

Feeling the Race Issue: How teachers of colour deal with acts of racism towards them

by

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B.A., Whitworth University, 1992

M.A. Whitworth University, 1994

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

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Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract

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Figure 1: All My Relations

Inspired by my own struggles with racism, this narrative and phenomenology study investigated how teachers of colour in the Canadian schooling system dealt with the pain of racism and how this process informed their teaching practice. I addressed this issue of racism and its relevance to the schooling process from an anti-racist theory of education theoretical framework. The study comprised of six women of colour who shared their experiences with racism through written narratives, face to face interviews, as well as electronic communications. While the study focused on the schooling experiences of the teachers, their narratives comprised of holistic experiences that included experiences in the schooling system as well as the general society. The data collected, revealed the following themes as central to the questions of the study:

Knowledge of cultural, family, and political history gave the participants strength to stand against racism. However, most of the women carried the shame of being and knowing they were different. Trying to attain a form of standardized beauty was an ongoing struggle for the participants. All participants pointed to one teacher whose care was instrumental to their choice to become teachers. To the participants getting a good education was more important than worrying or paying attention to the pain of racism. However, all but one of the participants admitted to receiving treatment for racism related anxiety. Finally, the participants shared that by participating in the arts or having personal faith and beliefs was helpful tool that helped them negotiate the worlds of their cultural beliefs and traditions and that of mainstream (White society) society.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all my Kikuyu ancestors from the Clan of Munjiru for guiding me to this path of self discovery. I also, dedicate this work to my Maternal and Paternal grandparents for all the sacrifices they made so that their children and grandchildren can acquire new knowledge in a new way. To my Mother and Father, I dedicate this project as a token of gratitude for the Love, support, financial, time, and emotional sacrifices you have made for us and for teaching me the nobility of the teaching profession through your examples. I couldn't have made it this far without you! Last but not least, I wish to dedicate this work to all my academic and spiritual teachers, brothers and sisters whose ongoing love, support, encouragement, and honest critique, I wouldn't grow without!

Definition of terms

Antiracism

Anti-racism includes beliefs, actions, movements, and policies adopted or developed to oppose racism. In general, anti-racism is intended to promote an egalitarian society in which people do not face discrimination on the basis of their race, however defined. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-racism>)

Identity

- the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity; "you can lose your identity when you join the army"
- the individual characteristics by which a thing or person is recognized or known (<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=identity>)

Institution

An established organization or foundation, especially one dedicated to education, public service, or culture (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/institution>)

Institutionalize

The term institutionalisation is widely used in social theory to denote the process of making something (for example a concept, a social role, particular values and norms, or modes of behaviour) become embedded within an organization, social system, or society as an established custom or norm within that system. See the entries on [structure and agency](#) and [social construction](#) for theoretical perspectives on the process of institutionalisation and the associated construction of institutions (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutionalize>)

Mainstream

The prevailing current of thought
(<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=mainstream>)

Minority

A group of people who differ racially or politically from a larger group of which it is a part (<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=minority>)

Multiculturalism

The acceptance or promotion of multiple [ethnic cultures](#), for practical reasons and/or for the sake of [diversity](#) and applied to the [demographic make-up](#) of a specific place, usually at the organizational level, e.g. [schools](#), [businesses](#), [neighborhoods](#), [cities](#) or [nations](#). In this context, multiculturalists advocate extending equitable status to distinct ethnic and [religious](#) groups without promoting any specific [ethnic](#), [religious](#), and/or cultural community [values](#) as central (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism>)

Narrative

A story that is created in a constructive format (as a work of writing, speech, poetry, prose, pictures, song, [motion pictures](#), video games, [theatre](#) or [dance](#)) that describes a sequence of [fictional](#) or [non-fictional](#) events.
(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative>)

People of Colour

(plural: *people of colour*; [Commonwealth English](#): *person of colour*) is a term used, primarily in the [United States](#) and Germany^[1], to describe all people who are not [white](#). The term is meant to be inclusive among non-white groups, emphasizing common experiences of [racism](#). *People of colour* is preferred to both *non-white* and [minority](#), which are also inclusive, because it frames the subject positively; *non-white* defines people in terms of what they are not (white), and *minority*, by its very definition, carries a [subordinate](#) connotation
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_color)

Race

(Social Science / Anthropology & Ethnology) a group of people of common ancestry, distinguished from others by physical characteristics, such as hair type, colour of eyes and skin, stature, etc. Principal races are Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Race>)

Racism

The belief that each race has distinct and intrinsic attributes; the belief that one race is superior to all others. Prejudice or discrimination based upon race.

(<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/racism>)

Schooling system

The system of formalized transmission of knowledge and values operating within a given society

(Sociology dictionary at http://dictionary.babylon.com/education_system/)

Self-esteem

Sense of personal worth and ability that is fundamental to an individual's identity

(<http://www.answers.com/topic/self-esteem>)

Self-hood

The state of having a distinct identity <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/selfhood>)

Self-worth

The [value](#) one assigns to oneself or one's abilities in self assessment.

(<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/self-worth>)

Trauma

An emotional wound or shock often having long-lasting effects

(<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=trauma>)

Chapter 1

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” Freire

Introduction to the study

The journey to this study has been a process of self reflection and personal growth. I started my doctoral degree sure of what I was going to study and of how long it was going to take to do so. At that time addressing racism as a social ill seemed not worthy of my time and effort. Victory over racism and racist people meant not paying attention to the behaviour or the pain it cause me. Conversations of racism were relegated to free times with my friends, which had I been paying attention, I would have noticed increased in number and time spent on them. Despite my resistance, arrival at this juncture of my learning curve has enlightened my search for knowledge and equitable justice by leaps and bounds.

In this chapter, I will share in greater details how and why I chose this study. I will share how my experiences as a student and teacher in Kenya, the USA, and Canada have influenced the assumptions through which I viewed and interpreted the data from this study. Lastly but not least, I will share research questions that formed the study, the purpose and relevance of this study to the Canadian schooling system.

Background to the study

Countless months of reading a myriad books and articles on theories, assumptions, and philosophical frameworks dealing with the question of race and racism within and without the North American schooling system left me anxious, depressed, and with no awareness of what had brought on this break down. Physically shaken, I was unable to continue with this study. Several months of therapy later, it dawned on me that my resistance to the study was a physical manifestation of wounds, held within me, from a lifetime of subtle and overt racist experiences that I hadn't acknowledged and fully dealt with. This moment of clarity gave relief on one hand, but it also launched me onto the beginning of the most emotionally draining journey, I have ever done. I could no longer deny or postpone the effects racism has had on me.

Guided by a beautiful soul, who, although not trained to deal with this particular aspect of therapy (I wonder if anyone is), was a female from a minority background, I began to look at the history of my experiences with race. This history spans from the day of my birth in Kenya, at a private hospital, owned and managed by an English couple. Here, my Christian English name (Mary later changed to Maria) was designated as my first and official name, while my culturally appropriate one, passed down from a lineage of women warriors from the Munjiru Clan, of the Kikuyu tribe of Kenya, was relegated to a second and hopefully forgotten state. My socialization was further endorsed through the Presbyterian theological foundation, my schooling in private and public, post colonial schools in Kenya, and furthered in the USA and now Canada. To say I can't pinpoint my

social place and identity would be a serious understatement. I can't, at this point, clearly see all the good of my upbringing, for the soreness in my soul at the realization that some aspects of my identity are deemed socially unacceptable. A reality I have been too oblivious of, to be an agent of my emancipation. Instead, I willingly and enthusiastically participated in my own colonization. I resonate with Freire's lamentations:

How can the oppressed, as divided unauthentic beings, participate in the pedagogy of their liberation? ...As long as they live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor, this contribution is impossible.... "Liberation is thus childbirth, and a painful one. (Freire, 1992, p. 42).

In spite of the colonially influenced aspect of my schooling, I owe my passion for teaching as an emancipatory process to my parents. I was raised, by a Dad who was a school principal and a school teacher Mom, to love and respect the educational process for all the possibilities laded within it for those who had the privilege to partake of it. I watched them both labour for their students and often given of their time and finances to the many who were brilliant but couldn't afford to go to school. My father spent countless hours transforming low performing schools into nationally recognized academic institutions in areas of the country with few if any modern amenities. School was a place to lift oneself and his/her kin from wherever they were to a more evolved state. Schooling was always a valued aspect of our culture and was weaved throughout our living experiences from the day of our birth until our dying day and marked with a meaningful communal rite of passage at the end of each level of mastery as determined by our elders and peers.

It's this journey of self liberation I'm newly embarked on, that has created within me the desire to see how other teachers of colour, educated and now working within the

Canadian schooling system, have dealt with the pain from racist acts directed towards them.

“Simba, I don’t think we are in Kenya anymore”

In the fall of 1988 at the age of seventeen, I left Kenya to further my studies at Whitworth University, in Spokane Washington. I was excited and given the academic success I had achieved thus far, I expected to not only excel in my studies but to so quickly and go back home. The journey of learning has not ended yet. In fact, it feels like its only beginning. Although my original intention was to study international law, I received a Bachelor of Arts in Education and a Masters of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language. I proceeded to teach in a middle school in Vancouver, Washington in 1995, where my realization of the incongruencies between my teacher training and the actual teaching practices began. This was especially true when it came to working with minority and international students. I came into my classroom confident of two things: I could assist any student to love learning and that any student, who wanted to do well in school, could. I was completely unaware of the systemic inequities embedded within the schooling system. The issues of honouring and respecting all students’ backgrounds through the incorporation of their knowledges were never addressed. It wasn’t until I started my doctoral work, and only in two courses, that I heard of the concept of offering equal floor space to girls as was traditionally done for boys and incorporating multicultural material into the main curriculum and “allowing” students to draw from their backgrounds of origin as part of their learning process. To me, school and home were always two parallel entities that served different roles. School was where you

acquired the tools and skills you needed to, socially and economically function in society and home was a place of refuge from society. The idea that they all home, school, and society are all part of the whole wasn't something I had been awakened to. Engaging in the education system, I began to feel, that certain aspects of the process didn't align with my inner knowing. I couldn't put a finger on it, but I felt it. When things aren't aligning with my inner knowledge, I get "butterflies" in my stomach and my throat constricts, until I can identify the cause of it or I remove myself from the environment causing it.

There were specific teacher and staff training meetings when this feeling persisted. During my first year of teaching, I recall one that resulted in a heated discussion of the merits of including more historical material about Native Americans in the Social Studies curriculum. The argument created an ongoing rift in the teaching staff, the "pro-American" (as they referred to themselves) staff that wanted to emphasize the historical conquest of America, and the "anti-American" (as the first groups referred to this one) group that wanted to water down the curriculum and give everything back to the Indians, and the teachers of colour who didn't know which side to join. It was the speed at which the teaching staff took sides that not only took me by surprise but frightened me quite a bit. Teachers who were previously friendly took spoke to me very cautiously and some stopped contact all together. The tension eased somewhat over the five years I was there but I never again felt at ease in the environment.

Two years after I began teaching, our school received a federal grant to assist in the creation of a magnet school for all English as a Second Language students in the school district. The process of creating a welcoming climate for the students, who ranged

from no level of English proficiency otherwise referred to as Non English speakers (NES) to prolific English language speakers, was an anxiety provoking process and the major reason why I made the decision to return to school and study how the inclusion process can be less painful for the students, teachers, and the community. As the international students populated our school, intolerant attitudes from many of the staff members began to surface. Despite the presence of these activities prior to their arrival, the ESL students became the scapegoat for student behavioural issues and academic underperformance of the school: they were blamed for spray painting on walls, causing chaos in the dining hall during meals, fighting and belligerent behaviour during recess, and causing the below standard performance in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), to name a few. These students and the magnet program became a constant agenda item during staff meetings. I'm not sure why this was the last straw for me, but the request by some teachers to change the students' last names because they were too long to fit in the school electronic grading book gave me reason to secretly write and request the presence of the school district race relations representative at one of our staff meetings. She did come and several race awareness workshops later, the blatant dislike of the international students subsided. However, the other Black teacher of color and me began to receive racial paraphernalia like swastikas, pictures of hooded heads, and images of burning crosses, in our staff mail boxes on a regular basis. Other than caution us to watch ourselves carefully which included checking for any tampering with our vehicles before getting into them, nothing else was done. We both left the school district at the same time. I came back to school in Canada and she moved to a more diverse region of the United States.

Other side of the fence

A conversation with a teaching peer at the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria regarding how we were both addressing the issues of racism and inclusion started me thinking about whether my sensitivity towards racism was based purely on the personal pain it inflicted or was there something more to it? In our conversation, my fellow peer shared how difficult the discussions on racism were. She shared that her students were angry at her for implying that they were racist. Despite the fact that she too was White, like them, they couldn't accept her insinuation that the belief systems they held so dear could be inherently racist. Her teaching experience shocked me because I had assumed that having a discussion on racism might have been easier and less heated amongst White people than in groups of mixed cultures. When addressing issues of racism in the classroom and with my White friends, I will often try to assess their comfort level before I move from one topic to another. I also find that sharing my own incidents with racism often helps ease the tension in the classroom and will allow the students to share their own opinions of what happened to me. Being White, I had assumed that my peer would not have needed to cautiously tread the path of conversations regarding racism. I didn't think the students would find her intentions accusatory.

My teaching experience and discussion of racism in my classroom were anything but angry and defensive. The students and I were able to address the hegemonic nature of the North American society values and belief and how they, by their origin in Western ideology, are prejudicial towards most, except a very small section of the population, namely, the upper class Christian White male. I have always felt that during our

classroom discussions on the importance of the inclusion of diverse knowledges, material, and languages, into the curriculum and school culture, the students and I engaged in honest consultations about the personal, social, and cultural histories that informed our daily lives and inevitably, our teaching praxis. I think that watching historical clips or reading newspaper clippings of incidents that took place gave the students a time and a place to attribute to some of the racist atrocities that have happened.

Through the use of historical video clips, images, and movies, that clearly depicted the once openly accepted and sanctioned, gender, racial, religious, ethnic, and cultural prejudicial practices, most of which are still present but subtle, the discussions often took a more reflective tone. After this point, a few students from visible minority groups, on their own volition, had chosen to share some of their experiences with racism in their schooling process without any negative response or defensive remarks from the students in from White mainstream culture. Students of all cultural backgrounds shared during and after the classroom discussions how these experiences had created an awareness they hadn't had before. Despite the successes that I have had with consultations on inclusive practices, I found myself unable to articulate how I was able to facilitate these discussions, to my peer who was struggling with her classroom discussions. I have since continued to ponder this issue and as of this point, I can attribute my success with these discussions to intuition. By intuition, I mean an inner knowing that isn't necessarily guided or informed by my formal education. In *indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations, and context*, Kovach (2009), describes this way of accessing knowledge as originating from the "extraordinary" and is deeply personal and particular" (p.56).

Earlier I shared how I get “butterflies” in my stomach and my throat constricts when I encounter knowledge that is contradictory to my own sense of who I am. It was this same feeling that led me to acknowledge that there was more to my feelings and reaction to racial prejudice than I had acknowledged. I do think that some of this pain and shame I feel due to racism could be “tribal karma come to roost”. As a member of the majority Kikuyu tribe of Kenya, I too have engaged in a system that academically, economically, and socially, privileged me and the people of my tribe, above all other tribes in the country. To date members from the Kikuyu tribe continue to dominate the political, academic, and business sectors of the country. Although I never heard and saw prejudicial language in our home and church, it was definitely present in the schools I attended. Children from other tribes who came to study in the Central Province, where most of the Kikuyu people live, were insulted and sometimes assaulted by teachers and fellow peers because of their tribal origin. I knew that I was never in danger of being insulted like they were, a fear I only felt after I came to North America.

It was the Kikuyu people that the colonialists chose to teach their ways of learning and doing business so that they could later use them to “control” the rest of the country. Living in one of the fertile lands and highest part of Kenya and surrounded by the savannah grassland, the Central Province, where the Kikuyu people lived as farmers, was a safe and good place to set up a defence station and business center. This business and cultural hub is Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, where many of the colonial homes and businesses are still standing. Inevitably, the first tribe influenced and indoctrinated by the colonialists was the Kikuyu people. We learned that one who walked, ate, talked, learned, prayed, bought and sold, like the White man, was better than all the other traditional

“heathens”, as I often heard other tribes referred to. It was the job of the Kikuyu people, once enlightened by the White man, to go and teach and awaken the other members of the country, a task we took quite literally and proudly. While there are few members from other tribes in the Central Province of Kenya, member of the Kikuyu tribe can be found doing business, preaching, or farming in all corners of the country. While, the colonial system stripped most Kenyan tribes of certain aspects of their cultural heritages, the Kikuyu people were the ones who gave up most, if not all of it. In doing so, we as a cultural group have deemed ourselves more sophisticated than all other tribes and very boldly articulate our perceptions of the inferiority and backwardness of the practices of other tribes. I must admit that I have yet to make peace with this aspect of my cultural heritage.

The January 2008 internationally reported post election tribal warfare (Nairobi Chronicle, 2008) was a direct result of the rift created during the colonial days between the Luo and Kikuyu tribe. It was the outward expression of the below the surface current of hate between these two groups, based on nothing else but perceptions of cultural inferiority. The Luo people chose to take revenge on the Kikuyu people for all the cultural insults they had endured. During the Kenyan and USA elections, when President Obama, who is half Luo was running for the USA presidential election, many Kikuyu friends of mine would openly make racist remarks, about how the Kenyans and the whole world (USA) were going to be led by “boys”, without a thought as to the hurtful nature of their words. To some Kikuyu people, the Luo are seen as boys because their rite of passage from boys to men isn’t like ours. As I understand it, the Luo traditional culture does not use circumcision as their show of manhood like the Kikuyu men do. This reason

continues to be used as an excuse to wage a political and cultural war against them. Any interactions, be they through marriage (which is highly discouraged among the Kikuyu people), political, religious or business between the Luo and the Kikuyu people have this undercurrent of tribal hate and mistrust. As a member of the dominant Kikuyu tribe, I continue to receive the personal, social, and economic benefits that go with dominance while in Kenya. This is a privilege I lost when I moved to North America.

The harsh reality of moving from a cultural environment where my name alone was attributed to the “haves” and my cultural belonging unquestioned has caused in me a deep resistance. I can relate this experience to the scene in the movie *Roots* (1977), when Kunta Kinte wouldn't accept Toby as his name until he was beaten to submission. Having known what it is like not to worry about being judged based on my race, not to mention holding the delusion that everyone else had the same opportunity I had as a Kikuyu, I believe, gives me a little insight into where some of the students, who are reluctant to give the race dialogue a space in their classroom, are coming from.

I have found that being open to share various aspects of my ongoing struggle with my students, and how I strive to use these experiences of hurt to inform all aspects of my life and especially my teaching practice, allows them to reflect on their own journeys of feeling demeaned or misrepresented. My thoughts are, if I can cause an intrinsically motivated reflection that would cause the teachers to be more inclusive in their preparations and instruction, be thoughtful, kind, encouraging, and compassionate towards their students, and especially those from marginalized backgrounds, my work will have been useful.

Nature of the problem

Intra group discussions

For as long as I have been in North America, as a student and teacher practitioner, a week barely goes by when my fellow peers of colour and I don't discuss our ongoing experiences with racism and our frustrations over the incredible senselessness of it on one hand, and the demoralizing and exhausting efforts of maintaining our self-esteem and holding our heads high, to spite those inclined to heap these assaults on us. The resounding absence of a discussion on obtaining external support has always struck me as odd. Not only is this idea not a consideration, I know from a personal perspective, that the thought of asking the very people who insult you on a regular basis to offer you relief from the pain of racism, is the ultimate defeat. Staying strong and presenting an unbruised persona, doing well, and succeeding in all I do, was to me is the only way to keep my spirits up. I know I am not alone in this and many people of colour, like me continue to go into their classrooms and work places with raw emotional wounds, while presenting a strong and resilient image.

In her book *Rock my soul: Black people and self-esteem*, Hooks (2003), refers to how many Black men and women, especially in the Southern part of the United States, have not unlearned the “inherited legacy of simulating submission and never showing feelings” (p. 55), a way of being during slavery days that has persisted through the civil rights movements to this day, and can be perceived in all social economic levels of the Black community (p. 55). Without the “cultivation of the capacity for critical thinking”, she adds, no Black person in the United States can have any measure of self-esteem in a “society centered around principles of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalistic

patriarchy... wherein everyone is socialized to a varying degree to hate and fear 'blackness' ” (p.15).

I can expand this notion of socialization to various degrees of hate, Hooks refers to, to include not only Blackness but other people of colour. Within the Canadian context, I equate the hate and fear referred to by Hooks, to the fear and hate directed towards the members of the First Nations community, first and foremost. Having lived in the United States for 12 years and in Canada for almost nine, I feel a level of ease in the intensity and frequency of racist incidents directed towards me, while at the same time, I hear and see the same sentiments towards the First Nations Peoples, expressed in the same or even more intensity of hate and fear, usually through the media and by individuals, as were directed towards me, in the United States.

In conversation with my friends of colour, I get the feeling that perhaps, the most disheartening and lasting of all experiences shared amongst us are those that have occurred during our schooling years. National and immigrant students of colour alike have shared having personally experienced or witnessed acts of racism instigated by their teachers or other school administrators. The results of which have been a love hate relationship with the schooling system and all that it promises. For many people of colour, the schooling process is considered a stepping stone to a higher and more socially preferable state of being (Hooks, 2002). Therefore, it is with great hope and anticipation that most children of colour come into the classroom. Despite our social, economic, linguistic, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds, most of my peers and I look at academic success as the door to meaningful personal, economic, social, and cultural agency. With a good education, we can not only liberate ourselves but also our families, and cultures. By

being models of what can be achieved with hard work and determinations, we can encourage others to strive in their academic work and achieve their dreams. In the

Pedagogy of hope, Freire (1992) succinctly captures this hope,

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p 16)

Education researchers and scholars have pointed to the underachievement and the low graduation rates of students of colour, (BC statistics, 2001; Dei, 1996; Darder, 1994; Henry, 1998; Ladson-billings, 1998, Ogbu, 1985). However, conversations with my peers, consistently point to a constant fear of failing academically. Be it through lack of effort or due to conflicting teacher/student/school relationships, my friends and I hold academic failure as the ultimate let down. Academic success is directly linked to self esteem and self worth. It isn't for lack of want to succeed that most are unable to fulfill their academic obligations, but for a loss of morale and will power.

While encouraging the cultivation of personal agency and self reliance, Hooks (2000) alludes to the demoralizing schooling process she experienced as a student during the schooling desegregation process. Comparing the desegregated and segregated schools, the all Black school were a place where Black students acquired standards of academic excellence, while constructing their personal identities, within a system whose ethics and values were congruent with those taught at home or at church. The desegregated schools, while being a lasting symbol of political freedom for the Blacks, became a place where Black students needed to disprove the belief of their intellectual inferiority to the White race, "We had to be smarter than they were to embody a direct

challenge to the white supremacist thinking of the inferiority of the white race” (Hooks, 2003 p. 83). Many of my peers have definitely shared this sentiment.

Worthy of note at this point, although I will discuss this further in the data analysis chapter, is the struggle of self-worth and self-esteem that these experiences caused in most of us. Aspiring to appear as we think we should, many of us continue to act one way while in the White world and another way while we are with our families or our fellow friends of colour. As someone who has tried to be outspoken when I witness an act I considered unfair to myself or another, I have often found myself remaining silent or making a choice not to respond, when faced with racist acts, only to complain to my friends, at a later time.

Conversations with my women peers of color especially are wrought with the fears of not feeling beautiful or desirable. Many of us often have gone to expensive, often bordering on dangerous extremes to alter our physical appearances so as to fit more closely, to our notions of what we think is accepted beauty, which not surprisingly is that of the lighter skin, straighter hair, and less curvy bodies. During the course of my teaching, I witnessed this effect on other students of colour, some as young seven years of age, who wishing to fit into a more normalized look, had changed their names, hairstyles, and even fashion sense. Although I didn't know how to address the issues with my students, observing these kinds of behaviour always brought back the “butterflies” in my stomach and caused my throat to constrict.

Narratives of racism and educational theory and practice

Despite the impact of racism on the lived experiences of those affected by it, many critical education, critical race theory, social and feminist theorists continue to address the issue of race, and racism from the class, social economic, and institutional platforms and rarely if at all, from the lived experiences of the specific individuals. Anecdotal evidence is rarely used and referenced to (Collin, 2000; Giroux, 2001; Henry, 1998; Dei, 1996; Delgado, 1995; Hooks, 1994).

Its importance notwithstanding, the race discourse remains, predominantly in the academic or political realms, with little or no access to the masses of people greatly affected by it. Ever changing prescriptive remedies are often imposed on mainstream educational theories and pedagogies and reluctantly practiced within institutions of learning, with little or no consultation with the stake holders, especially those from visible minority groups. Nonetheless, critical race theorists, researchers, and education practitioners, most from visible minority groups, are beginning to pay tribute to the injustices of racism in their academic literature, theories, and pedagogies. They tirelessly continue to advocate for the questioning of the rationale behind the institutional and systematic subjugation of knowledges from minority populations. Slowly but surely the effects of these works on the educational pedagogy are beginning to trickle down into the classrooms (Dei, 2000; Freire, 2000, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Henry, 1998; Hooks, 2004, 2003, 1994; Kehoe & Mansfield, 1994).

The ability for educators to guide students to engage in the process of the kind of dialogue that reflects on lived experience, as a way to inform their own intellectual, social, and even physical emancipatory journey is perceived by Freire (1970), as an empowering and an act of trust in the students' ability to reason their own dilemmas and

solutions. A critical dialogue that offers psychological and emotional ease for the wounds of racism, while situating these experiences within the political and social climate in which they occur, will in the end, raise the consciousness of the students, from a place of victimization to individual, social, and political agency (Freire, 1970). While the dialogues and conversations with my peers offered us great relief and a camaraderie based on lived experiences, the idea of any of us taking up any of the issues with the authorities never garnered much support. The fear of losing face and place in our places of employment or school was often stronger than the desire for justice.

During my undergraduate work, a friend from a visible minority group, who is now a published author, upset at her professor's refusal to accept her creative writing piece as her original work, decided to report the injustice to the Dean of Academic Affairs. Many of our mutual friends, in a show of moral support, agreed to meet her at the office at an agreed upon time, but I was the only one who showed up. I can only assume they felt fearful of imagined or real repercussions they might have experienced as a result of participating in supporting such a blatant disagreement with an instructor. While the matter was never adequately resolved, and the professor involved never came to accept the originality of my friend's work, my friend felt empowered enough by her decision to address the matter within the institution that she began a committee of ombudsman to mitigate matters that arose between the students of colour and their instructors.

We might have understood this entire experience and its impact on us and our institution of learning, had we been guided through a dialogue that looked at the issues at play from their socially embedded constructs. As it was, we felt the need to pit ourselves

against the instructor and the institution. It was the instructor against the student of colour.

Our resistance might have been seen as a refusal to embrace the all Presbyterian Christian way of being, which the instructors, through the rigorous faculty selection process, were perceived to embody, in all its aspects. Growing up Presbyterian, I was taught to respect the order of things and to trust the system. A Christian based education, preferably within the Presbyterian academic institutions, to the highest level one can achieve is greatly encouraged, and those who have achieved it are well rewarded in academic positions and social status within the Presbyterian community. To question the intentions of such an esteemed individual isn't something that is taken lightly or favourably. My friend found her displeasure placated through kind words and assurances of the Deans office's intentions to pursue the issue without any concrete resolution. Darder (2006) description of this socially constructed fear of the different and misunderstood other was particularly true of my Christian affiliated university:

Through a variety of politically inspired and media fabricated messages, U.S. citizens are told in no uncertain terms that we are no longer safe in our own homes. And because we have all lost our supposed national certainty, we are persuaded into believing that if we accept Christian values and conservative economic policies (as our symbolic substitutes), this will somehow magically bring back the good old days of national certainty—a certainty that had always resided outside the immediate experience of the country's disenfranchised majority. (p.6)

These experiences with students' resistance and unguided attempts towards individual agency were not limited to my studies at the university but were part of my teaching experience as well. On one occasion, I witnessed a group of young Black students in the middle school I worked in, attempt to address their dissatisfaction with a

science text that suggested Africa as the source of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In a carefully crafted letter to the school principal, they requested that the text be changed to one that was less racially biased. After an extended consultation with the teaching staff consisting of all White and only two Black teachers, one of who was African (me) the other American, it was concluded after a “democratic” voting process and despite my and the other Black teacher’s objections, that the text would continue to be used. To the credit of these students, they took the matter to the school district’s equity office and with the support of their parents, were able to have the science text changed, beginning the following year. Today, I wonder how this act of courage on their part might have informed their academic and future career endeavours. I wonder if they were ever able to understand the institutional mechanism through which the science book they objected to had ended up on the school district’s approval list and in their classroom. I wonder if they were able to transfer this sense of agency to all their other experiences with images or texts that misrepresented their notions of themselves.

Antiracist education theory (Dei, 1996), despite its critics and ongoing evolution, does offer a theoretical framework for the expression of lived experiences in a safe and equitable space within the classroom experience. Although the idea of allowing those most disadvantaged by racism, to fully share their experiences within the mainstream culture, let alone share the wealth of their backgrounds, continues to be a taboo subject in most North American schooling environments, narratives of experiences with race and racism are beginning to inform education research, teaching theory and pedagogy (Darder, 1991; Dei, 1996; Freire, 2002; Giroux, H.A. 2001; Hooks, 2000).

It is my opinion that until the teachers of colour and of the dominant culture are able to articulate their own lived experiences in a manner that transcends the pain, guilt or ambivalence towards racism, the students will remain unfamiliar with their own capacity to be at the center of their own learning and to liberate themselves academically, socially as well as reconstructed from an empowered position the socially constructed identities they may not agree with but feel they must embrace.

The issue of race and racism was so sensitive and steeped in social and religious correctness that only the very brave were willing to address their own experiences in a public forum at both the university I attended and the school district I taught. My experiences of attempting to address some of the racial incidents I had experienced during my undergraduate years and subsequent teaching went unaddressed because, in my opinion, the administrators in charge were unwilling to accuse the instructors and staff involved of being racist, without concrete evidence of it. Acknowledging that some of the esteemed members of the Whitworth University faculty, engaged in racist and prejudicial behaviour, would have meant disciplining these instructors, a process which would have reflected badly on the Christian image of the school, not to mention bring to question the schools' hiring process. It was simpler to allow us to have our ombudsmen committee, I had referred to earlier, that would, in theory, address the issues of instructor and students conflicts, than question the integrity of the instructor. While the placating nature of this gesture was not lost on the students of color involved, the process was, nonetheless, empowering and affirming. Our subsequent conversations were hopeful and encouraging as we recounted these experiences to other students who later found

themselves in situations where they needed to confront their instructors or other staff members.

In retrospect, I believe that had the Dean of Academic Affairs and the instructor involved chosen to address my friend's dissatisfaction from a more constructive instead of defensive standpoint, the university towards a more inclusive atmosphere might have been greatly advanced in away that helped with the retention of minority student, which was and continues to be a problem. In particular, the Dean might have investigated the beliefs and assumptions that caused him to judge the student's work as not her own. The student might have enlightened the instructor and the dean on her prestigious schooling background and exposure to literature from many international and cultural backgrounds. Her cultural background contributed greatly to her unique writing abilities instead of disadvantaging her creativity, as the instructor assumed.

My assumptions birthed from my experiences with racism

My journey of addressing the pain racism has caused in my life has been empowering on many levels. Through this process, I have gained the courage to discuss the direct effects of racism on me with my White friends without the fear of alienating them. To my pleasant surprise, their responses to me have been compassionate, not patronizing or defensive, as I had imagined they might be. These discussions have given me an opportunity to examine my own assumptions about racism and the lenses through which I see my role in creating a safe and equitable learning and teaching environment for students in my teaching practice. It is through the lenses and assumptions I share here, that I undertook this study and I interpreted the findings of the data gathered:

- 1) I mostly viewed my experiences and those of others from the lenses of anti-oppressive, anti-racism, anti-poverty, feminist and as a Black Kenyan Woman.
- 2) I assumed that like me other teachers of colour were experts in their knowledge of lived experiences with racism.
- 3) Like in my own experience, I assumed that sharing their experiences with racism for the purpose of informing current teaching practices would be both healing and empowering to the participants.
- 4) I came to this study with the assumption that the themes that would arise from the analysis of the data collected would further inform the knowledge and ongoing process of creating equitable learning and teaching environments.
- 5) I held the assumption that the current education system has profound effects on the students and teachers of colour which affect their identity, social dynamics, relational dynamics, and teaching practice.
- 6) Finally, I assumed that the participants would provide a full and honest account of their experiences with racism.

Problem statement and purpose of the study

The study was guided by the following central questions

- 1) How have teachers of color experienced racism which has been directed towards them, while in the schooling system?
- 2) How have they been able to either let the pain of racism go or deal with it in a way that allows them to continue working in the same schooling system?

Relevance of the study

The relevance of this study is its intention to give the participating teachers a space to express and document the narratives of their experience with racism in a safe, respectful, and sympathetic space. As mentioned earlier, individual's day to day experiences with racism are rarely discussed in mainstream culture, let us accessed to inform teaching practices. Gathering knowledge on how teachers of colour have addressed their pain from racism and how they might have transformed their experiences to create equitable spaces in their classroom would be useful to the teaching practice. In addition, the findings of this study will further inform the anti-racist education literature and teaching practice, on the process of creating in a classroom, a safe and open space for students and teachers to speak their truths, without the fear of ridicule and judgement, and in the process strengthen their sense of individual and social agency. As well, an analysis of the themes in these narratives will serve to document the pain of racism as a form of psychological stressor.

The process of sharing ones experiences for personal healing and to inform community is a common North American practice strongly anchored in Western ideology where narratives were constantly used to explain historical conquests, pass on social values, norms, and beliefs, from generation to generation. Whether through the literary canonical texts, the themes of which are often mirrored in various forms of mass media or the philosophical, theoretical, and scientific thoughts dating all the way back to Plato, the Western ideology is expressed primarily in narratives (Maynes et al., 2008).

