

The Inequity of Employment Equity: An Intersectional Examination of Black Men and  
Employment Related Racism

by

Jessie-Lane Metz  
Bachelor of Social Work, University of Victoria, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Leslie Brown, Public Administration  
**Supervisor**

Dr. Michael Prince, Studies in Policy and Practice  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Lyn Davis, Social Work  
**Departmental Member**

## **Abstract**

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Racism is a serious barrier to achieving employment equity in Canada. The intersectional nature of oppression creates a situation where, based on various characteristics including gender, place of birth, and ethnic group membership, individuals experience employment related racism differently from one another. This intersectionality indicates that policies that may protect one marginalized group may not protect all groups equally. Through an examination of current employment equity research and reports, an overview of employment equity and human rights legislation in Canada, and an analysis of data collected in three interviews with Black men living in Victoria, British Columbia, a series of recommendations are made for employers, allies, and policy changes. This research illuminates the inequity of employment experiences in Canada, and provides suggestions for next steps forward from members of a population currently underserved by existing employment equity measures.

Keywords: employment equity, racism, gender, Black men, intersectionality

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the three research participants whose willingness to share their experiences and expertise provided the material needed to undertake this research.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: Polite Denials**

*Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them.*

- Martin Luther King Jr., (1967)

Racism and racial discrimination are alive and well in Canada, and various studies have shown that this continues to impact the experiences of racialized Canadians in the workplace (Daudlin, 1984; Department of Canadian Heritage, 2005; Hum & Simpson, 1999; Jain & Lawler, 2004; Pendakur & Pendakur, 2002). Non-racialized Canadians, those representing the majority population in Canada, may acknowledge that racialized people sometimes experience racism, which is the belief that people from one or more racial backgrounds are inferior to those from other backgrounds, and racial discrimination, which is the specific treatment of people from certain racial backgrounds based on racist assumptions. Still, incidences of racism are frequently treated as one-off events by white Canadians, many of whom are resistant to engage in conversations that examine deeper systemic oppression that continues to disadvantage marginalized populations in all facets of their lives. These denials are further buffered by myths of an unproblematic multicultural, “post-colonial” or “post-racial” society in which individual merit is the only determinant of success for all people, which may be anecdotally supported by the experiences those who benefit from the privileges of being “unmarked”

by race. When cases of racial discrimination are made apparent, despite all of the polite denials that serve to silence such realities, white Canadians often remain assured that the various equity policies and equity legislation in Canada will serve to correct these problems.

The perception that racism is addressed through assorted forms of preventative policy actions or legal recourse fails to encompass the reality that Canada is still a deeply racist country, and that people from various racialized groups continue to experience racism in many forms on an ongoing basis. Even when a policy is directed at one specific category of discrimination, for example, employment related discrimination, there is no guarantee that the policy itself will be able to legislate for the various intersections of oppression within any one form of discrimination. The *Employment Equity Act of Canada* of 1995 (EEA) sets out to equalize employment opportunities for four historically disadvantaged groups, including women, Indigenous People, people with disabilities, and racialized people (referred to in the EEA as “visible minorities”). A growing body of literature suggests not only that the EEA has failed to create legitimately equal outcomes for member of any of these groups, but also that more complex failures to equalize opportunities occur within each equity group (Agocs, 2002; Hum & Simpson, 1999; Jain & Lawler, 2004; Lum, 1995; Pendakur & Pendakur, 2002; Reitz & Bannerjee, 2007; Swindinsky & Swindinsky, 2002). This has been the case for Black men in Canada, who, like other members of racialized communities, continue to face high levels of employment related racism. Moreover, this population experiences a unique form of work-related discrimination than other racialized groups, based on stereotypes specific to

Black men (Bobo & Fox, 2003; Este, et al., 2012; Henry, Hastings, & Freer, 1996; Harvey Wingfield, 2007).

Far reaching policies, such as the EEA which applies to approximately six out of every 10 Canadians (Dib, 2004), and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* of 1985 (CHRA), which applies to all Canadians, fail to account for the complexity of discrimination and the ideas that people in power hold about subgroups within the larger population of oppressed people in Canada. Through an exploration of the existing literature about the EEA, as well as the experiences of Black men seeking employment in Victoria, British Columbia, an opportunity exists to illustrate why employment equity is not working for Black men specifically, which relates in turn, to issues of oppression for all marginalized groups in Canada.

There is evidence to suggest that racism directed at populations varies based upon the ethnic group's membership and gender orientation of individuals (Sinclair & Kunda, 1999), among other intersectionalities. This differential discrimination, in turn, creates employment outcomes that are different for each population, in the case of this research, Black men, when compared to other racialized groups. In terms of employment, examining one facet of this complicated issue emphasizes how a broad equity policy alone cannot truly provide equal outcomes for all oppressed groups. This examination provides a background about employment and racism in Canada, a format to honour the knowledge and resistance of members of oppressed groups. It also provides recommendations from an affected group in order to further equity initiatives that account for the intersectionality of humanity and the terrible complexity of discrimination.

## **The Researcher**

I would like to acknowledge that I am a visitor living on Coast Salish territory, which I consider to be both an honour and a privilege. I am a Black woman of bi-racial parentage. When I began my thesis research, I was living in the predominately white community of Victoria, British Columbia, but I have since moved to Vancouver, British Columbia. As I have had opportunities in my education and daily life to critically examine what it means to be racialized in Canada, my expertise on the topic has grown, as has my commitment to eradicating racism. I observe daily the ways that people of colour are excluded from the structure and content of mainstream Canadian life. As I have been exposed to Black feminist writing, I have come to better understand the concept of intersectionality, and how all identity markers interact to shape our unique experiences of marginalization and privilege. While Black men experience male privilege in relation to Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1983, hooks, 1981), and other possible intersections of privilege depending upon other identity markers, they also experience the marginalization of racism in Canadian society, which manifests in employment among other facets of their lives.

While activism is often not intersectional in its intentions and outcomes (Falcon, 2009), I view the struggles of all marginalized groups as collective struggles strengthened by a shared understanding of oppression. This means that we are all responsible for fighting alongside each other against oppression, whomever that oppressor is targeting. It also means that one equity group should not fight for inclusion at the expense of another group, and that everyone is responsible for fighting all forms of oppression, even if they are not personally impacted. My intersectional values provide a lens through which I can

learn about the struggles of groups experiencing marginalization. It also provides guidelines that shape my own activism. I am committed to deconstructing and understanding the various forms of discrimination that exist based on the intersectionality of individuals, hoping that, in documenting these experiences of marginalization, I am also working towards the empowerment of all people. In the spirit of anti-oppressive and intersectional practice and theory, I choose to identify myself as an “intersectionalist”, a word that, to my knowledge, was created in personal communication between myself and other individuals who shared a common experience of feeling excluded from mainstream feminism, and limited by feminism when practicing intersectional activism. According to Falcon (2009), intersectionality “provides fuller and more complex understandings of people's multiple identities and of experiences with racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination” (p. 468), by examining social justice issues as a combination of interacting systems of oppression and privilege. This developing intersectional viewpoint impacted my decision to use two research methodologies in this study, and also provided a different perspective through which to analyze the interview data and the existing research on employment related racism.

My education has been an extraordinary privilege, particularly because it has provided me with the language to express my knowledge about racialization and racism, as well as access to a world of literature that informs my opinions and ideologies. Through my coursework, I have come to see that public policy is a good area in which to address injustice and to legislate for fair outcomes. This work is challenging in many ways, and constant interrogation and evaluation is necessary to ensure that good intentions lead to good outcomes. I have learned that good policy is not possible without

representative voices from the community, guiding not only policy development, but also policy evaluation, and that this means much more than the often tokenistic input that individuals may have during the formation of special committees and reports, prior to the actual drafting of any policy. I have also come to understand that policy alone cannot eradicate racism.

### **The Purpose of the Study:**

Until the intersectionality of discrimination is acknowledged, policies to address discrimination will continue to advantage some groups over others and will fail to improve outcomes for some populations. Through an examination of interviews with members of a racialized group, Black men, who have experienced employment related racism, contextualized by research about racism, employment equity measures, and the intersectionality of oppression, this document seeks to establish that the existing employment equity policies fail to legislate fair outcomes for all marginalized groups. Through this critique, a series of recommendations for changes to the EEA are made, but also recommendations for changes with employers and those working towards being allies.

### **The Research Question:**

My research asks the questions “what are the experiences of employment related racism of Black men in Canada?” and “what can be done to effectively protect Black men from employment related racism in Canada?” Literature and qualitative data included in this study demonstrate that Black men experience discrimination differently from other marginalized groups, and that this discrimination is related to their intersectional identities (Bobo & Fox, 2003; Este, et al., 2012; Henry, et al., 1996; Harvey Wingfield,

2007). This discrimination in turn, negatively impacts their employment outcomes (Este, et al., 2012; Harvey Wingfield, 2007). Through an extensive literature review and three qualitative interviews with Black men in Victoria about racism in employment, this research provides concrete next steps forward for allies, employers, and the EEA itself to address employment related racism.

### **The Significance of the Study:**

It can be easy for people to become complacent when equity issues appear to be addressed through broad reaching policies, so long as these issues and the specific policy itself are not deeply interrogated. This is the case with discrimination and the EEA (1995) and the CHRA (1995). On the surface the EEA appears to address the inequities that various groups experience in employment outcomes, but when the policy and policy outcomes are examined through the experiences of individuals within equity groups, it becomes clear that this is not so. A focus on this reality helps not only to provide a platform to advocate for a better process for policy creation and evaluation, but also for more critical understandings of discrimination and the complexity of marginalization. The research conducted in this study utilizes an anti-racist as research methodology. Participants were given the opportunity to be involved in the research process from the initial interviews, through to feedback about their specific contributions to the analysis and recommendations chapters. The analysis of this research provides the context of individual experiences of racism, as well as explanations of racism, information on the impacts of racism, and celebrates many forms that resistance against racism may take. The recommendations section of this work explores changes that could make the EEA more intersectional, but also anti-racist strategies for employers and allies beyond what

can be legislated in policy. Overall, this research, through exploring the individual accounts of Black men who have experienced employment related racism in Victoria, British Columbia, provides a format to implement change to employment policies and general employment practices in Canada.

The research in this study includes a chapter examining existing literature about employment equity, racism, Black men, and immigration status. Chapter Three introduces an anti-racist research methodology, which was used in the data collection and analysis of the interviews for this study. The next chapter examines the data collected in the interviews, which is followed in Chapter Five by the recommendations created based on the data. The concluding chapter of this document summarizes the literature, and also provides some next steps in achieving better employment equity outcomes overall.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review: Catching Up**

Employment related racism impacts racialized individuals intersectionally in terms of ethnic group membership, place of birth, and gender, among other identity markers.

Protections for individuals experiencing work related discrimination are mandated by the EEA (1995) and the CHRA (1995). The information in this chapter comes from a number of sources, mainly academic, governmental, and non-profit sources. The findings in this chapter include demographic information about the Black male population in Canada, information about equity policies that relate to racism, an explanation of intersectionality as it relates to this topic, white privilege and employment, the manifestations of racism in employment, and resiliency.

Some of the best information about employment equity and racism has come from the Canadian Census, and the in-depth Parliamentary EEA reviews that, according to the EEA must be undertaken every five years (1995). However, the last long form census was conducted in 2006, and the federal government has not completed a Parliamentary review of the EEA since the first report was released in 2001. The “2006 Employment Equity Data Report” (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), 2009) is based on 2006 Census data, and the “Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2011” (HRSDC, 2013), is based only on data provided by employers covered by the EEA. This limits the availability of timely quality statistical data in this study, and also risks issues of injustice in employment going undocumented.

## **Demographic Information**

According to the *Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2011* (HRSDC, 2013), the availability of racialized people in the Canadian workforce is on the rise, comprising 15.3% of the total available workforce. These numbers will continue to grow as immigration brings 200,000 newcomers to Canada each year, 75% of whom are racialized (Plante, 2010), and as racialized Canadians come of age and enter the workforce (Cheung, 2006). The population of people of colour in Canada is projected to be 30% by 2031 (Malefant, Lebel, & Martel, 2010). In 2006 of the five-point-one million self-identified people of colour in Canada 15.5% are Black, with Black people representing 2.5% of the population, the third largest racialized group in the country (Statistics Canada, 2010). About 30% of Canada's racialized population is Canadian-born, while just over 66% are immigrants; 44.3% of Black people in Canada were born in the country (Statistics Canada, 2010). In British Columbia 25% of population is racialized, with a total of 28,315 British Columbians, or 0.7% of the population identifying as Black (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Hum and Simpson (1999), and Pendakur and Pendakur (2002) found that one quarter of people of colour experienced harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, 56% of participants in the "Ethnic Diversity Survey" (Statistics Canada, 2003) stated that the discrimination they experienced occurred most often in employment related situations. An examination of employment related discrimination human rights cases in Canada between 1980 and 1998 found that black men had filed the most complaints of all racialized groups (Agocs & Jain, 2001).

