INVISIBLE VISIBLE MINORITIES: THE EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL MINORITY TEACHER CANDIDATES ON PRACTICUM AND IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of racial minority teacher candidates are often unheard in teacher education programs considering that the student population is increasingly diversifying and the teaching population does not reflect this dynamic. In a country that is internationally known for its multicultural practices, it is important to examine the experiences of racial minority teacher candidates in order to gain a better understanding of the ways in which issues of race and power persist in our education system.

This qualitative study documents the experiences of a small group of racial minority teacher candidates who recently completed post baccalaureate teacher education programs at universities in Ontario, Canada. With a particular focus on their practicum placements, the five participants were interviewed in order to bring to light their experiences of working and living in an education system that sustains, what has been called by critics, “a culture of whiteness.”

Over the course of the interviews, the five racial minority teacher candidates reveal that the often covert and overt forms of racism are systemic to the education system. It became obvious that in many cases, the participants did not consciously recognize the racism they encountered while working, living, and learning within the education system. Considering a culture of whiteness that is endemic in schools, power relations were further jeopardized and imbalanced by their race. Despite this, the participants also exhibited forms of resistance to the Eurocentric culture that is so deeply entrenched in the education system. Through an investigation of these themes, this thesis offers implications for future racial minority teacher candidates and anti-racist educators.
DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother, my Popo, who passed away as this thesis was being written. In life, you taught us the value of education and hard work; in death, you taught us the importance of love and family. I hope this makes you proud.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My parents arrived in Canada in 1976, when Canada had relaxed its immigration policy to welcome a new wave of immigrants. After a 24 hour plane ride, they arrived in this country, my eldest sister in my mother’s arms, with four hundred dollars in their pockets. They came to Canada for a better life and raised us to believe that Canada was a better place to live. While my sister was my parents’ only child born outside of Canada, we were all instilled with a strong sense of both Canadian and Chinese heritage and culture. By shielding us and insulating us in environments that were comfortable and accepting, they tried to protect us from the harms of society. I was raised in a busy household where race and culture were not discussed; we were taught to be proud of our Chinese heritage but also taught to be proud to be Canadian. We lived in a suburb of a large urban centre that is marked by its racially mixed population; I believed myself to be no different from my next door neighbours or my friends at school.

I have brief memories of the ways in which race touched my life prior to entering university: an uncle asking me if I was afraid students would question whether I could be a good French teacher because I was Chinese; the relentless stares that would be directed towards me when I would be walking hand in hand with my non-Asian boyfriend; or the anger in my parents’ voices when it was discovered my sister was dating a boy who was not Chinese. Looking back, it is obvious that these incidents affected the ways in which I perceive race but, at the time, I was unaware of their significance. Living in an insulated community where difference was thought to be the norm, I had not been exposed to incidents that I identified as being overtly motivated by racism until I reached university.
I could not detect the subtle forms of racism that affected my daily life until I began this research. It has been a long journey of intellectual discovery that has been marked by pain, confusion, learning and, finally, a deep understanding of the ways in which race and racism work in Canadian society.

Before beginning this research and before I had personally experienced overt racist incidents, I felt that racism was something that happened to “those” people; it did not happen to people like me who were born and raised in Canada, who spoke with no accent, and did not wear clothes from “back home.” I paid little attention to the comments that my white friends would often share with me. I did not understand the meanings attached to what they were saying nor did I have the conceptual tools to unpack these statements that were fraught with meaning: a friend from university who once said to me “You are the coolest Chinese person I have ever met” or my high school friend who said “I never thought we would become friends because all your other friends are Chinese.” I remember feeling uncomfortable after these statements had been made but I could never figure out why I felt this way; after all, we lived in Canada where racism did not exist. I would usually muster up a weak smile and a “thank you” because I truly did not know how to react or how to respond. What do you say when someone calls you the “coolest Chinese person they have ever met?” Are we to infer that Chinese people are not cool or that the inquisitor just has not been exposed to “cool Chinese people?” At the time that these statements were made, these situations posed a series of problems for me that I did not know how to mediate. In most cases, I did not know how to deal with the feelings and questions so I continued my life, diminishing their salience. The fact that I can recall these statements (that at the time, seemed meaningless or nonchalant) years
after their utterance, bears testimony to their importance and the turmoil that they created in my frame of reference. I was not theoretically equipped to dissect these statements or to understand their significance to my experience or situation but with the conceptual tools I have now acquired, it is easy to see the underlying racism that was simmering beneath the surface of these experiences.

I just was not able to see it because society had conditioned me to ignore the subtleties of racism. I had been raised in a time and a place where multiculturalism was thought to be a reality. I believed that we as Canadians had achieved multiculturalism and this could not even be questioned. According to the Department of Canadian Heritage (2004a):

The [multiculturalism] policy enables the integration of minority Canadians while encouraging our institutions to remove discriminatory barriers to employment, service delivery, and civic participation. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act encourages the full participation of all Canadians in every aspect of Canadian society. The Act is designed to prevent whole communities in our society from being marginalized. (¶1)

It was not until much later in my life that I was brutally awakened to the fallacy of this notion.

I now invite you to take this journey with me; each stop along the journey will help you to understand the contexts that have shaped my life and my research. I will begin this chapter by recounting the two incidents that propelled me to examine issues of race and racism within teacher education from the perspective of the racial minority teacher candidate. I will then outline the purpose of this study and also the importance of this research. Finally, I will introduce the rest of the chapters in this thesis.
The Beginning of My Journey

This journey began two years ago when I was a student enrolled in a teacher education program in a mid-sized university in Ontario, Canada. This teacher education program is known to be one of the top teacher education programs in Ontario. There were two pivotal events that took place that year that completely changed the course of my studies and, also, the course of my life. The first incident took place in one of the required classes in the winter session. I cannot remember exactly the topic of the class discussion but one student raised her hand and, in a matter-of-fact tone, she began to say “I was watching a documentary the other day and it was about body image and cosmetic surgery. They were discussing how in Japan, women were rushing to get cosmetic surgery done on their eyes so they could have eyelids. You know, since Asian people don’t have eyelids…” I did not let her finish. In my anger, I interrupted the rest of her statement and asked loudly “Did she just say that Asian people don’t have eyelids?” I was livid. I could feel the blood rushing to my face and I could feel the anger burning in my eyes. The course instructor stopped the class. Understanding the gravity of the situation that was unfolding, she said “It seems that Angel is upset about the last comment. Angel, would you like to comment on it?” and I replied with anger and shock, “It’s not that Asian people don’t have eyelids, it’s that we don’t have folds.” It seems like such a ridiculous response to such a ridiculous comment but at the time, I was speechless and could not think of anything else to say.

I remember leaving class that day completely angry and incredulous. I was astounded that another student in the program, another future teacher who would be
influencing hundreds of children over the course of her career, could possess such a narrow and ignorant view. When I discussed this incident with friends and family, I always received the same response. It was always “Don’t worry about her, she’s just ignorant, don’t think too much about it” but I could not shake the discomfort that I felt and continued to feel for months to come. I was disappointed that another teacher candidate who would be entering our school system could be so ignorant. It was not until much later that I realized that she was not the only ignorant teacher candidate. This disregard and insensitivity for other cultures was systemic to teacher education and trickled from the faculties of education into our schools. It became apparent that teacher education programs were not concerned with theoretical learning but rather “practical” knowledge; the incessant emphasis on lesson plans and classroom management began to leave me with more questions than answers. I began to feel unfilled; the program was not addressing my desire and need for more substantial theoretical learning.

Weeks passed and we had finished the winter session of classes. I was completing the final practicum placement of the teacher education program and I believed that it would be similar to my other placements: I would gain the necessary skills to teach and manage my classes, as well as learning how to mark, plan and assess accurately. The day in question began like every other day; I was teaching my class of 28 Grade ten students about World War One. A group of white male students were wandering in the halls and peeked into my classroom. Seeing that I was a racial minority, they began to shout racial slurs at me while I was teaching. My associate/host teacher was sitting at the back of the classroom and did not hear their taunts; they had the nerve to knock on my door and speak to him after they had stopped yelling. A few of the students in my class heard what
these students in the hallway were yelling and looked at me to gauge my reaction. I was humiliated and shocked; I could not believe that this was happening to me in one of Canada’s largest and most multicultural urban centres. I was dumbfounded and stunned, yet, I somehow found the words to continue on with the lesson and ignore this incident.

This situation posed many problems for me; these students had shattered my sense of security and I began to question my confidence and ability as a teacher simply because I was not white. It also raised a number of questions that ruminated in my mind months later: Am I a good teacher? Will such instances escalate? Does this happen to others? Why did these people feel that they could perpetrate these acts against me? How can something like this happen in our multicultural country? I was overcome with a mix of emotions: I did not know what to do and I did not know who could support me and help me through this difficult time. I was unsure of how to handle this event having led a sheltered existence; it was one of the first times that I was made to feel different because of the colour of my skin. As a defence, I tried to diminish the significance of this incident and I tried to overlook the ugliness, but as time passed, I found it increasingly hard to ignore. Patricia Williams (1991) best articulates the feelings I had at the time when she explains:

There are moments in my life when I feel as though a part of me is missing. There are days when I feel so invisible that I can’t remember what day of the week it is, when I feel so manipulated that I can’t remember my own name, when I feel so lost and angry that I can’t speak a civil word to the people who love me best. (p. 228)

I felt so embarrassed and ashamed I did not know what to do. Eventually, this confusion and anger transformed into action and determination. These acts of hate and ignorance had been directed toward me and, in the second incident, because I was visibly different,
this gave these white students consent to commit this horrible act of racial discrimination against me. Seeing my racialized body appeared to give them a sense of entitlement to a power that I will never have or ever be able to possess. It was these two incidents in tandem that forced me to stop and examine my role as a teacher and, more specifically, my role as a racial minority teacher. These two racial incidents had an immeasurable effect on my conceptualization of race, racism, power, and Canada; they propelled me to examine how race and power in all forms impact the Canadian education system.

While these acts of racial discrimination may have been open acts of ignorance, racism has evolved to take a subtle form that continues to be present in social and educational institutions. In the past, racism was mostly expressed in overt forms of discrimination that were based solely on biological physical features. We now understand race to be a social construction of categories: not of scientific biological difference. George Dei (1996) explains that:

> Notwithstanding the fact that there are still important forces in society who argue for biological differences and intelligence, the current strength of the social meaning of race rests on the understanding that the concept cannot be defined biologically. Rather as many have pointed out, race is a product of specific socio-historical and political contexts. (p. 42)

With the entrenchment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the enactment of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, it is perceived that Canada is a multicultural and accepting society where racism has been eradicated. However, this common misconception of Canadian beliefs is inconsistent with the reality of my own experience. It is difficult to negotiate the supposed multiculturalism that we as a country claim to have achieved yet the injustices of racism continue to be prevalent. The following problematic began to formulate: “What are the conditions and situations that
continue to allow race and racism to be present in society?” and also, “What can I do to help alleviate current conditions of inequity?”

It is against this backdrop that I present my experiences and more importantly, those of the five recently graduated racial minority teacher candidates who agreed to be interviewed for this study. It was not easy to find these five teacher candidates but their willingness to share their lives and stories with me gave me the hope and strength to envision the possibility of working towards a more just education system where the colour of one’s skin does not put one at an advantage or disadvantage.

**Purpose**

With an increasingly multiracial, multi-faith, multilingual and multicultural student population in the Canadian education system, teachers within the field and entering the field do not reflect this dynamic: the demographic composition of the majority of teacher candidates in teacher education programs is white, middle class, heterosexual and female (James, 2007; Levine-Rasky, 2000b; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005). For those who are entering the profession and who do not fit this demographic, their voices and experiences are often marginalized and unheard. This highlights the fact that race and racism continue to play a significant role in educational institutions in our country. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) emphasizes, “the voice of people of color is required for a deep understanding of the educational system” (p. 14).

In this work, it is not my intention to demonize or lay blame upon the white racial majority but my intention is to expose the inequity racial minorities feel and live on a daily basis in the Ontario context. It is also my intention to give a voice to a marginalized group that is often silenced and rarely heard.
The purpose of this study is to bring to light the experiences of a small group of racial minority teacher candidates who have recently completed pre-service teacher education programs in Ontario, Canada. Through an examination of their practicum placement experiences, I will investigate the ways in which race and racism have shaped, formed and affected their lives and practice as teacher candidates. Additionally, I will examine the ways in which power and power relations continue to affect the lives of these racial minority participants as they try to live and work in this social institution considering that race and power are intrinsically linked.

**Importance of the Study**

Most research examining issues of race conducted with students enrolled in teacher education programs concentrates mainly on the attitudes and opinions of white students (Levine-Rasky 2000b; McIntyre, 1997; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005). This is especially true in a Canadian context. This perpetuates the idea of white privilege and a culture of whiteness within the education system and particularly within faculties of education; it continues to give a voice to those who form the racial majority while continuing to silence the marginalized. This study attempts to provide a voice to racial minority teacher candidates and to also contribute to the small body of literature that focuses mainly on the experiences of racial minority students enrolled in teacher education programs. Through a close investigation of the conditions and situations that shape the formative learning experiences of these racial minority teacher candidates, we can hope to gain a better understanding of the ways in which race and power affect the lives, experiences, interactions and thoughts of racially and culturally marginalized
groups within the education system and what teacher education programmes might do to address these issues.

**Overview of Thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Following this introduction in which I have presented the experiences that have led me to pursue this research as well as the purpose and importance of this study, chapter two explores the conceptual framework by which this research is conceptualized and analysed. I explore the concepts of race, the racial other, racialization, racism, power in relation to race through a Foucauldian lens, Critical Race Theory and anti-racism. The conceptual framework is then followed by the literature review which is comprised of four main parts examining the use of Critical Race Theory in education, the use of Critical Race Theory in a Canadian context, racism in the education system and research focused on racial minority students in teacher education programs. The fourth chapter explains the methodology used for this study. It outlines the setting, the participants, the data collection and the data analysis. In chapter five, I begin the analysis of the experiences that were shared with me. This chapter discusses the ways in which a culture of whiteness is present in the education system. In chapter six, I analyse the ways in which power relations have an effect on these participants. Through a Foucauldian perspective, power relations involving students, teachers and student teachers are examined with the added consideration of race. In the seventh chapter, I discuss the ways in which these five participants resisted the Eurocentric curriculum, the participants’ ability to relate to their students, the participants’ desire to act as role models for them and also the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool to combat the culture of whiteness in their classrooms. Finally, the last
chapter concludes this thesis by discussing the things I have learned, what they mean, and how I plan to move forward.
CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There have been many books, articles, and reports written on the subject of racism and one common thread that links them all is that notions of what constitutes racism, similar to perspectives on race, are constantly changing to fit the needs and purposes of those who gain advantage from the subordination of racial minorities and the sustained perpetuation of racial hierarchy (Agnew, 2007). Seeing that the definition and meaning of racism is constantly changing, it can take many forms: it could be the parental disapproval of a Chinese daughter who dates outside of her ethnicity, it could be the new Sri Lankan immigrant being denied a job because he lacks “Canadian experience,” it could be the young Black man being stopped by the police while driving home, or it could be the friendly jokes that imply a white friend has no rhythm on the dance floor. It is far reaching and it permeates into the daily interactions and actions of all people.