In a conversation with my father, he reminded me of the importance of narratives of experience to my people, the Kikuyu people. Narratives for life lessons and meaning

making are also utilised in my own cultural background. Every life experience, whether deemed good or bad, is a story with a lesson worth learning. There is therefore no bad life experience for the mere fact that if it can be told, it can be learned from. I attribute this interpretation to the narratives I and my fellow peers of colour have experienced. Despite the pain of the experiences, the narrator of the story continues to hold his/her power. In the telling, the narrator finds the lessons and the intentions of an instigator/perpetrator, become, in the end a highlighter of the wisdom of the people and the strength within each individual to be a force of change. The telling of the story is in itself, the proof of this agency.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set a foundation for the study I undertook. I have endeavoured to reflect on how my upbringing and education as a member of the majority Kikuyu tribe, Christian, female from Kenya, the United States of America, and Canada has informed my understanding of the racism acts I have encountered. Specifically, I have addressed my experiences with racism in North America I encountered during undergraduate and graduate work as well as my teaching experiences in both countries. As well, I have discussed the relevance and purpose of this research study and how they both relate to my experiences as a teacher and student in the North American system. I have also discussed how narratives, as I understand them from my cultural background and through literary review, can facilitate the healing process for those affected by racism on one hand, and inform teaching practices on the other.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature that addresses issues of race and racism and some of the effects they have on students of colour in the schooling system. Within the anti-racism theory of education framework, I will explore the schooling system as the mechanism through which the values, beliefs, and norms of society are sustained. The literature further discusses how reflexive teaching practices can assist students and teachers deconstruct the school curricula and community to develop an empowered sense of personal and social agency. While there is little research on the issue, I will also explore the concept of race based trauma in an attempt to establish, even in a small way, the psychological, emotional, and physiological impact of racist acts on those who experience it.

Anti-Racism Theory of Education: bedrock of change

In her paper *towards indigenous feminist theorizing in the Caribbean*, Patricia Mohammed, (1998), discusses the need to create a feminism perspective that is “accessible to her specific background, “third world” (p. 6). She argues that while feminism has played a great role in allowing for the voices of marginalized populations within the developed nations, the voices of those cultures in the developing nations remain under represented. Other researchers have also articulated the inability of the feminist theory to represent the experiences of people of colour in the North American continent and other developing countries (Brah, 1996; Caliste & Sefa Dei, 2000; Hooks, 2000; Mohanty, 1997). The importance of including the voices of

marginalized groups into the racial, gender, class, sexual orientation dialogues at the levels of academic and social institutions is emphasized by social, cultural, and critical theorists as well (2008; Hill, 2004; McLaren, 2000). It is for these reasons that I chose to center this study on the thoughts and findings of several feminist and education critical theorists, but especially the principles and recommendations of the anti-racism theory of education, as articulated by George Sefa Dei. Born in Ghana and educated in both Ghana and Canada and now working at an institute of higher learning in Canada, Dei's articulation and understanding of antiracist education resonates with my beliefs, having lived in the African Diaspora as well. I too grew up and was educated in Kenya, and furthered my education in the United States of America and Canada. In his articulation of antiracist theory of education, he addresses the perceived limitation of the theory, which I will discuss later, by recommending a paradigm shift and willingness by all educational and social institutions' practitioners to question the assumed and taken for granted White privilege and ongoing systematic subjugation of all other knowledges (Dei, 1996).

Dei's interpretation of the anti-racist education theory and practice is of particular interest to me because like me, he writes from the perspective of one who has had the experience of growing up in a political, social, and cultural milieu, where he was part of the majority. From his writings, I gather that he didn't experience discrimination on the basis of his colour, race, or ethnicity. While the impact of this type of a background on one's reaction to acts of racism is still painful and demoralizing. I know from personal experience and conversations with other immigrants that knowing that there is place of refuge where one's voice, dignity, and selfhood is not only accepted, but held in high regard, does soften the psychological blow of racist acts. Hooks (2003) comments on

how affirming and encouraging her Black segregated schooling experience was. Despite the lack of certification of their teachers and minimal school resources, the fact that all their administrators and teachers were Black was proof that all the students, despite their social, economic, or class, background, could excel academically if they wished to. Their schooling process with all its shortcomings modeled the possibilities.

The anti-racist education theory was originated in Britain around the literary works and practice of education scholars and researchers like Troyna (1987), Tryona and Williams (1986), Gilroy (1982), Bains & Cohen (1988). In Canada, Abella (1984), Thomas, (1984) and Lee (1985), were among the first scholars to embrace the anti-racist theory or education as a solution to the process of transforming the schooling system towards a more democratic, just, and equitable institution (Dei, 1996).

An anti-racist education framework interweaves the historical, cultural, systematic and institution imposition of dominant values and assumptions. It aspires to offer a process through which willing education practitioners can begin to deconstruct the race, gender, social economic, class, cultural, linguistic, and sexuality questions in all areas of the schooling process (Dei, 1996). All identities are deemed to be socially constructed for the purpose of sustaining dominant culture (Dei, 1996; Hooks, 2000; Tryona, 1986). Therefore a careful exploration and questioning of societies understating of power and how power is utilized in decision making is part and parcel of creating an anti-racist schooling system. The decision as to what constitutes relevant and credible knowledge within the schooling system should come from all education stake holders and should be expressed through open space dialogue (Dei, 1996)

Foundations of anti-racist theory of education

Dei (1996) defines anti-racism as “an action oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (p.25). The theory urges a rigorous look at history and the ideologies that have caused a feeling of “alienation” and “disconnectedness” (P. 15) in many marginalized youths, despite their success within the schooling system. Through an ongoing dialogue based on mutual respect and focussed on examining, acknowledging, validating our collective histories, and honouring social differences, those within the schooling system can begin the process of creating an understanding of the lived experiences of marginalized populations. The conscious process of interrogating, within the schooling system, the past and ongoing colonial narratives by those most adversely affected them is what will create a continuity of traditions that are inclusive of the histories represented in the community (Mohammed, 1998). It’s through the acknowledgement and valuing of these experiences that the society, empowered by the individual, can strengthen and transform (Hooks, 2000). These differences are the “source of strength to bolster our collective might. We act together to transform our social and material existence” (Dei 1996, p. 17).

The transformative and revolutionary dialogues must begin in the schooling system because outside of the home, school, as an institution of learning and culture transmission, is the core contributor to individual cultural identity (Bell; 2000; Dei, 1996; Darder, 1991; Giroux, 1985). It’s therefore the role of the schools to deliver the kind of education that creates a shared sense of belonging, connection, and identification, not only in the school, but in the general communities, as well (Bell, 2010; Dei; 1996; Freire 1970; Ladson Billings, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Principles of anti-racist theory of education as they relate to the Canadian schooling process

Acker (2006) discusses how much of the social and economic inequities are constructed as part “of the daily working activities and organizations of work” (p. 441) and how the ongoing struggle towards gender equity within the work place is revealing the ineffectiveness to address the gender question without its being interconnected to race and class (Collin, 1995; Dei 1996).

In his interpretation of anti-racist education theory, Dei (1996) has taken this argument further and called for a “recognition of the “social effects of “race”, despite the concept’s lack of scientific basis “...Race as a concept is deemed central to anti-racism discourse as a tool for community and academic organizing for political change” (p. 27). Therefore, a “comprehension of the intersections of all forms of social oppression, including how race is mediated with other forms of social difference like, gender, class, and sexuality, is essential to understanding the full social effect of race” (p.28) . As part and parcel to the investigation of the inter-subjectivity of race with other forms of social oppression is a critical questioning of

“White (male) power and privilege and its dominance in society and a problematizing the marginalization of certain voices in society, especially, the deligitimation of the knowledges and experiences of subordinated groups in the education system”. (p.28)

Walker (1993), calls for an acknowledgement of the “White as a racial group as opposed to a group with a race” and a recognition of how being a race-less group Whites have maintained their privilege through a lack of knowledge of their advantaged status and the oppressed state of the labelled and marginalized groups” (p.344). Through visuals that set whiteness as the standard for normalcy, the privilege

of whiteness continues to be “an emphatic statement of the multiple ways in which Whites are empowered and entitled by virtue of race” (p.345).

In *Feminism is for everybody*, Hooks (2000) highlights the importance of including men as allies in the struggle for gender equality and in the same spirit, anti-racism education theory underpins the importance of questioning White (male) privilege in the form of education that embodies a holistic understanding and appreciation of all human experiences, comprising social, cultural, political, ecological, and spiritual (including dominant and marginalized concepts of religiosity, faith and religious practice) aspects (Dei, 1996, p.26).

As a medium through which societal assumptions and values are taught and maintained, the schooling curricula should not only question white privilege, problematize the subjugation of knowledges and voices from minority groups, but should also “focus on an explication of the notion of “identity” and how identity is linked with schooling/to schooling” (Dei, 1996, p.31). Since students do not go to school as “disembodied” generic youths, educators need to understand “how racial, class gender, disabilities, sexual identities, affect and are affected by the schooling process and learning outcomes” (p.32). There is, therefore, a need for the education stake holders to acknowledge the pedagogic need to confront the challenges facing attempts at addressing issues of diversity and difference in the schooling system and an administrative movement towards the creation for an education system that is more inclusive and is capable of responding to minority concerns about public schooling (Dei, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Henry; Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000).

As part of the institutional structure sanctioned by society to the traditional role of producing and reproducing not only racial, but also gender, sexual, and class based inequalities in society, schools must seek to understand that the problems faced by the youths cannot be understood in isolation from the material and ideological circumstances in which the students find themselves. Instead, these problems must be understood as part of the current global and economic restructuring which has serious implications for Canadian schooling and especially for racial minority, women, and economically disadvantaged youths (Dei, 1996; Walker, 1993). Of great importance is the problematization of schooling practices like tracking, meritorious rewards, use of assessment materials and formats, teaching practices and methodologies that often privilege students from White race over students from other cultural groups (Bell, 2000; Darder, 2007). This task of scrutinizing the efficacy of the schooling system to educate, in a culturally appropriate and respectful environment cannot be achieved without the input of student-teacher-parent-community interactions. Rather than pathologizing families and students and blaming victims of social-historical and structural racism, anti-racist theory of education calls for parents and community members to share in the vital decision making processes affecting the administrative, control of schools, along with administrators, teachers and students (p. 27-35). Only then can anti-racist practitioners: administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and students, begin a process of transforming the schooling system from one centered on Western ideology into a space that is honouring and respecting of all knowledges. Caution is expressed however, that in this process, practitioners of the theory resist the tendency towards a perception of social reality from a “deficit

paradigm” that holds this theory as the only solution, as this would perpetuate the ongoing power relations of the have and have not. Instead, an understanding of the possibilities, and limitations of the theory are recommended (Niemonen, 2007; Dei, 1996; Cheng & Soudack, 1994).

It is through the schooling process that students begin to develop a socially situated identity (Dei, 2000; 1996) through text and knowledge transfer that either confirms or contradicts the students’ notions of their home culture (Dei, 1996). Regardless of culture of origin, this process of knowing or wondering where one’s identity is situated within the schooling system, can cause a stronger or lesser sense of self, causing students to become further alienated from, or identify with, the country, culture, or language of origin (Dei, 2000; 1996; Hooks, 2000; Henry, 1998; Cummins, 1986; Walker, 1993).

Racial identity creation within the schooling system

In Foucault’s Challenge, Mimi Ovrer (1994) argues that schooling stories are often narrated to embody the complex disciplinary technologies present in schools through the testimonies which the tellers use to make sense of self. She further posits that these interactions between oneself, others, and the technologies of individual domination, create the histories of how an individual acts upon him/herself and are based upon personal beliefs of self. This is significant, given the young age at which students come into the schooling system and the amount of time spent there.

As mentioned earlier, students come to school with significant home identities. However, it is while in the schooling system that they learn where in the social stratification they fit. As they are situated within a society’s cultural context, schools

aren't neutral environments. They impart upon the students the cultural values, assumptions and ideologies deemed most beneficial to society as decided by those in leadership. In her book *Culture and power in the classroom*, Darder (1991) suggests that the sole purpose of the schooling system in the United States of America is to further the progress of the White dominant group. Even the most progressive of bodies within this schooling system, as long as it's anchored in the unexamined ideologies that perpetuate this privileging of the White majority, in the end serves this very purpose. Within the Canadian context, education researchers and educators like (Calliste, 1994; Dei, 1996; Henry; (1998) have articulated similar sentiments regarding the privileging of the knowledges and histories of the White majority in the Canadian schooling system. Dei (1996) suggest to acknowledge that the inequities within the schooling system affects the students requires an exploration of how those within the system narratize their schooling process. In other words, what stories are the stake holders in the schooling system creating themselves and how are these stories represented in the greater society?

As it relates to race and racial identity within the schooling system, Dei (1996; 1993), suggests that the process of racialized narrative is supported through the "creation of the self and other, or us and them, in the discourse of hate perpetrated by the colonizer on the colonized" (Dei, 1996, p. 50). A process which Darder (1991) states, affects all students regardless of their background but has more negative effects on the lives of marginalized minorities, than the majority group.

In the North American schooling system both the conservative and liberal educational discourses, in their "adherence to a positivist education perspective, emphasize consensus, social conformity, and the stability of the dominant culture [all of

which] are accomplished through a hidden curricular” (Darder, 1991p.20). Both the liberal and conservative discourses uphold the values and beliefs of the dominant group (middle to upper class White male) and the continued suppression of marginalised groups’ knowledges, as evidenced by the constant creation and documentation of minority categories and terms to differentiate groups. A practice that suggests a distinct and inferior status to the dominant culture, and sets the categorized groups as subordinate and deficient at the social, political, academic, and economic levels. The successful acquisition and execution of these Western ideological values, beliefs, and assumptions of the dominant group are therefore set as the gate into a place of better and improved social, economical, and personal wellbeing (Darder, 1991; Dei, 1996; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Darder (1991) posits that the North American pedagogies solidly anchored in the Western ideology and scattered through colonialism to almost every corner of the world, aspire to educate individuals who can adapt to the “existing power configurations” by “emphasising control, logic, prediction, and certainty”(p.21).

This process, according to Darder, proceeds “with permitted disregard of most historical consciousness and knowledges regarding subordinate culture which has led to the systematic denial and suppression of human agency (1991, p. 21). Through the tracking of students and offering meritorious rewards and promotion into upper grades and eventually institutions of higher learning, many students of color are left behind and find themselves relegated to the blue service sector of society. The solution to which, the antiracist theory of education recommends, a rigorous critical investigation of White male power and privilege, the rationality for its dominance, its delineation and reading in the schools and society at large (Dei, 1996).

Therefore, any teachers of colour who haven't addressed the effects of this discourse to their identities, become supporters and sustainers of the system, thereby re-subjecting themselves to the systematically institutionalized inequities, while tragically perpetrating them to students and especially those of colour (Hooks, 1999). As catalysts of change all, but especially teachers of colour, must heed Freire's call to look at their past as a means of understanding more clearly the values and beliefs at the foundation of their perceived identities, so as to ultimately and wisely build the future ([Freire, 2000](#)).

While reflecting on her experience as an Aborigine student in Australia, Behrendt (1996) remembers how alienated she felt studying within a system which still predominantly focuses, on the colonial history and ignores the experiences and presence of its indigenous people. As she walked through the halls of her old elementary school, she recalled the discouragement she received from many teachers and one especially has stuck with her:

'You will never amount to anything', said her third grade teacher...It's chilling to think how many Koonos are disheartened, put off, and lose confidence through the meanness and hatred that some teachers so blatantly show towards Aboriginal children (p.28)

In her various publications, Ladson-Billings, notes the transformative power of teacher encouragement and high expectation of students (2000; 1991; 1994). As Slocum, now a Harvard graduate notes, in spite of her experiences with racist teachers, her persistence and progress in her academic rigors was hugely due to the encouragement she received from the Aboriginal student centers and a university professor who believed she could attain any level of academic study she desired:

...in the Aboriginal student center, to know there were other Koonos who felt the same way I did, gave me confidence...they provide an important life line for

students when the message was the messages are we shouldn't be there... Someone reached out... she was confident that I would be accepted in post graduate work, a confidence I didn't share. (p.29)

Gender, race and sexual harassment within the schooling system

During the interview process and while reading my participants narratives, it became clear that for most of the participants, the racism they had encountered had affected how they perceived themselves as gendered individuals within the Canadian society. Four of the participants shared having personally encountered racially charged sexual harassment in addition to racial discrimination while in the schooling system. While most of this harassment came from fellow students, some of it came from their teachers and other members of the staff.

The study of race and gender hasn't acquired enough attention in the social and political arena (Simen, 2005). Nonetheless, as Welsh et al. (2005) notes "the rape script is raced whether it involves intraracial or interracial rape" (p. 89). Anti-racist education theory posits that race dialogue in academia and political spaces cannot be complete without a language that adequately expresses all human experiences (Dei, 1996; Welsh et al., 2006; Walker, 1993). Russo (1991), highlights the need to reject "essence/totalizing discourse" for a that is for one that is comprehensively inclusive of "forms to knowledges that reveal an understanding of how multiple identities as subject positions affects our very existence" (p. 303). Evelyn Glenn succinctly captures this thought "... histories and experiences are not just diverse, they are intertwined and interdependent" (as cited in Dei, 1996, p. 55). Dei (1996) suggests employing "integrative anti-racism studies" (p. 55), to address the exclusivity and interdependent nature of race, class, gender, and sexuality, as socially constructed categories. He defines intergretive anti-racist approach as "an activist

theory and analysis that must always be consciously linked to struggles against oppression” (p.55). Calling for a rejection of “meta-narratives and the grand theories” (p.56), that deny the complex nature of human experiences, the integrative-antiracist approach proposes a “multiplicative” analysis of how various forms of social oppression are “historically constituted (Dei, 1996, p. 56; Welsh, et al., 2006).

In their paper, *I'm not thinking of it as sexual harassment: understanding harassment across race and citizenship*, Welsh, et al. (2006) and Simien (2005), emphasis the need to study the interconnection between gender and race. They note how legal descriptions of racial and sexual harassment are more advantageous to White women than men. Harvey, (2005), also asserts the need to theorize the social construction of gender and how it affects women of colour especially. The article notes how studies addressing interactive oppression, investigate how race, gender, and class affect minority women’s access to certain jobs, compensation for work, and their suitability for work” (p. 790) while relegating them to a victim position.

Welsh, et al, (2006) investigated how race and citizenship described and understood sexual harassment in their work places. The study confirmed results from other studies that showed that women of colour “experienced racialized harassment alongside sexual harassment (Gruben & Bjorn, 1982; Mansfield et al. 1991). The study found the distinction between sexual harassment and racial harassment was a little blurry for most. While acknowledging the prevalence of racially charged sexual harassment, they didn’t perceive themselves as victims of sexual harassment. Instead, they saw sexual harassment as part of the ongoing systemic racism which they had learned to accept and “deal with” (p.96).

Compared to White women, the women of colour were less likely to report these occurrences. However, these women of colour were more likely to feel offended and report racial discrimination, which they saw as a more serious issue than sexual harassment. Those who were willing to do so were less likely to do so if the perpetrators were from minority groups as they felt the need to “stay united” in the fight against mainstream racism. The authors suggest that the White women were more able to identify and report sexual harassment because they were “advantaged by their white privilege and assumed citizenship status and therefore, their harassment was less linked to their racial identity than their race” (p. 96). This study suggested a connection between citizenship statuses was connected to the frequency of sexual harassment and lower report rates. Immigrant women who needed their employers’ approval to gain citizenship reported more incidents of racial and sexual harassment and were also more likely to remain silent and tolerate the abuse. For some of the women with full citizenship status, uncertainty about the views of the employer on race and racism also caused some of them to stay silent about their harassment. Yoder and Aniakudo (1996) found that Black women firefighters were more likely to be sexually harassed and less likely to report these incidents to their bosses. Harvey (2005) notes that while in the most predominantly White (male) work place, women of colour were more likely than White women to “experience feelings of marginalization, dissonance, and alienation” (p.790).

To create their own safe spaces within the work place, many women of colour find it necessary to form alliances with people from their own minority groups or from other minority groups (Simien, 2005). For many women of colour, this isn’t necessarily a safe haven from sexual harassment, as they continue to experience stereotyped racialized

sexual harassment from the men from their minority groups and others, but experiencing it from members of their own and other minority groups instead of the White race was seen as less serious, less offensive, and more tolerable (Welsh, et al., 2006). Although there is greater “feminist consciousness among the women of colour than men of colour” (Simien, 2005, p. 530), when it comes to political activism, women of colour often have to choose to participate on behalf of their entire culture group instead of themselves as gendered individuals in the North American society (Welsh et al, 2006).

The schooling experience of women of colour isn't different from that expressed by the women in the above named studies (Hooks, 2000). Harvey (2005) calls for consideration of the ways in which race, class, and gender combine to create schooling experiences for minority women and men that differ from those of white women and men. In addition to understanding how forms of oppression and in this case, racialized sexual oppression, have been historically constituted within the schooling system, Dei (1996) suggests, refraining from using other forms of oppression as deterrents as this would be destructive. An example of using a form of oppression to deter another would be violently or shamefully disciplining a student for using a racial slur or for sexually harassing another.

Anti-racist education pedagogy

Curriculum

The intention of anti-racism education isn't to create yet another hegemonic structure in the schools but to allow every student to share in the school center (Dei & Calliste, 2000). Therefore, an understanding that race is socially constructed and therefore bears strong and persistent social meanings embedded within the experiences of minority groups living in White dominated societies is crucial to the race discourse.

Educators must realize that “debating the validity of the existence of racism is often painful for minority students and when forming and delivering their subject matters, the teachers must therefore make a connection between the perpetuation of racism, sexism, class differentiation and the subjects and material they use, as these are fundamental aspects of human experiences that intersect both in the historical and contemporary reality of people’s lives” (Dei, 1996, p. 28).

The efforts of extricating racism from the education institutions requires, for the anti-racist education practitioner to intentionally, rigorously, and critically evaluate the formal content in the textbooks, lesson plans, assessments, etc., as well as the hidden and latent images in schools, such as image representation. They must also critically assess preferential and exclusionary treatments based on socially constructed notions of punishable or reward able attributes, omission in curricula material, ordering of inclusions into the established and seen curricula, and all other aspects connected with the schooling system.

In their review of anti-racist literature and its implementation within the Canadian schooling system, Cheng & Soudack (1994), remarked on the importance the theory paid to the content being taught, how it was taught, but also by whom it was taught. They highlight the importance of the racial composition of the teaching staff matching that of the students, in the attempt to address and combat the racial inequities in the mainstream and hidden curricula. In addition to equitable distribution of the racial makeup up of the teaching staff, they suggest a revamping of the curricula, by critically evaluating the omission, inclusions, and ordering of the formal and hidden curricula. The ultimate intention for the critical evaluation of the curriculum is to move it from a Euro-centered

to an inclusive and anti-racist one that is representative of the diverse histories and the different perspectives and knowledges. As far back as 1993, the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training observed the need for a curriculum that was more representative of diverse knowledges within its schools:

What is taught in schools must represent the authentic picture of its reality. The curriculum must represent the variety of peoples and cultures in Ontario and Canadian society and accurately represent the contributions of all men and women of all races, cultures and religions, ages, abilities, and backgrounds. (p. 8)

Along with racial inequities, the curriculum should highlight other socially constructed identities and how they are represented or misrepresented in the formal and hidden curricula as none of these identity categories is independent of the others. The curriculum therefore, should be:

...weaved within the diversity and complexity of human experiences...and integrated into the mainstream (not as an additive curriculum), and treated as a perspective permeating every aspect of the curriculum. (Cheng & Soudack, 1994, p. 15)

In restructuring the curriculum, the students and teachers of colour and members of other marginalized populations will begin to develop a sense of identification and connectedness with the schooling system (Dei, 1996; Dei & Walcott (1993). Furthermore, as Cummins (1986) found in his observation of school children, those children who felt centered in their own knowledge, (culture, gender, ethnicity, etc.) exuded more confidence and were better motivated to excel academically, because students are empowered when they knew that they were part of the information.

Teacher: The catalyst of change

To assist students reach a more authentic sense of self and actualize their potential, the praxis of the antiracist education theory is geared towards guiding them

through an exploration of their personal, societal, and global worlds, as an inextricable component of their schooling program (Dei, 2000; 1996). Therefore, the facilitating teachers need to philosophically, theoretically and experientially, understand this process of self-realization (Hooks, 2002, Ladson-Billings, 1994; Freire; 1993). Teachers of colour, having experienced the cultural, linguistic, race, and ethnic, emasculating schooling process, need to first engage in a personal cleansing process, so as to gain an awareness of their attitudes about, their interpretations of, and the self-preservation mechanism acquired throughout their schooling (Hooks, 2002).

These teachers need to pinpoint where, within the schooling system, their racial identities were uplifted or subjugated below the dominant culture's beliefs and values, how this affected their notions of themselves, and begin to consciously position themselves, mentally, emotionally and intellectually, as equals within the segregated cultural milieu of the schooling system (Hooks, 2002). Only by tapping into their knowledge, which is the sum total of all their experiences, can they align their teaching praxis with that which is needed to assist students be authentic in their learning and lived experiences (Hooks 2002). Lacking this experience, these teachers of colour will continue to perpetuate the distribution and acquisition of inequitable knowledge. Guided by the filters of their unquestioned and unexamined socially constructed identities, they will impart subtly and/or overtly their racialized, classed, gendered, etc. acquired beliefs. By articulating their understanding of their social relation to schooling, their voice could contribute to the taken for granted knowledge (Freire. 1993). To transgress their own racialized schooling and now teaching practices, they must understand the structuralized and systematized oppression of knowledge and voice, embedded in their educational

process, and re-examine how their created and presented global, national and citizenship identities are authentic representations of all their lived experiences (Dei, 2005; Freire;1998; Hooks,1994).

Although laws against blatant inequitable distribution of community resources have created seeming equitable institutions, more subtle forms of racism are embedded within socially constructed structures, where they are continuously, propagated, first, through the school system, the mechanism through which societies maintain the values and beliefs of the dominant culture, then through the ranks of the social economic ladder. Darder (1991) describes it this way:

The social status quo is not only maintained along divisions of cognitive skills but even more importantly along non-cognitive skills or behavioural skills that are directly related to social class...skills are differently reinforced...among different students in the same environment...rules that are most significant in the relation to what students learn regarding their appropriate future roles in society. (p.5)

It is through the schooling process that students begin to develop an identity. Overtly or subtly through text and knowledge transfer, the students' home culture is confirmed or contradicted and the creation of a racialized society continues (Darder, 1991; Dei, 1993; 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2001; Henry, 1998).

While the praxis of this theory is geared towards assisting students to reach, through an exploration of personal, academic, global and experiential processes, a more authentic sense of self so as to fully actualize their potential, it's my opinion that the facilitating teachers need to, out of their own volition, experience the process of self-realization as prescribed in the anti-racist theory. Teachers of colour, especially, who having experienced the inequitable, cultural, gender, linguistic, race, and ethnic, emasculating schooling process, need to go through a, cleaning process if you will, that

will assist them to get in touch with their attitudes, interpretations, and self-preservation mechanisms of what their experiences in the schooling system have been. They need to pinpoint where, within the schooling system, their racial identities, were uplifted or subjugated below the dominant culture and intentionally position themselves, mentally, emotionally, intellectually as equals within the cultural milieu of the country and schooling system (Hooks, 2003; 2002). Only then can they align their personal teaching philosophies with their authentic selves; an essential condition in facilitating the students in their authentic identity formation as suggested in the anti-racist education theory (Dei, 1996). Short of this, these teachers of colour will continue to perpetuate the inequitable knowledge distribution and acquisition, because, guided by the filters of their socially constructed, unquestioned and unexamined identities, they will impart intentionally and unintentionally, their subtly and overtly acquired beliefs, values, and assumptions (Hook, 2002).

Therefore, a teacher of colour, having encountered the Canadian schooling system, in order to encourage his/her students, regardless of their racial identities, needs to commit to a process of self-actualization which promotes their own well being. This process of self discovery needs first be directed towards oneself. Students will not learn to address issues of racial inequity if the teacher hasn't come to terms with her/his own experiences of race, because the teacher isn't a neutral participant in this process (Hooks, 2000).

Hooks (2000) further asserts that a renewal process that would rejuvenate current teaching practices into emancipatory ones, would need to be experienced by all teachers, and particularly teachers of colour. Dei (2005) sees it as essential for teacher of colour to

learn and be able to "articulate their understanding of their social relation of schooling [so that] their voices could contribute to the taken for granted knowledge" (p. 277). To transgress their own racialized schooling and now teaching practices they need to understand the structuralized and systematized, knowledge, oppression, and voice, embedded in their educational process, and re-examine their created and presented global, national, citizenship identities, and how they are authentic representations of the essence of whom they believe they are (Dei, 1996).

Despite societal perception of teachers as unpoliticized and neutral, the very process of education is politicized and hence, those within it (Hooks, 2010). Teaching is an institutional position and the teachers are unique individuals whose classroom encounters are the embodiment of different discourses, sometimes with contradictory histories, that may at times induce empowerment or powerlessness in them and their students (Persell, 1977).

Inevitably, a racialized schooling system will produce racially conscious teachers and students. Currently, the teacher education and socialization process affects minority students differently than it does students from the dominant groups, regardless of the cultural and ethnic background of the teacher. More often than not, teachers will hold negative and lowered expectations for lower class and minority students than middle to upper class White students. This "genesis of teacher education" (Persell, 1977, p. 132) is influenced by the teachers' social beliefs about race, class structure, social, political and economic status. It is also influenced by pedagogical theories, conceptual frameworks, educational structures, attitudes, and practices instilled by teacher training programs and

students' physical characteristics, behaviour and test performance (Darder, 2004; Dei, James-Wilson & Zine, 2002; Dei & Calliste, 2000).

Teachers, regardless of their identities, have the onus of engaging in a wholistic and inwardly directed process of self actualization that would promote their well being. A holistic approach to teaching, learning, and spiritual identity, is more beneficial to the learner and the teacher, than the objectification and compartmentalization of a separate public and private teacher identity, that doesn't interweave the schooling and private life experiences, and places intellect above experiential knowledge (Hooks, 1994)

The antiracist education theory blends the two concepts of the private and teaching/learning experiences, not only as important processes in the acquisition of academic knowledge, but as integral aspects in the socialization of whole beings, whose expressions and identity are the subtotal of all their lived experiences (Dei, 1996).

Through sharing lived experiences of theorizing, the teachers and students are proactively linked to a process of self discovery, recovery, and collective liberation, while bridging the existing gap between theory and practice. The teachers and students of colour and other marginalised populations especially, would benefit greatly from such a process oriented curriculum (Dei, 1996). While the defining and deconstructing of the effects of race and all other socially constructed identities continues to be highly theorized, their experiences are painfully real, not to mention invalidated and unacknowledged, for lack of an acceptable "socially constructed, analytical and conceptual category" (Dei, 1996, p.41).

Hooks (1994), describes the anguish of having her attempts at validating her struggles as a Black woman within predominantly White male dominated institutions of

higher learning. It wasn't until she encountered the critical and liberatory pedagogy taught in the faculty of women's studies and the works of Paolo Freire, that she able to experience the beginnings of a union of mind, body, and spirit pedagogy that she would later apply in her teaching practice. Willis (1998), also painfully recollects how a White male secretary in a faculty of education she was teaching in, reacted offensively to a request she made and how the chair chose to support him, without acknowledging the secretary's overt racism, or the inappropriateness of his behaviour to a distinguished faculty member.

Other teachers of colour, have also recollected the hurts and frustrations of learning and working in institutions of learning and other social environments, where their experiences, like Hook's and Willis', were ridiculed, dismissed, or completely ignored, despite their official status within these institutions. Race superseded their academic credentials, work experience, or status, in determining how they were treated. None of these women were allowed to express their experience in the institutions they were part of. If anything, their inferior status as a subjugated minority was reinforced by their teachers, professors, and faculties (Ladson-Billing, 2001; Hooks, 2000; 1994; Henry, 1998; Willis, 1998; Kehoe & Mansfield, 1994).

For theory to act as a healing practice, for both the teacher and student, their theorizing experiences need to be fundamentally linked to the process of self-recovery and collective liberation, as earlier suggested by Freire (2002). This process cannot happen within the prescribed curricular. (Dei, James-Wilson & Zine, 2002), recommend utilizing other centers of knowledge by allowing both teachers and students to negotiate the learning institutions from a multicentric perspective that must be integrated within the

very foundations of the now unicentric theories and pedagogies of learning. Academic institutions must value and legitimize even those works of marginalised groups perceived to offer accessibility to the broader reading public and therefore, officially sanctioning and permitting teachers of colour especially, to legitimately tap into their indigenous, spiritual, and community knowledges, instead of constantly filtering through their own knowledges, to access the one legitimately sanctioned knowledge.

While all teachers, regardless of background, can teach all students to excel, endorsing various languages, equitable hiring processes in all areas, diverse knowledge sources, and visual representations of all things pertaining to schooling, to reflect the knowledge's of those within it, would physically, visually, mentally, and psychologically validate and empower all students and teachers and staff from subjugated minority groups (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Banks; 2007; Cummins, 1986)

A historical look at the interconnectedness of discriminations: “Black Shame”

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers of colour have addressed racism in their lives in a way that has enabled them to go back and teach in a system where they admit to have experienced racism. Through this investigative process, it became evident that each of the participants' experiences with racism was as unique as the strategies they chose to cope and heal their wounds. However, underneath it all lay a common thread. This thread was the history of the systematically embedded social, cultural, ethnic, class, sexual, and national values and belief systems, that portray difference as deficient (Delpit,1988). While each participant's sense of self worth as woman of colour, a racialized and gendered being, diminished, the wheels of a

historically systematized system of oppression kept turning, powered by a the beliefs and values of a hegemonic system that vigilantly guards the interest of the upper class White male. The pain of the participants' experiences of is so real that managing it leaves no time to further investigate whether the notions of femininity, beauty, or desirability, they hold onto are based on fact or fiction.

I will further look at the interconnectedness of gender, race, class, and nationhood through the eyes of Wigger's (2010) account of the 1920 Black Shame campaign in Germany in which women were called upon to play the role of maintaining the purity of the White German lineage by not having sexual intercourse with the Black Soldiers imported from the African French colonies.

Lessons from the Rhine

LATE LONDON EDITION

DAILY HERALD

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BLACK SCOURGE IN EUROPE

Sexual Horror Let Loose by France on the Rhine

DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUNG GERMAN GIRLS

The article we publish below from the pen of Mr. E. D. Morel is a revelation so horrible that only the strongest sense that it is our duty to let the British public know what is being done would induce us to publish it.

Particularly, we want to guard against the assumption that we are acquiescing in the policy of raising hostility between Great Britain and France. The French people are innocent. Still more strictly would we guard against the idea that we are encouraging colour prejudice. But for the very reason that we champion the rights of the African native in his own home, we deplore that he should be used as a mere instrument of revenge by an imperialist Power.

