Naming Our Reality: Exploring Racism in Employment

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have dedicated their lives for my brother and me.

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ABSTRACT

The existence of racism in Canada is well documented (Johnson and Enomoto 2007; Henry and Tator 2006; Lopes and Thomas 2006), yet little is known about the employment experiences of those marginalized by race. In a study looking at African Canadians' experiences of racism related stress, James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd and Turner (2010), found that racism in the employment sector was one of the most significant areas of stress faced by the study participants. Given these findings, this qualitative study sought to further explore the everyday employment experience of adults in Nova Scotia, who are marginalized by race. In addition, it sought to foster deeper understandings of the influence of employment equity policy on organizational change.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

FGS   Faculty of Graduate Studies

Dal   Dalhousie University

EE   Employment Equity

FCP   Federal Contractors Program

CRT   Critical Race Theory

CCR   Critical Consciousness-Raising

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Parents' Encounters

When asked what inspired me to write this thesis, I cannot point to any single event that prompted me to explore racism in the workplace. Rather, I would contend that this study arose from a steady progression of events in my life, such as the discrimination my family experienced as immigrants and the development of my own awareness and analysis through everyday experiences and education. Consequently, I will lay the initial foundations of this thesis by providing an overview of my parents' experiences of racial and ethnic marginalization in the workplace and how my personal experiences growing up in Canada are directly linked to theirs.

Twenty-five years ago, my parents made a decision that changed the lives of our family in a drastic way. When war broke out between Iraq and Iran, my parents decided to apply for a visa and relocate our family from Iran to Canada. At the time, I was very young and unable to grasp the magnitude of the change. However, looking back, there is no question in my mind that the relocation played a fundamental role in my spiritual, emotional and physical development. After twenty-five years of living in a nation that my parents envisioned would promise a better future for their children, I am now reflecting on how the experience of immigrating to Canada has impacted my life. This process has not been easy. Through the pain and struggle of weaving through the memories of the past, I am able to gain greater clarity of my parents' struggles upon landing in a distant place, away from their origin of lineage and understanding. I am grateful that my father and mother have been able to share with me their stories of

experiencing marginalization in their work environments in Canada. My analysis of their stories has shaped my personal development in a significant way.

Prior to arriving in Canada, my parents already had a network of friends here and had also experienced travelling internationally before the move. In addition, my father had previously lived outside Iran in his early twenties while he earned his Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree at the University of Missouri. When he finished his undergraduate degree, he moved back to Iran and worked for approximately 18 years in various positions in the oil industry. Along with his Bachelor's in Engineering, he received an MBA from Harvard University in 1979 through a distance program offered in Iran.

My mother received her Bachelor in Comparative Literature in Iran and travelled extensively in Europe and the United States. She worked for an American insurance company for a few years before marrying my dad and having two sons. What they soon came to realize, however, was that even with their education and employment qualifications, my father and mother would face employment barriers in Canada.

When my family initially arrived here, my father was able to get a one-year contract working as an engineer in a small town close to Vancouver, BC. Even though his salary was considerably lower than what he was making in Iran, my parents believed that this would be a start to what would become a bright future for my father's career. My dad's initial experiences working in Canada were 'tolerable'. However, he was over-qualified for the position he had at that time. Knowing that he would need to find work once the one-year contract came to an end, he applied to every major oil company in Canada

during his first year in the country. Surprisingly, my father found that every job he applied for rejected him, with many noting he was 'over-qualified'.

Without any doubt in his mind, my father articulates passionately that his age and ethnicity had something to do with his credentials not being recognized in Canada. He argues that it was more economically and socially 'attractive' for the companies to hire someone who was younger and born in the country, even if that meant discrimination against him based on age and ethnicity. Out of frustration of being unable to find employment, my parents considered the idea of relocating back to Iran even as the war was raging. My father needed money to provide for his family and he was desperate. As for American work options, he was unable to work in the US because he needed a permit. His options dwindling, my father read an ad in the local paper about an oil company in Libya, North Africa that was hiring. After an interview in Calgary, he was offered a position and reluctantly took the job overseas.

My father's job description essentially comprised working seven to eight months in an oil field in Libya and spending the rest of the year with his family in Canada. Meanwhile, my mother continued to work as a secretary and took on the multiple responsibilities of working full-time, caring for her two sons by herself and managing the everyday responsibilities of being a lone parent. This was in addition to being an immigrant woman trying to integrate and adapt to Canadian society. As one can imagine, my experiences as a child and youth were impacted tremendously by my father's absence due to working abroad and the workload that my mother carried. Fortunately, we had a support system of friends and extended family who helped us cope with the life demands of being new to the country. However, what they were unable to foresee were the

experiences that my parents encountered as a result of racism, ethnocentrism, ageism, classism, and sexism in the workplace.

My father noted that when he arrived at the oil refinery in Libya, he felt isolated and alone. Even though the staff were from various cultures, he did not feel a warm welcome from European and Canadian co-workers (mainly white workers). He told me that most of the white workers would 'socialize together' and exclude him from joining in their social interactions. Even though he supervised many of the white workers, he heard from other workers that they were talking behind his back and trying to find weaknesses in his work performance. Some of the comments that he heard from third party sources included "just because you have a Canadian passport, does not make you a Canadian" and "this guy comes from Iran and thinks he can supervise us." While my father insists that these comments were made because he heard them from credible sources, he says he did not confront the workers whom he believed made the comments because he did not hear them directly. However, what he did experience first-hand were subtle acts of 'everyday racism' that consisted of social isolation and being challenged on technical matters (Henry & Tator, 2006). In addition, my father noted that for the twenty years he worked as a supervisor, he did "not feel fully accepted" or as an equal to most of the white workers.

My mother's experiences were considerably different as an Iranian-Canadian woman. When first arriving in Canada, she took a secretarial position where she assisted in office administration. She noted that her overall experience at her first job was relatively friendly but that one experience sticks out in her memory. Unlike my father, who is considerably darker in physical complexion, my mom is light-skinned and has

been told on several occasions that she 'looks' European. One of her co-workers

commented to her that "I never thought you were Iranian because you don't look like an

Iranian". The co-worker continued that "you look European and sound French". This

blatant form of ethnic discrimination was one of many experiences that my mom had to

endure as an immigrant woman in Canada. Throughout several secretarial positions, she

experienced various forms of oppression that are distinct in nature due to the

intersectional relationship between her gender, class, and ethnicity. In one of her

positions as a Coordinator, it got so bad that she approached her Union for support due to

conflicts with a manager whom she felt was overly-critical of her work performance

without just cause. My mother believes that the manager preferred to have one of the

'white' employees perform the job to which she was assigned. My mom noted that the

torment and pain that she experienced at the time had a direct effect on her health and

well-being. As a result, my mother eventually changed her career and working

environment by relocating to a new office in a different region.   Even with the change of

my mother's working environment, the discrimination-induced ramifications remained.

She went through a mild depression for several months following the change in her work

environment.

    As I reflect on my parents' stories and my life during these times, I believe that my

experiences are an extension of the lived experiences of my family. When they suffered,

I felt it, and when I suffered so did they. Even though I was not consciously aware of it at

that time, as I reflect back, I am convinced that the injustices that my parents experienced

in their work environments played a critical role in my desire to study social work and to

advocate for social justice and equity in the workplace.

Personal Encounters of Discrimination in Employment

The systemic, cultural, and individual experiences of ethnocentrism and racism that my parents encountered in their work environments have influenced me to explore and reflect on my own stories. These stories are linked directly to being a first-generation immigrant male, living with the burden of having to be reminded on a daily basis that I am 'different'. Whether it is my physical appearance or the name that my parents have given me, I am consistently reminded through the Canadian media, educational system, and institutions that I am the 'other'. This is why I self-identify as being an outsider/within (Collins, 1991) and understand how it feels to be marginalized in the workplace due to one's identity and social location in the world.

One memory that stands out is when I first discovered that my name was neither adequate nor acceptable for the type of work that I was doing. It constitutes one of my first encounters of ethnic discrimination in the workplace. I began working at a call center in my late teens. Similar to many youth trying to find employment in the summer, I decided to apply for a telemarketing position at the local call center in my home community. At that time, I had minimal understanding of issues related to individual, institutional and systemic racism. Instead, my focus was on earning money so that I could spend it as fast as I made it. My primary role and responsibility in the job was to sell time shares to individuals living in Canada and the United States.

When I went through the training and orientation for the position, my supervisor suggested that I use another name when I called potential customers. Although it has been close to a decade since this incident, the memory is still very clear. I am confident that my supervisor did not believe it was in the best interest of the 'business' to have

workers with foreign sounding names selling time shares to clients (the majority of whom were white clients). It was simply not socially or economically attractive and sadly I obliged, changing my name from Sasan to Sean. As I reflect on the incident, I am certain that this experience played a critical role in my disinterest in the job, subsequently leading to my resignation from it. Furthermore, this is the first experience that I recall which shaped my understanding of racial and ethnic discrimination in the work environment.

Following the summer position at the call center, I was accepted into the University Of British Columbia (UBC). My understanding of racism was minimal at that time. I was not aware of how my father's ethnicity played a role in him working overseas and the impact that racism, ethnocentrism, ageism, classism, and sexism had on my parents' lives. Growing up, I was not exposed to an educational system that took a critical look at issues facing 'visible minorities'. It was in university that I began to learn about the social injustices that racialized individuals faced and continue to face in Canada. As a result, I soon came to the realization that the literature I was exposed to in high school neglected to critically explore the experiences of groups such as African Canadians, First Nations, newly-arrived immigrants and groups who are disadvantaged because of their social position in the country. As a result of gaining knowledge through my academic and personal experiences, I decided to apply to the Bachelor of Social Work program at UBC.

Along with my academic experiences at the University of British Columbia, I worked and volunteered in various social service settings. In particular, one agency I worked for prompted me to want to learn more about the experiences of employees as they related to

racism in the work environment. Overall, working at this organization was helpful to my personal and professional development. To a degree, I felt sufficiently supported to approach my supervisor and ask questions relating to my role and responsibilities and certain policies that affected my duties. However, there were several experiences that I had at the agency which made me question how issues related to racism and ethnocentrism were managed.

As a new worker on the team and the only 'visible minority', I was reluctant to critically question or explore issues surrounding culture and its connection to service delivery. During meetings with other staff, I was not vocal because I felt intimidated to speak up for fear that I would be shut down or alienated in some way in the process. In addition, there were no proactive measures in place to create a space for employees to share concerns related to racism and cross-cultural practices. I recall one incident when a white worker, who was somewhat of a mentor to me, made a comment about an Iranian client and stereotyped the mother as being 'aggressive' because of her culture. I am not sure if he was aware that I was in the room when he made this comment. However, I remember clearly that my supervisor just brushed it off rather than addressing it, which would have helped to create a safe and inclusive space for all the staff, and for me as a minority. I was silenced in the workplace, as I felt unsafe to speak out. As a result of this experience, I avoided speaking out in fear of being labelled the 'other'. In addition, I experienced tokenism because of my ethnic background.

During the time that I was working at the organization, I was routinely assigned to cases that included individuals of 'color' and/or individuals who were not fluent in English. The unspoken assumption was that I could relate 'better' or understand the

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client's needs because of where I was born. I was never asked how I felt about the role that was imposed on me; it was just assumed that it was the 'natural' way of doing things. In actuality, I felt embarrassed and ashamed because it reminded me of how assimilated I had become into North American/ European culture and how I was losing the language that was passed down from my parents. This became a great source of stress for me during my time at the organization because it reminded me of how I did not really 'fit in' to white Canadian society, and yet was not fully accepted by the Iranian community. As a result, I began the process of self-reflection and started questioning the organization for which I was working.

The individuals who held positions of power within the organization were usually white, heterosexual, able-bodied men. Whether it was in the managerial or upper level positions in the agency, the people who made critical decisions that affected the lives of the 'front line' staff and clients were typically white men. However, the clients came from a range of cultures. The lack of diversity and inclusivity within the agency was not a reflection of the people the agency was serving because British Columbia is a very diverse province. Approximately 40 percent of individuals living in Vancouver are from racial minority groups (Henry & Tator). The agency had no policies or practices in place to address systemic inequality. It was evident in the high number of managers and senior managers who were 'white' and the clients that came from diverse cultural backgrounds. The hegemony of 'race' within the organization was quite apparent.

Rather than training the staff to be equipped to provide culturally safe services to individuals from diverse backgrounds, the organization took a 'color-blind' approach to service delivery. It was not seen as a priority to address the racial inequities that clients

experienced. I believe that the financial costs played a critical role in the management's decision to neglect cross-cultural training for staff because that would mean spending time, resources and energy to combat social injustice. In addition, the politics of downsizing social services in British Columbia played a role in the number of resources available for staff and clients, some of which could have been used to address inequities within the work environment that I witnessed and experienced directly.

As noted above, there is no single experience that has contributed to my interest in learning and exploring themes related to racism and discrimination in the work environment. Rather, my knowledge has been shaped by a steady stream of life encounters that have led to critical reflection and the genesis of this research. My hope is that readers have learned more about my experiences and those of my parents, and what has helped to develop the body of work within this study. Through my personal experiences of immigrating to Canada and witnessing the struggles that my parents encountered in the workplace due to their ethnicity, I am motivated to learn about the daily experiences of racialized employees in the workplace.

In the following chapter, there will be a comprehensive literature review. The chapter will highlight essential information as it relates to racism in Canada and provide critical themes regarding racism and discrimination in the workplace. Chapter 3 will highlight the methodology used in the study and discuss issues related to research design and the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 will focus on the research findings, and Chapter 5 will discuss the findings. Chapter 6 will end the thesis with a summary and recommendations for future work. My aim in conducting and writing this study is to explore the lived experiences of employees regarding racism in the workplace so that

emergent themes can be identified and ultimately contribute to equity initiatives

dedicated to organizational change for all employees.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, there will be a review of literature pertaining to racism in Canada, and how racism is manifested in the workplace. The chapter will begin with a summary of key concepts and definitions connected to racism in Canada. In the following section, data and statistics will be provided as it relates to the experiences of racialized workers in the labour force. As the chapter continues, there will be information related to employment equity within Canada and the impact of racism on well-being. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings that are guiding research on racism within the workplace in Canada.

Racism in Canada

In a social constructive perspective on race and racism, concepts are neither value-free nor impartial but rather hold meaning depending on one's experiences and values. The social constructivist theory supports the notion that individuals frame an analysis from the intersectional relationship between their environment, cultural, and historical context (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner & Schmitiz, 2008). Lopes and Thomas (2006) define race as "a social category used to classify humankind by physical features such as skin color, hair texture, facial characteristics, or stature" (p. 269). James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd, and Turner (2010), note that "there are probably as many definitions and descriptions of racism as there are people who experience the phenomenon" (p. 64). In light of the myriad possibilities surrounding the social construction of the concepts of race and racism, I will simply argue that these concepts play an active role in social interaction, privilege, power and allocation of resources amongst individuals. Society is

color-conscious and racism is a continuum of acts that include stereotyping and

prejudices (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). For these reasons, I am interested in exploring the

lived experiences of employees who have experienced racism in the workplace.

There are multiple definitions of racism in literature. In *Race, Racialization, and*

Antiracism in Canada and Beyond, it is asserted that racism is:

> "[d]octrine, dogma, ideology, or set of beliefs whose core elements is the claim
> that 'race' determines culture… racism refers to the result of 'racialization'"
> (cited in Johnson & Enomoto, 2007, p. 4). That is, historical acts through which
> people's bodies are inscribed with symbolic meaning and, on that basis, people
> are assigned social places…racism is a set of contingent processes through which
> the meanings and experiences of the racialized are not only constantly reinscribed
> and reinforced, but also transformed …it is both the cause and result of
> racialization (p. 6).

In contrast, Lopes and Thomas (2006) define racism within a specifically Canadian

context. They note that racism is defined as "those aspects of Canadian society that

overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to white people and whiteness and that

devalue, stereotype, and label racialized communities as the other, different, less than, or

render them invisible" (p. 270). Considering the widely divergent definitions for racism,

it is valuable to be cognisant of its distinct versions.

Lopes and Thomas (2006) provide a useful snapshot of three forms of racism that

include individual, institutional and systemic aspects. Individual racism is defined as the

"beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism" (p. 270).

Individual racism can be conscious or unconscious, active or passive. Examples of this

form of racism within organizations can include subtle acts such as ignoring a racialized

employee, to making 'jokes' about the 'other'. This form of racism helps to reinforce the

idea of racial and moral superiority along with maintaining power. Lopes and Thomas

(2006) suggest that unlike individual level racism, institutional racism can be illustrated as the "networks of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages for white people and discriminate and oppress racialized people" (p. 270).   In the context of racism in employment, I note that power is inherent in the daily social interaction of employees within organizations. Power is not fixed and absolute, but changes hands through everyday language and actions. Lopes and Thomas accurately highlight that the current power imbalances that exist in Canadian organizations privilege white people and that racialized individuals are the primary victims of systemic racism.

Systemic racism can be defined as "the conscious and unconscious policies, procedures, and practices that exclude, marginalize, and oppress racialized people" (Lopes & Thomas p. 270).   Systemic racism is supported by institutional power and by powerful and often unexamined ideas which make racism seem normal and justified. Systemic racism allows individuals to practice racism in organizations, unchecked by effective complaints procedures, performance appraisals, and promotions, which require equity competencies (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). An example of systemic racism within a Canadian context would be the historical injustices that immigrants have faced when applying to become Canadian citizens. Until 1967, immigration policy was restricted to 'preferred nations', meaning white European countries (Graham, Swift & Delaney, 2009).   Henry & Tator (2006) note that prior to 1967, "the policy divided the world's population into two parts: preferred immigrants, who were of British and European ancestry and white; and the rest of the world, largely composed of people of color" (p76).

