessary. They told a story of a ride-along with the Winnipeg Police Service (it wasn’t clear to me which one of them was actually on the ride-along). They came across a party at a house where the police had been thirty times in the last year to respond to disturbances. Speaking about the police officer on duty, they told me about his frustrations trying to deal with the situation effectively:

So he winds up loading the kids into a cruiser car, and they drive around looking for a responsible adult that will take them in. And when the call was cleared, I asked them: how many times have you been to that house before? And the answer was thirty three times that month. We know! It’s not that we don’t know, right? And the broader point here: Block by Block is about, from my perspective, using the influence and capacity of the people that are at the core to begin to focus on what we know and focus on the issues less from the perspective of mandate and more from the perspective of outcome. (79, p. 12)

When I asked the bureaucrat about the role of CBOs, he talked about them in a way that suggested that they were necessary to the project, but likewise had to engage in compromises:

The role of non-profits are, they’re gonna be working with folks if they’re the agency best positioned to do it. But it’s also about bringing their perspective, us understanding them, them understanding us and how we can lever all of our capacity to improve service delivery. (79, p. 12)

Then he went on to give me a “good example.” He tells me that if you drive down Selkirk Avenue (what he called “the mile of misery”), a north-end street populated by multiple social-service organizations, at three in the morning, all of them are closed and there are no available services:

I’m not saying this critically, right, this is not meant to be critical in any way shape or form, but you know some of these places are absolutely closed when you know, when things need to be addressed . . . . These kinds of issues we’re dealing with don’t work in a Monday-to-Friday, 8am-to-5pm window . . . . At the end of the day this isn’t about money, it’s about whether or not we’re doing the right things in the right time at the right measure with the right people. (79, p. 13)
I told him that I had been hearing that this was something community organizations were hyper-aware of—they wanted to be open all night, but they just didn’t have the resources. I reminded him about the very loud and visible campaign one such organization was undergoing at the time to crowd-fund $25,000 for a 24-hour drop-in center that the Province had said they would not fund. He responded that community organizations needed to understand that there was no new money and that they needed to do better with what they had. He insisted that the issue was not money, it was realignment. I responded that I understood that many of the agencies know that they need to be open at night but are suffering from a lack of capacity. He answered in a tone that was supposed to indicate a revelation, a trick, a point I could have never thought of but which holds the key to what he is talking about: “Well, do they need to be open during the day?”. These are the kinds of choices he uses as examples, which seem to be impossible choices.

The government relationship to CBOs mirrors their relationship to Indigenous communities more broadly—they believe they know what is best, and they communicate this belief in condescending ways. For him, government collaboration with the CBO sector in the context of Block by Block meant teaching them that they needed to more with less:

I think inside the NGO community, certainly you know it’s a really good conversation, it’s a respectful conversation, but I think some NGO folks are beginning to understand because at the end of the day you know their money is coming from the same place mine is. (79, p. 18)

In his description of why the government “collaborates” with NGOs, he indicated that it makes them easier to manage from a government perspective. For example, the government knew that it couldn’t go ahead with Block by Block without the cooperation of CBOs, but that the program won’t necessarily incorporate their perspectives about how it should run. The other architect of Block by Block told me that the initial stages of Block by Block were partly to figure out “what was going on” with all the dozens of programs in the
inner city that they knew little about, the implication being that they needed to be streamlined and better managed. So, while the Block by Block strategy relies heavily on the relationships community organizations have with inner-city residents, its initial intention was not to be community driven. Collaboration, for the Manitoba Corrections bureaucrat, was more about image management for the government, which is also how he described their rationalization for increasing funding for police and jails. Those increases were “off the table”—not up for discussion because they have to do with “politics” and re-electability. He described the funding of punitive responses to crime as “the reality of political life” (79, p. 19).

Block by Block only came with a nominal amount of new money from the provincial government: $200,000 to fund the coordinator position. In the same year, community organizations had been told there was no new money for anything, and the police budget had increased. The idea behind dedicating such a tiny amount of money to the initiative is that it is utilizing personnel that are already funded by the government, and that by improving communication among government-funded agencies, ultimately all agencies will save time. As of July 2014, the planning had already required a lot of additional work from everyone involved in the form of meetings, liaising, and the frustrating emotional labor of trying hard to construct a coordinated intervention plan among groups of service providers with very different approaches to the people they work with.

This program got held up at the stage of “community consultations” which were slated to go a lot more quickly than they did. As the person in charge of Block by Block at the community level told me, “community consultations” were actually consultations with community-based organization leaders, a fact some of the “community partners” regarded cynically but with a cautious optimism: “So we often say community when we’re talking about the workers in the community but that’s not even necessarily the true community,
but at least you know it’s still someone who kind of has that community perspective” (112, p. 4). In the words of the coordinator, a former executive director of an inner-city women’s center, the government brought together a bunch of other executive directors of community organizations to get their approval for the Block by Block plan: “I was one of them at the time and they sort of said hey, we’ve got this great program, you know what are we, we’re going to start this, what do you think? They thought everyone would just love it and that wasn’t the case” (112, p. 4). Then she laughed.

First, community organizations rejected the idea that the executive director of the initiative was going to be a retired police officer, and that the partners at the table were going to be mostly government organizations. Community organizations resisted this based on their understandings that their organizations, built to be flexible and “community led,” knew more about the needs in their communities and needed to have more of a role directing it. According to the project director who was hired after the community consultations process, the government did make a concerted effort to respond to the concerns of the community. This is why the project—which was supposed to have started in April in the year I was interviewing—still hadn’t started by August, and it didn’t look like it was near starting.

Representatives from community organizations visited Prince Albert, looked at their model, and “found lots of reasons why it wouldn’t work in this community” (112, p. 5). The model was based on a small city environment where everyone “kind of knows everybody,” from the police to the agencies involved. In contrast, in the twenty-one square blocks where it was to be implemented in Winnipeg, the community-level director told me that there were thirty community-based organizations that service the area, five schools, and at least
a dozen child and family service agencies.\textsuperscript{15} The executive directors who had been invited to the consultations insisted that everyone be allowed at the table. This was frustrating to the government because they wanted results fast. However, the government was ultimately responsive to the plea of community organizations that “if we go too fast, if we don’t do this the right way then it won’t work at all” (112, p. 8).

A central concern for community partners was that families who were going to be involved in “targeted responses” needed to consent before information about them could be shared between agencies. They were concerned about the police, but they were even more concerned about Child and Family Services (CFS) authorities who had the power to take away people’s children. The fear of drawing CFS attention to families who weren’t already involved with CFS was very great. In this sense, the community organizations felt they were really putting their reputations on the line for this initiative. The government was asking them to use the hard-earned relationships of community organizations with community members in order to let a range of government agencies into their lives. In this context, it was important to them that whichever agency made initial contact with the family gets the family’s written or verbal consent to have information shared among other agencies. Afterwards, the process proceeds as follows (in the words of the community-level director):

So if consent is given which is the ideal situation, hub connector asks the family about their goals, needs, who they are involved with and who they would like to be involved with, and then the participant information sheet which is just some information so we can follow up with the family and, and everything, so very basic information. And then the goal sheet is completed, okay. After we get consent what happens is we send out an email to all the people on the hub and it will be in an encrypted file attached, we’ve got consent, we’ll be discussing this family at the next meeting. We’re not going to put any of that in the email, they’ll just know that if you

\textsuperscript{15} In the past fifteen years, Child and Family Services has been devolved into dozens of Indigenous-run agencies, which has not resulted in the intended reduction in rates of apprehension.
get this attachment and they’ll look in their systems to find out what they can, so they’re going to gather their information from their systems and the hub connector is going to bring information directly from the family. (112, p. 49)

The “hub” describes a “hub and spoke” model whereby there is a central hub of representatives from different agencies who then decide together and create a team of responses. The community-level organizer described one person at the Block by Block planning table—a “government” person, as she put it—who thought that families would never consent to this, which to him meant that they should do away with the consent process and prioritize interventions for the sake of public safety. The community organizations at the table were able to counter that sentiment, but the community-level director I interviewed agreed that getting consent was going to be difficult:

I’m hopeful that they will but they won’t give consent because of who’s at the table. . . I think that they’re going to see Winnipeg Police Services and Child and Family Services and the first thought is, especially if they’re not already involved with that system. . . the first thing that’s going to go through their mind is someone’s going to come and take my kids away. (112, p. 55)

CBOs are invested in helping to get families to consent because they see promise and potential in the initiative. In an example given to me by the community-level director, better communication between Manitoba Housing and the relevant Child and Family Services agency could have a huge impact. For example, it could alleviate the pressure of this scenario, which she described as “not uncommon”:

You can’t get housing until you get your kids back, but you can’t get your kids back until you get housing. So I think it’s a housing policy issue—so housing will not give the mom a house big enough to have the kids in it until the kids are actually returned, but Child and Family Services can’t return the children until that happens and because there’s such a wait list with housing that you know again if they could just change it you know the plan. . . but that doesn’t happen, so that’s one of the biggest barriers. (112, p. 63)

Still, she acknowledged that it would be hard to get people to give their consent:

Who’s actually going to sign this form, you know? And how do we get them to? We are saying we need you to trust that by sharing this information the police are not going to come bounding down your doors and we need to be clear on what those
guidelines are in terms of, unless a child is being hurt, you know like those things we can’t change. Or if someone’s life is in danger in that moment. (112, p. 31)

In turn, the community was being asked to trust the police—to trust the good relationship that they’ve built with the one police officer on the hub committee. At the point of planning, the community person I interviewed really liked the police officer involved, but she was not actually clear about how it is that they could ensure certain police responses because ultimately the responses come down to the discretion of the police officer. In reference to the police officer who was part of the Block by Block planning:

Yes, you know that she can you know like, I think the example she often uses if someone’s breaching, you know whatever, like to let that go based on the fact that other things are happening, you know stuff like that, so she’s been given some discretion on that. And but again how far that goes and where their line is I don’t think I can respond to that. But you know I think again if somebody is going to be hurt, safety is always going to be there, they’re supposed to make things safe right. (112, p. 51)

The community-organization person I talked to was cautiously optimistic about working with the police. On the one hand, she was cautious because:

Community-based organizations have a negative [trails off] . . . I think our fear is, I mean again it’s the same as child welfare is that we’ve heard stories you know. And so we think that—you know, I don’t—but a lot of people think that the police are there to hurt families and that’s not the case. As I form relationships with them I’m truly understanding that. If you would have asked me two years ago I don’t know what I would have said. (112, p. 29)

On the other hand, she was optimistic about the fact that information sharing was supposed to go both ways. Earlier in the interview she had referred to the director of one of the organizations who was notoriously hostile toward the police. Later, she said that that woman was sitting at the Block by Block table “so that when she calls up the police and says, you know, what’s going on here, they don’t say ‘I can’t share that information with you’” (112, p. 52).

The director at the community level described the mission statement of Block by Block as “a platform for authentic collaboration that improves community, safety and social
outcomes for families by unlocking agency, community, and family capacity” (112, p. 10). The idea is that agencies could work better together: “So if Child and Family Services and you know the North End Women’s Centre could communicate in a different way things would be better for the family” (112, p. 10). She wanted to move away from the language of crime prevention and use the language of “healthy communities” instead.

It was centrally important to the community partners who were involved in the community consultations that the Block by Block intervention process be genuinely directed by the families involved. This was expressed by the Indigenous organizations involved in terms of the principle of self-determination. This is one example of community organizations—many of which are Indigenous led—being very protective of the types of relationships they have with their communities, and not wanting to disrupt those relationships by imposing the involvement of either social services or the police on them.

The only thing that is a main component of it is that families will guide it and that we, that we will be changing systems right. . . and that’s how we’re hoping to get their buy-in, because I, I don’t know if I would have agreed to some of the stuff that we’re asking them to. (112, p. 48)

This demand has taken a long time to navigate because a premise of the intervention is that families don’t really know what help they need, otherwise they would have presumably already accessed those services. From the perspective of the community director, “We’re not looking at fixing the individual, we’re looking at fixing the systems” so they work better for families. But she also acknowledged that the government was resistant to letting families direct the process. As she put it, there is skepticism on both sides:

The community-based organizations are skeptical the government will actually make it happen; the government is more skeptical that if we just give people control of their lives back that change will happen. Like those are extremes when I’m saying that but that would be more what it is. (112, p. 28)

The principle of having the initiative be directed by the families involved had been adopted up to the point of the involvement of the police, which is not optional if something criminal
is discovered through the increased contact and communication with other intervening organizations. According to the academic architect, the families can dictate who gets involved in terms of agencies, and can refuse a service—except in the case of the police, who have ultimate authority: “So there would be those exceptional cases . . . . I think policing is kind of a different issue than ‘I don’t want to deal with that agency, I’d rather deal with this one.’” (108, p. 17). He insisted that Block by Block was not a police-centered intervention, however the intervention won’t have the power to keep the police out of people’s homes:

Let’s say that there’s a single-parent mom and she’s got mental health problems, it isn’t like she’s going to show up at the police station to say what her problems are. If she gets identified, it will be discussed at the hub meeting, then the appropriate agency people—WRHA sit on the hub, Child and Family services sit on the hub, so maybe a person from each of those agencies—will go knock on the mom’s door and say, hey we’re here to give you some help. So the police won’t be there at all. But on the other hand, if there’s an issue and the mother says, the kids next door are always bringing drugs over and trying to get my daughter involved in white slavery or whatever, the people on the hub know that they, ok we’ll just call John our police officer on the hub and so that will get them involved. (108, p. 16)

This means that the potential exists for all this extra service-provision attention to lead directly to more criminal-justice–system involvement. Despite the rhetoric of a “holistic” intervention which implies an understanding that criminalized behaviors are related to other problems in people’s lives, there is a distinction being made between problems that will be met with service provision responses and problems that will be criminalized. In this case, being “holistic” only works in one direction: to incorporate criminalization into social welfare services, but not to allow CBOs or social welfare agencies to influence the actions of the police.

In my interview with the academic advisor to the initiative, I asked whether it is a problem for the police and community organizations to work together to intervene in the lives of families together—whether getting the police involved with community organizations might deter some people from then getting services from those agencies. He
responded that that was not a problem, “not at all because the police are actually a minor part of the Block by Block” (108, p. 15). The Chief of Police and the head of the RCMP are on the steering committee of the initiative, but he said that the intent, from their perspective, is to have the community “do what they do,” so that the police don’t have to “spend as much time arresting bad guys,” which I understood as meaning that the community would be part of the problem solving that would lead to fewer arrests (108, p. 15). However, police have the final say in whichever partnership they are invited into, and once they are invited in, they can’t be sent out again by those who extended the invitation.

Additionally, in the same area at the same time as the Block by Block pilot project, there was another new policing initiative being tested. Within the same neighborhood, the “Smart Policing Initiative” focuses on “hot spots, hot people, and focused deterrence” (108, p. 16). It is part of what the Block by Block academic advisor said was a change in the way police were going to do business citywide, referring to the increasing emphasis on data analysis at the center of new police funding. The policy advisor justified this again in the language of holistic responses: “Again, this notion of the more things you put into an area the more likely you are to be successful. So the police are going to be doing this very intensively in this area, so that’s going to be the police involvement but in a more traditional kind of sense” (108, p. 16). While the smart policing initiative is not a part of the Block by Block initiative, it is a more suppression-based activity happening alongside it. This mirrors the pattern in changes in policing that have come about with this attention to “community policing.” While some new officers are assigned to work with community partners in the context of Block by Block, other supplementary officers do not have to work with community organizations at all.

*Community Policing*
In the context of the addition of community police officers to the Winnipeg Police Service, youth agencies and community groups are being asked to accept increased contact with the police community-liaison officers and diversity officers. I observed a meeting of refugee-youth–serving agencies, government representatives from the crime prevention branch, and community-police officers in order to observe the dynamics of police involvement in organizing around neighborhood issues with community organizations. Ultimately, CBO representatives refused the kind of involvement with the police that the police were offering.

The main purpose of the police officers who were present was to work to improve relationships with refugee and immigrant communities. The meeting aimed to lay the groundwork for an upcoming forum, organized by all parties involved, where they would invite community members to have a dialogue with the police. A number of community-organization representatives at the table suggested that the forum start with half an hour where community members could raise issues. One of the issues they identified from concerns expressed by parents, was the stopping and harassment of kids by police, where kids complained of being regularly detained, patted down, and then let go. The police became frustrated by this suggestion: they wanted the forum to be a positive conversation, not a site that would just be about “complaining.” They wanted to speak to this issue by educating refugee families—assumed not to understand “Western policing”—about the reasons they stop youth. The message of the police to community members at the table was, “Of course we don’t stop youth indiscriminately,” and the police simply wanted a forum to clarify this misunderstanding to the community.

The police were also fixated on the idea that they were doing the community a special favor by having these conversations, which meant that they wanted something in return. They had come with a plan for how community organizations could model
cooperation with the police so that the community would follow. They presented people at the table with a proposal: they wanted elders in the community to be asked by community organizations at the table to stand with the police to make a public announcement for the media, denouncing youth gangs. The police asked that all organizations around the meeting table be present, alongside the chosen elders, for a press conference where everyone would say: “United with the police, we publicly condemn gangs.”

What was of particular interest to the police was that community leaders condemn the use of gang names that, in the words of the police, “coopt” the names of cultural communities. They referred to the street gang “African Mafia” as an example. They introduced this to the group by way of saying that other community liaison officers had made a similar request of Indigenous leaders as well. They had asked Indigenous elders to stand with police to publicly denounce gangs like the Indian Posse, the Manitoba Warriors, and Native Syndicate. The police recounted that they had also suggested that the Native leaders hold up an eagle feather while doing this, which is sometimes used by Indigenous people as a symbol of truth-telling.

The Indigenous leaders had said no, according to the police, in part because they said it wasn’t fair to target Native street gangs when there were also gangs like the African Mafia and the Mad Cowz who were started by refugee youth. The response around the table of refugee youth serving agencies was also a resolute “no.” One refugee-youth–serving agency director, also a refugee himself, said they couldn’t and wouldn’t publicly condemn the choices of their youth because it would compromise their ability to have the relationships with those youth that their organizations needed in order to support youth in times of crisis.