## **Equity Policies**

### **The EEA**

The first version of the EEA was enacted by Parliament in 1986 (HRSDC, 2012a). In 1992, a report entitled “Re-evaluating Employment Equity” was released by Employment and Immigration Canada, which found that the Act was not meeting the needs of equity groups, with outcomes becoming increasingly dire when intersections of oppression such as race and immigration status were examined (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1992). Bill C-64 came into assent in 1996 to replace the original EEA (HRSDC, 2012a). The EEA applies to four categories of federally regulated employers, including:

Private sector employers and crown corporations with 100 or more employees...federal departments and agencies for which the Treasury Board is the employer...separate agencies with more than 100 employees that are in the federal public administration... [and] other public sector employers including the Canadian Forces, RCMP and CSIS (Government of Canada, n.d., Program Coverage section, para. 1).

The EEA covers approximately 12% of the Canadian workforce (HRSDC, 2012c).

While all employers covered by the EEA are required to track their employment equity figures, only federally regulated private sector employers and Crown corporations are required to report their data to HRSDC annually; the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) is responsible for auditing these employers (Government of Canada, n.d.). Provincial and territorial workplaces are not mandated by the EEA, but employers may elect to follow EEA guidelines (Public Service Alliance of Canada

(PSAC), 2012). The federal government has clarified that the EEA does not enforce quotas, hiring unsuitable applicants, nor promoting discrimination of any kind (Bradshaw, 2002).

### **The CRHA**

Every year the CHRC selects a number of employers to audit using a “results and risk-based approach”, as well as randomly selecting a number of regulated employers (CHRC, 2010). If an employer is deemed to be non-compliant they are asked to perform “undertakings” to address the issues that exist within a timeframe of no more than four months; if an employer fails to do so they may be handed a Direction from the CHRC (CHRC, 2010). The EEA emphasizes that non-compliance with the Act must be addressed through persuasion, and that directions to non-complying employers should be used only in cases of absolute necessity (HRSDC, 2001). If an employer fails to adhere to the Direction, an employer may be referred to an Employment Equity Review Tribunal (CHRC, 2010). Tribunal orders may not impose quotas, require the creation of new positions, or require hiring someone who would not qualify for the position through merit (EEA, 1995). A single failure to report employment equity data or to report incorrect data can result in a fine of maximum \$10,000 for a single violation, and \$50,000 for multiple violations (EEA, 1995). Non-compliant federal contractors may also lose their right to bid on and receive contracts of over \$25,000 (HRSDC, 2012e,).

Individuals may seek redress if they experience employment related discrimination through the CHRC, regardless of whether or not the employer is covered by the EEA. The CHRA (1995) was first passed in 1977, and protects individuals from discrimination based on a number of factors including race, national or ethnic origin,

colour, and gender. Under this legislation, individuals are protected from employment related discrimination in “recruitment, hiring, job assignment, termination, pay rates, conditions of work and termination”. (The B.C. Human Rights Coalition (BCHRC), 2002, The Protections section, para. 1).

In British Columbia individuals must file a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal within six months of the incident of discrimination (BCHRC, 2007). If the case goes to a public hearing, one or more Tribunal members will conduct the hearing and rule on the case; if the case is successful, the BCHRT may proscribe remedies including: Cease and Refrain orders to stop the discrimination; Restorative or Reinstatement orders to redress the inequity experienced; Lost Wages and Expense orders, including costs associated with pursuing the complaint; and, Injury to Dignity and Self Respect orders, to compensate financially for the impacts of the injustice (BCHRC, 2002). While there is no maximum stated payout provincially for injury to dignity and self-respect, the BCHRC states “the highest Tribunal award in this category at August 2007 is \$25,000.00” (2009a, Types of Remedies section, para. 1). Complainants can access support and advice in filing complaints, or apply for representation once their complaint has been filed (BCHRC, 2009b).

If the complaint is federal, individuals have 12 months to file a complaint with the CHRC (CHRC, 2013b). Following the inquiry and screening stage, if a formal complaint is filed, the case may go to a hearing with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRC, 2013a). If the tribunal agrees that there is a case of discrimination, corrective measures may take the form of ordering an employer to:

Change its policies or practices, or create human rights policies...pay you for lost wages or give you your job back...take human rights awareness training, or...pay you for pain and suffering up to a maximum of \$20,000, and any losses caused by the discrimination... [and/or] pay you up to a maximum of \$20,000 for reckless or willful discrimination (CHRC, 2013a, The Tribunal section, para. 5).

If a federal complaint goes to the tribunal, complainants are responsible for their own legal fees, which cannot be repaid as a part of any remedy (CHRC, 2013a).

### **Critiques of employment equity in Canada**

Critiques of the EEA span the entire policy from inception to assessment. Reitz and Bannerjee (2007) criticize the EEA because it was “developed without an emphasis on specifics and with perhaps an even smaller consensus on objectives” (p. 35), making it difficult to enact, coordinate, and assess. It can also be difficult to assess its success with people of colour, because of the inconsistency of terms used to describe this population in surveys and due to increases in individuals self-reporting as racialized, rather than actual increases in representation (Lum, 1995). Because the EEA does not cover the majority of employers in Canada, data is limited to employers required to report by the Act, rather than all Canadian employers.

In terms of recourse, the Act could be more successful if it addressed systemic workplace discrimination, rather than individual cases of discrimination filed as human rights complaints (Agocs, 2002; Agocs & Jain, 2001), and if penalties for non-complying employers were increased and extended to EEA violations other than misrepresenting or failing to report employment equity data (Redway, 1992). In the case of employers wanting to create more equitable workplaces, Lum (1995) finds that the government does

not provide enough support. The CHRC found that between 1998 and 2001, the majority of employers who were audited were not in compliance with the Act, and that of the 70 employers that eventually complied, only 8 of them were in compliance initially (HRSDC, 2001). Using the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) search function, there is no evidence of an employment equity audit case ever going to the Tribunal (CHRT, 2013) indicating a lack of action in cases of non-compliant employers. Calls to the Tribunal to clarify this issue have not been returned at this time. Redway (1992) suggests a “National Employment Equity Strategy” resource be made and disseminated to the public, and that employment equity training be provided to employers to forward the cause of workplace equity as initial steps in improving the success of the EEA.

## **Intersectionality**

### **Intersectionality and racism**

Intersectionality examines all of the facets of identity as they relate to the experiences of individuals. This study focuses on intersectionality as it specifically relates to Blackness, maleness, and immigration status. According to the “Ethnic Diversity Survey” (Statistics Canada, 2003), when compared to other racialized groups:

Blacks were more likely to report feeling that they had been discriminated against or treated unfairly by others because of their ethno-cultural characteristics. Nearly one-third (32%) of Blacks, or 135,000, said that they had had these experiences sometimes or often in the past five years, compared with 21% of South Asians and 18% of Chinese... Another 17% of Blacks, 13% of South Asians and 15% of Chinese reported that these experiences had occurred rarely (p. 18).

This quote emphasizes that even within racialized groups, experiences of discrimination

differ due to intersectional traits such as specific ethnic group identity.

### **Racism, Black men, and immigration status**

Cis-gender maleness, when compared to other gendered identity markers, is considered to be a privileged identity. Black men do hold male privilege as it relates to Black women (hooks, 1981). In the words of the Combahee River Collection (1983), as Black women “we struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism” (p. 267). When maleness interacts with Blackness in white spaces, this leads to a specific form of discrimination, which Harvey Wingfield (2007) describes as “gendered racism”.

This discrimination is tied to specific stereotypes about Black men including hyper-sexuality (Hill Collins, 2004), threatening physicality (Welch, 2007), inherent criminality (Henry, et al. 1996; Welch, 2007), a predisposition to drug use (Welch, 2007), a lack of job skills (Bobo & Fox, 2003), and low intelligence (Este, et al., 2012). Black men are often seen as “a threat to the White men who own the system” (Este, et al., 2012, p. 42), in the words of a Black research participant in a study about work related discrimination, and are often characterized as the “angry Black man” (Harvey Wingfield, 2007). Sinclair and Kunda (1999) interviewed white men who interacted with Black professional men, finding that when white participants who otherwise held negative stereotypes about Black people received favourable feedback from the Black men, they would reject these racist thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts about that person as a professional. If the participant were to be criticized by the Black professional, they disregarded the person as a professional, instead reverting to racial stereotypes to protect themselves from this criticism (Sinclair & Kunda, 1999).

Immigrants of colour report experiences of racism, but also discrimination based on accent, place of birth, and other factors that mark them as immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2003). The “Employment Equity Act Review” states that:

Integration of white immigrants into Canadian society is easier than the integration of members of visible minorities, and, as a result, members of visible minority groups are the most disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of wages and occupational levels. This problem amounts to a form of racial discrimination (HRSDC, 2001, Main Barriers section, para. 1).

### **White privilege and employment**

White privilege is a series of advantages afforded to white people based on the idea that whiteness is the norm in society; “those who benefit from it often fail to recognize it and may even deny its existence” (Thompson, 2009, p. 895). Agocs and Jain (2001), emphasize the interpersonal and structural nature of white privilege, stating:

In workplaces in which whiteness is constructed as normative, informal social behaviour may harass, exclude or marginalize members of racialized minorities....

In some instances the culture of an organization or department may render minority groups invisible, while in others it may create a "poisoned environment" that is intimidating, abusive, hostile, humiliating or offensive to minority men and/or women (p. 3).

Overlooking racism, or refusing to address it as it occurs in the workplace, also reinforces white privilege (Este, et al., 2012). Bobo and Fox (2003) found that many employers are aware of, and admit to their own racism, even using it as a screening tool for job applicants. A component of privilege is the ability to overlook or undervalue those

that are different than oneself. The practices of overlooking credentials and work experience of immigrants (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2005) as well as assuming that newcomers lack language abilities and Canadian work experience and education (Cheung, 2006) signals both stereotyping people of colour and privileging a specific workplace culture. White privilege can as take the form of unequal workloads, with Este, et al. (2012) finding that “many research participants reported feeling emotionally drained by the pressures of having to work ‘ten times harder than white co-workers’” (p. 41).

In terms of responsibility “those marked as ‘having race’ are continuously called upon...to explain, to disclose, to educate, to carry the burdens and risks of change” (Agoos & Jain, 2001, pp. 14-15). However, addressing workplace related racism is not the sole responsibility of people of colour. A racialized participant in one study stated, “Sometimes I just tell people, I’m off-duty.... I am not doing any more educating today.” (Etse, et al., 2012, p. 42), placing the responsibility to address white privilege on those who benefit from and perpetuate it.

## **Manifestations of Racism in Employment**

### **Education and employment**

When comparing education levels Cheung (2006) found that “28% of Canadians of colour have university degrees, as compared to 18% of the general population” (p. 18). Citing Citizenship and Immigration data from 2009, Houle and Yssaad (2010) identifies that almost 50% of immigrants have a university degree, and that “among those who were admitted as principal applicants in the skilled workers category, 72% held a university degree, as did 41% of newcomers in the ‘spouse and dependents, skilled worker’

category, and 33% of family class immigrants” (Recognition of Newcomers section, para. 2). According to a study by Milan and Tran (2004), about one-fifth of Canadian-born and foreign-born working age Black people have a university education — the same proportion as all Canadian-born persons of the same age group. Despite these average-to-high educational levels among people of colour, wages and rates of employment remain lower than for other Canadians (Cheung, 2006).

Jason Kenney, the former federal immigration minister, in a statement to the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, declared that that degree-holding immigrants are unemployed at a rate four times higher than Canadian born degree holders (2013). Racialized immigrants are less likely to have their foreign credentials recognized than non-racialized immigrants, at a rate of 42% to 52% (Oreopolous, 2009). This “failure to properly recognize foreign skills and credentials is a systemic racist barrier to equal opportunity” (Jackson, 2002, p. 2), as applicants are barred from employment.

Even in the case of immigrants who have found employment, Zeitsma (2010), found that 24% of working immigrants who were educated abroad were not employed in their field of expertise, with 77% of this group working in jobs that did not require a degree; the statistics for Canadian born and educated workers were 62% and 57% respectively. Wages of degree holding people of colour are also impacted by racism in employment. Because of learning recognition gaps, approximately 546,000 Canadians, almost half of them racialized, are earning \$8000-\$12,000 less than their earning potential annually (Bloom & Grant, 2001).

### **Job seeking and unemployment**

Gilmore and Le Petit, (2008) found that in 2007 the employment rate for new immigrants was 77.9%, while for Canadian born citizens the rate was 83.8%; very recent immigrants experience unemployment rates more than two times that of those born in Canada.

Oreopolous (2009) finds that immigrants who are visibly racialized struggle more in finding employment than their non-racialized counterparts. Cheung (2006) states:

In 2000, the unemployment rate for Canadian-born workers of colour was 10.7% compared to 9.1% for immigrant workers of colour, and 7.1% for all other workers. Unemployment rates are particularly high among Canadian-born male workers of colour, and Canadian-born workers of colour who are Southeast Asians, Blacks, or Latin Americans” (p. 2).

When seeking work, all Black Canadians face considerable barriers. The “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001) states, that in reference to the four groups protected by the EEA, “Blacks appear to form the most disadvantaged group; with the same professional qualifications and the same work experience, white job applicants are offered three times as many jobs as Black candidates.” (Main Barriers section, para. 2).