Henry & Tator (2006) note in their book *The Color of Democracy* that democratic racism is the "inherent conflict between egalitarian values of liberalism, justice and fairness, and the racist ideologies reflected in the collective mass belief system as well as the racist attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions of individuals" (p. 19). Wellman adds to the discussion concerning the concept of democratic racism by highlighting that "the maintenance of a wide array of myths and misconceptions' about racism has permitted a pattern of denial that has led to a wholly inadequate response to racism" (cited in Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 22). Democratic racism is deeply ingrained in the stories and myths created by mainstream culture and spread through language and information. The learning of democratic racism begins very young for Canadians and it is perpetuated through families, communities and schools (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 23).

Golderg et al. (1993) contend that racist discourse covers a wide spectrum of expressions and representations that include a nation's recorded history as well as scientific forms of racist explanations, such as Rushton's theory of racial differences, economic, legal, and bureaucratic forms of doctrine; cultural representations in the form of national narratives, images, and symbols (cited in Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 22). Many people resist anti-racism and equity initiatives because they are unwilling to question their own beliefs and value systems, discursive practices, organizational and professional norms, and positions of power and privilege within the workplace and society (p. 23). Henry & Tator (2006) note that by "acknowledging that ethno-racial differences make a difference in the lives of people is to concede that Euro-Canadian hegemony continues to function and organize the structures within which the delivery of mainstream programs and services operates" (p. 23). Furthermore, when dominant discourse and language are

framed from a culturally biased framework, e.g., Eurocentric, there is the danger of excluding, marginalizing, and reinforcing racist views by maintaining the status quo and isolating racialized workers in Canada.

Johnson and Enomoto (2007) contend that, "in Canada, the history of racism in the name of democracy, liberalism and civilization is gruesome" (p .6). The authors describe how First Nations and Inuit people were the first targets of European colonialism. They were subject to racialized violence that included cultural genocide and individual debasement and demoralization (p. 6). Yet racialization and racism are not isolated to Aboriginals. Examples include the connection between the history of slavery and present day, in which "Black Canadians inhabit vital but marginalized communities in Canada's major cities" (Johnson & Enomoto, 2007, p. 7). As the findings in *Race and Well-Being: The Lives, Hopes and Activism of African Canadians* suggest, "racism constitutes a social determinant of health and urgently needs to be recognized as such", (James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin Lloyd and Turner, 2010, p.32). These examples illustrate a few of the countless cases in which racism, class exploitation, and social injustice have marginalized racialized individuals in Canada and have led to power imbalances in society and organizations. Furthermore, the history and contemporary conceptualization of racialization and racism in Canada happens in the context of whiteness and white privilege. Consequently, to fully understand racism, it is critical to be aware of the social construction of whiteness and some of its effects.

White Privilege

In *Critical Multicultural Social Work*, the authors note that "although the term 'white' is as much a social construct as the term 'race', the denial of its existence grants those

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with white skin a special status, which reinforces widespread misery" (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner, Schmitz, 2008, p. 41).   This statement supports the notion of the myth of meritocracy to which Macintosh (1998) refers in her reflection on white privilege. The myth of meritocracy is the idea that privileges and advantages in life are based solely on hard work and effort rather than on the social position to which one is born. In the current socio-political climate of the 21st century, 'race' plays an active role in the unearned privileges and advantages that are afforded to individuals. Furthermore, it is noted that in recent decades, scholars from many fields, including critical race theorists, have rejected the assumption that analyzing race means focusing primarily on people of color and have embraced the critical study of whiteness (cited in Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner, Schmitz, 2008). Just as class, sexual orientation, gender, and abilities affect the privileges that individuals are accorded, racial privileges also are determined within our current Canadian society. In addition, it is important to be cognisant of the intersectional relationship between the various forms of identities that are markers for privileges and oppression. For example, a white male and a white female may have quite different life experiences because of their gender, sexual orientation, class, and abilities.

In *White Privilege and Male Privilege*, McIntosh (1998) provides a list of special circumstances that she feels she did not earn but were handed to her because of her skin color. Taking a reflective approach to her writing, she asserts that white people are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, just as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. She articulates the hidden and elusive nature of racism with the benefits and costs associated with it. MacIntosh makes explicit her experiences and feelings relating to racism and sexism, and how white privilege is a 'real' phenomenon. Her

experiences support the idea that the multicultural policy within Canada falls short by not addressing race, racism, and ethnocentrism within the workplace, institutions, and everyday life.

When racism is discussed within a Canadian context, it is not uncommon to hear stories that systemic racism is something of the past. Canadians pride themselves on being 'multicultural'. If one decides to question the liberal ideological underpinnings of multiculturalism in Canada, references are made to policies such as the Multicultural Act, the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In addition to federal policies, employment equity programs and diversity training have been implemented by some organizations to address discriminatory practices within the workplace. However, scholars, practitioners, and community members alike have argued that these polices fall short of addressing the root causes of racism in the workplace and hence reduce the chance of creating an equitable, inclusive and fair working environment for all (Agocs & Harish, 2001; Lopes & Thomas, 2006). An analysis of statistics that relate to 'visible minorities' in the labour force, provide a clear picture of the location of visible minorities, or racialized employees in the workforce.

Visible Minorities and the Labour Market

In the paper 'The Visible Minority Population in Canada: A Review of Numbers, Growth and Labour Force Issues', issues related to visible minorities and the labor force in Canada are examined (Samual & Basavarajappa, 2006). It is noted by the authors that "visible minorities" refer to "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" as defined in the Employment Equity Act (p. 242). However, the definition of 'visible minorities' is not supported by everyone

(Samual & Basavarajappa, 2006). For the purpose of this thesis, this term will be referred to interchangeably with terms such as people of color, racialized persons and individuals marginalized by race.

By 2017, the numbers of visible minorities are projected to range from 6.3 to 8.5 million, accounting for roughly one in five Canadians (Samual & Basavarajappa, 2006). Canada is becoming increasingly diverse and the labour market will be shaped by ethno-racial changes in the country. Thus, it is imperative that equity initiatives are aimed at creating and maintaining a fair and equitable work environment for individuals from all backgrounds. This is essential because research reveals the grim reality that visible minorities are currently facing in the employment setting.

Samuel & Basavarajappa (2006) note in their report that:

> visible minorities were less likely to be employed all-year than all other workers. They had higher rates of interrupted employment during the year, and higher rates of unemployment. Consequently, visible minorities worked three weeks less in a year compared to all other workers. For visible minorities, fewer weeks of work meant less income and a higher likelihood of living in poverty, despite their willingness to work as reflected in their labour force participation. (p. 249)

Additional statistics strengthen the argument that racism and ethnocentrism play roles in the labour market experiences of racialized employees. For instance, visible minority graduates from Canadians universities were as qualified as other graduates but were less likely to find employment (cited in HRDC, 2001). Milan and Tran (2004) assert that Canadian-born black workers aged 25-54 were as likely to be university educated as other Canadian-born workers of the same ages but had lower average earnings and employment rates and higher unemployment rates (cited in Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006). Further research shows that access to job opportunities, upward mobility,

earnings and income has also been limited for visible minorities as compared to non-visible minorities (cited in Samuel & Basavarajappa ; Jackson, 2001). In contrast, in their survey of social work graduates, Bernard, MacDonald and Wien (2005) found that with favorable labour market conditions, equity group graduates, including African Canadians and Aboriginals, did find positions in the labour market that were comparable to their mainstream counterparts. However, they assert that while this result is positive, there remain limiting factors that need to be addressed, including the elimination of discrimination that graduates face in their job search and in their place of employment.

The authors highlight:

> "Our results clearly point to the fact that equity group graduates in large numbers indicate that they face discriminatory barriers both in their job search and in their employment. Another way of stating this is to say that affirmative action in education is not sufficient – it also requires determined action on the part of employers (p.xv)."

It is important to note that among 'visible minorities', individuals experience different disadvantages and outcomes. It would be an error to assume that all "visible minorities' experience the same level of discrimination in the employment setting because 'other' factors such as: immigration, region, social class, abilities, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and age have an impact. In addition, there is an intersectional relationship among various forms of privileges and oppression. For example, a white female may face barriers because of her gender that a white male will not face; a black lesbian may face different barriers. This is why it is critical to be aware of discrimination in the workplace in all its forms. Furthermore, the examples of discrimination that racialized workers face are one of the many reasons why we have Employment Equity in Canada.

Employment Equity in Canada

It is stated in section (2) of the Employment Equity Act that:

> "The purpose of this Act is to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfillment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences (HRSDC, June 21st 2011)."

Every year, the Treasury Board must report to Parliament on the progress that the Public Service is making in terms of achieving a representative workforce with respect to the four "designated groups": women, Aboriginal peoples, racialized people ("visible minorities"), and people with disabilities. The Employment Equity Annual Report 2008-09, tabled on March 29, 2010, shows that while some advances for the equity groups have been made in recent years, there is still a long way to go to achieve a representative and barrier-free Public Service (HRSDC, June 21st 2011). It is noted that:

> The Report shows that the gap in representation of racialized people continues and in fact has grown as new census numbers reflect our rapidly changing population. Racialized people now represent 9.8% of the public service workforce (versus 15.3% of people in the labour market). (Public Service Alliance of Canada, June 21st 2011)."

On the report itself, it is noted that

> "Representation of members of visible minorities in the federally regulated private sector increased to 16.6% and continued to exceed labour market availability of 15.3%. However, in the federal public sector, the greatest challenge continues to be the gap in their representation (8.0% compared to 13.0% labour market availability" (HRSDC, June 21st 2011).

However, there were some positives added in the report. The report highlights those recruitment goals for racialized people in the Public Service will be above their

"workforce availability" (WFA) rate, in order to close the gap (HRSDC, June 21st). The

Public Service Alliance of Canada notes on their website that:

> "the Report does not indicate what that recruitment goal will be. Currently, the
> WFA number that is used in the Federal Public Service excludes non-citizens and
> is therefore, at 12.4%, much lower than the 15.3% figure. Further, the number is
> always out of date because the census is only taken once every five years and it
> takes two years for the census to be analyzed. Since the Canadian population is
> rapidly changing, this gap will continue to widen (June 21st 2011)."

They go on to report that:

> "with respect to women, people with disabilities, and Aboriginal Peoples, the
> Report states that these groups are adequately represented in the Public Service
> workforce, as compared to their 2006 national workforce availability figures. (Of
> the total Public Service workforce, 54.7% are women, 4.5% are Aboriginal
> peoples, and 5.9% are people with disabilities). And yet, the more detailed
> findings suggest that representation is not even across the various job categories
> and departments, and that many of the same problems that have persisted for
> years continue… For three of the four equity groups (women, Aboriginal peoples,
> and racialized people), there remains a gap at the executive level. This means that,
> despite some successes in making hiring more equitable for these groups in entry
> and mid-level jobs, they are still not well represented at the higher managerial
> levels… People with disabilities and racialized people are not being hired at rates
> which reflect their representation in the overall labour market (their WFA). For
> both of these groups, there remains a significant gap in terms of hiring into the
> Public Service" (Public Service Alliance of Canada, June 21st 2011).

As the numbers and information highlights in the most recent Employment Equity annual

report, there is much work to be done when it comes to correcting the disadvantages that

racialized people have faced and continue to face in Canadian employment settings.

In the report 'Employment Equity in Halifax: Issues of Race, Inclusion and Vitality',

the researchers consult and interview employers, unions and employment equity

consultants regarding employment equity (EE) in Halifax companies and institutions

(Cassin & Divine, 2006).   The findings suggest that employment equity (EE) contributes

to a more innovative workplace and makes positive contributions to employers (p.66).

However, there were some challenges that were identified in the report, as it relates to employment equity.

Cassin & Divine (2006) note that "while visible minorities compose 4% of the population of Nova Scotia, they account for 22% of human rights complaints" and "the vast majority of complaints (78.2%) are about employment".   As the numbers suggest, discrimination in employment is a human rights issue that needs to be urgently addressed in Nova Scotia and within Canada. In addition, it is noted by the writers that most of the companies and organizations that were approached to participate in the study on employment equity, declined to participate in an interview concerning the policy within their institution (Cassin & Divine, 2006). The writers note that:

> "The short time frame accounts in part for this. However, the topic EE in general and more particularly race, appear to be major reasons for declining interviews. Race is a sensitive issue among Halifax employers and EE is not a main priority for employers who declined interviews" (p.70).

As the quote above suggests, it appears that employment equity is not a serious issue for employers in Nova Scotia. However, with the long history of racism in Nova Scotia, marginalization of visible minorities has important economic costs (p.67). It is noted by Cassin & Divine (2006) that:

> "It is estimated that if the labour market experiences of immigrants were identical to those who were born in Canada and if women had the same labour market experiences as men, the result would mean an extra 1.6 million employees across Canada and an extra $175 billion in personal income" (p.67).

As the findings in the report on Employment Equity in Halifax suggests, racism is a common experience for many visible minorities in Nova Scotia and Canada. The 'Ethnic Diversity Survey' highlights that:

"Discrimination or unfair treatment show that Canadians of African origin were more likely to report feeling that they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly by others because of their ethno-cultural background. Almost one third of Black Canadians (32%) said they had had these experiences "sometimes" or "often" in the past five years compared with 21% of South Asian Canadian and 18% of Chinese Canadians" (p.67).

This is why it is critical to have social policies (Employment Equity, etc.) that help to contribute to a more innovative workplace and make positive contributions to employers from diverse backgrounds (p.66).

In the report 'Racism and Discrimination in Canada', the researchers explore how racism affects laws, policies and practices in Canada (Cassin, Krwchenko, VanderPlatt, 2007). The request for the report indicated two areas of interest that provided the context for the report. These interests include:

"The first interest was the changing demographic in Canada and related to this, findings and income of recent immigrants has been declining. The second context was a recent report (2004) by the United Nations Special Rapporteur. The findings comment that Canada's diversity is supported by "…..multi-cultural policy, democratic institutions and protection of human rights, as well as by many programs and projects run by a number of federal and provincial departments," it was nevertheless found that racial discrimination continues to exist in Canada and particularly experienced by certain groups"" (p.3).

The synthesis of the findings of the report includes:

"That the academic literature supports that view that racism is part of the fabric of Canadian society and that is has become more subtle over time. That racism is characterized as systemic in institutions and practised in culture, communication, (absence of) representation of diversity and assumption of dominant paradigms. That racism is further characterized as part of the information culture and is experienced as part of ordinary interaction. It is characterized as symbolic which points to the learned assumptions which are part of socialization in historically dominant cultures in society. That new forms of racism are not necessarily embedded with economic inequality and acquisition of social skills in the culture but are directed to particular groups. Public apathy and antipathy to concerns about racism are formulated as pointing to deeply held assumptions about differences in both public consciousness and discourse (p.5)".

The report asserts that "the research confirms Canada has an excellent framework of rights protection in legislation and policy and a lot of program initiatives" but that "the literature points to the problems in identifying specific practices which directs attention to the general point that systemic discrimination remains largely unspecified empirically (Cassin, Krwchenko, VanderPlatt, 2007, p.5). Regarding anti-racism work in Canadian institutions, the research supports that "we need to develop more practical goals, objectives and monitoring of our process and challenges" (p.8). As Agocs & Harish argue (2001), there needs to be more work done when it comes to making the workplace fairer for all employees.

Agocs and Harish (2001) assert that "discrimination in the workplace is defined as making an unlawful distinction between certain individuals and others based on characteristics that have nothing to do with the job or service" (p. 7). The Canadian Human Rights Act and similar legislation at the provincial level prohibit discrimination on basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sex, and various other grounds (p. 7). Henry & Tator (2006) note that:

> Human-rights laws are codes of conduct to which society is expected to adhere. Although the prohibited grounds of discrimination vary from province, several jurisdictions prohibit discrimination in accommodation, facilities, services, contracts, and employment. All the codes prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, and, in Ontario, sexual orientation (p.293).

As the quote above illustrates, there remains questions regarding the consistency and inclusivity of all human rights issues in regions across Canada. In a Canadian Race Relations Foundation report on systemic racism in employment, Agocs and Harish (2001) point to the lack of substantial research in the Canadian context. In response to this lack

with respect to systemic racism in the workplace, a team of researchers decided to conduct an extensive study that would explore the effects of workplace discrimination.

Agocs and Harish (2001) sought to understand and document the personal experiences of people from various racial minorities (Aboriginal, Black, Asian and South Asian). In addition, they wanted to explore racism in the culture of work environment and to develop an assessment tool to identify different forms of discrimination. Through the analysis of the human rights cases and focus group interviews, a draft survey questionnaire was developed in the study which identified behaviours that members of racial minorities have experienced as racist or discriminatory. Examples of these behaviours include: creating a chilly or hostile climate in the workplace, limiting access or participation in the work-related social interactions, or introducing bias into decision-making in performance appraisal, promotion, developmental activities, job assignment, and compensation (Agocs & Harish, 2001). The research findings support the belief by advocates for equity initiatives in Canada, that there needs to be a more rigorous process in identifying and following up on work-related incidents of racism and discrimination (Agocs & Harish, 2001; Lopes & Thomas, 2006).