A DELIBERATE POLICY

By E. D. Morel.

"In addition to Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Offenbach, Hanau, Homburg and Wiesbaden have been occupied. The troops (20,000) consisted entirely of Senegalese black men, only the officers being white."—Daily papers, April 8.

In the columns of the DAILY HERALD last January I wrote on the conception laws applied to the whole of French Africa and Madagascar. I there dealt with the methods adopted in Africa, the bloodshed involved, the menace which the policy constitutes for all Europeans, and for stable and humane government in the African tropics.

A fortnight ago I called attention in general terms to the European side of the question in a letter to one of your weekly contemporaries. I should have taken the gloves off before now about it, had it not been that I have been waiting for complementary details as the result of inquiries I am prosecuting. My information is not yet as complete as I should wish, but the news is in-ter-est-ing in that it shows in a clear manner the use of these black troops, to pay for their up-keep, and provide fuel to heat them. At Saarbrücken, it seems, the cost to the town of these brothels is no less than 70,000 marks. It is reported to me that the mayor of a certain town (I do not here name it for obvious reasons) was told that his hesitation in complying with demands for this purpose was rendering him liable to court-martial; it was impressed upon him that such houses were "specially necessary for black troops, and if not provided, German women, girls, and boys would pay the penalty."

All this is merely the fringe. As one correspondent puts it:—

"Some of the most awful things never become publicly known—the assaults by negro soldiers on ladies who could not face publicity, and have committed suicide... things are such that strangers would consider them pure inventions, whether told or printed."

Main Justice, Liverpool

I should like to emphasize some of the main ideas involved. The results

FRENCH TROOPS RUSHED UP

Reinforcements Sent to Frankfurt

TANKS MOVING EAST

BERLIN, Friday.—To-day Frankfurt is a little quieter than yesterday. The French seized all the large hotels for their own purposes, and quartered a great number of officers and soldiers in private residences.—Wireless Press.

AMSTERDAM, Friday.—The "Berliner Tageblatt" reports that now French troops have arrived from France in the occupied zone. Three regiments of infantry and a great number of tanks started yesterday from Strasbourg in an easterly direction, and to-day French troops ferried over the Rhine at different points for the reinforcement of the force of occupation in the neutral zone.

It is said that Marshal Foch has ordered the reinforcement of the troops of occupation at Frankfurt.—Exchange.

Condemned and Saved

BERLIN, Friday.—Ten members of the "Red Guard" were condemned at Duisburg to death by drumhead court-martial in the Ruhr districts, but, according to the papers, only two of the sentences were carried out, as a telegram from the Government arrived in time to stop the execution of the others.—Reuter.

BERLIN, Friday.—A minor who participated in the fighting has been sentenced to be shot.—Central News.

"WHEELS IN THE AIR"

How Dogs Caused Fatal Bus Smash

The cause of the fatal bus smash at Shooter's Hill on Easter Monday was attributed, at yesterday's inquest on the three victims of the accident, to the driver's attempt to avoid running over two dogs in the road.

The inquiry was held at Greenwich by the South-East London coroner (Mr. W. H. Whitehouse). As a result of the smash 21 people were injured, the three who succumbed being May M. Watson, 56, widow; Frederick G. Watson, 36, a bookbinder; and Albert T. Daynes Wood, 51, a master butcher.

The driver of the bus, an ex-soldier, Herbert Croxley, was present in court. His right hand was in a sling and his head was bandaged, and he appeared to be very weak as he was assisted to his seat.

Charles Black, son-in-law of Mrs. Watson, said he spoke to the driver of the bus, and he was perfectly sober.

"Dogs—and the Man"

The next witness was Louis Pezouric, who saw the accident whilst standing in his front garden. He said, he said, was attracted by the howling of a dog, and, looking up, he saw a bus turn sharp to the left, "with wheels in the air, and the vehicle owing in." The bus then crashed to the ground.

Witnesses ran to the spot, and found it lying across the road with all the glass splintered, and those who had been injured lying on the sidewalk. The dog, which had been run over and was howling pitifully, was lying in the roadway.

Albert Grainger said he was standing outside a public-house last Monday evening, when his attention was drawn to two dogs in the centre of the road. A man stepped off the sidewalk to drive them away, and a bus passed going towards London. The next second the bus swerved to avoid the dog, and "over it went." Witness ran to give assistance and helped the driver to the hospital. On the way the driver said to him, "It was those dogs—and the man."

Mr. McDonald expressed the sympathy of the L.G.O.C. with the relatives of those killed, and the inquiry was then adjourned until next Friday.

BIG RAIL WAG DEMAND

Discussed by Central Wages Board

£17,000,000 CLAIM

As exclusively announced in DAILY HERALD yesterday, the National Union of Railwaymen has in a demand for a flat increase of £1 per week for all men covered by the settlement of January, 1920, in conjunction with the Associated Society it has also asked for an increase of 1s. per day for all drivers and firemen and 2s. for all cleaners.

The latter demands will affect whole of the men employed on all railways of Britain and Ireland.

The cost of the demand for £1 per week for all men covered by the settlement works out at a total of £15,000,000 a year, whilst the claim for 1s. for drivers and firemen and for cleaners would amount to a total of £2,000,000, giving a gross total of £17,000,000 per annum.

Wages Board Adjourned

The matter was considered yesterday by the Central Wages Board. The Board consists of five representatives of the men and five representatives of the general managers of the companies.

After a lengthy discussion the meeting was adjourned until Tuesday next.

Inquiries elicited the statement that there is a possibility of the Board being able to deal with the matter by referring it to the National Wages Board, which would be the next course under the terms of the Jan. agreement.

The National Board consists of the following persons:—

Mr. W. W. Mackenzie (chairman); Mr. J. H. Thompson; Mr. W. J. Boyd; Mr. J. May; Mr. J. H. Williams; Mr. H. W. Walker; Mr. Henry Thomson; Mr. Thomas Williams; Mr. A. J. W. J. H. Simpson; Mr. Stevenson; Mr. Robinson; Mr. E. Manville.

Rank and File Demand

The decision taken by the N.U. Executive to apply for a flat rate increase without regard to the sliding scale agreement made in Jan. brings to a head the unrest among railwaymen of the past few months.

Figure 2: The Horror of the Rhine (Wigger, 562)

Wigger (2001) like other researchers (Hall, 2000; Tarman & Sears, 2005) suggests the use of a language, grounded in historical facts, that is accessible to the people most affected by these notions of socially constructed identities as they are all constructed from the same fabric of power differential control. Hall (2000) as well, sees no difference between the practice of sexism and racism, as they are both informed by the same ideology of exclusion. He also suggests the use of terminologies and concepts that

bridge the gaps for those who posit themselves on any one side of these socially constructed identities. (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992), as well assert that racism cannot be understood without taking into connection its relationship with all other socially constructed identities.

Interconnectedness of race, gender, class, and nationhood

In *Black Shame*, Wigger (2001) reconstructs the process through which the concepts of nation, culture, gender, and race, have overtime “overlapped” and flexibly combined into categories of “integration and exclusion” (p. 553). He uses the 1920s Black Shame campaign that was orchestrated by individuals, groups, and European nations against the Black soldiers from the African French colonies. The campaign was mobilized as a movement for the protection of “White womanhood” (p. 553). “...the ‘Black Shame’ was condemned as French aggression against white womanhood, the German nation, European civilisation, and the White race, and was used as an ideological call for the cohesion of all Germans and ‘Whites” (p.553). The Black soldiers were stigmatized as brutes with uncontrollable sexual desire and accused of raping or desiring to rape the White woman, a stigma that has persisted to this day, across Europe and North America. The image below is a “scene from German propaganda movie *Die Schwarze Schmach* (The Black Shame, 1921)” (Wiggin, p. 560) a fragile White woman is portrayed in the hand of Black soldiers.



Figure 3: Scene from Propaganda Movie (Wiggin p. 560)

Wigger notes how through this campaign, Germany placed the German White woman as a figurative “medium of the imagined Black threat” (p. 558), and in the process placed the burden of maintaining an untarnished and unpolluted German on the bodies and psyches of women. Gender in this case, became central to the Black shame campaign by pitting the Black soldiers, who were described as primitive and barbaric, against the White upper class women, who were seen as the “ideal of purity and civilization” (p. 558). Class entered into this scenario as the images of the imagined rape of White women portrayed women from the lower class sector as the actual victims of this sexual brutality and the upper class women as the implied victims. As well, the campaign portrayed women from the upper class sector as “conscious, passionate

defenders of the honour of White womanhood: full of national and racial pride” (p. 567). Portrayed as having “an awareness of their inferiority” (p. 567) women from the lower class sector were seen as being protectors of the upper class women, willing to do whatever it took (including giving their bodies to the soldiers) to protect their superior counterparts from the imagined rapes from the African troops.

Wigger suggests that the use of women bodies was a “national racial metaphor” (p.567) representing the rape of Germany by its enemies, on the one hand. On the other hand, Germany intending to maintain its White heritage, wished to control the women’s sexuality by forbidding them to have sexual intercourse with the Black soldiers, which might have resulted in the “biological decline of the purity of the White race and power through mulattoisation and Syphilitication” (p. 567). To benefit the state and Whiteness, women were represented as helpless and “embedded with an element of weakness” (p.568). Stereotyped as weaker than men, women and notion of femininity became a representation of a weak link for the nation of Germany and Whiteness and were therefore, in need of constant monitoring and scrutiny. In the image below the campaign puts a special call to women to do their part in keeping German civilized by stay away from the alien soldiers.

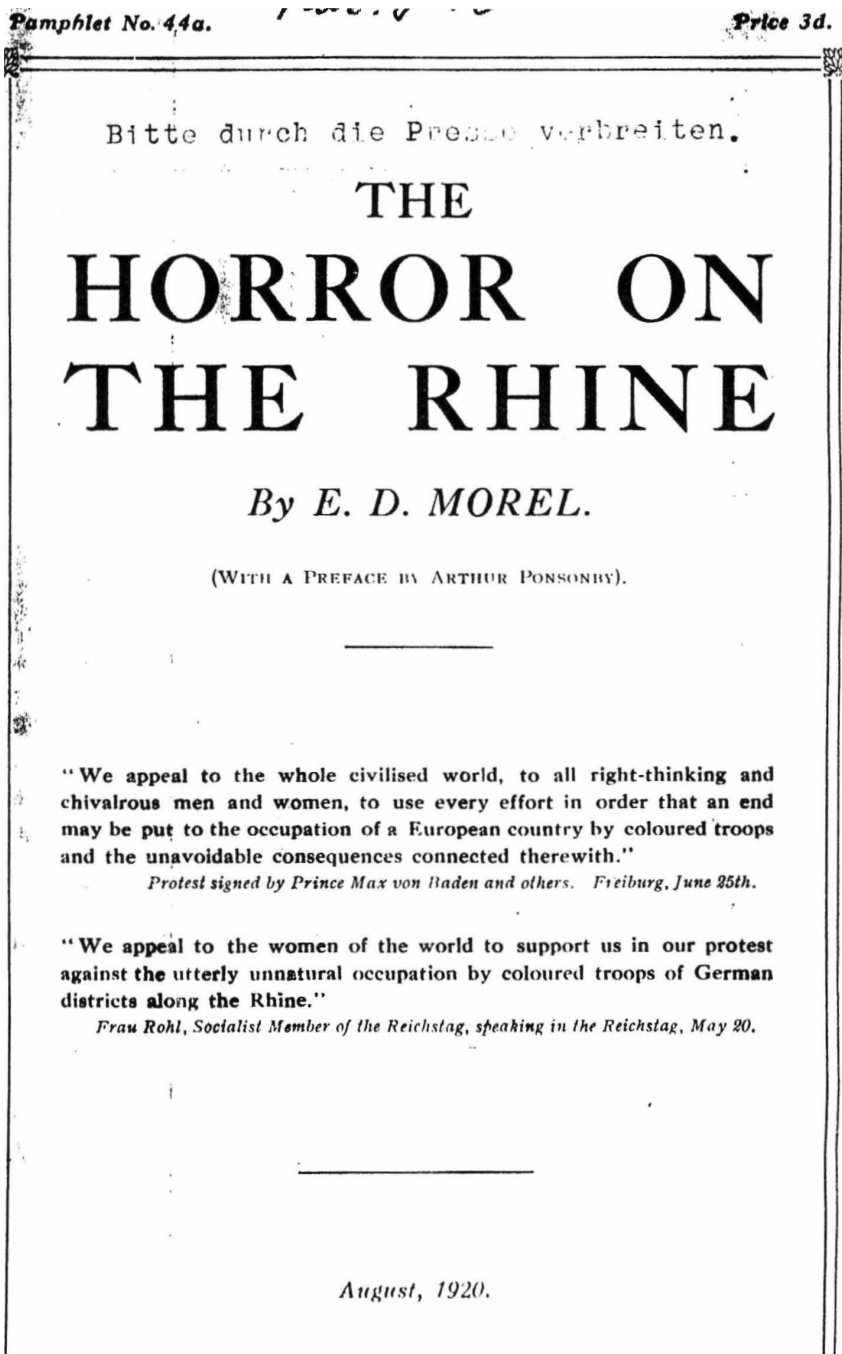


Figure 4: Horror on the Rhine (Wiggin p. 562)

In this campaign, the woman was portrayed as having the power to taint or keep Germany pure biologically and politically. Wiggin explains this rationale, "If a nation bases the definition of itself on blood and lineage, then a metaphor of "national

contamination wouldn't work outside the concept of a nation linked to purity, therefore, a nation can only be contaminated through the sexual intercourse of woman" (p. 568).

The role of maintaining feminine and national purity must then fall on the powers that be. The Black Shame campaign, sought to accomplish this goal by interlacing and interconnecting the characteristics and patterns of the betraying woman, who chose to have sexual intercourse with the Black Soldiers, with those of the savage Black Soldier. In this process gender now merged with race, and class, in the racialized campaign. Gender became a racialized concept that caused a schism among the White women. By keeping their bodies pure through not engaging in sexual intercourse with the Black soldiers, women were seen as "defenders of their femininity, racial, and national honour" (p.569). The power and freedom of their sexuality no longer belonged to the women but to Germany and to the White race. As Wigger notes, "Gender became a flexible and combinable category, but was also used as a direct substitute for category race" (p. 569). Like the Black soldiers, Wigger notes that women were seen to have little sexual control unlike their "White male counterpart" (p. 570) who wishing to establish a criteria for the ideal woman, as the keeper of national, feminine, and racial honour, created a distinction between the "honourable and dishonourable" woman (p. 570).

The dishonourable woman often portrayed as being from a lower social class was usually depicted as voluptuous and sensual, while the honourable woman was depicted as being from the upper class "domesticated, with pale, fragile features, and kept her body free of alien forces" (p. 570). The dishonourable woman was seen as a traitor of the White race while the honourable one was hailed as the preserver of the White race. In this image, a dishonourable woman is depicted as a sow seducing a Black soldier.



Die Illustration »Infamie« vom Zeichner Del Marle erschien am 10. Juli 1920 in der Zeitschrift »Le Rire« und trug die Begleitworte: »Wir wollten einen Adler erwachen und müssen uns vor einem Schwein schützen.« Die Zeitschrift hat eine Paginierung.

Figure 5: Infamie (Wiggins p. 572)

During this campaign, not only did Germany and its international allies invoke the loyalty of White women to keep its honour as a nation and as a race, but it also defined the physical and sentimental qualities of this process along racialized boundaries. Race was used as the measure of loyalty and honour. To be dishonourable was depicted as synonymous with the concept of the Black soldiers who were seen as primitive and barbaric brutes. The purest and vilest of German women was now judged against the inferior attributes given to the Black soldiers and dishonourable women. Loyalty to Germany and civilization allowed the German White woman no room for self modification. The ability to self-modify or regulate implied that one lacked control and was dishonourable.

Connection to the research themes

The struggles with racism that the participants shared in the findings pointed towards the existence on a belief system that held certain attributes of humanity to be favourable than others. Those who had supportive home environments and the ones who had sought counselling continued to struggle with gender, class, and race based issues that they often embraced as a form of weakness on their part. The fact that they were unable to let these issues go was seen as a confirmation of an already existing deficiency. To understand the source of some of their struggles, I echo Wiggins's call to carefully comb through historical accounts of how concepts of femininity, race, and beauty have been manipulated over time to benefit those in power.

A note to the teacher of colour

In addition to understanding how concepts of identity are constructed within society, it's essential for women of colour, especially, to investigate how these same

notions of identity are constructed in their own cultural backgrounds. Not knowing where one is coming from may create a murky road for the woman of colour whose only notions of her race and femininity is constructed in the same oppressive system she lives in.

Where there seems to be little or no documented knowledge that fits the identity she may have of herself, then the creation of a concept that is befitting of her understanding of herself is in order. For the teacher of colour, it is especially important for her to have a solid foundation, self constructed or blended from historical knowledges, she stands on. Students of colour looking at her will by virtue of rarity of teachers of colour, in the education fields, remember aspects of the confidence and self knowledge exuded, perhaps much more so than the subjects we taught.

Interconnectedness of socially constructed Identities within the schooling system

In *Other people's children: cultural conflict in the classroom*, Delpit (2006) laments the lack of culturally appropriate knowledge and strategies for working the students of colour in a manner that will instil in them a pride in their culture and in themselves as contributing members of human race. Of particular concern for her was the lack of voice that she observed in the Native Alaskan children and their parents. At the core of her argument is her persistence that a culturally sensitive curriculum, one that honours members of the community in their own voices can be as challenging and thought provoking, as the current curriculum. The usefulness of a curriculum isn't based on its uncentric philosophical foundations but it its ability to awaken a students desire to learn.

Like Delpit, Ladson-Billings (1994), also emphasis the importance of creating a curriculum and learning space that integrates all aspects of a student's identity. She

insists that only then can White and students of colour awaken to their learning process instead of engaging in the system of banking we currently have. Specifically Ladson-Billings defines a culturally relevant and congruent pedagogy as,

...a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” Participating in culturally relevant teaching essentially means that teachers create a bridge between students’ home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements. Culturally relevant teaching utilizes the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of the students to inform the teacher’s lessons and methodology (1994, p. 17-18)

In addition to a pedagogy that engages students at cognitive, emotional, sociological, cultural and ecological levels, the culturally congruent pedagogy must also, create an open space where dialogues between the teachers and students, students and students, and teachers and teachers can occur in a spirit of mutual reciprocity (Dei & Caliste, 2000).

In such a space, the teachers, students, and other members of the schooling establishment can co-construct a relationships with their students and teacher practitioners that is “fluid and equitable”, with both teachers and students as part of the collective “community of learners,” As well, a process that would create such a learning environment would encourage the students to begin to “ to operate in the dual worlds of their home community and the white community”(Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 162-163).

For many students of colour, participating in the schooling process is a task born out of necessity and the worlds of teacher and these students remain unbridgeable due to lack of knowledge, fear, or motivation. Howard (2003) suggests that “Teachers need to understand that racially diverse students frequently bring cultural capital to the classroom that is oftentimes drastically different from mainstream norms and worldviews.” (p. 197) Also, because teachers and students often come from seemingly dissimilar backgrounds,

in order for teachers to connect with and engage students, they must “construct pedagogical practices in ways that are culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful for their students.” (p. 197). Delpit (2006) recommends allowing the students and their parents to be the primary informants of this process because, like all other students, students of colour enter the schooling establishment convinced that they can excel. Their perceived failure to do so lies in the schooling system and in the students’ perception of how the school views them once they get there. The students have piece of the puzzle to offer to the schooling establishment, as does the school to the students and their communities.

Ladson-Billings & Henry (1996), share that a dedication to the academic success of all students, regardless of their social, economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender should be the priority of any school wishing to establish a culturally congruent pedagogy. Second to that they note, is a dedication to train teachers whose focus is the development of cultural competence and who encourage their students’ “cultural integrity” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.160). As she notes often students of colour perceive school as a place where they cannot be themselves because their culture is not valued in the schools therefore, “Culturally relevant teachers should utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 162). “Teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy provide students with a curriculum that builds on their prior knowledge and cultural experiences” (p. 163)

In the age of information the creation of a curriculum that is culturally relevant should be representative of the times we are in. A shift from a text and fact driven curriculum to a more conceptual model of learning that allows the students to engage in

the world and others critically, is preferable. From a practical point, it is now easier to access information that mirrors the diversity of the students from the internet than it is from text book. From a critical literacy perspective, “students must develop a broader socio political consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.163). Students of all races need to be able to critique and evaluate the information that is passed on to them and make informed choices of the aspects of this information they wish to embrace. They no longer have to accept any socially constructed identities as part of who they are. The schooling process is now equipped with the capacity to allow each student to have agency in the classroom and the school site as a whole.

Race based trauma: Recognizing and healing the wounds within the Schooling system

In her article, *The embodiment of pain in US anti-racism*, Slocum (2009) suggests that underlying the training and activism on race and racism is a promotion of anger and tears, as in its very nature racism embodies emotions of pain, rage, shame, fear, pleasure, boredom, etc. In their investigation of emotional geographies, (Rose, 1993; Duncan, 1996) concluded that emotions constitute a space in both the body and places in which these bodies reside. These emotions create currents between people, and places and could be transformative of both entities. Although emotions cannot be “subsumed within the cultural context” (p.19), the dynamics of power within an institution may silence some. It’s therefore important within the anti-racist education practices, to allow for the articulation of any emotions from the students and teachers, without censorship. Slocum further asserts that emotional intensity in the anti-racism education learning process and

training, could serve, for members of the dominant group, to melt away denial, uninformed or guilt ridden apologies as well as create identification with those painfully affected by racism, in all its various definitions. As she puts it:

The Anti-racism training space is created for soul bearing, display of sadness...it doesn't invite people of Colour to explain racism unless they wish to, nor does it ask for testimonials unless they wish to share it. (P.27)

While acknowledging the difficulties of such a process and the resource material and staff members adequately trained to facilitate such an experience in a productive manner, she calls upon all teaching practitioners to begin the process by acknowledging the ongoing presence of racism and its negative emotional impact on all minority students.

Although the existence of racism is acknowledged at all levels of society, research of the emotional and psychological effects on those affected is an area that I still needs to be researched and understood in both the education and medical fields. While other forms of abuse, such as harassment, bullying, physical abuse and neglect, issues related to family and home environment dynamics, whose occurrence is often based on the subjection perception of the individual affected, have been acknowledged as social stressors that adversely impact the social performance and general well being of the individuals affected, a criterion for the assessment of the impact of racism on the individual has yet to be established and accepted within the medical and educational institutions of North America (Carter, 2007; Bryant- Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Carter & Helm, 2002;). Bryant-Davis (2007) observes that researchers, in the field of psychology, who have looked into the effects of racism have referred to "race based traumatic stress by various names, including, but not limited to, societal trauma, intergenerational trauma,

racist incident–based trauma, insidious trauma, psychological trauma, emotional abusiveness, and racism” (p. 135).

The issue of race and racism has become so politicized in the education arena that most, if not all practitioners, approach its occurrence with fear and great caution, so much so that “where racism is concerned, there seems to be a tendency to discount subjective experience” (Carter, 2007, p.44). Carter further explains that, as things are at present the options are, “seeking legal counsel to file a lawsuit or a complaint within his or her organizations, or through some other recognized body, seek the services of a mental health professional for relief from physical, emotional, psychological effects of the encounter, or live with the encounter and try to cope with any effects that may have arisen” (p.145) and that many if not all choose to cope with race based trauma most of the time. In his paper, *Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury: Recognizing and Assessing Race-Based Traumatic Stress*(2007), Carter asserts that the mental health assessments and diagnostics categories offer little guidance on how to assess and recognize racial incidents as causes of “emotional and psychological harm” (p.145). Therefore, those affected have no specific language and terminology of explaining their experiences other than call it race or discrimination. Even more lacking is the terminology to describe the emotional and psychological effects of racism. Brant-Davis (2007) posits for healing to occur, “...recognition on the part of both the targets and professionals must occur” (p.145).

Since other diagnostics for depression, anxiety, acute stress reactions, aren't specific to race and racism, mental health professional and targets of racism alike, must differentiate and understand the “unique aspects of racial experiences...and know how to

manage the emotional and psychological effects (caused by racism) and how these effects may be manifested....” Accurate assessment and recognition of race-based traumatic stress injury can be used to seek relief and remedy the emotional, psychological, and physical pain, which, as Thompson-Miller and Feagin (2007) note, has been endured by many in both silence and fear. This has perhaps occurred because many encounters with racism are subtle, indirect, and difficult to identify and address, yet are nevertheless extremely painful. The research evidence shows that ambiguous, subtle, and unintended experiences of racism can produce stress and that when coping fails, stress can produce trauma (Carter, 2007) (p.146).

In assisting targets of racism to heal, Carter suggests their articulation of how their experiences of racism created emotional and psychological injury is of greater importance than just being able to identify themselves as targets of racism. To this end, a race based traumatic injury model can be utilized to accurately assess, recognize, and offer immediate and/or ongoing relief to the unique injuries to the physical, emotional, and identity which they might have “endured in silence, fear, and denial, due to the fact that, many encounters with racism are subtle, indirect, and difficult to identify and address but nonetheless extremely painful...which when coping fails, the stress can produce trauma” (p. 147).

With a more specific race based trauma approach, the targets can make direct links between the acts of racism and the emotional and psychological injury independently, or with the assistance of a professional, and hence quicken the healing process. Such a tool would perhaps, reduce the dismissal of historical and experiential facts as not being racist, intending discrimination, or oversensitivity on the part of the

target. As with other accepted and diagnosed forms of physical, emotional, and psychological stress causers, like rape, harassment (physical, verbal, mental, etc.), perception of racism by an individual would become a valid reason to seek emotional and psychological counselling from appropriate professionals, as well as physical protection (Bryant-Davis, (2007); Carter, 2007).

As is often the case within mainstream institutions, Carter suggests that *“relegating people of Colour experiences with racism (in all its classifications) to subjective forms of perception may actually reflect subtle racism.... Working to affirm ones possible harm and claims of racism should be treated as valid and potentially harmful experiences that warrant redress”* (p.151). Clark, Anderson, Clark, and Williams (1999) have stated that to discount perceptions of racism as stressful is inconsistent with the stress literature, which highlights the importance of the appraisal process. They argue that *“the perception of demands or situations as stressful is an important aspect in initiating the stress responses and that the initiation of psychological stress responses as a result of perceiving racism would qualify [such] stimuli as stressors”* (p. 810).

To establish racism as a cause of stress, warranting the attention of medical, as well as other social institutions, Bryant-Davis (2007) suggests the need for an international application guide for race base trauma, despite the lack of a clearly delineated model for the diagnosis and treatment of such trauma, and the need for further research into the phenomena not withstanding.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature for anti-racism theory of education theoretical foundation, on which I based my study. I discussed principles of anti-racism theory of education and their relevance to the Canadian schooling system's theory and pedagogy. In a brief look at the historical look at the interconnectedness of discriminations I addressed the inter-subjectivity and interconnectedness of race and gender, and politics, and the affects of relationship to racialized sexual harassment. Lastly, I discussed the literature on race based trauma and how it's relevant to creating a safe and healing schooling environment.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

As with every aspect of this dissertation process, choosing a methodology that would meet the goals of my study proved to be a wrestling act between what I intuitively knew to be the appropriate path for me to take and what I thought should be the right academic thing to do. Intuitively I understood the importance of using lived experience to inform practice and yet, I resisted the notion of utilizing narratives as a form of research. I felt that it was a loose and subjective medium through which to write as big a project as a dissertation. Although I come from an oral tradition background and experience the world in a narrative form, I never have intentionally applied this skill or any of my cultural ways of learning to my scholarly or academic works. In fact, the world of my Kikuyu cultural knowledge, ways of knowing, and that of my academic learning, have continued to remain parallel to each other, until now. My preference has always been to utilize the Western ideologically based education. At best, I could apply the word tottering to describe my struggle to choose to privilege the little cultural knowledge I share in this process. I'm still unsure as to its benefit to the general educational practitioners within the Canadian schooling system.

In addition, it was by choosing to heed my intuition, and the absolute inability of my participants' to articulate experiences with racism in the formal and analytical format, that led me to cautiously consider simply sharing their narratives as an acceptable way of relaying their lived experiences with racism. *Mwethi ndagaga* is a Kikuyu proverb that says an answer will always avail itself to the seeker. I was relieved and delighted akin to

Margaret Kovach's (2009) description of her own journey towards utilizing her Plain Cree Knowledge as the foundation for her research methodology. In creating a research methodology that was centered on "tribal epistemology" (p. 43), she created a design that was "holistic, story based, purposeful, experiential for the participants, researcher, the community...cognizant of the tribal ethics, utilized tribal ways of knowing and gaining knowledge, and gave overall consideration of colonial relationship" (p.43).

Reading Kovach's analysis of indigenous methodologies, which greatly emphasized the importance of the researcher's preparation at both the community and academic spaces, helped to inform my decision. Her work included a consideration of giving back to the community and decolonizing ethics, as part of the knowledge gathering, and meaning making, processes. She helped in determining how much of the information I collected I wished to share in my final document. Since giving back and doing no harm to the community is an essential part of the indigenous research methodology, and knowing what knowledge to privilege is therefore the responsibility of the researcher, I chose to share information that showed the essence of the participants' struggles and victories with racism without making them appear victimized or disempowered.

Prior to reading Kovach's (2009) book, I felt quite discouraged about the manner in which I would share some of the very sensitive information entrusted to me by my participants. Lacking a space, outside of the faculty of education, within which to situate myself, I intuitively knew, based on my experiences, that some of the data collected, while it might have made sense to many students of colour, would have been too volatile to share in a general manner and without the sources to support and stand by it. Allowing

myself to tap from my own and other indigenous ways of knowing, I proceeded to write the final research document.

Knowing that not too long ago, Kovach, had engaged in the same struggle, which led to her choice to privilege her own Cree Knowledge in her dissertation process, was the information I needed to settle the butterflies in my stomach and release the knot in my throat. I'm still now sure why I needed the validation from another indigenous researcher, but I felt relieved and privileged to share in her courage, struggles, and resolution to stand within her indigenous epistemology while addressing mainstream education issues. The knowledge from her work greatly illumined my final research text. As mentioned earlier, the guiding question of my study were,

- 1) How have teachers of color experienced racism which has been directed towards them, while in the schooling system?
- 2) How have they been able to either let the pain of racism go or deal with it in a way that allows them to continue working in the same schooling system?

To guide the participants in their narrative writing process, I used the following questions

- 1) What are the most memorable racist acts directed towards you in the schooling system?
- 2) How were these incidents different from regular bullying?
- 3) What was your immediate reaction? Describe emotions.
- 4) Did you seek assistance? Who from?
- 5) Were satisfied with how it was handled? Explain.
- 6) How did you decide who to tell?
- 7) How would you handle the same situation today?
- 8) What are your thoughts and opinions about racism in the schools?

In the remaining parts of this chapter I will focus on narrative as a method for approach as a discussion of this phenomenon is offered within my literature review. This discussion will emphasize narrative inquiry theory and its practical implications to my research on how teachers of colour educated and now teaching in the Canadian schooling system have learned and continue to address the pain caused by subtle and overt acts of racism. Specifically, the discussion will address:

- 1) Philosophical foundations of narrative and hermeneutic phenomenology
- 2) The reason/s why I chose narrative inquiry as my methodology of choice.
- 3) The process of getting to know and selecting the participants.
- 4) Explicitation of data and reflexivity
- 5) Limitation of the study
- 6) The ethical issues I took into consideration while engaging in this study.

Philosophical foundations

Merging narrative and hermeneutic phenomenology

After the first face to face meeting and reading the first set of narratives from the participants, it became clear that the participants trusted me enough to share aspects of their experiences with racism that they had never shared at all, or had shared only with their circle of trusted friends and family. Kovach (2009) talks about her constant reflection on the research preparation process in an attempt to make sure that she was doing her research in a “good way” (p.52) so that she caused no harm to herself, the participants, the community, and the community knowledge. In her process she heeded her intuitive inclination as a guide to the nature and manner of information she would use

and include in her work. I too allowed my inner knowing, in the form of butterflies in my stomach and a knotted throat, to once again alert me to the possible compromises in relationships and ultimate purpose, to contribute to the anti-racist education that sharing all of the information could cause. As well, I would not have been able to address the nature of all the issues raised by my participants within the context of this study's intentions. I needed a format through which I could share some of the narratives as well as the essences of these experiences while honouring the trust the participants had bestowed upon me. Combining the narrative design with phenomenology was a happy medium, based on my assumptions, questions, and the purpose of this study, which was to understand how teachers of colour addressed their pain with racism. (Myrne, et. al., 2008) assumption of narratives as the process through which education examines the experiences of the past, present, and future assumes a learning process that at the very least, is experiential and transformative. Taking into account this fluid, reflexive, and ever changing nature of lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) I wanted a methodology that would allow reflexivity for me and the participants. Moustakas (1994) perceives a qualitative, phenomenological, and interpretive study as beneficial because it offers a "holistic nature of experience" (p.21) that integrates behaviour and experiences of both the participants and researcher while at the same time searching for the root meaning of the phenomena being studied. In phenomenology, data of experience is critical to understanding and interpreting human behaviour. Because phenomenology holds reality to be socially constructed, dialogues between the participants and the researchers shed light into the phenomenon being studied and require the researcher to reflect upon them as part of research data (Myrne at. Al., 2008) Therefore, the use of this

combination of methodological designs allowed me to use the data shared by the students and that which was created during the data collecting process, and was critical to the overall understanding of how these teachers had experienced and addressed racism. Reading the participants narratives, hearing them relate how they had faced, and coped with acts of racism during our face to face and telephone conversations, helped me to “reflect the interests, involvements, and personal commitments” (Moustakas, 1994, p.21) of my self as the researcher/participant and the participants, not only to the my research, but to the creation of more equitable learning and teaching spaces within the education system.

Choosing to incorporate phenomenology, into the narrative research, not only served the purpose of meeting the goals of my research, but also allowed me to study an abstract topic without being restricted solely by the qualitative data collected. I could access my own experiences and intuitive knowledge, as well (Kovach, 2009). In addition to reading the participants’ narratives, observation during our meetings gave me insight into their current attitudes, their opinions, memories, impressions, and feelings they held about the experiences they were sharing. Insight that was far beyond any numerical data I might have collected Neuman (1987).