In this chapter, I will discuss the terms, concepts and theories that are essential to my understanding of the ways that race and racism work within society and, more specifically, the education system. These theories and concepts have shaped and influenced my work. They shed light upon the ever fluid definition(s) and notions surrounding the meaning of racism. In order to understand the lens through which I have examined not only this research but also my surroundings, it is important to understand my perspectives on concepts such as: race, the racial Other, racialization, racism and power. In addition to these, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and anti-racism have proven to be useful theories in the conceptual scaffolding of this work and my perception of the
world that surrounds me. I will begin by describing the concepts of race, the racial other, racialization and racism. I will continue by emphasizing the link between racism and power relations using a Foucauldian perspective and interpretation of power and power relations. I will discuss Critical Race Theory and anti-racism, two concepts that have greatly influenced this research. Lastly, I will conclude by discussing the theoretical differences between anti-racism education and multicultural education.

**Race**

Race is a *social construct* that is used to divide and categorize the populations of the world. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1997) point out “Race is a socio-historical construct which is neither objective nor static. It is a multidimensional complex of social meanings, subjectivities, practices and institutions organized around the question of human physical characteristics. Race is constantly being reinterpreted and recreated” (p. 77). The conception of race as a marker of biological difference in order to produce social difference can be traced back to the eighteenth century, when evidence suggests, in some cases, early notions of biological difference based on race were used to justify the slave trade in the West Indies (Banton, 1999). By the nineteenth century, theories of racial difference began to form substantially. It was at this time that it was believed that the peoples of the world could be categorized based on biological and genetic indicators that determined physical, social, and intellectual differences (Satzewich, 1998). However, this biological interpretation of race has largely been challenged by critics who hold that racial difference using biological justification is the underlying basis of racism (Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 1999, p. 36). When understood this way, it becomes apparent that race is socially constructed in order to preserve a racial
hierarchy that was designed to protect the power of the racial majority and to enforce and reinforce their dominance in society. In our world, this translates into a colour spectrum which places the darkest at the bottom. Sherene Razack (1998) emphasizes that “white…is the colour of domination” (p. 11). Society continues to foster the racial hegemony that has prevailed in society for centuries.

Considering racism’s formation and intention to divide, it creates an “us” versus “them” dichotomy in society: “us” being the racial majority and “them” being those that are “different,” who are regarded as the Other, the outsider. This binary opposition establishes the racial hegemony that our society continues to perpetuate to maintain racial order. In analysing a lecture given by Michel Foucault on January 28, 1976 at the Collège de France, Ann Laura Stoler (1996) succinctly summarizes that Foucault theorized that “race is a discourse of vacillations. It operates at different levels and moves not only between different political projects but seizes upon different elements of earlier discourses reworked for new political ends” (p. 72). Seeing that the meaning of race vacillates and changes, the racial majority can continue to enforce their dominance on the racial minority and impose a racial hegemony that is difficult to refute or challenge. The interpretation and definition of the Other continues to change to serve the needs of the powerful majority.

Race continues to be a salient characteristic of one’s identity, self-conceptualization, and positioning in society. George Dei (1996) contends that “the study of the concept of race is a study of representation as defined by identity, identification and social practices” (p. 60). By discussing the conceptualization of race, issues of identity and representation are attached; according to Dei, race is a discussion about
representation and identity. The idea of race as representation is further supported by Henry Giroux (1997) when he maintains that "‘whiteness’ as a racial identity is being constructed through the stereotypical portrayal of black and Latino kids as intellectually inferior, hostile and childish while coding ‘whiteness’ as a norm for authority, orderliness, rationality, and control” (p. 299). Giroux observes here that the creation of a white racial identity is in opposition to the racial portrayal of those who are non-white; white racial identity has been created at the expense of those who do not have the privilege of white skin, further reinforcing negative racial stereotypes. These stereotypes strengthen the racial opposition and division that lead to misconceptions about race and racial groups. The assertion of white racial identity through negative stereotypes of non-white racial identities strengthens the notion of the racial Other.

Race is such an integral part to a person’s identity that discussions about race highlight the importance it plays in society. Our society has been created in such a way that the colour of one’s skin has different effects on one’s experience, for example, being white can produce significantly different experiences than being black or brown. To highlight this importance, Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1993) assert that:

At the level of experience, of everyday life, race is an almost indissoluble part of our identities. Our society is so thoroughly racialized that to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity. To be raceless is akin to being genderless. (p. 5)

Race can affect the ways a person is perceived by others, the ways they interact with others and the ways they interact with and within institutions. While Omi and Winant contend that being raceless is akin to being genderless and that both gender and race are indispensable aspects of one’s personality, unlike race, gender can be discussed and debated more openly whereas discussions about race are often met with discomfort or
even denial. When writing about her experiences teaching a course about racism at various universities in the United States, Beverly Daniel Tatum (1992) calls race a taboo topic that students often feel uncomfortable talking about. She explains that “race as a taboo topic, is an essential obstacle to overcome if class discussion is to begin at all. Although many students are interested in the topic, they are often most interested in hearing other people talk about it, afraid to break the taboo themselves” (p. 5). In a Canadian context, the silence surrounding the discussion of race is no different. In an article examining the ways that teacher candidates perceive and handle issues of race, R. Patrick Solomon and Beverly-Jean Daniel (2007) further support this when they affirm:

Canadian society continues to regard race as a discourse that should be closeted because of the assumption that the mere mention of the word retards human sensibilities and has the interesting repercussion of instigating feelings of guilt amongst minoritized candidates. The maintenance of the mythology of colour-blindness, irrespective of the fact that the lived realities of Canada’s many visible racialized groups attest the insidious challenges of racism, and serve to placate the ideology of the Canadian mosaic, whether they are members of the dominant or minoritized groups. (pp. 167-168)

As Solomon and Daniel point out, the cultural context that we have in Canada allows for discussions about race to be silenced by the guilt of disrupting the cultural mosaic. Issues of racial identity are suppressed to accommodate discussions surrounding tolerance and multiculturalism.

Another aspect to consider when discussing the complexity of the term race is the ongoing debate surrounding the usage of the word itself. Due to the fact that race is a socially constructed concept, many academics will enclose the word race in quotation marks to highlight the disputed context of its existence. As Peter Li (2007) highlights:

The choice of not using quotation marks would give an unwitting endorsement of these concepts [race and racial] as though they are unproblematic. Furthermore,
the repeated usage of these terms without quotation marks conditions readers to accept them as conceptually valid and socially proper. (p. 52)

On the contrary, I have chosen to take a stance similar to George Dei (1998) on this issue.

While it may be true that using quotation marks problematizes and challenges the soundness of the term and its function, its use does not justify the way in which these quotation marks can diminish the significant role that race continues to play in society.

Dei asserts:

All social concepts lack scientific validity. Terms like gender, race and class are concepts that society has chosen to engage in conversations and practices. They are socially constructed categories whose meanings are historically specific and change in different political and cultural contexts. They are contested notions and yet it is race that appears in quotation marks. Why? Just because race is an unstable category does not mean that the term lacks social application. Moreover, numerous other terms used in academic discourses are rooted in false scientific and biological explanations and/or interpretations, yet many terms never appear in quotation marks. (p. 304)

While race continues to be a salient issue in the daily lives and experiences of all people, it clearly has differential impact depending on relative social position.

The “Racial Other”

It is difficult to pinpoint when the notion of racial Otherness was created but it can be traced as far back as the time of the Crusades when Christians were fighting to maintain Christendom from the expanding empire of Islam (Said, 1978). The Other is a response to the binary discourses that dominate society. Frances Henry, Carol Tator, Winston Mattis and Tim Rees (2000) add that “the discourse of ‘otherness’ is supported by stereotypical images embedded in the fabric of the dominant culture” (p. 29).

Speaking about categories established to differentiate across race, Edward Said (1978) states that “underlying these categories is the rigidly binomial opposition of ‘ours’ and
‘theirs’, with the former always encroaching upon the latter (even to the point of making ‘theirs’ exclusively a function of ‘ours’))” (p. 227). It is in this binary opposition that the identity of the dominant is asserted: “we” are not “them,” “they” act differently from “us,” depending on what the collective “we” has been determined to be.

This otherness is best demonstrated by Said (1978) who theorizes that the dominant West asserts its Occidentalism through its opposition to the East, the hegemonic and dominant discourse he termed Orientalism. He contends that the Orient and the practice of Orientalism were created to be what the West believed itself not to be: mysterious, primitive, romantic, and exotic. He describes that “it is Europe that articulates the Orient: this articulation is the prerogative not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries” (Said, 1978, p. 57). The East or Orient is constructed through the lens of colonialism and imperialism as unknown and unfamiliar to the West and because of this, it posed a danger that the West needed to defeat and subdue. By eroticizing the Orient, the West effectively neutered the East and positioned the East as inferior. Said explains “For a number of evident reasons the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West” (p. 208). Western Europe created the Orient by eroticizing and exotifying the East. Said (2001) described Orientalism to be “a myth system with a mytho-logic, rhetoric, and institutions of its own. It is a machine for producing statements about the Orient and it can be studied historically and institutionally as a form of anthropological imperialism” (p. 36). This highlights the fabricated nature of the exotic East and the exotic Other. The
Other exists when it is created by the dominant culture, as a corollary to what it represents.

Said continues to expand on the notion of Orientalism by discussing the objectification of the East. By reducing the East to a subject or object that can be studied, counted and quantified, the power of the Orient was lessened as a measurable and describable science upon which the West could thrust its values. The East was diminished to an object that the West could control and study. To the West, it could be placed under a microscope and examined thoroughly to establish the supposed superiority of the Occidental world. Said (1978) reveals that:

Moreover, behind each statement there resonated the tradition of experience, learning and education that kept the Oriental-colored to his position of object studied by the Occidental-white, instead of vice versa. Where one was in a position of power...the Oriental belonged to the system of rule whose principle was simply to make sure that no Oriental was ever allowed to be independent and rule himself. (p. 228)

The Occidental countries attempted superficially to understand the Orient but their inability to understand the Orient was a constant entrenchment of the objectification and exotification of the Orient. According to the West, the strange Orientals could never rule themselves successfully because they were different and they were unfamiliar with the Western concept of rule. To Occidentalists, Oriental rule seems barbaric and primitive despite centuries of independent Oriental rule prior to the first encounters between the East and the West. Sherene Razack (1998) elaborates that “the cultural differences approach reinforces an important epistemological cornerstone of imperialism: the colonized possess a series of knowable characteristics and can be studied, known, and managed accordingly by the colonizers whose own complicity remains masked” (p. 10). It is important to note here the history of imperialism: the West conquering the East, the
West subjugating the East by force in order to study and “know” it. By emphasizing the differences in culture, the West embedded their supposed superiority over the East. By reaching a superficial understanding of the East and assuming that it could be studied and managed, the West diminished the human cultural quality of the East and it was objectified into an area of study that could be mastered after months and years of study. The Other was study-able as an object, a subject that could be learned and taught.

To support this notion of racial othering, we can also look at the work of Frantz Fanon (1967). Fanon maintains that in order for a white person to assert her/his identity, they must assert that they are not Black; they must place the Black person in a position of inferiority in order to characterize them as the racial Other. Fanon (1967) asserts that “face to face with this man who is ‘different from himself,’ he [the white man] needs to defend himself. In other words, to personify The Other. The Other will become the mainstay of his preoccupations and his desires” (p. 170). By characterizing the Other, the black/white dichotomy becomes the focus of identity; by placing black and white in opposition, the white person can defend her/his self-imposed position of superiority in the colour spectrum. Fanon highlights here that by placing emphasis on racial difference when the racial majority is confronted with different races, the Other becomes the subject of study and focus. This furthers Said’s notion of the objectification of the racial Other. Both Fanon and Said theorize that as an object of study, the racial Other is reduced to an inferior position. Fanon elaborates on the notion of inferiority and superiority: “the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior” (p. 93). The feeling of superiority can only exist if one group is made to feel
inferior; in this case, the feeling of inferiority is perpetuated by the racial hierarchy that places racial minorities at the bottom end of the spectrum. These two notions of inferiority/superiority cannot be separated; they require equal participation from both sides in order for both concepts to thrive. This further entrenches and demonstrates the concept of racial hegemony.

This notion of the Other is further perpetuated by stereotypes that are assigned and maintained in society. Fanon adds that “for not only must the black man [sic] be black; he must be black in relation to the white man [sic]” (p. 110). Racial minorities are further subjugated and restricted by stereotypes that are constantly reinforced by the racial majority and also by racial minorities themselves. The Other must play the part that they are assigned and they must not deviate from this assigned racial role. Similarly speaking within the context of gender roles and more specifically femininity, Magda Lewis (1993) discusses how women must not only demonstrate their understanding of the social codes entailed in being a “proper” woman but how we, as women, must also show our compliance to the subjugation wrapped within these social codes. Similar to the ways that women are made to be the Other within the context of gender, those who are not white are made to be the Other within the context of race. Lisa Delpit (1993) suggests that racial minorities must be taught these codes in order to achieve success. She asserts:

Students must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors: that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher’s expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own ‘expertness’ as well; and that even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power, they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and about the power relationships they represent. (p. 138)
We must also comply with the social codes that are imposed upon us as racial minorities. Not only must racial minorities be the racial Other in relation to other racial minorities but they must also be the Other in relation to the racial majority. By playing the role of the racial Other, always the submissive, humble, inferior, always smiling individual, the inequity of racial hegemony is enforced and solidified. The persistence of these stereotypes further entrenches the uneven power structure in race relations.