The police officers, exasperated, said that somebody needed to have the guts to condemn criminal activity. They told the people around the table that these youth gangs
are brutal, and that the community needs to take them seriously. Someone from a refugee-housing organization commented that they were the ones who were there to console families when they were affected by gang violence—that it was their community members and organizations who were on the real front lines of gang violence. Another man commented that it felt like the police were asking them to be puppets—that it felt colonial. This man was not Indigenous: he was a refugee from Somalia. While the settler-colonial relationship between the state and Indigenous people is legal and literal, his charge was a reminder that the colonial nature of policing also extends to the city-center immigrant and refugee communities, who are also dealing with cycles of structural and interpersonal violence. The police were asking the people around the table to distinguish between those who are of community and those who are not, and the community refused to do so. This is indicative of a number of conflicts between the police and community organizations about what it means to them to “take crime seriously.”

Conclusions

As Adam Crawford (1999) observes, what is required in order to talk about “the community” and punishment in the same breath is a sense that those who are being punished—the criminals—are somehow not “of” the community supposedly being protected. The integration of community organizations with police, and the securitizing logics they bring with them, is more accurately conceived as fracturing than “holistic.” In Manitoba, targeted evictions and the punitive restriction of income assistance are some NDP-led strategies which have been leveled at individuals conceived as threats to their “community.” Because these strategies target the whole lives of offenders and not just their harmful behaviors, the vulnerability produced in their lives extends to the lives of their family and friend networks. As Crawford (1999) predicts, the wedding of security and social
development and the mobilization of community around crime deepens divisions within communities, rather than strengthening the ability of communities to deal with harm and distress.

In the NDP lexicon, the concept used to describe the condition achieved by the integration of prevention and suppression is “security.” As Woolford and Thomas observe, NDP actors invoke the idea of “security” in their crime policy as “the semantic means” to expand concern for crime control into the domain of education, community, families, health, and housing (Woolford & Thomas, 2011, p. 121). Security is deployed as the condition that allows communities to be healthy and which justifies the punishment of those who violate those communities:

Security, like education and health care, is a basic human need and a prerequisite to full participation in society. As a first step, we must ensure that Manitobans feel safe in their homes and in their neighborhoods, and that our justice system is working for all our citizens. (Mackintosh quoted in Woolford & Thomas, 2011, p. 122).

In their policy announcements, the NDP emphasizes that their integrated approach to security provides benefits for everyone. In a 2013 announcement of funding for ten new police positions, Premier Selinger emphasized that policing was being targeted in the city center:

Six new officers will be focused on street patrols, enhancing the visible presence of officers in the areas of Winnipeg where it is needed most, said Selinger. “Everyone has a right to feel safe in their communities.” (Province of Manitoba, 2013)

It is through emphasizing the community-oriented character of their carceral expansion that the Province has incorporated police expansion into “progressive” values. However, Woolford and Thomas (2011) observe that the NDP’s goal is not security in the sense of “individual and community certainty in the face of precarious social conditions. . . but, rather, a feeling of security that is predicated on a politics of inclusion/exclusion” (p. 122). This is exemplified when crime prevention and suppression are combined, requiring
distinctions to be made between those people worthy of limited social supports, and those who should be targeted for punishment. It is a security for some, premised on the generation of insecurity for others.

In practice, attempts at bringing the police, social services, and community organizations in closer communication in Winnipeg mostly benefit police by creating new pathways for them to have greater access to and more contact with inner-city communities. In the context of combined prevention and suppression initiatives, police have been granted more resources to better “know” city-center communities and integrate into them, while community-organization and social-service–agency “partners” are being asked to do the work of communicating and working with police, with no new funding for their work. The overall effect of community policing, therefore, has not been to change existing police practices, but it rather to put more police officers in more places than ever before.

The examples of integrated crime-suppression and prevention strategies in this chapter demonstrate the difficulties with the idea that the authority of police may be tempered or scaled back by virtue of working more closely with “the community.” Rather, I suggest, “community police” are given more opportunity to exercise “discretion,” which still puts police decision making at the center of supposedly community-led “problem-solving” strategies. This undermines efforts of community-based organizations to respond to harms in the lives of their community members in ways that do not put them at risk of arrest and imprisonment.
Chapter 5

The redeemable youth and the punishable adult in crime-prevention policy

Introduction

I mean, this government would say it doesn’t want more kids in care, it doesn’t want more people in jail, and yet the totality of its investment have produced exactly that. — Bureaucrat, Manitoba Corrections (79, p. 34)

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how Indigenous youth in Manitoba are rendered more vulnerable to incarceration through the narrow definition of the problem of Indigenous incarceration. In recent years, the Manitoba NDP government has made “crime-prevention” policy and programming a government priority. This is mostly constituted by the provision of social and recreational programming directed at inner-city youth. Based on interviews with bureaucrats in the Crime Prevention Branch of the Manitoba government, I find that government officials generally assume that their crime-prevention strategies will reduce the rate of Indigenous incarceration. At the same time, however, they declare that the expansion of policing and incarceration in Manitoba is outside of their purview, and they therefore act as if both expansions are inevitable. I argue that we must draw a distinction between “crime prevention” and “incarceration prevention” in order to understand the ways that crime-prevention programming can actually embolden the expansion of imprisonment and policing unless that expansion is directly opposed.

In this chapter I explore some of the “work” being done by bureaucrats and politicians through the deployment of particular definitions of crime prevention. I illustrate how the construction of redeemable young offenders is achieved at the expense of adult offenders, who are then constructed as simply punishable. This bifurcation of young people worth supporting and adults seen as “lost causes” is one way the crime-prevention project
interlocks with the ongoing settler-colonial project in Manitoba. While Indigenous youth are targeted with job-training programs, social-skills initiatives, and “proper supervision” in order to reduce the “risk” they are assumed to embody, this definition of crime prevention treats the oppressive conditions under which Indigenous communities are living as intractable.

In the first part of the chapter, I identify similarities between neoliberal crime-prevention discourses and Canadian colonial language centered on managing the risks posed by Indigenous youth through assimilative social programming. I illustrate how contemporary ideas about crime prevention draw on and reproduce the enduring colonial impetus to isolate Indigenous youth from their families in order to make them live in particular ways, while assuming and planning for the inevitable death of Indigenous families and communities. These historical examples illustrate how crime-prevention programming is set against a backdrop of ongoing political struggle over the management of Indigenous youth.

In the second part of the chapter, I illustrate how these colonial outcomes are reproduced by people who are aware of colonial dynamics and are acting in ways they believe to be good for Indigenous communities. By focusing on the activities of the Children and Youth Opportunities Department of the Manitoba government, I illustrate the limits of “well-intentioned” social programming as a response to violence faced by Indigenous communities.

Crime prevention in colonial context: struggles for control over Indigenous youth

In order to make the comparison between contemporary crime-prevention efforts and past assimilation efforts, I draw heavily on an article by Sarah de Leeuw where she illustrates how “concepts of childhood” have been central to colonialism (de Leeuw, 2009). It
is apparent how contemporary crime-prevention programming exploits an existing colonial logic when observing the stability over time of the following ideas in government policy aimed at Indigenous youth: the need to keep Indigenous children busy; the idea that they will inevitably be troublesome without intervention; the focus on Indigenous youth and the discarding of adults; the construction of other Indigenous people as bad influences; and the need to harness the economic potential of Indigenous youth.

The Bagot Report in 1845 was one of the first documents produced by British officials to address the “Indian Question” in Canada. It is a summary of British thought and practice about Indians in what would become Canada. In these earliest reports, government officials characterize Indigenous people as needing to be kept busy in order to avoid their savage nature:

The history of this period afforded abundant evidence of their [Aboriginal peoples’] enterprise and prowess as warriors, with many remarkable instances of heroism and magnanimity, and no less striking examples of bloody revenge, and savage cruelty. . . To these [negative characteristics] must be added the natural indolence of the Indian temperament, which, in the absence of the excitement of savage life, keeps many of his race in a state of inertness, destructive alike to the energy and health of body and mind. In his native state the Indian is simple-minded, generous, proud and energetic; his craftiness is exhibited chiefly in the chase and in war. He is generally docile, and possesses a lively and happy disposition. (Canada, Province of, quoted in de Leeuw, 2009, p. 127)

In legislative transcripts from the early days of the Manitoba NDP government well over a century later, Justice Minister Gord Mackintosh rationalizes social programs aimed at crime prevention by the same logic: “I have a philosophy. A busy good is a good kid . . . . [C]reate an environment where kids are busy. They are not getting into trouble” (quoted in Woolford & Thomas, 2011, p. 124). In the present, the discourse of “crime prevention” pivots on the idea of “at risk youth.” The “risk” discourse implies that a trajectory toward trouble has already been set into motion and that it must be interrupted. Risk management fixates
on the idea that we can prevent crime by redirecting youth from their path—which is leading toward crime—especially if we intervene early (Crawford, 2011, p. 31).

In de Leeuw’s work she identifies both the tendency to construct Indigenous people as child-like, and the tendency to focus on literal children as the preferred site of intervention. In the following quote from the Davin Report (1879) adults are constructed as “lost causes” in the task of assimilation, justifying the removal of Indigenous children from their families in order to be properly socialized:

Little can be done with [the adult Indian]. He can be taught to do a little farming and at stock-raising and to dress in a more civilized manner but that is all. The child, again, who goes to a day school learns little, and what little he learns is soon forgotten when his tastes are trained at home, and his inherited aversion to toil is in no way combated. . . . If anything is to be done with the Indian we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly in the circle of civilized conditions. (Davin quoted in de Leeuw, 2009, p. 129)

One of the most distressing continuities between early policy discourse justifying residential schooling and later crime-prevention interventions is the construction of family members and friends as bad influences. In a 1958 report, Father André Renaud emphasizes the importance of removing Indigenous children from the bad influences of their parents. He suggests that one of the only ways to properly socialize Indigenous children is to move them to new communities:

[In] acculturating Indian children, the following prescriptions appear necessary for success and thoroughness: isolate the child as much as possible from his native background, ideally twenty four hours a day and twelve months of the year, to prevent “exposure” to Indian culture; upon graduation, integrate the young trans-cultured Indian in a non-Indian community, following him through till he or she is permanently settled away from his community of origin. The purpose of such prescriptions, particularly of removing the child permanently from his original environment, is to provide him with a unified experience and thus prevent a later disorganization in his personality. (Renaud quoted in quoted in de Leeuw 2009, p. 131)

In the present-day configuration, crime-prevention opportunities are likewise aimed at youth and located outside the home. The young person is treated as separate from the
family unit and more amenable to being resocialized if they are given “proper supervision.”

For example, the “Lighthouses” program is a youth-crime–prevention program run by Manitoba Justice. The program funds supervision for after-school programming in inner-city neighborhoods. Lighthouses are meant to be beacons of “light” and “positive activities” in otherwise dark communities. The provincial government website describes them as effective because of the three “S's”: structured programming, youth are supervised, and there are skilled staff. Inner-city kids are to be kept busy, to be supervised, and to be supervised by the right people.

There is nothing inherently wrong with providing supervised community spaces for kids to hang out. It is notable, however, that supervision by people other than family members is what is encouraged, rather than addressing the problem of lack of space/adequate housing for poor families, or the parental working conditions, which requiring them to work, stay out late, and sometimes leave their kids unsupervised. The Lighthouses website cites crime-prevention research that “supports that it is important to provide youth with positive and supervised activities when school is out and on weekends” (Manitoba Department of Justice, n.d.). It is assumed that the best supervision and mentorship for these kids can be provided outside the home. The conditions under which parents are not able to provide this support is assumed to be inevitable. Parents/adults are seen as lost causes.

In the same vein, an anti-gang initiative run by the Manitoba government instructs youth that their best opportunity to be safe will be to leave their communities. The initiative, called “Project Gang Proof,” is a manual and a series of ads that instruct young people how to leave gangs. In this literature distributed to community organizations, schools, parents, and social service agencies, young people are instructed to “stop looking and acting like a gang member—change how you dress, stop using gang signs and talking
like a gang member.” Gang members are instructed to “cover up tattoos,” and the pamphlet suggests that if young people are to avoid becoming criminalized they may need to “move” to a different neighborhood and cut ties with family and friends (Province of Manitoba, n.d.). This is reminiscent of early colonial suggestions that the most important hope for a young Indian child was in leaving their communities, and shedding old ways of dressing and being.

Early colonial policy reveals that the management of Indigenous youth has always been seen as a project of multiple state and non-state institutions. In a 1947 report from the Department of Indian Affairs on so-called Indian Schools, the burden of the Indian problem is restated. Education is no longer conceived as the only solution—it is recognized that many tools must be deployed and that the process could take much longer than was previously thought:

To produce Indians of such capacity is not an easy task. It may mean 100 or 200 years of the keenest kind of insight and understanding. Education of every type must be utilized. This should include schools, community groups, the press, the radio and all available forces, both positive and negative. (Indian School Bulletin quoted in de Leeuw, 2009, p. 131)

In the present, a summary statement about fighting crime taken off the Manitoba New Democratic Party’s website integrates the all of the above components of the vision: the need to protect Native kids and provide them with better influences, the multi-pronged nature of the task, the importance of making them productive members of society, the centrality of (forced) schooling, and the need to inculcate Northern (read: Native) youth with discipline and self-respect:

We will not give up on vulnerable kids. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to preventing crime. In 2015 there will be more prevention options, including expanded sports and recreation and after-school programs, community policing, and mentorships. Manitobans under the age of 18 who have dropped out of high school will be required to attend a meaningful alternative, such as learning job skills—dropping out and doing nothing will not be an option. A northern cadets program
will be helping youth learn self-respect and discipline, and keeping northern communities safe. (Manitoba NDP, n.d.)

These examples illustrate how, in Canadian history, social development programming has always been part of the colonial arsenal and it has always explicitly been about security and the management of the threat of Indigeneity.

As the residential schooling system was being phased out, new legislation was being phased in which allowed for the extension of the child welfare system onto reserves. Technically, social service provision to people classified as “Indians” under the Indian Act is a responsibility of the federal government. However, reports about bad living conditions on reserves prompted lobbying by the Canadian Welfare Council and the Canadian Association of Social Workers, which resulted in a change to the Indian Act in 1951, allowing provincial child-welfare programs to apply to status Indians (Hudson & McKenzie, 2003). There were no consultations with First Nations leaders or organizations about this change in policy. The extension of child-welfare services onto reserves led to a decade now referred to as the “sixties scoop” (Johnston, 1983), when thousands of Aboriginal children were once again removed from their homes by federal authorities purporting to act in their best interests. Between 1960 and 1990, an estimated 11,000 status Indian children were apprehended by the child welfare system (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). In some cases buses were used to remove children from reserves en masse (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). In other cases, families handed over their children to what they understood to be temporary foster care in order for their child to receive medical treatment, only to have their children never returned (Morris, 2007). The “sixties scoop” was based on the fundamental assumption that “the best homes for [Aboriginal] children were not Aboriginal homes” (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). Instead of offering support to Aboriginal communities in response to revelations
about bad living conditions on reserves, the child welfare system removed the “innocent”

victims and left the rest:

Instead of the counseling of families, or consultation with the community about
alternatives to apprehending the child, the apprehension of Aboriginal children
became the standard operating procedure with child welfare authorities in most
provinces. (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 519)

The politics of Indigenous children in Child and Family Services care reveals a lot about the
political struggle over control of Indigenous youth, and the rejection on the part of non-
Indigenous people of Indigenous self-determination. By the 1970s, pressure from Aboriginal
communities to stop what they called the “cultural genocide” being inflicted by child welfare
agencies (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991) led to a number of measures that paved the way for
First Nations control of Child and Family Services. This was also a central recommendation
of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, which acknowledged that political struggles over the care
of Indigenous children was at the center of the problem of Indigenous incarceration.

In 2003, the Province of Manitoba enacted the Child and Family Services
Authorities Act, which laid the framework for the devolution of responsibility for Child and
Family Services to three First Nations authorities, and one general authority (Hudson &
Mackenzie, 2003). Since the 1970s, a number of First Nations bands across the country
have had varying levels of control over the administration of child-welfare services on
reserves (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). However, the Manitoba Child and Family Services
Authorities Act represents an “unprecedented” (Bennet, Blackstock, & De La Ronde, 2005,
p. 52) policy shift towards even greater First Nations control by allowing First Nations
input into child-welfare policy and standards, and extending the jurisdiction of First
Nations services off reserve, so that First Nations people anywhere in the province can be
served by First Nations child welfare agencies (CWI, 2001).
Support for the intent of this new policy has been widespread (Hudson & Mackenzie 2003, p. 55), however the implementation process has been tumultuous. Since 2003, there have been a few high-profile deaths of children in the care of First Nations-run child welfare agencies. In 2007–2008, a few reporters latched onto these deaths and wrote a number of articles about the state of child-welfare services since the devolution process. The columnists used (arguably exploited) the stories of the deaths, along with stories describing a general state of “chaos” (Reynolds, 2007) in the child welfare system, to launch an emotionally charged attack against the devolution of responsibility to First Nations authorities. The issue gained support in the national media in columns written for the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* newspapers (Kay, 2008; Wente, 2007).

Most media coverage has framed the privileging of cultural factors above child safety in child-placement decisions as the central problem with the new child-welfare system. For example, Margaret Wente (2007) called the death of Gage Guimond a “sacrifice to political correctness,” and accused the child welfare system of putting “‘culture’ and family ties ahead of kids.” She blamed “white guilt over the sins of the past” for creating “a deadly double standard that tolerates widespread abuse and neglect of children—so long as they’re aboriginal, not white” (Wente, 2007). Lindor Reynolds (2007) pleaded to the Manitoba public that “children have died. More will die. It’s as plain and as awful as that.” Jonathan Kay (2008) of the national post called Gage Guimond “a toddler martyred to native identity” in a system whose “politically correct intentions paved the way to [his] grave.” Kay goes on to ask “would it have been so bad if Gage Guimond had been ‘assimilated’? . . . Assimilation can be a wrenching, painful process. But at least life goes on” (Kay, 2008).