Phenomenology

There are many phenomenology designs, for the purposes of this study I chose to use hermeneutics phenomenology as described by Van Manen, (1990). An educator as well, Van Manen describes research as “oriented to lived experiences (phenomenology) and as interpreting the “texts” of life” (Hermeneutic, p.4). Unlike Moustakas (1994), who calls for the phenomenologist to put aside his/her perspective of the phenomenon under

investigation and solely concentrate on the participants' experiences, Van Manen (1990) sees phenomenological research as a "dynamic study of several activities. One is the researcher's abiding concern for the phenomenon being studied, then a reflection on the essential themes that constitute the nature of the lived experiences, and a written description of the phenomenon, while at the same time maintaining a strong relationship to the inquiry and a balance between presenting the phenomenon and interpreting it. (Creswell, 2008)

Dewey (1938) suggests that life is a narrative through which the education process examines and makes sense of individual and historical experiences. Phenomenology, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962), is the primary lens through which we experience and conceptualize our lived experiences. In my study, I wished to share the voices of my participants' experiences as students and later teachers of colour within the Canadian schooling system without the need to arrive at a definite conclusion or definition of these experiences. In other words "...put essence back into [their] existence without expecting to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than their facticity..." (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii). As well, Mooi (2009) reiterates this purpose of phenomenological studies to "understand and make sense of their lived experiences" (p.20) while Pilkington (2005), underscores the importance of experiential and practical when compared to theoretical and abstract knowledge. I wanted to understand how my participants had come to choose their teaching profession although they had encountered racism while in this very system. To do so, I decided to allow them to share their stories a format that allowed them the freedom to write as much or as little as they wanted. This study is focused on the descriptive narrative. Since

“inter-subjective understanding occurs through lived human relations in a hermeneutic circle of interpretation” (Mooi, 2009, p.21), the research process has the ability to “co-constitute meaning” and create a “fusion of horizon” from shared experiences (Gadamer as quoted in Mooi, p.21). It was my hope that by sharing our experiences with racism within the Canadian schooling system, the participants and I would fuse the experiences and lessons learned from them to knowledge that would not only empower us but other students and teachers of colour and the education community at large (Kovach, 2009).

Narrative inquiry

Why Narrative Inquiry?

The choice to utilize narrative inquiry methodology was the result of a consultation with my committee after a frustrating search for a methodology that would adequately address the issues I wished to look at. Lacking the counselling training it would require to walk through such sensitive and personal stories, I hoped to participate in a holistic, participant, researcher, collaboration dialogue that would pay due diligence to the stories I was asking the participants to share. Ultimately, the justifications for choosing this narrative inquiry as a methodology were both personal and topic related.

On a personal level, I make sense of my lived experiences through the narrative process. It is how I was taught, through my cultural tradition, to search for knowledge, learn from and through experiences, and inform my choices. Every lesson has a narrative of meaning attached to it. This is how my elders explained all important information to me. Until now, I have never felt the need to include this process in my academic rigours. It never seemed appropriate. The academic world and my lived experiences seemed and continue to seem worlds apart.

Once I accepted narrative as my methodology of choice, in which to frame my research, it was clear that this philosophy best fit my attempts to represent, in a holistic manner, the participants' narratives with racism. The methodology resonated with the particular group of participants I was collaborating with, all of whom come from cultural backgrounds and heritages that value the oral tradition as a meaning making process for lived experiences; as evidenced by their choice of privately writing their narratives instead of doing it through the interview process. Since narrative inquiry is situated within a social science body of literature that embraces identity as "our self-narrative in which live and tell...and identity process or phenomenon studied, could only be carried out with a method informed by and embedded within it, across disciplines and world views" (Woods, 2001, p.42). Daiute & Lightfoot, (2004) suggest that in differing from other formalistic theories which begin inquiry with theory, "narrative inquiries tend to begin with experience as lived and told in stories" (p. 128). As a method, it begins with the experiences of individuals as lived and told in stories which the writers have provided as ways for analyzing and understanding their stories as they were lived and told. I will define it here as a specific type of qualitative design in which "narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17)

The procedures for implementing this research consist of focusing on studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences and chronologically ordering (or using life course stages) the meaning of these experiences." (pp. 53-54) No other qualitative methodology would have, in my opinion, facilitated the experiential unfolding of a lifetime of stories and a

collection of truthful and uniquely satisfying and healing stories for the participants and me (Woods, 2001).

In their book, *Telling stories: the use of personal narratives in the social sciences and history*, Mayne, et al., (2008) endeavour to demonstrate the effectiveness of narrative analysis in enriching discussions of human agency within the individual and social arenas. In like manner the purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to learn how teachers of colour, educated and practicing in the Canadian schooling system, have dealt with the pain of racist acts directed towards them while in the schooling system.

In their text, *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research*, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) aspire to create a definition of narrative inquiry that is visual instead of auditory. They also offer a working concept of their assumptions and the characteristics inherent to narrative inquiry. They define narrative inquiry

As lived and told experiences as a way of understanding experience... a collaboration between researcher and participants over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interactions with milieus and inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry, still in the midst of living and telling, reliving, and retelling, the stories of the experiences (p.20))

The definition assumes a foundation of working with meaning constructed through narratives of living and lived experiences, and for purposes of this study it supports meaning making, reconstruction, and reflection on the narratives that may have occurred during the data collecting and analysis process. During this time, the participants read my interpretation of their narratives of experiences, which I then endeavoured to organize, interpret, and present in this study, based on the narratives they had shared.

It's their desire to articulate the lived experiences of students' learning, teachers' practices, and educational spaces that has motivated Clandinin & Connelly (2000) to refine and define narrative inquiry as a method of inquiry and phenomenon. Amongst their influences are such scholars as Dewey whose understating of the nature of experience validates the idea that people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but also in relation to their social context. Individuals' experiences grow out of other experiences, in a continuum with each experiential point bearing a past, present and future. Alasdair's (1981) notion of narrative unity offered a way to construct the continuity of individual experiences in more informative detailing, while Geertz (1995) placed the experiences within the "wholeness of his metaphor parade" (p.19), offering the option to understand lived stories from the time, place, society, and social context it's experienced.

To the narrative inquirer "life is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.17). Human beings are "story telling organisms that, individually and collectively live stories lives" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, p.2). Therefore, students, teachers, and education life experiences within the learning spaces are storied; which makes narratives the best format to represent and understand them. The process of inquiry within the educational space, and other spaces as well, is itself in narrative form, "The inquiry is itself a form of narrative experience" and "temporal" in nature (p.19) therefore, the researcher's concern isn't only with what is happening in the here and now, but in the greater context of the past, present, and future. The collaborative nature of this inquiry brings together both the stories of the participants

and the researcher as well (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Therefore, when narrative is the phenomenon, the lived experiences of the research participants as well as those of the researcher are of main concern (Green, 1997; Holloway, 1997).

Narratives of teaching

In the book, *narrative inquiry: Experience and story qualitative research*, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have discussed the apparent increase in scholars now working from and within the “narrative sense of identity” (p.12). Wood (2001) also observes how narrative knowledge is increasingly being utilised by various researchers to create narrative perspectives of knowledge, and language that fit their fields of research and study, across all disciplines, and therefore lending validity to the power and the usefulness of lives lived, researched, and understood (Johnson, & Golombeck, 2002; Woods, 2001; White, 1997; Carr, 1996).

Johnson & Golombeck (2002) perception of narrative inquiry, or the process of retelling lived experiences as a “knowledge transmission model”, views teachers and educational researchers as having been placed outside of classroom life in their endeavour to quantify and generalize knowledge about what “good teaching and what good teachers do” (p.1). In other words, teachers are viewed as objects of study rather than knowing professionals or agent of change, waiting for researchers to create, hold, and bestow knowledge upon them (Clandinin,1986). To the contrary, Johnson and Golombeck assert that teachers “not only possess knowledge, they can also be creators of the knowledge... how they use knowledge in the classrooms is highly interpretative and contingent on knowledge of self, students, curricula, and time and cultural setting” (p.2). Therefore the incorporation of both the teachers’ and students’ lived experiences into the

process of learning and schooling further contribution or “fuller” and “thicker” descriptions of their personal identities (Woods, p.17).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have borrowed Geertz’ (1995) anthropological retrospective study and utilized it in their study of the “ inherent difficulties of attempting to research phenomenon undergoing constant change” (Clandinin & Connelly, p.17) by situating their “tentative” research knowledge on richly described narratives that tend to illuminate the continuity of wholeness of an individual’s life experiences” (p.17), hence making narrative inquiry become the research into the individuals “storied moments of time and space for researchers as well as participants” (p.17).

In their contribution to the place and purpose of narrative inquiry in teacher education research and development, Clandinin and Connelly have aspired to infuse Geertz notions of narrative inquiry for practitioners and students across all disciplines. (1995,1999). In their 1990 article, *Stories of experiences and narrative inquiry*, they blend their ideas of narrative as an inquiry method and phenomenon of inquiry, further enriching their understating self identity within the narrative philosophy of inquiry and further validating its effectiveness as a methodology of inquiry.

In their book: *shaping a professional identity: stories of educational practice* Clandinin and Connelly (1999) point out the importance of understanding the process of identity formation as an individually and/or socially constructed and reconstructed process. As they state it “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lived lives” (p.2). Therefore, storied identities, especially in the classrooms, “can be understood, shaped, retold, and relived, in an altered manner, depending on the time and place of inquiry, telling, and retelling”, suggesting that both notions of identity and lived

stories are in a constant process of change and are “susceptible to change through individual and social agency” (Woods, 2001, p.14) as well as the circumstances in which they are created and lived.

As it relates to individuals who have experienced “oppressive cultural practices (and later) develop problem saturated description stories about their sense of self” White (1995) suggests that if people’s difficulties are connected to their “self-told” stories, then they can be facilitated to recreate different views of their lived experiences by “locating, generating, and resurrecting alternative stories” (p.16). Through a process of collaborative dialogue, between the participant and the researcher/facilitator, “that invites a deconstruction of outlived stories while focusing on unique outcomes, individuals can better understand “problematic meanings attributed to their identities and sense of self and co-construct self stories whereby the participants are empowered ” (p.15). The end result as Woods explains it is a “fuller” or “thicker” description of the participants’ personal identities (p.17).

What makes this a good narrative inquiry?

Language is in continuous development. Therefore, to facilitate a dialogue establishing the elements that constitute a “good” narrative inquiry, narrative inquirers continue to select and create concepts that fit their understanding of their own inquiries (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Therefore it is important not to attempt to fit the language of narrative inquiry method into a language created for other forms of research. Its language being under development, each inquirer bears the task of researching and defending the criteria most applicable to the undertaking (Clandinin & Connelly, 2002).

For the purposes of my narrative inquiry, I chose to apply Clandinin & Connelly's perception of a narrative inquiry method as having "an explanatory, invitational quality, authenticity, adequacy and plausibility and resonance" (2000, p. 185). In describing the value of my choosing narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study, I echo (Woods, 2001) assertion that it should be assessed and understood:

...based upon the invitational and resonating quality it embodies with the participants and researcher...an experiential text that richly illuminates the narrative identity process known as authentication, engaging the readers in a resonance process while conjuring up their own personal memories and experiences as they connect with the participants' stories...(p. 43),

Narrative as a phenomenon and method of inquiry and the place of the researcher within it

The process of eliciting, interpreting, collating, and presenting the participants' stories, brought to light the importance of my reflexivity as a researcher. As self experience is the single most important guideline in pursuing phenomenological research, I engaged in a process that included the steps recommended by Douglas and Moustakas (1985) which included:

- 1) Acknowledging my pain with racism which was the internal crisis that led to the questions I investigated in this study.
- 2) By searching first in solitude and then through counselling and discussion with my fellow peers of colour, I began to expand my awareness of people who could relate to the struggles I had experienced with racism.
- 3) In preparation for the proposal and data collection, I began steeping myself in the deeper literary regions of the question so that it became the center of my world. Almost every experience during this phase seemed to echo, mirror, or relate to my struggle with racism.

- 4) Guided by my inner knowing (Kovach, 2009) in combination with reading the participants' narratives and the consequent discussions, I intuitively began to grasp the patterns and related aspects of association until a vision and awareness began to emerge from the individual and collective experiences of both the participants and myself.
- 5) As the vision emerged and ever mindful of representing the participants' experiences in as holistic a manner as I could, I maintained an ongoing dialogue with the participants in order to seek further clarification, delineation, and refinement of the themes that were emerging.
- 6) Finally, and once again mindful of creating a resource that was easily understood by the participants and the community, I wrote the final research documents that projected the various forms of themes and values I had inferred from the data (p. 45-46).

Reflexivity

This study was birthed from my years of "immersion" (Douglas & Moustakas, p. 46) in the experiences of racism and the challenge of learning how to develop "thicker skin" so as to fulfill my academic and professional obligations here in the USA and Canada. As recommended by Banister (1999), I engaged in a process of reflexivity and self-search, that assisted me in determining which aspects of my experiences with racism I wished to address. This reflexive process highlighted the one difficult nature of addressing an issue as broad as racism and its effects on people's lives. Each individual's interpretation of their experiences was couched in their own family of origin, cultural, location baggage (Kovach, 2009). As well, I recognized my incapacity and lack of knowledge on how to deal with the emotional and psychological effects of racism.

Borrowing from Banister's (1999) recommendation for researchers to first create meaning for themselves and their changing body, I began to unpack my own background as a Kikuyu woman, Black woman, raised Presbyterian and now Baha'i, born in Kenya, educated in Kenya and the USA and Canada and now living in North America, where I practice as a teacher. I examined the assumptions and beliefs that underpinned the interpretation of my experiences with racism including the societal held racial stereotypes and social stigma that I might have embraced as acts of resistance, surrender, or nonchalance. In chapter one I shared some of the assumptions I brought into this study. However, my understanding of all the lenses I utilize in my day to day experiences continues to develop, but to date, my engagement with this research process and life in general is informed through anti-oppressive, feminist, anti-racist, and indigenous lenses all of which are embodied within the knowledge of my people, the Kikuyu tribe of Kenya.

Through this process of reflexivity, I decided to ask my participants about the socially constructed racial barriers in the mainstream culture, as well as discuss topics of racism that continue to be considered taboo to discuss within the mainstream culture. I chose to highlight these issues because in my experience discussing racism and its effects on our lives isn't a topic that many people of colour discuss at length within any of the institutions of mainstream culture. Even when a platform for discussion is offered, very few of us choose to share most of our experiences. I for one only share the bits and pieces of information that will not cause too much discomfort or heated reaction from those I share with.

Looking through the vast and variant information I had collected, it became clear that each of the participants worked from a set of beliefs and assumptions that were family, socially, or self taught, through which they made meaning of or sought resolution for their experiences with racism. Learning how they had acquired, sustained, used these beliefs and assumptions became an important aspect of my data analysis. It was their experiences, born from these assumptions, which I wished to write about, as they were evidences of their resiliency, to me. As well, sharing these aspects of my participants' struggles and victories with racism is part of my ongoing desire to affect social change, in the field of teaching especially.

Given the personal nature of the narratives shared with me and in keeping with Kovach (2009) warning from the Cree elders to do this work right, it was important that I share their stories in a manner that depicted, privileged, and honoured their contributions to the general knowledge and anti-racism education intention without causing them or the racial equality dialogue any harm. I intended for this research process and final research document to be empowering to all participants as well as informative to those teaching practitioners wishing to create equitable spaces in their school sites.

Lacking a counselling background, heeding the caution of the Human Research Ethics Board to mind the emotional wellbeing of the participants, and being very aware of the painful and lasting effects of racism (Carter, 2007), I wondered how I would handle any intensive emotional difficulties the participants might have, despite my attempts of creating safe and open discussion environments. As it turned out, all of my participants were quite comfortable to share those experiences. They were all quite touched to know that I would be using their stories to inform my teaching practice and

that this information would be available to everyone. I on the other hand, found the process of listening, reading the narratives, and immersing myself in the participants' accounts of their experiences with racism, emotionally and physically draining. With each account, I relived my own experiences with racism. Eventually, I successfully sought relief through an *Emotional Freedom Technique* (EFT) and acupuncture.

Getting to know and inviting participants

Over the course of my education and teaching practice in North America, my fellow peers of colour and I have spent countless hours listening and consoling each other over emotionally charged stories of racist acts that we experienced in our daily lives. Although we often recommend professional counselling to each other over life challenges like death of family members, relationship difficulties, career related challenges, and such, the issue of seeking professional help for dealing with the effects of racism never once came up. I myself began addressing the effects of racism through counselling. It was during this process that I realized the healing power behind telling these stories from an empowered position. Reliving some of those racist incidents was a healing process that allowed me to acknowledge my own resiliency and personal power to overcome. I wondered if my fellow peers would experience this on their own journey.

Kovach (2009) recommends choosing a group of participants with whom the researcher has an existing relationship and who can bring something to the topic of investigation instead of randomly selecting individuals. Given the sensitive and personal nature of the topic it was important for the participants to have a level of trust with me prior to coming in. The participants of the study were fellow peer teachers of colour and

those they recommended. All were sent a letter of invite outlining what the study entailed and the importance of their contribution to it. Altogether, eight people, six women and two men were invited and all eight agreed to participate in the study at first. However, after writing the first narrative and sending it in, both of the male participants, independent of each other, shared that they felt their stories wouldn't be beneficial to the study and requested to stop participating. Another female participant was unable to finish her narratives as a result of schedule overload. The final group consisted of five female participants from the following backgrounds: Lebanese, Persian, Canadian/Japanese, Coast Salish First Nations, and Persian/Pilipino.

Narrative Collection

In recognition of Clandinin and Connelly's (1990) position that narratives are individual and social identity stories that are constantly changing and that they are lived, told and written, it was essential for me to acknowledge, reflect, and share my own story through an initial recollection of some of the events I had documented prior to beginning the study. I continued reflection in a paper diary and private online blog. The latter came as a result of having recollections at a point where I didn't have my diary and therefore opted to start an online blog instead. This process allowed me to observe my own reshaping, rethinking, and re-experiencing my lived stories as they intertwined with those of the participants (Clandinin & Connelly's, 1990; Myrnes et al, (2008). In addition to the participants' narratives, I offer my own narrative as part of chapter four in the final research document, as a way of offering the participants and readers alike, the chance to interpret how my educational experiences as a person of colour partially educated and now practicing in the Canadian schooling system, have influenced and shaped my interest, purposes, and intended outcome of this study.

The sensitive nature of this study, asking participants to revisit incidents that had the potential to be painful and potentially unresolved experiences, called for an especially collaborative and intentionally nurturing research relationship between and with the participants. The study wouldn't have continued otherwise. Their willingness to honestly and vulnerably open up, tell, and reflect upon their lived experiences with racism affirmed Clandinin and Connelly's position that,

Researcher relationships are central to the creation of field texts...they shape the nature of field letters and establish the epistemology status of them/us... such a

relationship “embeds meaning in the text and imposes form on the research texts ultimately developed...what is told, as well as the meaning of what is told is shaped by this relationship (1994 p. 419)

While this analogy and its implications made sense at a cognitive level, I found that I needed to intentionally take off the teacher, facilitator, persona and embrace a peer to peer perspective of myself as the researcher/researched and participant inclusively. I was encouraging my participants to travel to places in themselves that required vulnerability and nothing in my teacher training and practice had trained me to do this effectively and safely. I therefore chose to cultivate as genuine and authentic a friendship as could have been possible in the time given. This stance assisted in the creation of a space that felt safe, encouraging, and almost always cathartic for my peers and I to share our experiences with race. I developed through negotiation and consultation, a flexible, respectful, accepting, empathic, and ongoing relationship with each participant. As a side note, I would like to mention that almost all the participants didn't perceive their experiences as worthy of narration, citing as one shared, “I just could not come up with very much that I think would be helpful in your research”. With a gentle collaborative dialogue, there always was a story worth telling.

Developing the aforementioned research environment involved; ensuring ongoing consent through script, verbal, telephone, and electronic communication. With regard to ethical issues, time involvements, and voluntary participation, each participant maintained a copy of the consent form for the length of the interview process. I made every effort to accommodate the participants' time availability and schedule constraints. Through out the entire data collection process I constantly communicating my gratitude to my participants for their willingness to assist with the research and let them aware of

the honour and respect with which I held each of their narratives. I also sought their feedback on my interpretation of their narratives after each face to face meeting.

The first significant restructuring of my methodological plan happened after the first two participants shared, during one of our reflections, their opinion of the process that a recording device made them uneasy and made the whole process seem contrived. “I can’t get over the fact that my words are being recorded... feels weird” was one of the responses I received. Upon further collaboration, they, independent of each other, suggested writing out their narratives in a private setting, sending it to me through email and then meeting to discuss the information. One of the reasons one participant shared for preferring this method was that it allowed for more reflection on their experiences with racism than they would normally give to it. As one participant shared, “I never think about this stuff...usually I just get mad and then let it go until the next time.” After this, I offered the option of a face to face interview or privately writing their narratives and each one chose to privately write. On average, it took each participant about 2-3 weeks to write their initial narratives and send it back to me. I offered a list of general questions, agreed on an appropriate time for me to send a reminder before a final date to send their narratives.

My field texts were now comprised of my first meeting with the participants, where the consultation was geared towards an explanation of the intent and purpose of my study and a brief introduction of experience with race and racism and why I had chosen this particular topic for research. This seemed to create instant camaraderie as participants realized that they weren’t the only ones who felt the pain of racism. One participant on the first day said, “ It never occurred to me that I could share how I felt

without feeling super sensitive and weak....I mean, aren't we supposed to overcome and ignore people who don't know better that to treat us that way (referring to racism)?" Since I hoped for a more holistic sense of "the complexities" (Wood, 2001) of each participant's experience, I encouraged them to include experiences that occurred outside and within the schooling system. During our initial consultation, I realized that all participants, me included, weaved their experiences between the school and social places they visited.

I began each meeting with a gentle series of general memorized questions and driven conversations that facilitated a naturally flowing discussion. These questions were also offered in electronic format for the participants to use a guide while privately writing their narratives. While I tried not to censor or insistently direct the participants' feelings or experiences, I did pose questions regarding their perceptions of their reactions to racist acts towards them. For example, in response to one participant who wondered whether she was racist as well, given the she felt uncomfortable with others who wore their traditional outfits socially, I inquired "how did you decide you were racist?" To other participants who struggled to place the origin of their feelings knowing they were different, I offered the option of viewing two video selections, "A Girl Like Me" and "A Boy Like Me" both of which is readily available from Youtube videos, as a format through which they might reflect on their own questions of their interpretation of their experiences with race from an outsider's point of view.

It was my impression that by offering the participants the opportunity to privately write their narratives while gently maintaining a collaborative dialogue through face to face meetings, emails, and phone conversations, "invited them to story-tell around how

they created a life informed by a more empowered, coherent, and accepting sense of self, despite the complexities each was forced to make” (Wood, 2001. p.32) while dealing and addressing their experiences with racism. I too was able to guide and assess my growing understanding of my interpretations of some of the racist acts I had encountered. My own lived narratives seemed to travel from a sole experience, to a collection of powerful narratives of endurance and victory. As I encouraged the participants to “refine and substantiate their narratives” (Woods, 2001. p.32) I found myself doing the same with my own narrative of lived experiences.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) Suggest asking a participant to travel to a place or find a memento that was meaningful and significant to their lived narratives as a way of encouraging a more holistic recollection process based on more sensory perceptions in addition to their memories. I offered this opportunity to 3 of my participants since they were openly engaged in art professionally, socially, and personally. To the artist, I requested a visual narrative of lived experiences, to the musicians, a song/songs, poems, dance routines that might have been representative of any and all of their lived experiences.

Explication of the narratives

In her article *Narratives: more than just telling stories*, Bell (2002) emphasizes the ability of narratives to bring to the surface cultural assumptions and norms that would otherwise be lost when interpreted within the “grand narrative” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p.10) of mainstream culture. Bell further explains that in

sharing narratives “we select those patterns of stories to which we will attend and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect stories that are available to us” (p. 207). Therefore, a thoughtful analysis of shared stories can offer reflective insights into the life experiences of those who share their stories as well as their social circumstances (Maynes, et al., 2008; Hooks, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Schon, 1983).

To highlight the essence of each participant’s experience without sharing some of the more sensitive and intimate information shared with me, I chose to include only the first narratives that the participants shared with me. At the point of writing their first narratives, the participants were still feeling their way through the process and just beginning to recall some of their experiences. During our later meetings and discussions, a few of the participants shared how writing the narratives and talking about their experiences brought up many memories they had long forgotten. On a few occasions during our face to face conversations, I witnessed some participants remember these occurrences. Often times these instant memories caused in both the participants and myself; feelings of sadness, anger, and sometimes sheer amazement at how much assault we had absorbed and still kept going with our school work.

Explicitation of data

Hycner (1999) Cautions that the term analysis may compromise the intended outcome for phenomenology researchers as it may suggest “breaking into parts” the data collected. The term “explicitation” on the other hand, suggests “investigation of the constituents of the phenomena being studied, while keeping the context of the whole”

(p.161). In keeping with my intention to present the true essence of the participants lived experiences with racism, I chose to use the word explicitation of data instead of analysis. The truest essence of my research process was definitely investigative. There were no definite conclusions about the nature of the lived experiences of my participants or the data collecting process. Even the process of writing the final document left me wanting to research the phenomenon further. There was so much more to be shared and learned. Hycner's explicitation process (as cited in Groenewald 2004, p. 17-21) involves five steps. I will discuss how I used each step in the data explicitation stage of my study.

The first stage is Bracketing and phenomenological reduction. Hycner (1999) laments that Husserl's use of the term reduction. As it's used in phenomenology, it has little resemblance to the reductionist natural science methodology. In phenomenology studies, the term reductionist refers to the "deliberate and purposeful opening by a researcher to the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004, p.21). The researcher, wishing to understand the lived experiences of the participants, suspends his/her own presuppositions of the phenomenon and refrains from taking a positive or negative stance (Creswell, 1998; Miller and Crabtree, 1992). Hycner, (1999) recommends listening to recorded interviews several times and reading the notes several times to develop a familiarity with each of the participants' worlds. I was fortunate enough to live in the same town with all the participants and was able to schedule several face to face meetings, most of which lasted from two to four hours. This was important because I needed to regularly clarify and debrief on the narratives, emails and my own reflections on our dialogues as only two of the participants recorded their interviews with me

present. While this process proved to be arduous, it created a bond and trust between me and the participants that led to a deeper sharing experience.

Hycner calls, Delineating units of meaning, the second step in this explicitation process crucial to the entire research process because those statements that are extracted and isolated from the data serve to shed light on the researched phenomenon (Cresswell, 1998; Hycner, 1999). At this stage, the researcher makes significant judgement calls while trying to suspend his/her own presuppositions. Groenewald (2004) suggests that the researcher should first consider the entire “literal content, and assess the number of times a unit of meaning is mentioned as well as paying attention to how the participants use “nonverbal and paralinguistic cues” (p. 19).

Beginning with our first face to face interview and all through the listening to the recorded interviews, and rereading the narratives and emails from the participants, I paid attention and documented the words, phrases, and ideas that were recurrent for each of the participants. I considered any words, ideas, themes, or thoughts that occurred at least three times or more to be significant enough to note. Some of the words and phrases that occurred for more than three times were shame, fear, ugly, I never belonged, and hate me, to name a few. After each dialogue, reading of narratives, and listening to the taped discussions, I wrote down the words and phrases that occurred alongside my summary of each interview that formed my field notes. Doing this allowed me to see the specific opinions, feelings and thought of each participant, while at the same time getting a picture of the units of meanings that were emerging for the entire group.

The third step in Hycner’s data explicitation process is clustering units of meaning to form themes. At this stage the researcher uses the non-redundant units of meaning

created from a thorough immersion in the data, and groups them into clusters of themes that are significant to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998, Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then searches for the commonality in various clusters and identifies central themes “which express the essence of the clusters” (Hycner, 1999, p. 153). As I mentioned earlier, I began to hear and see emerging themes from my very first interactions with the participants. Each participant expressed her experiences with racism in a manner that was unique to her individuality, but the various themes of how they dealt with the racism in the Canadian schooling system and the community at large were prevalent in every participant’s written and spoken words. I needed to condense all the many clusters of themes into central themes that articulated most of the essence of these narratives.

To do this, I wrote out a list of all the recurring words and phrases from the notes on each individual participant and guided by my intuition (Kovach, 2009) and my interpretation (Creswell, 1998) of the dialogues, narratives, and emails, I created central themes that included some of the recurring words and phrases as well as what I felt was the essence of my interaction with the participants and their dialogues. I was able to create twelve central themes. At first, some of the themes, like living with the anxiety of racism and coping with the anxiety of racism, as well as other themes, appeared to be similar in meaning and implication; but after consulting with the participants, I realized that different participants’ experiences with racism resulted in different understandings of these themes. I decided to heed Hycner’s (1999) caution to the researchers to pay attention to the meanings of units of meanings that might seem similar but in essence be different in terms of their importance and weight in the participants’ own lives.

Summarising each interview, validating, and where necessary modifying it, was the fourth of Hycner's steps in the data explication process and is essential to ensuring the validity and integrity of the research process. Ellensberger summarizes this process this way:

Whatever the method used for a phenomenological analysis the aim of the investigator is the reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject. Each individual has his own way of experiencing temporality, spatiality, materiality, but each of these coordinates must be understood in relation to the others and to the total inner world. (as cited in Hycner, 1999, pp. 153-154)

To make sure that the essence of the participants' worlds is presented as accurately as possible the researcher takes back his/her interpretation of the experiences and creation of themes is in align with the participants own lived experiences. I engaged each one of my participants in this process by discussing my understanding of their experiences and the process through which I had created the themes. I also shared the final document with them. It was during this process that I felt the nature of the research process transform from a researcher/participant relationship to a meaningful camaraderie of shared experiences and a mutual interest in creating a safe learning environment for all students and teachers of colour (Kovach, 2009).

The fifth of Hycner's steps in data explication is the process of extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary. After the participants approve of the researcher's interpretation of their lived experiences, a text bearing the general themes is created in the context of the phenomenon being researched. Moustakas (1994) states the importance of reflecting the context from which the themes emerged in a manner that acknowledges even the unique and insignificant differences within the data because "minority voices are important counter points to bring

regarding the phenomenon studied” (Groenewald, 2004, p.21). Kovach (2009) emphasizes the importance of creating a document that is accessible to the members of the community for the purposes of building and advancing the lives of those who shared their life experiences. To meet this need and with the understanding that my study was primarily intended first for teachers, second students, and third the general community, the final document adhered to the Western ideologically based qualitative research format. In the future, I wish to rewrite the information in this document, with the permission of the participants, in a format/s (to be determined later) that will be more readily accessible and empowering to students of colour of all ages, their parents and the general community.

Limitations of the study

Although I utilized predominantly narrative inquiry for the data collection process, as a form of research situated within the Western ideology, it limited both me and the participants from engaging in the process of narrative sharing or story telling more familiar with our own backgrounds. Kovach (2009) notes that, “stories capture our attention and ask us to think deeply and reflect on our actions and reactions... a process that suits the fluidity and interpretative nature of ancestral ways of knowing” (p.94). Part of the challenge arose from my lack of appreciation for my cultural ways of knowing, learning, and relating life stories and therefore conducting a study within a methodology that wasn’t representative of my inner knowing. Having been schooled in similar colonized backgrounds, all, but one of the participants, the Coast Salish First Nations woman, were as out of touch with their own cultural ways of learning and knowing as I was. Nonetheless, these narratives have embedded within them; the inerasable evidence of resilience of all the individuals and their People’s represented.

Bell (2002) acknowledging the personal nature of story telling, asserts the need for developing a general framework of friendship before asking participants to share personal narratives of their lived experiences. While I was able to develop a level of understanding and mutual trust with the participants, it wasn’t until each participant felt comfortable with me and being part of the study that the discussions began to follow naturally. It seemed to me that the participants needed to feel and know the purity of my intention towards them and their stories before they could relax and share their stories.

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, I found the commitment and collaborative aspects of this study to be slightly challenging during earlier part of the data collection process. As it became clear to some of the participants that I wanted them to share their experiences with racism as part of my dissertation process, most were quite reluctant to “put themselves out there”, as one participant put it. However, further explanation of my intentions for wanting to share their stories as well as mine and assurance of their anonymity seemed to ease their minds. As mentioned earlier, some of the participants wished to not be recorded while sharing their information and instead chose to write their narratives, a choice that proved to be invaluable as, the narratives were quite candid and made me decide to offer all participants the option of writing their narratives.

While the participants and I collaborated on many aspects of the data collection, and retelling process, the tension between the researcher and participants was evident (Bell, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The participants often checked with me to make sure they were giving me what I was looking for or recanted a statement if they thought it wasn't inline with what I was looking for. They were “constructing stories that supported their interpretation of themselves” (Bell, 2002, p. 209) while at the same time adjusting these stories to fit my intentions as they understood them.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) address the tendency of formalist inquiry to look at people as exemplars instead of “embodiments of lived experiences” (p. 43) whose lived experiences are viewed as exemplars of cultural values and beliefs. I found myself engaged in this very dilemma when I realized that one of the participants' experiences with racism wasn't as I had thought it would be. I found myself asking the participants

questions that would intentionally lead to the responses I wanted to hear. To her credit, her written narratives and consequent conversations remained consistent. I learned to “acknowledge the truth while holding [a] different agenda” (p.43)

While the recheck process was essential to maintain the validity of the phenomenological questions and the participants’ intentions, it also yielded new and rich information that I would have loved to investigate further were it not for the restrictions of time and the research questions. This process also highlighted the importance of language to articulate participants’ intended meanings (Kovach, 2009)

Creswell (1994) notes that a researcher’s decision as to how a social phenomenon is studied is guided by his/her epistemology (theory of knowledge). The phenomenologist cannot be removed from his/her explicit beliefs and presuppositions and therefore shouldn’t act otherwise Hammersley (2000). Moustakas (1994) writes that the aim of phenomenological research is “to return back to the things themselves” (p.26).

Heidegger’s introduced the concept of “being there” and the idea and value of “dialogue” or interaction between a person and their world (as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 4).

Groenewald further explains that “describing as accurately as possible while refraining from any pre-given frameworks the phenomenon being studied is the researcher’s main task” (p.5). Since explaining the lived experiences of the participants is the main concern of the participants, Hycner (1999) cautions the phenomenologist not to rigidly follow specific steps, “since that would do a great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon” (p. 144). Instead, the researcher should allow the essence of the study to emerge in a manner that would capture the “rich descriptions of the phenomena and their setting” (Kensit, 2000, p. 104).