When it comes to developing an understanding of racial equity in employment, it is critical to review earlier efforts by the Canadian government to deal with issues of discrimination and racism in the workplace. For example, employers covered by the Employment Equity Act (1988) and the Federal Contractors Program are required to include the culture of the workplace in their review of employment systems to identify discriminatory barriers (Agocs & Harish, 2001). However, as noted by Agocs and Harish, systemic assessment of organizational culture for employment equity purpose is

rare (2001). Furthermore, they note that while there has been some progress in developing methods of reviewing formal policies and practices to identify systemic barriers (i.e., monitoring the numerical representation, distribution and compensation of racial minorities), concerns remain regarding the effectiveness of employment equity to address racism in the workplace and various forms of oppression. These findings support the evaluation that "that where there are policies and enforcement responsibilities to address systemic discrimination at the federal level (e.g. Canadian Human Rights Act, Employment Equity Act), there is no consensus on their effectiveness" (Beck, Reitz, Weiner, 2002).

Of major concern in this study is the fact that "between 1987 and 1996 in the federal jurisdiction, the salary gap between visible minority workers and all workers widened, and while the job category of upper level managers grew, the proportion of visible minorities in this category did not increase" (Agocs & Harish, 2001, p. 3). Critics of the employment equity policy in Canada point out that systemic racial discrimination is deeply embedded within the culture of organizations (workplace) and remains unchecked by equity change efforts. Agocs and Harish (2001) note that "until discriminatory barriers in the informal social behaviour of the workplace are revealed and brought into the focus of employment equity change interventions, little progress toward equality will be made" (p. 3). In other words, it is not enough for employers to simply impose "diversity training" in the workplace when the underlying causes of racial discrimination in employment are not named and accounted for. As previously articulated, racism is a real phenomenon within Canadian society. The workplace is a microcosm of the broader society and requires comprehensive equity initiatives to address the inequities that exist

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between various cultural groups within employment settings. As highlighted by the statistics and data, there is a gap between the legislation and policies that aim to address inequalities in the workplace and the practices that take place. To understand the reasons for the gap requires a critical analysis of organizational strategies aimed at challenging racism and discrimination in the workplace.

Organizational Theory and Racism in Canada's Workplace

Hatch (1997) notes that Organizational Theory is a field of study with multiple perspectives on organizational structure and change. She contends that organizations cannot be explained by a single theory (Hatch, 1997, 2002; Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Helms et al., 2009). Rather, it is a multi-disciplinary field and, depending on the theory used, there is a set of assumptions that researchers make about the world. As a result, researchers studying organizations are inherently biased in their thoughts, values, experiences and world views. This is why it is important to interject a critical examination of how race and culture shapes the employment experiences of racialized individuals.

Within literature, there are particular perspectives that have been identified by notable researchers as being critical to the development of Organizational Theory. Some of these perspectives include studies on classical, modernism, symbolic-interactionism, and post-modernism. Notable thinkers aligned with these frameworks include Adam Smith, Herbert Simon, Erving Goffman, and Michel Foucault (Hatch, 1997, 2002). Some of the concepts of organizations they analyze include environment, technology, social structure, organizational culture, physical culture, politics and power (Hatch, 1997, 2002). Upon further review of these thinkers, I discover that one characteristic these individuals share

is that all are white men. They conceivably then frame many of their positions from a Eurocentric perspective regarding organizational development and change. This circumstance raises several questions, such as whether the alternative perspectives of studying the phenomena of human interaction get lost in the process. Moreover, if the researchers who have historically studied organizations are all white men, is there a gap in research as it relates to gender and race in Organizational Theory? My review of literature on Organizational Theory identified a gap as it relates to race, power, and privilege in organizations.

While there is a substantial body of literature on organizational theory (Hatch, 1997; Hatch, 2002; Astley and Van De Ven 1983; Jensen, 1983), there is also a widely held belief that, for the most part, there is silence on matters of race, gender, class and other forms of oppression in organizations (Lopes & Thomas, 2007; Agocs, 1997). Until recently, there has been little research on Organizational Theory and racial inequality. A review of research published in 20 leading English language journals in the areas of organizational behaviour and human resource management between 1964 and 1989 found no single study of organizational change and development that included considerations of race effects (Agocs, 1997). Lopes and Thomas (2007) support this claim by noting that:

> [m]ainstream theories of organizational development and change make no reference to the ways in which power is embedded in the social identities of managers, workers & service providers, or the impact of organizational power has on the lives of people. (p. 8)

However, with the rise of Radical Feminism Studies, changes began occurring with respect to Organizational Theory (Hatch, 2002).

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With the advent of post-modernism in the field of Organizational Theory, feminists began drawing on the writings of Karl Marx and Critical Theory. Critical theorists argue that power in organizations is used to marginalize the powerless (Hatch, 2002). As the Marxist paradigm highlights, the determinant sphere of life is in the production and reproduction of material existence, which is in the production of subsistence (Gupta, 1996). Gupta (1996) argues that "people are not only producing things but also relations and ideas about those relations, including social relations in the work environment" (p. 3). An example within our capitalist society is when managers and owners take part in the process of reproducing ideas by consciously or unconsciously organizing particular divisions of labour based on racial, ethnic and gender stereotypes (p. 3). As Gupta (1996) asserts, "social power is the ability to affect people's life chances through one's control over social resources, including human resources, and through one's position of privilege within the social hierarchies of racism, gender and class" (p. 3). Subsequently, some modernist thinkers would argue this premise by highlighting that there is a rationale to the distribution of power and hierarchy in organizations. As a result, feminists and critical theorists began deconstructing bureaucracy to show that it is typically a white male dominated form of organization (Hatch, 2002).

In addition to the critical theorist movement in organizations, labour economists have proposed the dual labor market model. Peter Doeringer and Michael Priore contend that adult white males tend to dominate the primary jobs, earning high wages and being given better opportunities, while racialized individuals are overrepresented in the low-status secondary sector jobs, earning low pay and having little job security (cited in Hatch, 2002). Critics of the dual labor market model argue that it does not explain the

disproportion of white males in the primary sector. This is because the dual market theory only considers the economic and technological reasons for labour market stratification while ignoring conditions in the cultural, social, physical, legal and political segments of the general environment (p. 272); for example, when immigrants migrate to Canada and their credentials are not recognized or there is a bias in hiring and promotional practices. However, it is important to note that race is not the only factor that affects employment opportunities. One needs to be cognizant of various forms of oppressions, such as: class, gender, [dis]ability, sexual identities, sexual orientation, age and the intersectional relationship they have with race, and with each other. It is noted by Baines (2007) that humans experience multiple oppressions that shape our everyday experiences. She notes that these oppressions are intersectional because they "overlap, contest, undermine and/or reinforce one another, depending on a variety of factors in the immediate and global environment" (p.20). Whilst I understand the reality of the intersection of oppression, my primary focus in this project is on race and its relationship to the work environment given the scarcity of work on employment and racism in Canada.

In 1997, a landmark decision by the Human Rights Tribunal was made as a result of perceived 'systemic' racial discrimination in the Health Care system in Canada, specifically addressing 'glass-ceiling' barriers to the promotion of visible minorities to senior management (Beck, Reitz & Weiner, 2002). This case provides an illustration of the elusive and subtle nature of this form of discrimination and the complex evidence required for employment equity remedies. Race is one of the major bases of domination in our society and a major means through which the division of labor occurs in

organizations (Nkomo, 1992). Lopes and Thomas (2006) support this point by noting "racism has shown to lead to disparities in income, housing, healthcare and education, with white people systemically enjoying more benefits than non-whites do" (p.16).   In addition, one cannot address white privilege without noting that not every white person has the same privilege. Class and other forms of oppressions affect the social position that one holds in society.   It is not my intent to create a 'hierarchy of oppressions', but to focus specifically on the aversive effects of racism on the lives of racialized employees.

In the study *Managing an increasingly diverse workforce: Experience of minority manager and professionals in Canada*, researchers compared the work experiences of white and racialized graduates in early career experiences. The sample size consisted of 295 men and women who were interviewed. In the sample, the racialized group perceived more discriminatory treatment and greater resistance to equality than did the white sample (Burke, 1991). Ironically, white managers who were sampled in organizations that were observed to be less responsive to racialized workers' needs reported less satisfaction, commitment, and development in work. Alternatively, organizations that were more accepting of racialized workers were more satisfied and committed with or to their work (Burke, 1991). My assertion is that when racism and ethnocentrism are not addressed within the work environment, the organization runs a greater risk of alienating racialized workers and placing barriers on an inclusive workplace for all.

As these studies highlight, racism and discrimination affect the well-being and lives of racialized employees. Furthermore, the research indicates, racism within employment is a serious problem that needs to be addressed urgently.

Impact of Racism

As noted in *The Colour of Democracy*, that "racist discourse covers a wide spectrum of expressions and representations that include a nation's recorded history as well as scientific forms of racist explanations, economic, legal, and bureaucratic forms of doctrine; cultural representations in the form of national narratives, images, and symbols, and so on" (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 22). This is why it is critical to be aware of the relationship between 'race', employment and well-being.

In a study looking at African Canadians' experiences of racism related stress, James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin Lloyd and Turner (2010), found that racism in the employment sector was one of the most significant areas of stress faced by the study participants. In the 900 participants in their survey, 55% experienced racial discrimination in hiring, promotion and job assignment (p. 102). This finding builds on the work of Lopes & Thomas (2006) note that racism "not only is a hazard to one's health, it threatens access to basic necessities of life, while continuously doing damage to one's emotional, psychological, spiritual and social well-being" (p.17). This illustrates that racism, class exploitation, and social injustice have marginalized racialized individuals in Canada and have led to power imbalances in society and organizations.

As noted earlier, Mills and Simmons argue that organizations have an immense influence on our social and psychic lives, often resulting in a lack of self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness, unhealthy levels of stress, sexual harassment, pay inequalities, **racism**, physical injuries, and a segregated work life (cited in Lopes & Thomas, 2007, p.8). This view is supported by James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin Lloyd and Turner (2010), who state that African Canadians experience a considerable amount of racism related stress in

employment, which impacts their health and well-being. One could argue then, to effectively change the life experiences of racialized people, one must begin with organizational change in the employment sector..

In *Reading Organizational Theory*, Mills and Simmons challenge the existing texts on organizational theory which are silent about race, gender, class and other forms of discrimination. They maintain that:

> we live in a time dominated by organizations, and that these organizations and capitalism have 'evolved hand in hand'. Most organizations are hierarchal, with control and decision-making powers lying in the hands of the few people in senior management positions. Even in the non-for-profit sector, employees are rewarded for generating the greatest number of products, programs, and services at the lowest costs. As a result, interpersonal relationships within organizations are largely impersonal manipulative, mistrustful, and mediated by money. Organizations, they argue, have an immense influence on our social and psychic lives, often resulting in a lack of self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness, unhealthy levels of stress, sexual harassment, pay inequalities, racism, physical injuries, and a segregated work life. (cited in Lopes & Thomas, 2007, p. 8)

Clearly, organizations face a number of challenges that are connected to inequity and marginalization. These challenges have not received much attention in the literature or organizational theories. Yet, some writers assert that racism-related stress in employment is a health issue (James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd & Turner, 2010). Literature supports that racism in the workplace is a very real phenomenon for racialized minorities from diverse backgrounds (Gupta, 1996; Jain & Agocs, 2001; Lopes & Thomas, 2006). This is why it is critical to be aware of theoretical frameworks that challenge racism in the workplace.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that I am applying to my research are Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical Consciousness-Raising (CCR), and Afrocentric Theory. Critical Race Theory will help inform my research in the area of racism in the workplace as the CRT movement is interested in studying and transforming the relationships among race, racism and power (Delgado, 1995). Moreover, the major themes and tenets within CRT, CCR and Afrocentric Theory align with my personal values of social justice derived from a common history of oppression. It will be argued that racism can manifest in a varying pattern depending on individual background and history. However, victims/survivors of racism share the experience of having their health and well-being affected by the adverse effects of individual, institutional, and systemic racism.

Critical Race Theory emerged in the United States amongst African Americans and other legal scholars in the mid to late 1990s. Many of the ideas of the CRT movement sprang in part from Critical Legal Studies (Delgado, 1995). Activists and scholars within the field of Critical Legal Studies began questioning issues related to class and unequal distribution of wealth and power. Primarily, they were challenging the liberal discourse on the neutrality of law and how issues related to class affects judicial decision-making and legal outcomes. Critical Race Theory takes a more specific approach by focusing specifically on issues related to race, power, and law (Warner, 2006).

Some of the pioneers in the field of Critical Race Theory, Derick Bell, Mari Matsuda, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, were instrumental in critiquing liberal ideology and the idea of being 'color-blind' (Delgado, 1995). In Roithmayr's article on Critical Race Theory, she notes that:

In the view of some CRT scholars what civil rights reformists had once taken for granted as helpful in the interests of racial emancipatory-colour blindness, formal legal equality, merit integration- had now to be seen to in fact reflect, create and perpetuate institutional racial power. (1999, p.2)

Ladon-Billing (1998) adds to the discussion by highlighting that the four themes of CRT include: racism is normalized within society, that the process of CRT is one of individual & collective storytelling, that there needs to be critique of liberalism within institutions and that the primary beneficiaries of Affirmative Action in America are white women. In addition, there are no set doctrines or methodologies that define CRT, however, scholars who write within the movement share two broad commitments. These include a critique of 'race neutral and color-blind ideas' and being racially conscious. In addition to these objectives, theorists working within the CRT framework use the 'vexed-bond' between law and racial power to transform the social structures and to advance the political commitment of racial emancipation (Delgado, 1995). CRT fits well with my personal values as a critical social worker because it challenges the current status quo and raises questions related to issues of power, privilege and oppression. It also fits well with the exploration of racism in the workplace to allow for the application of a critical framework when examining how race/ethnicity affects work culture and decision-making. I believe that through critical dialogue, positive change can occur and new possibilities can be created for equity in the work environment.

When it comes to the limitations to the theory, critics suggest that CRT is too connected to 'American-Paraochialism'. It is argued that CRT scholars need to pay more attention to the process of the "applicability and implications of its key concepts outside of the context", in relation to the local and global conditions (Goldberg & Essed, 2002). As well, critics highlight that CRT falls short in acknowledging its conceptual debt to a

wider history of racial theorizing in the critical tradition (Warner, 2006). Furthermore, it is challenging to argue its substantial contribution to the idea of counter-storytelling in the area of anti-racist ideology and practice.

In the context of Critical Race Theory, understanding the everyday experiences of people of color in the workplace requires an understanding of how race, class, and gender operate in conjunction with the everyday racism prevalent in organizations (Aylward 1999; Baines 2007). It could be argued that CRT falls short in addressing the intersectional relationship between various forms of oppression. Two individuals who experience everyday racism may share similarities as it relates to racial oppression, however, a woman of color will be placed in a situation where she is negotiating her sense of agency by dealing with the intersectional relationship of racism and sexism. As a result, her experience of racism may be distinct from that of a racialized man. This example can be applied to all forms of identities and oppressions, as each individual's life story is complex and varying. By gaining insights into the themes of Critical Race Theory, one can broaden their knowledge when it comes to challenging oppression in its various forms. Furthermore, Critical Race Theory involves investigating the intersections of power, privilege and race, by constantly asking how organizational policies, practices, norms, and rules have been infused with racism. CRT's insistence on validating the experiences of Black people (Aylward, 1999) and ethnic minorities is closely aligned with Critical Consciousness-Raising (CCR).

Critical Consciousness-Raising usually starts with discussions of people's everyday worlds and helps them to understand how their worlds are organized, who holds power, and how power can be used make social change (Baines, 2007, p. 53). It is asserted that

"critical consciousness is the ability to question one's history and social position for the purpose of confronting inequality-and provide a base for the development of critical thinking" (Joyner, Sisneros, Schmitz and Stakeman, 2008, p. 6). Thus, the process of change begins with a critically conscious individual who has become sensitive to the broader social systems that reinforce social inequalities such as racism.

Freire (1982) suggests that consciousness and sensitivity must be used for action. The process of bringing critical consciousness and sensitivity to meaningful practice is what Freire called praxis (Joyner, Sisneros, Schmitz and Stakeman, 2008). It is important to note that the concept of praxis refers to the skills for critical analysis, in which reality is seen as being in a transformative state, not one that is static (Freire, 1982). As it relates to the transformative state of knowing, it is critical to try and learn about the various worldviews that shapes an individuals' understanding of self in relation to their environment. This can be achieved through several ways, such as learning through observation, curiosity and exploration. One of these world views can be seen in Afrocentrism.

To be Afrocentric, Asante argues that it is "to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African worldview" or "to place Africans and the interest of Africa at the center of our approach to problem solving" (Asante 1991, p.171; Asante, p.198). The core principles of Afrocentricity include: the interconnectedness of all things, the spiritual nature of human beings, the importance of collective identity and the recognition of the affective dimensions (Este & Bernard, 2003, p.320). By holding a firm appreciation of the values within Afrocentric theory, I am grounding my research within these principles.

Keeping an appreciation for the direct connection between learned knowledge and experience, Afrocentrists appreciate and acknowledge "the power of lived experience" and encourage people to find their own voices, based on their own experiences (Dei, 1996, p.84). I am valuing "the power of lived experiences" by documenting the first voices of individuals who have experienced or witnessed racism in their workplace. This is achieved by placing the participants in the 'center' of the stories and acknowledging that they are the true experts of their lives. As a result, I am collaborating with the participants, to challenge the social and economic struggles that are connected with the lived experience of racism and discrimination in the workplace.