Contested notions of “the best interests of the child” are at the center of the debate about First Nations control over Child and Family Services and highlight the ongoing struggle for control over Indigenous youth. According to the report of the Aboriginal Justice
Inquiry, the “Aboriginal view” of best interests of the child “takes into account the needs of the family and the community” (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). The report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry outlines what happens to Aboriginal communities when the best interests of the child and the community are separated:

If removal of children occurs on a large scale, the ability of the community to function properly and to retain its cultural traditions with a sense of positive self-esteem are undermined, and social disorganization results. Taking measures on a child-by-child basis that undermine the long-term health of the community puts the entire culture at risk. (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991)

The struggle over such definitions, and the scale at which social-service providers and policy makers understand Indigenous children’s best interests, and their role ensuring it, has many layers. While my research was initially motivated by the colonial language of crime-prevention programming, through my interviews with people working in the government and CBO sector I’ve found that that language doesn’t reflect the nuanced understandings of crime prevention—and even of colonialism—that exist among people working in those fields. My question then became: How does this colonial logic get reproduced, even by people who are aware of colonial dynamics? In the next section, I move away from the discursive affinities between crime prevention and other colonial projects, toward a description of the logic and structure of crime prevention. I trace the origins of the Manitoba NDP’s crime prevention strategy, and illustrate how it came to focus so narrowly on social programming for youth. I zoom in on the workings of the Crime Prevention Branch of the provincial government—now called the Department of Children and Youth Opportunities—in order to illustrate the conditions under which the intentions of bureaucrats to acknowledge and work against settler-colonial dynamics get transformed into interventions that unwittingly reproduce those very dynamics.

*The limits of good intentions in the administration of crime prevention*
In 2010, the Manitoba NDP government came out in support of a Federal omnibus crime bill, Bill C-10 spearheaded by the ultra-conservative Stephen Harper government. The NDP usually attempts to position itself in opposition to the Stephen Harper government (rhetorically, at least, to the degree it can while also governing a province). It could have done so in this case as well, as two of Canada’s biggest and most economically and politically powerful provinces—Ontario and Quebec—rejected the crime bill outright and said they would not enforce its provisions. Among other things, the omnibus bill called for draconian mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses, which promised to drastically increase the number of people serving time for small offenses. A lot of people and organizations in Manitoba were angry about the NDP government’s support of this bill. There were protests from a range of people and organizations concerned with criminalization: inner-city community organizations that work with criminalized people, lawyers associations, prison-abolition organizations, and Indigenous organizations.

After the controversy surrounding Bill C-10, the provincial Government created a new department called Children and Youth Opportunities (CYO). It was created by moving the Crime Prevention Branch out of the Department of Justice and making it into its own dedicated ministry, with an ostensibly expanded mandate to serve all children and youth not just “at-risk” youth. According to one senior policy advisor, they opted to call it “The Department of Children and Youth Opportunities” (CYO) instead of the Department of Crime Prevention because the latter was considered a negative title (as if we were to refer to the Department of Health as “the Department of Sickness Prevention” (18, p. 5). This was important because the department was created to help renovate the image of the government post-Bill C10, and to re-establish the NDP in the minds of the public as a government that cares and supports people. In the words of the Premier of Manitoba, Greg
Selinger, the creation of the CYO department was an expression of a new framework for dealing with crime,

a much more progressive framework and a holistic framework and the ability to connect with a wide variety of institutions and community partners to do things. And it sent the right message after Bill C-10 which was emotionally where you and I started this conversation and the feeling coming out of that experience was that this needed a more positive proactive preventative approach and that’s what we did. (154, p. 9)

The naming of the Department also tells us that the opposite of crime, according to the government, is children and youth opportunities: crime, in their view, is caused by a lack of opportunity provided to children and youth. The CYO website features pictures of mostly Indigenous kids participating in recreation programs.

The government chose Kevin Chief, a newly elected star Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to be the Minister of CYO. Kevin Chief is Indigenous, and was elected to the provincial government as representative of a district in Winnipeg’s North End, Point Douglas, where more than 50% or the residents are Indigenous. To the media, Kevin Chief has been sold as an example of how successful youth programming can redirect the life course of a young Indigenous kid from the North End who, by virtue of his background, is assumed to have been “at risk.” As one policy advisor told me, “the media loves him,” and the (mostly white) “South End of the city loves him too,” because they love the idea that recreation programming can “save” Indigenous youth.

For the most part, the Children and Youth Opportunities Department does not directly provide service. Their role is to evaluate policies and programs, figure out best practices, and generate evidence to inform who and what they decide to fund. Under the banner of Children and Youth Opportunities, the government has funded (among other things) parenting programs, early childhood education programs, Lighthouse recreation center programs, and a program called “Turnabout” where the families of kids under 12
who get in trouble with the police are targeted and connected to supports and resources. Turnabout is the closest thing to a direct service offered by the department, “and the rest is kind of more applying the principles of best practices to the programs that we fund” (102, p. 11).

The intention of the government in making an entire department dedicated essentially to crime prevention was to re-emphasize their commitment to being “tough on the causes of crime.” The CYO department hasn’t actually been given that much new money, so the discursive shift it marks is more important than any kind of meaningful redistribution of resources toward crime prevention. One of the values they are trying to emphasize in the creation of the CYO department is their commitment to funding and connecting with community groups and devising a “community-led” strategy. To this end, the first Minister of the CYO Department, Kevin Chief, conducted province-wide consultations in order to develop a strategy for keeping kids out of crime. The result was a five-point strategy which sums up the provincial NDP’s approach to social problems, delivering social programming alongside increased punishment infrastructure:

1) Strengthening the early years and schools; 2) Creating youth opportunities; 3) Supporting recreation and healthy communities; 4) Promoting mental health and preventing substance abuse; 5) Safer streets: more beat cops, better correctional facilities, tougher laws. (Province of Manitoba, 2012a)

In an interview for this project, I asked the Premier how he justifies his government spending more money building new jails and funding new police officers, while failing to allocate anywhere near as much new money to crime prevention. He responded that their spending on “the causes of crime” far outweighs their spending on justice when you take into account all their spending on education, health, housing, and any other public service. One person I interviewed remarked that everything the government did to improve the lives of children and youth was essentially crime prevention. Mandatory schooling, clearly
aimed at Indigenous children, was reiterated as an important crime-prevention strategy by the Premier:

I think in terms of where we’ve gone we’ve gone more and more to the tough on causes of crime side of it and the prevention side. We’ve done very significant investments in education, even the requirement for young people to stay in school till 18 was a message to schools not to give up on kids to do alternative programming to make sure more a wider range of kids can stay in school and graduate. And we’ve got 72 to 85 percent graduation rate now. So that was huge. Culturally appropriate teaching in schools, more Aboriginal teachers in schools, more culturally appropriate teachers in schools. We’ve been working on all those issues quietly behind the scenes since I’ve been in this job. (154, p. 10)

In my interview with one of the Premier’s senior policy advisors, she admitted that the question of crime prevention was very “interesting” because there were a lot of programs that call themselves crime prevention now that wouldn’t have ten years ago (150). This push to redefine all social services as “crime prevention” could be seen as a strategic and progressive position on crime for a left-of-center government attempting to justify social service spending to skeptical, conservative publics in an age of austerity. However, as the workings of the CYO department reveal, when packaged as “crime prevention,” scarce social service resources are more easily redirected toward superficial programming rather than meaningful social supports.

One senior policy advisor described the CYO department as a way to essentially funnel small amounts of money to community-based organizations. However she also expressed frustration at the lack of a clear definition of crime prevention, and a lack of research that can inform evidence-based policies. She expressed that she really couldn’t think of a good body of literature or policy proposals around crime prevention: “Like, actual policy. I can think of criticisms of suppression, and ideological literature about crime prevention, but not policy” (150, p. 1).

The implication from other policy advisors I interviewed was that the CYO department was created in part to fill this gap in evidence and to research best practices.
However it is interesting that those in policy development are aware of the ambiguity of “crime-prevention” programming. They are adamant that crime prevention should be something that community-based organizations can offer, and therefore they have looked for literature and policy proposals that articulate crime-prevention programming at that scale. It never seems to cross their mind that perhaps crime prevention in fact can’t be produced at that scale:

The government would absolutely invest in more crime prevention if we knew what that was, what worked. We don’t see any answers coming out of community-based organizations either. We fund a lot based on good faith. For example, in the face of a lack of evidence I am willing to go along with the idea that providing kids with more recreation will help keep them out of trouble—and we do fund recreation and supervision—but overall I cannot recall programs that are evidence-based. (150, p. 2)

She emphasized that they are in need of evidence of affordable programming that can be offered by community organizations. This is what led to the creation of the Block by Block initiative described in the previous chapter, whereby a few hundred thousands of dollars was dedicated to getting social-welfare and community organizations to communicate better with each other and with law enforcement.

Another explanation for the dedication of attention to the CYO Department, and its separation from Manitoba Justice, is that political staff and policy advisors feel that they have very little control over justice policy because they can’t control the police or the judiciary. Therefore, through the work of “crime prevention” they are able to express a position and appear pro-active on the crime front. The key feature of the Children and Youth Opportunities Department, as distinct from the Crime Prevention Branch housed within Manitoba Justice, is that they are not involved at all in suppression activities. This results in people at the Crime Prevention Branch conceiving of their work, crime prevention, as being totally separate from the levers of justice. As one of the directors said, they don’t do suppression, “but justice and police can do that part. . . . you know the
suppression stuff is not our thing” (102, p. 12). There is not necessarily a sense that suppression conflicts with their goals, it is just that it is not their jurisdiction. Again, the punishment enterprise isn’t being called into question. Instead, the CYO department represents an addition to options for dealing with youth, alongside punishment as one other potential tool in the tool box.

The people who work at the CYO department in crime prevention come from social-services or justice backgrounds. The people I interviewed seemed to have a sense of purpose about their work with the CYO department. One woman described moving through various social-service and justice settings and realizing that she wanted to be doing something qualitatively different. She describes working at corrections-affiliated community programs like Marymound, Macdonald Youth Services, and the Mobile Crisis Team, “and then from there I moved into youth corrections and realized that locking children up is not the answer, so I made a move into the community and have been there ever since” (101, p. 29). By “community” she means her work in government with the Lighthouses program, because her position puts her in direct contact with community organizations. She went on to explain her relationship to community organizations: “Because my message was always, how can I help? As opposed to ‘you have to.’ And that’s very disarming for people, isn’t it, when you extend a hand of friendship as opposed to a stick, you must do this.” (101, p. 29).

I was surprised by the strong identification bureaucrats within the CYO department had with “the community.” There is a very strong sense among the people who work at CYO that their mandate is to really listen to communities in order to understand what is working and what isn’t in terms of crime prevention. However, the community-based orientation of the Lighthouses program was emphasized almost over and above the actual resources it was able to offer or the effect it had. Continuing from her earlier description of her role in government as “disarming” to community organizations, this CYO worker
reframes the value of Lighthouses in terms of their community-building ethic, downplaying its material offerings:

People tend to, wow you know, it tends to put a human face on people. So from that respect more than anything else, I think that’s the value of Lighthouses. Yeah it’s $12,000, but it’s also the ability to build relationships and break down barriers, yeah. (101, p. 29).

This ethic may indeed be unique for a government department, and it is an ethic that seems to be valued by employees working in crime prevention in the Manitoba government. However, it is indicative of the government’s commitment to crime prevention more broadly, which is that it includes a lot of communication and redefinition but not a lot of new resources for the communities it is supposedly bolstering.

Those who work in the Crime Prevention Branch expressed awareness about the colonial dynamics of the work they are doing. Three of the four people in that branch I interviewed were women who identified as Indigenous or Métis. One of the women acknowledged that she looked white, and that she understands that her appearance combined with the fact that she works for government poses a special challenge to building relationships with the communities they are attempting to support: “I mean to look at me I look white, and so I’m going into these communities seemingly as a white woman from government, there was a lot of resistance. . . . [G]overnment did some pretty damaging things to, you know, our bretheren. So I get it” (101, p. 29). This awareness of colonialism is a large part of what informs their commitment to letting the community “lead” in terms of developing crime-prevention programming. The rhetoric of having projects be community led is very powerful, and the people who use it in this department talk about it as a unique feature of this government which they are proud of. However, the space within which communities have to move and develop programs that address their needs are very limited. In the case of the Lighthouses program, the government is offering $12,000/year in order to
have a community pursue its vision. In this sense, a commitment to self-determination is made superficially, but not backed up by material resources.

There are more non-Indigenous-run Lighthouses serving Indigenous kids than there are Indigenous-run Lighthouses serving Indigenous kids and this is in large part a problem of different levels of pre-existing resources. In order to qualify for Lighthouses funding, a community already has to have a certain amount of capacity. Pre-existing community organization is required in order for an initiative to be “community led,” which means that there has to be some kind of coherent community organization for the government to offer funding to. The Lighthouses program also expects communities receiving funding to acquire some of their own funding and assemble a budget in order to qualify for government funding. When I asked about what distinguished “successful” Lighthouses programs from less successful ones, the coordinator essentially said that poorer communities were less successful at getting and operating grants:

I would say the common thread for communities that struggled were lack of other resources in the community. Lack of community capacity as a whole. You know very arduous conditions in those communities that where even the basic needs were difficult to have met. So programming became less of a priority, not because people didn’t want to do it but they were busy trying to make sure that the kids were fed, you know. (101, p. 15)

She went on to say that funding for the lighthouses program hasn’t increased in 13 years: it has remained steady at $12,000 a year. I asked whether there had been talk of increasing funding, and she said that there is a great awareness of the need for it, but she chalked the funding freeze up to general austerity, not to a specific political decision being made on the part of the government: “governments are under fiscal restraints, right?” (101, p. 17).

The defense of the value orientation of the government—their stated support for communities—seemed almost to blind workers in the CYO department to the broader context in which they were working. The coordinator of the Lighthouses program had a lot
of praise for the NDP government and was willing to write off a lot of their shortcomings as a result of external pressures. When I asked her about their “tough-on-crime” agenda, she defended what she believed to be their core belief system, and argued that public opinion was to blame:

I don’t think that the attitudes or the belief systems have changed. I think that governments need to be accountable to the people and they need to make decisions based on the identified wishes of the people. . . and I think that when they’re consistently hearing that the public wants a tough-on-crime agenda, they’re compelled to respond. So I don’t think, my feeling is not that they’re wanting to get tougher on crime. (101, pp. 17-18)

Regardless of whether or not this is true, the NDP is able to advance a lot of brutal policy because their progressive supporters are convinced that their core values are still good: “I feel like they genuinely want to do a good job and I think that they genuinely want to be sensitive to and responsive to changing dynamics” (101, p. 32). In the case of the Lighthouses program, the constant promotion of the idea of consulting with and listening to communities seems to counter-act the reality that it offers such meager funding, and that poor communities are at a disadvantage in accessing that funding. Therefore, the settler-colonial dynamic of superficial social programming aimed at Indigenous youth and run by non-Indigenous communities is not a result of a lack of stated government commitment to Indigenous people, but a result of a lack of resources.

One of the ways the problem of colonialism is rearticulated into a governable problem within the realm of crime prevention is through the construction of Aboriginal communities as “uniquely complex” and facing “multiple barriers.” The solution, within the CYO Department, is to create “lenses” to apply to existing programs that are then supposed to make them relevant to Indigenous youth.
In the following passage from an interview with one bureaucrat, he illustrates how the “legacy” of colonialism can be used in order to justify punitive responses but still stay within the realm of progressive discourse:

I mean there’s a lot of kids in custody here for pretty violent stuff. . . It just happens to be they’re in Manitoba so we happen to have more of it than other places. For a lot of different reasons. . . because I mean if you look, you can’t because it’s confidential, but if you looked probably the majority of people that are in custody here are for violent offenses, or significant reoffending. . . . There’s other, you know there’s, it’s not a simple solution in terms of that because there’s a lot of social type of issues that contribute to that stuff. . . I think there’s a lot of reasons, you know all the historical things that have happened, Aboriginal people is definitely one of them. And then there’s, so that’s probably the major overarching thing and then there’s a number of things that could come as a result of that, not that are guaranteed to come as a result of that but often do. (102, p. 26).

In a vague, non-committal way, he explained that he thought there were “probably more violent young offenders here,” and that it has to do with a legacy of colonialism. His overall logic was that violent youth should be put in custody, and non-violent youth should not, but because there are more violent youth in Manitoba (which is because of colonialism), we have more youth in custody.

In other parts of interviews with other government workers, the unique nature of the Manitoba offender population—often code for talking about Aboriginal people—was cited as something that made the Manitoba context much more complicated and therefore worthy of a different set of responses. In the context of the research function of the Crime Prevention Branch, there was a lot of talk about adjusting programs to fit within our “specific context” to address our “specific challenges” which often include “multiple barriers” (102, p. 15): “The Crime Prevention Branch is just kind of responsible for kind of researching, analyzing what might work here in a Manitoba context too of course ‘cause our populations are different than most” (102, p. 11).

This acknowledgement that Indigenous communities might want different programming is in part a result of demands from Indigenous communities themselves.
However, the seemingly “progressive” acknowledgement of a colonial past is used to justify more punitive measures in the present. When I asked one of the bureaucrats why he thought there were so many Aboriginal people imprisoned in Manitoba he said: “I don’t, I don’t know exactly why, if I knew I’d probably be pretty popular” (102, p. 27). Indigenous incarceration is imagined as many things, but rarely as the fault of the system. He goes on to say, “I think the systems have done a pretty god job and I think that people consciously try to be cultural appropriate” (102, p. 27).

The constant invocation of “cultural education” as part of crime-prevention programming also seemed to eliminate from view some tangible, material differences in power and resources between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. When one of the bureaucrats I interviewed told me about the “complicated problems” of Indigenous people in the justice system, he suggested that “people need to get back to their culture”:

“Part of it is getting, helping people get back in connection with their culture ‘cause that’s the biggest, one of the biggest pieces” (102, p. 28).