Moustakas (1994) uses the term “epoche” which mean to abstain (Groenewald, 2004, p.13) to refer to the researcher’s ability to suspend any preconceived idea of the phenomena being studied. While I consciously tried to remain detached from my participants’ experiences, the interview process remained very much “reciprocal” (Bailey, 1996, p.7) with the participants and myself engaging in ongoing dialogues during the face to face, as well as the telephone dialogues. Kvale refers to this process as and “interchange of views between people conversing about a theme of mutual interest with the intention of understanding the phenomena” (as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p.13).

Following each face to face meeting and telephone dialogue, I summarized what I heard and saw, as well as my own thoughts, impressions, and inclinations in the form of dated paper field notes and a private electronic blog. Miles and Huberman (1984) underscore the importance of the field notes in assisting the researcher to maintain a “balance between descriptive notes and reflective notes like hunches, feelings...” (p.69)

Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the University of Victoria Ethics Review Board. As mentioned earlier, all participants completed written consent forms which they held onto until the last interview to ascertain ongoing consent during the narrative collecting, analysis and review process. The consent forms explained the purpose and intention of the study, the data collecting process, their rights to participate and withdraw at any moment and an assurance of their anonymity.

The process of getting permission to collect the narratives from teachers in the school districts, in which they practiced, became a personal struggle for me and further

strengthened my desire to study the personal effects of racism on teachers of colour within the Canadian schooling system. Upon sending an electronic request form, I was invited to a meeting with a member of the school district where a majority of the discussion revolved around the validity of my study. Hearing members of the school administration say that sharing narratives of experiences with racism would not be beneficial to the teachers involved or their teaching practice, and could actually cause them more harm than good was rather shocking to me. I felt the dissonance between policy making and putting these policies into practice. Although the existence of racism within the schooling system was accepted, I was surprised that the administrators I spoke to didn't seem to realize that there were individuals who were affected by its existence and who, if given the opportunity, might actually be able to speak about it. This process confirmed for me the desire to put faces to the experiences of racism, much like we are beginning to do with bullying and harassment.

The personal nature of the data collection process kept me cognizant of relational ethics that needed minding through out the course of the study. I wanted to ascertain that each participant was comfortable in my portrayal of their narratives as well as our collaborative dialogues. To this end, I let each participant know what information I would be including and let them decide if this felt truthful to their intention for sharing the narratives. Invitations to ask questions, review the narratives and request for the removal of any information were extended through the course of the study. To keep the essence of the written narratives in the voices intended, I chose to publish them as they were written by the participants.

The anonymity of each individual was maintained by removing their actual names and names of work places and replacing them with fake names. For Darlene, who is a renowned artist and art teacher, I requested a written consent for the permission to use her art work is familiar to many. It's worth mentioning that none of the participants sought anonymity and quite to the contrary, were willing to share their identities and would have been okay to do so barring the requirement of the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) and my own intuition that the dissertation format might not have adequately expressed the true essence of their experiences.

Chapter 4

Narratives of experiences

Group Profile

Original group composition

As mentioned in the methodology chapter there were eight participants at the beginning of the study, two gentleman and six women. I felt that not only did the group members want to share their experiences with racism, but they were eager to have this information documented, as this was a rare opportunity; having someone recognize that racism was painful and asking them to speak of this pain. At the end of our first meeting, each participant sounded eager to write their narratives.

As I shared in the methodology chapter three of the participants from the initial group choose not to continue for various reasons. One of the women participants regretfully couldn't continue due to family and other commitments. Despite their enthusiasm at the beginning, both the gentlemen, independent of each other, requested to pull out of the study, as they didn't think their stories would contribute much to my study. I felt that one of the gentlemen wasn't going to budge, but with the second one, I decided to probe further into his reason for wanting to stop the study. He too felt that the information of his experiences wouldn't contribute much to my study. He also shared that he didn't feel comfortable hashing out past hurts because, as he put it, "nothing can be done about it now". I also had a female participant who requested to not participate in the study. Being of mixed heritage with physical features favouring those of the Caucasian race, she didn't feel that her experiences with racism would be as useful to the study as would those who were more visibly different.

I wondered if as a society we may validate the narratives of women more than those of men, especially when they had to do with recollected painful and seemingly not heroic events (Maynes, et al, 2008).

Other than my discussions of racism with friends, family, or peers, I had never interacted on this subject with other peoples of colour that I met. I was quite nervous about asking them to bear their souls to me, a stranger. I wondered if they would be candid or guarded, especially after hearing that my dissertation would be open for anyone to read. Knowing how emotional, discussions of racism could get I wondered if I had the wisdom and know how to address such pain should it arise. I had made a decision to allow the participants to guide the data collecting process, which is how the writing of narratives in private came about. This proved to be the icebreaker I was hoping for. It seemed that once the participants knew what we were going to discuss, based on their own writings, they were more open to delving further into more intimate subjects related to their experiences with racism. Also, sharing my own experiences with candour assisted in creating a bond of trust between the participants and me.

I was greatly humbled by the courage, resolve of character, and ardent hope for an equitable society that each of my participants showed. Once the foundation, purpose, and intent for the study was clear to them, the participants chose to offer some of their painful experiences with racism to me, with the hope that my study, and others like it, would move the race dialogue a little further. They were open, candid with what they chose to share, and very conscientious to not short change me on any information I might want, no matter how difficult it was for them to recollect and write or speak of it.

Once I received each participant's narrative, read, and began to acknowledge the emerging themes, the discussions with the participants became more personal, emotional, enriching, and thought provoking. In reading each narrative, I found myself recollecting similar experiences I had had, a process that proved to be very painful, saddening, but yet affirming and reassuring to me as a person of colour who had been able to come to North America and pursue my education to the level I have. Each of the participants shared their own pride in their accomplishments despite the ever present thorn of racism.

Participants' group profile

Five of the participants are currently teaching in BC in the elementary and high school levels. One of the participants is currently in a counselling program in the Education faculty of one of the institutions of higher learning in Victoria. This particular participant requested to be included in the study upon hearing what I was doing. I decided to include her narratives and interviews because I felt they would offer me an opportunity to see how someone from a counselling background processed this pain of racism. The manner in which she wrote, shared, and processed the interview process was quite enlightening. I will discuss this further in the discussion chapter.

The cultural and ethnic distribution included two members of the First Nations community, one Persian, one Lebanese, two individuals with mixed heritage: Persian and Pilipino and Japanese and French Canadian. At the time of the interview, all participants were at a point where they felt proud to be members of their specific heritages and they shared their uniqueness in their teaching practices.

Emerging themes

I began to note emerging themes from the very first conversations I had with my participants, which I noted in my field notes. More themes emerged and others recurred while reading through the narratives of experiences and the consequent face to face and telephone conversations, and emails. I chose to use those themes that consistently during our discussions, the narrative explication process, and other electronic communications most participants had at least three recurrent themes.

Individual participant's profiles

Below, I offer some background information on the participants as well as some of the recurring themes from their narratives and my conversation with them. All participants had the opportunity to review my perception of them and make any corrections or additions they wished to.

Participant one: Angelina a conscientious teacher

The first participant is a Canadian of Japanese and French Canadian Caucasian descent. Physically, she looked more Japanese than she did French Canadian. She is a French teacher.

Theme: Awareness of difference

The awareness of difference is very apparent in this participant's perception of herself both at the personal and professional levels. She shared her awareness of being different as a young child. Although she never experienced racism as a young child in Montreal, she was aware of kids who were different and that this caused them to be harassed. Knowing that she was physically different, she worked hard to fit in as much as possible and downplay, to the best of her ability, any aspect of her being that appeared

different. This feeling of difference and the desire to fit a standard model of being has carried on to her adulthood and manifests itself in body image issues.

Theme: Geographical solution not a solution

Realizing that her difference would never be mainstreamed in the Canadian cultural context and wanting to understand her father's culture, this participant sought to travel to a country where everyone looked like she did and spoke a language she understood. Her destination of choice was Japan. Japan wasn't as welcoming or accepting as she had hoped it would be. Although she looked like everyone there, she felt even more foreign and unaccepted than she had felt in Canada. To the Japanese people, she was a foreigner, a "gaijin".

Theme: Blending both cultures and just being me

Reading her narratives and sharing our experiences with race, I got the sense that this participant has arrived at a place where she is able to embrace her cultural backgrounds and see more of the wealth of her upbringing than the feelings of being different it created in her. As an English & French teacher who is also fluent in Japanese, she is able to make positive meaning and derive strength from her struggles with racism.

Participant two: Nehema the processor

The second participant was perhaps the most willing to share her experiences with racism. From the beginning, she saw value in sharing her experiences with racism. She felt that by sharing her experiences, both the individuals and society at large can begin to understand the emotional pain racism causes in people's lives. She was very aware of the aspects of her life that had been greatly affected by her experiences with racism, but also wished to learn and be strengthened by them.

Theme: I want to learn more about you

One of the most striking characteristics of this participant was her conviction that in learning and knowing more about each other, no matter how difficult, we can begin to erase the socially constructed divide of gender, culture, race, sexual identity, etc. I found it quite interesting that many of her experiences with racism occurred while she attempted to live out this philosophy of her life. It was awe inspiring to hear her speak of the pain and ongoing issues of self worth, the origins of which she attributed to the racist experiences she had in her elementary and secondary school days, and yet hold this hope of wanting to know people as people, regardless of what they may choose to do. Very empowering and reassuring for me.

Theme: I'm I a beautiful woman?

While this participant seemed to understand that notions of beautiful are socially constructed and differ from culture to culture, she continues to judge her femininity, desirability as a love interest to the opposite gender, and aesthetic beauty, based on the racial and cultural feedback she has received as growing up. So much so that she dresses and adorns herself in ways that will disguise aspects of her more visible cultural features.

Theme: Where is my safe haven?

Knowing who her “true and loyal” friends are was a recurrent theme in this participant’s narratives and our conversations. Knowing whether her perceptions on life were judged based on her cultural background only was very important to her. Consequently, feelings of vulnerability and insecurity were apparent in situations, places, or with people, when she wasn’t sure how they felt about her cultural background. It was with those friends who had stood by her and supported her when political climates and

people's attitudes "demeaned" or "demonized, her culture, that she felt most safe and close to.

Participant three: Darlene, a woman of few words and profound insight

The third participant embodies, in my opinion, a silent strength. Even in her speech she was slow to respond, but every word she spoke was laden with meaning. Looking at her art or watching her paint gave me the feeling that I was witnessing a master and her craft. Her greatest desire she shared is to encourage both the young and elders in her reservation to pursue their dreams even when doing so might be difficult. Darlene generously allowed me to include her artwork in my final research document. It was her hope that her images would extrapolate visually how she understands some of her experiences with racism as well as show her hopes for the future, not only for the First Nations communities but for all humanity.

Theme: I must remember my history

It was clear in her narratives, our conversations, and her arts that this participant was very connected to her history. Of all the paintings I saw, there wasn't a single one that didn't bear a reminder to her history. It is in the stories of her people, their colonization, near annihilation, and consequent resilience, that she draws her strength. In the same manner that she respects her histories, she respects and seeks to know the histories of other cultures and peoples who have persevered the atrocities of colonialism that her own have.

Theme: Dream and intuition

This participant often referenced her dreams and intuition as the source of her inspiration to paint. I felt that in her dreams and intuition she understood the intention of

her life and all her experiences. All the pain she had suffered because of her First Nations background made sense of in her dreams and paintings. It's also through this process of listening to her intuition and painting that she continues to visualize a world where people of different backgrounds can unite while maintaining their wisdom and ways of being.

Themes: Loving motherhood

This participant's pride of being a Coast Salish mother was quite evident in her paintings. What struck me was the intricacy of her depiction of the First Nations mother's capacity to nurture and heal herself, her children, and her peoples. Looking at her depiction of womanhood, I felt empowered as a woman of colour to walk with my head held high and to believe that there is a grander reason why I ended up here on the continent of North America.

My Faith makes it all make sense

Second to her First Nations histories and knowledge, this participant shared that her Baha'i Faith gives her a way to articulate and blend the injustices she and her peoples have experienced through colonialism, and her desire to create the unified world of her dreams and intuition that she creates on canvas. Although she has come to some acceptance with the fact that her father, who was Irish, and his people, had desecrated her First Peoples' heritage, seeing the land that was healing and sacred now turned to commercial ventures and that her Peoples have little say about this is a particular sore spot for her. It's her Faith that offers her peace and comfort and allows her to visualize and paint images of unification, forgiveness, and love between her "Peoples and the White people"

Participant four: Zahara the optimist

This was the participant that gave me hope of a time when the sting of racism will lessen its pain on those it's inflicted upon. Reading her narratives, talking to her, and looking at the issues of racism through her eyes, was refreshing because I instinctively felt that she truly didn't hold anger against people who acted towards her. She currently teaches Spanish and French in the same high school she graduated from.

Theme: I don't feel it

I was almost in disbelief when during our first meeting, this participant shared that although she saw acts of and even experienced racism, she didn't feel the anger or the pain that many of us struggle with for long periods of time. She observed and was frustrated and irritated with its existence, but its impact didn't seem lasting for her. I was curious to understand how she had come to be this way, although she was born and raised in Canada.

Theme: They are all my children

In reading her narratives and talking to her, it was clear that her parents who were immigrants and both from different cultures placed a great deal of importance on acceptance. This participant was also very fortunate to have teachers in her elementary and secondary school years who were loving, accepting, and very intolerant of prejudice. As a result, she now treats her current students in the same manner that her parents and teachers had treated and modelled for her.

Theme: I know what is important

This participant seemed to have had an understanding of what her purpose within her family circle and the communities was from an early age. Her parents made sure that she received the best education she could and made sure that while at home, she pursued

those interests that she was drawn to. One of those purposes was to know that other people's dislike of her had no bearing on her accomplishments. She was in the driver's seat of her life and she demonstrates this through her command of four languages, a growing and promising music career, in addition to her teaching practice.

Participant five: Nadia the cautious emancipator

Of all the participants, she was one whose experiences and responses to racism mirrored mine the most. Having a "quiet and shy" personality to begin with, she was much more aggravated by any incidents that highlighted her difference.

Theme: I didn't know what to do or who to talk to

Not wanting to bring anymore attention to herself this participant chose to not address or report racist incidents to her parents or her teachers. Even if her teachers had noticed, it's my observation that she might not have assisted them with the appropriate disciplinary action by confirming the occurrence of these incidents. Not only did she not tell the teachers of any racist incidents but she also failed to tell her parents. For the most part her incidents with racism remained unspoken until this study.

Theme: I had very low self esteem

This participant was able to articulate quite succinctly the connection between her experiences with racism and her feelings of low self-esteem. The lack of media imagery and representation of people of from the Middle East caused in her the desire to want to blend her features to fit those of the "blonde blue eyes" standard of beauty. Even as she shared her experiences and thoughts on racism, I could still sense the pain and the feeling of aloneness she still carries with her.

Theme: The protective teacher

This participant's dedication to protecting her primary school students is almost equal to the pain of her own experiences. She recollects with great clarity the incidents where she has observed teachers treating children with disrespect or insensitivities about their person or cultural background. It seems like her pain with racism keeps her antennae tuned into the pain and struggles that her students may carry or be unable to speak of.

Theme: Am I racist, as well?

Through our conversations, especially, the reflective nature of this participant was evident. One of the questions that came up was whether or not she too was racist. Because she often felt embarrassed and ashamed of other people who made their cultural differences too blatant, she felt that she had to be racist as well. Through discussion and viewing of Kiri Davis (2005) video, "*A Girl Like Me*", she began to consider the fact that she might be projecting what she believed about herself on to other people. It was her shame at being different that might have led her to feel ashamed of those people from other cultures who wished to continue in their cultural practices, although they were in Canada.

Participants six: Maria/ Researcher

During the research process, I chose to participate as one of the participants by sharing my own experiences. Doing so honoured the participants who so generously opened up their hearts and honestly shared with me their struggles with racism. For some, it was the first time they had shared some of their pain with anyone.

Theme: Is it worth it?

Before doing this study, I looked upon acknowledging the pain of racism as disempowering act. I didn't want to give any more space to racism as I felt it was a form

of endorsement. However, ignoring it took an emotional and psychological toll on me and in the end forced me to face and acknowledge that the effects of racism affected my personal psyche as much as they affected the North American social institutions.

What do I do with my Kikuyuness and Africanness?

One thing that remained constant between my schooling in Kenya and in North America, was the question of how and when to be fully Kikuyu or African in this “postcolonial” , “post slavery” society I find myself in. For upward social mobility and economic success, feel the need to act “Western” even though my thoughts and ways of perceiving and interpreting the world are very much influenced by my upbringing as a Kikuyu. As yet, I can’t say that I occupy my Kikuyu space and my Western space comfortably. It feels like an ongoing game of musical chairs.

Am I beautiful enough?

My struggles of whether being either light skinned, skinny body, straight hair, was more desirable than being dark skinned, tight curls, and curvy body didn’t not become important to me until I came to North America. In retrospect, these were always present in my growing up days in Kenya. Although I understand the interconnectedness between racism, sexism, class, and body image, this issue continues to be a struggle for me.

Narrative samples

Angelina

My childhood: the awakening

I was born in Ottawa to a French-Canadian mother and a Japanese father. I grew up speaking French and English at home and at school. In my early childhood (ages 0 – 8) I never really felt different from my peers and was quite popular at school. I was sociable and had lots of friends. I was considered pretty and got attention from boys. I don't remember ever being picked on for being different. Maybe this is because Ottawa is a culturally diverse city or maybe children that young don't pay much attention to racial differences.

When I was 8, I decided to go and live with my grandmother in Northern Quebec for a year. I was away from my family for the first time. I lived in a very small village where everyone knew each other. It was also a very homogeneous group of people: French Canadian, catholic, with a small-town mentality. Not only was I new to this place, but I also looked very exotic. This is my first memory of being singled-out for being different. My memories, however, are very positive. My classmates were very impressed by the fact that I could speak English so well. Grownups always commented on my exotic looks, but with admiration and wonder. If I was the target of hateful or racist words or actions, it wasn't openly expressed to me or I was oblivious to them.

When I was 10 years old, my family and I moved to Gatineau, near the city of Ottawa but in the province of Quebec where everything was predominantly French. Despite its proximity to Ottawa most people didn't even speak English. For the first time in my life, I became acutely aware that I was different from my peers. This realization came from pure observation on my part, not from being told otherwise by fellow classmates. At an age when fitting in and being normal are becoming very important, this realization of being different sparked a fear of being judged by others as well as self-hatred for everything that made me different. The worst possible thing for a young prepubescent child is not fitting into her social circle. I had become aware of other children being

ostracized at school for being poor, for being overweight, for wearing glasses or dressing funny and I didn't want to become the brunt of people's jokes or the victim of bullying. Although I never became a target of bullying and remained well-liked and had many friends, I felt as though I was "playing a part" and was afraid of being "found-out" at any moment. It made me question my identity as I was unable to be genuinely myself. I developed low-self esteem and always felt self-conscious. I felt deep shame towards my looks, my heritage, my father and our home life, my family's religion and anything that was distinctly different than what I saw around me. I carried the weight of this big dark secret on my shoulders, but on the outside I pretended as though nothing bothered me.

In my early teenage years, I was so ashamed of my father that I actually doubted my love for him. I hated the fact that he didn't even try to be like other Canadians. He ate on the floor Japanese-style, spoke broken English and practiced Buddhist chants loudly. He looked visibly different than my friends' dads. I was embarrassed to have friends come over to my house. Those who did come over thought my dad was funny and cute, but I was mortified. I started alienating myself more and more from my father and drove a wedge between us that endures to this day. I certainly didn't embrace my Japanese background and wanted nothing to do with learning about its culture or language. It wasn't until many years later that I realized that my father wasn't strange at all: he was Japanese.

My teenage years: the charade continues

When I was 13, we moved to the West Coast, to Victoria. As a young teen, my biggest wish was to have a normal life. I tried to become someone I wasn't. Plagued by low-self confidence and lacking an identity, I rebelled and hung out with the wrong crowd. I started smoking, drinking and doing drugs to fit in. I was looking for love and acceptance in all the wrong places. I despised my unusual looks and my round figure. I thought I was ugly and unlovable. I was extremely unhappy with myself physically and developed an eating disorder.

As an adolescent, I was very sensitive to any racial comment made in my presence and was easily offended. Usually, I kept quiet to avoid confrontation or putting the spotlight on my differences. I also pretended that it didn't bother me, but it scars me to this day. I remember a few times being called Chinese by strangers or people who

barely knew me. Sometimes people would ask me how to say a certain thing in Chinese. This ignorance infuriated me, because people didn't even get the country right. Japanese and Chinese are not the same thing. Besides, being born in Canada, I didn't even speak Japanese and had never been to Japan. I felt as Canadian as the next white person, but people didn't see it that way because of my eyes and complexion. I remember one particularly hurtful comment made by a stranger on the street one day as I was walking with a friend of mine. This guy said "hello ladies" and then recanted and said "hello lady," referring to my friend. He had refused to acknowledge my presence or accept me as a human being because I was obviously of a different race. My friend started defending me, but I told her to drop it. I didn't want to make an issue out of it. I felt very hurt that someone could be as stupid and insensitive as to hurt someone with their words that way, someone who knew nothing about who I was. However, I didn't know how to assert myself and stand up for what I believed in and failed to speak up. Because of my young age and the fact that I was easily influenced, I doubted my own worth. As a result, I just hated myself more and believed that I was perhaps an outcast.

Ironically, although I was very ashamed of my Japanese background, I was very proud of my French-Canadian background. Although English-speaking people often made derogatory comments about the French Canadian, I never felt ashamed. I always defended my roots and proudly exclaimed how great they were. I was proud to speak French and my Quebec roots were a big part of my identity. I wanted to showcase my "French-Canadian-ness" and hide my "Japanese-ness." In retrospect, I know that this is surely because French-Canadians are white and therefore "normal." It was an ideal that I wanted to be associated with.

Going to Japan: reverse racism and discrimination

Interestingly enough, in my birth country I didn't feel like a real Canadian and was always singled out as being a visible minority, yet in Japan I was also a foreigner who didn't fit in and could never be seen as one of them. This made me feel as though I didn't belong to either country. I was a freak, a mutt, a weirdo. It wasn't until many years later that I was able to fully accept myself for whom and what I am: a union of two cultures. I now embrace and appreciate my cultural roots and unique heritage.

Although I'm half Japanese, when I went to Japan, I never felt as though I belonged there. I was a Gaijin and the obvious Asian traits which made me stand out in Canada were too slight in Japan. I also inherited my mother's voluptuous figure. Besides, as soon as I opened my mouth, my very poor Japanese would betray me. The Japanese couldn't quite figure me out. In Japan, staring is not considered as rude as it is here, so people would look me up and down, from head to toe. Already, afflicted by low self-esteem this staring made me very uncomfortable. I remember my landlord, who knew I didn't speak Japanese well, making derogatory comments about me, thinking I couldn't understand what he was saying. He would say how fat I was and that I needed to lose a lot of weight. I just smiled and pretended like I didn't notice what he said, but inside I was hurt, ashamed and feeling unworthy and unaccepted. Being picked on for my weight was more hurtful than being discriminated against for racial reasons. I think this is because I can't do anything about my cultural background. It'll never change. However, being overweight was something that I had some control over and hence something that I had failed at. I hated the fact that I overate, was addicted to food and couldn't control my cravings. I hated letting myself go and based my worth on my physical appearance. In my opinion, racial discrimination is the same as being discriminated against for one's appearance, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, etc. It's as damaging and as hurtful.

I started teaching English in Japan at the age of 19. I taught all levels of English, from children to adults, one-on-one and in a group setting. I taught French as well. Although I taught many different groups of students, all were Japanese. In general, these students were fascinated by my "Gaijin-ness." I found out over the years, that racism is very common in Japan. In general, Western or English-speaking countries are well-perceived and their people idolized a phenomenon similar to the Hollywood glamour! However, people from other Asian countries, specifically Korea, are discriminated against and judged very harshly. Being from Canada, I was mostly admired by my students and people befriended me because I could speak English.

My teaching years: forgiveness and acceptance

Upon my return to Canada, I enrolled in the linguistics program at UVIC and graduated with distinction with a degree in Applied Linguistics. I did my practicum at

UVIC teaching ESL students from around the globe. For the first time, the demographic was broad and varied. I was conscious of the racial and linguistic differences between students, but as a teacher I always tried my best to avoid making others feel uncomfortable. I always think carefully before I speak, because I don't want to accidentally hurt or offend others. Your research has made me re-evaluate the way I teach. It's true that we fail to address the issue of racism in our classes for fear of being un-politically correct and worried of offending people. Because I've always been conscious of my own feelings towards being singled out, up until now I have always tried to avoid pinpointing differences in order to avoid making others feel uncomfortable. However, I think it's a good idea to put a voice to this and be able to discuss it openly in a safe environment.

I now teach French and English. I currently teach French to a pretty homogenous group of students: primarily all Anglophone adult males, well-educated, Being French has never made me feel less than adequate, because in this setting, although these students are highly intelligent and successful, I am the expert in the field. They respect the fact that I'm a native French-speaker. Not only does it give me an identity, but it also gives me credibility, professionalism as it is my area of expertise. The fact that I'm a visible minority is always a good starter for a conversation, but I've never felt anything other than interest and curiosity from the students' end. I am also comfortable in my own skin and I don't mind telling people my story.

In conclusion, I realize that being of a different ethnic background has had long-term repercussions that have afflicted me as an adult. I strongly believe that this is the root of my distant relationship with my father, my low self-worth, my weight problem, my eating disorder, my alcoholism, my feelings of inadequacy, my inability to be authentic, and my quest for perfection, to name a few. Fortunately, these are issues I have addressed as an adult in therapy and have made me the person I am today: more accepting of myself as an individual and of society in general.

Thoughts on the videos: A girl like me & A boy like me

I was deeply affected by the impact of racism on the youth and children depicted in both videos. The video "A Girl Like Me" reminds me of living in Japan, where the

ideal of beauty is having light skin. Skin bleaching products are hot on the market. Tans are out and young women walk around with a parasol on sunny days. All young people dye their hair brown or blond, which looks unnatural on Asians. The most popular cosmetic procedure in Asia is creating a fold in the eyelid to give the eye a more western appearance. Society is telling young Japanese people not to embrace their Asian looks, and that to look more western is a standard of beauty. The young black women in the video seem to be facing similar pressures from society.

In the video “A Boy Like Me” it is traumatic to me that young children of colour learn whether consciously or unconsciously from society that they are not as worthy as white children. Children learn from a young age different stereotypes and stigmas associated with different races. So much of an individual’s identity, self-confidence, self-worth, values etc, are moulded in childhood. Seeing the children’s drawings without arms and faces made may heart ache. How can we make sure that our children are shielded from this type of racial discrimination and encourage positive cultural acceptance? It seems that children pick it up from society in general which promotes a certain ideal for beauty, perfection and worthiness.

Darlene

As I think back, it wasn't an actual event. It was an ongoing knowing of being treated either too kindly by teachers because I was Native, or just learning to understand the importance of never talking about my Native roots in school. Kids were almost trained to look down on my race from birth. I knew it, and so did all the other Native people in my school. We all stuck together and lived in denial almost; to survive the damage it did to our very souls.

I remember being singled out in grade 2, by my teacher Mr. Wild, who knew I was native because he met my mother. It was almost normal for him to be enraged most of the time; I found him very scary and would freeze up in his class sometimes when he started throwing things. He would direct math questions at me, hit the desk and demand an answer, and when I could not speak, he would hit me on the head with a hard cover book and call me stupid. This was so embarrassing for me, the students seemed shocked at times. Eventually I snapped and ran out of the class room all the way home to tell my mother. It did not really occur to me that it was a race issue, until I was older. I was the only Native child in the class room. There were children who called me swab and dirty Indian. I was too shy and socially untrained, to really know how to deal with this at such a young age. I accepted the fact that I was ugly, not as good as the other children. It stayed with me until I was 33 years of age, when I came to see that I was not so ugly, just different because I am mixed. Being singled out by a teacher, made me realize that non-native or white adults and children were dangerous, unpredictable or innately cruel! Like it was part of who they were, almost, there training or upbringing. I believed this always, and still do at times, as I still see so much racism in my community and in schools by adults.

I didn't seek assistance from anyone... My father was physically abusive to me as a child. There were many beatings, he was also white, so I assumed it was part of the non-native white Canadian culture. The only help I got was from my mother, who told me to never let a teacher hit me and not tell again. The incident was not resolved.

I wasn't satisfied with how it was handled. At the time, I watched my father come to the school and rough up the teacher, saying I was his property, and that he had no right to put his hands on me. This to me, made me feel confused.

I never told anyone else about these and other incidents until now.

| Were I to experience this in behaviour as a teacher, I would have the teacher removed from his professional by law and would press charges against him for assaulting a child. I would also investigate the home life of the child, as my father saying I was his property is odd and worth investigating.

As far as talking and dealing with racism I think that when schools try really hard to bring the culture into the school, it creates division. It singles us out, and lets everyone know we are the minority, the ones who suffered, the ones to pity. Children can be cruel. It should be handled better, with more dignity, honour and should just be mandatory for all to learn about our culture. Not in forceful way, it should just be. Children should begin to learn some Native language from the area they live, from the time they are in kindergarten. This would make Native people feel less pressure to try and fit in. Cultural ways should be taught, this would help others understand about big house events, about treatment centers and residential schools.

Through all these experiences, I have learned to treat kids as individual special lights, not one, but all of them, regardless of race. I am very proud of who I am, I love my mixed race today. It gives me hope for a better future. I have learned that adults want to change, to find guidance somewhere. I make myself available for people who need help to understand better.

Nadia

Life in Costa Rica

Life in Costa Rica was a very difficult adjustment, not being able to communicate or understand often what was expected of me. My first school was a British Costa Rican private school where half of the classes were conducted in Spanish and half in English. Despite the fact that most of the students spoke English well enough to communicate with me I was treated as an outsider and ridiculed from day one. My sister and I were both made to feel our outsider status every day. The fact that we were not members of Middle Eastern descent, and not Latin, made us total pariahs, without any provocation on our part. This treatment was tolerated by the American teachers and so escalated until we decided to leave the school altogether. Our second school was the Costa Rican Academy which was a school that catered to the children of American military personnel and other English speaking expatriates. This school was a better experience overall. The main challenges here were of a cultural nature. Where most of the students were free to date and often partied our culture did not allow us to easily participate or approve of what was normal adolescent social behaviour. My sister and I did not easily rebel from our parents' expectations even though these expectations of dress, chastity and comportment made life more difficult in trying to make friendships and be accepted by our peers.

As a child my perception of myself was that I was white. I identified with the modern material culture in general but would often find that I lacked certain "common" knowledge which I would later discover came from a shared white Canadian experience which I lacked growing up in a Persian Canadian household. Connected to this were the problems of cultural reference in conversation, jokes, idioms, metaphors and references which make up so much of common speech in any culture. This in itself was such a barrier to social communication that it alienated me. It was as if I didn't speak English at all, and thus I inherited and manifested foreignness from an earlier generation.

This was more than a little bit responsible for my withdrawn and shy nature and this was never to my recollection addressed by any educator I came into contact with. I

can only assume that they like my peers judged my shyness to be of my own making and not a result of a cultural or racial alienation. The policy throughout my education in Canada seemed to be that we are all the same and that differences should not be celebrated or demeaned. This however did not serve the best interests of we who were of another culture as we were left to muddle through conversations, Christmas carols and cultural references the significance of which we were never invited to share in. I was a great loss in retrospect to both me and my classmates never to have had an opportunity to shape my culture and experience with them.

Teaching experience

“As it being my first year teaching in a new environment, I felt that as long as the teachers didn't overtly insult the children and the other teachers didn't say anything about it, then perhaps it was acceptable behaviour toward the children.

I feel that my role in this situation could have been more of one of acceptance of different cultures in the school, and protecting the children from the discrimination of the teachers towards their differences. Allowing the children to communicate with the others in their own language might have helped them feel more confident in themselves, which later would help them communicate with the other children of Caucasian background.

I feel that the teachers needed to be educated more on being more accepting and tolerating different cultures that were clearly much different from theirs. The children could have learned a lot from the differences and they could have been highlighted and celebrated, as is done in most other Montessori schools.”

Life in general

“After watching a short film called a girl like me, it let out a light switch in my mind as to why I might be feeling certain way toward my fellow race, and toward any race that is not Caucasian. I feel that as a child in town, growing up I was only exposed to one certain standard of beauty which was confirmed through the media and TV shows I watched.

My whole life I have been embarrassed to be a visible minority, and I realize that have a slight distaste towards anything "traditional", as I thought that anyone who wants to live in Canada should try and "fit in" to what westernized standards are such as clothing, food, speech. Instead of trying to embrace and highlight and learn about the different cultures, which now I realize I will need to actively change the way I think about people and not instantly judge them how they look.

I feel that being married to a Caucasian husband it might have helped assimilate me into my society, and make me feel more "normal". I think that my husband is starting to understand what it is like for me now that we have lived several months in Fiji where being Caucasian is the visible minority, and it has helped me greatly in appreciating that all cultures are valuable and helping me build my self identity. Victoria's population has changed a lot in the past twenty years, I believe that soon enough people will have to be more accepting of other races and culture out of exposure, education at home and school and necessity to live harmoniously and respectfully with diversity".

Maria

Learning in Kenya

Growing up on the foothills of M. Kenya on my father's farm, I felt I new who I was, who my people were, why I had the names I was given, and more importantly I never doubted that my being intended and purposeful. I had a mission of carrying forward the pride of my people like my great grandmothers and fathers had done. My father especially, constantly reminded me of how honourable my name, Wanjugu, was, not just because I was named after his mother, but because in her own right, she had been a warrior woman and woman much loved and esteemed in her community. I recall going back to the reserve where she and my grandfather lived and other grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, would come to see me, and wish me well on my journey of following in my grandmother's footsteps. I never quite understood why they seemed so happy and excited to see me, I was just a little girl, but they held so much hope. I felt at home and safe. In my mind there was no impossibility. I could do, go, and accomplish anything I put my mind on.

With the blessing of my family and the longstanding traditions of my people, the effect of the Christian doctrine seemed almost minimal, until the age of 12 when my parents sent my siblings and myself to a British Boarding School, known for its academic excellence. Until this point, I was called by my "real" name Wanjugu. Even though all official documents, school, hospital, church, etc. required that I register using my English name, Mary, which was referred to as the first name, I never felt that the name belonged to me. I do recall intensely disliking being referred to by that name, although I didn't understand why. Perhaps it was its connection with the attainable virtues of Mary mother of Jesus or just the mere sound of it.