**Racialization**

Racialization refers to the process of associating certain biological, social, physical, and intellectual features to certain races. These associations often carry additional meanings (Henry et al., 1999). Robert Miles (1989) explains that racialization refers to:

Those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities. The characteristics signified vary historically and, although they have usually been visible somatic features, other non-visible (alleged and real) biological features have also been signified. The concept therefore refers to a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other (usually but not exclusively) somatically. (p. 75)

It is basically the process by which we, as a society and individually, separate and classify the people that we encounter on a daily basis. Racialization encourages negative difference recognition and it perpetuates the existing racial hierarchy and hegemony that we as a society have created collectively. This is not to say that whenever difference is recognized, a negative attitude is taken but I am suggesting that racialization can encourage a negative recognition that does not celebrate difference but problematizes it; within the context of racialization, difference is seen as abnormal and unacceptable. Vijay Agnew (2007) expands this notion of racialization to suggest that “The use of the term
racialization, as opposed to race and racism, emphasizes that the definitions of white and black are inherently unstable, changing in different historical contexts and open to several meanings” (p. 10). This emphasizes the multiple meanings that racialization can imply or suggest, as well as the fluidity of the term race. She adds that “racialization is a process that occurs in the context of power relations, whether this process takes place in discourses, is systemic to structures and institutions, or is merely a matter of everyday encounters” (p. 10). Racialization stresses the importance of power within any societal and institutional structure and it makes apparent the many barriers and disadvantages that the marginalized are forced to mediate and negotiate. At a deeper level, the process of racialization displays power relations in the daily lived experiences of each person regardless of colour, race, or ethnicity; it highlights the salience that race continues to play in society and, also, the inequality that still exists.

**Racism**

Racism, a hotly contested term, has a lengthy history that continues to change meaning (Agnew, 2007, p. 11). Today, we understand that racism entails the attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, ideas, actions, and philosophies that continue to place racialized minority populations at a disadvantage. Miles (1989) explains:

Racism is therefore a representational form which, by designating discrete human collectivities, necessarily functions as an ideology of inclusion and exclusion: for example, the signification of skin colour both includes and excludes in the process of sorting people into the resulting categories. However, unlike the process of racialisation, the negative characteristics of the Other mirror the positive characteristics of Self. Racism therefore presupposes a process of racialisation but is differentiated from that process by its explicitly negative evaluative component. (p. 79)
The negative racial disadvantage results in the sustained existence of the racial hegemony that is engrained into the daily lives, experiences, and interactions of each person. It reinforces racial opposition and the racial Other through the inclusion and exclusion of certain groups. Himani Bannerji (1987) adds that “racism is not simply a set of attitudes and practices that they level towards us, their socially constructed ‘other’, but it is the very principle of self-definition of European/Western societies” (p. 11). Building on the notion of Orientalism, Bannerji strengthens the argument that white racial identity is created in relation to the non-white racial identity, that is, the “white norm” will always be asserted in relation to the non-white racial Other.

Racism is essentially about power (Haynes, 2003, p. 66) and how it can be wielded against those who are disadvantaged by its use. It is often thought to be the overt acts of horror that are committed against the racially marginalized; this could mean name calling and/or physical assaults that are perpetrated based on racial differences. It conjures up images of white hooded men, terrorists, and swastikas, all of which have played an iconic role in history and culture. These are all explicit and overt examples of racism and its ugliness but these images and words neglect the insidious form that racism has taken, the covert forms of racism that we all encounter daily. It is embedded in the foundations upon which we have built our society; it is engrained in the social institutions that we must encounter on a daily basis.

This notion of insidious racism was highlighted by Philomena Essed (1991). She names this type of racism as everyday racism. She explains that:

The crucial criterion distinguishing racism from everyday racism is that the latter involves only systematic, recurrent, familiar practices. The fact that it concerns repetitive practices indicates that everyday racism consists of practices that can be generalized. Because everyday racism is infused into familiar practices, it
involves socialized attitudes and behavior. Finally, its systematic nature indicates that everyday racism includes cumulative instantiation. These arguments make clear that the notion of everyday racism is defined in terms of practices prevalent in a given system. (p. 3)

Everyday racism is the notion that racism pervades our daily social interactions as well as the social, political and institutional interactions and policies that take place on a daily basis. It is so entrenched in our daily actions and experiences that it is difficult to detect. This is supported by Himani Bannerji (1987) and Roxana Ng (1993b; 1995) who call this \textit{commonsense racism}. Bannerji (1987) elaborates:

Where as clearly stated racism definitely exists, the more problematic aspect for us is this common sense racism which holds the norms and forms thrown up by a few hundred years of pillage, extermination, slavery, colonization and neo-colonization. It is these diffused normalized sets of assumptions, knowledge, and so-called cultural practices that we come across racism in its most powerful, because pervasive form. These norms and forms are so much a daily currency, they have been around for so long in different incarnations, that they are not mostly (even for an anti-racist person) objects of investigation for they are not even visible. They produce silences or absences, creating gaps and fissures through which non-white women, for example, disappear from the social surface. Racism becomes an everyday life and ‘normal’ way of seeing. (p. 11)

This type of racism highlights the silence that becomes a common symptom of racism; if it cannot be named, then it must not exist. The visible become invisible. Ng (1995) adds that it is the “unintentional and unconscious acts that result in the silencing, exclusion, subordination and exploitation of minority groups” (p. 133). By referring to this as commonsense racism, Bannerji and Ng raise the notion of commonsense that was explained in detail by Antonio Gramsci (1971). Gramsci problematizes the concept of common sense: “there is not just one common sense, for that too is a product of history and a part of the historical process” (pp. 325-326). This highlights the idea that common sense is also unstable and changing; similar to other ideological constructs such as racism, the notion of common sense changes over the course of time. Due to its ever
changing and subtle use, commonsense racism is a form of racism that many do not understand or they simply choose to ignore.

Another consideration when examining everyday racism is the interpretation of its meaning in a particularly Canadian context. Henry et al. (2000) define *democratic racism* in the following way:

The primary characteristic of democratic racism—the most appropriate model for understanding how and why racism continues in Canada—is the justification of the inherent conflict between the egalitarian values of 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)

This highlights that despite the supposed multicultural attitude that policy makers and politicians have taken, Canadian society still perpetuates the beliefs and attitudes that enforce racial hierarchy. As a democracy, we continue to believe that we live in a fair and racially just society because we have laws such as the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2004a) to protect the interests of racialized minorities who inhabit the land. If these laws were as effective as they were intended to be, then why is there still a racial and cultural divide in Canadian society?

Theoretically, Canadian multiculturalism aims to create a cultural mosaic, as opposed to the “melting pot” attitude of assimilation of the United States. According to the Department of Canadian Heritage (2004c), “Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging” (¶1). Will Kymlicka (1996) maintains that “we should aim at ensuring that all national groups have the opportunity to maintain themselves as a distinct culture, if they so choose. This ensures that the good of cultural membership is equally protected for the
members of all national groups” (p. 113). Conceptually, multiculturalism is an ideal policy that addresses the multitude of issues that surface when cultures try to coexist but the reality of Canadian multiculturalism is that “official multiculturalism barely acknowledges the historical inequities of race and ethnicity within Canada and it does little to address systemic racism” (Srivastava, 2007, p. 291). Anver Saloojee (2004) adds that “multiculturalism was not designed to dislodge the power and privilege of the white majority” (p. 420). Multiculturalism has failed to address power inequities and it perpetuates the Eurocentric notion of Western superiority and racial Otherness. As Henry Giroux (1992) asserts:

Multiculturalism is generally about Otherness, but is written in ways in which the dominating aspects of white culture are not called into question and the oppositional potential of difference as a site of struggle is muted. Modernism and dominant forms of multicultural education merge in their refusal to locate cultural differences in a broader examination of how the boundaries of ethnicity, race and power make visible how whiteness functions as a historical and social construction. (p. 116)

Multiculturalism was initially adopted as state policy in the latter part of the twentieth century to address the lack of a cohesive Canadian national identity and, also, the growing split and dissidence between the French and English populations in Canada. It was then expanded to include the interests of other cultural groups who had involuntarily been silenced in the nation building efforts of the government. Himani Bannerji (2000) encapsulates these sentiments:

This ideological Englishness/whiteness is central to the programme of multiculturalism. It provides the content of Canadian culture, the point of departure for "multiculture." This same gesture creates "others" with power-organized "differences," and the material basis of this power lies both below and along the linguistic-semiotic level. Multiculturalism as the "other" of assimilation brings out the irreducible core of what is called the real Canadian culture. (p 110)
Plainly stated, multiculturalism, as an act of nation building by the Canadian government, has been created to address the English/French dichotomy in our country and it fails to address the power relations and Eurocentric notions of superiority that are attached to this narrowly envisioned ideal. It has further silenced minority groups through the superficial representation of racial equality through the celebration of ethnic food, festivals and fashion.

This has led to the definition of Canadian identity to mean white Canadians (Ash, 2004). Eva Mackey (2002) highlights that the multiculturalist program of the government enforces the concept of the Canadian-Canadian, that is the “true” Canadian, the white Canadian who does not assert Canadian identity through hyphens, for example, a person of British ancestry whose family has been in Canada for generations as opposed to a person of Italian or Chinese ancestry whose parents and/or grandparents immigrated to this country who may still identify as Chinese-Canadian or Italian-Canadian.

Multiculturalism is so deeply flawed that the apparent differences it claims to celebrate, create an even greater divide by polarizing and separating cultures within its social fabric. The attempt to create a united Canadian identity is at odds with the desire to maintain one’s culture. In order to become “truly” Canadian, one must distance herself/himself from her/his own “native” culture but even then, the appearance of racialized skin will never fully allow racial minorities to be “real” Canadians. Augie Fleras (2004) adds that:

Canada’s official multiculturalism is ultimately a social experiment in living together without differences. It envisages a culture-blind Canada in which many cultures coexist, but only by denying the relevance of diversity for purposes of inclusion and exclusion. There is much to commend in culture-blind multiculturalism that revolves around disadvantages, not differences; discrimination, not celebration; and ‘fitting in’ rather than ‘opting out’. But a
different dynamic is required when deeply differenced minorities pursue the principle of inclusion without integration. The danger of a culture blind multiculturalism resides in its tendency to impose a monocultural uniformity because of a proclivity to ‘pretend pluralism’. The superficiality of a pretend pluralism has had an excluding effect on those who prefer to live together differently by standing apart. (p. 439)

By trying to unify the different racial and cultural groups in Canada, the voices of these groups have been further silenced through an ideology of democratic racism. Superficially, multiculturalism has been achieved but the fact is that democratic racism is an authentic reality and result of the social context that we have created.

“Whiteness” is another aspect that is important to understand in order to gain a deeper comprehension of racism. Whiteness, as an area of study, has emerged within the last 15 years (Chubbuck, 2004). Whiteness emphasizes the dominant position that the colour white has come to embody and signify; it stresses the continued subordination of the racial minorities to the advantage of those who can benefit from its power (Henry, 2004). Whiteness involves the implicit power and privilege that is associated with being white; it demonstrates the hegemonic construction of race that society has foregone. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) further explains that:

First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage of race privilege. Second, it is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others and at society. Third, “whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (p. 1)

In some social institutions such as the education system, whiteness encompasses the entire institution and creates a culture of whiteness, that is, a culture within the institution that marginalizes and ostracizes those who are not white. The prevalence of a culture of whiteness in Canadian educational institutions is made evident by Frances Henry (2004) when she conducted a study at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario after the
resignation of six faculty members who were either a racial minority or aboriginal. She reveals that these six faculty members all left due to the systemic and open racism they felt in the work environment. Not only were these academics the victims of institutional and systemic racism but they were also the targets of racism committed by their students. Many of their students and colleagues possess white privilege and tried to discredit these academics simply because they are not white. Detailing the culture of whiteness that had been institutionalized, Henry (2004) describes that “Overriding all their specific concerns, faculty of colour, both men and women (as well as some White women faculty) feel detached, alienated, and marginalized from the dominant White malestream culture that has largely defined the University” (p. 146). Values promoting and tolerating a culture of whiteness are so engrained into the school environment that it creates an environment that perpetuates covert and systemic racism that is detrimental to racial minority students and faculty. This report highlights the marginalization that racial minorities often feel in the education system; a culture of whiteness weights heavily on the ways in which racially minoritized individuals work, learn, and live in the social institution of schooling.

As an extension of whiteness, white privilege also explicitly relates to the power and privilege that is associated with being white. In her influential article *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, Peggy McIntosh (1990) outlines the daily and unseen privileges that white people possess. She itemizes daily episodes of advantage that often go unnoticed or unconsidered. She also highlights its underlying and often hidden nature:
As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that
puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary
aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. (p. 31)

We often only see the side of racism that creates disadvantage; we are conditioned to see
and recognize the words, actions and thoughts that hinder the progress of racial
minorities, as opposed to the words, actions and thoughts that encourage advantage
among those who benefit from it. We are taught to only see one side of the coin without
noticing the other side; if one group is placed at a disadvantage then, another group must
be placed at an advantage. We can only distinguish how it oppresses and subordinates,
not how it empowers or enables the socially/culturally/racially/economically advantaged.

**Power**

The notion of power is intrinsically linked to the concepts of race, racialization
and racism. Frantz Fanon (1967), whose work on race has been recognized as seminal,
observes that “The Negro *[sic]* is unaware of it as long as his existence is limited to his
own environment; but the first encounter with a white man *[sic]* oppresses him with the
whole weight of his blackness” (p. 150). Here Fanon points out that a racially
marginalized person will not feel oppressed until she/he encounters her/his oppressor. In
this case, it is a black person encountering a white person and realizing that by the mere
colours of their skins and the implications and stereotypes associated with the colour of
their skins, the black person is marginalized. Paolo Friere (1970), a Brazilian educator
who has had a tremendous impact on the West, furthers this notion of the oppressor’s
feeling of superiority in his examination of the education of the oppressed. While Friere
does not explicitly talk about racial oppression, his words still ring true for the oppression
caused by racism. He suggests that:
This struggle [the struggle for humanization and for emancipation from the oppressor] is possible only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed. (p. 44)

Friere continues to discuss the unjust order that we as a society have created and maintained by stating that it is perpetuated to subordinate the marginalized and it is maintained through death, despair and poverty. His discussion of social class struggle is similar to that of the racial struggle; the unjust racial order strengthens the power of the oppressor through the subjugation of marginalized groups.