As Este and Bernard note, it is imperative that social workers "address the range of structural and systemic barriers that have denied members of the community their rightful place" (2003, p.321, p.323). Part of the process is to uncover and make 'visible' the effects of "colonization, slavery, and the continuation of structural racism on the material and spiritual well-being of African peoples and humanity in general" (James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin Lloyd and Turner (2010), p.24). By interviewing racialized employees as it relates to racism in the workplace, the goal is to develop organizational strategies aimed at combating and eliminating racism in the workplace.

In this chapter, information was presented as it relates to racism in Canada and the workplace. The chapter began with a summary of key concepts and definitions connected to racism in Canada. In the following section, data and statistics was provided as it relates to the experiences of racialized workers in the labour force. As the chapter continued, there was information related to employment equity within Canada and the impact of racism. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the theoretical

underpinnings that are guiding this on racism within the workplace in Halifax, Nova

Scotia.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter begins with a discussion of qualitative research and why I chose it for the study. This is followed by a discussion concerning Phenomenology, a detailed discussion of the study design and the process of data collection and analysis. By providing a clear framework of the methodology chosen within the research, it will be asserted that Phenomenology will capture the essence of the themes within the research.

Academics and researchers may choose to conduct qualitative research when a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2007; Faulkner & Faulkner, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln's definition of qualitative research fits well with my assumptions of the world, which includes the ever-changing nature of qualitative inquiry, from interpretivist and naturalistic to the social construction of social justice work (cited in Creswell, 2007). They define qualitative research as follows:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conservations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 36)

In addition, there are several reasons why qualitative research fits well with exploring the experiences of employees as it relates to racism in the workplace.

As noted in the previous chapters, my goal is to explore the lived experiences of racialized employees and get a thick description of information from their stories. Through conducting in-depth interviews, I will gain a deeper level of understanding of the themes related to racism in the workplace.   By studying a marginalized group that

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has experienced racism in the workplace, readers will learn from their stories; as their narratives touch on the 'essence' of their lived experiences. For this reason, I have decided to apply Phenomenology to the research. Phenomenology is concerned with gaining an in-depth understanding of the experience of the individual(s) under study (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2007).

Phenomenological Design - Two Approaches

Van Manen states that "the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce an individual's experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence" (Van Manen, 1990, 177). Moustakas expands on Van Manen's statement by noting that this 'essence' consists of 'what' the individuals experience and 'how' they experience it (Moustakas, 1994). As much as these two writers share similarities relating to phenomenological design, their two distinct approaches are considered extremely valuable to the historical and contemporary development of phenomenology (Creswell, 1997)

Hermeneutic and Psychological Phenomenology

It is noted by Creswell that unlike Psychological Phenomenology, Hermeneutic Phenomenology is an "interpretive" process in which the researcher interprets the "texts" of life (Hermeneutics) (Creswell, 1997). Van Manen is a key writer who highlighted that it is the researcher's role to "mediate" between the different meanings of the lived experiences of individuals (Van Manen, 1990, p. 26). In other words, there are no set rules or methods in Hermeneutic Phenomenology other than to understand the essential themes in the study by making interpretations of the phenomena (Creswell, 1997).

Unlike Van Manen's position, Moustakas illustrates the psychological approach to Phenomenology.

Psychological or Transcendental Phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Once the research identifies a phenomenon to study, there is a stage named "bracketing". In this stage, the investigator sets aside her/his personal experiences by making broader philosophical assumptions explicit (Creswell, 1997). Through documenting personal experiences and values, the researcher aims to be as objective as possible and to minimize imposing his or her values, beliefs, thoughts and ideas on the data. Hence the term "transcendental", in which everything is perceived freshly for the first time (Moustakas, 1994).

The methodological positioning of the research is a blend between Moustakas and Van Manen's frameworks. Through appreciating that reality is socially constructed through meaning, I am adhering to the belief that it is not possible for the researcher to be neutral or impartial in the research process. As noted earlier, I am unable to detach myself from this research because of what my family and I have personally experienced regarding racism and ethnocentrism in the workplace. Therefore, I am a co-author in the research process. As Charmaz suggests, the qualitative research process needs to have flexible guidelines that take into account the power involved in the research and the hidden meanings shared, and then make these relationships explicit (cited in Creswell, 1997). I am cognizant of how my power, privileges and identities shape the research process. As a result, I kept a journal that documented my thoughts and experiences, continuously reflected on my work, and had regular debriefing with my supervisor.

One of the primary goals within the study, was to share in the empowering experience by hearing the stories of the individuals and minimize the power relationship that can often exist between researchers and participants (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, the goal was to understand the context and settings in which employees experience racism and their feelings, thoughts, actions as they relate to this problem. These stories help contribute to the existing literature on racism in work environments and raise new possibilities for where research, policy, and practice can move as they relate to this issue.

Self-Reflexivity

Prior to exploring the research objectives and design, it is critical to be aware of issues related to self-reflexivity. Baines (2007) notes that the process of self-reflexivity and social analysis beings when "social workers constructively criticize their own participation in their practice and link it to social processes" (p. 22). This holds true for research, too, and my aim is to be reflexive and self-aware of my multiple identities and values.

Being a university educated male, I am aware of the privileges and power that I hold. Through debriefing with my thesis committee and keeping notes of my thoughts and feelings, it is fundamental that I continue with my self-reflection and its impact on the research. As noted in the introduction, I have personally experienced racism and ethnocentrism, thus, I am unable to detach from the research process because of my life experiences, critical-consciousness, and sensitivity to the area of interest. What I am able to do is to consciously self-reflect on my social location in the research and how my power and privileges affect the research. I am cognizant that there is a challenge in being impartial and that is why I consider my worldview, or set of beliefs that guide action to

be that of a social interpretist (Creswell, 2007). By appreciating the view that reality is socially constructed through meaning making, I can adhere to my theoretical positions of Critical Race Theory, Critical Conscious Raising and Afrocentric Theory.

Aligned with the view that race is socially constructed, the research will make explicit the experiences of racialized workers and argue that "race is not a fixed term, but one that is fluid and continually shaped by political pressures and informed by lived experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 27). As Creswell (2007) notes:

> In research, the use of Critical Race Theory methodology means that the researcher foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process; challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of racialized individuals; and offers transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination in our societal and institutional structures. (p. 27)

By applying this theoretical framework to the research design, I am connecting the themes of Critical Race Theory, Critical Conscious Raising and Afrocentric Theory to the research objectives.

Research Objectives & Study Design

The research objectives of this study were to document the first voice accounts of people of color, visible (ethnic minorities, racialized people). More specifically, I wanted to explore their experiences of racism in their workplaces and analyze how those experiences differ across ethnicity, gender and age. In addition, it was to identify change strategies that could help organizations become more inclusive and welcoming workplaces.

Study Design

The Phenomenological study began with identifying a phenomenon to study. Specific to my research, I decided to explore the experiences of racialized employees in the workplace as it relates to racism. Through this process, my goal was to understand the lived experiences of employees when it comes to racism and ethnocentrism in the work environment. It is important to understand these common and unique experiences because the stories will contribute to organizational strategies, aimed at challenging and combating inequity within the work environment. In addition, the stories contributed to a deeper level of understanding about the features of the phenomenon and provide useful information for future work within the area.

To gain a deeper level of understanding of this phenomenon, I have explored the lived experiences of racialized employees. The study uses phenomenological methodology, informed by structural analyses and undertaken with emancipatory and action intent. This allowed the researcher to begin with the relatively unstructured accounts of research participants' experiences and perceptions. From there more structured accounts were elicited through a semi-structured interview guide. The analysis of the data within the research drew on structural analyses, such as Critical Race Theory, Critical Consciousness Raising and Afrocentric Theory. The transformative process of the research began with holding a firm appreciation for oral storytelling through the lived experiences of racialized employees. The research instrument consisted of a set of questions for the in-depth interviews (see Appendix A). The questions in the interviews provided a forum for participants to express their thoughts, feelings and observations as they related to racism in their workplace. Through the interviews, themes developed

surrounding the research questions, and these themes captured the overall "essence" of racism in the workplace.

As it relates to the phenomenological research design, the in-depth interviews consisted of 13 participants from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds. The participants were recruited through several methods: these included contacting potential participants through organizations such as the Halifax Regional School Board, the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth, Immigration Settlement & Integration Services, the Association of Black Social Workers, and the Masters of Social work Student List Serv. Snowball Sampling was used, so that individuals would refer someone that they know who may be interested in participating (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2009). Recruiting participants was accomplished by forwarding the poster that highlights the objectives of the study, criteria for eligibility and contact information of the principal investigator. As participants were recruited and interviewed, the process of conducting phenomenological research was underway.

Phenomenological research design seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals who are being studied, as it relates to their perceptions, thoughts, ideas and experiences (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2007). Phenomenologists ask questions about lived experiences, as contrasted with abstract interpretations of experience or opinion about them (Van Manen, 1990). The process of sampling was purposive because the researchers' goal was to recruit participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study. The "phenomenon" under study was racism in the workplace, as I was interested in the meaning and themes related to this topic. Subsequently, I learned about the common features of this phenomenon and began the analysis process.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological analysis is primarily a writing exercise, as it is through the process of writing and re-writing that the researcher gains a deeper level of meaning (Van Manen, 1990). Through the stories that the participants shared in the interview, I composed a story that captured the important elements of the lived experiences of the participants. Furthermore, data analysis produced rich thematic description that provided insights to racism within the work environment from the perspective of racialized employees (Creswell, 1997).

The first question asked participants what is their understanding of the concepts of race and racism Following the initial question, I asked questions such as "What are some things that make it fair/equitable and unfair/inequitable for employees in the work environment?" and "What are the everyday experiences of racialized men and women within the work place?" I purposely kept the initial questions open and broad, so that participants could describe the issues related to race/racism in their workplace. Throughout the interview process, the goal was to learn about workplace experiences concerning discrimination, fairness, and equity.

As the interviews proceeded, the questions focused on the social interaction between colleagues and how employers and colleagues can challenge racism within the work environment. In addition, participants were asked to elaborate on Employment Equity initiatives.

One of the research objectives in the study was to identify change strategies that could help organizations become more inclusive and welcoming. Literature has widely supported that employment equity strategies have been one source in helping to create

inclusive and welcoming work environments (Agocs & Harish, 2001). As a result, I intended to gain a deeper level of understanding of Employment Equity policy, by inquiring how the policy works in their work environment. Furthermore, I was interested in learning about what organizational supports are in place to assist in equity initiatives. Throughout the interviews, the goal was to make explicit the statements and quotes that provide an understanding of how participants tell of the experience of the phenomenon of racism in the work environment. Once these statements were identified, themes emerged within the research.

By using the participants' own words, themes emerged concerning the phenomena under study. An example was the theme identified as a "feeling voiceless". Personal quotes and stories connected to the theme of 'feeling voiceless' were illustrated. Similar to this finding, numerous themes emerged and were documented.

As the research findings were highlighted, a storyline emerged that captures the "essence" of racism in the work environment. The "essence" is the common experiences that the participants' shared as it relates to this phenomenon. Along with the similarities that the participants share, the different perceptions, thoughts and experiences of individuals in the study are highlighted. This valuable knowledge and these pertinent insights will provide the information needed to capture the essence of racism in employment. By staying firm in my theoretical positioning, I make explicit the marginalized voices of racism/sexism in the work environment; by moving past description in Phenomenology, I achieve flexibility in research by giving voice to the participants' reality in their own words.

Strengths and Limitations

When it comes to the study, there are a number of strengths. As noted, there is a scarcity of information as it relates to exploring the issue of racism in the workplace and initiatives aimed at challenging it. In relation to this, there is limited amount of information in literature, which documents the voices of employees who have been marginalized by race and ethnicity in the workplace. This study will contribute to the provincial and national dialogue, as it relates to racism in Canadian institutions and suggestions to make the work environment an 'anti-racist' space. In addition, new themes have been outlined in this study, which will provide a greater snapshot of the issues confronting racialized workers in Nova Scotia and Canada.

Additional strengths are that participants may feel empowered through the process of sharing their stories. The findings of the study will contribute to the literature on racism in employment and will affect social policies and practices as it relates to racism in the workplace. As noted, suggestions for organizational strategies that are aimed at challenging racism in the workplace are strengths. The thesis will conclude with suggestions for future work and will help bridge the gap between academia and the community.

There are some limitations when it comes to explanations of different forms of racism and ethnocentrism within the workplace. Firstly, there may be other casual factors affecting the findings of racism in organizations. The mistreatment of racialized workers could be substantially associated with factors other than race/ethnicity. Examples can include: employee's work performance or interpersonal skills, the position of power of employees, the manager's attitude which may be negative and toxic across all racial lines,

etc. The argument used by some critics is that when a racialized employee comes forth and makes claims of prejudice, discrimination and/or racism in the workplace, the employee is either being 'too sensitive' or 'misinterpreting' the situation. I question this assumption, given the reality that the employee who makes the claim runs the risk of jeopardizing his or her job security. However, it is important to be aware of other possible associated factors affecting social interaction and behavior in the organizations.

In addition to 'other' factors that can affect social interaction in the workplace, the study's findings can't be generalized to regions outside of Nova Scotia. It is the researcher's view that the findings of the study overlap and are interconnected with some of the experiences of racialized employees in other regions in Canada, however, additional research is needed to uncover some of these issues. Also, it is dangerous to assume that all of the participants experienced the same form of 'racism' and discrimination in the workplace.   It is critical to be aware of the intersectional relationship of the privileges and oppression that participants experience and how that relates to their work environment. This too needs to be further uncovered through research.

Moreover, based on the sample size, it is challenging to differentiate the different forms of 'racism' that individuals from varying ethnic and racial groups experience. However, it is the author's opinion that there are some differences because of the lack of multiculturalism that exists in N.S and the economic disadvantages that the region faces, in relation to cosmopolitan cities such as Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. As the findings suggest, racism in the workplace interacts with many factors that include the

economic opportunities existing within the province and the number of 'newcomers' willing to stay.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the process of recruitment, I received ethical approval to conduct the research on October 19th, 2010. Furthermore, on November 18th 2010, I received approval from the Halifax Regional School Board to conduct the study as well. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic in the study, there was a chance of emotional and financial risks for the participants that were interviewed. Some of these risks included the fear of job loss if information was shared about the employee's organization, private information being disclosed to the public and emotional grief as a result of sharing personal information. The fear of job loss and issues connected to privacy were addressed by disclosing to the participants that both their name and the name of their organization were not being identified in the study. Furthermore, the issue of potential job loss was mitigated by anonymity and confidentiality. Due to the sensitivity of the research question and concern for participant's health and well-being in the study, there were resource referrals available for participants. These included: Employment Assistance Program, Family Services & Association of Black Social Workers. The estimated probability of the risks in the study is minimal.

In addition, I had a commitment to follow ethical guidelines for research. The process of mitigating risk was achieved through several additional methods such as: regularly checking in with participants to ensure they felt safe and comfortable throughout the research, providing clear framework to the objectives in the research, explaining that participants were able to leave during anytime in the study, seeking consent, maintaining

confidentiality, disclosing the limitations of confidentiality (duty to report), locking and

storing data in safe place, retaining data in physical form with field supervisor for up to

five years and protecting the anonymity of individuals in the research process. As noted,

the primary goal of this study was to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity were met

and to keep the participants information as secure as possible.

The chapter began with a brief description of the methodology design of the study,

Phenomenological design. The two approaches to phenomenology were highlighted and

the chapter continued with a summary of the research design, objective and data analysis.

Furthermore, the strengths, limitations and ethical standards were reviewed. In the

following chapter, there will be a discussion of the research findings of the study.

Chapter 4 – Research Findings

   This chapter will present the themes that have emerged from the interviews. Using a

semi-structured interview guide, participants were asked questions related to their

experiences of racism in the workplace. As the participants shared their experiences,

many unique themes and narratives developed.   This chapter is organized by the themes

that emerged from the data analysis. The following themes are presented and augmented

by what participants' identify as racial marginalization in the workplace, what employees

can do to challenge racism in the workplace, and thoughts on equity initiatives to make

the workplace more welcoming, diverse and inclusive. I begin with an overview of the

research participants and their profiles. Participants were provided with a pseudonym, so

that they will not be identified.

Profile of Participants

   In the research, there were 13 participants interviewed, six male and seven female.

With regards to race and ethnicity, participants self-identified as being from diverse

cultural backgrounds. The 13 participants self-identified as being: African, black,

African-Canadian, Indo-Canadian, South-Asian, black/Aboriginal and Mi'kmaq. The

participants' ages ranged from 25 to 64. In addition, participants were employed in

various employment settings and their education ranged from that of a Master's degree to

high-school completion. The table below provides a detailed snap shot of the participants

and their profiles.

GENDER	**6 MALE** **7 FEMALE**
RACE/ETHNICITY	**2 AFRICAN** **6 BLACK/AFRICAN-NOVA SCOTIAN** **1 INDO-CANADIAN** **1 SOUTH-ASIAN** **1 MI'KMAQ** **1 BLACK & ABORIGINAL** **1 BLACK WITH ABORIGINAL** **ANCESTORY**
AGE	**3 - 25-34** **5 - 35-44** **4 - 45-54** **1 - 55-64**
EDUCATION	**7 – MASTERS** **4 - BACHELORS** **1 – HIGH SCHOOL** **1 – HIGH SCHOOL WITH SOME** **COLLEGE**
EMPLOYMENT	**3 - EDUCATION (FULL-TIME)** **1 – EDUCATION (PART-TIME)** **1 – MANAGEMENT (FULL-TIME)** **2 – PROVINCIAL (FULLTIME)** **1 – CASHIER (PART-TIME)** **1 – CALL CENTER (FULL-TIME)** **2 - FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (FULL-TIME)** **1-PROGRAM COORDINATOR (FULL-TIME)** **1-STUDENT (FULL-TIME)**

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

Participants come from diverse backgrounds and have unique life stories. The

commonalities between the individuals interviewed are that most were born and raised in

Nova Scotia and shared stories of experiencing racism in the workplace in Nova Scotia.