### **Wages and promotions**

The “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001) found that due to working in jobs below their skill level, “visible minorities are thus unable to make use of their qualifications, and earn up to 25% less than those [*sic*] of white Canadians” (Main Barriers section, para. 2). The Conference Board of Canada (2004a), summarizing Statistics Canada data (2003) found that:

Over the 1992 to 2001 period, employment of visible minorities grew on average

4.7 per cent per year versus 1.2 per cent for total employment. Yet, average wages for visible minorities were 14.5 per cent lower than the Canadian average in 2000 (p. 4).

In 1996, the earning differential of Black men, compared to white men, was 36% (Pendakur & Pendakur, 2002). These wage differentials for Black men have little variation between immigrants and second, or more, generation Canadians (Hum & Simpson, 1999). In the year 2000, Canadian-born Black employees earned an average of \$29,700 annually, compared to an average of \$37,200 for all Canadians (Milan & Tran, 2004).

“The Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001) states that senior management positions are elusive for racialized people, due to hiring practices that privilege whiteness, and that the few senior positions held by racialized individuals are likely tokenistic. The 2008 “Public Service Employee Survey” indicates that 27% of racialized employees felt that their career progress was moderately to extremely adversely affected by discrimination while another 17% felt that their career progress was impacted minimally (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2009). Stagnation is an issue for “workers of colour [who] tend to be concentrated in low level sales and clerical jobs, all the while working under a ‘glass ceiling’ that prevents them from attaining high level, more senior positions that are coupled with higher wages, better benefits, and greater security” (Cheung, 2006, p. 1). Este, et al. (2012), found that:

Many African Canadians have the experience of gaining employment and then finding that their experience in the workplace is marred by racism. In the interviews and community forums, African Canadians shared their experiences in the

workplace, which included having their efforts minimized, not getting credit for their work or ideas and not being taken seriously.... Several participants recalled times when their ideas were downplayed or ignored, or they were not given credit 'for ideas that were stolen by others.' At the same time, many face significant pressure to perform beyond that which is expected of their white co-workers (p. 41).

## **Outcomes of Racism**

### **Personal**

Having to hide one's personality is an issue for Black men in the workplace, due to stereotyping by white coworkers and supervisors. Harvey Wingfield (2007) found that "gendered racism, therefore, structured Black men's responses to racism such that they tended to repress any emotions, statements, or behaviors that could possibly be construed as militant, angry, or belligerent" (p. 207), which can in turn, lead to disassociating oneself from work, feelings of isolation, as well as suppression of anger. Furthermore, "Black men were much more likely to report being excluded from work-related events and to have few office allies" (Harvey Wingfield, 2007, p. 206).

Este, et al. (2012) shared the experience of a Black research participant who internalized her lack of promotion at work, blaming herself rather than "the organization's inability to acknowledge her skills and abilities because of the colour of her skin [which] has undermined her confidence in herself and her enthusiasm for her life" (p. 42). Stress, rage, lost opportunities, inability to provide for self and family, and dissatisfaction caused by workplace racism may also lower the self-esteem of Black employees (Agocs & Jain, 2001; Este, et al, 2012).

### **Health and wellbeing**

Scott-Marshall and Tompa (2011) found that workers exposed to “low earnings, no annual increase in earnings ... benefits inadequacy in the form of an absence of pension coverage, and manual work are at increased risk of subsequently reporting poor health outcomes.” (p. 377). These are all issues experienced at disproportionately higher rates by people of colour, including racialized immigrants (Cheung, 2006). Paradies (2006) found an association between self-reported racism and negative health impacts, particularly mental health impacts, in a review of 138 empirical population-based health and racism studies. Canadian health data also shows that mental health outcomes may be linked to racism (Government of Canada, 2006). Summarizing 2003 World Health Organization (WHO) research by Wilkinson and Marmont, Hyman (2009) finds that:

According to the WHO (2003), the daily experience of living as a racialized individual in poverty causes chronic psychological distress which can lead to ill health, either through biological pathways (for example, by affecting the endocrine or immune system) or through behavioural pathways (for example, by inducing risk taking behaviour). When this stress is experienced over a long period of time it can have detrimental effects on cardiovascular and immune systems increasing a person's vulnerability to infections, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, depression and aggression. (pp. 9-10)

### **Poverty**

In 2006, one-point-one million people of colour in Canada, over one in five racialized Canadians, were living in poverty, half of them in British Columbia (National Council of Welfare Reports, 2012). People of colour are two times more likely to live below

Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-offs that other Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2001). 18% of racialized individuals found to be living in poverty identified as Black (National Council of Welfare Reports, 2012). According to the National Council of Welfare Reports (2012) "the majority of racialized persons (66%) living in poverty were immigrants" (p. 5), compared to 12% of non-racialized immigrants living in poverty. Immigrants are more likely to be low income now than they have been in past (Picot, Hou, & Coulombe, 2007). Picot and Hou (2003) find that even though immigrants begin to "catch-up" with the rest of the population in the labour market over time, "low-income rates have been falling over the past two decades among the Canadian-born, and rising among immigrants" (Abstract, para. 4). Catching up to the general population is taking longer than it has in previous generations (Cheung, 2006),

### **Resiliency**

The resiliency of Black men facing employment related discrimination cannot be underemphasized. Despite ongoing setbacks and challenges, this population persists. Agocs and Jain (2001) describe research conducted with participants experiencing work related racism, noting that their research demonstrated "a plethora of human encounters with the many-headed monster of racism and sexism, and tell[s] of the courage and tenacity of those whose lives are touched by everyday racism and sexism" (p. 14). Honouring these experiences by identifying the resiliency of individuals is important. By recognizing the strength of those experiencing employment related racism, rather than focusing solely on those who perpetuate this discrimination, attention is given to those most disadvantaged by racism in a way that does not diminish their agency or ability to resist oppression. Lowe, Okubo, and Reilly (2012) found that supporting individuals by

listening to their stories can help in overcoming the trauma of racism, stating “the importance of active listening, conveying empathy and understanding, advocating for their rights, intervening on their behalf, and validating their experience” (pp. 194-195).

### **Conclusion**

Racism continues to impact people of colour in employment. Understanding the causes, experiences, and outcomes of employment related racism, as well as policies meant to address this issue emphasizes the importance of ending this form of discrimination. It provides a context through which to understand the experiences of racialized populations in employment.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Research Design: Creating an Equitable Study**

Research conducted with populations experiencing oppression must take in to account the potential harm of the research being done, in terms of re-traumatizing individuals, taking advantage of the knowledge of individuals for personal benefit, misusing findings, and causing potential additional harm to participants through possible retaliation from the information published. This research has been conducted with the best interest of participants in mind, as they represent a population that would benefit from better employment equity outcomes. To honour the experiences of these participants, to use their experiences and feedback as the foundation for the recommendations included in this research, and to endeavor to make this research valuable for participants I have used an anti-racist research methodology in this study. This methodology inform both the qualitative semi-structured one-on-one interviews conducted with participants in this research, and the ethical considerations made prior to, during, and after the completion of the interviews, as well as throughout completion of this thesis overall.

#### **Methodology**

##### **Anti-racist research methodologies**

An anti-racist methodology places the racialized individual at the centre of the research endeavor “to understand social oppression and how it helps construct and constrain identities (race, gender, class, sexuality), both internally and externally through inclusionary and exclusionary processes” (Sefa Dei, 2005, p. 2), subverting or altering traditional research approaches and outcomes in the process (Wahab, 2005). The

participants in this research were given control in this process through their ongoing participation and feedback as it relates to their individual interviews. Participants are also centered in this research by basing not only the Analysis chapter on their interview data, but also every recommendation made in the Recommendations chapter. The stories of participants are the highlight of this research, giving a human voice, that of a sample of Black men in Victoria, BC, to the data that indicates the failure of employment equity measures to address work related racism in the lives of Black men. This research also provides a platform for participants to state what they would like to see change in terms of employment equity to improve their lives and the lives of other racialized Canadians. Values embodied in an anti-racist methodology include understanding the realities of oppression that racialized individuals face, and examining structural issues of oppression (Wahab, 2005). Through an examination of existing employment equity literature, as well as the interviews conducted with participants this research highlights the structural issues that impede true employment equity for racialized individuals.

The far-reaching nature of anti-racist research methodologies are important to consider, as human beings have any number of intersecting identities, and to focus on race alone not only undervalues the complexity of the human subject, but also stymies the research process (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2008), and consequently the value of the research done. As a racialized person, I have an understanding of the multiplicity of intersections that form identity, and the complex ways that these intersections shape discrimination. Using an anti-racist research methodology, this research emphasizes the many identities of the participants, while highlighting the ways in which work-related

racism and employment equity measures fail, in part due to this lack of intersectional analysis.

Wahab (2005) cautions the anti-racist researcher to avoid the positivist ideas that are embodied in the belief that the researcher is the authority on a topic, that research must be universally applicable to be of value, and that research can and should be unbiased. The literature reviewed for this research is largely quantitative, which emphasizes the scope of employment related racism and its effects on all communities of colour. However, the quantitative research highlighted in the Literature Review, as well as the information analyzed from the interviews conducted provides information about the specificity of racism in employment for Black men, including Black male immigrants. By highlighting the experiences of this specific population, and the intersectionality of their experiences, this research becomes a template for change that specifically benefits this population. However, I also hope that this research offers a lens for future intersection-specific employment equity research for other populations.

An anti-racist researcher must embody anti-racist ideologies in daily life and constantly challenge and question oneself as a researcher and a human being; in short, anti-racist methodologies are about moving beyond just working towards inclusion, rather they are about working towards accountability and transparency (Sefa Dei, 2005). My personal commitment to accountability and transparency avoids tokenistic inclusion of participants to create a desired research outcome. Rather, this research is informed by the data participants provided in the interviews. I have included in the analysis and recommendations sections of this research data from participants that diverges from my own ideas and opinions, to transparently demonstrate my commitment to sharing the

experiences and recommendations of Black men in reference to employment related discrimination. An anti-racist methodology requires that I remain humble, open to new perspectives, and self-reflective through the entire research process. All recommendations included in this document are recommendations made by research participants. While, as the researcher, I have further elaborated upon suggestions made by participants, and theorized about possible next steps forward, I have not drawn any conclusions that were not informed by participants during the research process.

In taking on the role of researcher, I am endeavouring to tell the story of my community as it has been told to me, emphasizing what participants emphasize, and recommending what participants feel is best for Black men in employment. In an anti-racist spirit, I am explicitly stating my commitment to this research as a racialized woman who believes that intersectional approaches to policy and practice hold the key to better equity outcomes in employment for people of colour. I am personally invested in this research as a woman of colour, as a member of a racialized community, as a person who believes that racism is still prevalent in the daily experiences of people of colour, and as an individual who believes that everyone is responsible for practicing anti-racism in their daily lives. These biases are evident in my research, and central to all of the recommendations made based on the research conducted.

**Method:**

Because an anti-racist methodology is not method-specific (Sefa Dei, 2005; Smith, 1999), the values imbedded in this approach can be applied to qualitative semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The values of qualitative interviews are multi-fold; they provide a human perspective on larger social issues, allow researchers to

acknowledge and explore their own biases, give voice to information that may be lost in a quantitative analysis, and provide an opportunity for research participants to be heard in a way that is sensitive, thoughtful and can potentially be collaborative. Qualitative interviews in the anti-racist tradition are advocated by Okolie (2005), who suggests “critical social science scholarship is increasingly recognizing the need for people to speak for themselves, to relate their experience themselves, to tell their own stories and have these interrogated and validated” (p. 241). This was my intention with the selection of this method. I hope that these interviews have provided a space for participants to reflect upon and elaborate upon their own experiences of employment related racism, knowing that their narratives will be anonymous, and I have attempted to honour their words through diligently analyzing each interview, and validating their experiences through the literature reviewed for this research.

Singh Johal (2005) suggests that in pursuit of anti-racist interviewing in research, the researcher will encounter anger in the narratives of their participants and that the researcher should in some way “nurture a pedagogy of rage as a possible vehicle for resistance” (p. 270), both honouring the emotions that are caused by oppression and including them in research production in a meaningful and productive way. The awareness of the injustice of racism, and its effect were evident in each of the three participants’ interviews. In my analysis of the interview data I have not dulled the frustrations expressed by the participants during their interviews, nor the honesty of their words. I have highlighted the resiliency of each participant to ensure that despite the impacts that racism has had on their lives, each of them has resisted against this

discrimination and continues draw on sources of personal strength in the face of enormous inequity and injustice.

### **Participants**

Research participants were recruited through word of mouth, and referrals through friends familiar with the research project. Black men from all backgrounds, including both Canadian-born and foreign-born participants were invited to participate in the research. Participants were provided with follow-up contact information if they needed to speak with me, and participants were also notified that I could provide them with additional resources if they required support in pursuing a discrimination complaint, or if the research triggered them in any way. Participants were provided a written transcript of my summary of their experiences of racism prior to the document being sent to my committee, in an effort to ensure that they were comfortable with the material being shared, and that they felt that the material did not put their anonymity at risk. Participants were also provided access to the Analysis and Recommendations chapters during the revision process, in case any of them wished to make any changes related to their specific contributions to the research. All participants approved of their contributions in these chapters.