While discussing racism, it is important to understand how power relations work and what power means. As Michel Foucault formulates the question, “How is it [power] exercised? And “what happens when individuals exert (as we say) power over others?” (Foucault, 1994, p. 135). Foucault’s fascination with power is evident in his works; however, he does clarify that “it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research” (Foucault, 1994, p. 127). He theorizes that:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault, 1980c, p. 98)

Power works furtively in our society; power is never held in the hands of one person or group; instead, we are constantly negotiating and navigating through the webs and nets of power. If this is the case, then we are constantly in positions to exercise power and undergoing the exercised power. “Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the
social” (Foucault, 1994, p. 141); power relations are inescapable and evident in every social network but we must remember that “The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between ‘partners,’ individuals or collective; it is a way in which some act on others” (Foucault, 1994, p. 137). Power cannot be possessed; instead, power is enacted upon others.

Foucault also provides us with a different conceptualization of power and power relations between cultures. He states:

The fact that societies can become the object of scientific observation, that human behavior became, from a certain point on, a problem to be analyzed and resolved, all that is bound up, I believe, with mechanisms of power—which, at a given moment, indeed, analyzed that object (society, man, etc.) and presented it as a problem to be resolved. So the birth of the human sciences goes hand in hand with the installation of new mechanisms of power. (Foucault, 1988, p. 106)

Through a Foucauldian lens, we can see that the rise of human sciences is associated with power. As long as we problematize human behaviour and differentiate between cultures, manifestations of power will continue to be present in society. So, Foucault suggests that we should not conceptualize cultures and human behaviours as problems that need solutions. This brings us to the perception of the Other and Said’s notion of Orientalism; these two concepts will persist to be fixtures in society so long as different cultures are studied, measured and counted. Said’s conceptualization of Orientalism was largely influenced by Foucault (Said, 1978, p. 3).

Foucault also suggests a different conceptualization of the analysis of power relations that I used in my research. He suggests a reversal in the way that we analyse power relations: “One must analyze institutions from the standpoint of power relations, rather than vice versa, and that the fundamental point of anchorage of the relationships, even if they are embodied and crystallized in an institution, is to be found outside the
institution” (Foucault, 1994, p. 140). Power relations are not isolated in any given institution and they should not be analyzed as such. More exactly, power relations are interconnected with other institutions and we must look at factors outside of the institution in order to better comprehend how the power relations in that institution work. In order to gain a more complete understanding of the conditions that have led to certain circumstances, we must take a step back and consider the different variables and situations that have created the problematic.

Furthermore, Foucault makes the connection between truth and power, two concepts that are intrinsically linked to one another. He theorizes that truth is not really the truth; the truth is, in fact, fabricated and made by those with vested interests. He explains that truth is “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 132). Those who have vested interests will determine what is true or false based on how the truth can work for and benefit them. This is highlighted when Foucault says that “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth—that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as ‘true’” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 131). Foucault brings to light that those who are in power force what they choose to be true; the truth is fabricated to serve the particular interests of the powerful.

He continues that “‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power that produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it—a ‘regime’ of truth” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 133) Truth and power cannot be detached; they are linked because they maintain each other. He questions why, as a society, we have such an attachment to the notion or idea of truth, why it has been given so much
value and why we continue to pursue it if truth is in fact a form of power (Foucault, 1988). He then asserts that:

It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at present time. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 133)

This, however, reveals another significant problematic that continues to be relevant: If society could be emancipated from the power of truth causing an end to racial hegemony and racial marginalization, what would our society and world look like?

**Critical Race Theory**

One of the ways in which we can examine our current racial context and reveal its intentions and outcomes is by examining it through the lens of *Critical Race Theory*. Critical Race Theory (CRT) has its roots in the critical legal studies movement and developed in the 1980s out of informal discussions between professors and students of colour at Harvard University (Parker, 2003). CRT draws inspiration from many sources: Critical Legal Studies, feminism, the civil rights movement, social philosophy, and political philosophy (Delgado, 1995a). It aims to disrupt the racial norm, expose the subordination of the racially marginalized, and give a voice to the disadvantaged.

Laurence Parker (1998) writes that:

A major point of CRT is to place race at the center of analysis with respect to how many White European Americans and institutions in U.S. society assume normative standard of whiteness which in turn ignores or subjugates African-American, American Indians, Chicanos, Chicanas, Chinese-Americans and other marginalized racial groups. (p. 45)

Mari Matsuda (1995) describes this as *looking to the bottom* which is “adopting the perspective of those who have seen and felt the falsity of the liberal promise” (p. 63). The
concept of looking to the bottom encourages us to examine the power structures and institutions that place racial minorities in the weakest positions. By telling their stories and experiences, we can aim to better understand the contexts of the lives and the realities of those that have been fooled to believe in the liberal promise of racial and ethnic equality.

While Critical Race theorists try to stay away from static interpretations of what CRT entails and what it is, according to Marvin Lynn and Laurence Parker (2006), CRT has three basic and common beliefs:

1. Racism has been a normal daily fact of life in society and the ideology and assumptions of racism are ingrained in the political and legal structures as to be almost unrecognizable. Legal racial designations have complex, historical and socially constructed meanings that insure the political superiority of racially marginalized groups;

2. As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of White European Americans as the normative standard; CRT grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive contextual experiences of people of color and develop [sic] through the use of literary narrative knowledge and story-telling to challenge the existing social construction of race; and

3. CRT attacks liberalism and the inherent belief in the law to create an equitable just society. CRT advocates have pointed out the irony and the frustrating legal pace of meaningful reform that has eliminated blatant hateful expressions of racism, yet, kept intact exclusionary relations of power as exemplified by the legal conservative backlash of the courts, legislative bodies, voters, etc., against special rights for racially marginalized groups (Bell, 1988; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1987; Matsuda, 1987). (p. 260)

One of the central beliefs of CRT is that racism has taken an insidious form that lies beneath the surface; it is a reification of whiteness. Gerardo López (2003) explains:

The focus on explicit acts has ignored the subtle, hidden and often insidious forms of racism that operate at a deeper, more systematic level. When racism becomes ‘invisible’, individuals begin to think that it is merely a thing of the past and/or only connected to the specific act. (p. 70)
CRT emphasizes the challenge that we have in making the subtleties of racism apparent in society and relevant to those in positions of power.

Challenging the racial societal norm is an important part of CRT. Since we live in a society that has been socially constructed to place those who are different at a disadvantage, it is much easier to think and live in binary constructs: smart versus stupid, skinny versus fat, black versus white. CRT aims to disrupt the particular binary of race by decentering whiteness and looking to the margins. One of the ways that CRT achieves this is through the use of narrative and storytelling. These help to create rich and deep descriptions of situations and events that document overt or covert forms of racism (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The storytelling and narrative approach gives a voice to racial minorities and also allows those who are marginalized to describe their experiences in their own words. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) describes succinctly the salience of voice: “The ‘voice’ component of CRT provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step in understanding the complexities of racism and beginning a process of judicial redress” (p. 14). Sofia Villenas, Donna Deyhle and Laurence Parker (1999) describe the importance of storytelling and voice:

CRT legitimates storytelling as a method for examining how racism works against people of color in the everyday, and ethnography provides the rich data to show how ideologies of racism work to marginalize and disenfranchise children and families of color. Yet, most importantly, these data are also crucial to a rethinking of social action: The stories illustrate how communities’ preservation of their cultural integrity has enabled them to survive hundreds of years of enslavement and genocide. (p. 35)

By sharing the stories of the oppressed, we can begin to disturb the discourse of the dominant that has become the shared, collective discourse through which we analyse the situations and circumstances of our lives, regardless of the subordination of the
marginalized. It is the common story that is shared and widely believed throughout society; it is forced into the common truths that we as a society, tell ourselves. So far, the world has been socially constructed by the dominant. By providing an alternative to this discourse, by giving a voice to those who traditionally do not have the opportunity to speak or to be heard, we can hope to chip away at the inequality. Richard Delgado (1995b) further describes that storytelling in the context of CRT is counter-storytelling because:

> The stories told by the ingroup remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural. The stories of outgroups aim to subvert that reality. (p. 64)

By telling the stories of the marginalized, we can begin to counter the reality created by the dominant and we can “shatter complacency and challenge the status quo” (Delgado, 1995b, p. 65).

CRT also shows that race is a social construct that is continually fluid; it is influenced by ever changing political meanings (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Seeing that race is not associated with biology and that it is a social construct, despite its fluctuating nature, there remains one polarization that has not changed over time: black versus white. This is persistently reinforced through the colour spectrum: as a society, we constantly make decisions on what is white and more significantly, what is not white (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Derrick Bell (1995) elaborates that this constant reinforcement of race which he called *interest convergence*, is always done at the expense of the minority groups in order to serve the interests of the dominant white. He explains that “the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with
the interest of whites” (p. 22). CRT aims to disrupt this by questioning liberalism and the perceptions that laws are created to promote a fair and equal society.

Anti-Racism

Another significant theory that greatly influenced this work is anti-racism. While Critical Race Theory solely places the emphasis on race, anti-racism aims to not only address issues of racism but also other forms of oppression. Simply put, anti-racism, by definition, is “an action-oriented, educational and political strategy for institutional and systemic change that addresses the issues of racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression (sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism)” (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p. 13). It critically examines the ways in which power inequities affect the daily experiences, interactions, actions, words and lives of all people. Anti-racism provides a solid framework from which we can not only begin to examine societal conditions that silence racially marginalized populations but we can also begin to examine the power relations that lead to these conditions.

Within the context of education, anti-racism education helps those in the education system to begin to mediate the inequities within the system and fight for positive change. Enid Lee (1995), a leading Canadian educator, states that anti-racism education is about “equipping students, parents and teachers with the tools needed to combat racism and ethnic discrimination and to find ways to build a society that includes all people on an equal footing” (p. 19). Through anti-racist education, we can teach students, teachers and parents the ways to resist the hegemonic power that adds to the continued subordination of marginalized groups. We can begin to decenter the
Eurocentric discourse and begin teaching our students about knowledges that are often forgotten or unmentioned.

When discussing anti-racist education in a Canadian context, it is impossible not to discuss the works of George Dei (1996, 1998, 2000, 2001) and his collaborators (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, 2002b; Dei & James, 2002; Dei & Karumanchery, 2001). In his influential book *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice*, George Dei (1996) outlines many of the problematics, issues and discussions surrounding anti-racism education. He enhances the theory by presenting the notion of *integrative anti-racism*, which “provides an understanding of how different forms of social oppression and privilege have been historically constituted. It identifies how forms of social marginality and structured dominance intersect and shift with changing conditions in society” (p. 56). Integrative anti-racism emphasizes that each person holds multiple positions in relation to her/his identity, that is:

integrative anti-racism is a critical analysis of how current understandings of the dynamics of social difference relate to issues of identity and subjectivity. It moves away from establishing a hierarchy of difference and an exclusive and problematic concern with the ‘other’. Integrative anti-racism does not see the *self* as that which *other* is not. Human experiences are dialectically shaped by questions of social difference, by history and by socio-political contexts. The existence of multiple identities has some significance for how individuals live their lives and relate to each other in society, and how individuals come to understand society and work collectively for change. (Dei, 1996, p. 60)

Integrative anti-racism aims to create a new conceptualization of society by distancing itself from the binary discourses of self and other and an “us versus them” dichotomy. By understanding and considering different aspects of a person’s identity and societal positioning, for example, gender, race, sexuality, ability, class, etc, we can begin to work towards political and social change that challenges the injustices and oppression in
society. An integrative anti-racist approach is important because “we cannot hope to transform society by removing only one form of oppression. There is a common link between all oppressions in the material production of society; all forms of oppression establish material and symbolic advantages for the oppressor” (Dei, 1996, p. 56).

**Anti-Racist Education or Multicultural Education?**

When I am asked about this study and my research, it is generally assumed that I am a multicultural educator/researcher but nothing could be further from the truth! Despite my uneasiness in labelling, I attach the label of anti-racism proudly to my work and also to my teaching practice. I consider myself to be an anti-racist educator/researcher and not a multicultural educator/researcher but what is the difference?

Anti-racism and multiculturalism are easily confused seeing that many do not understand the difference between these two concepts. George Dei and Agnes Calliste (2000a) succinctly explain the difference between these two terms:

> Multiculturalism works with the notion of our basic humanness and downplays inequities of difference by accentuating shared commonalities. Anti-racism, on the other hand, views as suspect the whole nation-building enterprise as pursued by the dominant, together with the underlying assumptions of empathy, commonality, and good will. Anti-racism shifts the talk away from tolerance of diversity to the pointed notion of difference and power. (p. 21)

They further explain that anti-racism approaches issues of race through a consideration of the inequities and power imbalances that are embedded into institutional systems whereas multiculturalism conceptualizes issues of race as misunderstandings of cultural differences that can be resolved through education and knowledge. Dei (2001) also notes that:
Anti-racism unlike multicultural education focuses on the pointed notion of difference as opposed to diversity and its slippage to sameness. Questions of power and power relations are at the fore of anti-racist education. Anti-racism challenges the celebration of culture without a serious attempt to deal with the unequal power relations that crosscut our societies. Anti-racism asks about the power behind the construction, naming and celebration of difference. Anti-racism raptures difference as the basis or justification for power and domination in society. (the voices of student-teachers section, ¶ 18)

More specifically, from an educational perspective, David Gillborn (1995) notes:

Multicultural approaches frequently emphasized the need for diverse cultural images which, in reality, often patronized minority students and reinforced white assumptions about exotic, distant and ‘primitive’ populations. In contrast, antiracists’ explicit concern with political struggle and opposition to racism frequently labelled any concern for ‘culture’ as a short-sighted characteristic of multiculturalism that was destined to leave racist structures unchallenged. (p. 76)

Gillborn highlights the most serious issue of multicultural education; the continued exotification of “other” cultures and its disregard in addressing endemic structural racism. Christine Sleeter (1993) corroborates this in her investigation of the ways that white teachers construct race. In her observations, several of the white teachers who were involved in her study assert that they teach from a multicultural or colour-blind approach. They essentialized the teaching of culture by integrating lessons about food, music and festivals into their regular Eurocentric lessons. Frances Henry, Carol Tator, Winston Mattis and Tim Rees (2000) note that “the most serious weakness of multicultural education was its failure to acknowledge that racism was endemic in Canadian society” (p. 249). Conversely, considering that anti-racism examines racial inequity within institutions, the main concern of anti-racism is that it must work within the structure that it resists and desires to reorganize (Dei, 1998). Dei and Calliste (2000b) summarize concisely my conceptualization of anti-racism:

As students have a right to education, we and they also have a responsibility to ask critical questions about the absences, omissions and negations in schools. For
the teacher, a privilege to teach is also a responsibility to teach about the complete history of ideas and events that have shaped and continue to shape human growth and development. (p. 164)

**Closing Remarks**

These concepts have not only influenced this research and the subsequent analysis, but they have also had a profound effect in my daily life, interactions, and conceptualizations of the world around me. The process of comprehending these feelings and ideas is like making my way through a dark tunnel; these theorists provide a flashlight to show me the way. As I have reiterated, gaining a better understanding of the roles that race, racialization and racism play in society was a fundamental discovery that changed my perspective of how society works and more importantly, how people function and interact within its constraints. This has added to the realization that I was the Other. This information furthered my knowledge and comprehension of power structures and relations. I began to grasp the intrinsic connection between race and power and, subsequently, I was actively seeking a theory, a concept or an idea that could best articulate my concern about race and more precisely, my concern for the lack of discourses that differed from those of the dominant. I discovered that Critical Race Theory and integrative anti-racism are theories which are useful tools for gaining insight into racist discourses.