Mike was born and raised in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as African-Canadian. He has
worked in the Federal Public sector for several years. During the interview, he provided
a narrative of the racism that he has experienced when it comes to promotion and training
within his work environment.

Claire was born and raised in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as African-Canadian. She
has worked for several years in the education sector. Claire provided numerous stories of
experiencing and witnessing racism within the educational system in Nova Scotia.

Peter was born on the West Coast of Canada and self-identifies as Indo-Canadian. As the
interview took place, he was in the process of working to complete a Masters degree.
Peter provided numerous stories of experiencing racism in various work settings that
includes banking and social services.

Crystal was born in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as being black and Aboriginal. She
provided a deeply disturbing story of experiencing racial discrimination and harassment
at her current work environment. As a result of her experiences, she has placed a
complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Nova Scotia.

Diego was born in Africa and self-identifies as black or African. He described how he
experienced racism when he relocated to Nova Scotia and began working in various
employment settings.

Kate was born in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as African Nova-Scotian. She
highlighted the elusive and aversive nature of racism within the educational system in
Nova Scotia.

Karen was born in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as Mi'kmaq. She provided stories as it
relates to her experiences of racism and sexism in the workplace.

John was born in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as African-Canadian with Aboriginal
ancestry. He provided stories as it relates to experiencing racism in his professional work
in Nova Scotia and experienced racial profiling by the Halifax police.

Isabelle was born in the Caribbean and self-identifies as black. She provided numerous
stories of experiencing and witnessing racism in the workplace. In particular, Isabelle
highlighted the barriers that she has experienced when applying for equity positions.

Samantha was born in Nova Scotia and self-identifies as African Nova Scotian. She provided a narrative of how racism affects the policies, practices and programs within Nova Soctian work settings.

Dina was born in South Asia and self-identifies as South Asian. She highlighted her family's experiences of racism and ethnocentrism when immigrating to Nova Scotia. Dina describes the challenges of not having her foreign credentials recognized and the paternalistic attitude of employers and immigration services in Nova Scotia.

Ken was born in Africa and self-identifies as African Descent. He provided numerous stories of experiencing racism in various work settings within Nova Scotia.

Andrew was born in South America and self-identifies as African Descent. He has worked in management in various Federal government departments. He stated that racism is entrenched within the Federal departments that he has worked for.

As noted earlier, the research findings in this chapter are a reflection of the voices of the individuals who were interviewed for the study. The comments and stories that are shared are significant because they reflect the lived experiences of racialized employees in the work sector in Nova Scotia. In addition, the narratives signify the views of men and women who come from diverse backgrounds that range in income, education, employment, age, gender, race and culture. It became apparent through the interview process that the interviews helped the participants put their lived experiences into perspective. The interviews began with a discussion concerning the meaning of 'race' and 'racism' and touched on numerous questions related to racism in the workplace. The themes below resulted from a process bringing the shared voices together and naming some of the core issues that the participants identified, as they relate to racism in the work environment. The themes identified are as follows:

Themes Identified

1.   Sorting out the meaning of 'Race' & 'Racism'
2.   The workplace is a 'Double Edged Sword'
3.   Preferential Treatment towards employees based on race
4.   Feeling Voiceless
5.   Overworked & Proving Oneself
6.   Being Critiqued & Scrutinized
7.   Tokenism
8.   Singled-Out & 'Othered'
9.   Credentials Not Recognized
10. Intersectional relationship between Gender & Race
11. Race & Well-Being
12. Challenging Racism in the Workplace

Sorting out the meaning of Race & Racism

The interviews began with an open-ended question that asked individuals 'what is your understanding of race and racism'. All of the participants stated that the concept of 'race' is socially constructed. The common theme that emerged is 'race' is connected to physical characteristics such as: skin color, facial features, hair texture, shape of eyes, etc. However, Mike noted that *"race does not have to be physical characteristics; it could be that someone knows your background and treats you differently because of it" (i.e. country, language, and accent).* In addition, another participant noted that the terms race and racism are dependent on each other, meaning that, racism would not exist without the concept of race and vice versa. The common response was that people, who believe that race exists, treat 'others' differently because of this belief system (usually in a degrading or negative manner). Some of the comments that touched on this theme include:

> *"racism is when someone uses 'race' for their own advantage, when someone believes in the 'fact' that race does exist… ends up using that to put someone down on artificial 'facts"* – Peter

> *"the ability to itemize people and give them a name 'white/black' is problematic" and that 'the terms race/racism are problematic* – Andrew

Similarly, Mike said:

> *"racism could be negative if it hinders employment, hinders schooling, job opportunities, where you live at, people putting road blocks because they do not want certain groups to mix with them"*

These responses suggest that racism is connected to power and privilege

Research findings (Agocs & Harish, 2001; Johnson and Enomoto 2007; Henry and Tator 2006; Lopes and Thomas 2006) suggest that the terms race and racism are directly linked to privilege and power. Taken from a Nova Scotia context, several participants highlighted that it is important to discuss how white privilege affects the lives of individuals who are marginalized by race in the workplace. Kate highlighted that privilege and oppression are not absolute but fluid, implying that not all individuals share the same privileges/inequality because of their 'race' and that other factors such as class, gender, sexual orientation and abilities play a role too. She noted that historically, light skinned blacks were given certain privileges that darker skinned black folks did not have. Kate asserted that *"lighter skinned were in the big house being violated by master and darker skinned were in the fields"*. Two participants touched on the notion that race and racism are linked to colonialism. Karen noted that *"I really think if there hadn't been colonialism culture, I don't think racism exists"*. Related to Kate's description of racism, Karen described her unsettling experience of being called the N word by other kids on the playground. She notes that this was her first blatant experience of racism and highlights how racism is connected to ignorance and fear. John shared a similar experience when he was younger and noted that *"it was nothing to be called the n word, now people know there might be some consequences and are "politically correct"*. Karen described that some individuals hold on to the belief system that *"if you're not like me, then you're*

inferior". As the participant's response illustrate, the concepts of 'race' and 'racism' are socially constructed terms that are connected to power and privilege.

Connected to the theme of power and privilege, is the concept of systemic racism. Individuals highlighted that racism is systemic within Canadian institutions and society. The term 'systemic racism' was repeated throughout the interviews and several individuals noted that racism has become engrained within Canadian institutions and society. Within the Nova Scotia context, some participants noted that there is a bias towards Anglo-Saxon heritage and culture. Specifically, that there is a Eurocentric bias within mainstream institutions that could include: Education, Social Services, Health Care, Armed Forces, etc.

Isabelle states:

> *"racism in Nova Scotia is not the kind of racism you would know. You have to experience it to know it. Very subtle."*

Claire supports Isabelle's assertion by stating:

> *"from a Nova Scotia context, the predominant people come from an Anglo-Saxon heritage background, Eurocentric background. Kind of have that majority power base and have that power and privilege."*

These responses led to the question 'is your workplace fair and equitable for all employees, regardless of 'race'?

The Workplace is 'Double-Edged Sword'

When asked whether individuals believe their workplace is fair and equitable for all employees, the common theme was that *it is* and it is *not fair*. The term *'double edged sword'* was used to signify *"the fact that we have equity policies in place means that things are not fair"*. This response is directly connected to the concept of 'democratic

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racism'. Henry & Tator (2006) note in their book *The Color of Democracy* that democratic racism is the "inherent conflict between egalitarian values of liberalism, justice and fairness, and the racist ideologies reflected in the collective mass belief system as well as the racist attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions of individuals (p.19). Numerous participants asserted that because there are equity policies and programs in place, it verifies that racism is a real phenomenon within the workplace. One of the common responses in the interviews was that the policies that are designed to make things fairer for all individuals of color *"are words on paper but not enacted/enforced properly"*.

Participants provided countless personal stories of why they believe that employment equity policy within their current work environment is not working effectively to address the inequalities that exist within hiring, training and promotion. The terms that were used to signify this, include that the policies have *'no teeth'* and are *'lip service'*. Some of the comments that are related to the theme of 'double-edged sword' include:

Claire who stated:

> *"there is a discrepancy between policy and practice" and that "on paper it all looks good, you just don't see that, you don't hear about any type of strategic initiative or plan to diversify upper level management"*

Similarly, Samantha said:

> *"people attempt to put things in place to make it an equitable environment but how well they are working is the question"*

Clearly, there is a sense of encouragement about employment equity, as suggested by Claire. However, the double edged sword is evident as participants question the effectiveness of the policies, especially when they witness preferential treatment. This

response is directly linked to the periodic report that explores the working conditions of certain groups. It was reported that there is a gap for women, racialized and aboriginals, as it relates to the executive level. This means that, despite some successes in making hiring more equitable for these groups in entry and mid-level jobs, they are still not well represented at the higher managerial levels (HRSDC, June 21st 2011). As the following stories illustrate, a common theme in the interviews is that there is preferential treatment based on race in the work setting.

Preferential Treatment towards employees based on 'race'

Isabelle, Ken, Andrew and Mike work in different work environments but share the common experience of feeling discriminated against because of their 'race'. Isabelle shared a story of repeatedly applying for a position for which she was qualified. The job was an equity position that was being advertised. Isabelle described that she attended several interviews for the position. In every situation, she was denied the position following the interview.   She highlights that when she was speaking to the employers on the phone, everything appeared fine. However, when she arrived to the interviews, things changed. Isabelle firmly believes that racism played a role in the process of hiring. She notes that *"there is equity for the jobs but not getting hired, how serious are they about it"* and that *"people look at me like a black female foreigner… feel 'othered', an outsider…. excluded".*

Unfortunately, the theme of racial bias in hiring and promotion did not stop with Isabelle's story.   As Ken's story illustrates, he asserts that employers have too much power in terms of who they hire and that racial bias and preferential treatment affects their decision making.

In 2006, Ken emigrated from a country in Africa to Nova Scotia. He provided countless stories of experiencing marginalization due to his 'race' in the workplace. In one particular situation, Ken worked as a full-time casual employee for an agency in Halifax. He described that when he applied for permanent positions within the agency, he would not hear back from the employers. As time passed by and his frustrations mounted from his experiences in the workplace, he heard from two white colleagues that *"black people don't last here"*. Ken describes the stress that he experienced during this period in his life. He described in the interview that white individuals from outside the agency would apply for positions and get hired. He questioned why external applications were given priority over his internal status within the agency. Before Ken could get an answer, he received an email notifying him that he was laid off, due to *'downsizing'* of the agency. Ken notes that this experience had a profound effect on his sense of self. He asked himself *"is Canada really for me, I had a good job in my home country"*.

Following the termination of his casual position, Ken phoned a black friend who previously had worked at the same agency. He notes that similar to his own experiences, his friend had been laid off too. They shared their stories and considered getting a lawyer to challenge the decision that was made to end their positions. They came to the realization that it would be challenging for them to prove their cases. In the interview, Ken noted that *"I was very stressed because I was planning for a wedding at the time that I was laid off"*. Unfortunately, stories like these were too common in the study. As the next story illustrates, racism is a serious problem within many employment settings in Nova Scotia.

Andrew highlighted that he had worked in various federal departments and that in his experience racism was a real phenomenon within them all. He notes his experience within the military and how the culture within the organization created an 'aura' that excluded racialized workers within the organization. Specifically, he commented on how the military culture has a *'chain of command'* and that diverse ethnic groups are treated accordingly to this *'chain of command'*. He notes that *"the black people have suffered in this department for a long time…the history goes far back"*. The example that he provided was *"they had a black battalion in the army and it was only in year 2007 that they got any recognition"*. Furthermore, he commented on the lack of diversity within different levels of the military.

Andrew noted in the interview that *"few blacks/African descent in management positions"* and there is a *"huge under-representation of people from different ethnic groups in this department"*. He continues with this point by illustrating how *"they (blacks) come in and take a look, they don't see themselves represented and they go no, there is no embracing"*. In addition, the following story illustrates the barriers and challenges that racialized workers face within the employment setting.

Andrew provided a story of racism within the workplace that recently took place within his department. He noted that one of his colleagues was receiving emails from a supervisor that was filled with racial slurs. The racialized worker who kept receiving the emails broke down and ended up breaking part of the computer that he was using. The worker was dismissed for 5 days because of his reaction and was required to attend anger management training. Andrew highlighted that the supervisor who was sending the messages was not penalized and that the emails did not stop.

Following the 5 day suspension, the worker came back to his job. However, the emails did not stop. Instead of reacting out of anger, he forwarded the emails to three co-workers as proof of the harassment. When his boss found out, the worker was sent on another 5 day suspension. Andrew highlighted that if he gets a 3rd suspension, he will be dismissed. As the interview took place, there was an investigation taking place into the matter but Andrew noted *"this is the kind of thing that happens in the department"* and that it was *"racially motivated"*. As Andrew's story highlights, racial discrimination in the workplace is a real phenomenon and requires accountability by all levels of the institution. Andrew's story is one of racial harassment and preferential treatment. Mike's story illustrated below highlights the barriers to promotion and the role of preferential treatment.

Mike identified that he was employed for the provincial government and had worked for several years in his specialized field. Through years of building his qualifications, he applied for promotions within the organization. He illustrates a story of applying for several positions in management, only to be denied each time. Mike highlights that every time he applied for a promotion within the agency, a white woman with less qualifications would get the position over him. He describes how the organization is supposed to be targeting certain groups for the equity positions, yet 'visible minorities' are being overlooked. Mike describes that *"managers and senior management are not being held accountable, they have too much power"*. He shares a story of how one of the individuals who got the promotion that he was seeking, was being coached and encouraged to take on training that he was denied.

Mike states:

"One of the last times I applied for a management, the job was vacant for a year and a half. The person that they eventually hired, they put her in that position on an acting basis for year and half. I requested to get training and experience at that level and was denied. When we wrote our exams and went for the interview, I was qualified and she was qualified. They picked her for reasons for experiences she would have got at sitting at the senior table while she was acting. I was denied the opportunity to get experience"

Mike continues:

"It is about race. In my opinion they groomed her. I was the only visible minority that applied. She was white female. The other two times I applied, it was white females"

Mike firmly believes that race is the only explanation for why he was overlooked for the promotions and denied training. In the interview, he provided statistics on the under representation of black managers in his organization and articulates how his personal experiences and statistics on the hiring practices prove that racial bias exists within hiring, retention and promotion within the organization. Similarly, John asserts that "*I have a job; I do not have a career"*. His comment is connected to the theme of preferential treatment because in his 'job', he is unable to maximize his abilities to move within the organizations, something which he considers to be part of having a 'career'. The result in a case like John's, is that there are barriers to promoting racialized employees to top management positions, the so called 'glass ceiling' effect (Henry & Tator, 2006). As Isabelle, Ken, Andrew and Mike's stories illustrates, the common theme in the interviews is that 'it is not fair and equitable for racialized workers who are marginalized by race in the workplace'.

Feeling Voiceless

One of the ways that the unfairness was identified was participants' experiences of feeling 'voiceless'. The common responses that emerged relate to how 'people of

color'/'visible minorities' are not being taken seriously. Words used to signify this include feeling *'voiceless'* and *'discounted'*. Some of the comments that are connected to the theme of 'voiceless' include:

> *"our opinions and thought process are never fully respected"* – Peter

> *"have an important point; it falls on deaf ears"* – Samantha

For example, Samantha described a personal story of being challenged by a white male co-worker because she made a point with which he took exception. She firmly believes that it was her race and gender that played a role in this defensive reaction. Regrettably, stories such as these were frequent within the interviews. Furthermore, it can be argued that some of the other themes such as 'overworked' and 'singled-out' that have emerged within the study are connected to feeling 'voiceless'. For example, when an employee feels silenced, the individual may comply with being 'overworked' and refuse to speak out in fear of being further alienated.

As the theme of 'feeling voiceless' illustrates, racialized employees who experience this will potentially feel isolated and excluded in the workplace. Subsequently, the employee can become distant from colleagues and unwilling to engage in discussion, for fear of being shut down and alienated. This is why it is critical that the workplace is inclusive and safe for all employees, so that if there are cases in which employees are consciously or unconsciously isolating each other, that there are supports and resources available to resolve the issue.

Overworked & Proving Oneself

Whether an individual is being denied a job opportunity based on race or is being overly worked, these themes are interconnected. Throughout the interviews, several participants noted that they have personally experienced or witnessed a colleague being 'overworked' due to race and ethnicity. Some of the statements that illustrate this theme include:

Peter states:

> *"I had a supervisor (black male) work almost 4 or 5 hours a day extra to be noticed by upper management, so that he can move up in the agency"*

Similarly, Claire said:

> *"Feeling overloaded and overworked…they don't place expectations on other people (white workers)"… "Always running and feeling getting nowhere" (connected to how the organization is not taking a proactive measure to hire additional staff to provide the services required)*

She continues:

> *"We feel we have to show and demonstrate 150% of our work. It is true we have to work that much harder"*

And Diego shared:

> *"When you are a minority, you have to over-work yourself to prove yourself"*

As these statements suggest, numerous participants believe that racialized employees are vulnerable of being 'overworked' because there is an expectation that the worker needs to 'prove oneself'. Some of the possible explanations for being 'overworked' can include: stereotypes, low expectations and assumptions made by employers and employees. An example of this could be when an employer has an expectation that the racialized worker is not as driven or intellectually capable of fulfilling a role within the employment setting. This expectation could be based on unfounded stereotype, leading

to false conclusions and negative outcomes for the employer and employee. The danger

in this situation is that the low expectations could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy

because the racialized employee may internalize the messages of 'not being capable of'

and may decide to work 'that much harder' to prove oneself; or just 'give up'. Related to

the experience of needing to 'prove oneself' is the idea that employers will place lower

expectations on the employee because of stereotypes and assumptions.