For example, I asked about the difference between Lighthouses programming that is Aboriginal led and Lighthouses programming that is non-Aboriginal led. The person in charge of the Lighthouses program acknowledged to me that there is a lot more non-Aboriginal–led Lighthouses programming, and there are a lot of Aboriginal kids being served by Lighthouses programming that is not Aboriginal led. The difference she described was primarily in terms of differences in programming. Aboriginal lighthouses were doing a lot more “cultural reclamation activities,” which reflected sensitivity and awareness to “the need to introduce their young people to their histories” (101, pp. 25-26). The importance of these activities, I learned in the course of my interviews with people at community organizations, is not to be underestimated. They are incredibly important, and many Indigenous scholars (e.g. Leanne Simpson) have identified these cultural reclamation
activities as a form of power building. In contrast, she described non-Aboriginal agencies to be more directed toward “academic support and enhancement, literacy for newcomers and you know Canadian integration for newcomers... and a lot of sports and recreation and lots of art and performance” (101, p. 25). It is not that connection with culture is not important, it is that the invocation of culture to the exclusion of other things helps to create Native communities as therapeutic subjects, and self-determination as a project of cultural reclamation only, without also land, power, or even enough resources to deliver quality, consistent programming.

There was an acknowledgement within the Crime Prevention Branch of the need to prioritize partnering with more Aboriginal organizations however, in the words of one of the bureaucrats, there simply aren’t as many Aboriginal organizations as non-Aboriginal ones (102, p. 31). Therefore, being mindful of the needs of the Indigenous community becomes about applying particular “lenses” and “best practices” that help the government develop culturally appropriate programming that anyone can then deliver. This was described by one of the bureaucrats as an additive feature that could help existing programming work for different populations:

Because Aboriginal people are a big target population, we need to layer on kind of that extra thing, the kind of equity type of lens if you want to call it that but with an Aboriginal kind of perspective to it, because the reality is that’s you know probably a big target population for sure so. So yeah so that’s how I think we try to do that. Same with newcomers, yeah for sure. Newcomers is a newer kind of phenomenon for people right. (102, pp. 31-32)

The application of these “lenses” to programming for youth comes out of an acknowledgement that new types of programming need to accommodate the different life experiences of different youth populations. This is also a concern for the bureaucrats in the Crime Prevention Branch because they recognize that in order to get measurable results, they need to “adapt”: “most programs that you know now kind of have that layer that you
can add in or not because they recognize that a lot of the times, in Western Canada specifically, that part needs to be layered in or it’s not going to be effective anyway” (102, p. 32).

At the same time as there is a tendency to talk about the needs of Indigenous youth in terms of “lenses” to apply to programming, or “multiple barriers” for bureaucrats to help them navigate, there is a subtly racist suspicion about the demand from Indigenous communities to have culturally relevant programming. One interviewee, in charge of the corrections system, expressed doubt that there was a genuine Aboriginal culture for First Nations youth to return to:

I was speaking at a conference with a bunch of folks from the spiritual community, right? Chaplains, Elders. And you know, First Nations People talk about the necessity to re-establish their culture. And I look at the kids that we’re dealing with, and it might well be that they need to be re-established in their culture, and everybody buys that without thinking well what does that actually mean? ‘Cause when you watch what these kids are writing, they write like they’re from Compton, not Sagkeeng.¹⁶ (079, p. 24)

He went on to describe how going back to one’s culture—equated here with connecting with Elders and doing traditional activities on the land—how it isn’t going to help the Manitoba economy:

And that’s not to say that getting more tied to your culture isn’t going to be helpful, but it is to say that the issues that we’re talking about now are more difficult . . . . The broader point is that you know what sounds like a simple solution is frequently way more complex and takes account of the fact that the views of the Elders are not necessarily the views of the youth. And I’m not saying that the kids are advocating, saying we want mainstream integration. But you know clearly in Manitoba if we want—you know, when you look at how our future workforce is unfolding, finding ways for Aboriginal youth to complete high school and get good jobs, to be able to participate in our economy. I mean, that’s critical to our future. And I don’t know that we necessarily do that by saying alright, let’s go back to the trap line. I mean, there are kids who want and need that. But there are other kids. (079, p. 25)

¹⁶ A reservation in Northern Manitoba.
When they aren’t being constructed as therapeutic subjects, Indigenous youth are often constructed as resources to be harnessed. A large focus within the Children and Youth Opportunities Department is on funneling Aboriginal people into employment. In response to the fact that the incarceration rate is going up even though crime is going down in Manitoba, Premier Selinger articulated their strategy as one where they were proactively getting offenders into jobs, while passively waiting out the ebb and flow of jail construction:

We are building some more jail units but we are starting to see that moderate now. And our message is, and we’re working on this—we want less people in remand for long periods of time, we want less people going back to jail on the recidivism route, which means they need opportunities when they come out like Build Winnipeg, like job-creation programs, like opportunities to reintegrate into their community. We don’t want people in jail, we want people in jobs in the community. (154, p. 6)

In my interview with the Premier, he fixated on employment in social enterprises as an anti-gang strategy, referring to it a few times: “social enterprise has been a good way to take people who used to be in gangs and turning them into people who are rebuilding their communities. And we’ve been very supportive of that” (154, p. 5).

The government and many people on the left talk openly and unabashedly about the need for the Province to harness the economic potential of Indigenous youth. One senior policy advisor said that the biggest risk in the inner city was unemployment: “Inner-city people who don’t have jobs, they are the threat. It is intergenerational, it goes back to colonialism and residential schools, and we have a solution documented: get people jobs” (158, p. 6). Another policy advisor acknowledged that even the elite urban redevelopment capitalist class (represented by the Chipman family) was in on this progressive orientation: “it is becoming pretty mainstream that young Aboriginal people shouldn’t be in jail. What Chipman wants is trained young Aboriginal men for the workforce” (151, p. 5). Employment is a good thing, and Indigenous people who want jobs should be able to get jobs. Often they can’t because of the tremendous amount of racial employment discrimination in Winnipeg
which prevents them from getting hired. The point here is not to suggest that job training programs aren’t beneficial to the individuals they include, but to highlight the individualistic nature of strategies that see the reduction of violence in Indigenous communities as a project of bringing Indigenous people into the settler economy so that they may compete for scarce, precarious jobs alongside everyone else.

Bureaucrats understand to a certain degree that the demand for a return to culture is an act of self-determination on the part of Indigenous communities, which may mean that Indigenous youth will choose futures that are different from the ones the government hopes they will. On the other hand, superficial snippets of cultural education are woven into programming in order to buffer the government from criticism and make them feel like they are genuinely addressing the needs of Indigenous youth without meaningfully supporting Indigenous families and communities.

The work of the CYO department reveals how the “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime” logic works to create a number of bifurcated responses to crime that support some at the expense of others, rather than generating the holistic supports they imagine. This became clear to me when two program managers in the Crime Prevention Branch went through the laundry list of programming they funded. It was mostly directed either at at-risk kids and youth, or at mothers of babies already perceived to be at risk because they are poor or Indigenous or both.

I asked what was available in terms of similar supports intended for kids over 12, and they told me about programs overseen by the Department of Justice. While programming overseen by the CYO department is voluntary, the programming available to older “at-risk” youth is housed in Manitoba Justice and it is court-mandated, not voluntary. As one bureaucrat put it, once a young person is caught up in the Justice system, they don’t have much jurisdiction over that person’s future: “Yeah, if you’re on probation, you’re on
probation, you can’t do anything about that other than not get into more trouble and then not be on it anymore” (102, p. 20). These involuntary programs run by Manitoba Justice involve monitoring and reporting, curfews, and limits on mobility—all programs which these crime-prevention bureaucrats were ready to admit were likely to land kids back in jail because of the high risk of breaching that came with their many conditions, and the current zero-tolerance police policy for breaches. The people working in the CYO Department wanted to be involved in providing voluntary, supportive programming to older kids as well as the younger kids they already target, but they are working with limited resources.

In the context of austerity politics, and in the face of what they repeatedly referred to as “best practices” literature—literature that provides policy makers a sense of where they can expect the best return on their investments—investing in younger kids makes the most sense. So, in moving crime prevention to its own branch, which is rebranded as a positive project of providing supports, people with the power to provide supports are removed from responsibility for the lives of those kids who are already in contact with the criminal justice system. This is how, unintentionally, a line gets drawn in the sand between those who are worth supporting—those who may, through programming and supervision, be made to “fit in”—and those who are “lost causes,” who will be subject to being policed and caged.

The partitioning of children and adults into categories deemed worthy of separate responses is a distinct echo of colonial child-welfare and schooling polices that separate children from adults in what is deemed to be in the best interests of the child. I was surprised that the bureaucrats in the crime prevention branch had already thought about this connection when I suggested it to them. I interviewed two women about one of the only programs delivered by the CYO department, both women who identified themselves as being Indigenous, and they had both worked in the CBO sector prior to working for
government. The program they oversee receives referrals from the police, schools, and Child and Family Services, about youth under the age of 12 who are getting into trouble and who are perceived as being at risk of being incarcerated in the future. When a referral is received by the program coordinator, she tries to make contact with the family: first by sending a letter, then making a phone call, and sometimes by visiting their houses.

As the woman in charge told me, they work with a heightened awareness of the fact that they are government officials coming into the homes of mostly Indigenous families. Therefore, their approach is rooted in the idea that families should have control over the degree of contact they have with social services, and that families know best what they need. When they contact families of kids identified as being at risk, they ask the family what they need. They focus on supporting the family, not punishing them for the fact that their kid is in trouble, because they recognize that the family is the context in which a kid will change their behavior. In the words of one of the women who runs the program, “If the family says ‘fuck off’ to us, we leave them alone.” (201, p. 6) However, she acknowledges that those are families whose kids are likely to be referred again and again, and then when the kid ages out of program eligibility at age 13, the responding institution will likely be Criminal Justice. The degree to which participation in this program can be considered “voluntary” is questionable when the result of a family deciding not to participate is likely to be an accumulation of points of contact between their kid and the criminal justice system until their kid will one day be incarcerated. Under these conditions, the work of this program—now in a department that is separate from Manitoba Justice—is to keep kids from getting incarcerated while the net of incarceration is expanding around them as more police are being deployed to their neighborhoods.

The effect of the crime-prevention programming run out of the CYO Department is not to decrease incarceration but to increase the degree of contact between the government
and the most marginal families in the city. The idea is that contact will lead to that family being supported in a way that allows them to better support their kids. The intention is to support the entire family, not just the at-risk kid. However the tools the government workers in the CYO Department have at their disposal are extremely limited. For example, the women running the program agreed that the number one need of families they encounter is stable housing. This is corroborated by the dozens of interviews I did with people who work in the community organization sector. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in Winnipeg, and without safe and stable affordable housing, any family will have trouble staying healthy and stable. The CYO department can connect families with youth programming, and can act as an advocate for them in relation to housing, welfare, and education bureaucracies, but they cannot actually find or create housing for families.

The programming funded by the CYO Department is intended to be a small part of broader “wraparound” approaches—this is how people who work in them understand them. Nobody I talked to in the Children and Youth Opportunities Department thinks that their programming alone is enough to fundamentally change the lives of the people they are working with. However, they act under the assumption that their programming will reinforce other supports being offered to those same families, the way a porch wraps all the way around a house. In practice, those other supports have not materialized because they are supports that require more fundamental political shifts: the construction of affordable housing, raised welfare rates, raised housing allowance rates, and changes to punitive Child and Family Services policies. Not only do these crime-prevention programs not have power over some of the most basic levers of social welfare, but they are even further removed from the operation of justice now that they are in their own department.
Conclusions

The work of the CYO department reveals that “crime prevention,” as it is working itself out in Manitoba, is essentially additive. It is not about reducing a reliance on incarceration by the government, but about adding programming to the lives of youth at risk of incarceration. It is not about changing carceral practices, but about softening their appearance and making them more palatable by bringing care work into the discourse of crime. The resulting political sphere is one where bureaucrats are forced to act as though policing, incarceration, poverty, and homelessness are inevitable features of life that they must work around.

Interestingly, people I interviewed in the criminal justice and crime-prevention bureaucracies were much more likely to identify the damaging effects of policing and imprisonment on Indigenous communities than those in the NDP or their supporters. The NDP government acts as though being tough on crime is necessary, but not sufficient. In contrast, the bureaucrats I talked to considered being tough on crime as unfortunate, but inevitable. What is at work in their minds is not the sense that policing and imprisonment will ever do any good for Indigenous people (or anybody), but the sense that they are permanent and unchanging, and therefore we must work to make them more humane. And, as prison-abolitionist scholars have pointed out, it is often through renovations to criminal justice institutions that those institutions are sustained (Gilmore, 2007), and colonial legacies are renewed.
Chapter 6

Community-based organizations (CBOs) and struggles over the definition of “the problem”

Introduction

I remember that feeling of. . . it’s like adults are around, but they’re not there to care for you. They’re there to just kind of watch you. You know?

— Indigenous CBO worker, recalling spending time in non-Indigenous–run youth programming (131, p. 16)

During the time the New Democratic Party was in office, community-based organizations (CBOs) that had withered during the previous Conservative government were revived through increased provincial funding (Silver & Toews, 2009). Unlike what has been referred to as the “non-profit industrial complex” (NPIC) in the USA which is largely private-foundation–funded, non-profits in Manitoba receive most of their funding from the provincial government, or through arms-length granting agencies also funded by the Province. As government priorities change, so too do the categories of funding CBOs may apply for. Under the NDP, especially in the later years they were in office, CBOs reported that there were more grants for “crime-prevention” programming aimed at city-center youth. Sometimes they were new grants, and sometimes they were the same grants that had been previously available under more broad recreation or community development categories. In order to receive these grants, CBO directors and other grant writers would work to repackage their programming in a way that was consistent with “crime-prevention” goals.

There are dozens of government-funded youth-serving CBOs in Winnipeg’s city center and they have received the task of defining their work as “crime prevention” in different ways. This chapter is based on interviews with twenty five people who work in
CBOs who have defined at least part of their work as “crime prevention.” I interviewed eleven frontline CBO workers (people who worked directly with “at-risk” youth but did not make decisions about programming); and fifteen people in management positions in CBOs (people responsible for grant writing and programming as well as working directly with “at-risk” youth). Some CBO work embodies typical characterizations of non-profits in a neoliberal era it its focus on helping individual youth to take responsibility for bettering themselves and avoiding the temptations of crime. This work conceives of the problem of Indigenous criminalization as a set of criminal behaviors in need of “fixing” in a young person. However, a lot of other work focuses on filling gaps in what are conceived as system failures in order to help individual youth survive in ways that encourage them not to think of themselves as the “problem.”

CBOs are significantly constrained by their size, and their reliance on short-term piecemeal funding. However, they are also somewhat flexible to do work other than that their explicit funding mandate. Indeed, the fact that many people who work in CBOs refuse to do work that is being asked of them by government funders makes apparent how both criminalization and colonial control are being resisted at the same time. For example, some CBOs have resisted increased “community policing” using ideas of self-determination, autonomy, and community control. Colonial responses and criminalizing responses are rooted in the same idea that an individual needs to be either monitored, managed, rehabilitated, supported, or punished—they are colonial and carceral precisely because they do not respond to oppressive structural conditions and therefore contribute to their regeneration. I suggest that there are lessons for anti-criminalization activists to learn from long-held Indigenous practices of resistance to the imposition of outside definitions of problems in Indigenous communities.
Conflict over the definition of the problem: Indigenous youth, or colonization?

Differences in the ways different people and organizations understand the problems faced by inner-city youth explain differences in their responses to those problems. Crime-prevention programming aimed at improving the skills or changing the behaviors of inner-city youth is often (but not always) rooted in the idea that the problem of criminalization is one of individuals who make a decision to get involved in crime (much like responses to poverty that treat it as a condition of individual decision making). These responses naturalize policing and imprisonment as strategies that merely respond to criminal behaviors. Explanations for people’s bad decisions rooted in the idea that they are “damaged” by conditions beyond their control still follow the same logic, and consider criminalization to be a necessary but not sufficient response. These logics help to explain how people who work closely with Indigenous youth in youth-serving CBOs would not necessarily see resistance to policing and imprisonment as relevant tasks.

However, within other organizations, the problem of Indigenous criminalization is talked about as a problem of social systems working against Indigenous youth. Although CBOs are constrained in their capacity to resist those systems, many resist the logic of those systems in ways that could inform political consciousness raising and future political action.

Defining “skills training” as a crime-prevention activity is one important way criminalization is constructed as the problem of youth who are criminalized. In one large crime-prevention organization, which is run by non-Indigenous people and receives a large part of its funding from Manitoba Justice, their overall goal is “to help youth develop life skills for better tomorrows” (109, p. 6). In my interview with two women who work for this organization, they emphasized keeping kids busy as a major orientation of their work: “Keep them involved in something positive so hopefully they won’t go through the other
path” (109, p. 6). In fact, kids have to be “doing something” in order to make it through the programming of this organization, which is often mandated by a court sentence:

I mean we get into situations where they’re not ready to go but they have to be doing something to stay. Like, we’re not a hangout and like you know or a drop-in, we’re not that kind of thing. (109, p. 4)

Their crime-prevention work is aimed at keeping kids who have already been criminalized from being criminalized again. Among the things they offer to occupy youth’s time is a “Life Training Program” that tries to build the skills that are presumed to be absent when a young person is criminalized. The women I interviewed acknowledged that there are many variables that will contribute to whether or not someone ends up back in the justice system, but in their words, they try to tackle “the ones they have control over” (109, p. 6).

For example, the interviewees identified the fact that it was very difficult for the youth they work with to get jobs—especially Indigenous youth who face significant racism in the hiring process, and for whom there are very few jobs actually available. They acknowledged that their work only goes so far, that they can’t create jobs that don’t exist. However, they also expressed this as a problem of the inability of Indigenous youth to “compete” on the job market:

They need jobs. . . [but for] jobs that they could just have. . . they do not compete. Not all of them, but there’s a good many of them that can’t compete, whether it’s low education or sometimes hygiene, hygiene’s a difficult one. (109, p. 16)

When confronted with contradictory understandings of what the problem is—the youth, or the job market—they work on those problems they have control over: helping youth to present themselves on the job market in ways that might mitigate the racism they will inevitably face.