It is against this backdrop that I will tell the stories of my five participants in an attempt to shed light on the experiences of the racially marginalized. I was let into their private worlds to share their experiences of being not only a racial minority but a racial minority within the context of teacher education. This is not to say that all of their experiences were negative or positive for that matter, but each of the participants for one
reason or another, felt it was important to share their stories with me and with the world. By sharing the stories of the marginalized, we can begin to work towards achieving an understanding of race that will enable us to overcome the challenges of living in society.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I examine the literature that has created the context within which the research is positioned. This chapter is in four parts: first, I will discuss the use of Critical Race Theory in the field of education. Then I will review the literature pertaining to the use of Critical Race Theory in a Canadian context. This will be followed by an examination of literature dealing with racism in the education system in two main themes: the other student and the other educator. I will then discuss Canadian anti-racism research and finally, I will discuss literature involving racial minority students enrolled in teacher education programs.

Critical Race Theory and Education

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a relatively new theory that has only surfaced in the last three decades. CRT was first applied to educational research in the 1990s when Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) used CRT to explain the inequalities that students of colour often felt in the education system in the United States (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995) argue that in the context of education, gender and class are the main areas of explanation that are used to account for discrimination but these two social constructs are inadequate to fully explain why students of colour are constantly placed at a disadvantage. This is further supported by Marvin Lynn and Laurence Parker (2006) in their comprehensive literature review of the CRT movement and its many intersections with education. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) show that the main tenets of CRT fit into the context of education; racism is systemic and endemic in the education system and educational laws (focusing
specifically on the pivotal American case of Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas) were created around the construct that eliminated and condemned explicit acts of racism but perpetuated the subjugation of people of colour and advanced the desires of the majority. They maintain that the voices of the marginalized needed to be heard in order to gain a full understanding of the education system.

In that same year, William Tate (1995) published a thorough article that reviews the current literature of the time regarding CRT and its implications for educational research. He discusses the CRT movement, the academics that have made significant contributions to the advancement of CRT and how their writings can be applied to education and educational research. He reviews at length the contributions of Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado and Kimberlé Crenshaw, three legal scholars whose writings he considers to be important to CRT. He also shows how each of the foci of these three scholars applies to education: Derrick Bell’s focus on interest convergence can be used to examine the streaming system, standardized testing and funding issues in the education system, Richard Delgado’s focus on counter-storytelling can be used to give voices to students of colour who traditionally have been silenced, and Kimberlé Crenshaw’s focus on intersectionality of race, class and gender can be used to explain the condition that students of colour find themselves in.

Shortly after, Edward Taylor (1998) explains the basic strengths and weaknesses of CRT in education. Through his writing, Taylor makes this theory more accessible to those who would not think to use CRT considering its roots in critical legal studies. His article clarifies that CRT gives a voice to those who are systematically marginalized and that it could be applied to education yet it still had its faults. Through his explanation of
CRT, he emphasizes the importance of the experiences of those who were not members of the dominant (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Despite the negativity or pessimistic outlook that can be associated with CRT, he highlights the hope and possibility that CRT can offer to decenter the dominant (Taylor, 1998).

After these articles explicitly linked CRT to education, there have been a number of academics who have expanded upon this (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Sofia Villenas, Donna Deyhle and Laurence Parker (1999) describe the importance of CRT in education when they explain that “CRT strategies require that teachers, administrators, and community members inquire seriously into the nature of the problems related to race and into the racial impact of school policies” (p. 34). Garrett Duncan (2002b) discusses how CRT can be used to explain how racial dominance continues to be prevalent in urban educational research and in a separate article (2002a), he provides an explicit example of how an analysis of the experiences of urban black male youths can be done within the context of CRT. Marvin Lynn (1999) is another example of how CRT can be used to analyze the experiences of teachers of colour, more specifically, African American teachers. Daniel Solórzano and Tanya Yosso (2002) contend that using Critical Race Methodology and storytelling “confirms that we must look to experiences with responses to racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism in and out of schools as valid, appropriate and necessary forms of data” (p. 37). Dolores Delgado-Bernal (2002) gives a voice to students of colour and recognizes how they are holders and creators of knowledge.

**Critical Race Theory and Canada**

Despite the fact that the majority of work in Critical Race Theory comes from the United States, CRT can be applied to explain the experiences of Canadian people of
colour. David Gillborn (2006) adds that “there is no reason, however, why the underlying assumptions and insights of CRT cannot be transferred usefully to other (post-) industrial societies such as the UK, Europe and Australasia” (p. 19). An examination of the Canadian CRT perspective is important because Canada holds a unique position in terms of social ideology. Gabriel Bedard (2000) explains that Canadians identify being Canadian as being distinctly non-American and also, being non-racist due to our political and supposed embrace of multiculturalism. A preliminary search of CRT literature in Canada yielded minimal results and more specifically, a basic literature search of CRT in education in Canada has proven to be difficult. What is clear is that CRT can be used to describe the Canadian situation as many of the tenets of CRT are applicable. Carole Aylward (1999) offers a comprehensive treatment of the application of CRT to Canadian law but fails to elaborate on the interdisciplinary nature of the movement.

**Racism in the Education System**

While whiteness continues to be a problem in social, political and economic institutions (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Mun Wong, 1997; Dei, 2000), it persists as a problem in the Canadian education system (Dei & Karumananchery, 2001; Harper, 1997). Racism does not affect only those who are in the weakest positions such as students, but racism continues to be an endemic problem for teachers and professors.

*The Racially Othered Student*

One manifestation of the racial hierarchy in our education system is the common dynamic of white teacher and racialized student. Robin Diangelo (2006) concludes that recent data in the United States indicate that the majority of elementary and secondary
school teachers are white females. Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell (2005) note that there continues to be an “over-representation of white, female, middle class and heterosexual bodies” (p. 149) in our faculties of education in Canada. As teacher populations remain racially static, the student population is diversifying quickly. One of the ways that many educators attempt to resolve this is by adopting a colour-blind approach. Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees (2000) explain that colour-blindness is:

The refusal of educators to recognize that racism is part of the “baggage” that racial-minority children carry with them, and the refusal to recognize racism as part of the daily policies, programs, and practices of the educational system, are part of the psychological and cultural power of racial constructions on the lives of students of colour. (pp. 255-256)

Christine Sleeter (1993) contends:

people do not deny seeing what they actually do not see. Rather they profess to be color-blind when trying to suppress negative images they attach to people of color, given the significance of colour in the U.S., the dominant ideology of equal opportunity, and the relationship between race and observable measures of success. (pp. 161-162)

Colour-blindness is a dangerous discourse because it ignores an integral part of a student’s being and identity. Students enter our education system as racialized, classed and gendered individuals (Dei, 2000, p. 38) and the danger of colour-blindness lies in the belief that we can reach inclusiveness by disregarding difference and the challenges associated with confronting race (Williams, 1999, p. 392). In a study conducted by Manju Varma-Joshi, Cynthia Baker and Connie Tanaka (2004), they noted that a colour-blind approach to administration often leads to students being labelled as problematic, racial slurs being reduced to childish name-calling, students accused of being sensitive and quick to cry racism and the reinforcement of racial stereotyping.
To further this notion of othering, students who are racial minorities often feel like they are unfairly targeted by teachers and administration, resulting in the perception that they receive unfair punishments. In a study focusing on the British education system, David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell (2001) find that:

Many pupils (especially those of African-Caribbean and dual heritage) were convinced that minority ethnic pupils were not given fair treatment. To substantiate these feelings, they pointed to numerous individual acts, especially concerning teachers’ differential punishment of certain individuals. They found it harder to make a concrete connection to how this would impact on their studies but they were certain of its negative influence. (p. 84)

In an American context, this notion of preferential treatment of white students is further supported (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Tenebaum & Ruck, 2007). These studies indicate that racial minority students often feel like teacher expectations vary by race and that there is differential teacher treatment of students from different racial groups. More specifically, Harriet Tenebaum and Martin Ruck (2007) find that teachers hold more positive expectations for white students than for their racial minority counterparts.

These sentiments are reiterated in the Canadian literature. In higher education, Edith Samuel and Shehla Burney (2003) write of the racism, both tacit and explicit, that south Asian students experience while attending a predominantly white university partly due to stereotyping and cultural alienation based on values and difference. Based on the responses of the high school students who participated in their study, Martin Ruck and Scot Wortley (2002) conclude that the racial minority students believed that they are often punished harsher than their white peers. Interestingly, to further support the notion that the racial hierarchy is exemplified in the education system, they also found that students who were black were more likely to perceive biased treatment followed by
South Asians, “other” races and ethnicities, Asian students, then finally White students. They elaborate that “These findings are consistent with the view that the darker the skin colour the greater the social penalties that exist” (p. 194). This is further supported by Varma Joshi, Baker and Tanaka (2004) who find that colour-blindness and whiteness are further maintained through the disciplinary actions taken against racial minority students in a Canadian school system where the administration and teaching staff are predominantly white. As a result of the administration’s inability to recognize the cumulative impact of racism, the racial minority students received harsh punishments when they responded to racial taunts and threats that were minimized or dismissed as other incidents that did not name race as the key factor.

*The Racially Othered Educator*

In addition to the racial othering that racial minority students feel, this sentiment also extends to educators within the system. Hilton Kelly (2007) documents the experiences of six black educators teaching in schools that were predominantly white. He found that his participants succeeded in their predominantly white schools by crossing racial lines, continually striving to exceed expectations and resisting stereotypes. Focusing on performance pressures due to high visibility, that is the factors that pressure teachers to perform well, Reitumetse Mabokela and Jean Madsen (2006) found that the Black teachers who participated in their study felt the pressure to perform well because: (a) they were highly visible due to the low number of racial minorities on staff causing increased monitoring of their duties, (b) they had to fight symbolic consequences, that is the pressure minority teachers feel to represent their entire race or ethnic group, (c) they had to fight stereotypes and constantly prove their qualifications, and (d) they felt
confined and as a coping mechanism, used culture switching, the minimizing of cultural
difference so that the majority group feels comfortable. Kitty Kelly Epstein (2005)
outlines the systemic and institutionalized obstacles that prevent a critical mass of racial
minority teachers from entering the profession using the policies of the state of California
as an example. Based on interviews with racial minority teachers, June Gordon (1994)
summarizes succinctly the many reasons why racial minorities are deterred from
becoming teachers, many of which could be linked to systemic forms of racism.

In a Canadian context, Paul Carr and Thomas Klassen (1997) highlight the
challenges that racial minority teachers often face when working in the public education
system in their study that included both the perceptions of white and racial minority
teachers. They conclude that the racial minority teachers who participated in their study,
have a deep commitment to anti-racist education that often goes unnoticed by the
administration which is in contrast to the white teachers committed to anti-racism who
receive recognition for their efforts. For immigrant teachers who are new to the Canadian
education system, Ping Deters (2006) notes that mentorship and support, community
acceptance and recognition of immigrant status facilitate the transition into an education
system with which they are not familiar. Nina Bascia (1996) further supports this in her
study documenting the experiences of minority immigrant teachers. She found that
among the immigrant teacher participants, they overwhelmingly felt isolated in their all
white environments and, because of this, paid special attention to their racially
minoritized students.

Additionally, manifestations of racism and a culture of whiteness within the
university environment for faculty members who are racial minorities are well
documented. Racial minority professors are betrayed by their appearances; they are in positions of authority and power, yet their racialized bodies subjugate them into lower positions. The racial hierarchy is once again reinforced. Lucila Vargas (1999) comments that:

Since the Other Teacher comes from a stigmatized group and her appearance and expressive behaviour fail to fit the persona of a ‘normal’ professor, she is likely to encounter repeated difficulties getting accepted and treated as a legitimate member of academe. (p. 368)

Racial minority professors are often faced with students who doubt their knowledge and capability as an academic and lecturer. Using a model provided by Maher and Tetreault (as cited in Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005), Juanita Johnson-Bailey and Ming-Yeh Lee (2005) explain the challenges of being racial minority female professors in four themes: mastery, authority, positionality and voice. By describing their own experiences as racial minority university professors, they explain that the students constantly challenged their mastery of the course material taught. Their knowledge and their authority were contested; power was constantly being negotiated and the positions that they occupy as racial minority professors often confused their students in that their physical appearances did not exude the “usual” look of a professor. Finally, they discuss the notion of voice and how it applies to the classroom. By providing an alternative voice to the dominant perspective, these professors are often ostracized by the students.