Diego notes that *"I have a feeling people don't expect you to do well or meet

outcomes"*. Directly linked to Diego's statement are two stories that are related to the

subtheme of 'experiencing lower expectations'. Claire and Kate highlighted that they

either attended school in Nova Scotia or worked in the school system. They shared

stories of witnessing or experiencing lower expectations from the guidance counsellor. In

both situations, the narratives were connected to how the guidance counsellor encouraged

the student to apply for clerical or other fields, rather than pursuing university. The

participants agreed that the guidance counsellor placed lower expectations on the students

because of 'where they were from' or 'who they are'. Kate noted that *"if I listened to the

guidance counsellor, I would have never gone to university"*. These stories are linked to

how employers within the work environment are being marginalized due to perceived

differences.

Being Critiqued & Scrutinized

When it comes to the theme of being 'overly scrutinized', Peter notes that *"when you

are a person of colour, your work is that much more scrutinized, major mistrust almost"*.

Related to Peter's comment is the story that Claire shared concerning how her supervisor

was overly critical of her grammar and writing at work. She alluded that she felt

embarrassed and humiliated because he placed certain expectations on her, that he did not place on other workers. When Claire was asked whether she believes that the critique she received was based on 'race', she noted that "*Yes, I personally did. Ended up talking to couple other members. They were appalled. Other people on this team don't have a Masters degree.*" It is my assertion that Claire was implying that her co-workers do not have the level of qualifications that she has, yet do not experience the type of critique that she experienced.

As Claire's story highlights, her supervisor placed lower expectations on her, than he did on the other workers. He could have very well assumed that Claire was 'less capable of' and decided to overly scrutinize her based on negative stereotypes and assumptions of 'people of color'. As a result of this situation, Claire grew resentful towards her supervisor. The danger in this situation is that the working atmosphere may become 'toxic' and the racialized employee feel singled-out and grow frustrated by the unfair treatment. This could very well lead to racialized employee becoming distant from 'other' colleagues and not feel welcomed and safe (Luther,Whitemore & Moreau, 2003).

Tokenism

As the themes of being 'overworked' and 'overly-scrutinized' suggest, racialized employees are vulnerable to 'tokenism'. The broad definition of 'tokenism' is the practice of making a minimal or 'token' effort. As it relates to the workplace, the concept of 'tokenism' refers to a practice or policy that is based on limited inclusion of racial minorities at work, to give the impression that the employment setting is 'diverse' and 'welcoming' to people from all cultures. This action can be involuntary or intentionally based. Many participants experienced or witnessed tokenism in their workplace.

Claire stated:

> *"I am one of; I do not necessarily feel safe to share something with other members of the team"*

John highlights:

> *"Why am I the only person of color"*

And Samantha shared:

> *"most of the time, you're the only person of color there"*

The concept of 'tokenism' was repeated throughout the interviews and is connected to several stories that the participants shared. Examples of this concept include: hiring a 'token' racialized worker to give the impression that the workplace is 'diverse' and being the only person of color in the work setting.

The danger of practicing 'tokenism' is that the racialized employee will feel isolated and singled-out in the process. In addition, there is the danger that the unspoken assumption is that the racialized worker is the 'expert' on issues confronting 'visible minorities' or individuals who come from the same ethnic background as the racialized employee. However, this expectation may not be true, as the racialized worker may know just as much or as little as any colleague in the organization. The result of tokenism could be a working environment in which the racialized employee feels like a 'spokesperson' for his or her race and gets singled out in the process.

Singled Out & Othered

In the interview, Claire noted that *"I wish someone else would address this, why me"*? Claire's question is related to the concept of being 'singled out' due to one's race. Related to Claire's quote is a story that Peter shared as it relates to feeling 'singled-out'.

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He noted in the interview that he previously worked as a bank teller. Peter commented that during his time as a teller, he had a customer that refused to be served by him because of his racial background. Fortunately, Peter's manager (white woman) intervened and asked the customer to leave the bank. This story provides an example of how important it is to have 'allies' at work who will provide supports and challenge racism in the workplace.

As the themes assert, they are related to the concept of feeling 'singled-out' and unfairly treated based on race. Whether an employee is being overly-worked or not taken seriously, racialized employees are vulnerable to experiencing racism in the work environment and feeling 'othered'.

An additional subtheme that has emerged from the interviews is the concept of being 'othered'. Isabelle notes that *"People look at me like a black female foreigner… feel othered, an outsider, excluded"*. Related to Isabelle's statement is a story that Claire witnessed. She noted that there was a woman who moved from Africa to Nova Scotia to teach. The woman worked in a high school and was teaching students in a classroom. Claire highlighted that the parents of some of the students began complaining to the school regarding how their sons and daughters had a hard time understanding what the teacher was saying. As a result, the school hired a staff member to sit in the classroom with the teacher and 'help' communicate to the students.

After a period of time, the teacher who was being singled-out began to internalize the degradation that she was experiencing and eventually resigned from her position and left the Province. Claire believes that racism played a role in this situation because she specifically noted in the interview that she understood the teacher and that woman was

being singled out. Unfortunately, Diego shared a similar situation of moving from Africa to Nova Scotia and presenting to the class in which he was enrolled in. While he was presenting, certain students were laughing and he believes that it was because of his accent. These stories all illustrate the theme of being 'singled-out' based on assumptions, stereotypes and generalizations.

Samantha also highlights that she has experienced *"being singled out because of race.. I must be with the other black worker"*. Connected to this quote is Karen's story of being singled out due to her Aboriginal identity. She provided an example of being asked *"What do you think about the chief making 800k"*. Karen's response was that *"I am not from that community"*. As this comment highlights, being singled out is directly related to assumptions, stereotypes and generalizations that people have about certain groups of people. Furthermore, the personal story described below, captures how damaging racial marginalization can be in the workplace and the process of 'othering'.

Crystal provided a personal story of the negative and damaging effects of experiencing discrimination in the workplace. Crystal was working in the area of food services within Nova Scotia. On one particular day, she noticed that her two managers started treating her differently. Crystal provided a summary of the changes. Initially, she had begun feeling 'ignored' by her immediate supervisor and slowly the ignoring turned into blatant actions such as: being yelled at, cussed out and hearing direct/indirect racial comments. She highlighted that in one situation, the manager said *"your color is dark, wouldn't be able to see you"*. Crystal asserts that she was being singled out because she was the only black worker in the organization.

Around the same time as the ignoring and yelling began at the workplace, Crystal noted that *"the manager went out and hired somebody, she posted my position online and she hired this girl".* Crystal noted that her hours were cut down dramatically. Following the news, she asked to have a meeting with the manager of her supervisor. Crystal noted that the meeting did not help in terms of explaining why her hours were reduced. She firmly believes that she was being singled out due to her 'race' and that the politics within the organization were playing a role in this process (two managers were friends and enabled one another's inappropriate actions). In addition, Crystal alluded to the idea that there was nothing related to her work performance or attitude that would have led this decision and the manner that she was treated.

Crystal states:

> *"My hours were cut down to 13 hours/week. No reason, I was there for a year".*

She continues:

> *"They (colleagues) know the type of person I am..friendly, pleasant and nice to them, treat with respect."*

As the weeks passed, Crystal noted that one of her co-workers suggested that she could *"go for discrimination"* at work. Crystal noted that *"one of the co-workers is going to support me and be a witness… the older lady (co-worker) is going to say point blank, this is not a good place to work, they treat you like dirt".* Crystal is a single parent who relies on her work, hence one could imagine the strain that this experience had on her health and well-being. She highlighted in the interview that she would cry on several occasions at work and how the experience affected her self-esteem. Crystal noted that *"it affected my health, stress, emotions and mentally".* As a result of not being

unionized, she approached the Human Rights Commission and filed a complaint. She

noted in the interview it does not matter if it takes 5 years for this to be figured out, she

wants the managers to be held accountable for the discrimination that she experienced at

work. As this story illustrates, there is a relationship between racism in the workplace,

social interaction and related stress. Supporting this finding, is a study of African

Canadians' experiences of racism related stress, James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin Lloyd

and Turner (2010), who found that racism in the employment sector was one of the most

significant areas of stress faced by the study participants. Of the 900 participants in their

survey, 55% experienced racial discrimination in hiring, promotion and job assignment

(p. 102).

Credentials Not Recognized

   In addition, connected to the theme of being singled-out is not having credentials

recognized when moving to Canada. Two participants shared experiences of not having

their credentials obtained in their home countries recognized here in Nova Scotia.

For example, Ken shared:

> *"In my home country, I would have worked in higher position. But the position I
> have here, being treated as if I'm not competent enough, that is why I went back
> to school"*

Related to Ken's statement, his friend notes that:

> *"I believe strongly that my accent made them know that I am not Canadian. They
> made a judgement, I believe I was really qualified for the job"*

Related to the theme of not having credentials recognized is the subtheme of

experiencing 'paternalism' in the workplace.

Dina asserts that:

"Their approach (immigration services in Nova Scotia) was paternalistic"

Similar to Ken's story of emigrating from Africa to Nova Scotia, Dina shared a similar story of immigrating. Dina highlighted that when her family emigrated from South Asia to Nova Scotia, their education and work experiences were not recognized in the province. Dina illustrated the story of experiencing marginalization by immigration services and employers in Nova Scotia.

Dina stated that:

"Immigration services in Nova Scotia were not helpful.. not given many choices".

Dina described that when she accessed immigration services, she was assigned to an employment counsellor to help her find a job in the province. Dina illustrates that even with a Master's degree from her home country, she was unable to get any jobs. She noted that the employment counsellor would blame Dina for not getting a job and place full accountability on her shoulders. She commented in the interview that *"now I can identify that it was victim blaming"*. It even got so bad that the employment counsellor commented that *"you people wear smelly clothes when you go into interviews"*. Furthermore, Dina was assigned to a secretarial position for which she was over-qualified.

Dina highlights that her first experience in the agency that she worked for in Nova Scotia was *"horrible"*. She notes that there were newly arrived immigrants who were volunteering there and that she felt *"it was just exploitation of immigrants"*. Dina articulated in the interview that the staff at the agency would critique what she was

wearing and make comments that were very paternalistic. She notes that *"they thought they had the right to criticize us, our values, education, what we brought from home and everything"*. Dina highlights that the staff were all white and that she would hear comments such as *"In Canada, you cannot do this or do that"*. Dina firmly believes that the behaviour of the staff at the agency was *"demeaning"* and it was more about *"telling than working with"*.

As Dina continued to work at the initial agency that her employment counsellor matched her with, she illustrated more examples of the paternalism she experienced. She commented that *"they wanted us to wear cultural clothes because whenever there was a function, they wanted to present us. I felt very uncomfortable"*. She continues that *"it happened over and over and it felt that we were a show piece there"*. This story captures the essence of the paternalism and demeaning nature of her experiences. She used phrases such as I felt *"voiceless"* and *"humiliated"* at the agency. Eventually, Dina took matters into her own hands and found a job in another agency while she was still working.

As the stress and frustrations mounted in her initial work experience in Nova Scotia, Dina found a job in another agency. However, her supervisor within the initial agency that she was matched with found out. Without notifying Dina, the supervisor went behind her back and phoned the employers of the agency and asked the employer if Dina could start later. Once Dina figured out what her supervisor had done, she confronted her and commented that *"I was very angry and resented her action"* and *"I feel it was totally unethical"*. The supervisor apologized but damage was done and eventually Dina left the agency to work elsewhere.

Dina's stories illustrate the barriers and challenges that newly arrived immigrants and refugees encounter when they migrate to Canada. Dina communicated that she was able to advocate for herself in her employment settings but that the vulnerability of being an immigrant was being exploited. These examples provide the gaps in the workplace when it comes to not having credentials recognized and experiencing racism/ethnocentrism by service providers and employers. Dina asserted that *"if we are not expressing ourselves, if we don't speak loudly.. they think the person has low self-esteem issues. Because of cultural differences they will say "this person is not fit for the job".* This quote summarizes how culture plays a significant role in hiring practices and social interaction within the workplace.

Intersectional relationship between gender and race

When it comes to the intersectional relationship between race and gender, the theme was that there is a relationship between the two. Consistently it was highlighted in the interviews that *"females are seen as timid and emotional"* and *"men are seen as powerful and strong"*. Kate coined the term *'double dilemma'* to highlight that sexism and racism play a role in the daily experiences of women who are racialized. In addition, more than one participant noted that black men are painted in the media as being threatening and that this affects how they are perceived and treated in society. As some of the responses suggest, sexism is a real phenomenon within the employment setting. Samantha said:

> *"Black men perceived as passionate and women as being emotional"……. "I think it is racial more than gender"…"we act out in terms of race more than gender"*

Kate suggested:

"I sit at a table with men/women and females constantly defer to male…females sometimes contribute to their own oppression on the gender issue"

Others commented on the different treatment of racialized men and women based on gender stereotypes.

Mike said:

"Black male profiled to be aggressive, violent, etc."

And Kate suggested:

"If you lose control, you fall into the stereotypical role of aggressive black"

However, Karen mused about the more positive treatment of women.

"More respected because I was a woman, if I was a man, I would have been a problem"

When the participants were asked about the social interaction within their work environment, a common theme was that people gravitate towards *'sameness'*. Claire highlighted that *"people gravitate towards sameness for comfort and identity purposes"*. Ken went further by noting *"marginalized groups tend to group together"*. This could be due to comfort level and a sense of familiarity. Samantha supports this idea by stating that some individuals *"seek out other black folks to have a conversation with and get the story out"*. Kate touched on the notion that there are *'cliques'* in the workplace and that membership is connected to privileges and politics (i.e. social class, race, etc.). Furthermore, there are other factors that can affect social interaction. Some of them could include: social upbringing, values and exposure to different cultural groups. That is why it is critical to be cognisant of the intersectional relationship of the various forms of

privileges and oppression and how they are connected to race and well-being (Baines, 2007; Gupta, 1996).

Race & Well-Being

The majority of the participants noted that experiencing racism impacts their health and well-being. Ken commented that *"when you have direct impact of racism, it could give you an emotional distress, loss of self-esteem and the will to work"*. Samantha supports the idea that racism is linked to stress by stating that *"I am always on guard``... ``keeping your radar on all the time is draining"* and that *"you think you`re in a safe place and find out that you`re not"*. All of these examples highlight that racism is extremely stressful and can lead to numerous health complications.

Samantha asserts:

> *"experiencing racism is so stressful, it can come out in physical health and Mental health"*.

Similarly, Isabelle notes:

> *"Racism is a form of violence to yourself"*.

Similar to themes in the literature (Henry & Tator, 2006; James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin Lloyd and Turner, 2010), a common theme in the interviews is that there is a direct relationship between race, health and well-being.

Challenging racism in the workplace

Given the fact that all thirteen participants told many stories of experiencing and or witnessing racism in the workplace, it is not surprising that they also had many suggestions and stories about challenging racism. A major theme in the study is the notion that it is imperative to challenge racism in the work environment. One participant

noted it is critical to *"first acknowledge that racism is systemic and it has become normalized within our institutions and structures"*.

The challenge with having a safe and honest discussion concerning the lived experiences of racialized employees, is that individuals are sensitive to the terms 'race' and 'racism' and it has become equated with the *"the F word"*. Participants repeatedly noted that it is vital to have a safe and honest discussion regarding racism and how it affects employees. Diego highlighted that he sits on an anti-racist committee at work. The group was developed voluntarily by some of the employees of the organization because they saw a need for it. He asserted that the group does not solely focus on issues related to racism. Diego stated that the group identifies as 'allies' and that their mission is to help support one another when it comes to experiencing and or witnessing different forms of discrimination within the work environment. As this example illustrates, there are practical ways of challenging racism in the workplace.

When it comes to the major theme of challenging racism in the workplace, a subtheme that has emerged is to critically look at policies, programs and practices within the workplace and how they affect individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The subthemes and responses as they relate to challenging racism include:

1. Engaging the workforce in terms of policy, programs & practices
2. Mandatory cultural sensitivity training (anti-racism training)
3. Zero-tolerance to jokes, comments and behaviour connected to racism and holding employees/employers accountable for their actions
4. Fairer hiring and training practices

Other examples of combating and challenging racism in the workplace include: targeting leadership positions that are under-represented in the workplace and having a neutral body that monitors the hiring practices of Human Resources within the

workplace. One participant highlighted that *"need to target group members sitting at the senior table".*

Each of these subthemes is explored below.

Engaging the workforce

When the participants were asked what employers can do to challenge racism in the workplace, many of them noted that there needs to be more engagement with the workforce regarding strategies aimed at making the workplace an anti-racist environment. Some of the quotes that the participants shared as it relates to this subtheme include:

Peter states:

"Speaking openly to colleagues in a 'safe zone'" (i.e. monthly team meetings)

Similarly, Claire supports:

"Standing up and speaking out against racism"

Kate asserts:

"First acknowledge our bias. Racism is associated with privilege, power and design of birth"

And Karen highlights:

"It is important that people who are experiencing racism, that the support systems are closely in place to support these people"

These responses all suggest a willingness to be engaged and involved in making the workplace safe and inclusive for all. The process of 'engagement' is not a linear or one step process. It takes time, commitment and resources from colleagues, employees, clients and management. It can be argued that the process of making a workplace an

'anti-racist' environment is a collective process because there needs to be an understanding from all employees in the workplace that racism has a long history within Canadian institutions. Once it is acknowledged that systemic racism exists and affects Canadians, there can be some progress. Furthermore, the process of engagement needs to reflect the policies and practices within the organization, when it comes to challenging racism in the workplace.