In contrast, at an Indigenous-run youth-serving organization, interviewees expressed that it wasn’t “job training” itself that was a problem, but the assumptions that
structured how it was delivered. They felt it was important to bring that contradiction to light in the context of their programming:

A lot of kids that would like to work, need that mentorship and support to work. And not just the traditional jobs that they have in mind, like you know, the jobs that will be as flexible to their lifestyle as they are, as they need, right? Cause it's really hard to hold a job down when you're homeless and looking for a place to sleep at the same time. (118, p. 8)

The executive director (ED) of one Indigenous organization critiqued the job-training orientation of many of the crime-prevention programs she observed. While she wasn’t criticizing the pursuit of job training itself—many people want to work and want the training—she felt that it wasn’t addressing the larger context in which Indigenous young people weren’t succeeding:

Most organizations will say, “We’ll train them to get jobs,” and then that will be the end of the story, eh? It really doesn’t investigate power and relationships in that way, you know? It’s just assuming that we want what they have in terms of being tied to some wage economy—and I’m not saying that’s not a part of it, eh? But it’s not only about that, and that’s how it’s seen, that it’s kind of only about this... maybe they say well if we get people in jobs and then they’ll become part of the economy and then they’ll be able to get out of poverty but in lots of cases, most of the jobs people get are working in those very low-paying, entry-level, dead-end jobs people struggle with... and then we kind of set up almost for those kinds of systems of failure. (156, p. 11)

This awareness of a colonial context is not present at the other organization, and therefore is not communicated to the youth they work with. The workers at the “skills-training” organization had described getting “colonization training” in the context of their cultural diversity training, which involved an Indigenous employee of their organization talking about Indigenous history.

The colonization training is in house, so it’s done by... What’s her title?... Aboriginal: sorry I can’t think of her title [chuckle]. But it’s, it started from the beginning and just talking about the Europeans coming, so it starts right from the beginning, coming to Canada, talking about how that developed, residential schools, it slowly develops into where we are now, so how do we help this healing process. Because for you to understand what’s going on with the kids now you need to understand the history of the family. (109, p. 19)
This type of institutional acknowledgement of the legacy of colonialism reflects the approach of a lot of organizations to integrating Indigenous perspectives. These workers described the “Aboriginal stuff” they do as “small scale”—mostly focused on offering craft options so kids can make dreamcatchers, which involves binging in an Aboriginal person to do facilitation to explain what a dream catcher is. They have smudge bowls and medicines “and things like that” on hand if a youth comes in and says they want to be “more involved” in their culture. When I asked whether they thought Indigenous youth should be served by Indigenous organizations, one of them said, “Sometimes that works better for people to be working with their own people. . . maybe all the time, I don’t know [chuckle]” (109, p. 20). In the face of the difficulty Indigenous kids have making it through their programming, this organization saw its job as communicating to those kids that they themselves were still “worthwhile”:

I mean they are Aboriginal kids so they already have unfortunately that against them, even when you go to go for a job and things like that. So there are always going to be those challenges that they face that other youth don’t. But our job is to show them that that doesn’t, that they are still worth something, they still belong, they’re still part of the community. (109, p. 21)

This confirms the dominant narrative that Indigenous youth are welcomed into non-Indigenous programs in their damaged form. This is a different response from that given by some of the Indigenous CBO workers I interviewed, who saw it as their responsibility to talk to kids about the systemic nature of the difficulties they were facing. Different understandings about the temporality of colonialism impact how youth-serving CBOs see themselves in relation to Indigenous families. In an interview with a non-Indigenous CBO director who has run an inner-city community-development association for the past ten years, he told me that he had just finished reading *Indians Wear Red*, a book about gang violence written by CCPA School researchers profiled above in chapter two. When I asked
him how his organization works an analysis of colonization into their work, he told me a story about how parents don’t know how to parent:

We also have a lot of parents like feeling the effects of colonization and residential school and our kids, a lot of kids are being raised by their grandparents and so when they are with their parents their parents don’t know how to parent or haven’t, you know, haven’t had that in their life. So the, it’s often not always positive or where the parents just don’t know what to do with kids when they’re hanging out ‘cause they never had anyone do that with them. (111, p. 12)

In that context, he describes their work as “filling gaps that parents have traditionally done. . . so if you take parents out of the element we have to kind of figure out a way to replace that in a positive way” (111, p. 11). In this narrative, the fact that parents are “out of the picture” is taken for granted. When I asked whether their organization does work to support parents so they could better support their kids, he responded that they had never tried doing recreational programs with parents, and that there wasn’t funding for work with parents anyhow. His assumption that my question of “support for parents” was about providing recreation programming for parents implied that his understanding was that parents need to be developed as human beings rather than supported in their efforts to care for their children.

One of the programs that organization was preparing at the time of my interviewing was a 24-hour “safe space” for youth in their neighborhood. This is something widely supported in that neighborhood—and it is also something other organizations (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous run) are working toward in other neighborhoods. It is a response to the problem that there is nowhere in the city center for youth to go during nighttime hours if they don’t have a safe home to go to. One Indigenous frontline worker I interviewed questioned the resources and energy going into a 24-hour safe space and wondered why we aren’t putting the same resources into fostering families that can support youth. In her mind, finding secure housing would go a long way toward supporting familie’
abilities to support their own kids. She did not suggest that this was an either–or struggle—we need safe spaces for youth now, at the same time as we need housing. However, her comment provides insight into how an organization’s understanding of the problems Indigenous families face translates into their projects, programming, and political demands.

Another Indigenous Executive Director of a different city-center community development organization described Indigenous parents as being constrained by present-day forms of oppression and isolation. In her narrative, parents are not too dysfunctional to care, rather they are constantly being beaten down. In this context, recreation programming for youth is thought of as a support to parents rather than a replacement for them:

What I know is there are very few parents out there who don’t want their child to have a better life than they have. What I know is that want in the community is an incredible challenge given the economic and circumstances of the community you know in terms of affordable housing and having enough food on the table, and having enough to allow your child to participate, right? Participation is the big thing. So if it’s a challenge to get food on the table and keep a roof over your head, how do you then afford those things that help a young person develop, like sports and those type of different opportunities where it’s learning how to become a social person right? They just don’t happen, you become isolated in that. And the young people become withdrawn, they get angry because they want the same opportunities as other kids. So that’s what I know, that’s what I’ve observed, that’s what I’ve sort of talked about with a lot of community members. (121, p. 6)

Whereas the person in the non-Indigenous–run neighborhood association felt that the work they were doing was transformative, and would create the change necessary to lift up the inner city, the worker at the Indigenous-run organization expressed anger at the failure of the government to address more foundational problems:

What a family needs to get anything together is stability. You look at the sheer millions of dollars that are spent on incarceration, and you take that money and you start building homes with it that people could move into, that become theirs, right? . . . And that changes the whole family, not only that family, but generations of that family. And it’s so common-sense in my mind and why isn’t it happening? Why is that not happening? (121, p. 15)
Based on my interviews, one of the functions of being an Indigenous-run organization seems to be that they are less likely to take for granted that the Indigenous people they are working with are the primary “problems” to be solved. In relating to Indigenous parents, this means that while Indigenous organizations make an effort to know and communicate with the parents of the youth they work with, other organizations may see them as “lost causes.”

Competing understandings of the nature of colonialism informed competing understandings of the nature of CBO crime-prevention work in other ways. For example, some organizations saw themselves as the saviors of the youth they worked with, while others saw their programming as just a safe space in a landscape not built to accommodate youth without stable housing. For example, one non-Indigenous man I interviewed had been the director of the same inner-city youth drop-in center for thirty years, and had developed a perspective that did not characterize youth or their families as problematic. In my interview with him, he recalled when the founders of a well-known street and prison gang called the Indian Posse attended his programming. Richard and Danny Wolfe started attending the after-school recreation programming that is now funded as “crime prevention,” a label that particular worker resists. He described them as two perfectly “normal” Native kids who were very quiet when they first moved to the city and gradually opened up. At all times, in his recollection, they were active and productive members of the programming they were running. This worker emphasized that he would not have characterized these kids as “bad” kids or “at-risk” youth—they weren’t violent, they got along with other kids, they acted “normally.” He recalls that they were teased for wearing their hair in traditional long braids, and in this worker’s analysis they must have just gotten so fed up with being treated badly that they eventually saw an opportunity in organizing to defend themselves. He used this anecdote to articulate why it is that he’s not
comfortable with his after-school drop-in being referred to as “crime prevention.” To him, young people who were also “criminals” didn’t need to be or couldn’t be “fixed” through recreation programming—but they deserved recreation programming nonetheless.

For the ED inspired by *Indians Wear Red*, he stressed the importance of the programming of his organization in intervening in the behaviors of the “at-risk” youth who attend:

> Our crime-prevention kind of stuff is filling the gaps that would exist in other places and then providing positive role models, positive adults, positive relationships. And like we always say, like if you’ve never seen a healthy relationship or a positive interaction between people they how would you know like it just cycles, repeat themselves right, so we needed to figure out a way to break those cycles and in positive ways by engaging kids in healthy activities rather than unhealthy activities right. (111, p. 12)

At another point in the interview, the same person was describing the impact of losing funding for a gang-intervention program. In his explanation of their programming, it was the only thing between the kids they work with and incarceration. Incarceration was conceived as the inevitable impact of a lack of “mentorship”:

> We provided all these great opportunities for kids, these kids are way more connected, they’re all still in school, they’re you know whatever. A few of them got locked up after the program but that’s because we didn’t have funding to continue the mentorship, right? (111, p. 15)

The construction of incarceration as a product of a lack of mentorship happens in the same moment as the CBO itself is figured as indispensable. This is one crucial way that the work of CBOs is individualized and depoliticized.

> CBO program-grant categories, government rhetoric, mainstream discourse, and academic literature about the problems faced by inner-city residents overplay the individualized effects of the legacy of colonialism and underplay the ongoing harm caused by institutional intervention in the lives of poor and Indigenous youth. While some people I interviewed described the same hopelessness and the lack of self-esteem faced by
Indigenous youth described in the mainstream literature, CBO workers almost always framed these problems in the context of ongoing, present-day oppression. This has implications for who or what should be “fixed” in the programming they are delivering:

“It’s just you know when you have kids that are struggling with all sorts of other challenges in their lives, that begins to wear you down to the point you know where I think there is a tangible sense of hopelessness. Where it gets to the point of well what is the point! You know: nobody believes in me, doors are being shut, I don’t have the same opportunities. They give up.” (201, p. 5)

In these narratives, the justice system and Child and Family Services (CFS) were described alongside everyday racism as sources of violence and destabilization. For example, one frontline worker shared an anecdote in a discussion about all the ways that a sense of worthlessness is conveyed to Indigenous youth in their daily lives throughout the city. She described how both times her organization has taken a group of young people to cultural events they don’t usually attend, they’ve faced racism:

[At the theatre] there was some lady who made some comment about sex trade workers—the smell of one of the girls’ perfumes—smelled like a hooker wearing it. Yeah, we took them to the ballet—Nutcracker Ballet, and we had free tickets—and there were—even the security came and like were watching the kids and stuff. I was a little bit upset about it. It’s just, they knew where they were coming from, they were just a bunch of Aboriginal kids, watch ‘em. They weren’t doing anything wrong. (118, p. 13)

This interviewee connected this bad experience with experiences with the police, suggesting that the racism of the police isn’t unique, it is part of a more broadly racist society: “Yeah, and the police in this area too, like I’m thinking of a couple of youth who have just been kind of almost assaulted, for doing nothing. Just, you know... like the boys all the time feel like they’re easy targets to police. They’ve had nasty things said to them by police officers” (118, p. 13).

One woman I interviewed who works with sex workers talked about how workers in their field get trained in “trauma-informed care” which is meant to educate them about “traumatic events and the implications of that” (117, p. 7). In her view, this training didn’t
adequately account for the ongoing traumas Indigenous people face by virtue of being
Indigenous in Manitoba and dealing with ongoing racism. An Indigenous lens, in her view,
would “recognize historical and ongoing traumas that are not as blatant as a car accident”
(117. p. 7). In her experience, the idea of “intergenerational trauma” is used as if it is
something that lives within Indigenous people, and that there was a single historical
trauma that is discrete from the present:

It also excuses current trauma. So when something’s going on for my husband for
example, I’ll just use him for an example, people chalk it up to intergenerational
trauma. Where actually my husband walking into somewhere as a brown six-foot-
four Indigenous man is being newly traumatized. It’s not intergenerational trauma
that’s impacting him right now, its new trauma that’s impacting him. (117, p. 13)

These ideas about the problems faced by the youth they work with correspond with the
ideas of CBO workers who saw their work as supporting youth in their attempts to survive
by working against the systems that seem to be working against them:

I don’t know in general, these kids have been through a lot. Even something as
simple as getting angry and swearing and doing stuff like that. It’s [scare quotes]
“unacceptable behavior.” But for a lot of the kids that we see, they’re going through
so much, let them. Like they’ve got no other—like just trying to find that way that
just like helps them grow, right? Like the kids are going through a lot in their own
worlds and lives, so, and yeah, so they’ll do things in ways—and we’re trying to
support them, like we’ve done that throughout the years, supported them in ways
that they’ve been creative in their, in voicing who they are, right? (118, p. 17)

In the context of overt and consistent racism throughout systems supposedly designed to
“care” for youth, some organizations see their role as providing a refuge from those systems.

One youth-serving organization director described their organization as a “safe
haven”—not only from the grind of poverty and life on the streets, but also a safe haven
from “the professional crowd.” The professional crowd refers to the service providers who,
by virtue of your being in poverty, may take over your life in ways that make you feel out of
control. Although the person I interviewed acknowledged that social workers today seem to
be getting better, in the past, he said that an important part of their work was providing
refuge from social workers:

In the past it was like, that was just a way to kind of label the kids more, and just
saddle them with all the things that people are already saddled with. And it wasn’t
really doing them that much good. (122, p. 14)

Another frontline worker described the importance of distancing themselves from systems
so that the kids they work with can experience them as non-judgemental, and can feel like
they have some control over their contact with people intervening in their lives:

It hopefully lets an individual make more of the decisions of where they want to go
and [what they want to] do with their lives, as opposed to having somebody—
especially with youth, CFS determines everything that they do. Whether they can
even have their IDs, or where they’re living, or who they’re living with. And then
even afterwards, you know, for example I just have this one youth who had her baby
taken away. And really for the slightest reason—she messed up a little bit. . . . And
that’s not even jail, that’s just CFS. (118, p. 2)

These insights suggest that one way organizations might reflect on their potential impact in
the lives of the youth they serve is to evaluate their relationship to systems that are
working against the efforts of those youth to survive. It is important for some of the CBOs
where I interviewed to be independent of the systems they identify as being harmful in the
lives of the people they work with.

One of the core values articulated by organizations who saw their work as
supporting individuals rather than “fixing” them was the value of autonomy and self-
determination. This was particularly emphasized in two different interviews with older
Indigenous CBO workers. They both described taking credit for changes in kids’ lives as
akin to generating a dependency and teaching Indigenous kids that they needed
professional people to function. This was described as disempowering.

On the other hand, Indigenous leadership in organizations was described by many as being
the key structural factor that undergirds the orientation of an organization toward support
rather than fixing:
Um, some people would like that the Aboriginal thing not be necessary, like we should all be one. The fact is that we aren’t all one. That we have a history that was stolen and taken from us, cultures and languages and traditions, um, that people are working really hard to keep alive or to teach the young. And so maintaining that focus, being an Aboriginal focus is so important. (118, p. 11)

One of the older Indigenous CBO workers told me that he sees the impact of colonization in what he called an “institutionalized” headspace among some program participants, as a result of circling through various institutions that take control of your life—foster care, the youth center (jail), and adult jails. In his description of his work, it sounded like institutionalization was something that can be alleviated through the support and experiences of other Indigenous people, but that would likewise be reproduced if the “help” comes from non-Indigenous people.

For another worker, to honor the autonomy of the youth she works with is to resist the institutionalized mentality and to cultivate a sense of sovereignty:

You know we don’t take people’s sovereignty away as well. You know we don’t fix people here, hey? People can only fix themselves. And when they do something that either they or other people hold in esteem it’s not because of us, ever, it’s never because of us. It’s because of their personal power—they’re sovereign people too, eh?. . . They [other organizations] create dependency because then they get money for it. (156, p. 17)

She described the tendency for organizations to get grant money based on their promise to fix Indigenous people is an “Indian business”—a business that has grown in the context of the NDP government and the short-term grants for programming it has made possible, but a business which has not successfully made a dent in poverty (and in fact relies on its continuance):

I think what is so ironic in all these systems is, it’s a multimillion dollar system in Manitoba but the people are still living in poverty. Yeah. They still can’t get, you know, a bus ticket or laundry money—all the money goes to keep those systems going. (156, p. 22)

Another Indigenous restorative-justice worker imparted to me how alienating it is for non-Indigenous society to repeatedly and systematically assume that Indigenous people don’t
know, or can't do what is best for themselves. He illustrated this idea being conveyed to him in the context of participating in a protest under the banner of the Indigenous social movement “Idle No More”:

I think one of the things that stands out for me is I remember listening to a guy, a non-Native person in the news, talking about protesters at Idle No More. And I think this kind of captured that. And he basically says: “I don’t think they even know what they’re doing” (131, p. 18)

He remembers later in life being part of a program for Indigenous youth and feeling disconnected from the adults who were supervising him: “I remember that feeling of... it’s like adults are around, but they’re not there to care for you. They’re there to just kind of watch you. You know?” (131, p. 16).

One of the ways some organizations saw themselves as being accountable to a community, and distinct from systems and institutions that made the lives of their communities difficult was to prioritize the work and experiences of people from the community in hiring decisions. This is risky for community organizations, because in their experience, government and foundation funding prefer programs run by professionals. When CBOs take this risk, they sometimes prioritize the ability of workers to relate to the kids coming through their doors above the skills technically needed to make a CBO viable in the context of the government grant structure:

So sometimes you’ll be working with a staff that, well they’re not gonna be writing a proposal. But at the same time, there’s somebody who walked out at 1 in the morning when somebody walks in the door who nobody has seen before, they say, hey I know that, that was my cousin’s friend’s somebody, and blah blah blah. (122, p. 15)

The idea that some CBOs should resist the pressure to become a well-oiled grant-writing machine and hire people who are described as “experiential” or “insiders” to the community was a significant marker of difference from other CBOs who worked hard to package their programming in professional terms. One Indigenous Executive Director thought her
experience—as someone for whom work and community are one, because she is part of the community—was one of the important bases for trust between her and the participants in her program.