The interviews were conducted with three Black men living in Victoria who identified that they had experienced employment related racism, whether in job seeking, or while employed. All three of the participants were immigrants from three different countries within Africa. Each participant had varying experiences of employment and employment related racism. One participant had long-term Canadian work experience in his field, one had less experience working in his field, and the third participant had been

unable to find work suitable to his education, and was planning to move back to his birth country at the time that the interviews were conducted. The amount of time that participants had been living in Canada varied, but all participants had finished at least one undergraduate or graduate degree while residing in Victoria and all had some work experience in Victoria.

The interviews were comprised of nine questions (see Appendix 3) centered around the experiences of racism for each individual, the impacts of racism, the motivations of racism, policy questions about the EEA, and intersectionality. Participants all received an advance copy of the questions, and had some time to think about the information that they were going to share prior to our meeting. Interviews ranged between 30 minutes and one and one half hours, and were conducted in my home in one case, in a neutral location in another case, and at the workplace of the other participant. Each participant was given a book written by a Black author to honour their time and the knowledge that they shared.

### **Ethics**

When based on the “Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010) definition of minimal risk, this research project meets the definition. While participants were asked to speak about a painful topic for my thesis research, the interviews and writing was done in a respectful way, and will ideally contribute to addressing issues of systemic racism in employment. Details of participant participation in the completion of this research project have been addressed in this

chapter. Additionally, confidentiality was protected throughout the project. All original data has been coded to protect participant identities, and all data from this research has been kept on a password-protected computer, and in my personal password protected email account. The research honours the lives and resistance of these individuals, as well as speaking honestly to the injustices that they have faced in employment. This research aims to honour the participants and the lived realities of their daily lives, it also documents the their stories and of their continued resistance. This research also provides policy recommendations for improving employment equity outcomes for racialized individuals, and provides feedback for employers and allies who wish to address employment related racism outside of official policy. I have been cautious in my writing, and have also engaged with each participant repeatedly during the writing process to ensure to the best of my ability that this research does not endanger participants through the disclosure of any personal or identifiable information. Participants have had the right to withdraw from the research at any time prior to the completion of the project.

**Data Analysis:**

A narrative analysis, which “examines the informant’s story and analyzes how it is put together” (Kohler Riessman, 1993, p.2), was used to analyze the data in this research. The overarching categories in both the Analysis and Recommendations chapters of this study are based on themes touched upon by all participants in their individual interviews, with sub-categories focusing on feedback from at least one participant. Literature reviewed for this study reflected the findings from the interviews, but all themes in this research were based upon the shared experience of participants, or feedback from individuals participants that stood out as significant within the context of intersectional employment

related racism. Each interview followed the same basic format based on the research questions (see Appendix 3), beginning with participants speaking to their own experiences of employment related racism, followed by highlighting participant knowledge about this issue from the personal to the policy level, and this is reflected in the formatting of these two chapters. Participants were able to confirm that the themes that they considered essential to this research were included in the study during the feedback opportunities during the editing process. I highlighted the quotes from each participant in a different colour during the writing and editing process, so that participants could clearly identify their contributions to this document, but also to ensure visually that all voices were given fair representation, without one voice dominating the narrative. Analyzing the data in this way embodies the process of centering the knowledge of research participants described in anti-racist methodologies (Sefa Dei, 2005).

Beginning the Analysis chapter with an exploration of the experiences of participants emphasizes that each participant is an expert on this topic, and contextualizes all of the data and recommendations following those stories as rooted in participant narratives. From this point, data was pulled from the responses to the questions in the interview process that related to racism and its impacts, as well as intersectionality. From this feedback, I was able to isolate what participants identified as motivations of racism, impacts of racism, and also to identify, and explicitly name resistance. Formatting the research through categories highlighted by participants extends into the Recommendations section. In both of these chapters, I exercised my role of researcher to clarify or expand upon points made by participants, but every section of these chapters,

with the exclusion of introductory and concluding statements, include direct quotes and feedback provided by participants.

When, in rare instances, my personal opinions or own experiential knowledge differed from that of participants, I trusted their knowledge and included their perspectives and recommendations, counterbalanced by other participant feedback that took different perspectives and approaches. I allowed space for differing opinions, and used the embodied knowledge of all participants to provide a full view of the issues. My voice as a researcher becomes louder in the Recommendations section, as I elaborated on the suggestions of participants, and sought examples and brainstormed concrete ideas of how their suggestions could manifest in policy, places of employment, and with allies. The next steps explored in the concluding chapter of this document provide a space where the researcher voice is strongest. Here, based on all literature reviewed, analysis of participant interviews, and recommendations based on the knowledge of participants, I have established some suggestions in terms of better employment equity, and also in terms of employment equity research. This focus on researcher voice, rather than participant voice, comes only after participant voices have been explored, analyzed, and expanded upon.

**Limitations:**

My research is limited in that it relates specifically to experiences of racism in employment for Black men, not for all groups that experience discrimination in hiring. By examining these individual stories I hope that readers will understand the personal aspects of employment related racism, and how they tie to larger policy issues. The small sample area could also be considered a limitation of the research. However, interviewing

participants in only the city of Victoria provides a localized example of the larger issues inherent in employment inequity, and also highlights issues for a community not often analyzed individually in employment equity data. While the Literature Review included in this research emphasizes Canada-wide information about employment equity, the data analyzed from the interviews conducted is not generalizable to the entire Black male population. Rather, these interviews provide examples of why employment equity has not been achieved for Black men, and to illustrate the lived realities of discrimination of individuals based on their intersectional identities.

Anonymity of participants is another limitation of this research. By protecting participants from being identified, the ownership of this research is mine alone. I would prefer that participants in this research receive acknowledgment for their contribution to the research, and that their generosity in sharing their stories is attached to their names, a shared ownership of the research. This is not possible because of the risks of retaliation associated with disclosing the names of participants, possibly in their current jobs, but also in their general lives now and in the future. Despite these limitations, I believe that this research has value, both in addressing employment related racism, and also in honouring the resiliency of the research participants.

While the experiential bias of a shared racial identity is considered a strength in anti-racist research methodologies (Wahab, 2005), working as an outsider in terms of gender and immigration status poses certain problems in terms of embodied knowledge as a researcher in both cases, and in terms of privilege in the latter case. I did not fully anticipate the role that immigration status as Black men impacted participants until I had conducted the interviews. I included participant comments related to immigration status

in the Analysis and Recommendations chapters, and did further research, to contextualize this part of participant experiences in the Literature Review chapter. I worked to establish a space where Black male identity could be discussed, by making it clear that the gendered racism participants experienced was something that I knew existed, and also was the centre of this research. A strength of this outsider status as a woman of colour that I could not find documented anywhere, was that my intersectional identity in this specific research provides an approach to gender that is not exclusive from racialization, a line that becomes blurred with white skin privilege, but also does not carry the privilege of male identity within the Black community. This means that I can critically examine the nuances of race and gender in ways that are unique to Black women in community with Black men.

“Colourism” or “shadism”, a preference shown to lighter-skinned Black people, originates from the colonial practice of slavery in the North American context (Bodenhorn & Ruebeck, 2007). Despite my shared racial identity with research participants, I have relatively light skin in comparison to all three participants, which has informed by own experiences of employment related racism in ways that I must constantly examine. The awareness of light skin privilege that I hold relative to the research participants emphasizes the importance of centering participant’s stories in both the Analysis and Recommendations chapters of this document, as my own experiences are, in part, shaped by a privilege not shared by participants.

The EEA itself is limited in its current scope and recourse options, which means that policy recommendations are limited to theory unless the government changes the policy. The lack of reviews of the EEA, despite the five-year review requirement being

written into the policy itself, as well as a failure to modify the EEA based on recommendations from the sole “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001), suggests that EEA changes may not be undertaken any time soon. Therefore, additional recommendations for employers and allies, as suggested by participants, offer some practicable resistance to employment related racism even if policy recommendations are never acted upon.

### **Conclusion**

An anti-racist research methodology allows me as a Black researcher to conduct research that interrupts white privilege and instead privileges members of my community. Examining the intersectional nature of oppression through this methodology clarifies the importance of insider knowledge in creating social change. Interviewing participants one-on-one providing a safe opportunity with unlimited time for them to answer the interview questions and add additional information to their narratives. Providing opportunities for feedback allowed for the research to be shaped by the participants. Despite the limitations of this survey, the methodologies and method used provided a strong basis for analysis and recommendations based on the insider knowledge of participants.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Analysis of Participant Experiences: In Their Own Words**

This chapter begins with an exploration of participant experiences of employment related racism, providing a context for the knowledge of each individual. Individual participant stories span a range of facets of employment related racism, including the hiring process and while employed, and participants described both interpersonal racism and structural racism. From this point, participant data was analyzed into the following categories: experiences of racism; causes of racism; outcomes of racism; and, resiliency, all categorized based on the emphasis given to each topic by participants. Resiliency, which is a response to racism and therefore arguably an outcome of this form of oppression, is examined independently from other outcomes of racism, both to celebrate the strength of participants and to differentiate their survival from other more negative impacts of employment related racism.

#### **Personal Experiences of Racism**

##### **Participant One**

Participant One focused on one experience of racism relating to a position being filled in an organization he already worked for. He explained the experience thusly:

I was involved in a process where there was a project that I was supposed to work on, and what happened is when we sat around the table and they ask us who is going to do it, the person interviewing say, “I want a presentation” and they put me and another person to co-facilitate. So, to go together and design the presentation and co-facilitate it. So we went in the room, she was shaking, sweating, scared,

totally confused. I designed the presentation, set up who was going to do what. We came back in the room half an hour later. We co-facilitated the presentation. And, two days later they call me, they say, “Well, we decided to give her the project, because she was really good. Both of you were good, but we thought she might be the person to do the thing.

Participant One explained that he was passed up for a job working with a Black male group of African newcomers, as the hiring committee openly expressed their preference for the Canadian-born white female candidate with limited work experience. They explained this choice as an opportunity to “create this contrast and they [the population being served] will understand that this is Canadian”, effectively denying the Canadian-ness of a citizen born abroad, and also privileging whiteness as a desirable trait in the chosen candidate.

This incidence of racism had a number of negative outcomes. Within a short period of time, Participant One was approached by the organization to work part-time “as a consultant off your desk”, to address the program issues, so that the new hire could continue in the position, despite her inability to adequately meet the program needs. Participant One took a stand, doing the work, but only as an externally hired consultant, telling his employer “I will write you a proposal and say how much I get paid and how many days I put in.” He also stipulated that he be given published authorship for the work, guaranteeing acknowledgment both organizationally and in the larger professional community.

The new hire, benefiting from the experience and knowledge of Participant One, stayed in the position for a few weeks longer before resigning, with Participant One

covering until the end of the program year. The new hire admitted that she was awarded the position unfairly, saying, “If it was based on the presentation for the interview, you [Participant One] were the one that designed it.” This quote emphasizes white privilege in the workplace, not only in the hiring choice made, but also in the assumption that the racialized employee should fix the mistakes of the new hire in an unacknowledged role.

While various levels of management within the organization were aware that an incident of racism had occurred, no apologies were made. An individual responsible for the hiring decision assumed forgiveness for their actions, telling Participant One “I know you are the person who doesn’t take any of these things personal, so I’m sure you’ll forgive me.” Funding for the program was not affected despite word of the incident reaching a major funder. Participant One shared:

The funder who has overheard about this, but what did they do? Nothing. You know, they ask me nothing, or one person, the portfolio manager ask me one thing, and I say yes [confirming the racism], and she say, “Well we’re not surprised.”

Even in the long term, the issue of racism was not addressed. A white candidate was hired the following year, leading to a major cultural misunderstanding that was the responsibility of the new employee, which led to a number of children being pulled from the program. When describing the incident overall, Participant One explained, “it [the hiring decision] was not a matter of skill, it was clear. It was just racial.”

### **Participant Two**

Participant Two shared many stories related to finding work, and also of racism in the workplace. He experienced various challenges in job-seeking, including a lack of interest when submitting resumes, stating “you won’t get a callback if your name sounds black,

as in Black American, or sounds complicated, or they can just figure that you're Muslim or you're African or something". Participant Two described differential treatment in interviews, with employer biases becoming evident as interview "questions start to drift towards your, something about your ethnic background, and your upbringing, and where you're from, or what goes on there." Participant Two also identified racism-based barriers to being hired, as there were many positions he applied for going to non-Black applicants including other graduates from his Master's cohort.