The situation is no different in Canada. Himani Bannerji (1991) recounts her experiences of being both an “Other” student and “Other” professor in the academy. Her experiences speak to her search to find a discourse that addressed her needs, seeing that she felt that feminist discourse focused mainly on the binds of patriarchy, failing to address the intersection of issues of racism and classism. Linda Carty (1991) also shares
her experience of being discriminated against as a Black woman learning and teaching in higher education. As a student, she felt disconnected from the curriculum because her frame of reference was never considered and when she openly challenged the material, she was perceived as being problematic. As a professor, she realizes the contribution that she can make in dispelling the inaccuracies and myths that have been maintained by a culture of whiteness in higher education. Rashmi Luther, Elizabeth Whitmore and Bernice Moreau (2003) describe many of the difficulties that racial minority and aboriginal professors face. They found aboriginal and racial minority academics are faced with numerous challenges including: inadequate support, lower pay than their white counterparts, heavier workloads, “ghettoization” into teaching courses that focus primarily on race or ethnicity or into introductory classes with enormous numbers, tokenism, forced participation on committees that want their presence to demonstrate the committee’s desire to appear more diverse, they often act as role models to racial minority students which, in itself, has many other responsibilities attached and they are generally excluded from making key decisions within their departments. Enakshi Dua and Bonita Lawrence (2000) add to these challenges by highlighting the difficulties in teaching courses on race and ethnicity in a chilly environment that does not support positive discussion around these issues. Edith Samuel and Njoki Wane (2005) conclude from their study that “minority faculty members were forced to survive in a hostile environment with challenges in teaching, tenure, evaluations, funding, research and promotions” (p. 84). Agnes Calliste (2000) documents the continued discrimination and harassment that racially minoritized and Aboriginal professors experience in the university setting in Canadian universities. She also discusses the anti-racist efforts that
have been organized to try to redress these issues. Marlee Spafford, Vicki Nygaard, Fran Gregor and Marcia Boyd (2006) interviewed 42 racial minority faculty members of different universities across Canada. They reveal that these racial minorities in the academy face common challenges. These challenges include struggling with isolation, varying levels of acceptance within their respective faculties, experiences of being a mentor without having a mentor themselves, varying degrees of support from other faculty members, and the visibility associated with being one of the few if not the only racial minorities. Racial minority professors often encounter many challenges over the course of their careers. Razack (1998) elaborates that:

> When we confront the whiteness of the academy and note that an overwhelming majority of professors are white, we cannot change this situation by responding that white professors also belong to subordinate groups—some are women, some are disabled, some are lesbians. Such a response amounts to a statement that race does not matter, an outright denial of the impact of white supremacy on the lives of people of colour. (p. 161)

In this statement, she argues against the common discourse that often detracts from the experiences of racial minorities. She highlights the importance that race plays in the daily lives of racial minorities despite the refutation that we are all in some way marginalized.

**Anti-Racism in Canadian Teacher Education Programs**

To focus on the research pertinent to this study, I have mainly selected anti-racism research in teacher education programs. Hartej Gill and Graeme Chalmers (2006) document the ways in which anti-racist pedagogy was implemented at one particular teacher education program through the delivery of a “diversity” cohort initiative. Through their efforts to teach an anti-racist pedagogy, they were able to help their students develop better understandings of racism and race within their teacher education program.
Carol Schick and Verna St. Denis (2005) describe their attempt to employ an anti-racist curriculum in the teacher education program in which they teach but they discuss the intricacies and difficulties of performing anti-racism work in an environment where the minority population is predominantly Aboriginal. They discuss the concerns and benefits of talking about race and the inherent issues of speaking about whiteness: by talking about it, whiteness is once again recentered as opposed to the decentering aim of anti-racism. In a separate article, Verna St. Denis (2007) presents the need for anti-racism in aboriginal education. She shows that Aboriginal populations in Canada hold a unique position in Canadian history because of the systemic cultural extermination attempt that they have endured over the course of history. By uniting white and non-white allies to enact anti-racism in education, imbalanced power relations can begin to be addressed. Anne Wagner (2005) outlines the considerations that must be taken into account when trying to implement an anti-racist approach in a classroom setting. Mainly, she discusses student discomfort and, sometimes, denial surrounding issues of race and the challenges she faces as a white anti-racist educator. Cynthia Levine-Rasky (2000a) also discusses the implications and challenges of introducing race and, more specifically, whiteness to educators. She explains that the presentation of whiteness can often produce various outcomes such as the double binds of whiteness, affect, and the celebration of white ethnicity.

Within the context of whiteness, anti-racism can be problematic in that whites may not feel that it properly represents their experiences. From her perspective as a racial minority professor, Roxana Ng (1994, 1995) also discusses the issues of implementing an anti-racist approach in university classroom settings. She describes the continued
attempts to silence racial minority educators who “teach against the grain”, that is, who systematically challenge the Eurocentric university culture through their presence and critical teaching methods.

Overall, these scholars aim to decenter the dominant discourse in their respective teacher education programs by introducing and using an anti-racist approach. By educating future teachers about the merits of anti-racism, we can hope to reduce the Eurocentrism that is so embedded into the education system. Dei (1998) succinctly explains that “a major challenge for anti-racism education is that it must work within the confines of the very system and structures that anti-racism opposes” (p. 311).

**Racial Minority Research in Teacher Education**

In general, most research that is conducted with students enrolled in teacher education programs is an examination of the attitudes and perceptions of white teacher candidates which further maintains whiteness within the research. By continuing to focus on the opinions of white students in teacher education programs, racial minority students are further marginalized and silenced, thus perpetuating the idea of white privilege. Studies (Aveling, 2006; Carrington et al., 2000; Cross, 2005; King, 2001; Epstein, 2005; McIntyre, 1997; Schniedewind, 2005) have shown that faculties of education around the world continue to perpetuate white privilege and whiteness through the curriculum, professoriate and student population. Canadian studies show (Henry et al., 2000; Razack, 1998; Levine-Rasky, 2000b; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005) that the situation is no different in Canada. These studies confirm that teachers and teacher candidates ignore and deny the existence of white privilege and the power associated with it, thus perpetuating the ongoing cycle of white privilege and whiteness.
Finding research specifically related to racial minority students enrolled in teacher education programs has been a difficult task. Initial searches were time-consuming often producing few results but eventually the situation improved. It has become obvious that the majority of sources are based in Britain, more specifically in England. The examined studies (Basit & McNamara, 2004; Blair & Maylor, 1993; Crozier & Menter, 1993; Jones, Maguire & Watson, 1997; Siraj-Batchford, 1993) document and explain the issues that racial minority students face when entering teacher education programs. They emphasize that racism is a systemic force and that this could be dissipated through stronger school-university relationships.

C. Jones, M. Maguire and B. Watson (1997) report on the experiences of a group of racial minority students completing practicum placements in London, focusing primarily on a small group of Black students. They note the different challenges and the coping tactics that this group used to mediate their situations. One of the key findings is that Black and minority students participating in this study felt uncomfortable in their school placements and concentrated their efforts on developing survival and coping tactics rather than improving their teaching. These findings were most congruent with my own experience as a racial minority on placement and they also confirm the data presented in this thesis. However, the students who were examined completed placements in a large multicultural urban centre like London, England which fails to consider the experiences of racial minority students completing placements in predominantly white populated areas.

Many of the problems faced by British racial minority teacher candidates were also challenges for American racial minority teacher candidates (DePalma, 2008; González,
1997; Kauchuk & Burbank, 2003). Using a case study approach, Don Kauchuk and Mary Burbank (2003) analyse the practicum experiences of two racial minority pre-service teachers and report that both students had vastly different approaches to the classroom: one student was more successful in her placement by connecting with the students while the other student concentrated mostly on the curriculum and encountered difficulties. This study provides two deeply different perspectives about the ways in which racial minorities manoeuvre within teacher education programs. Many of the issues were addressed in broad terms and it fails to address issues of race and ethnicity in a serious manner.

In my entire search for literature, I longed to find Canadian sources. Each time I logged into an academic journal database, I would search incessantly for any material that involved racial minorities and teacher education in Canada, yet the results were always the same. After a while, I assumed that I would not find anything until one day, I stumbled upon something that was well worth the wait. R. Patrick Solomon (1997) uses a case study approach to reveal and analyse the practicum placement experiences of racial minority teacher candidates and also, the experiences of four first year teachers. He discusses how the racial minority teacher candidates he studied feel the need to be role models to their students and to other teachers. Most importantly, he concludes that:

The development of good social relations between student and teacher, the creation of a positive and dynamic learning environment, and the implementation of an inclusive curriculum enriched with cultural and cognitive strategies, create conditions likely to produce better learning outcomes for this group. (p. 406)

This study provides an excellent model upon which to base my study. Solomon provides an in-depth analysis of the perceptions that these racial minority teachers possess in relation to the concept of role modeling.
In 2000, Patrick Solomon examines the results of a study in which cross-race dyad partnerships were established among a group of teacher candidates enrolled in a diversity initiative in a teacher education program. Involving both white and racial minority teacher candidates, this study highlights the ways in which race and racialization continue to play a role in the education system. It also encourages cross-race partnerships in schools in order to support inter-cultural sharing and learning. In a separate study involving both white and racial minority teacher candidates, R. Patrick Solomon and Beverly Jean Daniel (2007) examine teacher candidates’ perceptions of race and white privilege. They conclude that these teacher candidates have a weak understanding of the history of race relations in Canada and also that those who are white continue to maintain and benefit from the privilege associated with the colour of their skin. They highlight the need to provide an accurate and honest depiction of race in Canadian society as opposed to the “antiseptic version that is currently being presented in textbooks and classrooms” (p. 170).

Closing Remarks

As I sit here in front of my computer, staring blankly at the blinking icon, waiting for the words to pour out, I ask myself the questions: What is important to know about this literature review? How does all of this relate to what I am doing? The important thing to know about this literature review is that not only have I carefully selected each of the writings I discuss but they have in some way, shaped the analysis that is to follow.

After surveying the research concentrating on the experiences of racial minority students in teacher education programs, it becomes apparent that there is a gap in the research involving racial minority students in teacher education programs. Canada
possesses a unique institutionalized multicultural pedagogy that distinguishes and polarizes the experiences of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, it becomes overwhelmingly clear that racial minority teacher candidates living in Western countries that follow Eurocentric curriculum feel uncomfortable and marginalized on practicum placements and within teacher education programs. This highlights the continued silencing and exotification of racial minorities in the education system. However, this can be countered by revealing the experiences of the marginalized and bringing their stories to the centre.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

This chapter describes the method of this study. I explain the chosen method, setting, participants, data collection and data analysis that were used.

Setting

This qualitative study focuses on the practicum experiences of a small group of racial minority teacher candidates who recently graduated from post baccalaureate pre-service teacher education programs that were located at mid sized universities, in towns that were outside of Canada’s major urban centres. Jody Miller and Barry Glassner (2004) suggest that “A strength of qualitative interviewing is the opportunity it provides to collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds” (p. 137). By using the technique of interviewing, the participants were able to share with me the ways that they constructed their worlds, their lives, and their contexts. Rosaline Barbour and John Schostak (2005) explain:

Clearly the interview is much more than just a tool, like a drill to screw deeper into the discursive structures that frame the worlds of ‘subjects’. It is as much a way of seeing, or rather a condition for seeing anything at all. (p. 43)

A qualitative approach allowed me to see their worlds through their eyes, it allowed me to get to know my participants better and also to gain a better understanding of the challenges that they were faced with while completing a program of study. David Gillborn (1998) supports this notion when he maintains that “some writers (myself included) have suggested that qualitative research, with its attention to multiple participant perspectives, social interaction and power within institutions, is more suited to the exploration of ‘race’ and racism in schools” (p. 52). Considering that race is socially
constructed, it is subject to individual interpretation (Okolie, 2005, p. 248): interviewing provides the flexibility needed to convey the many possible different meanings that race can embody or signify.

The practicum experiences of the participants took place in many different locations: some participants completed their practicum placements in large urban settings where the student populations were racially mixed while others were completed in small towns where the student populations were predominantly white. Some placement experiences were completed in private schools while the majority were completed in publicly funded schools. This provided the participants with a wide range of experiences from the participants. The individual interviews were conducted in neutral locations where the participants felt comfortable to let me into their lives and bear witness to their experiences. The interviews with Biff, Isabelle and Rachel\(^1\) were conducted in coffee shops, Jennifer was interviewed in a private office at her place of work and Stephanie was interviewed in an empty classroom.

Participants

Participant Selection

Finding these five participants was a difficult and frustrating process that at times seemed impossible. In retrospect, the five young teacher candidates who decided to participate were valuable informants. The first step in participant selection involved sending a recruitment notice to a student email list (see Appendix A) administered by a university registrar. This ensured that the email would be sent to all students enrolled in the teacher education program. At the beginning of this process, a major problematic

\(^1\) All participants have been given pseudonyms.
emerged: do I specifically write into the email that I am investigating racism within teacher education programs? If I wrote into the email that I was investigating incidents of racism, some racial minorities would not respond considering the common misconception that racism does not exist in Canada. Racism is often perceived to only be overt forms of discrimination; many times, the tacit forms of racism are unrecognized. Okolie (2005) describes the challenges that anti-racist researchers often encounter and he notes that “racism can be denied by both members of the dominant group and the racially minoritized. This poses different challenges from the ones mainstream researchers [in relation to racial minority researchers] deal with” (p. 248). Taking this into consideration, I grappled with this problematic and eventually decided that I would include this aspect in the email notice.

When the email was sent, I naively thought that I would have more than five people respond and that it would be a matter of me selecting who I would be interviewing. However, this was not the case. From the email, only one person responded. I was disheartened, how could only one other person see the importance of this research? After sending the email twice with the same result, I came to the conclusion that it was not that my research was not important but that my decision to include the word racism may have had a bearing on the outcome. I continued the search through snowballing and targeted recruitment until five participants had agreed to be interviewed.
Biff T.

Biff is a male of Chinese descent in his early to mid twenties who had just finished the teacher education program when he agreed to be interviewed. He is an intermediate/senior teacher who teaches History and Instrumental Music. He was born in Pearville\(^2\), a small city in Ontario but moved at a very young age to Mainville that had a predominantly white population. Spending his formative years in a city where the population was predominant white, Biff was often bullied as a child because of his Chinese heritage. In our interview, he described how his elementary school years were marked by physical beatings and verbal taunts that were racially motivated, leading him to insulate himself within the culture his parents instilled within him. Speaking about his childhood, Biff says:

Biff: Heck, I, I, got beaten up when I was a kid, but the brown kid always got the brunt of it. The Asian, you know, if you can’t beat’em, you join’em. Right, so you, so the Asian joins with the whites and then beat up the brown kid. I’m being really racist here, am I? (chuckles) Well, it’s Canada. (Biff, Interview, p. 8)

Upon entering high school, he moved to a suburb of a large urban area where he was able to fully express himself and be assured in his identity as a first generation Chinese Canadian. He then attended a local university and received a bachelor degree of arts.