This means that these CBOs miss out on some grant funding because they struggle with the specific skills needed to construct appealing grant applications. It also means that the people who work at those organizations aren’t as well remunerated because they can’t justify paying a non-credentialed person the same salary as a social worker. This was a frustration for one “experiential” woman who was working as a frontline worker with sex workers:

They set out these government and these police-based jobs. [Sighs.] Community-based organizations are, tend to be more experiential workers and [experiential-based thinking. And so when those big monies comes around and it goes, they don’t necessarily hire experiential peoples and stuff to take those positions. Um, they have their own ideas, their own structures, their own codes. Um, and so yeah, it just further you know creates that imbalance of, of, go back to colonial settler idea, of like, this is worthwhile paying this person $34 an hour, because they have this and that. But somebody who has that experience and knowledge too, actually effectively maybe? Understand it and deal with it? Doesn’t get recognized and paid. Child and youth care work? It’s probably one of the lowest paid. Right? Trying to get you know, our most valuable members in the community cared for is highly underpaid. So they’d rather just lock them up in systems or in corrections. (118, pp. 18-19)

Those CBOs who prioritize hiring community members are also those who are most likely to talk about their work in terms of building relationships in their communities, rather than serving clients. Distrust of “professionalization” is related to perceived boundaries professionals have, and the necessity of crossing those boundaries in order to provide real support and care to the young people an organization is working with:

They actually need somebody who’s sitting there who does care about them. Does that mean we hug and kiss and you know not have any boundaries at all? Absolutely not. But we have compassion for people, we actually truly care about the outcomes of their lives, and how they’re going to get through today. Not about how are going to exit sex work—it’s about what is going on for you today and what do you need from me—recognizing that people are keeping themselves alive. (117, p. 23)
This reflects some organizations’ understandings of themselves as supports in the struggles of young people, rather than saviors on a mission to change the people they are working with: and as people who are part of the same broader communities, communities that rely on the success and survival of these young people.

The discourse of protecting and guarding relationships is one that originates in Indigenous organizations, and it is sometimes used to refuse criminalizing logics imposed on organizations from the outside by government funding structures. For example, one organization that was asked to ban gang members from their programming by the police refused to do so, because their relationships with the kids classified as “gang members” was a trusting one, where the kids in question could be counted on not to put other kids in danger in the context of the programming:

One of the guys from the street crimes unit went to the head of city recreation and said, “They’re letting kids deal drugs at the [community center],” which was completely false. And he said they had intel and so we asked for the intel and they like wouldn’t share and we’re like, well we know all the kids, we know the kids who are in gangs and we know, like we know, we’re not saying that no dealing ever happens at the centre but we don’t let it happen visibly and definitely not in the building. (111, p. 21)

When police made the request, the organization responded with an understanding of the circumstances of the kids being targeted by the police:

And we’re just like no, because they’re kids that have grown up here, right? And so to say now you have no safe place in the neighborhood, good luck, where are they going to end up, right? (111, p. 21)

Others had similar anecdotes—for example, asking kids who are acting out to leave for the day, and come back tomorrow instead of outright banning them from programming. There was a lot of empathy expressed for people who are subject to criminalization, and some CBOs saw themselves as attempting to counteract the harmful impact of criminalization on the psyches of kids subject to it:
You know, even for the hardest guy or gal, when things happen, there’s gotta be someone who is not looking at them in the way police do. So that’s kind of a role that we fulfill sometimes. . . the people I know deserve, you know, some credit. And definitely compassion. (122, p. 13)

The idea of guarding “relationships” is so central to the work of so many CBOs, especially Indigenous-led ones that it has also been seized on by the government and the police in order to promote the idea that “community policing” is about strengthening relationships between police and communities. In the next section, I turn to an analysis of the relationships community policing is attempting to forge, and the ways they are being resisted and subverted in defense of the relationships prioritized by some CBOs.

*Contending with “community policing”*

The police and the government have seized on the theme of “relationships” in their description of the Block by Block crime-prevention experiment, which relies on collaboration and “relationship building” between CBOs, employment income assistance (EIA, also known as “welfare”), CFS, the police, and the health care system. The representative tasked with coordinating CBO participation described the goal of the project in terms of the desire of the police and other partners to speed up information-sharing between bureaucracies, in order to better coordinate responses to families in crisis. The community organization representative talked about the trepidation felt by their sector based on their fear that their hard-earned trusting relationships with their fellow community members will be damaged if they are seen to be involved with CFS and the police: “And so community-based organizations recognize that they’re putting their necks out on the line because they’re the ones with the relationships right” (112, p. 31). Community organizations whose funding was tied to the government had the most to lose in the relationship.
She described fundamental conflicts between the mandates of CFS, the police, and community organizations. In order for CBOs to interact with families in the context of the partnership with other institutions, she said they needed to be able to assure families that they weren’t going to be subject to interventions they didn’t consent to. However, as soon as the police are granted access through the trusting relationship of the CBO, they said they would have to act on anything deemed to be “criminal” activity. “Criminals” are seen by the police as outside of the sphere of the protective and preventative interventions coordinated through the Block by Block partnership.

The types of relationships CBOs are trying to protect also don’t match up well with the way Child and Family Services operates in relation to families, either:

Yeah, I mean, when I even hear the word—like I think sometimes we don’t pay enough attention to the messages that are underlying words—like why does a family need to be “managed”? I mean, they should be the case managers, and if we’re actually going to do that they’re not cases, they’re people. (112, p. 16)

In her estimation of the partnership, the systems they were working with were “depersonalized” in a way that had moved away from relationship building. They were participating in the Block by Block partnership in the hopes of building relationships with the other bureaucracies that impact the lives of the people they work with, but they were encountering fundamental differences in the way they understood their relationships to the families they were trying to support:

One of the things we’ve probably recognized the most in non-profit organizations, we all sort of have a model of the way that we work things, and basically it is the belief that families are the experts of their own lives. That they direct the process, that they’re in charge with it. We walk with them with where they’re at and you know relationship building is much more important than anything else. (112, p. 16)

In the context of Block by Block, the government’s idea of honoring and building relationships was to have representatives of community organizations—who were not necessarily community members themselves—around the same table as large
bureaucracies in order to gain access to families in crisis. They didn’t anticipate pushback because in their minds they were engaging in consultation. For example, they objected to the original idea presented by the government that a police officer would be the director of the project: "First of all, because you know, we know what works best in our community" (112, p. 5). She was alluding to the deep distrust of the police among poor, Indigenous city-center residents and the fundamental conflicts that keep that distrust alive.

Community-oriented policing is something that has been recommended by researchers with the CCPA School, government officials, and the police themselves as a solution to distrust of the police. In Winnipeg, community-oriented policing under the NDP has meant an increasing presence of “community-liaison officers” and foot-patrol officers who make contact with youth-serving CBOs and attempt to build relationships with youth. However, while the people I interviewed felt positive and hopeful about these new policing directions, they also perceived a sense of unpredictability generated by community-policing initiatives, rooted in their individual and collective experiences of police violence.

One long-time youth worker affirmed that there was something fundamental about police that made them unhelpful: “The way policing is structured, they see the bad in kids and not the good, and that’s bad for relationships.” (122, p. 13). He and others held out hope for a paradigm shift, citing “the integration of more community-policing models, more integration of different services” as being moves in the right direction (117, p. 23). However, he also made the observation that, in his thirty years of working in the inner city, “community policing” and building relationships with the community was often added to the police service, and was also always the first area to be cut—throughout this time, “there’s never been enough positive relationships with police as compared to negative ones” (122, p. 13).
The vast majority of people I interviewed agreed that police harassment of Indigenous people, especially Indigenous youth, is routine in Winnipeg: “If you’re an aboriginal youth in this city, you are automatically targeted as being a gang member, criminal, up to no good” (150, p. 4). The justice system was described by one Indigenous ED as being responsible for “torn-apart families” (123, p. 19). She described police as “hit and miss,” and cited police behavior as a danger to the lives and psyches of Indigenous youth:

Time in and time out our young people are—what do they call that, racial profiling—um they’re stopped by the police, riding their bikes down the road, driving a car, we’ve had incidents where kids have been picked up and interrogated for no reason, other than they were walking down the street. They’ll be picked up by the police and driven around asked a 100 million questions and dropped off. And there is no rhyme or reason and they weren’t doing anything so I think the impact for young people, I mean with any stereotype, it’s internalized. If you go out and about of your business and you have the police who are the very people who are supposed to be protecting you kinda singling you out—the way you dress, the colour of your skin, the fact that you’re a visible Indigenous person—it starts to wear and tear. And you know when we think about, you know, positive relations with the police, it’s difficult to try to encourage that with our young people because their experiences have told them otherwise and you know and, ah, so it’s very difficult for them. (155, p. 4)

The police were described as yet another obstacle Indigenous people had to deal with, on top of gang violence and interpersonal violence. Rather than being a source of safety, they were described as an additional stressor:

I know at least four people who’ve been killed while I’ve been here. And that’s the reality, you know? So, I think part of that is this gang influence, poverty, you know, social economic issues, bad choices, you know, every kid makes a bad choice, but they shouldn’t have to die for it. Um, a lot of different things. And then they have to deal with the police on top of that. I don’t know, man. It’s frustrating. (131, p. 10)

Why are [neighborhood youth] on the defensive? Because they see it and deal with it every day. So they’re almost on the ready. They’re walking as if they’re on the ready to be attacked. Not just by some other guy in another gang, but right up by the police. None of them that I know of see the police as a safe place to go to. As somebody that will help them out. Um, and if it’s not because they’ve had their own direct contact, in their families. Mothers, brothers, uncles, sisters. They’ve all sat there and watched their family be, you know, treated in some way. So they’ve definitely been educated. (118, p. 14)
Another woman, married to an Indigenous man, expressed her family’s sense that she could rely on police for help, but that her Indigenous family members could not:

I also recognized that if any of my children—like my husband and I, we’ve been together for—we’re high school sweethearts, we had a teen pregnancy—but even with our, our daughter, it was... we had many conversations, like if she ever goes missing I have to be the one to report her, ‘cause people will not believe you, ‘cause you’re a big Indian man [chuckle] and I need them to know, like it has to come from me, otherwise they’re not going to take it serious. (117, p. 31)

One youth worker observed that the problem of police violence was especially difficult for youth who are unable to name it as racism, and so they internalize what is happening as a problem with them. This speaks to the importance of the interpretive framing Indigenous organizations do for Indigenous youth. Another Indigenous restorative justice worker described the anger and resentment that comes from the routine bad encounters between Indigenous youth and police as a source of anger and hostility:

These police officers you know, live in completely different neighborhoods and live completely different lives, have no idea what these kids go through. And they [the kids] have a chip on their shoulder, you know? And rightfully so. (131, p. 3)

The presence of police was described by many organizations as an extremely unpredictable force in the lives of the people they worked with, and in the lives of their organizations. This stems in part from significant disconnects between the behaviors and orientations of different police units:

You know, the police chief saying crime prevention through environmental design, then some people in the gang unit doing something completely opposite and then people on the street level not knowing what’s going on... like, having a cop come to the centre and meet kids one day and then that street cop is going to be slamming that kid against a car the next day. (111, p. 20)

One worker told a story about how one unit of the police force became very adamant that a neighborhood organization ban gang members from the local community center. The neighborhood organization refused to do so, because they had a policy of allowing gang members as long as they agreed not to carry out “gang activity” at the center. The street-

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crime unit pushed hard on this for a while, and then they stopped communicating with the neighborhood organization all. In the mean time, the community-policing officers were meeting with the neighborhood organization every week, “sitting at the table with us, discussing issues” (111, p. 20), but not addressing that issue. He expressed frustration that they all have different mandates.

Unpredictability also comes with changing police leadership and political priorities. The police chief at the time of my research had expressed a public commitment to “crime prevention through social development.” Many people I interviewed expressed excitement and hope about that mandate. However, two frontline CBO workers who work directly with “street-involved” youth said that they had still seen a lot of suppression on the streets. Of the police chief, they remarked: “I’ve seen him talk. . . I haven’t really noticed a difference” (109, p. 12).

As the leadership of police changes, so do their priorities and the distribution of officers. One ED expressed frustration that police officers move around every four years: “So you’re either gonna have a good four years or a bad four years or a challenging four years.” (123, p. 8). Similarly, one CBO leader who had been working in the same youth-serving organization for thirty years lamented that, “We are always meeting the new community police officer” (119, p. 9). For him, community policing should be about relationships: in his words, “You have to prove yourself to the community as being able to help people with their problems—but as long as they are cops first, there’s going to be a barrier.” (119, p. 9).

A lot of CBO workers made statements about the police along the lines of “I don’t hate the police, but there are some really bad police officers,” or “I like them as long as they are doing their jobs properly.” Nobody I interviewed had a totally negative view of policing—they viewed it as redeemable, as long as the right people are involved or they get
the right training. Still, the criminal justice system is the source of a lot of the violence described by people who work in close proximity to inner-city youth—especially in Indigenous-run organizations—so much so that a lot of people I talked to described their work in terms of helping the youth they work with to avoid contact with the police and CFS, rather than helping the youth they work with avoid crime.

The unpredictable and uneven response of the police in the context of community-policing initiatives is one way to explain why the same people who express concern about police violence also hold out hope for positive relationships with “good” officers. This manifests itself in narratives like the one that suggests that violent police are just “bad apples,” such as this youth worker—the same one who described the police as a danger to youth alongside the danger of poverty and gang violence: “I don’t have a problem with the police, I have a problem with police who don’t know how to do their job and are very disrespectful to young people.” (131, p. 6). In the context of community-policing initiatives, the police rely heavily on the fact that there are some “good” officers—and they are genuinely experienced as good for the community, good at their relationships with “at-risk” youth, and reliable resources for many CBOs.

However, the existence of community policing also relies on the presence of other non-community-oriented police officers. Community police officers build relationships, but they are careful not to be the ones that make arrests of the kids they have relationships with: they call in other units to do that work. One woman remarked to me that she wished the police would just act in one way or another, pinpointing the fact that their power is in their inconsistency. If they acted reliably either with brute force or with compassion, community organizations would have an easier time strategizing how to relate to them and navigating their relationships.
Some youth-serving CBO workers—especially those who do not have personal or community experiences with police violence—accept the premise of community policing completely. In one interview I did, a non-Indigenous worker who was not from the area he was working in and described it as “sketchy” related how he was surprised to discover that the Indigenous and refugee kids he was working with didn’t have positive associations with police. He is an exception among the people I interviewed, but he serves as an example of what it can look like to bring people “in” from the “outside” under the pretenses of helping poor and “underprivileged” kids. This ED’s views about the police came out in the context of him describing his excitement about the new police chief: “He’s totally like got the right ideas about things” (110, p. 18). He describes how he brought this excitement to a meeting of the “youth council” of their organization, made up of youth who want to be involved in its direction. He told the kids he wanted to bring their questions to the new police chief:

And as soon as I started bringing up the police it was very telling because half or more than half of the kids in the group were First Nations, all of those kids became like very just visibly like uncomfortable, sad, stressed out, horrified. Some of them got out of their seats and just started wandering aimlessly, they looked like they were about to start crying. Some of them just said, “I want to get out of here, I want to go,” like it was traumatizing, they were suffering trauma that was being dredged up. (110, p. 19)

His interpretation of this situation was that kids were misunderstanding the role of the community-police officers. He acknowledged that they may have been witness to police violence, but believed that they had misinterpreted it because of their misguided natural alliance with their loved ones, which clouds their ability to see that the police are doing a good job:

They had probably witnessed their loved ones taken away or, or humiliated or taken down, even if their loved ones had done something totally wrong, children don’t ever see their loved ones as the villains. They maybe were even told that their older brother or cousin or sister or whoever or mom didn’t do anything and don’t believe it and the police are wrong. And so they have grown up believing that police are like basically like Nazi storm troopers or something. (110, p. 19)
Despite being responsible for running an inner-city youth-serving organization, he was incredibly naive in the assumption implied by this passage that physical violence is only used by police when it’s necessary or justified. In the same breath, he described how refugee kids he works with also have bad associations with the police, which he described as a result of their coming from “you know, a ramshackle military dictatorship or something like that. . . They have no clue that they’re not going to get shot on sight or tortured” (110, p. 19). Here, he assumes that the refugee youth he’s dealing with have no ability to make a distinction between where they came from, and where they are now—even though almost everything else in their lives has also changed. He demonstrates an ignorance of the harassment and violence refugee youth also experience at the hands of the police in the present, in Winnipeg.

His response to this problem embodies exactly what the police and the NDP government imagines should be the solution to conflict between police and Indigenous communities: he invited a community-police officer into the organization to visit regularly. As a response to a traumatized, visceral fear of police expressed by the youth he worked with, he brought police closer into the organization. He described how all it took was one session of the community police officer coming without uniform and interacting with the kids, then another session of her coming in uniform for the kids to warm up to her and to the uniform: “They were really interested in her because she wasn’t there for any bad reason. . . so then they really liked her and they started making art for her and it was a complete flip-around” (110, p. 20). For him, the problem was solved by a friendly officer dispelling the myth of the bad police officer:

> Like that suddenly made them realize that like, they’re [i.e. police are] people, and I described to the kids when that whole thing went down that maybe if some of them have a bad relationship with police it’s because it’s like a lot of jobs like there are some people who are really good at their job, some people who have a job and they’re not good at it and they shouldn’t be at that job. . . If you’re scared of the police it’s
‘cause that police was not good at their job, good police should make you feel safe and you know and they should just make you feel safe and happy. (110, p. 20)

Later, he talked about the parade his organization puts on every year, which walks through their city-center neighborhood displaying puppets and floats created by youth: “Oh, and our parades, we encourage everyone to like, smile and wave at the police”—he needs to do this because people at the march are known to yell at the police escorts—“Why does everyone always have to like yell ‘hey hey, ho ho, police brutality has got to go,’ when it’s a march about completely something else that isn’t even relevant to police brutality?” (110, p. 21).