Participant Two also recounted experiences of racism in employment that clearly related to his identity as an African-born man. After taking a job in customer service, Participant Two found that he was treated very differently from his white Canadian-born colleagues. He said:

When I started the job, everybody else I started with got taken to different roles within a few weeks. I happened to be the only Black person [and I] wasn't moved from then on. And then I was recommended for, like, a few more hours of training and so on. And then I had some key problems with speaking to clients over the phone, and so on, and they almost got me to sign into this accent reduction thing. And I wasn't going to do that because I thought like well if I needed that I wouldn't be a university graduate, if I needed this whole accent thing. There was so much talk about my accent and why I was probably not going to meet my monthly target, which I did for the first month. And then, the part that I think was really racist was that there were some ethnic pre-judgments made against certain [clients]. Because, when we'd call [clients], so they kind of almost, not written in paper or anything, but they always drift towards making me [contact] people from African, Caribbean

backgrounds, as though I can relate to them. But not in a nice way, but in a condescending way, as though “well, why don’t you do this, you’re not so professional, and maybe probably speak a language that they understand.” Even when it’s not necessary, they understand English. But you’re trying to get me to pry them open, to get in some solidarity, to get information or get your money. Which isn’t all that, you know, some of that involve breaking the rules. So this kept going on and on and on. And then you hear comments of supervisors, like, well you know, you never know because they are always ask us to log off and do this and that. You know, people make comments like, “You never know somebody’s whole credit information might end up in a computer in Nigeria or Senegal or somewhere.” You hear people say how risky this is to have you there with all of this information and whatnot. So they won’t post me to [manage accounts] for the government cause that’s risky, so they’ll post me to [private companies] or something, or just something else. And then when that went on they said I wasn’t very fit for [the position] so much, I should just be transferred to like admin or something.

Participant Two also identified a hierarchy of oppression within racialized groups in his employment experiences. While acknowledging that there is a shared experience of racism among various racialized groups, he stated, in reference to a former position:

I am less advantaged compared to the white guys that are applying to that company, and the [members of the employer’s racialized group] that are applying there too.

This is from experience; the things that they’ll tolerate from these guys are things

that you'll get written up for. Penalties. I'm way more prone to penalties and getting written up on and disciplinary work compared to other folks.

### **Participant Three**

Participant Three described various experiences of work related racism, including discrimination in job seeking and in the workplace. He found it difficult to get callbacks for positions he was qualified for without the support of white allies in the community, citing one example where “10 times I sent my application until one of my foster parents in the church asked the managers, ‘What is happening? He is sending all these applications. It can’t be hard.’ Then the next day I heard back.”

In job seeking Participant Three shared that merit alone was often not enough to get hired as a Black man, and that both solidarity and strategy were essential in finding work. He said “When I submitted my application, I hoped someone, somewhere, there would be a black person to have your back”, even though “I had the papers to support my credentials. I had the highest qualification among all the applicants so they could not say no” based on the assumption that a Black applicant would receive preferential treatment from racialized members of the hiring committee.

The racism Participant Three experienced was often blatant. He described management-enforced segregation between Black male staff members and white female staff members at a previous workplace, sharing:

If a black guy is dating a white girl, it's an issue. The bosses would know. I've had in the past, when I was in college, working at [workplace]. There are these girls who want to hang out, they want to hang out with you, you didn't invite them, they come. The bosses get mad at you and they talk to you. You're just hanging out. The

company, they don't mind, but some of the guys, the white guys get offended. So you're treated differently. This is really direct discrimination.

This example shows workplace racism so deep that it extends to policing the actions of employees outside of work time.

Racism was even present when I visited the participant at his place of work to conduct the interview. A white co-worker of Participant Three repeatedly suggested that I would have a hard time understanding the accent of the participant, who spoke fluent English. This individual stated, without any context of the participant's experiences of racism, that any discrimination he had faced in employment was related to his own accent, and in some way his responsibility. This incident reflected the Participant's statement that "In fact, as Black man, even your papers don't count much (laughs). In fact, if you're lucky, then you enter through the back door, and maybe get some position, and still, if you get there, they also think you don't know what you're doing."

### **Motivations of Racism**

Throughout the interview process, participants described personal theories about the causes of employment related racism. Four categories emerged including stereotypes, xenophobia, privilege, and a fear of losing privilege. This is not a complete list of causes of racism, rather a reflection of participant experiences and analysis, which resonates with existing research about the motivations of racism explored in the Literature Review chapter of this document.

Participants were all aware that stereotypes about Black men are a barrier in employment success. One participant shared that in job seeking, "sometimes we come off threatening to somebody because there's this assumption that you should be the dumbest

of the bunch. Then to come out so qualified, that's even more threatening, besides your appearance." Stereotyping was a component of each participant's personal stories of racism. In the case of Participant One, stereotypes about who is Canadian limited his employment opportunities. In the case Participant Two, stereotypes about Black people were used to assign work to him. Participant Three had to actively work against stereotypes in order to compete for jobs that he was qualified for. Whether job seeking or employed, participants reported needing to over-achieve just to have their skills acknowledged. Participants spoke about the need to work at least "twice as hard, yes. To stand up, to be accepted."

Participants mentioned that xenophobia was a barrier to finding employment when applicants had names of non-European origin. Xenophobia connects to race and place of birth, as employers "know I came from somewhere else, regardless of, well he's a Canadian citizen, but, you know, everyone knows I wasn't born here." Even when adapting to whiteness as the pervading culture, participants were not guaranteed freedom from racism in the workplace. One respondent shared:

I can only act white so much. You know, like by the time I change my name to something else and I still don't get it, by the end of the day I've traded everything that makes me who I am.... My entire existence and identity for nothing. And have nothing left.

Each participant shared at least one example of xenophobic behaviour, including differential treatment based on name or accent, and being treated as though they were not Canadian in their interviews.

Participants identified pushback against equity measures by whose privilege is threatened as a source of racism. In the words of one participant:

They're not finding it that equal, because equal to them still is not equal if it doesn't put them at the top. If they have to compete on a playing ground with everyone else, it's not good, because they are just as determined, just as competent and just as qualified.... People still want that honorary status. That's still causing problems, but it's changing gradually and some people don't like it.

This sense of entitlement can also lead to preferential treatment for like individuals, as one participant described, stating "I would say yes, some cases, in some occasions, it was directly, and sometimes, as I say, unconsciously. Sometimes they might prefer someone who would appear like themselves." Privilege was a major component in the experiences of Participant One, in terms of an unqualified individual taking a position knowing they did not earn it, acknowledging that situation only when the it became untenable, asking the participant to fix issues created by the hiring choice, and in not addressing the systemic issues leading to the racist hiring decision despite acknowledgement that the situation had been mismanaged. The assumption that this situation had no lasting impact, and that all would naturally be forgiven was also an example of privilege.

A fear of loss of power was identified as a major instigator in intolerant hiring and workplace practices, with one participant sharing "you're begging them to give you a chance, but giving you a chance entails them losing some power." Equity in employment improves quality of life for marginalized individuals, and those that enjoy exclusive

privilege may be threatened by the possibility that increased equity will extend out of the workplace. In the words of one participant:

It's almost like, well if we give him a chance he can afford to buy a house around us, in our neighbourhood, in our area, he can do the things that we do, because we are giving him a chance to have that.... Like, say a white boss or someone looking at my paper seeing my diploma, bachelor's degree and a master's degree. And he sees in front of me, he wants me to hire him and he's got this accent, and already you probably have some of the things he doesn't have.

Participant Three shared the example of a former Black coworker who was unable to advance past a certain point in his job, which could be a reflection of those in power acquiescing to some equity measures while still drawing a line that prevents sharing too much privilege.

### **Impacts of racism**

Every participant described some of the negative impacts of employment related racism in their lives. Their understanding of the impacts of racism extended to friends and colleagues experiencing similar discrimination. Specific outcomes of employment related racism identified by participants are reflected in equity research and include a culture of silence about racism, an erosion of trust of non-racialized individuals in the workplace, limited employment options and emotional and mental health impacts.

Employment related racism is often not discussed, partly because it can be obfuscated by other explanations for behaviours and decisions. One participant explained the difficulty in pinpointing racism, stating:

They don't really come up with a PDF to explain how you made it or how you blew it. So you can go home thinking well, the interview was great, or the interview was bad, or you can go home thinking that you deserve the job or you didn't. And there could be, racism could be the case, your name could be the case, something about you could be the case. You know, you probably didn't fit into their team or something, because of their criteria, but it could be a number of things.... But it [racism] does play a major role, and I think if it wasn't for that, it would be, it would be, you know, it would be a lot less difficult.

Even when racism is a known issue, calling it out isn't always possible, because of a lack of supporting evidence. A participant explained that:

Sometimes you go, you have to be firm and don't take nonsense; you know your rights, stand for your rights. And as a person of colour you have to pick your fights on a platform where you know you can beat them before a court of law, before the union, before the press, you take it.

Coming forward can also have unwanted results for individuals because:

In Canada I think it's [racism] very, very hidden, and disguised, and it's almost like a taboo subject. You dare not claim that that's the case. Everyone's going to look at you as a crybaby, look at me, you know. And so, that's led many people to not want to speak about it because they don't want to be the crybaby, like oh yeah, he's pulling the race card, but it's not a card, its real. It's not a card. You know a lot of times people say "Are you pulling that?" as a way to make you not complain about it. But it's not a card, it's what's happening.

Black men already experience disproportionate amounts of employment related racism, and the additional risk of being labeled a whistle blower or trouble maker can lead to individuals maintaining silence in the face of discrimination.

Experiencing employment related racism impacted participant's ability to trust that they were safe from racism in job seeking or in employment. One participant told me "I think I become more aware before I trust people. I try to be very careful and think clear, have the clear objective before I can give them my 100% trust." Openness in the workplace sometimes led to betrayal, which made participants more cautious as well. Describing the risk of being open in the workplace one participant said:

They say it's a beautiful country, no racism, laugh with you, smile with you, but stab you in the back. So you have to be very cautious. Know what to share. You don't have to share everything. Pick your friends. Those you can open up to. Not just because they tell you "oh, come on by", and impresses everybody.

The effects of this loss of trust worked to limit options for participants seeking employment. One participant shared that racism "keeps me more determined and then it makes me narrow down places where I can take my quest for a good career, to places where I'm less likely to have certain problems." This not only may have prevented the participant from finding the best job for himself as an individual, but also limits the ability of workplaces to recruit the best employees because of the trust loss through employment related racism.

Employment related racism was discussed as a cause of limited job options for Black men. One participant explained the challenges in finding rewarding work in Canada as a Black male immigrant, saying:

It takes a lot of courage to do that [start over in a new country], so many of us give up and do odd jobs. And this is a one-way street at the end of the day, it won't do anything, you end up doing these odd jobs for the rest of your life.

Despite the qualifications and experience of many racialized job seekers, participants recognized that discrimination could prevent them from ever reaching their full potential, because:

As every year passes they are growing older and they're not getting the opportunity to do stuff, and they can't qualify for loans to be self-sufficient or what not. And the more time they spend in the job market, the harder it is to get a job, the longer they spend in that market the harder it gets.

This situation creates a cycle of unemployment with the time between recent work experience grows and resources and savings dwindle.

Participants discussed a number of impacts of racism that related to emotional and mental health. Hopelessness was an issue described by one participant, who stated even when actively job seeking:

I tend to have a feeling behind me that this is probably not going to work, but I will still give it a try. But it's almost like, whatever happens, happens. So when it doesn't go right, I think, not in a bad way, but I just feel like I can't really expect it to.

Stress about ongoing experiences of racism was also identified when a participant shared that:

What it [racism] can do to people is motivate them less, and always pre-judge a situation, expecting a lot of stereotypical response to them and so on. And it gives some people a lot of psychological stress wondering if they can ever get a chance.

The cycle of racism magnifies emotional and mental health impacts over time. One participant told me:

How do you pay the bills? How do you take care of your responsibilities? And how are you supposed to feel good as a university trained individual, feeling like all you've ever been doing for the last seven, eight months was delivering heavy furniture or pizza or cleaning out the trash somewhere, just to pay the bills? You can't really pay them anyways, that's the major part I guess. But we do all that stuff, like being depressed or humiliated, but I think for most people, I think it's the survival part, like how? You know all this stuff so you can qualify for better. So why shouldn't you get it? It won't be a cakewalk, many people have to wait a certain time, but for some people it seems more perpetual like it's never going to change. So you get frustrated because you have to pay your bills.... I think that's the biggest burden for most people, you've worked so hard for some quality of life, so you feel you deserve it, you feel that you've paid your dues. So when that's not working and it seems like people are stepping on your dreams, that's frustrating for anybody.

### **Resiliency**

Despite the racism encountered by the interview participants in this research, each individual continued working towards their goals. Naming and documenting the resiliency of those most disadvantaged by the current employment system, and who stand

to benefit most from better employment equity emphasizes the strength of the participants. Whether gaining a clearer understanding of racism in employment, refusing to internalize discrimination, persisting in their struggles, or finding empowerment, the participants in this research embodied resiliency and highlighted its importance in achieving employment equity.

Through experiences of work related racism participants became familiar with its structures and manifestations. One participant shared “I think, since then also I become a bit more aware of the different ways people can express racism, and the systemic. Because the systemic was to see that this was conducted from the top to the bottom.” Instead of minimizing experiences of racism, participants learned to explicitly name it. Describing his experience of racism an participant said:

For some time, I thought okay maybe it’s because I wasn’t born here, then I figured out no, born here, or not, immigrant or not, citizen or permanent resident, study visa, working visa, it comes down just to you’re Black that’s what it is.

This quote speaks to the overarching nature of racism, even as it interacts with other intersections of oppression.