He completed his teaching placements at a school that was located in the area in which he spent his high school years. The student population was racially mixed but the teaching and administration were predominantly white. Biff completed three placements; two of which were spent teaching ESL History and one teaching instrumental music. He did not have a positive experience teaching instrumental music but thoroughly enjoyed teaching the History classes.

\(^2\) All towns and cities have been given pseudonyms
Isabelle T.

Isabelle is a female of Bahamian and Jamaican descent in her early to mid twenties who had already been teaching History in a suburb of a large cosmopolitan city for one year before this interview. She is an intermediate/senior French and History teacher. She was born and raised in Appletown, a small suburb located outside of a large metropolitan city that has a predominantly white population. She completed her elementary and secondary school education at a private religious school in Appletown and in her words, “of the 500 students, I might be one of 7 or 8 Black students, and I’m mixed at that” (Isabelle, Interview, p. 16). She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from a mid-sized university in Stufton, which is located outside of Canada’s major cities.

In her younger years, race was never really discussed in her house. Her mother was bi-racial (half black, half white) and her father, whose ancestry was racially mixed, was originally from Jamaica. Race was never an issue until one day when she was in Grade 4, a young classmate asked about Isabelle’s racial identity. She tells the following story:

Isabelle: I remember when I was in grade 4, we were reading a book about Africa, somebody put up their hand and said “oh is she, is Isabelle, is she black or is she white?” and asked the teacher in the classroom. (giggles) And the teacher kind of had, kind of brought the conversation over to me and I had never realized anything before. So I didn’t know and ask my parents (giggles) because I really didn’t notice and it was something that wasn’t really talked about in my house. Like I had relatives who were really light and I had relatives that were really dark and they were my relatives and that’s just how it was. Um, I had that experience and then, the best thing that my dad said to do was like “well, if they’re really curious, then, you can say you’re mulatto but it’s not even an accurate description either, so that might be easier to explain” and I didn’t have a good understanding of what that meant either but whatever. (Isabelle, Interview, pp. 8-9)

Race was never an issue for Isabelle until she attended school and was specifically asked to identify herself racially. Later in her life, she had other racial experiences but she
makes the distinction that she was “not sure if they’re racist, so much as ignorant” (Isabelle, Interview, p. 12).

Isabelle completed three practicum placements in two different schools: the first school was a private school located in a town in Ontario outside of major urban centres. The student population was small with a large number of international students. The teaching population and the administration were predominantly white. The second school had a similar composition to the schools in which she subsequently worked: large student populations that were racially mixed with teaching and administration populations that were predominantly white. Overall, it seems that Isabelle enjoyed her placements.

Jennifer

Jennifer is a female of Chinese descent in her early to mid twenties who had just completed the teacher education program when she agreed to be interviewed. She is an intermediate/senior teacher who teaches Instrumental Music and English. She was born and raised in a suburb of a large urban centre that is racially diverse. As a result of this, Jennifer did not experience any distressing issues of race while she was growing up and she believes that she has never experienced racism.

Researcher: Have you ever had a racist incident happen to you?

Jennifer: uh, like in my personal life kind of thing, or professional?

Researcher: everyday life.

Jennifer: um

Researcher: either or, whatever you feel comfortable talking about.

Jennifer: yeah, honestly I can’t recall one. Mmmm, nothing comes up. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 10)
Unlike the other participants, she knew early on that she wanted to be a teacher and enrolled in a concurrent teacher education program at a predominantly white university located in Smithton, a city that is outside of Canada’s major urban centres. Due to this, she completed a large number of practicum placements but the three placements that she completed in her final year of the program were the focus of this interview. Jennifer completed her placements in schools that were located in the same area where she was raised. Both the student and teaching populations were racially mixed yet the administration was predominantly white. Overall, Jennifer thoroughly enjoyed her placements.

*Stephanie*

Stephanie is a female of African descent in her early to mid twenties who was in the midst of completing a Master’s degree in Education which she began immediately following the completion of the pre-service teacher education program. She is an intermediate/senior teacher who teaches French and English. Stephanie was born in Africa and immigrated to Canada at the age of five, settling in Pearville, a mid sized city that has a racially mixed population. When she entered Grade four, her family moved to Mapletown, a small town located just a short distance from a large multi-racial city and she attended a small Christian school. Stephanie had a very difficult time transitioning from living in a racially mixed mid-sized city to a smaller town with a predominantly white population. She explained:

Stephanie: Um, well, ok, to be honest, I remember sometimes when I was in grade 4 like, I really wished that um, I were white instead of black so I looked like everybody else. And I wished my hair were not like kind of curly and frizzy but that it was straight and long like everyone else’s. So, I think I’m finally over
that but I did feel like that when um, when I was younger, to some extent. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 12)

She describes that she did not fully resolve these issues until her teenage years when she began spending more time with other people who were racial minorities.

Researcher: now, you said, even in grade 12, you had these sort of issues [wishing to be white], right? How did you resolve them eventually?

Stephanie: mmm, well, I don’t know why but I just remember in, at some point in Grade 12, I just started to um, hang out with friends who were Asian because I felt like, ok, well, we’re all people of colour so I won’t feel so out of place. So that was kind of how I resolved it for myself. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 12)

She attended an American university that was affiliated to her religious denomination where most of her friends were Black due to the fact that the environment was very racially divided. She subsequently spent 18 months teaching English in Taiwan where she was once again faced with a mono-racial environment.

Stephanie completed three placements in two different schools: one school was a very small private school located in a small town outside of Smithton and the second school was located in downtown Smithton. At the first school, the students, teachers and administration were predominantly white. At the second school, there were a few racial minority students but the student population, teaching population and administration were predominantly white. Overall, Stephanie did not enjoy her placements and she thought that she had a negative experience as a teacher candidate.

Rachel

Rachel is a female of Sri Lankan descent in her early to mid twenties who had recently completed a teacher education program and, because she was unable to find a full time job, was working as a substitute teacher taking different school assignments.
daily. She is a primary/junior teacher. She was born in Sri Lanka and immigrated to Canada at the age of five. She settled in a multicultural suburb of one of Canada’s largest urban centres and continues to live in the same area now. She completed her university education at a mid-sized university located in Stufton, a town that is predominantly white: she experienced her first serious racist incident at this point. Her original intention was to become a medical doctor but decided to become a teacher after she spent many summers working with children.

Her practicum placements were completed in elementary schools located in small towns that were in close vicinity to Plumville, the city where she completed her pre-service teaching program. The student population, teaching population and administration were predominantly white. Despite this, she maintained that the students and teachers were very accepting and respectful of her race. She really enjoyed all of her placements and she did not experience any feelings of mistreatment until she entered the work force. Teaching in an area that is located just outside of a large urban area, she expected that she would be entering environments that were racially diverse. She describes her feelings about race and how she feels about working in a predominantly white area:

Rachel: I do feel left out and I feel like, sitting in the staffroom, noticing that I’m the only one that is a minority. It’s, it’s a little, It feels weird and it’s because I think I’m so used to being around people that are different and you don’t really notice it but suddenly when you’re, it feels like you’re excluded. It’s like if you’re, if you’re like a freaking M&M for example, you’re like, in the box, there’s so many colours, you don’t notice “oh there’s brown ones, there’s black ones” you just know there’s a whole bunch of colours but if I was to segregate all of like the red and put one brown in there, you would notice that brown and it’s kind of that same sense because it just, it’s like the background that surrounds you. I mean, you’re just made to, like, kind of stand out. (Rachel, Interview, p. 7)
Rachel explains her views on race quite precisely here. Living in a racially mixed environment has caused her not to realize her difference until she is placed outside of this environment.

**Data Collection**

Each participant completed one interview that was audio recorded at which point the letter of information (see Appendix B) was given to the participants and the consent forms (see Appendix C) were signed. In the interview (see Appendix D), themes regarding their practicum experiences, perceptions of race, and of education were discussed. Each interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes, was subsequently transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then returned to the participants to enable them to review and possibly change their initial answers.

A consideration that arose during the data collection process was the issue of the race of the interviewer. I was aware that a difference in the race of the interviewer may lead to different data but it should not be assumed that this difference would negatively impact the significance of the responses. It is important to note that:

While recognizing that in a ‘racially’ conscious society, the colour of the interviewer’s skin is likely to influence the way a person responds, it is erroneous to assume that a qualitative difference necessarily implies that one type of account is intrinsically superior to another. Each is interesting and meaningful in its own right. A different account given to a Black interviewer does not invalidate that given to a White, although it may well cast it in a new light. (Rhodes, 1994, p. 548)

This difference may in fact, provide an alternative perspective that may be uncommon due to the smaller number of racial minority researchers. This possible difference has enhanced the research and distinguished it as unique. This added perspective will add to
the body of educational research and it provides a different outlook from a segment of the population whose opinions are often marginalized and unheard.

**Data Analysis**

Once the data were transcribed and checked by the participants, I felt as thought I had achieved a close level of familiarity with the data. I coded the transcripts and subsequently grouped the codes thematically. The most salient and emerging themes and events were noted. After the coding was completed, I read the data thoroughly and recorded any instances where I felt certain academics or writings would support the themes. Similar to Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell (2005) and Jones, Maguire and Watson (1997), I decided that the analysis chapters would be thematically organized and direct quotations from the interview transcripts would be used in order for the reader to hear the voices of the participants. I then began to write the analysis chapters by choosing excerpts from the interviews that I felt were representative of the themes that emerged.

Being a woman who is a racial minority has greatly influenced my analysis, interpretation and understanding of certain events and occurrences. In addition to this, it is important to note I experienced overt racial incidents while completing my teacher education program. I hold an emic position in this research. This sentiment of being *on the inside* is echoed by Dei (2000), Ng (1995), Okolie (2000) and Young (2004). Being an insider researcher gives a different perspective; we are able to understand the situation to a degree that others who have not experienced these phenomena would. Young (2004) observes that “Being on the inside means that the researcher can maintain a shared sense of comfort and ease in interacting in the field, and that the researcher is sensitive and
responsive to the cultural and social distinctiveness of the people under study” (p. 198). Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell (2005) note that as a team of minority researchers, “this served to provide a unique standpoint to not only the data analysis but also to interrogating the latent ideas and knowledge contained within the statements provided by the participants” (p. 152). This accentuates the value of minority researchers in research about minority groups; we can provide a distinct outlook.
CHAPTER FIVE
MANIFESTATIONS OF A CULTURE OF WHITENESS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Since White teachers continue to perpetuate power and privilege and still represent non-White bodies in racialized ways, there needs to be a move towards examining Whiteness and its implications in education. (Bedard, 2000, p. 56)

In this chapter, I will discuss the main ways that the participants encountered a culture of whiteness while completing teacher education programs. Biff, Isabelle, Rachel, Jennifer and Stephanie each experienced a culture of whiteness in their own ways, whether they were aware of it or not. While I have highlighted the most salient events that took place during their teacher education year, it is important to keep in mind that there are many more incidents of racism that often go unnoticed or are too subtle to detect. I will begin by discussing the ways a culture of whiteness manifested itself in the faculties of education and in the schools; I will then discuss the concept of “acting white” and proceed to discuss the denial of racism by racial minorities in the Canadian context. Finally, I will discuss a subtle form of racialization that my participants often encountered.

“All I saw was blond hair and blue eyes”

Rachel: And when I got there [faculty of education], first day, I walked in, it was just so crazy. I walked into orientation, I opened the door and all I saw were, literally, blonde hair and blue eyes…I stuck out like a sore thumb, it was ridiculous. (Rachel, Interview, p. 3)

In many ways, Rachel’s experience, one of her first encounters with a faculty of education, mirrors my own experience entering a faculty of education: walking into an auditorium and realizing that I was surrounded by a sea of white faces. In retrospect, I
think I should have been more shocked or more disappointed about seeing all those white faces like Rachel was but when a culture of whiteness is normalized, in this case, in the education system, a sea of white faces sometimes fails to produce a reaction specifically because it represents the norm. This normalization or desensitization to whiteness can be attributed to *everyday racism*. Rachel enters into an auditorium that is filled with a sea of white faces, it is no wonder that Rachel sticks out like a “sore thumb”. As noted by Laverne Smith, Yves Herry, Denis Levesque and David Marshall (1993), the population of students in faculties of education within Ontario are predominantly white (p. 53).

Rachel’s experience of encountering an auditorium full of white students demonstrates how a culture of whiteness is prevalent in teacher education: a lack of racial diversity in the faculties of education perpetuates a culture of whiteness which results in a lack of racial diversity in the teaching staff which results in a lack of diversity within school administration. It is a never ending cycle that fosters a culture of whiteness and perpetuates racial hierarchy; this culture of whiteness fails to reflect the changing composition of the Canadian population which is diversifying racially, culturally and ethnically (Bascia, 1996; Department of Canadian Heritage, 2004b).

Growing up in a racially diverse environment, Rachel was not fully aware of her racial marginalization until she began university. It was here that Rachel experienced overt racism for the first time in her life.

Researcher: Have you ever had an experience on practicum that you would identify as racism?

Rachel: No, I don’t think so. To be honest, since living in Canada, I’ve never had a racist comment made at me til I went to University, [in] Stufiton. That was the first time and again, I think it was ‘cause of ignorance and I think, it’s just, being in ah, such ah, very diverse, um, area where it’s so rich in culture and we
celebrate all these differences that it’s not a huge problem. (Rachel, Interview, p. 11)

She lived in what I have termed a “racial bubble”: a place where multiculturalism and diversity are so prevalent that it is believed to be the norm. Considering that the percentage of racial minorities living in Canada’s large urban centres is increasing steadily over time and that the racial minority population in some large urban centres currently accounts for more than 30% of the population (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2004b), in these areas, racial diversity is thought to be the norm and as Rachel points out, racial and ethnic diversity were celebrated in the area in which she was raised. She emphasizes this point again when she speaks about applying to the faculty of education in Plumville:

Rachel: Ok, well, when I got into [the university of] Plumville, I was working at a um, youth, ah, program and I had told my supervisor ‘cause she had gone to Plumville and um, she’s also, well not a minority here [in her hometown] but there she would be a minority. She’s African Canadian and she told me the first thing, she was like “I want to warn you, right off the bat, you’re going to go there and you’re gonna feel culture shock!” I’m like “What are you talking about? Like I’ve gone to Plumville, I mean, Stufton for my undergrad and it’s, you know, like there was diversity but when I first got there, not so much” and she’s like “No, no, no, no, wait ’til you get there.” And I didn’t understand what she was talking about. I’ve lived in [large urban city] my whole life, everywhere you go, you see different people, right? Different cultures all around. (Rachel, Interview, p. 3)

This culture of whiteness was affirmed by all of the interviewees to some degree:

Jennifer was the only participant who spoke of a racially mixed teaching staff.