The example of this CBO director’s experience facilitating police involvement in his organization demonstrates both the visceral nature of the trauma Indigenous kids experience in relation to the police, and the capacity of a non-Indigenous worker to gloss over that trauma as a “misunderstanding,” imposing his own experience of the police as a generalizable one, and imparting that vision to youth in what he perceived to be a “teachable moment.” In contrast to the CBOs who teach kids that the police are safe for them when their experiences tell them they are not, other CBO workers express empathy for youth who have bad experiences with the police, and disseminate the understanding that police engage in unjust and unfair practices. Conflict between community-police officers and the youth who attend programming at city center CBOs highlights the importance of rethinking police partnerships with community organizations as partnerships that reduce the reach and efficacy of CBO work.

Case study: CBOs, police, and responses to “sexual exploitation”

The politics of responses to sexually exploited youth in Winnipeg are a good microcosm of the political dynamics and debates that exist within the CBO sector about how they should relate to the police, and what it means to act in ways that honor the
autonomy and self-determination of women and girls doing sex work while also protecting them from exploitation.

One Indigenous-run youth-serving organization in Winnipeg’s North End was developed explicitly as a place of refuge for youth who were vulnerable to street-based sexual exploitation. The factors the ED of the organization identified as making young girls vulnerable to exploitation were both bad family lives and the dysfunctional Child and Family Services system:

Whether they were kids that were leaving unsettling home situations, or running from placements—young girls were ending up on the street and once they were there, there were individuals out there seeking to prey on them and exploit them. (155, p. 1)

The interference of police in the lives of sexually exploited young women was cited by two frontline workers as a significant barrier to their long-term well being. While they acknowledged that it may remove a woman from an immediately dangerous situation in the short term, in the long term the charges laid by police are very damaging to a woman’s ability to leave sex work if she chooses to. The conditions placed on sex workers targeted by the criminal justice system are also destabilizing in the short term. A few of the CBO workers who worked with sex workers recounted that one of the conditions that often came with their charges was that they had to avoid spaces that are central to their lives:

Yeah. So if you are, most women will, will be on the street, not that far from their house, so there’s a real, if you are charged with prostitution-related offenses? Then uh, for a period of time—and it’s a long time, I think 2 years—you cannot go anywhere in that neighborhood. Unless you get permission from police to do that. So you’ve immediately become homeless. You’ve immediately lost your kids cause you’re homeless. Uh, and, then you, chances are you’re gonna get beat up cause you owe a whole bunch of money to the trafficker who forced you to be there in the first place. (123, p. 19)

Some CBO workers described the Winnipeg Police Service’s (WPS) Sexual Exploitation Unit as having some particularly sensitive members who seemed to genuinely want to protect the safety of women doing sex work. Part of the Sexual Exploitation Unit is a
program called “Street Reach,” a combination of police and social workers charged with doing direct intervention in the lives of “the top fifteen most entrenched sexually exploited minors in Winnipeg” (123, pp. 8-9). One of the CBO Executive Directors described this as one of the most “critically important” functions of the police (123). According to her description, outreach workers built relationships with young people who were being victimized, “meeting them individually and communicating online” (123, p. 9), while at the same time police and social-worker teams would be collecting intelligence about who is exploiting or trafficking kids, and how they are being exploited.

In contrast, frontline workers I interviewed at another Indigenous-run organization, articulated ways that the government’s strategy (including the Street Reach program described above) actually made the lives of sex workers more precarious. For example, the mode of evaluating whether or not their funding was producing “outcomes” was to have organizations track the number of women who they helped to “exit” the sex trade:

So when I used to work at Sage House we had Status of Women funding and our evaluation, we sat down with our evaluators based on the contribution agreement with Status of Women and they said okay so here’s our evaluation wheel and they were like okay you contact with women and build relationships and then the women exit. And I was like, so my funding is to help women exit the sex trade ‘cause we’re going to fail, like I can guaranteed zero women want to exit the sex trade. This is three-year funding, so how does outreach equal exiting sex work? (117, p. 22)

She asked: what does “exiting” even look like when someone who might exit once gets back in the next day? In her mind, a good outcome was when an organization was making connections to women and building relationships so they could have access to information, and so they could make their own decisions about how they wanted to use the organization’s services. To be oriented toward racking up statistics of people who exited the sex trade was a structural constraint on the development of a meaningful relationship.

This analysis was part of an orientation toward working with sex workers that was entirely different from the orientation shared by the government and one of the larger
Indigenous-run social service agencies I investigated, which was pursuing the care and protection of what they called “sexually exploited youth” through the twin deployment of social workers and police officers. In that formulation, women were seen as victims of “exploiters,” who were then targeted with criminalization. From the perspective of other Indigenous CBO-workers, this approach doesn’t address the conditions that made a person vulnerable to “exploitation” in the first place, nor does it address the fact that criminalization of their “exploiter” led to a loss of income. For one worker, the focus on “exploitation” took power away from the choices women were making: “If you tell someone, ‘You’re being exploited,’ then she doesn’t have power in a system that’s failing her.” She elaborated:

She could be engaging in sex work because a system is failing her. Not because she’s making bad decisions—she’s actually making really fucking good decisions to stay alive. Because the other alternative is for death for her and for many, like the women that I worked with on the streets, like a lot of those women, and if I looked at them as victims of exploitation then I’m taking away all of their power to survive those situations. (117, p. 14)

Similarly, if people act like the solution is to take away sex work as an option, that fails to recognize the fact that a lot of the girls can’t survive without sex work. Another set of frontline workers reiterated this idea, emphasizing that the emphasis on exiting sex work contributes to women feeling bad about the choices they feel they have to make, especially in the context of a broader system that excludes them from accessing legal or legitimate resources to live:

If you listen to a lot of stories that people have about, you know, you’re getting out and the struggle to find a job, sometimes at the end of the day they still feel like they’ve gotta go back cause there’s no other options, right? (118, p. 5)

One of the frontline workers at the Indigenous youth-serving agency I interviewed had been a sex worker in Winnipeg’s city center in the past, and she observed that social
services and community-based organizations were set up in such a way as to encourage women to portray themselves as victims in order to be granted access to limited resources:

There’s limited supports out there, very limited. In Manitoba we’re supposed to be on the top with those things, and we do do good stuff here, but it’s limited, yeah. It’s almost like people have to victimize themselves as adults to get services and supports that they need. Just, oh, I can’t do this, I’m so broken, I’ve got post-traumatic stress, you know, you just, everything that’s wrong with you so that you can get help. So yeah. And I think that just kind of tears you down a little bit because you know, I think it’s better to think of yourself as a survivor than a victim. But you gotta do what you gotta do sometimes to get what you need. (118, p. 5)

For her and other front line workers, this pressure to self-victimize fit with the colonial tendency of community organizations and social services to take credit for the successes of the people they work with.

To them, refusing to take credit, and honoring someone’s autonomy and self-determination, involved recognizing the work (often Indigenous) people are doing to survive, rather than constructing their survival as only possible due to the interventions and supports of social-service agencies—implying that they were on their way to death anyway. This is also necessary because organizations come and go as funding comes and goes and so, in the eyes of many, it is both unrealistic and dangerous for social services to take credit for survival:

So I’m only a temporary little blip in their radar for a day and sometimes I only saw women once a week or sometimes once a month depending on their circumstances which means how in the hell am I going to ever be responsible for improving their lives. All I am is just a consultant which means they get to make the decisions to improve their life which means I also can’t take their success from them. So if I provide them with information and they come back and they say, “Oh, thank you so much, without you I couldn’t have done it,” I always say, “Really? ‘Cause I didn’t do anything, like you did all the work, I just gave you a piece of information and it was up to you to integrate that into your day or your life or whatever, I didn’t actually do anything.” (117, p. 23)

This CBO worker was adamant about recognizing that all the sex workers they work with were there before her organization existed, and that they would be there after the organization. For her, all that was possible in this context was a peer-to-peer, harm-
reduction approach, not an approach that seeks to change the behavior of sex workers. This contrasts significantly with the Street Reach approach, which takes on a savior mentality. The relationship the organization has with the women involved in sex work is subordinated to the information they can collect from that woman in order to criminalize the individual who has preyed on her structural abandonment.

The frontline workers at the Indigenous-youth–serving organization that works with sexually exploited youth were also critical of Street Reach because of the way they perceived it to be redirecting resources away from community organizations like theirs, toward the police:

Everyone’s fighting for money, for those resources, to keep resources going or to bring resources in or to bring back old resources that have been cut. And then you see these, like, police divisions now sprouting all over and the amount of money that’s being put into policing when they’re doing essentially—or trying to mimic—what we’ve done here. (118, p. 5)

Similar to their sense that people had to define themselves as victimized in multiple ways in order to get attention, they felt that the Street Reach program was an example of more money being taken from organizations like theirs who worked with a wide range of youth at varying degrees of vulnerability, in order to give it to a program that targets far fewer youth—the ones defined as “top priority” by the systems that have already staged interventions in their lives:

Yeah, struggle to deal with like—we deal with the community people. Tons of, like, youth that come in and out. Whereas these other organizations and agencies get tons more money to deal with a far smaller—it feels like a smaller select group of people or individuals. (118, p. 6)

In the meantime, those youth who are trying hard to avoid becoming entrenched in systems like Justice or CFS do not get resources precisely because of their success at surviving on their own up until this point:

Like they have to pass through that system first, to get defined as being a “top priority.” And yet we’ve got kids coming in and out of here every day who are trying
their best to stay out of the system. With no support. And the workers that are trying to provide it [with] less and less money. (118, p. 6)

These workers described the police as being even less responsive during the times the community organization felt they really needed them during the span of the Street Reach program, because they were focusing their resources on a few of the most marginalized youth.

The uneven and unpredictable behavior of police in response to women doing sex work reflects the experiences in the youth-serving agency sector more broadly, which is that some police officers are very positive, and others are negative and abusive, despite their supposed mandate to protect vulnerable women:

I was fortunate when I worked at Sage House to work with police officers who really understood that sex work and exploitation was not a criminal activity, it was a response to trauma and the situation that women were living in, and so they were fantastic. But at the same time I was doing outreach and I had a police officer like lights on, pull us over, what are we doing in this neighborhood and all that kind of jazz. (117, p. 31)

In the course of my interview with this respondent, she communicated that it ultimately didn’t matter how good a police officer was, as long as they represented policing. Even the understanding police officers at Sage House (an agency oriented at helping women exit sex work) would drive women away because their police powers were threatening and unreliable:

And even the Counter Exploitation Unit, which is a new unit they have around women involved in sex work and building relationships with women and stuff like that, they’re like we are non-law enforcement and then in the next sentence they were like, but if something happens we have to enforce the law. (117, p. 32)

This situation of some police officers being friendly and others being violent (the situation of “community policing”) is not an improvement over a uniformly violent police service. It is often more dangerous because of its unpredictability. In another interview, a front line
worker observes that “policy” doesn’t necessarily make it down to the work of frontline officers, especially when it isn’t in training manuals:

There was this big push in the media, everywhere, like the chief of police and all these people, “We’re not gonna arrest the girls, we’re gonna be targeting the Johns.” They were still, you know, girls were getting arrested for jaywalking or spitting or stuff like that, right? Like they were being charged with these little minor things, but when we asked about it, it was like well, if the new recruits, until they change the policy the new recruits are gonna follow the old policy. And yeah, and they pretty much have this sort of like well we can do whatever we want attitude? When they’re in this neighborhood, like you’re supposed to fear them because they’re the police. (118, p. 13)

The inconsistency of police violence in the lives of marginalized youth, combined with new police initiatives to “build relationships” with at-risk youth contributes to a particularly precarious set of situations for people engaged in illegal work:

So, uh, just to give you an example, like just a small example, we’ve had, uh, so we had the safe house for sexually exploited youth. And it is, it’s meant to be a safe house, so we have cameras on the outside, to keep bad people out, not to keep the girls in. And so, the, we would have offenders who would park outside, and as a form of intimidation to the girls on the inside. And they’d be professing their love on the sidewalk, and there was, there’s nothing legally you can actually do about that. So it all depended on the policing agency, so at the beginning when it was good, it would be like, hey Jean, can you come down here, we got a guy outside, this is a description, license plate, blah blah, can you come down? They would send someone there immediately and then a cop car like within seconds would be there. Uh, and they legally can’t do anything cause he’s on public—like public property. And unless he comes within the stalking parameters, it’s not considered stalking. So they would, these cops would come and just intimidate the hell out of these offenders, and then they would drive away, sometimes they even followed them home. . . . Then you had kids on the inside going like I really like cops now, because they’re doing something to help me, and they’re helping everybody, blah blah right? Then Jean left, somebody new comes in for four years, and says, I don’t have time for that. I am not coming down and wasting my time. Don’t call me unless there’s an absolute emergency. Blah blah. So you had four years of kids being let down by the police. So it’s, there are opportunities when it can work, and then it can fail miserably. And it’s personality-driven—like whether the priority is there to work together or not. (123, p. 14)

There was a strong sense that safety of sex workers, or any other youth, should not be reliant on the unpredictably alternating faces of police cooperation. The fact that policing is
so personality driven and discretionary is one of the ways youths’ lives are made vulnerable structurally, and one of the dynamics CBOs are constantly trying to navigate.

*CBOs and the NDP government*

Although the government seems to rely on CBOs to lend legitimacy to their crime-prevention and community-policing efforts, the uneven power relationship between the government and CBOs is frustrating for CBOs. During the last years of the NDP government reign, there was no new funding for community-organization projects, while the police budget continued to increase. When CBOs did get funding, they expressed that their spending was heavily scrutinized to a degree that felt unfair: “Every penny we spend is under a microscope... and yet in government you know if you look at CFS and you look at those systems like there’s no microscopes, there’s barely even telescopes, right?” (111, p. 31)

Early in the mandate of the provincial government, there was a sense among CBOs that the government was receptive to their concerns, but later they seemed to be more invested in popularity:

> It’s always tricky when you’re dealing with people whose livelihood depends on popularity and then dealing with people like us who are area experts trying to say, you know, “This is what’s right,” and then they’re like “Yes, but this is not popular.” (111, p. 22)

For this worker, his sense was that the government hadn’t yet funded a gang-exit strategy because it wasn’t going to be politically popular to spend money being “soft” on gang members. Instead, the provincial government spent $300,000 on commercials on TV and billboards telling parents how to detect signs that their kids are in a gang, and to tell kids to get out of gangs. His biggest concern was that leaving a gang is not often the safest route for kids: “It’s often more dangerous for a kid to try to leave a gang than it would be to stay
in” (111, p. 25). This worker felt that the NDP recognized the importance of community expertise to a certain extent, but that they were also committed to funding large counter-productive systems like CFS and the criminal justice system that often contradicted the work of CBOs:

So and I think to some degree government recognizes that. But then they create systems that don’t work so it’s like, it’s like, “Yes, we agree with community groups and we’ll fund you guys for this stuff a little bit. But at the same time we’re going to also fund these massive systems that are basically doing contrary work to what you’re doing.” (111, p. 27)

In the context of changing government fads and priorities, CBOs are constantly having to reframe and rework their programming in order to get funding. The precarity of their funding, combined with their dependence on it, constrains their ability to intervene politically:

Well, I mean if you're getting government funding you certainly don't want to bite the hand that feeds you. And that would be the biggest thing and of course the people who can and do make contributions and corporate donations are sometimes very politically inclined. And you know the wisest course of action is just to stay neutral. (121, p. 7)

Indeed, many respondents in the CBO sector claimed proudly that they were “apolitical,” which for most of them meant that they didn’t favor one political party over another.

When I asked this worker about whether or not she felt that the possibility of the NDP falling out of power would negatively affect the organization in the future, she communicated a line that suggested she felt that the good work they had done, and the size and scope of their organization would see it through potential funding cuts that would likely come with government change:

There’s such a strong community voice, and a strong system developed with the help of the NDP government. They have to acknowledge that it would be a hard thing to revert back to having an adversarial relationship. And if it is, that’d be like political suicide, like I would think. . . . I think we’re on such a level now that it almost wouldn’t matter anymore [who was in government]. (123, p. 17)
This attitude is partly attributable to the work of the CCPA School of social research in perpetuating the idea that evidence that a program works is enough to get it funded by any government. Still others raised their issues in a way that either major political party could respond to, but without indicting or supporting either the Conservative Party or the NDP:

I don’t think I’m the only person who feels that it’s best as in kind of a non-profit, we’ve always just toed that line of we’ve been very apolitical. Like here’s the issue, what are you doing about it? Sometimes that’s a scathing review of some people, and sometimes it’s a bit of a pat on the back. But you know, that’s up to them. . . . We’re very kid-centered here. Youth centered. We do, you know, understand about systemic change and work towards that but I guess we’re less overt. (122, p. 12)

This is a survival strategy for a non-profit organization in this sector, but it is also reflective of an understanding of politics that is focused on the community scale. Many people said that they would support either party depending on their stance on a particular issue, which is a narrow understanding of the class interests that the two plausible governing parties represent. The Conservative Party favors low taxes, a slimmed-down public sector, and a pro-business environment, while the NDP tries to maintain public services while also catering to the business class. However, it is also true that the politics of people in CBOs also reflect the fact that the NDP isn’t a “natural” ally of the inner city.

While NDP-ers feel that people in non-profits don’t have politics that are “well developed” enough to understand that their interests lie with the NDP government, people in the NDP government and its supporters don’t take inner city issues seriously enough to adequately fund the organizations they rely on to fill in the gaps of an underfunded public sector.