Through understanding the systemic nature of racism, participants were able to resist internalizing the racism they experienced. Refusing to blame himself for challenges experienced in his job search, one participant explained:

If they are qualified then how can you say they shouldn’t claim racism? How is that not racist? How? Because I don’t know how else to point at? What else is it? So that’s kind of where some people get stuck, because I hate to claim that that’s the case, but a lot of times there’s just nothing else you can think of but that.

Sometimes you know, you feel it, you do know. You just know this is what's going on.

Naming racism and acknowledging its presence in employment outcomes was a clear form of resistance for participants. Refusing to internalize racism also helped participants to withstand some of the emotional impacts of discrimination. One participant described his strategy thusly:

Sometimes you get depressed, you get frustrated, you know? And if you take it personal you can become a very bad man, like some kind of racist. Like many people, some decide go back home. Some have lost hope and gone to drugs, alcohol, you know. It's very hard because when it's committed you are kind of side-lined from a job, you don't get enough hours, you have little resources, maybe it effects your family, maybe the family splits, that kind of stuff. You know you get frustrated. You can get sick. You can give up. So a lot of it depends how you manage yourself. You can't take it personally. You have to say it is a system. Yeah.

Knowledge about the nature of racism can be used as a tool to address the individual impacts of internalization of discrimination.

Persisting despite employment related racism was another component of resistance for participants. The reality of racism impacted participants, but it did not stop them from moving forward with their goals. One participant told me that racism "keeps me more determined", and also that it caused him to find ways "to be self-sufficient and kind of do things for yourself, because begging for employment at times is like living, there's almost this feeling like where you're giving someone the choice to determine how

successful you're going to be." Moving on was an important step in resistance for participants, who did not want to become trapped by their experiences. I was told:

The question is which one do you want to hold onto, and of what benefit is that?

Does it motivate you, or does it not make you want to try? I don't know, you just can't let it, if you really have to make it. You can't let them beat you down or anything.

By acknowledging racism without allowing it to emotionally stymie the pursuit of opportunities and success participants were able to identify, address, and process racism, without letting it defeat them.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding experiences of racism, the causes of racism, the impacts of racism, and the importance of resistance is essential when legislating to address this form of discrimination in employment equity. In the case of this research, individuals had a wealth of personal stories to share, but also of embodied knowledge of employment related racism. By discussing the realities of employment related racism from individuals who experience on a daily basis, recommendations for improvements to the EEA that are mindful of lived experiences of the employment system under the current policy can be developed.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Recommendations: Addressing Employment Related Racism**

In the interview process, participants identified a number of policy recommendations related to the structure of the EEA. Participants also recognized that the EEA had limitations regardless of its existing strengths and their suggestions for improvement. Therefore, participants provided further recommendations for addressing employment related racism, specifically for allies and employers. The recommendations in this chapter expand upon the suggestions from research participants to include issues highlighted in the literature review, as their lived experiences of racism in employment are foundational to my understanding of what needs to change in order to promote better employment equity for Black men in Canada. The chapter is structured in terms of recommendations for the EEA, followed by recommendations for allies and employers, because addressing racism in employment requires legislative action, individual commitment, and organizational support.

#### **EEA**

One participant, when describing their feelings about the EEA stated that:

I think it's a very, very good idea, like the whole idea behind it and the intentions behind it are very great. Just like saying, what do you think about the Charter of Rights or the Multicultural thing in Canada? It's great. But, how applicable is that, and how does that really, like when you put it into work, how successful has that been?

Participants found that the EEA had some merits, and in one case a participant noted that:

As a Black person, I saw many more Black people in the workplace; otherwise they will never be there. And knowing clearly that they have the skills and expertise to be here, they deserve this job, but knowing if it were not [for the EEA], they wouldn't be here.

Participants agreed that the principles of the Act were valuable; but even if “it sounds good on paper, I wish it could be implemented fully. It would be good.” Participants did not suggest a complete rewriting of the EEA, rather a refinement in terms of addressing intersectionality, education, and more effective enforcement.

### **Addressing intersectionality**

Participants were aware that they experienced a specific type of discrimination based on their own intersectional identity, which was discussed by the participants in terms of their gender, ethnicity, and status in Canada as immigrants. I was told by one individual that “I have come to realize that your name, your background, and your status as an immigrant, whether you are citizen, you are born in the country, or you're born outside of the country” are all intersecting parts of his identity that impact his experiences of employment equity in Canada. In terms of his own identity as a Black man, the same participant stated that anti-Black racism “is more prevalent in the sense that you are threatening, and maybe we've garnered the most hate. I know that.” Still, “the bottom line of the whole thing is discrimination right? And regardless of to what degree ours is bigger than others or affects us guys compared to the other guy, nobody should be discriminated against.” Identifying that within shared experiences of oppression, certain equity groups, or intersections within different equity groups can experience unequal

outcomes helps to illuminate solutions relating to enforcement of and education about the EEA.

There was no equity group currently protected by the EEA that participants felt no longer needed the legislation, which was consistent with the findings in the in-depth “Employment Equity Act Review” (2001), and the most recent “Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2011” (HRSDC, 2013). However, a need for more nuanced protections for groups experiencing more employment related racism was acknowledged. All of the participants recognized that other groups were also experiencing very poor employment equity outcomes, with one participant saying:

I think it is good that all of them [equity groups covered by the EEA] are protected the same way, but I can see that there need more emphasis on the other groups. This is something, a loophole in the policy. Nowadays if you look in the Canadian work place, there is more of a representation of women, white women than anyone else, you know. So in some instances maybe we need more, but the minorities and the Aboriginal I think they need 99% of work that haven't been done yet.

This quote addresses many of the groups that are in particular need of better employment equity outcomes, but does not include mention of people with disabilities, who also have largely been underserved by the EEA to date (HRSDC, 2001).

Because the federal government emphasizes that the EEA is not based on a quota system (Bradshaw, 2002), and employment equity statistics provided to employers as guides to representative workplaces do not look at intersectionality in-depth, it remains difficult to identify which members of protected groups that are faring worse in employment outcomes than other members of these groups. A good initial step in

addressing intersectionality in employment equity would be more detailed data about intersectional group progress, examining outcomes for equity groups based on factors such as gender, race, ethnic group membership, and immigration status, for employers to better understand where employment equity is lacking.

The Government of Canada did acknowledge that individuals belonging to more than one designated group do experience more barriers to employment equity, and that the “Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on Employment Equity Data” could use existing EEA data to better understand this phenomenon (Bradshaw, 2002). In terms of intersectionality, the “Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2011” (HRSDC, 2013) only examines race as it intersects with gender. Even this limited intersectional analysis only extends to the categories of wages and overall workforce representation, excluding other categories such as type of job, whether employees are working full-time or part-time, and if workers are being promoted. These overlooked areas of analysis could potentially highlight work-related gender discrimination (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012), which could exist within and between intersectional sub-groups. The “Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2011” (HRSDC, 2013) does not examine the case of individual ethnic groups within the racialized workforce, and also doesn’t evaluate the case of racialized workers who have other intersecting identities protected by the EEA, or other intersections of marginalization not protected by the policy.

One participant also addressed that marginalized groups not protected by the EEA, such as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, were in need of legislated protection against discrimination in the workplace, something addressed in the “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001), which stated that “suggestions were

heard at some meetings to include other designated groups such as gays and lesbians, youth and older workers” in focus groups about the EEA (p. 38). The government response to this report did not include any mention of widening the scope of the EEA to include other groups experiencing employment related discrimination (Bradshaw, 2002), and to date, no additional groups have been added to the EEA protections.

A possible solution to increasing protections for marginalized groups not covered by the employment equity legislation, would be to apply EEA protections against all forms of discrimination listed in the CHRA, if an analysis of employment outcomes for groups impacted by those types of discrimination indicates that EEA protection is required. Canadians are protected by the CHRA from “discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered” (1985, Purpose of act, para. 1). As human rights complaints are often filed citing more than one intersection of oppression, basing EEA coverage on types of discrimination laid out in the Human Rights Act and identified as employment equity barriers, it is possible that the nuance of the Human Rights Act categories may lead to more equitable employment outcomes. For example, if national origin is an intersection of identity protected by the EEA, this may help to improve employment outcomes for racialized immigrants, based on protections in terms of racialization and place of birth.

Section 42 of the *BC Human Rights Code* of 1996 allows for employers to implement employment equity plans that promote preferential hiring, or even limited hiring of EEA equity groups underrepresented in the workplace in question. The ability to

transparently advertise for applicants and hire in this way promotes a more diverse pool of applicants, indicates that the workplace in question prioritizes employment equity, and can improve equity in the workplace. Encouraging employers to take advantage of this policy mechanism, and possibly extending these hiring practices to subgroups within the EEA that are further marginalized, or other marginalized groups not included in the EEA could help to address intersectionality in employment equity. Extending these measures to all provinces, or federally through explicit support for preferential and limited hiring in the EEA, and EEA outreach materials could also help to create actionable intersectional employment equity processes in workplaces.

### **Education**

The participants were not entirely clear about the provisions of the EEA, and recognized that this confusion was widespread. When coupled with privilege, a lack of knowledge about the EEA could increase incidences of employment related racism. Education about the EEA to the general public, something advocated for by Redway (1992), must include “the explanation that employment equity is not affirmative action, it doesn’t set one race against another”, in the words of one participant. Many participants shared stories of “people that are arguing that it’s putting unqualified people to jobs by virtue of race, not by virtue of merit”, which is not a component of the EEA, but is a major source of racism and resentment in the workforce (Bradshaw, 2002). If the general public and employers do not understand the Act, ultimately the EEA will not work, and may worsen employment experiences for all equity groups. The EEA must be accessible, easy to understand, and openly discussed on an ongoing basis to encourage its proper use and a clear understanding of how equitable hiring decisions are mandated.

Education about the EEA itself is not a standalone solution to issues related to misunderstanding or lacking knowledge about the EEA. Because some equity groups, such as white women, are more likely to benefit from the Act, workplaces have seen a considerable shift in terms of certain intersections of equity. This, coupled with a popular belief that Canada is not a racist country, or is post-racial may lead to the misconception that racism and other forms of discrimination are no longer an issue in the workforce. As one participant stated:

I think it [the EEA] doesn't address the issue of racial discrimination in employment a lot. And I think Canada almost downplays it as though "that stuff doesn't exist here". It's like a topic that nobody talks about. Nobody wants to accuse everyone of racism, even if you know it, it's unfair to say that it's happening or whatever. We just want to pretend it's not there and let these minorities bear the pains by themselves. But, I think that it is there, but on grounds it doesn't seem like there's any protection against this kind of racism.

Educating all Canadians about the widespread racism in Canada would help to highlight the inequities that still require action for every group protected by the EEA.

Current educational strategies about the EEA provided by the federal government include online access to the EEA, Employment Equity Data Reports, the EEA Annual report, Guidelines for the EEA and access to the Compliance Policy, access to other tools and resources such as the Workforce Analysis Tool, the CHRC Audit Procedures Manual, and the Employment Equity Computerized Reporting system, employer tools for implementing the EEA, a publication about the myths and realities of the EEA (HRSDC, 2012b), and contact information for a Workplace Equity Officer through the Labour

Program (HRSDC, 2012d). My personal experience of accessing these educational materials involved a lot of research, navigating between pages, and also between various governmental ministries and Human Rights organizations, which could be a major disincentive to employers looking to implement and evaluate employment equity in their workplaces, as well as for members of the general public who are under or misinformed about the EEA. Much of the online documents made available by HRSDC have been archived, meaning they may only be available to read in certain formats. Employer education about the EEA is the responsibility of employers themselves. The “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001) states that training for employers about the EEA, particularly middle management, was lacking, and that the government should take a more active role in public education programming, including outreach. The “Government of Canada Response” (Bradshaw, 2002) concurs, but does not state any deadlines or quantifiable plans in order to achieve better outreach to employers.

### **Enforcement**

The EEA is largely a set of guidelines that employers are asked to adhere to. Participants all spoke to the lack of enforcement in the EEA, and how this negatively impacted the effectiveness of the Act. One participant asked:

What will the government do if those institutions don't fulfill their promise? Do they have a yardstick and beat them up? Do they pull the plug? Take away the funding? What will they do? This is not clear for anyone.... So I think this is a policy recommendation. You need to be clear and you need to be publicly accountable.

Increasing the scope and dollar amounts of fines is recommended by Redway (1992), and more effective enforcement is advocated for in the “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001). The federal response to the review finds that “the current mechanism for enforcing reporting requirements is adequate” (Bradshaw, 2002, Penalties for False Reporting section, para. 4).

Interestingly, both the BCHRC and CHRC do offer monetary compensation as a possible settlement for individual complainants experiencing work related discrimination as defined by the 1985 “Canadian Human Rights Act”, an example of an equity policy with enforceable guidelines. The ability of the CHRC to enforce penalties in individual cases, but not in cases of non-complying employers for reasons other than reportage issues, makes little sense. Laws generally include penalties of some sort as a deterrent against violation, and the lack of penalties for employers violating employment equity guidelines begs the question: what is the point of legislation that cannot be enforced? Extending penalties for employers in violation of the EEA could include increased fines dependent upon the net worth of the employer in question, the amount of progress made towards employment equity, possibly including hiring quotas in cases of severe underrepresentation, and incidents of discriminatory practices in the workplace.