Mandatory cultural sensitivity training

Connected to the process of 'engaging the workforce' is the subtheme of mandatory cultural sensitivity training. Many of the participants suggested that having mandatory cultural/sensitivity training for employees and employers was a must. Some of the statements that were made by the participants as it relates to this subtheme include:

> *"Cultural sensitivity training should be done in the beginning when anybody is hired to the organization" (should be mandatory)*

Ken suggested:

> *"training on racism/diversity would be helpful because it would bring awareness of the issue of race and at times people tend to be very racist and don't know the implications of what they are doing"*

Diego, speaking of his colleagues, said:

> *"I've heard people say after diversity training, oh my god, I didn't realize I had this much privilege and that I could be hurting someone" (white privilege and if unaware of racism/differences and how it effects services)*

Similarly, Karen said:

> *"They do not know the root causes (racism)", "People have to become aware"*

And Mike suggested:

> *"Mandatory training is helpful but you can't change the way people think or act unless repercussions if they act negatively" (need accountability and connection to policy/practice)*

Samantha added to the discussion of mandatory anti-racism/cultural sensitivity training by noting the importance of having folks who have generationally experienced racialization in Nova Scotia speak openly of their lived experiences in the training. She suggested this would make the process collaborative and community focused. As Samantha noted *"it is important to the history"*.

Zero Tolerance & Supports

In addition to the subthemes already discussed, some of the participants noted that it is vital to have 'zero-tolerance' to racism in the workplace and have supports available to staff as it relates to this issue. Throughout the interviews, numerous participants noted that there needs to be *'zero tolerance'* to all forms of racism in the workplace and supports available for staff to address racism. Some of the statements that were made as it relates to this subtheme include:

Peter's suggestion for:

"Zero tolerance to racial jokes" (connected to policies and programs)

And Diego:

"Zero tolerance to any discrimination"

Claire said:

"It is helpful to have allies that are white and all colors"

Additionally, Peter speaks to the need to address systemic racism.

He said:

"Workplace should be putting more pressure on the school system to make issues of racism much clearer when kids are in kindergarten, grade 1, 2, etc."

This idea is supported by Karen, who said:

"If they teach the proper history in the schools because it is not just our history, it affects non-aboriginal as well"….."stories from Aboriginal perspectives not being shared at all"

As these quotes suggest, there is much more work to be done as it relates to combating and challenging racism within Canadian organizations and society. As Peter noted in the interview, *"having people of color in positions of power in many ways challenges societies' perceptions"* and Mike highlighted that there *"needs to have target group members sitting at the senior table"*.

Thoughts on Employment Equity Act/Policy in the workplace (EE)

As these quotes suggest, a subtheme is the need to have fairer hiring and training practices in the workplace. When it came to the question of Employment Equity policy within the workplace, the majority of the participants noted that they had some understanding of the policy and its relationship with their current work environment. The overwhelming majority of the participants noted that *"it looks good on paper but have doubts about how it is working"*. Others noted that it is *'lip service'* and not being enacted properly. As highlighted earlier in the chapter, several participants provided personal stories of applying for equity positions within their organization or elsewhere, only to be declined. They all believe that race played a role in the process and that there was *'preferential treatment'* given based on race.

One participant noted that *"if we have 100 people in society and 5% of society is made up of a certain group, which means the workforce should represent 5% of that*

group within the agency". The common theme that has emerged from the research is that there needs to be equitable representation of qualified workers when it comes to hiring, retention and promotion in all levels within the work environment. Some of the participants noted that managers and individuals responsible for hiring, training and promotion practices have too much power. Kate highlights, *"if you have institutionalized racism in a system, then every policy you have in place is not going to have the impact it could have because things are not fully equitable"*. Ken goes one step further and highlights that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a quota system in place within the workplace, so that 'visible minorities' are equally represented within all levels of the agency. Andrew commented that *"the government had not turned Visible Minority issues into legislation"* and *"when are we going to have a law in Canada to say exactly how to deal with visibly diverse people"*. These statements illustrate the importance these participants place on the need for racial and ethnic diversity within the labour market.

As noted above, a key theme that was consistently articulated within the interviews was that that diversity is good for the workplace because it strengthens the workforce in multiple ways. This theme was linked to employment equity policy because equal representation and fairer access to employment opportunities will diversify the workforce. In addition, some of the participants noted that there is lack of 'holistic' knowledge of EE in society. As a result, people are misinformed and assume that EE policy is reverse discrimination/racism. One participant noted that EE is *"very important policy but we need to do a better job in educating the public about it"*. Another participant noted that he has mixed feelings about EE. On one hand he realizes the importance to diversify the work place but is concerned regarding the stigma associated

with it. As these findings suggests, there is a danger in marginalizing and excluding

racialized workers because some colleagues will assume that the worker who was hired

through EE was not qualified. This theme goes back to the response that there needs to be

more effective education on employment equity and racism within Canadian institutions

and society.

As illustrated within this chapter, racism within the employment setting in Nova

Scotia is a real phenomenon for these participants. The individuals who were interviewed

shared personal and traumatizing stories of either experiencing or witnessing racism

within their employment settings. The 13 individuals who were interviewed came from

diverse backgrounds and employment settings. However, they all shared a deeply

disturbing narrative of feeling marginalized because of their race within the workplace.

The goal is for these stories to contribute to ongoing efforts to combat and challenge

inequities within the work force, through policies, programs and practices.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Key messages from the literature review

   One of the key messages from the literature review was that dominant discourse and language in Canada is framed primarily from a Eurocentric lens. There is the danger of excluding, marginalizing and reinforcing racist views by maintaining the status quo and isolating racialized workers in the process. In addition, it is critical to frame the discussion of race relations in Canada, by exploring how privilege and power are entrenched into Canadian institutions and how it is connected to systemic racism. As noted by Henry & Tator (2006), "acknowledging the ethno-racial differences make a difference in the lives of people is to concede that Euro-Canadian hegemony continues to function and organize the structures within which the delivery of mainstream programs and services operates" (p. 23). In other words, it is critical to question the 'color-blind' framework within out institutions and explore how race, ethnicity and culture shape the everyday experiences of individuals living in Nova Scotia and Canada.

   Another key theme from the literature review is that policies designed to make the workplace fairer, fall short in addressing systemic racism. Scholars, practitioners and community members alike have argued that policies such as Employment Equity fall short of addressing the root causes of racism in the workplace and hence reduce the chance of creating an equitable, inclusive and fair working environment for all (Agocs & Harish, 2001; Lopes & Thomas, 2006, Henry & Tator, 200). While there is a substantial body of literature on organizational theory (Hatch, 1997; Hatch, 2002; Astley and Van De Ven 1983; Jensen, 1983), there is also a widely held belief that, for the most part,

there is silence on matters of race, gender, class and other forms of oppression in organizations (Lopes & Thomas, 2007; Agocs, 1997).

Academic literature supports the view that racism is part of the fabric of Canadian society and that is has become more subtle over time (Cassin & Divine, 2006). Hence, racism has become part of 'ordinary interaction' and shapes the everyday relations in our society. A key theme in the review is that "the literature points to the problems in identifying specific practices which directs attention to the general point that systemic discrimination remains largely unspecified empirically (Cassin, Krwchenko, VanderPlatt, 2007, p.5). In addition, there is no consensus on their effectiveness (Beck, Reitz, Weiner, 2002).

As the researchers exploring employment equity within employee settings of Halifax, Nova Scotia discovered, most of the companies and organizations that they approached to participate in the study declined to participate in an interview concerning the policy within their institution (Cassin & Divine, 2006). They highlighted that the concept of 'race' is a sensitive issue in Nova Scotia (Cassin & Divine, 2006). As a result, this thesis sought to explore the issue of racism in the workplace from the perspective of employees. The goal was to bring participants voices into the discussion of racism and equity initiatives designed to make the workplace fairer for all.

Key Themes from Participants' Voices

Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, education, income or employment setting, all of the participants agreed that the terms 'race' and 'racism' are socially constructed concepts that play an active role in employment opportunities and experiences of

racialized workers.   The major themes that were identified as it relates to their

experiences included:

1.   Sorting out the meaning of 'Race' & 'Racism'
2.   The workplace is a 'Double Edged Sword'
3.   'Preferential Treatment' towards employees based on 'race'
4.   Feeling Voiceless
5.   Overworked & Proving Oneself
6.   Being Critiqued & Scrutinized
7.   Tokenism
8.   Singled-Out & 'Othered'
9.   Credentials Not Recognized
10.   Intersectional relationship between Gender & Race
11.   Race & Well-Being
12.   Challenging Racism in the Workplace

Furthermore, it can be asserted that all of the themes are interrelated. For example, when

a racialized worker feels 'voiceless', there is a good chance that the worker is

experiencing being 'single-out' and 'othered'. As a result, this experience can potentially

affect the employee's health and well-being.

    Despite these similar experiences, there were some differences too. The majority of

the participants were born and raised in Nova Scotia. Numerous participants implied

through their responses that racism was more 'open' and 'blatant' when they were

younger (i.e. being openly called the N word). However, it was noted by more than one

participant that racism has become more subtle over time and people try to be 'politically

correct'. This concept supports the idea of being color-blind and not challenging racism

in the workplace. This finding supports Cassin & Divine's (2006) findings on the

reluctance of employers in Halifax to discuss Employment Equity because 'race' is still a

sensitive issue. In addition, it is the writer's view that before there can be a transparent

discussion of policies aimed at making the workplace 'fairer', there needs to be an

accurate and honest education on the history of racism in Nova Scotia and the negative consequences of it. From this, there can be more of a holistic account as to why policies such as Employment Equity exist. This is a critical point and finding from the thesis and needs to be further explored.

Furthermore, some of the stories from the participants indicate that things have not changed in many areas when it comes to experiencing racial injustice in Nova Scotia. One participant noted that she has observed guidance counsellor(s) supporting the idea of a student(s) taking clerical positions following high school, rather than pursing university. The participant believed that race played a critical role in this process. Similarly, another participant noted that she had previously experienced a guidance counsellor suggest that she pursue another area, rather than going on to university. In her own words she states, *"If I had listened to the guidance counsellor, I wouldn't have gone to University".* In addition, several participants highlighted that it is important to discuss how white privilege, preferential treatment and systemic racism affect the lives of individuals who are marginalized by race in the workplace.

When it comes to the intersectional relationship between gender and race, numerous participants noted that there is relationship between them. However, a participant highlighted that 'race' plays more of an active role in everyday experiences. This indicates that some individuals may perceive race to be a more salient issue. Along with gender, there is a relationship between class and race. The majority of the participants self-identified as African-Canadian or black. As literature supports, historically African-Canadians have been marginalized because of race in Nova Scotia (James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd and Turner, 2010). As a result, some of the participants highlighted that

there is white privilege that favours individuals from an Anglo-Saxon background in N.S. This continues to display itself in mainstream institutions in Nova Scotia. There is a Eurocentric bias in the education system that places African-Canadian students (along with racialized students) at a disadvantage regarding schooling and education. As the findings suggest, the educational experiences are interrelated with employment sector and all other mainstream institutions. These findings are supported by the literature that there is an under-representation of racialized workers in executive positions in many mainstream institutions, that some racialized workers do not feel welcomed in many employment settings, and are excluded from 'full participation' (Henry & Tator, 2006, Thomas & Lopes, 2006, Gupta, 1996). These would contribute to class distinctions being apparent.

Despite these similar experiences, there were some differences too, such as some unique experiences shared by immigrants and newcomers in the province. Four of the participants have recently moved to Nova Scotia and described feeling 'othered', e.g. foreign credentials not being recognized, paternalism, etc. This implies that some immigrants don't feel welcomed and that is why many leave to find employment opportunities outside of the province. This needs to be explored in further studies, as it is an important issue that has social and economic costs for the province.

Implications for policy

The term 'double edged sword' was used to signify "*the fact that we have equity policies in place means that things are not fair*". One of the common responses in the interviews was that the policies that are designed to make things fairer for all individuals of color "*are words on paper but not enacted/enforced properly*". Numerous participants

noted that managers have too much power in decision making. The study's findings suggest that people gravitate to '*similarities and race can play a role in this process'*. As a result, this can affect hiring decisions and social interaction. Participants provided countless personal stories of why they believe that employment equity policy within their current work environment is not working effectively to address the inequalities that exist within hiring, training and promotion.   The terms that were used to signify this, include that the policies have '*no teeth'* and are '*lip service'*.

In addition, if employers are not open to discuss EE within their work environment, it is very challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. The responses by the participants supports the notion that 'race' and 'racism' are sensitive terms for employers in Nova Scotia and that there is a reluctance to have an open and safe conversation regarding racialized workers experiences. Some of the reasons for this are a lack of commitment and knowledge from the mainstream public, regarding racism and employment equity. As a result, it makes it that much more challenging for racialized employees to 'prove' that they have experienced racism in the workplace. This is related to the idea that mainstream institutions place racialized workers at a disadvantage because they are Eurocentric and potentially exclude and marginalize racialized employees from full participation. The media, educational system, and mainstream institutions needs to take a proactive measure to address this. There is a pattern of denial and the literature and study supports the idea that racism has become more subtle and elusive over time (Cassin, Krwchenko, VanderPlatt, 2007). A key theme that was consistently articulated within the interviews was that that diversity is good for the workplace because it strengthens the workforce in multiple ways. This theme was linked

to employment equity policy because equal representation and fairer access to employment opportunities will diversify the workforce.

Implications for practice

When it comes to racism in the workplace, there are many implications for practice. Firstly, it comes down to the 'Atmosphere' within the workplace. When racism is entrenched and normalized within everyday practices of the workplace (and society), no one questions it because it is 'business as usual'. The unspoken rules and messages sent through formal and informal social interaction is framed from a Eurocentric framework that can exclude racialized workers from feeling welcomed. In other words, forced assimilation can potentially create a toxic working environment because there is a lack of appreciation of differences and diversity within the work setting. Whether it is the way one dresses, speaks, thinks, or behaves, differences can be minimized at the expense of the dominant culture. Furthermore, it affects the services that clients receive because there is a lack of understanding of cross-cultural practices from a range of styles. It is the writer's view that practising from one dominant world view, can create exclusionary practices such as preferential treatment and division among colleagues.

Implications for social work

As noted earlier in the thesis, not many mainstream theories of organizational development and change make reference to the ways in which power is embedded in the social identities of managers, workers & service providers, or the impact of organizational power has on the lives of people (Hatch, 1997, 2002; Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Helms et al., 2009). There is a connection between policy and practice in Social Work because Social Workers need to be aware of how racism shapes the lives,

experiences and health of racialized clients and colleagues. To explore this issue, it is

imperative to begin by questioning dominant institutions such as the workplace. In

addition, the issue of equity in the workplace is very relevant to the field of Social Work.

There is an over-representation of racialized individuals in the welfare system and

correction system in Nova Scotia and elsewhere. It is noted in the book *Fighting For*

Change (2006) that:

> "Although Black people in Nova Scotia have a long and significant history here
> (Nova Scotia), we have not had a fair or equitable representation in critical
> decision-making processes. African Nova Scotians have been poorer than the
> average white Nova Scotian, who in turn has been poorer than the average
> Canadian (Roker, p.27)"

The writer continues:

> "The association of black Social Workers (1988) and Barkley (1985) have
> documented that Black people make up a high percentage of social service
> caseloads in Child Welfare and Corrections. However, few go to voluntary
> counselling services in family service or mental health facilities. There are few
> African Nova Scotian professionals working in these agencies as well" (Roker, p.
> 29).

As the quotes above illustrates, racism plays an active role in lives of blacks and

racialized groups in Nova Scotia. This issue needs to be critically explored and

accounted for because social and economic disadvantages affects all in the community,

not just the individuals being directly impacted by it. Furthermore, there needs to be more

diversity in all levels of social services, so that racialized social workers have the

opportunity to practise from culturally relevant frameworks, such as Afrocentric theory

and practice. The danger is having a culturally biased framework adopted by a social

worker. This can potentially have damaging effects because good intentions may not be

enough. It takes a culturally appropriate and effective intervention that reflects a holistic

account of the individuals 'lived experience', so that they can 'name their reality'. As

this chapter has highlighted, this study is relevant when it comes to literature, policy,

practice, and Social Work. The following chapter will conclude with linking the

literature to the study, summarizing and providing suggestions for future studies.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion: Connecting Literature to the Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter will bring the information in the research together, by connecting the literature review to the study's findings. The findings in the thesis suggest that there is a direct relationship between what scholars are sharing and what the participants highlighted in the interviews. Through this process, the goal is to bridge the gap between the research and community. The chapter will conclude with a summary and suggestion for future work.

Making the Link

The literature review began with James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd and Turner (2010), noting that "there are probably as many definitions and descriptions of racism as there are people who experience the phenomenon" (p. 64). By holding a firm appreciation of the various interpretations of race and racism, it was noted in the literature review that these concepts are *'socially constructed'*. It is asserted that these concepts play an active role in social interaction, privilege, power and allocation of resources amongst individuals. The major theme in the literature is that society is color-conscious and that the 'color-blind' approach does not challenge racism and social injustice. As the research findings suggest, there is a direct link between the literature and participants' responses. The participants stated that the concepts of 'race' and 'racism' are socially constructed and are connected to power, privilege and systemic racism.