While the matron helped my sister and I settle into our new environment, she overheard us talking in our language and referring to each other in our names, as we had always done. To this day, I call how sternly she threatened to whip us if she ever again heard us talking in Kikuyu and calling each other by our second names. I re-experience the anxiety in my stomach, just like I felt it that evening, each time I think of that evening. We never did speak Kikuyu or call each other by our "real" names while we were at school from that day one. We only spoke English. Although situated in the center

of our cultural land, the school bore no reminders of the surrounding cultural values. No images of local heroes or histories. From this age on, schooling became an anxiety provoking process for me. My father still recalls how worried he and my mother used to be over my health and wellbeing. I was unable to eat and developed chronic diarrhoea and migraines for the length of time I was in that school. Amazingly, I excelled academically and maintained a seemingly active social life at school. They are still amazed that I became a teacher and have attained the level of education I have. I attribute that to their love for our traditions, the blessings and unseen assistance of my ancestors' spirits and the well wishes of my many grandparents, aunts and uncles, in the reservation, to whom I remain the renewed spirit of Wanjugu, their warrior woman.

A meeting with Agency: a reawakening of spirit

The nature of schooling I had experienced in the British boarding persisted into my secondary level schooling. It was in high school that I started to embrace a different way of being within the schooling system. To her credit, my literature teacher understood (not sure how) the impact of our colonial system on the spirit of the students. She carefully walked through a literally journey that included the classics like Shakespeare and other Western texts, she made sure to include a text from each continent including all of the islands, places I had never heard of, and ended with a wide selection of literature by African authors.

On this journey she highlighted the overt and subtle cultural changes that occurred before and after colonialism and how these changes translated into the lived experiences of the people at all levels of society. The last assignment of the course was a research project of our traditions. She required that we interview a grandmother and recreate the histories of our past, outline how our lives were different, carefully consider what aspects of our traditional culture we wished to hold onto and let go of and why, and finally outline how we were going to intentionally keep the past embedded with our present.

The interview process gave great joy to both my parents and extended family. I saw the elders come to life as they narrated their life experiences. This process seemed to bring life to all the people I talked to, but I gave me new life. Almost every member of my class chose to no longer be addressed by their English names, which we began to call

our slave names and we allowed ourselves to speak to each in our traditional languages, despite the threat of punishment. It was an empowerment like I had never felt. While we felt personally empowered at the grassroots, we still understood that officially our names and manner of being was to remain as we were instructed to, for the most part. Our convictions of value of our traditional ways and beliefs, while felt deeply, remained for the most part theoretical knowledge. We took no action to restore our lost cultural dignity at an official level. My convictions were to be greatly tested during my studies in North America.

A foreign land, a foreign culture, a new pain and a new resolution

As I prepared to leave my home to study in the United States of America, I remember one of my grandmothers telling me to understand that my travel to White man's land was going to change my beliefs and my views of my land and my people. She said that once I live in the White man's land, I may begin to dislike myself and my people and even wish to change myself to be a White woman. I couldn't have understood then her foresight at that time and it wasn't until a few years ago that these words came back to me, and I understood what my grandmother meant.

I attended a university affiliated with my church and the university extension of the high school I was attending. Given the similarity of doctrine I expected to blend in smoothly, at least at with the church community. This wasn't to be. Three incidents in particular affected me greatly.

Upon my arrival, I treated by the church community who saw me more like a project to be improved than a fellow sister in our faith. From the first day, I was offered used clothes and other things without as much as a consultation. It was assumed, I later realized, that coming from Africa, as I was referred to, I automatically was in need of charity. I recall an incident where a woman, took me to her house and pull out a plastic bag of clothes and told me to sort out what I wanted. In my attempt to acknowledge her kindness, I started to look through the bag, but she quickly stopped me and removed a velvet jacket which she said I couldn't have. I felt ashamed. I didn't know why, but the feeling of shame overwhelmed me. I had never needed for clothes and none of these clothes were my style, but seeing her take that throw back to the 70s fashion, Austin Power looking jacket made me feel less than worthy of all the good clothes I had. I didn't

know this feeling. Still not knowing why, I cried myself to sleep that night, in my dorm room. I was homesick. This was my first experience with knowing that being from Africa was not a preferred existence. It was something that needed developing or eliminated. There seemed, to me, to be no aspect of my culture, no matter how proudly I shared, that was deemed worthwhile to be embraced or replicated

The second incident happened about two months after my arrival. I fellow dorm mate and I had somehow fallen into the habit to going to dinner together until one evening when this boy called my room and requested a “rain check” as he had several things to do. Other than not knowing what a rain check was, I assumed nothing of it. I gathered from the context that he couldn’t make it to dinner. This went on for several days and I finally asked him if something was the matter and if there was anything I could do to help. After a brief silence, he quietly shared that he was comfortable going to dinner with me, because people were saying things. Curious, I inquired of the nature of things being said, to which he responded very slowly and almost hesitantly, “stuff about you being Black”. My first thoughts of that statement were what a dumb thing to say? For the first time, I became aware of being a person of color, any color. Until then, the color of a person was never a determinant of the nature of a relationship I would have with them. Like I had felt during the velvet jacket issue, a feeling of shame overwhelmed me. I knew that his argument was dumb but yet I felt shame that my color alone would cause someone to not want to walk out of the dorm with me. A week later, I ended in the school clinic, my migraines and digestive issues had resurfaced. From this point on, I became very self conscious of who I was. I worked hard to try and blend into the White mainstream any aspects of my body that I could. I dyed and straightened my hair, a very expensive, time consuming, and unsafe undertaking, I bleached my skin, tried to keep up with the latest fashion, changed my accent to a more standardized way of speaking, by listening to countless hours of audio tapes. The shame persisted as did the racist comments, paraphernalia, and actions, right down to a burning cross outside my window. I never understood the extreme hatred of the Black race especially among my Christian brethren. It still mystifies me, even though I now understand the mechanism through which values are passed one.

Despite the ongoing assault of my cultural identity, I continued to achieve academic success. I believe I learned in my boarding school years to disassociate one experience from another. I knew studying was beneficial to me and I strived to do well. However, not even my classroom experience was sacred from race related comparisons. It was in one of my junior year philosophy courses, where the professor, after grading my paper and reading it to the class, as he did with the papers he perceived to be well written, turned to me as I left the classroom and said to me, “Well done Mary, that was a beautiful paper, you people don’t often get As”. I knew that in that compliment was an insult but I still didn’t quite believe that a professor would stoop to the level of racial comparisons. It was the gasps from my fellow students that confirmed that they too had heard the insult. I did thank him for the intended comment and yet again the feeling of shame overwhelmed me and I cried all the way to my room. I believe that were this not my last year of my master’s degree, I would have left that day and gone back home.

I eventually came to accept that to most of my fellow church members and peers, I was an African, project. I have sat through countless conversations of the good deeds that have been bestowed upon us, answered countless questions about the impoverished and unliveable conditions of my beloved country and people but in all of this I have found a renewed pride in the strength of my people. Talking to my fellow people of Color and fellow White friends who understand the inevitability of human equality, I have seen myself move from shame to pride. However, it wasn’t until I was willing to admit that the shame from the various forms racial assaults were traumatizing to me and restricted my capacity for full agency. To me acknowledging the hurt felt like the ultimate self-betrayal or myself and my culture and not at all representative of my name sake, Wanjugu, the warrior woman. To acknowledge this pain was to admit defeat. I couldn’t have been more wrong. From the day I allowed my counsellor to walk me through my this emotional war zone within me, I began to heal and reclaim my pride and to celebrate my resilience and persistence. I feel a blossoming strength that comes from knowing that I can work through imposed pain and that I assist others, and especially my students of color, harness their strengths to work through the pain of racism while working towards their life goals.

Nehema

Although I am not pursuing any formal graduate training in education, I am writing to share some of my narratives in hopes that people can recognize and hear both the extreme and subtle voice of racism, alongside other discriminatory practices, that continue to pervade our Canadian schools and society.

A Biblical Lesson

As a young student in grade six, my mother registered me in a summer Bible day camp that took place at my school. Although my family and I do not follow the Christian faith, we are surrounded by constant reminders that this is one of the dominant religions practiced in Canada and North America. For example, in my small rural community where I grew up, there were four churches in the area, all within walking distance from my childhood home. Therefore, in an effort to introduce me to Christianity and its basic tenets, my mother signed me up to participate in a summer day camp aimed at teaching Christianity to children of my community and other nearby communities.

On one particular day, I remember informing the day camp teacher that I was not Christian. I think this came about because she had asked my peer group how many of us had Bibles at home. Anyways, her initial response was that of surprise, and then she proceeded to inscribe her own copy of a Bible and give it to me, but not before stating that I will not go to heaven, like we talked about in a previous teaching session, if I do not learn about Christianity and read the Bible at home everyday.

Although I was only about 11 or 12 years old at the time, her reaction imprinted on me a message that it was “wrong” to not be Christian and not have a Bible at home. This experience also made me more aware of my “otherness” – that I was different in some way from the other children and needed special attention to reform me into something or someone that was “acceptable”. There was nothing extreme in what this teacher did; rather, it was the subtle message about wrongness and acceptance that made me feel less than, and different from, the other children in the day camp program.

I understand that this was a CHRISTIAN day camp, and the assumption is that most of the children would be Christian and have access to a Bible at home. Was it to wrong then for my mom to enrol me in such a program, knowing that I would eventually be

“found out”? Or rather, would it have been more suitable for the day camp teacher to use my disclosure as an opportunity to discuss religious tolerance and acceptance, given that kindness and compassion to others are values espoused in the Christian faith? Some of my thoughts on this experience focus mainly on the role of a teacher. I imagine that most teachers today do well in fostering tolerance and acceptance in their classrooms at school. Do these efforts cease in the case of religious instruction? Do teachers apply their own attitudes of openness and tolerance when instructing about religion?

Broken Connections in 9/11

Like many other tragic events in history, people will remember 9/11 for a long time to come. I remember arriving to school that morning and finding the campus community at a standstill. A huge TV in the student centre helped form a gathering place for students and instructors to watch as the events unfolded. The haunting image of the two planes crashing into the world trade center buildings was one of the most imprinted images in my mind. It was this image that also served as a centerpiece for a discriminatory interaction between my mother and a long time family friend.

In the small rural community where I was raised, my family stood out. We were the only Middle Eastern family among the rest of the Ukrainian families in the community. After 20 years of settling in and living there, my family felt that we have found our place, a sense of belonging in this small, but otherwise, hospitable community. A few days after 9/11, my mother was on her way to pick up some mail from the post office. This post office, the only one in community, was a place where the locals often met during their morning errands. On this particular day, every mailbox was filled with the local paper containing images of 9/11. As my mom was at the post office picking up her mail, one of my parent's long time friends came into the post office. As he picked up his mail and noticed the images on the front page of the local newspaper, he turned to my mother said “Well, you must be happy about this”, inferring that because of our Middle Eastern heritage, we would be happy that these events were targeted against the United States and caused so much destruction. My mother left the post office in tears, devastated that this long time friend would insinuate any kind of satisfaction with the events of 9/11, simply because our ethnic origin. She called me later that day, still shaken up at this interaction at the post office. She proceeded to warn me not to discuss these events with

anyone, and to not disclose my ethnic origin if anyone asks. To this day, she still cautions me about not disclosing my ethnic origin when traveling, especially to the US.

The impact of 9/11 and the reaction to what this event meant also were noticed in my uncle's restaurant business. Shortly after 9/11, my uncle noticed a significant drop in customers at his restaurant, although he always had a steady pace of regular customers from the community, and his popular menu items were sometimes featured in the local newspaper. 9/11 was a devastating tragedy, and will not be soon forgotten. As people made assumptions and judgments of Islam, based on the media, many failed to recognize that many Middle Easterners, especially those who follow Islam, were also questioning their security and safety in a nation that branded Islam and Islamic countries as "the axis of evil".

The events of 9/11 became a topic of discussion in several of my undergraduate classes in psychology, including my social psychology class, where media influence was analyzed, and group behaviour and dynamics were applied to understand how the reactions towards 9/11 can be accounted for in some respects by group dynamics and theories. Luckily, I have never experienced any discriminatory interactions regarding 9/11, but there still remains some uneasiness in my interactions with people who subscribe to beliefs which continue to perpetuate the subtle, yet antagonistic reactions towards 9/11, Middle Eastern conflict, and towards cultural diversity.

Zahara

Life in the Brown Lane

I guess I could say that I've been really fortunate in my life to have never really felt the sting and cruelty of discrimination and prejudice. I was raised in a predominantly white city but never felt like an outsider. This is my not-so-interesting-mildly-entertaining-not-nearly-finished story.

The Early Years

As a child, I never felt like I was 'different' from the other kids in my school. I went to the same school from Kindergarten to Grade 7 and was friends with everyone in my class. I guess I never felt different because the class I was in was the only reality I knew, as was the case for the other kids in the class since no one had really come or gone during our 8 years together. Looking back, I guess it never hit me that the only other 'different' people were my friend Erik who is half Indian half Dutch, and my other friend Ruth who is from Eritrea. And I guess I didn't think too much of it when during the Gulf War in '92/'93 my friends would crack jokes that they better not hurt my feelings as my dad (who is middle eastern, with a moustache) would bomb their houses. That being said, I never felt any different or discriminated by my friends or teachers at the school.

As I look back on it now, it is probably to the credit of the teachers that my elementary school experience was a joyful one. They treated us all as they did their own children. I know this because my friend Fiona's mom was also our seventh grade teacher. It was this very teacher who took the liberty of applying for scholarships to St. Margie's for me, and my best friend Alana.

High School & Adolescence

High school wasn't much of a different story. Thanks to my seventh-grade teacher, I went to a private, all-girl, international, school. There were girls from all over the globe at this school. They came from all parts of Asia, Mexico, Australia and South America, so it was pretty hard for me to feel like I was any different from the others.

There was, of course, the kind of behaviour that is expected in any high school. I'm talking about girls being cruel to one another for no apparent reason save an absolute

excess of hormones. I think this is something that unfortunately, every girl, regardless of race, will have to experience at one time or another.

The teachers at the school were good at promoting and acknowledging any kind of racial diversity in the school in a positive way. Their primary goal was our academic education however, and this was our goal too. Sometime in the early 2000s our school was ranked the #1 private school in all of BC.

I was probably about 15 when the issue of my parents not wanting me going out with my friends came up and gave me the first warning sign that they were quite unlike most Canadian parents. The idea that I wanted to go out with my friends to spend a day being idle in a shopping mall was completely absurd. Still, for the most part, I stuck to my guns about it all, and they relented.

University Years

What can I say about university life that isn't already public knowledge? I started out studying business and was in economics classes, that I'm sorry to say it, were populated by mostly Asian students. For personal reasons, and none at all having to do with the students in the classes, I changed my major in my third year to Spanish and minored in French.

I fell instantly in love with school, my classes, my teachers and my fellow students. There was once again no prejudice here as most of my teachers were Mexican, Colombian, French and African.

The Afterlife

As I look back on my school years, I see how sheltered it all really was. I've found that living in Victoria also provides a little bit of a bubble when it comes to certain hardships that exist in other cities. People seem to be happier here, friendlier, and more willing to accept and embrace differences. I lived in Toronto for a short while and, not that everyone was racist there, but there was definitely a self-imposed segregation between different cultures. For example, you knew that in 'x' city is where all the 'fill-in-

the-blanks' lived, and so on and so forth. I think the same kind of thing happens in Vancouver and other major cities.

Unfortunately, I feel that as I get older, I notice more and more instances of racial intolerance. I don't know if it is because people are scared, or unwilling, but there is something really sad about it. I've noticed a marked difference between attitudes in Canada and the States also. I'm not saying that there are no racist people in Canada, but I do think that Canadians are more conservative and quiet about it, whereas Americans are more open about it.

I feel lucky also to have never felt any kind of discrimination in the work force. Perhaps it has just been my own personal experience, but I've noticed that there are a lot of teachers in many schools in Victoria, from different ethnic backgrounds, which in my opinion is great for the students. I believe that the solution starts with the young and fresh minds of children and youth. In teaching them to appreciate all the different peoples of our world, I hope to make a difference, however big or small it may be.

Chapter five

Different races, different places, one language: Further conversations on the themes

Introduction

In this chapter I will further discuss the process I used to create the central themes from the personal dialogues, written narratives, and my field notes. I will also share how I locating myself in my own cultures informed this research study. I will then share the central themes and situate them within the participants' voices, which I extracted from the collected data. Since the dialogues between the participants and me were almost always reciprocal in nature, I will include some of my own experiences with racism that I shared with the participants as recommended by indigenous researcher (Kovach, 2009).

Locating myself within narrative and phenomenological study

By situation myself within my own Kikuyu cultural background and its epistemology, I was able to share my own experiences as separate from those of the participants. This process served to develop trust among the participants and create a balance between the researcher/me and the researched as I too become a participant. As anti-oppressive researcher Susan Strega (2005) suggests, including my own experiences in the data collection and analysis process allowed me to "share, voice, and give space to the perspectives of marginalized voices, in a system of domination and subordination where they aren't appreciated" (p.224). This process allowed me to learn from the assumption, beliefs, and perspectives of the participants, instead of setting myself as the expert in the question. In this investigative process, we were all learning and informing each other at personal and professional levels. As Van Manen suggest, "Phenomenology as a research method in education tries to ward off any tendency toward constructing a

predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would rule-govern the research project" (1990, p. 29).

In *A new critical framework for applying hermeneutic phenomenology*, Mooi (2009), reiterates that the intention of phenomenological research is to “understand how individuals perceive and make sense of their own lived experiences” (p.20). Not only does the researcher need to analyse the data of the participants’ lived experiences, but his/she must locate him or herself within the study. Phenomenologist Van Manen (1984), suggests that as researcher, I reflect on how my own lived experiences orientation to the phenomenon I studied, before I engaged in the “existential investigation of the phenomenon I was studied. I have shared the assumptions and the lenses through which I viewed this study in the beginning chapter.

The experiences of the participants very much mirrored my own pain and struggles with racism. This made it increasingly difficult to utilize the bracketing format suggested by Crabtree (1992), where the researcher “must bracket his or her own preconceptions and enter into the individuals work with the self as an experiencing interpreter” (p. 24). Instead, I chose to utilize the process of analysis suggested by Kovach (2009), which encourages the indigenous researcher to maintain ongoing clarification of the intentions and motivations of the study by cultivating a self awareness and the ability to consciously situate oneself within the ongoing research. This form of reflexivity allowed me to participate as “co-constructor of knowledge in specific and defined ways” (Kovach, 2009 p.111). Through the inclusion of my voice to the experiences of the participants I attempted to “pursue this phenomenological question of study in such a way that made my way of addressing the question became an example of

what the questions sought to clarify”(Van Manen, 2001 p. 46). While sharing the stories and finding commonalities assisted in the “making of particular phenomenon, this was not an attempt to generalize all participants experiences” (Kovach, 2009, p.111) Instead the process of locating myself as researcher/participant ensured that the participants realities were not “misinterpreted as generalizable collectives while at the same time affirming perspectives about objectivity/subjectivity conundrum” (ibid) during the research and data explication process.

As I mentioned in the methodology chapter, I conducted face to face, telephone, and email dialogues with each participant and in response to the request of some of the participants, after our initial meeting, offered them the opportunity to write some of their experiences in narrative form. As Welman and Kruger (1996) suggest, the discussions were directed towards the participants “experiences, feelings, beliefs, and convictions” (p. 196) regarding how they had dealt with the pain of racism as students and teachers in the Canadian schooling system. As evidenced in the narratives I shared in chapter four and the quotes I will share in this chapter, the participants described their experiences in a “language free from the constructs of the intellect society” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p.96).

The relevance of the themes to the questions of the study

As noted earlier, the purpose of this narrative and phenomenological study was to understand, how teachers of color have experienced the racism which has been directed towards them, while in the schooling system and how have they been able to either let the pain of racism go or deal with it in a way that allows them to continue working in the

same schooling system? It was important that I share the experiences of the participants in their own words as narratives in a way that enabled me, the participants, and the future readers to reflect more deeply on the way which these participants made interpretive sense of their lived experiences (van Manen, 1990, pp. 74-76). Reading through various literary sources on phenomenology allowed me to see limits transcend the limits of my interpretive sensibilities (Hycner; 1999 Mooi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990).

Neuman (2004), explains how at the beginning of a research, researchers have an unexamined “concept of the phenomenon as soon as the first pieces are collected, the process of analysis begins” (p. 320). This analysis process requires the researcher to remain in a constant state of self reflection on their own location within the study. Such was my experience of the explication process. While immersing myself through the narratives, field notes, and transcripts, I constantly reflected on how the emerging themes related to the questions of the study. As well, I examined how my own assumptions of the study might have affected my perceptions and interpretations of the participants experiences (Moustakas 1990). Through ongoing dialogues with the participants, I was able to address the questions of the study and represent the participants’ understanding of their experiences with racism through the following eight themes.

List of themes

- 1) Importance of knowing cultural, family, and political history
- 2) Shame of being and knowing you are different
- 3) Beauty standards and the cost of trying to achieve them
- 4) The saving grace of caring and nurturing teachers

- 5) The esteem and importance of a good education
- 6) Living and coping with the anxiety caused by racism
- 7) Healing through the arts and personal faith
- 8) Living in two worlds: the home and social personas

How we overcome: Description of the themes

The importance of personal, cultural and political identity within the schooling system

In reading through the data collected, it was clear that knowing ones cultural roots and identity played a key role in how these participants responded to the racism acts they experienced during their schooling process. Knowing that they had a cultural history of resilience gave the participants the strength to overlook the hurts of racism and pursue their academic and career goals. In *Native identity and community on campus*, Rolo (2009) laments the challenges that Native students face in college and university campuses as they try to find a community with which they can identify with. He notes that often academic work takes a back seat to these struggles. Cummins (1986) also notes that in addition to creating a community space that embodies and represents the Native values and believes, and hopes, the inclusion of knowledges from indigenous communities into the mainstream curriculum also creates a sense of belonging for students from minority backgrounds while validating the presence of these knowledges to students from mainstream culture. Those participants, who had names, images, and maps, or any regalia from their ancestral past, use them as a “dykes” to ward of the pain and discouragement of racist acts.

This is definitely true in my case. Knowing that the name I was given by my parents embodied the accomplishments (factual or mythical) of a line of warrior women

who had protected our tribe alongside the men has always been empowering to me. Seeing and hearing how my father especially (whose mother I'm named after), continues to narrate stories of his mother's and all her namesakes' accomplishments, in the face of great tribulation, anchors my resolution to see things to the end, even when the end seems far and dim, as with this dissertation process. There is a sense of knowing and a feeling of belonging that comes with having an awareness of ones roots. I imagine this is why the writing, picture and movie making businesses continue to do well across the world, as each writer, photographer, or movie maker attempts to lock a piece of their history in genealogical stone.

As one of the participants shared, "erasing the history of a people doesn't diminish the innate desire to search for ones roots". In fact, "it's more than likely to create a loyalty and a deeper connection built mostly on the victories and positive aspects of the culture" Another participant shares how not seeing her own people represented in the books puzzled her:

I always wondered why there was so little information about our people in the books...I lived among my people and the elders always used to tell us stories about where we lived and events that had happened...It was normal to me and I never understood why we didn't have it at school. I remember always feeling so happy when I was at home because everyone liked me there...even if I did well in school, I always wanted to be back home...I still do. I feel better when I go back to visit my people on our land.

Another participant shared how her family's move to North America as a teenager, and having her culture referred to only in "stereotypical" concepts, gave her awareness and a love for her culture she had never had before:

I remember being so excited to answer questions that people would ask me about my country and people...I would give these elaborate explanations of things like the difference between our foods and theirs or our dating and marriage customs...then I realized that no matter what I said, there were a set of standards

questions that were asked, almost by everyone.. Most of the questions were about my being woman... People would ask questions about me being forced to marry someone I didn't want to or having to always take second place to the men. One time this woman asked me straight out, if I felt lucky to be in Canada because I was free to do whatever I wanted.

About three years into her stay in Canada, and realizing that she was never going to be able to blend into or be accepted in the culture, the participant shared how she decided to be proud of her background despite all the stereotypical notions she encountered:

I tried so hard to show that we were not just one way but it was so difficult and I just got tired of answering the dumb questions or just said what I knew they wanted to hear...even the teachers just wouldn't let it go! You would think that they would ask sensible questions or at least be open to hearing my opinions of my culture, but they were just like the rest... I always felt so frustrated and conspicuous...So I decided to just be. I started to hang out with other international students and looking things about what was going on back home on the internet...I looked at fashion and what was in and wore that to school... It felt good to do something I wanted. I did almost all of my projects on my country...my dad was so happy... I actually learned more about my country after I came to Canada and I really liked it....

Torres (2009), attributes this process of attempting fit into the school environment as the reason why many Black students and other students of color are “less likely to complete their degrees than whites and demonstrate lower levels of psychosocial well-being compared with students on predominantly Black campuses” (p. 883). Students in all Black campuses didn't have to deal with the issue of identity and their process of school mirrored that of most White students in the mainstream schooling system

For Darlene, being able to envision her ancestral world in her dreams and reproducing these images that on campus helped and continue to help her create for herself sense of belonging no matter where she was. In her images, she will paint her understanding of the source of her strength and courage. In the image below, she has painted this image of a beautiful woman who arises in the morning and walks into in edge

of the ocean to listen and receive the wisdom and lesson from her ancestors. In our discussion about this image, she share how this image honours the place of the Coast Salish woman's role of listening and carrying out her healing messages from Creator to her community... "Women have a very important role for my people... they are healers and nurturers...we haven't really seen the true power of our First Nations' women, yet"



Figure 6: Spirit of my Ancestors



Figure 7: Victoria's Story

In figure 3, Victoria's Story, the participant share how her desire offer her son a more inclusive and balanced history of Victoria than she had received in the schooling system she:

...explained the truth about Victoria, the city where my Native people once thrived long before it was a city, my son was eager to learn about the history. He was young at the time, and mainly learned by looking at pictures in history books. The past is so controversial and so much struggle and transition took place. My Native people survived one of the worst events in they're time, so that we could be here today. I honour the strengths and endurance of my ancestors and forgive those, whose greed led them to unspeakable acts of violence.

The participant's pride in her heritage and the humility, with which she perceives her ability to paint images of hope and victory, while paying tribute to her cultural heritage, was evident during our conversations. As shown in this photo titled Freedom that she painted at the age to 24



Figure 8: Freedom

It's through her dreams and sense of intuition that she is able to paint images that depict her People's wholeness, hope, and victory, despite any contrary information received through the media or the ills and difficulties her community is going through right now:

I see many difficulties in our communities right now, but our ancestors lived on this land before it was taken from us...the spirit of my ancestors is still with us, we are a strong and proud people...I can already see how much our communities have begun to come together from when I was growing up.

Echoing the same sense of pride in her families resilience after leaving their country and coming to Canada, another participant shares how seeing her parents' love for their culture and their determination to succeed, and garner pride for themselves and their country of origin, gives her a reason to succeed in her own academic and career endeavours:

I think a greater part of my motivation to succeed comes from watching my parents dedication to make sure that no one thinks that they are lazy or just not hardworking...my father especially wants to be a good example for us and for other immigrants from our country...even if my siblings and I do not really speak our language, my father still talks to us in it and he used to teach us how to write and speak...we weren't really that interested... my parents are really proud of their heritage and I don't want to let them down....

Another participant also shared how empowered to remain strong and do well in all her ventures, she felt when looking at pictures of her family tree and how her parents being from separate backgrounds, were able to remain married at a time when mixed marriages weren't the norm:

...when I look at the collection of pictures my parents have I feel so lucky to have been born now...their lives must have been hard being from two different cultures and trying to have a social life... All the women especially look so serious and strong...I don't think I have had even a little of the racism they must have gone through and yet they did well... I mean, we are here, right? I know it's hard and painful but I think it's nothing compared to what they went through...even now my parents are very nice to everyone, they really don't discuss racism or how difficult their lives were...so I think I can try a little more...

Berry (2006) and Cummins (1986), emphasis the importance of the inclusion of personal and cultural history in any schooling programs intended to help minority students develop a sense of belonging. He recommends accessing any and all cultural sources beginning with members from these communities and where that is not possible other scholarly or ecological sources. Without these identity markers, minority continue to experience school as a foreign culture and are in an ongoing state of culture shock (Torres, 2009, p. 883). One of the participants shares how this ongoing experience of culture shock feels to her affected her emotional wellbeing while she was at school, not being able to assess whether she was doing what was expected and lacking another person to compare herself to.

I was always afraid that I wouldn't know what was expected of me. I was so shy so I would ask any questions and the teachers didn't come to me. It always felt like I wasn't seen and I didn't matter. I was the only person from the Middle East so there was no comparison of how I was supposed to be as a Persian kid in the classroom... My parents didn't know how to help me and I didn't ask them to me most of the time...

Political History and Media Influence

While some of the participants felt empowered by knowledge of their ancestral history and spoke of it with pride and enthusiasm on one hand it also seemed to bring out feelings of frustration on another. Whether it was media driven, or curriculum based knowledges of their histories, the participants felt misrepresented and judged which in turn created a feeling of resistance. The First Nations participant and those whose families immigrated to Canada, shared their feeling of "being endlessly foreign". In *Rock my soul: Black people and self esteem*, Hooks (2004), refers to this feeling of anger and resistance when the Black and White schools in the Southern part of the United States were desegregated. In the Black schools, the students knew where they belonged, they could see what was possible for them, through the eyes of their teachers, and they never needed to justify their presence as classed and racialized students.

In my own experience, I can attest to a certain form of paralysis and shame that comes from knowing that the socially constructed notions and definitions of being a Black woman in North America are always attached to me wherever I go. In my experiences, there is always a yardstick of how Black I'm being. Whether it's my choice in hairstyle, clothing, choice of music, or hobbies, I often feel, or I'm told that these choices are either Black or not Black enough. One example was my choice to study Ballet during my college years. Our Caucasian female teacher, and owner of the

company, was as open and generous a human beings as I have encountered. Realizing that the traditional pink ballet outfits wouldn't look good with my skin complexion, she ordered a dark blue leotard, brown tights and slippers for me and told me that I was not to wear those pink ones unless I wanted to. She also told me not to worry about straightening my hair so that I could slick it down into a bun as most commonly worn in the profession. With these outfits, she set forth to create leading roles for me because there were no lead roles for a Black ballerina in the Ballets she chose. Her generosity was not lost on my dance mates who proceeded to circulate a memo to be signed by anyone who was opposed to my wearing different colour outfits. Some of the dancers boldly suggested to me that the reason why there were no colour leotards other than the pink and "nude" colors was because ballet wasn't meant for Blacks and people of colour who couldn't naturally blend in.

I share all this to say that, despite the teachers generosity and genuine attempt to help me dance ballet with respect and dignity, my fellow dancers' reactions were so disempowering that I left dance for a whole year. I simply didn't have the courage to display my teacher's conviction of my right to be at her company in clothes that were complimentary to me. I did go back after a year and loved every minute I spent dancing, but I always felt like a foreigner amongst my dance mates.

As shared in the above section, some of the participants' strived to succeed to maintain and continue their family and cultural pride on one hand, while wanting to fail to spite the system on the other. Their participation in this study shows that they worked through the education system and became teachers. Here some of the participants share this struggle. One participant's equates the feelings of alienation she felt while in the

schooling system to what she imagines it would feel if one found themselves excluded from their family album:

You know what it feels like? Looking at a family album and not seeing your picture in it? It's like I live here, I eat here, but I don't belong...even the family pets make it into the family album.

These participant shares how the ever changing media attitude towards their cultural people affects their relationships with community members and contributes to their frustrations and feeling of alienation:

Now, I get nervous every time I hear news about our reservations...it's never good news...I know bad thing happen there, but bad things happen everywhere so why not report about some of the good things that happen there too... No matter how much I say that back home I could travel and do whatever I wanted to do, there is still this loud of disbelief...it's very frustrating and the news doesn't help at all...

After the 911 tragedy, my mother told to down play my Middle Eastern roots...say that I'm Greek, Spanish, or another culture...the whole system, school, TV, whatever has no intention of showing our people as good or productive people...if they did, who would take the blame for all the problems in society...I have a college degree and a good job but the first thing people wanna' know is "where are you from?" and then everything I do from that point on they judge me based on my culture...everything I say and do, it's because I'm this or that... I don't even want White people to befriend me, I just want the same right to go and be in places without feeling like I do not belong there.

The Shame of being different and ugly

The inaccurate portrayals of most cultural groups as deficient (Cummins, 1986) and the consequent responses to members from various cultural groups using the unquestioned knowledge from the media often leads to viewing members from minority groups through stereotypical lenses. Torres (2009) asserts that these stereotypical notions induce the feeling of shame in many members from minority groups. Tarman & Sear (2005), see this as subtle form of racism that replaced the overt form. They refer to this form of racism as "symbolic racism" (731). The establishing of a standard form of beauty

that is that of the pale skin, slender build, middle to upper class as the norm to be ascribed to, suggests “that a subtle racism that emphasises group conflict stemming from structural inequalities (ibid).

Because many people of colour choose to socialize predominantly amongst their own cultural groups where the children are surrounded by people who look like them, it isn't until they enter the schooling system that they are aware of their difference (Berry, 2006). In *Shame and social bond* (Sheff, 2000), states that shame, as an emotion is “powerful force in the structure of societies” (p. 84) Furthermore, he posits, shame socially constructed in the same manner that pride is. Since both pride and shame are externally motivated, individuals in societies are able to pick up subtle cues of whether or not their behaviour is socially acceptable. This is what Tarman & Sear (2005) referred to as “symbolic” racism (p. 721).

For the women in the study, this issue of feeling that being of a different culture was synonymous with unacceptable standards of beauty seemed to create more profound and lasting emotional wounds than all the other themes we discussed. One of the participants whose parents had immigrated to Canada felt that blending into the system and embracing the standard measure of beauty and letting go of all things diverse was her way of belonging into the Canadian mainstream. However, in the process of our research dialogues, she came to the conclusion that it was time for her to begin to embrace her cultural differences from a positive standpoint.

My whole life I have been embarrassed to be a visible minority, and I realize that I have a slight distaste towards anything "traditional", as I thought that anyone who wants to live in Canada should try and “fit in” to what westernized standards such as clothing, food, speech... Instead of trying to embrace and highlight and learn about the different cultures, which now I realize I will need to actively change the way I think about people and not instantly judge them by how they

look.

For this participant, being young, sensitive and not knowing how she fit into the school culture of Victoria took an emotional toll that affected her self esteem and self worth long after she had completed her schooling process:

When I was 10 years old... I became acutely aware that I was different from my peers. This realization came from pure observation on my part, not from being told otherwise by fellow classmates. At an age when fitting in and being normal are becoming very important, this realization of being different sparked a fear of being judged by others as well as self-hatred for everything that made me different... I would do everything in my power to change how I looked.,, coloured my hair, refused to hang out with people of colour, joined sports,...I was determined to not feel running...I was always running from myself.