Another issue with the EEA is that workplace discrimination can only be addressed through the CHRA, and then only on an individual case-by-case basis. Each participant had experienced multiple occurrences of workplace racism, yet none had filed complaints, citing difficulty in proving the allegations. One participant raised the possibility of having the requirement of an enforcement agency written into the EEA, instead of having to file complaints through the CHRA, stating “I would be happy if we

have a body, a platform to implement those theories that we have on papers”, something also advocated for in the “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001). This could have the added benefit of employers being examined for the employment equity processes overall, rather than just individual experiences of employment that does not guarantee systemic change in the workplace. The ability to address systemic complaints would alleviate the requirement of individual human rights complainants to “carry the burden of seeking redress” (Agocs, 2002, p. 259).

Even changes to the current audit process could help to lessen the amount of time it takes to complete an audit, particularly when employers are able to delay the process, potentially for years, according to Agocs (2002), who identifies that the CHRC is overburdened with cases, particularly because few employers are in compliance during their first and second audit, which suggests that the CHRC may not be best suited to oversee the enforcement side of the EEA, at least without organizational changes to improve efficiency. The “Review of the Employment Equity Act” (HRSDC, 2001) raises the possibility of removing “distinctions between the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Employment Equity Act* while broadening the CHRC powers” (Enforcement section, para. 2) as a possible way to address issues related to enforcing the EEA through the CHRC. Whether enforcement continues to be overseen by the CHRC, or is transferred to a legislative body as a part of the EEA, better enforcement of the EEA is needed.

### **Alternatives**

Even with the suggested modifications and additions to the EEA, participants maintained that policy alone was not enough to end work related racism and other forms of discrimination. A participant told me that even with the Act:

People are people, and people are going to act how they want to act, no matter what, there's always a way to beat out legislation, so there's always going to be a way it fail if they want it to fail.

This does not mean that there always has to be discrimination in workplaces, rather in means that change also “has to come from people's minds and conscience.” In tandem with the EEA, a cultural shift towards addressing equity was the best way forward, according to participants. This need for a balance was described by one individual, who stated:

Yeah, it's so complex. I was saying, you know, if people, mankind could open their minds or open their heads and think outside the box, to grant or grab opportunities based on their qualifications or experiences or merits it's okay. But, if there's open discrimination or open marginalization of a certain group of people, then it would be worth having [the EEA]. But I would advocate for, if possible, if everyone could transform their minds and would look at the ability and the qualification of the candidates then I would be happy. But not just, but of course that's very hard.

Based on these statements from participants, as well as the recommendations to improve employment equity provided by participants about the roles of allies and employers, the following recommendations are divided into a section for allies who are committed to participating in reducing racism in employment, and also for employers who are responsible for eliminating employment related discrimination in their own organizations.

### **Allies**

Participants discussed the role of allies as something that could be built upon to create safer spaces in workplaces. One participant discussed building these relationships, stating

“you have to know in the struggle, you have to identify your allies, who you can work with.” According to this participant, allies could often be found in other employees experiencing marginalization in the workplace, basically of building alliances among communities of support. Interview data supported that a lack of allies in workplaces allowed for discrimination to take place unchallenged, and prevented applicants from getting interviews or landing positions. Additionally, in a workplace without allies, it was often difficult for participants to speak up about racism, as they risked being considered troublesome by non-sympathetic employees.

Building alliances can be difficult. One participant offered suggestions on how to establish allies in workspaces when managers and colleagues were not interested in anti-racist action. When working in a job serving customers or clients, he shared:

The other thing is if you work hard, your clients, your customers will be your rock, your foundation, your supporters....So your allies are those you serve. So if you are a black person, even if you have challenges from this, those you serve may be enticed to become your allies. Your customers, your clients, those that know you. Or some of your staff. Building good report with staff, there is nothing your manager can do, so there are ways to overcome them.

This unconventional approach provides an opportunity to create safety in a job despite the attitudes of coworkers.

A major absence I noted in this research was the lack of advocacy, support, and acknowledgement of personal responsibility to address racism by white folks who witnessed, participated in, or benefited from inequitable work environments. The exceptions to this included white people experiencing other intersections of oppression in

the workplace. For example, a transgender coworker one participant built alliance with, non-work related white friends and community members who supported participants, and in one case, white church members who assisted a participant in finding a job all were allies identified in the interviews. Alliances with those committed to anti-discriminatory behaviour are important. One participant stated that:

I surround myself with positive people. I surround myself with the right crowd. Like, my friends. Actually I have very few buddies of colour. I don't believe in these things of only Africans, or only of colour. No. I have friends across the board.... I'm always involved with organizations, I volunteer. For Cuba, for events, The Red Cross, kind of stuff. You meet open minded [people]. So those people are my friends.

Even when actively working on being an ally, there is a common issue of undermining people of colour, or taking credit for work that should be done in support of, not on behalf of, or for personal accolades (Hill Collins, 2000). Stating that, in his opinion, allies were usually more likely to hurt than help, one participant said:

The worst thing is that these people who fight against those other group, they call themselves allies, very powerful allies. So if you have someone who calls themselves your ally and they are sabotaging you underground, this is the worst. You know, and you can see this is happening. They are very vocal, they have all the right words, they are very energetic, they have resources, the knowledge, and they go around and say we are the allies, we are helping. But 90% of the time they hurt.

Some of these issues are related to exercising power in the workplace, rather than actively working to minimize privilege. One participant suggested that for allies:

It's very, very, very hard. Even there are some good ones, they are sometimes out there, but even they don't listen. They think what they know is power. I think for me if you can be a good listener, then you can learn.

For white people who want to address racism in employment and act as allies in the workspace, based on the literature reviewed, as well as participant suggestions, which aligned with my own views in many cases, I recommend speaking up when discrimination happens, rather than leaving it to the racialized staff in the workplace to address. Advocating for equitable hires, explaining or discussing EEA policies with other co-workers, creating inclusive workspaces, utilizing diversity and equity training opportunities may help to reduce workplace racism. Most importantly, allies must acknowledge white privilege, identify how it manifests in their employment, and actively engage in refusing benefits afforded to them because of whiteness.

Even when working actively to be an ally, this solidarity does not replace actual equity. As one participant stated:

So, another way to turn this around is to empower the Black people or the visible minority for them to speak for themselves. Now the question of *empower*, for me, I have a problem with it. Because there is someone who is giving you this power, and that person as the ally, oftentimes they are the problem. But I do think that there need to be a kind of empowering. The system has to pull those minorities out and push them themselves to stand for themselves. Because so far, it is other people talking for us, you know. Yeah, look around the country. Who is talking about employment equity? Who is talking about racism? So other people are talking about *your* experience of racism. They write books about it, they publish about it, they, you

know, they even get elected to the senate or to the parliament to defend minority rights, you know.

In the words of Sister Outsider on Twitter, “being an ally is not an identity it is a process” (FeministGriote, 2013). By remembering that being an ally is not an identity, one can move away from a sense of ownership of power and of benevolence in stepping aside for people of colour to exercise their own rights (Hill Collins, 2000). Until legitimate equality is achieved, mindful and supportive work is required from allies at all times.

### **Employers**

Employers must address issues of racism in hiring and recruiting in order to create opportunities to build diverse workspaces. Research participants discussed existing challenges in having an opportunity to enter the workforce. In terms of job seeking and racism, one participant shared that “what I need is, grant us equal platforms to present ourselves, and judge us based on our deeds or what we put on the table.” Rather than individuals having to worry about whether or not their employability is being fairly assessed alongside other non-racialized applicants, workplaces must create straightforward hiring and recruitment strategies inviting diversity and recognizing job skills without bias. The University of Victoria (UVic) is an example of an employer that has made information about employment equity available, including information about preferential and limited hiring (UVic, n.d.). While there are still issues to address in terms of employment equity at UVic, employment equity statistics and surveys are available online, and the university has an Equity and Human Rights department, and offers resources related to employment equity, education, and accommodation (UVic, n.d.). The Public Service Alliance of Canada is another example of an employer who has a staff

dedicated to employment equity issues, and also provides straightforward information about employment equity (PSAC, 2013b), as well as a commitment to create a discrimination free workplace as stated in the overview of their website (PSAC, 2013a).

In terms of the workplace, employers have particular responsibilities to employees and potential employees to reduce racism, legally, but also ethically. Employers can claim to be inclusive, but if they do not vigilantly enforce equity, as well as ensure that employees with power and privilege adhere to equity measures in their workplace practices, discrimination can fly under the radar. One participant described that even when “the company doesn’t openly embrace discrimination, but sometimes those in the middle management do practice, unknowingly too....They will kind of humiliate you, get mean.” Similar power imbalances can emerge among employees in any setting. These types of scenarios can be addressed through open dialogue about equity, through consistent monitoring and feedback mechanisms, as well as through hiring trained professionals that can address inequity in the workplace.

Another workplace issue was the misuse of equity initiatives by employers seeking to benefit from appearing to be a diverse workforce. The “Employment Equity Act Review” (HRSDC, 2001) identified tokenistic diversity to be a problem in many workplaces. One participant summarized the complexity of this issue, stating:

The Black men or Black women will be recruited in the organization, just because the organization wants to show the face that they are definitely changing.

Oftentimes they will put them in the front-line so that everyone see that there is a Black person at the window. The second one is, even if they put it in a managerial position, most of the times the power they give them is totally different from the

other managers. And the third issue that Black men face in the workplace that bring them in as employment equity hire, is that those workplaces don't have any skills any training, any resources to keep this person there. Not only to keep them, to even integrate them, but also for retention. So those workplaces don't have the retention skills and resources. They don't have the conflict management structure to manage the issues, racial and so on, and most of the people in position that can do something are even scared to face it, and are filled with so many biases, racial biases that if there is a problem, they can't see it. That it is someone else. They think that because before we didn't have a problem, now that this guy is, here's a problem, so he is the problem. Because this is how I call it, denial, you know, and this is what has happened.

This example highlights the issue of poor in-house equity measures, which can place blame back on equity groups when these placements break down. This can create further barriers for other racialized applicants, and also creates hostile work environments for the very employees that employment equity is supposed to benefit. Actually implementing non-biased hiring practices would provide employers with a more diverse workforce in all types of positions, would increase the likelihood of more diverse hiring and promotions in future (HRSDC, 2001), and also would reduce the types of systemic oppression leading to the breakdown of work placements for marginalized employees.

Hostility from coworkers is an issue that was discussed by participants "because, oftentimes, the coworkers think that the person has less skills and that it is preferential hire". This conflation also includes the idea of affirmative action, or hiring quotas, which is not a component of the EEA in any way. One participant addressed the need for

straightforward information about how equity policy requirements are being met in individual workplaces to stem misdirected resentment, saying:

That's also creating a lot of hate for minorities because the white folks will complain nowadays and say that you know, because of affirmative action and Employment Equity Act, I can't get a job because these guys have to hire three natives, one Black and one this, it's mandated. So that puts the merit thing in question too. Is this merit or are they just doing the status quo? And that makes people resent them even more. It's not like a fair playground. Now it's like, oh they're babying some people and some people are getting shafted for it. So I think that's a bad thing for us too, unless it's actually working as it should work, but since it's not its creating resentment against the minorities, because the majority tends to feel that this is against them, that they're just going to hand everything to these guys.

Responsibility for these types of misconceptions, and the negative impacts that they can have on individuals is not the sole responsibility of employers. Still, actively addressing these issues when they come up, and providing employee outreach to avoid these misconceptions at all are important steps in addressing employment related racism, as “often senior management buy into employment equity, but staffing officers and line management remain reluctant” (HRSDC, 2001, Education and Training section, para. 1).

### **Conclusion**

The EEA can be improved upon in many way , including addressing intersectionality and possibly including more equity groups, writing in better EEA education and publicity requirements for the general population, and better enforcement of the policy overall. The

policy alone, however, cannot fully address issues of discrimination, without the buy-in of allies and employers across Canada. With the combined powers of policy, as well as the sincere efforts of allies and employers, discrimination in the workplace can be effectively addressed.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Concluding Observations: Moving Forward**

Changes to employment equity measures are needed in Canada. Individuals with various intersectional identities experience employment related discrimination at different rates, and in different ways. Understanding the intersectional nature of employment related discrimination, the protections in place to address this discrimination, and the existing gaps in addressing this discrimination are essential in improving employment equity for all Canadians. This chapter provides an overview of the research as well as next steps forward in improving employment equity for Black men in Canada, but also for all Canadians requiring protection from employment related discrimination by the EEA.

#### **An overview of the research**

This thesis has summarized demographic information about racialized Canadians, examining intersections of ethnic group membership, immigration status, and gender. An overview of the EEA, as well as the Canadian Human Rights and BC Human Rights processes as they relate to employment related discrimination was provided.

Intersectionality, and the realities of white privilege were explored as challenges to employment equity. Literature on the manifestations of racism in Canada were highlighted, including information about education and employment, job seeking and unemployment, and wages and promotions. Outcomes of racism and its impacts on individuals, their health and well-being, and poverty levels were also examined, as was resiliency as a response to racism.