As noted in chapter 2, systemic racism can be defined as "the conscious and unconscious policies, procedures, and practices that exclude, marginalize, and oppress

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racialized people" (Lopes & Thomas p. 270).   Systemic racism is supported by institutional power and by powerful and often unexamined ideas which make racism seem normal and justified. Some of the participants noted that racism has become entrenched within Canadian institutions and society; in terms of Nova Scotia, there is a bias towards Anglo-Saxon heritage and culture. Also, there is a Eurocentric bias within mainstream institutions that can include: Education, Social Services, Health Care, and Arm Forces. This theme is related to the concept of 'democratic racism".

Henry & Tator (2006) note in their book *The Color of Democracy* that democratic racism is the "inherent conflict between egalitarian values of liberalism, justice and fairness, and the racist ideologies reflected in the collective mass belief system as well as the racist attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions of individuals" (p. 19). When the participants were asked whether they believe it is fair and equitable for all employees, the common theme was that it is not fully fair. The term *'double edged sword'* was used to signify *"the fact that we have equity policies in place means that things are not fair"*. This response is directly connected to the concept of 'democratic racism' because it illuminates the inherent conflict that exists in policies, programs and practices. Many people resist anti-racism and equity initiatives because they are unwilling to question their own beliefs and value systems, discursive practices, organizational and professional norms, and positions of power and privilege within the workplace and society (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 23). As a result of the pervasive nature of racism in employment, there is a direct relationship between race & well-being.

It is noted in the book *Race & Well-Being: The Lives, Hopes and Activism of African Canadians* that "racism constitutes a social determinant of health and urgently needs to

be recognized as such" (James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd and Turner, 2010, p.32). Numerous participants asserted and supported that racism impacts health and well-being. Stories were illustrated that supported the notion that *'racism is a form of violence'* and it creates stress and health problems. It became quite apparent through the literature review and interviews that there is a direct relationship between race, social identity, health & well-being. As a result of this finding, participants were asked "what can colleagues and managers do to combat and challenge racism in the workplace"?

When the participants were asked "what can colleagues and managers do to combat and challenge racism in the workplace, participants provided a list of suggestions as it relates to the question. A major theme that emerged in the study is that there needs to be equitable representation of qualified workers, when it comes to hiring, retention and promotion in the work environment. When participants were asked about Employment Equity policy (EE), some of the participants noted that the policy is *'lip service'* and has *'no teeth'*. These terms were repeatedly used in conjunction with policies, practices and programs that do not take a comprehensive approach at combating and challenging systemic racism in the workplace. These findings are directly linked to the information highlighted in the literature review.

Scholars, practitioners and community members alike have argued that policies aimed at addressing equity in the workplace, fall short of addressing the root causes of racism in the workplace and hence reduce the chance of creating an equitable, inclusive and fair working environment for all (Agocs & Harish, 2001; Lopes & Thomas, 2006). It is argued that systemic assessment of organizational culture for employment equity purpose is rare (Agocs & Harish, 2001, Cassin & Divine, 2006). Agocs and Harish (2001) note

that "until discriminatory barriers in the informal social behaviour of the workplace are revealed and brought into the focus of employment equity change interventions, little progress toward equality will be made. (p. 3). In other words, it is not enough for employers to simply impose "diversity training" in the workplace when the underlying causes of racial discrimination in employment are not named and accounted for. As these findings suggest, there needs to be much more work done when it comes to combating and challenging racism and ethnic discrimination in Canadian employment settings.

Summary

This final chapter has made a direct link between the literature review and the findings within the study. The major themes that have emerged in the research include: 'race' and 'racism' are socially constructed concepts that are connected to privilege and power and that racism is a real phenomenon within the employment setting. In addition, the major themes that were illustrated in chapter 5 highlight the very real, everyday experiences of racialized employees in the workplace, as it relates to racism.

Some of the participants asserted that there is an intersectional relationship between gender and race. As a result, various forms of privilege and oppression are interconnected. Whether an individual is experiencing race(ism), sex(ism), heterosex(ism), class(ism), able(ism) or any other form of (ism); all are interrelated and affect life chances and employment experiences.

Related to the intersectional relationship of oppression, Bernard, White and Moore (1993) assert that black women can experience a 'triple jeopardy'. This is further explained when the authors' state:

> *"If non-White poor people are also female, they suffer not only the inequalities which have affected all women, but some additional problems with race, and gender may be intricately linked and compounded the effects of each other, creating a triple jeopardy for black women" (p.257).*

The writers continue that:

> *"This situation of triple jeopardy affects the life chances of the individuals or groups afflicted by all three sources of oppression at once. Further, class and race have been closely associated historically and continue to be so; these factors have affected both genders differentially (p.257).*

As the concept of 'triple jeopardy' asserts, the discussion of racism in employment cannot be done in isolation from other forms of oppression. The themes illustrate that racalized employees share similarities when it comes to everyday experiences of racism in the workplace. However, it is imperative that the discussion of racism in the work setting takes into consideration the differences that individuals share and the intersectional relationship between race, class, gender, ethnicity, age, education, sexual identities, sexual orientation, abilities, region and immigration status. The experiences of racism are unique to individuals and a critical analysis needs to take consideration the diverse experiences that individuals share and the common experience of being discriminated based on race and ethnicity. As the study's findings suggest, racism impacts health, well-being and social identity.

In response to the lived experiences of racialized employees in the workplace, participants highlighted that colleagues, employers and managers need to take a more rigorous and comprehensive approach to challenging racism in the workplace and suggested some strategies. There were subthemes to challenging racism in the workplace that were outlined in chapter 5. In addition, it was repeated in the interviews that employers need to be held *'accountable'* when it comes to hiring, retention and training (promotion) in the workplace. The overwhelming majority of the participants noted that

Employment Equity policy *"looks good on paper but have doubts about how it is working"*. Others noted that it is *'lip service'* and not being enacted properly.

As the themes and subthemes suggest, the general 'essence' of the narratives that were shared within the study support the notion that there needs to be an open and safe dialogue concerning racism and others forms of discrimination in the workplace. It was suggested that one must *"first acknowledge that racism is systemic and it has become normalized within our institutions and structures"*. The strategy and goal is to have a discussion that places employers and employees accountable for their actions, without placing blame and creating further division amongst individuals.

Along with the goal of having an open and safe discussion of issues confronting racialized employees, the general 'essence' of the narratives shared by the participants includes that policies, programs and practices within the work place need to take an anti-racist framework that engages employees from all backgrounds as it relates to racialized workers 'everyday experiences'. It simply is not enough to impose 'diversity training' on staff when the root causes of racism and ethnic discrimination are not accounted for. As one can imagine, the goal of making the work environment an 'anti-racist' space is not a simple or straight forward process. However, as the literature and the study supports, diversifying the work environment and having everyday practices that are 'inclusive' and 'welcoming' will enrich the experiences of employers, employees and clients.

As the research supports, the issue of racism within the work setting goes beyond the terms 'race' and 'color'. Rather, it is a human rights issue because each and every individual has the inherent right to the treatment of fairness, justice and equity within the

workplace and society. That it's why, it is critical to look at policies, programs and

practices that transform employment settings to make them as equal and fair as possible.

Suggestions for Future Work

Suggestions for future work include conducting research in this area, which explores

the 'first voices' of both employers and employees. Future work can use both qualitative

and quantitative methodology. Due to the time constraints of the study, there were 13

individuals who were interviewed. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to

regions outside of Nova Scotia. It is the researcher's view that the findings of the study

overlap and are interconnected with some of the experiences of racialized employees in

other regions in Canada. Further research in this area is needed, as there is a scarcity of

information as it relates to the experiences of racialized employees and employers in the

work environment in Canada.

In addition, future work needs to critically explore organizational strategies aimed at

combating and challenging racism and social injustice in the workplace. Due to the area

of interest within the study and the time constraints of writing the thesis, the researcher

was unable to comprehensively review equity initiatives in various employment settings

across the region and country. Future work can aim to explore social policies and

practices such as Employment Equity, Human Rights policies, in the work setting and

examine the effectiveness of the policies.

Future work needs to take into consideration all 'other' forms of oppression and

privileges that individuals experience and how they are interrelated when it comes to

racism and social injustice in the workplace. The majority of the participants held

'Master' degrees and this potentially impacted the research findings. A critical

discussion of class in Nova Scotia and its relationship to workplace experiences of all, including racialized workers, needs to take place. There needs to be more discussion concerning how our capitalistic system sustains and reinforces inequities within the workplace and society.

The results of the study indicate that racism is a 'real' phenomenon in the workplace that impacts the 'everyday' experiences of employees who are marginalized by race in Nova Scotia. Of particular concern is the fact that most of the participants have little faith that social policies such as employment equity are making the workplace equitable and inclusive for all workers. These results are not generalizeable as the study sample is small, however, it clearly suggests that further empirical research is needed to examine this issue from the perspective of employers. Given the scarcity of literature that explores the voices of racialized employees as it relates to racism in the workplace, this study does help to fill the gap. It is the writers view that before there can be an 'open' and 'safe' discussion regarding the effectiveness of the equity policies, there needs to be a comprehensive discussion regarding issues connected to the concepts of 'race', 'ethnicity', 'racism' and how they intersect with all forms of privilege and oppression within the workplace and society. Further research can continue to work to bridge the gap between academia and community, as it is imperative that research and social policies are effectively implemented in the employment setting.

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Appendix A – Demographics/Interview Guide

1 Sex   Male_____   Female _____   Other_____

2. Ethnicity: African-Canadian/Black_____   First

Nation/Aboriginal_____

Other_____ (Please identify which group)

3. How old are you?   1. 18-24   2. 25-34   3. 35-44   . 4.   45-54   5. 55-64 6.

65+

Where were you born?

4 If Canada   1. What province?

5 If NOT Canada   1. What country?

6 If NOT Canada, did you come to Canada as

1. Student

2. Immigrant

 3. Refugee

4. Domestic or migrant worker

5. Came as a Canadian citizen already

6. Other

7 If NOT Canada, How many years have you lived in Canada?

8. If NOT Canada, Are you a Canadian citizen?

1. Yes   2. No

9. What is your current marital or relationship status? Are you . . . . 1. Single

      2. Married or Common Law

      3. Separated or divorced

      4. Widowed

10. What is the highest level of education you have completed?   1. Less than high school

      2. High school

      3. Some post secondary

      4. Completed college

      5. Completed undergraduate university

      6. Completed Masters degree

      7. Completed Doctoral degree

11. Right now, are you. . . .   1. Employed

12. If employed, are you employed   1. Full-time (30 hours or more/week) 2. Part-time

(< 30 hours/ week)

13. If employed, what is your occupation?

Interview Guide

1) What is your understanding of race and racism?

2) Thinking of your current work environment, are there things that you think make it fair and equitable for all employees working in your organization?

3) Are there things that make it fair and equitable for employees for racialized employees?

4) Is there anything that you think makes it unfair/unequitable for employees that are marginalized by race?

5) Have you personally experienced or observed something that you consider inappropriate or unfair as it relates to race/racism in your organization? Please explain

6) Tell me about your everyday experiences as a RACE/ETHNICITY/GENDER in this work place.

7) What is your experience of social interaction between colleagues at your workplace? What do you believe helps to create an inclusive space at work?

8) Tell me what things, you think that employers, managers, and colleagues in your workplace can do to combat and challenge racism in organizations.

9) Does your workplace have Employment Equity policy? If yes, tell me how the policy works in your workplace. If not, why do you believe this to be the case?

10) What organizational supports are in place to assist with the implementation of the Employment Equity policy?

11) Do you have anything else you would like to share regarding your workplace

experiences with equity, fairness and/or discrimination?

Appendix B - Information to Participants

Title of Study: "Naming Our Reality: Exploring Racism in Employment"

Sasan Issari   Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard

Graduate Student   Supervisor

Principle Investigator   Wanda.Bernard@dal.ca

Sasan.Issari@dal.ca   902-494-1190

902-452-4904

Introduction to Study

The research study is being conducted by Sasan Issari, who is a graduate student at Dalhousie University, as part of his Master's in Social Work.   You are invited to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.   Your employment performance evaluation will not be affected by whether or not you participate. You can choose not to answer any questions that you wish not to in the study. The study is described below. This description tells you about the risks, inconvenience, or discomfort which you might experience. Participating in the study might not benefit you, but we might learn things that will benefit others. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Sasan Issari.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of employees who have experienced or witnessed racism in their workplace. Through interviewing participants, the aim of the study is to gain clarity concerning the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of employees in workplace as it relates to racism.

Study Design

You may participate in this study if you are an adult who is employed either part or full-time. You will be asked to identify your racial background as: person of color, visible minority, First Nation or person marginalized by race at the beginning of the interview. In addition, you may participate in this study if you identify yourself as: and have a particular interest in the objective of the study and experience(s) as it relates to racism in organizations.

Who will be conducting the Research

I, Sasan Issari will be the Principal Investigator in the study. I will be collecting and analyzing the information that will be shared in the interviews. My supervisor, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard will be my primary contact in terms of supervision and supports.

What you will be asked to do

You will be asked to participate in an interview that may last up to 90 minutes. The research will be conducted at a location that is agreed between the participant and the principal investigator. The interviews may be at the participants home, a private meeting

room at the School of Social Work, or a mutually agreed public location where privacy can be assured. You can withdraw from the study at any time. There will be a set of questions asked of you. The questions will focus on racism in the workplace. You will be asked to provide consent for the researcher to record, transcribe and analyze the data in the interviews. Also, agreeing to quotes in the final report is optional. This process is a necessary part of conducting research.

Possible Risks and Discomfort

Due to the sensitivity of the research topic in the study, there may be some emotional risks for you. Some of these risks can include the fear of job loss if information is shared about your organization, private information being disclosed to the public and emotional grief as a result of sharing personal information. These risks will be minimized by my commitment to follow ethical guidelines and confidentiality.

The process of mitigating risk can be achieved through several methods such as: regularly checking in with you to ensure that you feel safe and comfortable throughout the research, providing clear framework to the objectives in the research, explaining that you can leave during anytime in the study.

In addition, there will be referral resources available for you. The list of resources will include: Family Services Association, Association of Black Social Workers and Employee Assistance Program(s).

Possible Benefits

You may directly or indirectly benefit if you participate. Some of these benefits include: feeling empowered by sharing stories, contributing to literature on racism in employment and affecting policy and practices in the workplace.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

You will not be identified in any reports or publications personally. Your name and the name of the organization you work for will not be used in the study.

In terms of Anonymity, you will be given the option of being provided with a name that will not identify you. This will ensure that this name cannot be passed on inadvertently. When the interviews are completed, the audio recorded data will be transcribed and stored in the principal investigators residence (locked file cabinet) until all the interviews are completed. Once all the interviews are transcribed, coded and stored, they will be on a USB stick and locked in a private location in the supervisor's office. The principal investigator and his supervisor will be the only people who will have access to the data.

 In terms of confidentiality, there will be a legal responsibility for the researcher to report. These are in cases if participants disclose information that the principle investigator believes to be associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, or the abuse or neglect of an adult is in need of protection. In the event of suspected child abuse, this must be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Dalhousie University Policy on Research Integrity requires that data be securely maintained by the institution for 5 years, post publication. This will be accomplished by having the principle investigator's supervisor keep the data in a safe and locked location. After five years, the information will be erased.

Questions

If you have any questions, you can contact me directly during working hours (8-4pm, Monday-Friday), at 902-452-4904. In addition, you will be provided with any new information which might affect your decision to participate in the study.

Problems or Concerns

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Patricia Lindley, Director of Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics Administration, for assistance at (902) 494-1462, patricia.lindley@dal.ca

Appendix C – Consent Form

"Naming Our Reality: Questioning Racism in Employment"

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study.

However I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I _____, agree to allow the principle investigator to audio record the interviews.

I_____, agree to the option of being quoted in the final paper without my name or organization being identified.

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Principal Investigator   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Appendix D - Invitation to Participate

Have you experienced or witnessed racism in the workplace? Do you want to share your story? If yes, please contact me.

My name is Sasan Issari and I am conducting research as part of my Masters of Social Work at Dalhousie University. I am seeking employees of organizations who have experienced racism in their workplace to participate in my research study.

In order to qualify for this study, you are:

1. You are an adult

2. You are currently employed as a part-time or full-time employee

3. You identify yourself as: person of color, visible minority, First Nations or person marginalized by race in Halifax Regional Municipality.

4. You are willing to share your experiences of racism in your workplace.

If you qualify for this study, I urge you to consider participating in an interview that should take no longer than 90 minutes of your time to complete. Participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. There are minimal to no risks of psychological harm involved in completing the current research study. Every step will be taken to reduce any risks, such as fear of job loss. The interviews will be at a place convenient to both the participant and principle investigator. You will have the option of being audio recorded and quoted in the interviews and final report. You will be asked to provide consent to participating in the study, being audio recorded and quoted. Your answers will remain anonymous. Your name and the name of your current employer will

not be used in the study. In addition, details will be changed, so that you will not be identified. I understand this is a sensitive topic for some and believe this study will contribute to the need for more knowledge and change strategies to help challenge racism in the workplace.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact Sasan Issari at Sasan.Issari@dal.ca or 452-4904 in order to participate.   Thanks.

Appendix E – Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionist

Confidentiality Agreement

I _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Sasan Issari, as it relates to his research. This information shall not be disclosed to any party within or outside Dalhousie University.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Transcriptionist Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Principal Researcher Date   Signature