Another participant recalls how her experiences were ongoing. At a young age she came to assume that being First Nations was a bad thing. However, this knowledge created a bond between her and other First Nations students in the school, a reaction that Darder (2004), sees as a form of resistance and a way for minority students to assert their place in the schooling system:

...Kids were almost trained to look down on my race from birth. I knew it, and so did all the other Native people in my school. We all stuck together and lived in denial almost, to survive the damage it did to our very souls...From that point on I have had First Nations friends, brothers and sisters around me. I went to my mother's reservation which I call my home. There I belonged...I felt grounded...and being there renewed me. I dreamt a lot when I was there...I still do...

Tarman & Sear (2005) address the issue of how some people from minority groups trying to lessen the pain and anxiety of racism by embracing the physical aspect that are closest to Whiteness. This tendency within the Black community is called passing (Hooks 2004; Tarman & Sears, 2005; Morrison, 1981). In the PBS Frontline documentary *Secret Daughters*, Adrian Piper in *Passing for White, Passing for Black*,

discusses the anxiety experienced by those Blacks who chose to pass for White because their physical features closely resembled those of the White culture. Aware that being discovered would cause them social shame and demotion, these men and women took the chance and lived everyday not knowing whether it would be their last day to pass as White. Likewise, this participant shares how she chose to survive her racialized schooling experiences by openly identifying with Whiteness and rejecting her cultural identifiers:

As a child my perception of myself was that I was white. I identified with the modern material culture in general but would often find that I lacked certain "common" knowledge which I would later discover came from a shared white Canadian experience which I lacked growing up in a Persian Canadian household.... I feel that being married to a Caucasian husband it might have helped assimilate me into my society, and make me feel more "normal."

Choosing to embrace her Whiteness didn't save her from the pain and barriers that were caused by other culturally insensitive behaviour from her peers. As she shares here, she continued to feel further and further disenfranchised from her schooling experiences:

....there were the problems of cultural reference in conversation, jokes, idioms, metaphors and references which make up so much of common speech in any culture. This in itself was such a barrier to social communication that it alienated me. It was as if I didn't speak English at all, and thus I inherited and manifested foreignness from an earlier generation. This was more than a little bit responsible for my withdrawn and shy nature and this was never to my reflection addressed by any educator I came into contact with.

For the next participant, her awareness of difference came from a Bible Camp, a place that "was meant to accept everyone". She looks back at this experience as the time she became aware on being different and "not in a good way". During further discussion about this experience, she shared that her shock came from the fact that her mother had sent her to this camp so she could understand more about Christianity. As a Muslim in a

small rural town, her parents felt that knowing more about the Christian tradition was going to help her blend in.

....Although I was only about 11 or 12 years old at the time, her reaction imprinted on me a message that it was “wrong” to not be Christian and not have a Bible at home. This experience also made me more aware of my “otherness” – that I was different in some way from the other children and needed special attention to reform me into something or someone that was “acceptable”. There was nothing extreme in what this teacher did; rather, it was the subtle message about wrongness and acceptance that made me feel less than, and different from, the other children in the day camp program...

Another participant shared how her awareness of how different her father was from the other children’ parents brought a sense of shame and dislike for herself and his Japanese culture. She shared during our conversations that the distance she created between her father and herself, has endured to her adult life, even though she has some terms with and appreciates his difference:

In my early teenage years, I was so ashamed of my father that I actually doubted my love for him. I hated the fact that he didn’t even try to be like other Canadians. He ate on the floor Japanese-style, spoke broken English and practiced Buddhist chants loudly. He looked visibly different than my friends’ dads. I was embarrassed to have friends come over to my house. Those who did come over thought my dad was funny and cute, but I was mortified. I started alienating myself more and more from my father and drove a wedge between us that endures to this day.

Beauty Standards and the cost of trying to achieve them

The struggle over concepts of beauty and how the participants’ perceptions of how their “ethnic” beauty affected their ability to find life partners and to a lesser extent, career advancement was discussed during each of my visits with the participants. At first I thought this issue was similar to the issue of feeling shame for being culturally different

but the participants made it clear to me that they experienced this issue differently as women. One of the women clarified her perception of these two issues this way:

By now, I know what to expect at school and I have learned to just ignore most of the racism comments...unless they are really hurtful and then I say something. I understand that I am in someone else's country and they may not want me here, so I can accept that even if I don't like it... but feeling beautiful is different... Not only do I not feel beautiful to White guys, but I also do not feel beautiful to our own guys because they want the White girls...they judge us by the standards of the White girls they meet and say we are too harsh, too bossy, too much like men... I mean how do I contend with that? On the other hand, the White guys want me to be like their stereotypical "oriental girl"...it's really hard...

Some of the women in the study, shared that beauty or how well they their mirrored the standardized "White" beauty directly affected their everyday experiences. Ranging from whether or not they got the job they wanted, to how the clerk at the stores treated them, they felt that their physical features played a key role in how the kind of treatment they received. One participant shared how this idea plays a role in how she researches and prepares for job interviews:

...Before I go to any interview, I try to go by and see what the diversity composition of the workers is. If they are more White people, I tie my hair back and try put make up in such a way that I blend some of my features into a more neutral look...it just makes the process easier...

Another participant shared some of the modification she makes when going out to social gatherings:

...I always try to downplay my features...sometimes I will wear light coloured panty hose so my legs look paler than they really are... I know this I probably shouldn't pay too much attention to it but sometimes I get want to not to keep explaining where I am from...

The awareness of being different seemed to occur a lot earlier than the realization of whether or not they viewed themselves as beautiful. While most of the participants

shared that most of their realizations of being different also caused a sense of shame, their notions of beauty didn't surface until puberty. Here one participant shares her enchantment with the beauty she saw in the women who were in her family as a young girl but later hated her distinctively Native features:

I always thought that my mother and my aunts were the most beautiful women and wanted to dress and put makeup just like them...I'm not sure when I stopped feeling this way but I know that by the time I was a teenager, I hated my straight hair and Native features...I would spend hours in the morning curling my hair in the morning...I still thought my mom and aunts were pretty but I didn't want to look like them, anymore...

... I accepted the fact that I was ugly, not as good as the other children. It stayed with me until I was 33 years of age, when I came to see that I was not so ugly, just different because I am mixed.

These two women below express the pain of feeling they weren't beautiful because of their unique feature:

...growing up, I decided that it was better if I excelled in school and sports because I was never going to be one of the "pretty girls"...I didn't feel desirable a woman so I dressed more like a tomboy...I think I was afraid of someone liking me because I didn't see why they would have.

When I was 10... I despised my unusual looks and my round figure. I thought I was ugly and unlovable. I was extremely unhappy with myself physically and developed an eating disorder. Society is telling young Japanese people not to embrace their Asian looks, and that to look more western is a standard of beauty.

Following a human anatomy class on the developmental changes that occur during puberty, some boys told one of the participants that because of her unusually dark hairy body, her pubic hair would be like that of men, a comment that continues to affect her perceptions of her own beauty to this day:

After that comment, I did everything I could to hide the hair on my body and anything that seemed masculine...I wore long sleeved shirts and pants even

during the summer...which caused conflict with my parents...I still use foundation and hair removal products to try and cover any masculine aspects.... I never dated in school...but I think some boys had crushes on me...I felt ashamed because I thought they only were interested in me because of my “exotic” look...they wanted a taste the “exotic fruit”...this affects me to this day...I still try to cover up my masculine features.

Regardless of how much effort they put into acquiring what they felt was beautiful, some of the participants have never been able to believe it, or accept a compliment from another person. Here the participants share how they are constantly judging and gauging themselves against other women:

Oh.... It’s endless, every time I go to a social gathering where there are people from other ethnic groups, I feel the need to check if I’m the darkest, fattest, shortest...person in the room... it doesn’t matter what I wear, how I do my hair, or how many people tell me I look good, I still think, in the back of my mind ...I wonder how I look...

...there were several boys who used to like me in high school...one especially would always ask me out...my girlfriends would say how envious they were of my cheekbones, or my hair, or my height...I was taller than most of them back then... anyway, I was never able to believe any of it and never went out with any of them...I truly did believe I was ugly... now, I think I’m okay.

I have never thought of myself as beautiful...my mom always warned against being too fat, too dark... she wouldn’t let me play outside for too long in the summer....sometimes she told me that I wasn’t feminine enough and I might end up single forever...in our house there were these fashion magazines that my mom looked at and made me look at...so I didn’t think that our looks were acceptable...

Coming from a culture where curvaceous bodies were considered beautiful, I thought of myself as not beautiful in the cultural sense, but there was always hope that I would gain weight when I had children. However, my sense of not being beautiful while in my homeland could have prepared me for the deluge of faults that surfaced when I came to North America. Although I was considered skinny in my culture, I was too

curvy for North America and buying clothes that fit my body type became near impossible. The images of the ruler straight figure were everywhere and jog, dance, or lift weights all I wanted, the curves wouldn't budge. Another issue that needed fixing, according to my dentist, was the gap between my teeth. While this was and continues to be a mark of beauty among my people, the dentist let me know that it was a common default amongst people of African descent that was easy to fix. While I chose to ignore the dentist's suggestion, I did develop an awareness of my mouth and teeth that affected how I socialized with people and White people especially. My Kinky hair became another sore spot for me. Getting products that I could use to keep my hair naturally curly became a gem digging venture. No store or pharmacy or hair salon in town carried them. My fellow African Americans and African students encouraged me to relax (straighten) my hair because it was easier to maintain. It was a two hour bus ride to the black hair salon, a trip I took many times. Like some of my participants, I slowly began to feel that I wasn't beautiful and consequently developed body image issues and an eating disorder.

Below is a painting from one of my participant's art collection called, *All My relations*, which was inspired by the French Painter, William Bouguereau? The moment I saw this painting, I fell in love with it. I loved the strong brave features of this proud First Nations woman, mother of all children, any beauty you name; she was it to me. She appears aware and yet unapologetic for whom she is. The painter had gone through her own struggles of feeling ugly. In fact, it wasn't until she turned 33 that she embraced her beauty. While looking at this full size image, she shared that this woman represented the untapped strength of a First Nations woman. She shared that although customary she chose to paint her with her looking straight at the viewer because she wanted even those

who wouldn't approach her to see the wisdom from her eyes and learn from the wisdom embedded there by the Creator. She offers more insight into the painting below.



Figure 9: All my Relations

The Native woman, who represents all healthy, strong, confident and balanced Native women, is looking straight at the viewer, yet still has feminine quality about her as she embraces the toddlers. It's no mistake that I had her holding closest to her, the non-native Caucasian babies, who seem to be starving for love, food or attention. In this painting, I wanted to show their hunger for spiritual sustenance, in a world that encourages materialism. The babies are representing the people of North America, who have fooled themselves into thinking they can live without acknowledging the Creator. The children, who sit beneath the woman, are more balanced spiritually, but lack the foods that come straight from the earth, untreated by harsh chemicals and pesticides. I think nature provides us with a less stressful approach to our diets. One needs to find the time to understand this, and live a life that encourages a more balanced approach to

existing. All my relations, is a term that goes way back to the beginning of time, when humanity separated, and began to travel to all 4 corners of the earth. Native people of North America were told to remember this saying 'All My Relations,' so that when the time came to unite once again, we would all recognize each other as family, regardless of race or culture.

The saving grace of caring and nurturing teachers

Sheff (2000), write about how the role school plays in creating a shame or pride in the students. He posits that "prestige seeking" is a common human behaviour the denial of which creates the inferiority concept that is "shame based" (p.85). This shame based concept, he notes is observable through physical reactions like "blushing, stuttering, quickened speech, etc." (p.85) and can have "Hidden injuries" or lasting emotional and psychological repercussion for those "children without requisite secure bonds" (p.86). In North American schooling system where reward and status is based on individual achievement, perceived lack of achievement or the inability to achieve due to external circumstances, may lead to a "lack of self respect in the students" (p.90). Sheff further notes that teachers will often predetermine those students they perceive as having the appropriate requirements for achievement and nurture them while at the same time sending subtle message of deficiency to the rest of the students (Ladson-billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings, further asserts that, there is no formula to decide which students can and cannot succeed and that all students if encouraged to excel, have the ability to do so. Generally speaking, the students chosen to be nurtured for success tend to be "talented, middle class or closest in action and appearance to middle class (Sheffer, 2000, p. 21).

All but one of the participants was fortunate enough to have a teacher who was willing to see and nurture their capacity to learn and excel. The effects of racism were

painful and long lasting for participants; however, the generosity and loving acts from some of their teachers were even more profound.

For me, this generosity came from my ballet teacher. The memory, warmth, and true love I feel for her is far greater than the effect of any single racist effect. Her acceptance wasn't enough to erase all the hurt I had encountered before and thereafter my dance participation, but thinking of her kept me going and studying through those courses where teachers were less than friendly. A few of my participants shared their positive experiences with White teachers. They share how these experiences offered a place of emotional refuge while they were student but also continue to influence their teaching practice:

For this participant schooling was a where she felt nurtured and protected. She knew that any racism she encountered would be dealt with immediately. So good was her experience that she is now a teacher in the same school and with some of the teachers who taught her:

The teachers at the school were good at promoting and acknowledging any kind of racial diversity in the school in a positive way. Their primary goal was our academic education however, and this was our goal too.

...I never heard one teacher make my culture an issue... in my school especially, there was absolutely no tolerance of any bullying let alone racist remarks...I always felt that my teachers treated me like I was family...even now, when I am around them, I feel like I am with family...I guess I was very fortunate and protected....which is why I treat my students the same way...they are like family to me... even the naughty ones are like naughty little sons and daughters...

I feel lucky also to have never felt any kind of discrimination in the work force.

Overall, the schooling process for this participant was very difficult. She was shy and withdrawn and wasn't able to communicate well with the teachers. For this reason, her fourth grade teacher's generosity was a welcome contrast to her schooling experience:

My fourth grade teacher is the reason I teach today... she was nice and caring to all of the students but I felt like she was just a little nicer to me.... It wasn't like the other teachers were mean to me but I always felt like they didn't see me, or they didn't know what to do with me, especially my last name, so they just sort of pretended like I wasn't there... My fourth grade teacher never asked me how to say my name, she always seemed to be so happy to see me and she let me help her...I loved her and I still remember her to this day...

For the following participant, her experience with difference in this instance was very different from what later became the “thorn in her flesh”. At this time, she being different was embraced by the community:

...I lived in a very small village where everyone knew each other. It was also a very homogeneous group of people: French Canadian, catholic, with a small-town mentality. Not only was I new to this place, but I also looked very exotic. This is my first memory of being singled-out for being different. My memories, however, are very positive. My classmates were very impressed by the fact that I could speak English so well. Grownups always commented on my exotic looks, but with admiration and wonder. If I was the target of hateful or racist words or actions, it wasn't openly expressed to me or I was oblivious to them.

The esteem and importance of a good education

Berry et al. (2006), notes that for many immigrants and members from marginalized groups, a mainstream education is a mechanism for self, social status, and economic improvement. However, this process of self, social, and economic development extends far beyond the individual and their immediate family to the immigrant community and to their communities of origin. Therefore for many students of colour and other marginalized populations, schooling bears multiple purposes and consequences.

Since all but one of the participants was practicing teachers, I wanted to find out how their education process had impacted them and their families and immigrant communities, if at all. Despite their experiences with racism while in the schooling

system, they had chosen teaching as their profession. I wished to know how they had come to this decision.

Conversations with the participants reiterated in my mind the high regard with which many immigrants and members from minority groups hold the education process and the social and economic benefits of successfully completing ones schooling.

I experienced this high regard for education during the schooling days in Kenya. Every child I grew up and went to school with knew that their parents and society at large expected them to do well. Parents went with little money, clothing, or food to send their children to the best and most promising schools, they could afford. Despite the scarcity of teaching resources in many schools, many teachers encouraged their students to dream big and aspire to become the best in their field of choice.

The picture below shows the main hallway entrance into my elementary school. Underneath the school's coat of arms, are the Latin words, "Suma Peto" (aim high or I seek but the highest) and underneath the Kenyan coat of arms are the Swahili words, "Elimu ni Nguvu" (education is power). These were the first and last words we saw in the morning when we came to school and in the evening when we left. Every child from grade 1 to 8 knew these mottos and was always ready to demonstrate how he or she was striving towards aiming high or achieving good education, whenever the principal required it. I remember walking out to recess with some of my friends and we must have looked a little too jovial and relaxed for school, because the principal came out of his office and had us recite our multiplication tables. Had he not asked me to recite the 5th multiplication tables, I wouldn't have made it to recess that day.



Figure 10: Nyeri Primary School

The participants' stories of schooling weren't unlike mine and those of the students I studied with back in Kenya. All their parents stressed the importance of a good education, over and above any other gifts they had:

Here one participant shares how her parents encouraged her to finish her education even though she was a gifted athlete:

...it was something to fall back on. My parents, my dad especially, didn't care as much about my athletic skills like he did my grades...he was happy that I did well and got trophies but he would always remind me of my academic obligations... if you don't get good grades, you can't play any more". So sports were my carrot.

Another participant shares how her parents were reluctant to let her go to the mall like her friends were doing. She shared during our discussions that her parents wanted the very best for her and encouraged to pursue other goals like music. However, finishing her education was never an option. It had to be done. Both were highly educated in their former countries but weren't able to apply those skills here in Canada but they wanted their daughter to achieve just as high an education as they had and more:

I was probably about 15 when the issue of my parents not wanting me going out with my friends came up and gave me the first warning sign that they were quite unlike most Canadian parents. The idea that I wanted to go out with my friends to spend a day being idle in a shopping mall was completely absurd. Still, for the most part, I stuck to my guns about it all, and they relented.

...my parents made it clear that we had to go to school and get at least one degree...it wasn't even an option, we just knew that this was something we had to do...to their credit, they had come to Canada and had to go back to school because their education wasn't valid and they couldn't get jobs...they had and worked minimum wage jobs to put themselves through school...so, I would say we have it much easier, than they did... I can't remember a time when my dad wasn't studying or reading something... he also helped us with school even if his English wasn't that good... now I can help him with his English...ha.

In many parts of the world, holding a college degree and above is a mark of resilience and is through social recognition. Often once an individual receives an academic title, it's considered rude and disrespectful not to address them by it (Sheff, 2000). This is a great motivator for many parents to encourage their students to excel, knowing that they cannot go back to school once they immigrate or due to lack of finances and other family commitments. The desire to succeed by both the parents was often a motivation enough for the students to overlook their pain of racism and pursue their academic work. Some of the participants share how their parents' desire to see them receive this recognition might have encouraged them to pursue their education:

...I would call it a healthy competition... there aren't many of us where I grew up so we all know each other...they don't put pressure on us but every now and then my parents will say something like...so and so son just got his medical licence...
...my mother was always afraid of having dumb kids so she'd constantly "encourage" us to study hard.

Another participant shares her father's pride at seeing his children' academic success

My father won't come right out and say it but his social pride is always evident. As each one of us has gone on to complete degrees, he has taken to addressing us by our professional titles, especially when talking to other members of the community.

For this participant, her parents desire to see his children' socially recognized became a stressor for her, not because she wasn't interested in doing well and bettering her own

circumstances, but because she didn't much care for the comparative and competitive aspect of it:

- Me: did you feel pressured to study and do well in school?
 Participant: oh my yes and I really, really hated it... I didn't understand why I needed to compete with people I didn't know...
 Me: Weren't these people from you community?
 Participant: of course, they were, but I wasn't close enough to them to where I wanted to get into a competition with them! He didn't actually come out and say it, but I think my Dad was afraid we were going to embarrass him if we failed...
 Me: I know what you mean... My Dad would make us stand up in church and then he would announce our term positions....so embarrassing...
 Participant: Oh, that's bad, oh my goodness, at least my Dad only shared my school reports with our relatives... I still feel angry when I think of those times...it was too much!

Role models and community builders: Focusing on the bigger picture

Connected to this idea of getting good education are the concepts of being positive role models for other students from their background and helping build their communities. As long as they had a goal they were aspiring to, racism even though painful often took a back seat to their pursuits. They made it through by "ignoring the racism" and "focusing on the greater goal" as one participant put it. The struggles with racism and exclusion seemed to have raised a level of sensitivity to the plight of struggling students and especially those from minority groups. Each participant had the aspect of community that they wanted to contribute to and a few were already in the process of doing so:

This participant shares how community members were sceptical of her intentions when she set up her gallery in their reservation instead of going to a business district within the city:

...when I first came to work here, many people were very sceptical of my intentions... they wondered why I didn't take my business downtown or a business district somewhere... It's now been several years and they are beginning to see that I'm not going anywhere, I'm here to stay. It was always my dream to have a business here because this is our land, it's beautiful... I see the beauty even if we have a lot of work to do, still, but it's beautiful... I want to be a role model for the youth, to show that they can follow their dreams, and they can proud of who we are... I want them to learn to listen to their dreams because these are their messages from the creator... Instead of looking at the media or what others think of them, they can listen to their dreams... I would like to be able to teach them that...

Empowered by her own experiences as shy kid whose culture many students and teachers didn't understand, she now conscientiously seeks out those students who seem withdrawn like she was.

...you know, I was a quiet kid and didn't cause trouble so I was left alone... If an adult had taken the initiative and been interested in me without seeming to have to categorize me first I'm sure it would have gone a long way towards lessening my fear of adult scrutiny... I try to reach out to the students so they aren't feeling left out like I was... If I can make a difference in a child's life, then everything I went through wasn't in vain... Some good had come out of it...

For this participant, sharing her cultural pride in visual ways is very important. Not seeing images of people who looked like her and having her uniqueness pointed it to her was a source great "anguish and self hatred" Through counselling she has come to terms with who she is and hope to pass this pride to her students.

If they see that I love all my heritages and I'm not trying to change and hide them, perhaps they will start to love theirs as well...
 ...It's important to me that students from other cultural backgrounds see how proud I am of who I am. I always make sure they know where my parents come from and I have pictures of myself and my family... I think this is important... I think my struggles with who I was would have been much easier if I had one teacher of color... I don't know, but I think so... It's all in the past now and I can make it just a little easier for my students.

Having felt judged and misunderstood for most of her schooling experience, this teacher shares how she hope that her students remember her for her kindness and acceptance of them:

...I hope that when my students looks back, they will remember me as the good teacher who didn't judge them or make fun of their cultural backgrounds... We have so much power and influence over these kids....

Living and Coping with the anxiety of anticipated and blatant racism

This theme emerged at the time I was going to request permission to conduct my research from the school districts personnel. After the third time of being asked to justify the benefits of teacher narratives to their teaching practices and the school districts, I began to feel quite anxious and unsure of the use of my study as well. Dealing with the school districts' personnel got me to thinking about the ongoing anxiety that I experience almost on a daily basis as I try to anticipate how I should present myself to the world as a Black, Kenyan woman, with dreadlocks. I mention these three aspects of myself because not a week goes by when someone doesn't ask me to explain one of them.

In *Coping with racism: A selective review of the literature and methodological critique*, Brondolo, et al., (2009) notes that “incident or episodes of ethnic related maltreatment occur on a weekly basis for some minority groups” (p. 64). As well, self-reported racism was assessed to be related to “mental health impairment and other health related ailments like hypertension and coronary disease” (65). Among these self-reported incidents of racism that article cite, “racial and ethnic identity, confrontation and anger, and sympathetic social support” as the buffers most used by people of colour to address their ongoing experiences with racism (p. 65-66). These finding were confirmed through

my own discussions with the participants. Three of the participants, shared that they had sought counselling to address the body image or self-worth issues, the root of which they attributes primarily to racism, and had/were currently taking anxiety medication. In addition, to seeking medical support, they admitted to associating primarily with family members and other members from their own or other cultural groups. All of them used various forms of artistic activities as a way to “release pressure and feel good”. The participants shared their experiences of living with the anxiety of interacting with the general community as visible minorities:

For this participant, living with the anticipation of how people would respond to her as a visible minority had become so common that she never considered it as a source of the anxiety she often felt:

I never thought of it as living with anxiety but now that you put it that way, it is anxiety provoking... Since it isn't something I talk about often, I just didn't think my struggles with anxiety could have been connected to me feeling different... I do know that somewhere at the back of my mind I anticipate that someone might ask me where I am from or why I was in Victoria....but I just didn't pay too much attention to how it affected me..

The participant below clearly remembers how stressful her schooling experience was.

Sitting with her as she shared this information, I could see how these memories continue to affect her.

...all my school days were filled with anxiety. My teachers didn't hide their feelings for native kids and I was always afraid I would do something to make the teachers punish me... I really can't remember one single time when I was eager to go to school...maybe my first day of it but that was it. As soon as my mother put me on the bus the kids started to call me names... Today, I just don't care anymore. I love who I am and I have loving people in my life I can count on so I don't really care if random people decide to like or not like me.

In the image Spirit Bear, this participant shares how through learning to meditate she has learned to be okay with who she is while at the time invoking the Spirit of Bear to come and heal the land and the people. The poem she shared embodies her hopeful sentiments.



Figure 11: Spirit Bear

I see that you have been touched by the Creator
to give us hope...
What a gift.

Someone somewhere told this legend of you
a thousand generations ago.

And here you are, appearing, as we all turn away and continue to wait.

We are sensitive, human, and require a constant flow of nurturing.
Please don't be discouraged, Spirit Bear, we know you are there and know it's
time to make the turn.

The past will transform itself into a new reality, as we embrace your message of
peace with such love that tears of happiness will flow from one human to another.
So go ahead, let your spirit soar full circle and don't be discouraged, because we
know you are there. Time heals all wounds.

It was through the mass media and popular texts that this participant began to realize that she was different. The lack of representation in popular culture caused her to get anxious about being in social surroundings that didn't involve her cultural activities. This anxiety

carried on into the schooling process where she says that her difference “was magnified”. This feeling of alienation from mainstream culture continues to this day.

I knew I didn't like being different and I remember feeling anxious about that long before anyone pointed it out to me....I wonder where I learned that? I have struggled with body images issues and now I believe they were directly related to me knowing that I was physically different and that wasn't okay...

According to Brondolo, ET. al. (2009), many people from marginalized, view school or their place of work as a formal environment that requires a different way of being and for most, it's a very stressful environment as they feel the pressure to perform to standards that often a contradictory their cultural way of doing work.

The participants shared experiencing the schooling system as a stress causing environment for which some had sought medical help. However, all the participants had sought comfort from social environments that were inclusive and sympathetic to their plight as marginalized populations. Family was the number one place of refuge for all the participants. Even when there was conflict within the family, the participants chose to identify and be with them instead of seeking other safe havens, “I know who my family is, where they are, and how they feel about me”, is how one participant put it. With the exception of one participant whose school teachers were a true place of refuge and safety for her, the other participants never considered school to be a place of comfort. It was somewhere where they went to get an education.

...I went to school to learn...as long as I got the education I needed. I was okay with the teachers not really liking me...I had my family and friends so I would say I was doing okay

Family safety: It's worthy of note how the participants' attitudes and demeanours changed when talking about their caring family members. The world of racism was gone

and forgotten as they recollected the love and safety they felt with their loved ones. Here, one of the participants share how knowing that her mother was on her side, helped her strive through their schooling process:

My mother has always been there for me. She defended me when the teachers wouldn't defend me against the bullies...My mother actually came to class and sat with me for several days and watched the boys who would taunt me for me...She is still very protective.

Knowing that her parents had confidence in her and watching her father and mother help her with in her school endeavours, despite their low level of English acquisition propelled this participant's to want to work harder:

...I tried so hard in school because I saw how much my parents wanted me to do well. My dad would help me with my homework even if he didn't know much English... he was always so patient. He told me what a smart little girl I was, so I did my best and here I am" My mother, bless her, she made sure I looked very pretty and braided my hair every morning... too bad I didn't keep up the girly stuff up, but I knew I was special...

The mere knowledge that her mother was aware of her struggles and was willing to offer comfort without much knowledge of what had happened at school gave this participant an emotional and physical safe haven and allowed her to put aside her pain from racism long enough to get her school work done (Brondolo, et. al.,2009).

We didn't discuss racism in my family but I always felt good going back home...I think my mom always knew when something was on my mind or if I was upset because she would do special things for me...so I didn't ever have to say anything...My family also helped me with my projects when I needed their help... Home was one place and school was another....

In the image below, this artist participant adds the component of merging with nature in addition to family, friends and those who "greet us with kindness even when they don't know who we are". During our follow up discussion, the participant shared how being in

on the in Victoria surrounded by the ocean and the land where her Coast Salish people had once lived and flourished was emotional healing and morally uplifting, “I know I’m supposed to be here, I feel at home here and I see so much hope and promise for our people here” In this painting aptly name “Appreciation” she shares the comfort and healing that comes from sharing the beauty of the land with loved ones.



Figure 12: Appreciation

We live in a time that challenges our need to be connected to the earth and to family and loved ones, to better understand ourselves...It shows two women who have been picking berries looking back at the town with the lights in the background, watching the sun set and appreciating that they are alive and healthy and their culture is still going strong.

Healing through the arts and athletics

While racism needs to be addressed at all levels; individual, institutional, and community, it’s the effect that it has on the individual within the schooling system that was the main focus of this study. Knowledge of how racism affects the students and the

teachers is crucial to the ongoing process of creating equitable learning spaces. In talking with the participants of this study I was able to learn how each one had resolved to address their experiences with racism in a way that enables them to continue working with children in the schooling system. More research is required in this particular area, however, studies carried out by mental health professionals have indicated that members from visible minority groups who had a buffer that offered support to them as they addressed the racism they encountered were able to integrate further into the mainstream culture, they had an increased sense of cultural and personal pride, they reacted to racist incidents with less aggression, and had less depressive episodes as well as other mental health issues (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Brondolo, et. al., 2009; Bynum, et. al., 2007; Lee, 2003; 2005).

It was interesting to me that all of the participants engaged in some form of artistic or athletic activity that was separate from their teaching practices and family duties. One participant is a mom and marathon runner, two enjoy regular free dancing and two are accomplished artists in their own rights; one as a painter and the other a musician. They all shared that while they were in their creative environments, everyone seemed equal. “Everyone in the dance studio is there because they enjoy dancing and are happy to be with like minded people”, one woman shared. Reflecting on her work as a painter and teacher, another participant share how she saw her teaching practice,

“...in my class I believe that all students can learn to paint or draw... there are no limitations and no one way of doing art... I work very hard to get people to let go of this idea that they are not artists...everyone can create something...when we are dancing or painting, all our worries seemed to be forgotten...”

“When I’m dancing I feel free and uninhibited, it’s my way to decompress”, shared one of teacher dancers.

I had the opportunity to watch both of the professional artists as they performed their crafts and each was mesmerizing. Sitting in the art gallery of one of the participants, surrounded by all the beautiful, colourful, images that exuded such hope, I felt transported back to my own country and my own village where I could walk and be anywhere without having to wonder about answering questions about my hair, skin complexion, or the numerous social ills plaguing my home continent of Africa. Here is what the participant shared when I told her that I could stay there for hours watching her paint and looking at all the paintings:

I’m glad you feel that way...I enjoy painting and teaching people how to paint. When I paint, I feel the hope of our ancestors who lived on this land. I can see where we are headed and it’s a beautiful place. There is so much potential here even if we can’t see it, but I see it...

She continued to share how she intended to plant flowers by the side of the gallery come spring because “it’s going to bring the beauty I envision in my dreams for this whole place...I will begin there with my flower garden”. I really cannot capture the essence of hope and positive vibe I felt in her gallery or when talking with her. One thing was clear, there was no hint of the pain racism had caused her while she talked about the beauty she saw in the world, even though we had shared an intense conversation right before the gallery tour. The world of her art was very different from the world where racism existed and in which she held so much hope.

I was equally enchanted to watch the professional singer perform, to a crowd surrounded by back-up dancers and singers. I couldn’t believe she was a teacher by day.

The stage seemed so perfect for her! It looked like she had conquered both worlds. The song titled *Push*, from her own repertoire encourages self motivation, persistence, and drive to strive and keep the hope that one can and will get where she/he needs to get to.

Push

You made up your mind the other day
 To change your life in every way
 But now that you try it's not so easy
 Too hard to get by on your own
 You're tryin your best to be somebody
 But some of your friends don't believe
 You've got what it takes to ever make it
 Don't let what they say hold you down
 As time, time, goes by
 Time, time, will show

(Chorus)

Push yourself, forget the rest
 Don't think too hard, you'll convince yourself
 You're not the best
 Believe in your dream
 No matter the size you gotta give it a try
 You could take it so far if only you knew
 How strong you are you've got it in you
 Try to hold on you can make it
 All alone you're strong enough
 As time, time goes by
 Time, time will show
 You've got it all, all inside
 No one can stop you
 From reaching your goal

Chorus x2

Forget about the people around you
 That only want to bring you down
 Forget about the things you can't do
 Do what you can and make it count

Chorus x3

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ag_u_R4iTa4

This participant share that her success as a teacher and musician are a direct result of her parents and teachers support. Her parents always told her to always look at the big

picture and know what was important to her. Her teachers encouraged her to pursue her goals and made sure that any acts of racism towards her were dealt with openly and quickly. She often shared during our conversations how lucky she felt to never have felt the sting of racism, personally.

Coping through faith and personal belief systems

The use of religion or religious beliefs and affiliations is not a new idea to cultural and social resistance movements. Almost the entire Negro Spiritual repertoire is coded with messages of escape and anticipation of a better time to come. Among the participants of this study, religion appeared to be a place of refuge and solace than a form of resistance. While not all the participants were actively involved in a formal religious organization, each one had a faith or a belief system that they turned to in times of difficulties or gratitude. While not attempting to define each participants religious and personal beliefs but only attempting to portray ever so carefully the essence of how I felt while in their presence, I would liken my perception of these religious experiences to Kwilecki (2004) definition of

religious experiences as having the capacity to allow the “believer” to “develop biological resiliency which could occur as the individual stops strategizing- subliminally recognizing the exhausted psyche in an emotional configuration that overcomes temperamental melancholy and imparts endurance in the subject, at a biological and psychological level (p.484)

Most of the religious and personal belief systems were learned through family practices. A few were self created, and others were as a result of “searching for a spiritual path that resonated with the core of who I was”, shared one participant. The belief systems of the participants included, in no particular order, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Traditionalism, Nature, Belief in the Self and Baha’i. For most of the participants,

having a belief system was helpful in dealing with difficult circumstances like racism, or issues dealing with self-worth. Through their religious pursuits, the participants often “experienced the opportunity to pursue their problems in a new context and a new hope” (Kwilecki, 2004, p. 480). Here a participant shares how a blend between her Buddhist practice and Nature walk help relieve her stress:

I wouldn't say that I am a practicing Buddhist but I have learned how to chant and meditate, especially when I'm going through challenges...I also find walking through the woods or by the ocean quite relaxing and grounding.