Using an anti-racist research methodology, I completed semi-structured informal interviews with three Black men living in Victoria, British Columbia, all of whom had immigrated to Canada in their adult lives. Limitations of the research included the small sample size specific to one racialized group within the larger population of individuals protected by the EEA, the requirement for anonymity for the well-being of participants limiting my ability to acknowledge participants for their contributions, and issues related to my outsider status as both a woman and a non-immigrant, when compared to research participants, as well as my light-skinned privilege which has informed my own experiences of employment related racism. Some solutions to these challenges are offered in this chapter. Participants were invited to provide feedback related to their specific contributions in both the Analysis and Recommendations chapters of this document in an effort to make the process both safe and inclusive for participants.

The analysis chapter of this thesis highlights a personal experience of employment related racism from each participant. From this point participant theories about the motivations of racism were explored, including stereotypes, xenophobia, white privilege, and a fear of losing this privilege. Impacts of racism, including a culture of silence, erosion of trust, limited employment options, and emotional and mental health impacts were also explored. Resiliency of participants in the face of employment related racism was also addressed in this chapter. The Recommendations chapter moved on to suggestions for policy changes to the EEA, in terms of addressing intersectionality, education, and enforcement, and also anti-racist strategies for allies and employers, all centered on the data collected from interviews with the three research participants.

**Next Steps:**

To improve employment equity outcomes for Black men in Canada, as well as other groups protected by or requiring protection from the EEA, there are next steps in both research and policy. Understanding more about employment equity, as well as the Canadian population as it changes over time will help to ensure that the EEA remains current and applicable to the challenges of discrimination in the Canadian workforce. Adjustments to the existing EEA would also serve to address gaps already identified in the policy to date.

**Employment equity research**

Current in-depth research into the employment outcomes of intersectional sub-groups protected by the EEA, as well as further research into equity groups that may require EEA protection now or in future, could help to clarify what changes are needed in the EEA. By better understanding the experiences of equity sub-groups experiencing disproportionate employment related discrimination it is easier to clarify the intersectional nature of employment related discrimination, and the need for intersectional approaches to hiring and workplace equity. Research already exists indicating that racialized immigrants, transwomen and transmen, people who are gay, lesbian and bisexual, and older workers experience high levels of work related discrimination (HRSDC, 2001; Pizer, Sears, Mallory, & Hunter, 2012; Roscigno, Mong, Byron, & Tester, 2007) and inclusion of these groups into the EEA bears consideration (HRSDC, 2001). If a report about intersectional identity and employment equity, as well as a report about employment equity for other marginalized groups were to be

commissioned by the government, or compiled by researchers, an opportunity for more nuanced dialogue and possible EEA policy changes could begin.

The shift from a long form census to the shorter voluntary National Household Survey raises a number of issues in employment equity tracking, and also in addressing intersectional issues with the EEA that have not been addressed to date. Frenette, Green, and Picot (2006) found that in the case of voluntary surveys, those issued to populations with the lowest incomes were less likely to be completed than those distributed to wealthier participants. Green and Milligan (2010) suggest that in this research, and other research conducted by the authors (Frenette, Green, & Picot, 2004; Frenette, Green & Mulligan, 2007) that “there is strong evidence to suggest that survey non-response is non-random” (p. 385). If this is the case, then a voluntary census cannot control for non-responses, and therefore a resource used for various equity measures from the non-profit level through to the government (Green & Milligan, 2010) may not provide representative data, possibly for the most marginalized populations in Canada. Additionally, the long form census has been used in past as “a true population benchmark” (Green & Milligan, 2010, p. 386), against which other surveys are measured. This means that when additional employment equity data is calculated there is no unbiased survey to use as a point of comparison.

Agocs (2002), states that the 1996 census had data specific to people of colour and Indigenous people, which added richness to employment equity data, but that information about people with disabilities was very limited, which impacted employment equity data for this population. A lack of consistency in data collection for EEA protected groups between census years also impacted the ability for researchers to compare data over time (Agocs, 2002). These issues could be addressed by including census questions specific to

all four protected groups, as well as sub-groups within these categories in future censuses. I would recommend that in order to better assess the successes and challenges of current equity legislation in Canada, including the EEA, that the long form mandatory census be reinstated by the federal government.

A survey of the general population, including self-identification questions to determine whether or not participants belong to a protected EEA group or groups, to gain a clearer idea of how Canadians perceive the EEA, what issues they identify with the EEA, and what is working the EEA. This would be an opportunity to establish what Canadians think of the Act, and also whether these ideas about the Act differ dependent upon whether or not individuals belong to protected groups. Feedback from Canadians could help to clarify for the government what types of education about the EEA are required to inform the general public about the Act, or to address misconceptions that may exist. It also provides a feedback mechanism for all Canadians about the EEA, which could, with timely outreach and possible policy changes based on these recommendations, increase individual investment in the Act. It would be important that this survey be used to determine public understanding of the EEA, and to seek feedback about improvement to the Act, not that the questionnaire not be used to potentially repeal the Act or reduce protections for equity groups.

### **Public Policy**

In terms of employment equity policy, it is essential that the EEA be fully enacted, meaning that the five-year in depth reviews of employment equity in Canada should be re-implemented immediately using the most current data available. It has been 12 years since the first and only “Review of the Employment Equity Act” (HRSDC, 2001) was

completed, and 11 years since the “Government of Canada Response” (Bradshaw, 2002) was released. In this time the demographics of the Canadian workplace have shifted considerably, and the in-depth success of the EEA, as well as a documentation of any steps that the response to the report promised, have not been summarized. The regular reviews of the EEA also provided a place for employees, employers, and other Canadians to voice their ideas about the EEA, to share their stories of employment related discrimination, and their challenges as employers in enacting employment equity plans in their workplaces. It is difficult to create timely recommendations about improving the EEA if there is no current analysis of the Act itself, something that was anticipated in legislating five-year reviews of the EEA as a part of the policy itself.

Regardless of the need for an in-depth review of the EEA, there are clear issues of inequity in employment equity for sub-groups within the groups protected by the Act. This evidence emphasizes the need to modify the EEA, clarify employment equity data related to the EEA, and to the delivery of outreach about the EEA itself to address intersectional issues of inequity in the Act. If the EEA were to be modified to include an analysis of sub-groups within and across protected groups, with the ability to write in specific protections for groups benefitting least from the EEA, the Act could be more successful in addressing the most entrenched employment related discrimination. This analysis and possible policy changes resulting from this analysis could also be implemented in the educational component of the EEA. If the workforce and employers are aware of intersectional oppression in employment equity, it may be more likely that they are to recognize these patterns in their own workplace, and more likely to address the structural inequities that exist.

Ensuring that employers, employees, and the general public understand the EEA is essential to the success of the Act. While the “Government of Canada Response” (Bradshaw, 2002) to the “Employment Equity Review” (HRSDC, 2001), promises that:

The Minister of Labour has been mandated by the Act to engage in public education campaigns to foster employment equity. These contribute to an acceptance of the principles of employment equity by employers, labour organizations, designated group organizations, and the general public....

Representatives from labour and designated group organizations have volunteered to contribute to public education in partnership with employers. (Employment Equity Research section, paras. 1 & 2).

Modifications to the EEA itself, clarifying the types of educational outreach, the schedule for these outreaches, and the governmental department responsible for this outreach would help to ensure that education remain a priority of the EEA, and would make it more transparent if educational initiatives were not undertaken as promised.

### **Conclusion**

All of the feedback about employment equity in this report is based on the personal stories of Black men who have experienced employment related discrimination in Canada. Their knowledge is embodied and experiential, and also reflects the particular challenges experienced by Black men, and racialized immigrants, two groups that experience disproportionately employment inequity (HRSDC, 2001), despite being members of a group protected under the EEA. This oppression is intersectional in nature, and an understanding of intersectionality is important in ensuring equal outcomes in employment for all Canadians. Through a review of the literature on topics related to

employment equity, racism, and intersectionality, a research design based on an anti-racist research methodology, and analysis and recommendations rooted in the narratives of the research participants, and concluding statements recommending next steps, this document provides a guide for improving employment equity outcomes overall.

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## Appendix A

### Letter of Introduction for Potential Research Participants

Dear [insert name]

My name is Jessie-Lane Metz, and I am currently an Interdisciplinary Masters Student, studying at the University of Victoria. I am writing to you because your name has been suggested to me as a potential research participant who may be interested in participating in my thesis research. My topic of interest is racism in Canada and how this relates to employment equity and the Employment Equity Act. Many studies have shown that Black men experience some of the worst racism and discrimination both while employed in Canada and while seeking employment, and I wish to explore the stories of Black men who have experienced racism in one or both of these areas to begin to address this terrible inequity.

If you are interested in participating in my research, I will ask to meet with you on a one-on-one basis to speak about this topic. I will have a series of interview questions that I will provide to you one week before our meeting. I will be open as well to speaking about any other topics that you wish to share related to this issue. I understand that this is a difficult topic to talk about, and as such all of the interviews will be confidential and your identity will be protected in the written research as well. You will also be able to see my final writing and to make any changes that you see fit, or to withdraw your input from the research overall.

I hope that this research will help to combat racism in employment in Canada, and will help to inform how policies can be better shaped to reduce discrimination related to employment. Your personal contribution would be very meaningful to my work, and I hope that you will consider participating in this research. As a Black woman, I feel that this issue is very important to my community and myself and I intend to be deeply respectful through the entire research process.

Please feel free to contact me through email [redacted] or by telephone [redacted] if you have any questions at all or would be interested in participating in my research.

Warmest regards,

Jessie-Lane Metz, BSW

## Appendix B

### Participant Consent Form

#### *Participant Consent Form*

#### **The Inequity of Employment Equity.**

You are invited to participate in a thesis study entitled The Inequity of Employment Equity that is being conducted by Jessie-Lane Metz.

Jessie-Lane Metz is an interdisciplinary graduate student in the departments of Public Administration, Dispute Resolution and Studies in Policy and Practice at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at [jmetz@uvic.ca](mailto:jmetz@uvic.ca) or by phone at (250) 857-2508.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for an interdisciplinary MA. It is being conducted under the supervision of Professors Dr. Leslie Brown and Dr. Michael Prince. You may contact Leslie at [lbrown@uvic.ca](mailto:lbrown@uvic.ca) and Michael at [mprince@uvic.ca](mailto:mprince@uvic.ca).

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to document the racism that Black men face in seeking employment and while employed in Canada. The research seeks to critically examine the Employment Equity Act based on these interviews and a literature review to better understand how to create more equitable equity policies in Canada.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because it honours the processes, experiences and resistance of individuals experiencing racism in employment. It also helps to provide a sense the work that needs to be done in equity policy in Canada and adds a narrative voice to the issues of racism that many Canadians face in their work life.

#### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have experienced racism in seeking employment or in the workplace in Canada.

#### **What is involved**

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include completing a face-to-face interview with Jessie-Lane Metz at a place and time convenient to you. The interview will take no longer than one hour. Additionally, if you wish, you are entitled to read, provide input into and approve of the final thesis chapter of the research paper resulting from this research.

**Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the time that you provide both to be interviewed and to edit the draft if you choose to provide input at that stage of the research.

**Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a final thesis honouring yourself and other participants for experiences of racism that you have shared with me. It will also document the importance of and the significance of a better employment equity strategy in Canada that accounts for the intersections of identity within each person.

**Compensation**

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a small gift. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be deleted entirely up until the final draft of the thesis is prepared for my thesis defense. The gift offered to you will be yours to keep.

**On-going Consent**

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will provide you with a copy of the final draft of the thesis chapter, for you to examine, edit and approve.

**Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity names and other identifying details will not be used in the research. Anonymity will be respected if any information disclosed could be harmful in any way to participants or others named in the research. It will be known that those that participated in the research were/are Black men living in Victoria, but no further identifying information will be shared. Names will be coded in the transcribing and analysis stage as well.

**Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by coding of the data, and selective identification of names only to honour work done and accomplishments made. No identifying information will be released in cases were the

information could be damaging to participants or to others named in the research process.

**Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this thesis will be shared with others in the following ways: my thesis will be defended publicly at the university and some published copies will be made, and kept by myself, distributed to my close friends and family and will be kept for public access at the university.

**Disposal of Data**

Data will be stored on an ongoing basis on my personal password protected computer. All saved data will be coded to remove identifying information about the participants. PARTICIPANTS WILL BE CONTACTED FOR FUTURE USE OF THE DATA BY MYSELF IF ANY OPPORTUNITIES SHOULD ARISE IN THE FUTURE.

**Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted are listed at the beginning of this document.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

*Name of Participant*

*Signature*

*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## **Appendix C**

### **Participant Questionnaire**

Thesis questions:

- Could you please tell me about the employment-related racism or racial discrimination that you have experienced? Please feel free to speak to more than one occurrence if you wish.
- Do you think that this racism was directed specifically at you as a Black man?
- How did this racism affect you in the long-term?
- Who do you think is advantaged by the racial discrimination that you experienced?
- What do you think about the Employment Equity Act?
- Has the Employment Equity Act provided any positive experiences or opportunities for you as a Black man?
- What do you think should be done to make sure that Black men are protected from experiencing work-related racism in Canada?
- Does this differ from how you think other marginalized groups should be protected from experiencing work-related racism in Canada?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?