Premier Selinger ascribes naiveté to CBOs. Speaking of what in his mind is generous funding of CBOs (or at least the best they can do):

There is always the risk of people thinking that this is normal and that is a challenge the longer a government is around. People think “Oh, it’s no big deal, we can go with the other guys and everything will be the same only better.” Well actually not. If you have gone through a few times of seeing those governments come in—what they do is slash and burn. (154, p. 17)
While it is true that Conservative governments have historically slashed both public services and inner-city funding, it is also true that the NDP’s funding of inner-city organizations is not as good as they would have their supporters believe. One Executive Director expressed frustration with the failure of the NDP to address core issues that impact their ability to do their work:

You know, let’s, let’s throw another nonprofit in there to give the people a few tidbits and maybe that’ll—you know I don’t know. And no, I honest to god think we should all be marching in the freaking streets to create change in the city, and doing it collectively side by side. And not stop until change happens. I just look at the inadequacy, and again I’m being very political, I don’t care, I mean I look at the crap at City Hall, and the sheer waste of tax dollars, what that could be done to create housing for families right? But you know it becomes, “It’s not my department, it’s not my mandate, it’s not my priority,” and everyone keeps passing the buck. And nothing gets done quickly and that is so frustrating for me as someone who can see what’s needed in this community. We need housing, we need jobs, we need education for our kids. And we needed to do everything in our power to make that happen. We need a secure food sources for our families. And that becomes, you know, and that comes with training and education and employment, right? I mean the solutions are really self-evident in my eyes. And you know, that’s how you eliminate the uh, the crime rate, the so-called crime rate is you create different opportunities for people. (121, p. 9)

While this person felt angry and felt that there should be something done, she wasn’t a part of political organizing to demand something from the government, and didn’t express hope that that was possible. The level of dissatisfaction with the way systems treat poor and Indigenous people is high within CBOs, but the level of political organizing against it is extremely low. While people who work at CBOs are more likely than bureaucrats or politicians to identify the destructive impacts of “helping” systems and the ongoing racism faced by Indigenous youth and families, the way CBOs are currently organized does not position them well to respond politically to those systemic issues.

**Conclusion**

The experiences of people working in youth-serving inner-city CBOs reveals that the risks
faced by the youth they work with go beyond the risk of becoming involved in crime. They include the risks associated with being heavily policed and potentially imprisoned. In this context, inner-city CBOs act in many different ways to respond to the threat of various kinds of violence and harm. These responses reveal creative counter-logics to mainstream ideas about “fixing” at-risk youth, instead opting to support youth in the face of systems working against them. These responses also illustrate how the logics of crime prevention and the management of “at-risk” youth coarticulate with colonial logics, and are resisted in the same moments.
Conclusion

The question of who ends up in jail is the endpoint of political decision-making. The fact that the strength of imprisonment and policing grew exponentially during a New Democratic Party (NDP) government in Manitoba was not inevitable. The fact that the people targeted by policing and imprisonment were Indigenous people was not deliberate, but it is also the result of traceable political decisions. While it is possible at the individual level to identify decisions criminalized people made that may have led to their imprisonment, it is also possible to confidently assert that before the NDP was in power, those decisions may not have landed those people in jail. This is something NDP politicians and policy advisors are proud of. However, neither imprisonment nor policing have worked to prevent or reduce violence or crime in Manitoba. Manitoba is no safer now than it was before the NDP came into power. Therefore, this carceral agenda was carried out without benefit to the people of Manitoba, and with significant harm to poor and Indigenous people in Manitoba.

In April 2016, the NDP was voted out of power after three terms, totaling sixteen years in government. During this time, they made an entire complex of decisions that resulted in the massive expansion of the carceral state. This period of time requires reflection, especially on how the politics of social justice and defending the poor were mobilized for a carceral agenda, and could be mobilized in such a way again in the future. Ruth Wilson Gilmore makes a distinction between grassroots scholar-activism and scholarly research: “In scholarly research, answers are only as good as the further questions they provoke, while for activists, answers are as good as the tactics they make possible” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 27). She concludes that the overlap between scholarship and activism is “in the area of how to make decisions about what comes next” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 27). In concluding this dissertation, I outline some of the key contributions my dissertation could
make to the project of reflecting on the NDP's time in office in order to contribute to future political strategizing.

Chancer and Jacobson (2010) suggest that in order to scale back the advance of mass incarceration in the United States, leftists have to move beyond the “mostly academic” dichotomy between left-realist and left-idealistic approaches. This means going beyond a simple critique of mass incarceration, and incorporating two kinds of concerns at the same time, which are:

both the political uses made of the crime issue to justify punitive measures apart from actual issues of public safety (think: high recidivism rates) and the actual existence of crime and fears of crime as it disproportionately affects different communities of color and class. (Chancer and Jacobson, 2010, p. 188)

This means taking seriously both carceral expansion and the unevenly distributed harms caused by crime, and seizing rare political moments where there is an overlap between left- and right-wing positions in order to push through pragmatic policies that reduce the reach and power of prisons and jails. In the spirit of being pragmatic, this dissertation is meant to contribute to a critique which is both realist and abolitionist—realist in its willingness to acknowledge that street crime is a serious problem for working-class and otherwise marginalized people; abolitionist in its insistence that so too are police, incarceration, and social services mobilized around a supposed divide between the “criminal” and the “non-criminal” (i.e. deserving and non-deserving) community member. The abolitionist position “refuses to accept the centrality of the criminal law as a form of social control or ‘crime’ as a concept to define undesirable behavior. Punishment is seen at best as useless, and at worst as dangerous” (Cohen, 1988, p. 25). In other words, I argue that those things which cause harm should to be taken seriously in our scholarly and activist work, but that the discourse of criminality is an inaccurate and fundamentally inadequate way of accounting for harms in their totality.
The study of the carceral state offers tools to activists to understand how the harmful conditions of carcerality are produced beyond the confines of criminal justice institutions, and therefore must be resisted on many fronts:

Put simply, capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it. Thus, criminalization and mass incarceration are class war, as Platt and Takagi explained in 1977. Therefore, the struggle against group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death is waged in every milieu—environmental degradation, public-goods withdrawal, attacks on wages and unions, divide-and-conquer tactics among precarious workers, war, etc. Police killings are the most dramatic events in a contemporary landscape thick with preventable, premature deaths. (Gilmore, 2015, para. 6)

While this dissertation does not come close to doing the work of accounting for how the NDP’s social policy agenda helped to produce their carceral agenda in as comprehensive a way as Gilmore suggests, it gestures at a connection between the two by tracing the colonial logics that circulate in rationales for both social programming and punishment.

A central argument in this dissertation is that in order to understand the NDP’s expansion of the carceral state, it needs to be situated within the broader settler-colonial context within which it has unfolded. Situating the politics of crime in a particular set of racial logics connects it to the politics of crime elsewhere while also acknowledging peculiar, local expressions of carceral racism. In my literature review, I highlighted how projects of liberal carceral expansion often rely on liberal racial logics that in one way or another construct “other” people as benefiting from innovations in carceral control.

Canada’s settler-colonial history makes it apparent how, under particular conditions, “caring” interventions can be carceral. The history of settler-colonial control in Canada is one of violent dispossession, facilitated by the imposition of state-led interventions aimed at “helping” Indigenous people to adapt to colonial control. In this context, it is possible to see how the state-led mission of helping people to adjust to conditions of state violence is hardly helping at all. However, it is less easy to see this
pattern repeated in the present, especially as colonialism is so often invoked as a “past event” and not a present day structure of governance (A. Simpson, 2016). We can observe the present day reproduction of colonial control in the NDP’s pairing of crime prevention with intensified suppression, targeted in Indigenous city-center Winnipeg neighborhoods. The proliferation of police into these neighborhoods is taken to be an inevitable background against which unrelated “crime-prevention” interventions take place, aimed at helping young people develop skills to succeed in a world that is organized for their premature death and imprisonment.

Caring interventions are carceral when they are offered to some, and systematically denied to others. Examples from this dissertation illustrate how the Manitoba government made small amounts of money available to CBOs for youth-oriented crime-prevention programming, while failing to also support their families. As the Department of Children and Youth Opportunities funded crime-prevention programming for children under 12, the separate Department of Justice ensured that those youth not captured by crime-prevention programming would be captured by carceral supervision. This is a familiar logic to those who observe that the criminal justice system often gains legitimacy by allowing some people to be excused from its reach: “by campaigning for the relatively innocent, advocates reinforce the assumption that others are relatively or absolutely guilty and do not deserve political or policy intervention” (Gimore, 2015, para. 10). In the case of Manitoba, the distribution of crime-prevention funding helped to embolden the colonial logic that while some Indigenous youth were redeemable, adults and families were “lost causes.”

A bifurcation between those who are “of the community” and those who are not was also entrenched in the NDP’s efforts to more closely integrate crime prevention and suppression. The non-profit community-based organization (CBO) sector has been an important part of the NDP’s implementation of this strategy, which the NDP has described
as a “holistic” response to crime. However, efforts to bring police in closer involvement with non-profits have not made police more community-minded. As the example of the Block by Block partnership between police, social services, and CBOs illustrates, as long as police are part of a response team, police authority will be centered. The involvement of police in their operations limited the ability of CBOs to protect community members from harm, including harms that could stem from police or Child and Family Services (CFS) interventions. These examples illustrated how police try to mobilize “community” in order to cast out those the police had deemed troublesome or criminal. In practice, bringing intervention and suppression together emboldens the police, and does not strengthen the power of communities to determine responses to problems as they see them.

One of the most important findings of my research is that community policing is not an improvement on “traditional” policing in Winnipeg. In practice, community police do not replace traditional police, but are added to the police force to act as liaisons to communities recognized as being troublesome for the police. Community-police officers introduce themselves to community organizations as officers who will be more personally invested in relationships with the communities they police, and therefore be less likely to resort to brute force to do their job. However, they are always backed up by other police officers who are prepared to act in “traditional” police ways. In the experiences of youth-serving CBOs in inner city Winnipeg, “community policing” has meant more friendly officers dropping in on youth programming, but no fewer street-crime officers ready to question or pat down youth on their way home from programming. In this way, the introduction of community policing has generated a sense of unpredictability for people for whom part of their survival is trying to anticipate and navigate the actions of the police.

Unfortunately, local progressive research continues to provide unwitting justification for the expansion of policing into city-center neighborhoods. As Canadian
Center for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba (“CCPA School”) researchers produce “community-based research” aimed at policy makers, they pick and choose which community issues to foreground based on their understandings of what is politically possible, and what is most necessary. Because they understand the real cause of Indigenous imprisonment to be damaged Indigenous communities, they see police as mere reproducers of social order. They impose this explanation on people’s narratives of police violence in their lives, confirming that violence was already inherent to the spaces where police are concentrated (Comack, 2012; Razack, 2002, 2015).

The CCPA School agrees that policing and imprisonment are not the solutions to crime in the inner city, and in this way they see their research as implying a critique of policing and imprisonment. However, despite acknowledging the ubiquity of police violence and imprisonment in the communities they research, they do not see the carceral state as the source of harms. This analysis expresses itself in the views of NDP supporters more broadly who do not oppose the expansion of policing and imprisonment as long as it is not taking resources away from what they see to be the real issues: poverty and the intergenerational effects of past colonial trauma.

Within the worldview of the CCPA School, policing is considered inevitable. Therefore, they suggest that the policing experience can be improved through making it more community-oriented (Comack & Silver, 2008). “Community policing” is posed as a lesser evil in relation to more "traditional" forms of policing, which is the logic by which policing more broadly has gained strength in a progressive political milieux:

The concept of the lesser evil risks becoming counterproductive: less brutal measures are also those that may be more easily naturalized, accepted and tolerated—and hence more frequently used, with the result that a greater evil may be reached cumulatively. (Weizman, 2012, p. 10)
This logic could be undermined by research about the destabilizing effects of carceral control in Indigenous communities. However, this research is not easy to find, and I would suggest that this has to do with the hegemonic understanding that Indigenous communities are the problem.

While the focus of the government’s crime-prevention strategy on reforming individuals is an ideological decision with consequences for what will be funded and what won’t be, the focus of CBOs on individuals is often a function of their limited resources and structurally small scale. They are significantly preoccupied with responding to the immediate needs of the youth they are serving and stabilizing the routine crises that arise as a result of poverty.

Still, the different ways they understand problems points to different political analyses with different potentials for being scaled up into social-change projects. The harms of state violence are sometimes acknowledged and responded to at the level of CBOs. Indigenous-run CBOs in particular have developed a range of strategies for managing contact between Indigenous families and potentially harmful interventions from CFS and the police. In this sense, it matters greatly whether Indigenous youth are receiving programming from CBOs who see their job as fixing those youth, or CBOs who identify with the struggles of those youth to survive systems that aren’t built to support them. CBOs are more likely than bureaucrats or politicians to identify the destructive impacts of governmental “helping” systems and the ongoing racism faced by Indigenous youth and families. The infrastructure of CBOs established during the NDP’s time in government, and the experience and knowledge they have cultivated about the nature and impact of the problems in the inner city is tremendous. However, as they are currently organized, they are not well positioned to respond politically to those systemic issues.
Importantly, however, the Indigenous modes of survival expressed through CBOs do not exist because of NDP funding for CBOs, nor will they end when that funding stops. Indigenous people continue to organize around their definitions of problems in their communities in ways that draw attention to colonial violence and the inadequacies of the criminal justice system in keeping people safe. In the past five years or so, there has been a resurgence of local Indigenous-led organizing in Winnipeg centered on developing networks of community care in response to community-safety issues. Indigenous organizers have created an organization called “Drag the Red” that drags the Red River that runs through Winnipeg to look for signs of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW). While the federal government recently launched an inquiry into the status of the almost 2000 documented murdered and missing Indigenous women cases across Canada (Canada, 2015), government action to date has centered police responses while refusing to investigate police involvement in the deaths. In response, Indigenous organizers across Canada have developed ways of documenting and searching for these women when the police won’t. In Winnipeg, a group of local Indigenous men and women have started to patrol the streets of city-center neighborhoods in order to address their sense that the police are not keeping people safe. The Bear Clan Patrol doesn’t seek to report crime, rather they seek to make connections with people in distress (CBC News, 2015). Meet Me at the Bell Tower is a weekly “anti-violence meeting” where people from across the city gather at a Bell Tower in Winnipeg’s North End to discuss and strategize around a range of safety issues. It is not my intention to comment on the efficacy of any of these grassroots strategies. Rather, I draw attention to their existence as evidence that there are local ways of thinking about safety outside the criminal justice system, and that abolitionist activists who wish to learn something about how to act as if the carceral state is not inevitable have lots to learn from 500 years of Indigenous practice.
These examples also counter the damage-centered narratives about Indigenous communities. Discourses of damage in Indigenous communities have long been used to mobilize state control over Indigenous people. In the past, Indigenous children were taken from their parents for outside supervision because their parents were deemed “uncivilized” and therefore unable to acclimate their kids to the onslaught of colonial control. In the present, kids are deemed in need of outside supervision at CBOs because their parents are deemed to be suffering from the legacy of colonialism. If people are constructed as “in need of fixing,” it is not a giant leap to construct them as also in need of policing.

The liberal logic of carceral expansion works through the calculated distribution of freedoms and unfreedoms among people deemed differentially deserving, and through the granting of exceptions to punishment. The following passage, from an analysis of neoliberal New Labour governing logic, sums up the foundational interconnectivity between the promises of liberal philosophy and its racial logic:

Progress, but simultaneously the need to contain any ‘threat from below’;
tolerance, reform, moderation and representative government for the English race, but colonial governmentality, discipline and authority for the recalcitrant ‘other’ native peoples abroad;
emancipation and subjugation;
free men in London, slaves in the West Indies;
freedom now for some, an unending apprenticeship to freedom for others;
the universal language of ‘mankind’ versus the particularity of the discourse of women;
a civilizing ‘mission’ that harbored an un-transcended gulf between the civilized and the barbarians...

(Hall 2011, p. 15, emphasis mine)
The NDP’s carceral expansion project won the tacit support of progressives through its appeal to a promise to help Indigenous people, while also undermining their claims to self-determination by ensuring they were understood to be either damaged, or criminal, or both.

In closing, one of the reasons it is important to learn from the way the politics of crime were formed under the NDP government is because they highlight the unique challenge of organizing for abolition—of politicizing crime and criminalization—in the context of a more left or liberal political climate where the spectre of a worse, more conservative form of government always loomed large. I asked: By what logic does the expansion of incarceration and policing appear normal, natural, or necessary to people who otherwise understand themselves as being committed to social justice? And the answer is at least in part: by a colonial logic. The construction of Indigenous communities as damaged, immanent threats in need of management and intervention is a *condition of possibility* for the build-up of the carceral state. This is a logic that appeals to the liberal and social-democratic Left as much as it might to the Right and which should cause people on the social-democratic Left to think critically about how the politics of social programming fit into the carceral, colonial landscape in Canada. And it should serve as a reminder that the politics of abolition can’t be done effectively in Canada without a politics of decolonization.
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Appendix

This interview guide contains an approximation of the questions I used to conduct 43 semi-structured interviews. I adjusted my interview guide to suit the work of whoever I was interviewing. For example, I did not ask questions about the policy-making process of people who were employees of community-based organizations, although I did ask them about their opinions about crime policy.

• What does crime prevention programming look like in your organization?
• How was the crime prevention programming at your organization developed?
• Who does your organization's crime prevention programming target?
• Is the crime prevention programming at your organization effective? If not, what would it need to be effective?
• What are the crime problems your organization is trying to address? Are there crime problems your organization does not address? Why?
• What do you see as the causes of crime in the neighborhood you’re working in?
• How are the crime prevention programming activities of your organization effected by the expansion of policing in your neighborhood?
• How does your organization’s crime prevention programming fit into the broader mandate of your organization?
• Do you consider your work in this organization to be political? Why or why not?
• What is the difference between the work you do in your organization and political work?
• What types of activity are included in “crime prevention” policy?
• What are the crime problems your government hopes to address through crime prevention policy? Who are the targets of this set of policies?
• How is crime prevention policy developed and decided upon?
• What are the causes of crime in Winnipeg’s inner city? Is your government addressing these causes?
• Why are community-based organizations the primary bodies through which crime-prevention policy is directed?
• How is crime prevention policy and programming related to your government’s expansion of policing and jails?
• How does crime prevention policy reflect the values of the New Democratic Party? Does it reflect your personal values?