Reading from the sacred Writing of her Bahá'í Faith offers this participant the hope that a united world with no racism is possible. She is also able to forgive the injuries caused by

...Being able to go to church and connect with like minded people who do not judge me by my color or physical appearance is a great relief and privilege for me. I'm not sure I would be able to stay sane if I had to do it all alone...

For this participant the church community and her faith have become what Eliasoph (1999) refers to as “public space” that is different from home or work and where citizens attempt to create relationships with a wider range of people, expand their horizons, and “nurture a kind of self-hood that is compatible with an open society” (p.480). In this community she feels accepted and is able to contribute to society from this platform.

...I have no doubt that having a faith and being part of a group of people who think the same and who want the same in the world has helped to be where I am today...I think though, at some point, everyone has to step up and do something...you know?... My parents put me through school and now I have to take it from there and do the same for my family...I do love the people in my faith community though, we aren't perfect, but it feels like home to me...

Living in two worlds: The home and social personas

The comedy movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), humorously portrayed how the main character, Toula Portokokalos, a homely, ugly duckling, struggled to shed her very Greek presence and cultural traditions, at least in the public eye, so that she could assimilate and be accepted into the main culture, where she eventually found love and marriage, but not before she had shed all that was socially considered too Greek.

Unlike, Toula, those participants who wished to assimilate and blend into mainstream culture, many people from visible minority have not as yet been able to do that or want to do it. For some of the participants in this study, their desire isn't to shed their cultural features and traditions but to be able to proudly be good human beings. As it is, life in North America is a juggling act of,

What I think people think I should be, especially at work and in some social gatherings, and who I really am when I'm with my friends and family....seriously, I'm like two different people.

Sheff (2000) cites this struggle for identity in a culture where the very essence of who one is as one of the major causes of social constructed shame intended to create conformity. Those who aren't according social prestige through acknowledgment are relegated to a state of deficiency and having this awareness results to cooperate shame (p. 90). Another participant shares her experience of moving from the "White world" of her father to her mother's Reservation which she calls "home" and how the children would take time to analyze her before they let her play with them:

... Children would look at my hair and my features, because I looked like my father, before accepting me as one of them and allowing me to enter their circles of play, they always let me play with them... Going to the reservation, was going home for me...I felt empowered and rejuvenated... I felt I belonged... I still feel

the same way, I can look deep within my spirit there...I feel grounded... In the White world, I coped and functioned but I always had a feeling of alienation...I didn't belong.

Participants shared how they often take cues of how to be or what is expected of them from the social surroundings as opposed to what was said or implied:

I came to realize that even when they (employers) wanted diversity, it was just diversity on paper. They didn't really mean for me to go and be all Middle Eastern at the work place... It means come work here and learn what we do...

For this participants the simple and fun activity of going out with friends involves an assessment of what will help her blend with or stand out from the crowd while another mother out of worry for her child's safety ask her not to disclose her true identity.

...depending on where my friends and I are going out to dance or eat, I will dress to either put the regular makeup I usually do or tone it down so I sort of blend. ...out of concern for my safety...my mother asked me to identify myself as being from another race, especially when I travel.

Another participant shared how her attempts to transform her hair from jet black to Blonde, so she could fit in better with the school population, ended up being a complete disaster. For some of the participants the process of physically transforming themselves into their notions of what is normal or acceptable had at times become harmful to them:

...my mother wouldn't let me dye my hair blonde which is what I wanted but I did it anyway, when I went to a sleepover at my friend's...we didn't know what we were doing and both of us kept it on for too long so our hair ended up looking really frizzy like an afro...so I was a sort of blonde with an afro...so humiliating...we both had to cut our hair real short...not the look we were going for....

My own attempts to straighten my hair by myself, because the salon was too far and I just didn't want to spend the money, left me completely bald. Encouraged by my African American friends, to straighten my hair because it was easier to maintain, especially during the Eastern Washington winter months, I got a box of lye hair relaxer meant for Japanese hair and proceeded to apply it to my hair. I burned my scalp with the lye and most of my hair fell off in the next two days. Needless to say, I was cold, but saved a lot of money on hair products that winter.

It was a forgone conclusion among all but one of the participants that they should behave one way when they are with their family members, friends of the same culture, and international individuals, but another way when they were with "White" people, even those who they considered to be friends. Being with members of the same background and families was seen as "more relaxing" while being with White people, was "uncomfortable" as the participants share here:

... when I invite people over to my house, I tend to have either my international friends and people from my culture together...sometimes they bring their "Caucasian" friends...although most times they don't...it's like an unspoken rule... With most of my Caucasian friends, we tend to just go out and eat... we just don't go to each others houses...

This participant shares a common and quite prevalent sentiment among members from culturally diverse groups:

.... sometimes it is okay to just relax with your people and not feel so guarded...eat what you want and don't need to explain anything...speak your language, play your music, and dance in a relaxed environment...in my opinion, international people adjust a lot quicker to new surroundings and are open to trying more new things...we all have a lot in common...

For this participant there is a clear distinction between the different worlds she negotiates on a daily basis:

...I am a completely different person when I'm with my family and friends from my culture that I am at work... I talk differently...I'm definitely more relaxed and I definitely laugh more...

I too continue to negotiate the various worlds I find myself in. As a Black, Kenyan woman, I find that I can be different things in different circumstances. For example, the relationship with members of the Presbyterian Church I attended and with whom I keep contact was that of benefactor to the bestowed. In this environment, I'm not Kenyan but African and all that each individual understands that to mean. I have come to accept that while in this environment or in most of the homes of the members of the church, I will just go along and not make too big a deal about whether I'm from Kenya not Africa. Over time, the constant job of explaining the social and economic condition, most of which I do not understand, has become too burdensome. The most common occurrence in my experiences with this dance of identities is the fact that I can choose to identify myself as Kenya or African while in the company of those North Americans who are sympathetic to the plight of African people from the continent, but regard other Black people from North America and the Caribbean with suspicion and dislike. While I'm clearly aware of the betraying nature of my choices and their contradictions to my desire for racial and social justice, it is sometimes just easier to slide through when I have the chance to. Like the participants in this study, sometimes the need to belong and just feel comfortable or even appreciated is much stronger than my desire for justice.

Conclusion

This chapter I discussed the how important it was for me to locate myself in this study as a researcher and participants. I also shared and discussed the relevance of the themes that emerged from my data explication to the questions of the study. I then

shared and discussed each theme and situated it within the participants', my own words of experiences with racism. Citing some of the research that was relevant to the finding, I attempted to make a connection between the participants' experiences with racism and the strategies they had utilized to address and cope with them.

Chapter 6

Where do we go from here?

Discussion and implication of findings to the Canadian Schooling process

Every juncture of this research process has opened and expanded my thoughts on racism and its effects on individuals from every race. I have not only needed to acknowledge my own wounds caused by racism but I have also been privileged to see and hear how other women of colour continue to address their own pain. Each time I read a participant' narrative, I was struck by the strength, dignity, and fortitude of character with which each one has stood against the racist assaults encountered. That these women have chosen to go back into the schooling system and work as teachers, despite their painful experiences speaks to their ongoing dedication to create an inclusive and caring learning environment. This process has led me to want to believe that the intention of the schooling system, despite all its shortcomings, to do well and elevate the welfare of all citizens runs deeper and stronger than the underlying current of racial, class, gender, and other inequalities. It was in the schooling system that each one of these women found a teacher or a mentor who fanned their desire to learn and elevate their own circumstances as human beings.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the essence of the lesson taught to me by these teachers that I wish to pass on to any future readers of this document.

Umenyo: The essence of active perception

I was heartened to hear that each one of these teachers had found a teacher/mentor who nurtured them. While these women didn't identify very specific characteristics exuded by the mentors and teachers who assisted them in rising above the pain of racism, they shared that these teachers made them *feel* like they mattered. In addition to treating them with respect as human beings, the teachers seemed to have an inner understanding of their hurt and were able to transmit their empathy and well wishes in their verbal and non-verbal interactions with the participants. The Kikuyu word "umenyo" describes this ability to intuitively know and act on the inclination. "Umenyo" can be loosely translated to mean intuition with practice. For the purpose of this discussion, I will refer to "umenyo" as active perception, which is the ability to instinctually transfer inner knowledge to external circumstances. The term active is important here because it suggests a state of constant awareness and response to the knowledges acquired through the external senses and that which is acquired through our inner knowing. The idea of intuitive learning and knowing is often relegated to indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. However, Intuition is an innate ability in all human beings and like all skills, the more its consciously used the stronger it gets. As yet the teacher education process has not included umenyo as a tool for learning, knowing and knowledge creation.

It was this knowledge that my participants' teachers accessed in order to assist and encourage them in their healing process. The actions of these teachers towards the participants were the embodiment of "umenyo" in the Kikuyu sense of the term.

Understanding active perception and how to best utilize it is important because many students of colour, rarely share their experiences with racism with teachers. In the early years of learning, they may not understand the meanings or implications of racism behaviour even though they may intuitively know that they were meant to hurt them. Teachers in tune with their active perception can utilize this tool and in doing so counteract the subtle and overt physiological, emotional, and mental effects of racism on the students.

It's important that the teachers use the perceptive and active aspects of this knowledge together in relationship to the students who receive racist assaults and those who cause it. As one participant shared, watching a student who looked different being targeted for bullying made her fearful of being targeted because she too was different. It's my experience as a teacher that while I may not have known which child was racist, I always had an inclination about which child was more likely to be the bully and the bullied. The concept of "umenyo" suggests that having this intuitive knowledge, I should have acted in a manner that assisted the bullying and the bullied children to move to more empowered perceptions of themselves. Otherwise, knowledge that does not have an active component to it cannot be considered umenyo, in the true sense of word.

I see *Umenyo* as a metaphysical connection of all human beings that transcends the spoken words. Just like we are able to sense if an individual is upset or happy with us, both the teachers and the students are in constant interaction with each others' inner knowledges. I see this capacity towards active perception as a useful tool for all teachers and especially those working with students from marginalized populations. The teachers who made a difference in the lives of the participants were described as nice, gentle,

accepting, non-judgemental, and such. However, each participant pointed to the presence of something else they couldn't understand, except that it felt good to be around them.

As evidenced by the women who participated in my study, the effects of racism are often painful at the emotional and psychological levels. For many the trauma of racism lasts for many years and often affects the choices they make on a day to day basis. These effects of racism are compounded by their resistance to report for fear of not being believed, ostracised, or labelled oversensitive. For some of the women, not paying too much to the racism they continue to encounter is seen as their form of resistance. Stoicism and nonchalance was and is their way of taking their power back. The ability for a teacher to know that students of colour often choose not to report their experiences with racism should cause teachers to tap into their active perception for any inclinations. This capacity can mean the beginning of a new lease on life for the students understanding of themselves as their self worth. As many students are already too sensitive to their real or perceived differences, the willingness of the teacher to wisely affirm the students' worth without further highlighting their difference, would be a welcome experience for many students of colour in the classroom. In addition to the academic knowledge imparted on them the teachers identified by the participants as being "nice" connected with them on the less tangible and measurable level that eased their anxieties about not belonging in the schooling system.

Umundu: That which connects us

To elaborate this point of Umundu, I will use the example of the ever expanding global village and market on as an example of the implications of the concept. The

discussion per se is not about the social and economic status of the world or the forces that are behind it. The phenomenon of a global village does render itself to the explanations to this concept. The social construction of labels to describe and define groups of people is premised on the notions of difference, with one group (White male) being a model for the rest to aspire to. As the global village shrinks due the cyber infrastructure that connects almost all corners of the globe, through a common single language (English), the argument of difference among groups of people is increasingly loosing momentum. As people engage in business, scholastic, and personal ventures with global partners, it's becoming clear that although we may have different patterns and ways of being, when it comes to consumerism, we as a people are becoming more and more similar in our goals and intentions. While the power dynamics of this process continue to pit the "developing" countries against the "developed" ones, the cultural mindset of those in the developing worlds is changing, as they begin to travel and see the economic disparities between their own countries and those they wish to emulate. For this discussion, I ask the question, is it the pursuit of education, social, and economic stability that is leading people the world over to draw closer to one another?

The economic pull cannot be denied, however, I suggest that the underlying current causing humanity to constantly create gadgets that catapult us further from our own backyards is an essence the Kikuyu people call "*umundu*" which can be loosely translated to mean, the thread of human essence. On the negative side, it's this essence that causes the contradictory actions of the building and destruction of our own beings and our environments. Historically, every culture has had a time when it either dominated or used another for its benefits and a time when it was the dominated. The

vigilance with which a group of people keeps another subjugated is a testament to the acknowledgement of “umundu”. Because we fully understand the lack of this essence in the animals and other living things, there is never a need to administrate the process through which we manipulate their existence as we do our fellow humans. In understanding the capacity and inability of each other, those who have the material advantage to so, keep those less advantaged at bay, and take from them in a form of juvenile global jealousy and rivalry which stems from a knowledge of each others capacity to control and dominate. In my opinion racism and all other socially constructed ills are the painful result of our incapacity to celebrate our own human essence, *Umundu*.

This antagonistic relationship between the “dominant” and the subjugated minority was evident during my literary review process. Feminist, critical, social and cultural theorists, using the language and tactics of the dominant group they oppose, engage in their own stance against social injustices, in a dance that acknowledges only the destructive aspect of our “*umundu*”.

The inability for the participants and I to articulate in clear terms, our images and visions of how to create a teaching environment that would allow for the healing of any social ills, highlighted for me, the need to begin to coin a language that embodies the essence of our understanding of our *umundu*, and the environment in which we wish to nourish it. This isn't a call to undo all the work that has been done towards creating equitable spaces, but an addition to this process. This would be a language that allows the rewriting of histories not from a perspective of the conqueror or the conquered but one that “allows” each group to write their own histories as they, understand.

To clarify further, I'm not talking about the automatic inclusion of minority knowledges and voices into education research and practices, although this is a critical part of this process. I'm suggesting the use of a language that affirms the inherent right for different groups to include, if they wish, their knowledges into the mainstream systems. The decision of what knowledges to include, in this case, lies with the groups not with an abstract administrative order. The operational language and practices of any social institutions and especially the schooling system would have this assumption embedded within it. To do this would be to embrace this concept of *umundu*. By having the space into which any group can chose to contribute is different from including knowledge out of political pressure and correctness. This dishonours the Umundu by removing their inherent right to accept or refuse to participate.

This acknowledgement of "umundu", through a socially sanctioned language is especially crucial in the schooling system. I realized in the course of this study just how much of the participants' identity formed during their schooling days and especially during their primary years. With the exception of one participant, the other four learned that who they were was wrong, a feeling that even the "nice" teachers couldn't erase. The overhanging feelings of not being wanted, not meeting the "normal" physical standards, having a knowing of not being good enough, and constantly being judged, punished, or rewarded, by how well they fit the ascribed way of being (White), had lasting emotional impact on the lives of these women.

I believe that at the core of these traumatizing experiences, the pain that emerged was a result of the questioning and judging of their "umundu". Their inherent human connection was gradually severed during the schooling process. Not knowing how to

address or articulate their emotional, physical, and psychological states, these women projected the deficiencies ascribed to them by the system, towards themselves. This eventually led some to self-destructive behaviour, as a way of asserting their rights to their “umundu” as well as to dull the pain of exclusion.

Articulating the trauma of racism

Trauma: Any [injury](#), whether physically or emotionally inflicted. "Trauma" has both a medical and a [psychiatric](#) definition. Medically, "trauma" refers to a serious or critical bodily injury, wound, or [shock](#). This definition is often associated with trauma medicine practiced in emergency rooms and represents a popular view of the term. In [psychiatry](#), "trauma" has assumed a different meaning and refers to an experience that is emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects. (<http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=8171>)

My understanding of the condition that racism caused in the participants is more in line with this medical definition of trauma. It's my opinion that any discussion about the social construction, and perpetration of racism should include a thorough investigation of the nature and lasting effects of the trauma of racism on the individual and the society. In addition, the language currently used to articulate the social effects of racism in the schooling system needs to embody compassionate thoughts and a clear processes of how students can get assistance whether or not they wished to report racist incidents. Some of the participants shared how the process of reporting and consequential interrogation of incidents of racism was just as painful as the incidents.

In addition to a compassionate language, the schooling system needs to articulate a definition of racism that seeks to inform the perpetrator of the inappropriateness of such behaviour while leaving the offended individual feeling hopeful and included. As well, such a definition would offer the school counsellors a language with which to facilitate a more holistic and guided healing process. Some of the participants shared how the

adversarial nature prevalent during the interrogation of their claims of racism, often led to further victimization and an increased animosity between those who had racially insulted or assaulted them. Addressing racism from a position of our human (not cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender) commonality might be a way to bridge the gap between the injured party and the perpetrator, both of who are victims of a social order than seeks to dominate. In addition to creating a connecting point, this approach might serve to erase the need of the offended to seek the material means to be the oppressor at a later time and therefore. In this process, racism can continue to be addressed at the institutional level, while at the same time developing and applying a language that addresses its effects on the individuals at the school sites.

To assist in the creation of a working definition of racism as a trauma causing agent, separate from other forms of harassment, more research into the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of racism on the receiver is needed. As mentioned earlier, the availability of such a language to students, teachers, school administrators and counsellors might allow for the creation of tools and coping skills that can students address their encounters with racism as they happen, instead of waiting until circumstances get too difficult to handle.

A few of the participants shared that they might have reported some of the racist incidents they encountered, had they not felt physically threatened. Emotional exhaustion from defending themselves was not seen as a good reason to report incidents of racism.

As well, a clear definition of the effects of racism may cause a reflective pause for those who perceive their acts of racism as a form of socially acceptable interaction. I'm thinking of those individuals who use stereotypical innuendos when treating members of

minority groups and especially those they are familiar with. The participants in this study shared how many of their close friends from various cultural groups, but mostly from the White group, thought nothing of telling them culturally inappropriate jokes and were unable to comprehend why the participants felt offended. To have these issues articulated in languages and images that paint a picture of their inappropriateness would empower the students and teachers in the classroom to address them as they occur. The idea here is to empower the students so that they can be their own agents of change.

Envisioning lasting change in the schooling infrastructure

I struggle to find the appropriate words to express the capacity that lies within every child to emancipate him or herself, once given the knowledge of how to do so. I know what it feels like and I know when I see it, but the words fail me. I often recommend that the teachers in my courses watch, the award-winning documentary *Children Full of Life*. In this documentary a fourth-grade class in a primary school in Kanazawa, northwest of Tokyo, learns lessons about compassion, acceptance, and assertion, from their homeroom teacher, Toshiro Kanamori. By the end of their time together, Mr. Kanamori hopes that these children have learned how to remain happy or content despite lives trying challenges, some of which include death in the family. He also hopes that each child understands that without ensuring the wellbeing of their fellow students, their own happiness is a fleeting experience. At such an early age, he charts a path on which this youngster can envision their own “happiness” as part of a collective and holistic process. I find the simplicity of Mr. Kanamori’s, method unbelievable.

I have often wished that I could get a copy of the entire unedited script. However, watching and hearing the students’ own actions and words, live out and describe their

thoughts and intentions of why they chose to ignore a bullying incident or chose certain types of candy, to take to a peer whose parent had died, makes clear the ability of students, to transcend the socially constructed fetters attached to them, as they enter the schooling system. What is also of significance here is the fact that these students did not need to hear these messages from all their teachers. Other teachers might have reinforced Mr. Kanamori's ideas, but it is the lessons learned from their interaction with Mr. Kanamori were enough to effect significant changes in their behaviour and attitudes.

Within the Canadian schooling system, further research into the characteristics, practices, and attitudes of those teachers and schooling practitioners that effect positive change in the students is needed. These perspectives and lived experience of both the students and the practitioners could serve to inform the process of creating a schooling system that is honouring and mindful of the humanness of those within it, regardless of their backgrounds. While the participants didn't have elaborate descriptions of the aspects that constituted their notions of "nice" teachers, it was clear that the memories of their interactions were still very dear to them. Talking about these teachers made them visibly joyful. Memorable experiences are not specific to students of colour, however, knowledge of this process that made pleasant memories in an environment that one participant described as "perpetually uninviting and hostile" warrants investigation.

Ideas for further research

While the research findings offer insightful albeit anecdotal information into the aspects of the anatomy of the effects on individual personal, social, and professional experiences, they also make it clear that further research on the nuances in the

institutional, social, and political mediums through which racism is perpetrated. Specifically, further research needs to be conducted in an effort to explain the interconnectedness between teacher attitudes and how they relate to perceived social economic, race, ethnicity and gender, of the students of colour. As well, a comparative study looking at students' reactions to and consequent perceptions of racist acts they may experience within the schooling system and those experienced in other social environments including but not limited to; neighbourhoods, religious institutions, medical facilities, shopping malls, and even other countries.

Concluding thoughts: Lessons from the field

Sitting and talking with all of the participants highlighted their strengths and tenacity to succeed despite or to spite the system. By the time they shared their stories, most had sought the helps they needed to process the greater components of the pain racism had caused in their lives, and had acquired tools through which they continue to address these issues, as they occur. The participants shared their constant vigilance to create inclusive environments in their classroom and in their day to day experiences, as the direct reaction to their own experiences. Their experiences with racism in the schooling system had increased their sensitivities to the emotional wellbeing of students in their classrooms. It wasn't something they worked on or went to training for. More often than not, they shared how they felt intuitively guided to treat a student in ways that caused a change in his or her attitude. These teachers of colour, who have decided to come and teach in the same schooling that, peppered them with racism when they were

students, have unique skills and wisdom that could assist to affect the schooling process of other students of color and teaching practitioners.

Through an initial process of acknowledgement, respect, and appreciation of their struggles, the educational institutions within Canada can begin to request access into the lessons learned by these teachers. This requires for the education system to formulate a platform through which any teacher of color, who desires to do so, can share their experiences with racism and how these experiences inform their individual teaching practices. The lessons are as many and as varied as the teachers, as unique as each individual backgrounds and experiences with racism, and as useful as the listeners' purity of their intention to cause change in their teaching practices.

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Appendix A

Participants consent form

Department of Curriculum and
Instruction

Participant Consent Form

[Project Title]

You are invited to participate in a study entitled [TITLE] that is being conducted by [INVESTIGATORS].

[INVESTIGATOR] is a [RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY...E.G., FACULTY MEMBER GRADUATE STUDENT] in the department of [DEPARTMENT NAME] at the University of Victoria and you may contact [HIM/HER/THEM] if you have further questions by [INCLUDE CONTACT INFORMATION].

[FOR STUDENTS, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:]

As a [GRADUATE OR UNDERGRADUATE] student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in [DEGREE NAME]. It is being conducted under the supervision of [NAME OF SUPERVISOR]. You may contact my supervisor at [PHONE NUMBER].

[IF APPLICABLE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:]

This research is being funded by [NAMES OF FUNDING AGENCIES].

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is [STATE THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH IN NO MORE THAN 150 WORDS USING JARGON-FREE LANGUAGE.].

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because [STATE WHY THE RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT AND THE CONTRIBUTION IT WILL MAKE].

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because [STATE WHY AND HOW PARTICIPANTS WERE SELECTED].

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include [DESCRIBE WHAT IS INVOLVED, INCLUDING PROCEDURES, METHODS, TIME COMMITMENTS, LOCATION, ETC.].

[Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken.] [A transcription will be made.]

[Video tapes / photos / slides will be taken of you (your child) with your permission – SEE PERMISSION FOR VISUAL DATA BELOW].

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including [*STATE POTENTIAL OR KNOWN INCONVENIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATION*].

Risks

[*RESEARCHER MUST STATE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:*]

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. [OR] There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include [*DESCRIBE RISKS, E.G., EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL, ECONOMIC, ETC.*]. To prevent or to deal with these risks the following steps will be taken [*STATE HOW YOU WILL DEAL WITH RISKS*].

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include [*STATE THE BENEFITS OF THIS RESEARCH, AS APPLICABLE: TO PARTICIPANTS; TO SOCIETY; TO THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE*].

[*IF APPLICABLE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:*]

Compensation

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given [DESCRIBE ANY FORM OF PAYMENT, GIFT, CREDIT, ETC.]. 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 [*DESCRIBE WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE DATA – E.G., IT WILL: NOT BE USED; IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE FROM DATA BASE; USED ONLY IF PARTICIPANT GIVES PERMISSION*]. [*ALSO DESCRIBE WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ANY COMPENSATION*]

[*IF APPLICABLE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:*]

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as [*STATE THE RELATIONSHIP, E.G., TEACHER/STUDENT; THERAPIST/CLIENT*];

SUPERVISOR/EMPLOYEE]. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken [EXPLAIN HOW COERCION WILL BE PREVENTED].

[IF APPLICABLE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:]

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will [EXPLAIN HOW YOU WILL HANDLE ONGOING CONSENT; THIS IS PRIMARILY AN ISSUE IN RESEARCH THAT OCCURS OVER MULTIPLE OCCASIONS OR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME].

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity [DESCRIBE HOW ANONYMITY WILL BE PROTECTED; OR EXPLAIN LIMITS TO ANONYMITY OR JUSTIFY WHY LOSS OF ANONYMITY IS REQUIRED].

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by [EXPLAIN HOW CONFIDENTIALITY WILL BE PROTECTED (I.E., STORAGE AND ACCESS; OR JUSTIFY THE LACK OF CONFIDENTIALITY)].

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways [DESCRIBE HOW YOU ANTICIPATE DISSEMINATING THE RESULTS, E.G.: WEB-SITE, DIRECTLY TO PARTICIPANTS; PUBLISHED ARTICLE; THESIS/DISSERTATION/CLASS PRESENTATION; PRESENTATIONS AT SCHOLARLY MEETINGS; OTHER – SPECIFY – See permission for visual data below)

[IF APPLICABLE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:]

Commercial Use of Results

This research may lead to a commercial product or service. The nature of this commercial use is [DESCRIBE].

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of [DESCRIBE WHEN AND HOW DATA WILL BE DESTROYED, E.G., ELECTRONIC DATA WILL BE ERASED; PAPER COPIES WILL BE SHREDDED; OR JUSTIFY IF DATA WILL NOT BE DESTROYED AND DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW IT WILL BE STORED].

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include [AS APPLICABLE: RESEARCHER, CO-INVESTIGATORS, SUPERVISOR; INCLUDE CONTACT INFORMATION OR REFER TO THIS INFO AT BEGINNING OF CONSENT FORM].

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).

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.

Visually Recorded Images/Data *[IF APPLICABLE]* Participant or parent/guardian to provide initials:

- Photos may be taken of me [my child] for: Analysis _____ Dissemination*

- Videos may be taken of me [my child] for: Analysis _____ Dissemination*

*Even if no names are used, you [or your child] may be recognizable if visual images are shown in the results.

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY] *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT*

I agree to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study.
I agree to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results.

_____ (Participant to provide initials)

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Office of Ethics Review, (2008)

Appendix B

School District consent form

Department of Curriculum and
Instruction

School District Consent Form

Project: Feeling the race issue: *How teachers of color, educated and now teaching in the Canadian school system, dealt and continue to deal with the pain caused by overt or subtle acts of racism toward them, while in the schooling system.*

I request permission to invite some of the teachers of color in your school/school district to participate in the above named study being conducted by me: Maria Mutitu. The study will take place in between the months of January and April of 2010

I am a doctoral candidate in the department of curriculum & instruction at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have further questions by email at mmutitu@uvic.ca

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in PhD in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Budd Hall. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-8474 or Bhall@uvic.ca

Purpose and Objectives:

- The purpose of this research project is to understand emerging theories that explain how teachers of color educated and teaching in the Canadian schooling system address and resolve the pain caused by the overt or subtle acts of racism towards them or others while in the schooling system?

Importance of this Research:

- Perhaps the most profound relevance of this study is its intention to give the participating teachers a space to express and document the narratives of their experience with racism in a safe, respectful, and sympathetic space.
- Beyond that, the result of the study may further inform the anti-racist education literature and teaching practice, on the process of creating in a classroom, a safe and open space for students and teachers to speak their truths, without the fear of ridicule and judgement.

Participants Selection:

- The participants are invited because as teachers of color schooled, trained, and now working in the Canadian education system, they may have a unique perception of the systematic institutionalized inequities and how they affect people of colour.
- Their insights may further inform the Canadian teaching practice, in this rarely examined but very impacting area of education

What is involved?

Participation will include:

- Face to face interviews at a mutually agreed upon location, and will be recorded in audio and written notes
- Interviews will take place participants' non-work hours and off the school premises
- To promote as natural and supportive environment as possible, written notes will be utilized for both the individual and the focus group discussions, should the participants wish to not have their voice recorded
- To further create a naturally flowing forum, I will memorize the interview questions
- A copy of hard and soft folders will be created to hold information from each participant's interview, personal narratives, and field notes. Audio taped information and the researcher field notes will be kept in the researcher's personal folder.
- Later, all the information will be scanned, transcribed, and copied into a computer file to be stored and organized in preparation for data analysis.

Inconvenience:

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to participants, including

- Emotional recollection of painful experiences of racism.
- Time commitment of about 5 hours over a period of several months
- Participating in a group discussion

To prevent or deal with these risks the following steps will be taken:

- All participants have the option to withdraw from the study at any given time
- Participants will be encouraged to say when/if the interview process becomes too emotional to continue. Time, outside of the research process will be allotted for debriefing session, should the participants desire it.

Benefits:

- Participants will have an officially sanctioned forum to share and describe their experiences with race and racism in a safe and open space.
- Participants will meet and converse with fellow peers of color about their racialized experiences in their schooling and teaching practice.
- By the end of the study, the participants will be able to use their experiences with racism to empower themselves and their students in the schooling and teaching practices.

Voluntary Participation

- Participation in this research must be completely voluntary.
- Participants may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation.
- Upon withdrawing from the study collected data will be used by consent only. Otherwise, the participants will be offered the opportunity to keep all data before its shredded, erased, and appropriately disposed of.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

- The participants are all teachers and fellow peers
- All participation in the study is voluntary.
- Each participant will decide how much or how little of their information is used in the study.
- All participants will have to opportunity to view the final draft of the study before it's published.
-

On-going Consent:

- Participants consent will be requested for all interview, face to face and focus group sessions.
- I will seek verbal permission to proceed by restating the intention of the study, anticipated risks, as well as participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to each face to face interview session.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity

- Participants' names or places of work will be described using pseudonyms and in such a way that true their identity will not be revealed.

Confidentiality:

Participants' confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected as follows:

- All hard copy data will be stored in my home safe.
- Electronic data will also be saved in anonymous folders in my computer as well as an external hard drive.
-

Dissemination of Results:

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

- All the results will be published in a dissertation.
- Aspects of the results will be published in scholarly journals and presented in academic conferences, as well.
- I will only publish direct quotes or audio and recorded data with the permission of the participants.

Disposal of Data:

- The participants will have the option of keeping all data collected from them.
- If permitted by the consent of the participants, as indicated in the participants request to participate form, I will keep the data for a period of one year for further analysis of the data.

Contacts:

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include :

- Myself (Researcher) : Maria Mutitu: mmutitu@uvic.ca
- Dr. Budd Hall (supervisor) Bhall@Uvic.ca

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). 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. Print

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C**Observational and field notes taking form**

Length of activity:	
Descriptive notes	Reflective notes

Creswell (2006), p. 129

Appendix D

Guiding questions

Interview and Observational Protocol

Interview protocol

Project: Teacher of color strategies of coping and dealing with racist acts in the schooling system

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Position of interviewee:

Project description:

This narrative study will examine how teachers of color, educated and now teaching within the Canadian schooling system responded to the pain caused by overt or subtle racist actions directed towards them while in the schooling. It will incorporate a blend of narrative inquiry and hermeneutics phenomenology approaches in the gathering and analysis of relevant data. The results of this study will hopefully, contribute to the body of work geared towards creating safe and equitable learning spaces for students and teachers of color.

Questions: (open ended and tentative in nature)

- 1) What are some memorable racist acts directed towards you in the schooling system?
- 2) How were these incidents different from regular bullying?
- 3) What was your immediate reaction? Describe emotions
- 4) Did you seek assistance? From who?
- 5) Were satisfied with how it was handled? Explain
- 6) How did you decide who to tell?

A Tribute to My Inspirations and Mentors

I wish to acknowledge my Uncle Sam and my Maternal Grandmother Wahiuhu who are my guardian angels.

I lender special gratitude to my Paternal grandmother who I am named after, The Late Mary Wanjugu Kabuga, the person who introduced narrative/storytelling as a mechanism for personal and community healing and building. On several occasions, my grandmother observed an esteemed member of my family get physically abusive with me, when I was about 6 years of age. I mention esteemed member because there are certain members of the community who through the contribution to their families and community are perceived to bear wisdom and are often consulted on difficult personal and community matters. It is rare to encounter untoward behaviour from most of them but some do get carried away with the title and misuse the trust imposed upon them. Such was the case here. Being a child, I definitely had no say. I couldn't defend myself and while I could have shared this with my parents, I felt disempowered to do it.

Knowing how vulnerable and fearful I must have felt, my grandmother began a ritual of daily story telling. The main characters in these narratives whether animals or human were clever, reflective, self assured female who took stalk of their circumstances and if they didn't like them, proceeded to develop creative methods of resistance and eventual escape that not only freed them, but their families as well. Story telling in my tradition is interactive and each narrative consists of musical interludes that the listeners participate in right before the plot is about to change. My beautiful grandmother, in her wisdom and compassion, chose those songs that echoed repetitively the capacity of that

main character to watch, listen, run, dirt, hide, and spring to action when the opportunity afforded itself. I would sing these choruses as she listened to me until she saw me laugh and be happy, again. Sometimes she would ask my opinion on the actions taken by the main characters and what I would have done. Then she would end each story by reminding me how delighted she was to have a name sake like me and how she knew I would do great things. I have no idea whether my grandmother talked to this individual but he did stop his abusive behaviour and continued to treat me with great respect until he died. I also do not know whether she ever let my parents know of his mistreatment of me in their absence. I know I haven't as yet grasped the effects and importance of these times spent with my grandmother. In fact until the writing of this dissertation, I hadn't thought much of them.



Figure 13: Traditional Kikuyu Woman