Researcher: How would you describe the teaching population at the school?

Jennifer: Well, at the public schools I taught at, they were fairly diverse cause it’s in [suburb of large urban city], so it’s very multicultural and yeah, different, different backgrounds, different walks of life, some people were like, you know, long time teachers, and some were fresh starting. So, wide range. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 2)
Despite Jennifer’s assertion of teaching with a multicultural staff, her description of the school administration is similar to that of the other participants: mostly white.

Researcher: And what about the administration?

Jennifer: Um, the administration was mostly Caucasian.

Researcher: Mostly Caucasian?

Jennifer: Yes. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 2-3)

All five participants reported that the administration that they had encountered in the schools was predominantly white. This supports the notion that a culture of whiteness continues to manifest itself in our schools. This overrepresentation of white educators in positions of power promotes an environment that does not recognize the power of whiteness and white privilege that many in the education system still deny (Bedard, 2000; Levine-Rasky, 2000b; Raby, 2004; Varma-Joshi, Baker & Tanaka, 2004). With the colour-blind philosophy that so many Canadian educators have embraced, the effects of white privilege are perpetuated. In their investigation of minority students living in a predominantly white area, Manju Varma-Joshi, Cynthia Baker and Connie Tanaka (2004) draw attention to the very real and possible danger that this culture of whiteness can pose. They write that “operating within a colour-blind ideology, the institution of schooling essentially instructs its facilitators to seek alternative scenarios for student actions that are not overtly tied to race” (p. 203). They continue to say that:

Rather than downplay the impact of race and color, educators need to be aware of the privileges and power that wrap White skin. Again, this means going back to teacher training institutions. Without an understanding of privilege and power, White individuals are apt to see racism simply as individual acts of hatred. (p. 203)
The peril is that many educators fail to realize how white privilege affects their lives and the lives of all students and staff they encounter on a daily basis, but particularly minority students and staff. Stephanie recounts an experience she had with the white principal of the first school at which she was completing her practicum.

Stephanie: We met in our cohort, in the first school which was the rural school and we talked about the hiring practices and um I asked him [the principal] a question like “What are some of the things you are looking for in teacher candidates?” and he said “Um, well, we want to find someone who will fit in with the, with the teaching staff” and I didn’t really think anything of it, but then later, I discussed with, ah, my friend who was Indian, she was my closest friend that year actually, and she said, “Oh, you know, he said we want someone who will fit in with the teaching staff and all the teaching staff are white.” So, you know, she thought and I think that she was right actually, that that was kind of what he was saying but just trying to be more ah, polite about it. Yeah, I mean, like no one, well, no one made any comments that made me feel uncomfortable in particular but it was just a feeling, like, you know, you’re an outsider here. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 5)

It appears that the administrator did not realize the impact of his words but upon reflection and discussion with another friend who is a racial minority, Stephanie realizes that she can never fit in because she is a racial minority who is working in an environment that is all white. It is precisely this lack of thought and entrenchment of the hegemonic devices of racial hierarchy that fosters whiteness in the education system. In this situation, “fitting in” means being white and that was something that Stephanie could never achieve.

Stephanie highlights the often undetectable subtlety of whiteness and its prevalence in the education system; as she notes when she tells us that no one made any comments in particular to make her feel uncomfortable, but she still felt like an outsider. Similarly, while Rachel had an overtly racist comment made towards her when she was completing her undergraduate degree at Stufton, walking into an auditorium filled with
white students was one of the first times that she was unintentionally made to feel out of place solely based on the colour of her skin. She elaborates that:

Rachel: I didn’t notice it as much til you kind of find yourself in that area and it’s honestly like a culture shock and it’s not a huge, I don’t know, a problem, I would say, because it’s not like, you know, I got comments or racist remarks or anything that was insensitive, umm, but it’s just physically, you’re just, like you feel left out in that sense. There’s no one really to kind of connect with you. (Rachel, Interview, p. 2)

No one needed to tell Rachel and Stephanie that they were different and did not belong; they could feel their racial Otherness. In recounting these stories, both Stephanie and Rachel also underscore another important principle of whiteness: as Sharon Chubbuck (2004) states “whiteness is socially constructed through a process of negation, an assertion that it is not the Other” (pp. 303-304). They both felt like they were outsiders, interlopers in a world of white bodies. During my interview with Biff, in one of his responses, he refers to and uses the term “the Other”, so I asked him how he would define the Other. He responded:

Biff: It’s just something that, it’s just something that you…something that defines you. It’s something that you’re not, and therefore it’s the Other. For example, I’m not, I’m not a girl. So therefore, I’m a guy but without girls, how do I know I’m a guy, right? So it’s just a process, it’s just a process of uh, elimination….in order to know who you are, you gotta know who you’re not. (Biff, Interview, p. 18)

Biff eloquently summarizes the essence of what the Other means; it is an assertion of identity defined by what it is not.

To add to this feeling of otherness, Stephanie exemplifies one more result of a culture of whiteness: the feeling of invisibility. She recounts:

Stephanie: I was also dealing with reverse culture shock having just been abroad too and a lot of times in classes [at the faculty of education], they would kind of target it toward “ok, you’re a white teacher, so you’re going into a school that’s full of minorities, how can you relate to the minorities?” Like they actually said that in one of my classes. “How do we as white, um, teachers, you know, going
into [large urban centre] or some other city you know, with all, mostly minority students, how would you relate to them? So I remember that day in particular. Um, I guess, sitting kind of in the middle of the classroom and I just felt very, like before that I hadn’t really thought, “Oh, you know, I’m, there are only two minorities in this class” but then when, um, they said that, then I just kind of felt like this um, this unease I could say. So, but I think I got over that by the end of the year.

Researcher: Now in that situation, were you addressed at all in terms of, I mean, the situation that you just described. The teacher saying “ok, so you’re a white teacher going into a classroom that’s full of racial minorities…”

Stephanie: Uh hmm. [to confirm that she has heard the question properly]

Researcher: Did anyone or did the teacher acknowledge the fact that that wasn’t the case for you?

Stephanie: No, surprisingly nobody noticed that he said that (giggle) and nobody looked at me either even though I was right there like, in the centre of the classroom. I think maybe because I’m quiet as well, like, I just kind of blended in. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 8)

While Stephanie dismisses the lack of recognition of her race as a result of her quietness, it is difficult to deny that the culture of whiteness that is prevalent in this institution played a role in this event. This incident demonstrates an inability to acknowledge students who did not fit the dominant cultural demographic, a disregard for the presence of racial minority teacher candidates at the faculty and an ignorance to their situation.

Upon reviewing her transcript and having some time after the interview to reflect,

Stephanie added the following note:

Stephanie: While, I realize now, it was an honest mistake on the teacher’s part, I felt very cold all of a sudden and actually shivered, I meant to say this during the interview, but I didn’t for some reason. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 8)

Stephanie furthers her denial of the existence of institutionalized racism in this classroom by defending the instructor in calling his lack of acknowledgement an “honest mistake.”

Considering the conversation that she had with her principal about hiring practices and
this experience at the faculty of education, Stephanie minimizes their ugliness. It appears that she denies or ignores the white privilege that she so blatantly experienced: she shivered when it took place yet she defends the instructor. She unknowingly continues to sustain the racial hegemony so deeply embedded in society.

This addition to her transcript data brings forth the notion of honesty and truth and its relation to power. Foucault (1980b) writes that power and truth are intrinsically linked: truth is not really the truth. The truth is fabricated and made by those whose interests a particular version of it serves: “Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 130).

Despite its blatant presence as demonstrated by Stephanie, institutionalized racism and white privilege are hidden by those who are placed in high positions within the power and racial hierarchy. One of the key functions of democratic racism (Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees, 2000) is that racism cannot exist in a society that has enacted rules and laws that support social and political multicultural policies. The untruth that racism no longer exists in Canada has been forced to be true by those who are in power. Because of democratic racism, Stephanie believes that it was “an honest mistake” and that no one would intentionally exclude her based on the colour of her skin but it is this precise notion that fuels the continuation of whiteness and white privilege.

“I didn’t realize that white was a personality”

Rachel: They’re [Rachel’s friends] like “oh, you’re really whitewashed” what does that mean? Is it like, I don’t understand what that means. Is it because I’m really aware of the cul-, of the Canadian culture because that’s not really white. Then they’re really saying that Canadian culture, all of it is white? Like, it doesn’t make sense to me, right? Because I’m like, I honestly believe that this
country is very diverse. So, I wouldn’t mind as much that I was very westernized because then it is a culture. Like, I understand it. You know, I don’t uh, practice a lot of things that I would if I would live in Sri Lanka. Do you know what I mean? I’m not walking around in a sari, like I understand that, being westernized, but then, “you’re really Canadian”, I’m like “well, what does that mean?” Well, suddenly, am I, I’m well, just the fact you’re white. I don’t get that. I didn’t realize that white was a personality. It’s just the fact that you’re white. I thought it was only a physical colour outside, do you know what I mean? Just like those comments where people are like, “Oh, you’re acting really black.” What does that really mean? I thought it was a colour, not a personality, do you know what I mean? It’s human nature to just categorize people without realizing there’s actually huge effects. (Rachel, Interview, p. 13)

Another theme that emerged from some of the interviews was the concept of “acting white” or “being whitewashed.” Rachel’s reaction to being called whitewashed is very insightful into how society has categorized racial groups to fit into preconceived prejudiced boxes that generalize their behaviours and actions, an extreme example of stereotyping and denigration. Isabelle also discusses the concept of being whitewashed but not in direct reference to herself but rather to her students. Isabelle taught in a number of schools with large populations that were racially mixed and where diversity issues were prevalent. She often challenged her students’ notions of race and culture. When asked what the term “whitewashed” means, Isabelle elaborates:

Isabelle: I think the idea of whitewashed is that you may be, you may be a nationality other than white, but you behave like a white person would be. So I suppose you don’t ascribe to the same customs as people who look the same way as you, ascribe to, maybe you don’t use a lot of the same phrases. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 10)

This idea of “acting white” or as Rachel and Isabelle call it, “being whitewashed” was best described by Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu (1986) as an oppositional cultural frame of reference when they studied how African American students who were successful at school, coped and mediated the label of “acting white.” This label was
associated with school success in the African American community they examined. They note that:

Generations of black children have learned this lesson so well that what appears to have emerged in some segments of the black community is a kind of cultural orientation which defines academic learning in school as "acting white," and academic success as the prerogative of white Americans. This orientation embodies both social pressures against striving for academic success and fear of striving for academic success. (p. 177)

The hostility that some of Rachel’s friends exhibit is similar to the hostility that these successful African American students endured. By her own account, Rachel is more “westernized” and she threatens the preconceived notion of how she should act as a young Sri Lankan woman; she is thought to be “‘whitewashed.” In a subsequent article, John Ogbu (2004) further notes that:

In the context of oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference as well as negative interpretation of “‘acting White,’” contemporary Blacks adopt definite strategies to cope with the demand that they adopt certain “‘White’” attitudes and behaviors in White institutions and establishments. (p. 21)

By assuming certain behaviours, patterns of speech and attitudes that were perceived to be “white,” Rachel is labelled as whitewashed.

Upon closer examination, it appears also that both Biff and Jennifer exhibit characteristics of possessing an oppositional cultural frame of reference despite the fact that they did not fit the black/white dichotomy that marks the experiences of oppositional culture identification that have already been explained. Jamie Lew (2006) explains oppositional cultural identification when it is applied to racial minority groups that are neither Black nor White. In this study, Lew examines the school experiences of two groups of Korean American students: one group of students were enrolled in a GED (General Educational Development or General Equivalency Diploma) program while the
other group consisted of high school students who experienced success in the traditional classroom setting. Lew succinctly sums up the racial limbo that many Asians experience. She writes that “On the one hand, as racial minorities, they are often excluded from whiteness, while on the other hand, they are stereotyped as model minorities that align them with whiteness” (pp. 337-338). Historically, Asian minority groups have often been labelled as “model minorities”; they are examples to other minority groups that hard work and perseverance will lead to success. According to Tianlong Yu (2006), the concept of Asians being labelled as “model minorities” dates back to the Civil Rights movement when “to fight back, the racist power elite realized that simply responding by saying ‘there is no racism’ would not help; it would make more sense to show an example of minority success” (p. 327). So, they chose to exemplify the “hardworking Asian” stereotype where it was believed that if “the Asians can overcome, you can too.” This perception solidifies racial hegemony as it creates division among racial minority groups.

Similar to some of the participants in Lew’s study, both Biff and Jennifer were clear in their assertion of their dual identities as being both Chinese and Canadian. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 8; Biff, Interview, p. 15). As a result of his life experiences, Biff shows a different understanding of racism and its manifestations in society. He endured physical and verbal assaults as a child simply because he was the “Chinese kid.” He openly states at the beginning of his interview:

Biff: Because I was in ESL classroom, I was with ra, ah, a lot of race, I was dealing with a lot of racial minorities, something I’m more comfortable with actually, uh, even though I grew up in Mainville, I have this, I have this, barrier with white people. Other than Michael McDonald who is just weird, but uh, I don’t know, I don’t know how to explain it cause it’s like, it’s more like, uh,

3 A pseudonym has been assigned
yeah, I grew up with them but I also got kinda, I also got bullied by them when I was a kid ‘cause I grew up in like, hick-hick town Mainville, right? Hick-hick area of Mainville. (Biff, Interview, pp. 2-3)

When I probed a little further, he explains that “I’m not fob but I’m not white either, I’m not Canadian either. So, I also got beaten up. The fact that I got beaten up and I and I know, like, you know, what white people think. Right?” (Biff, Interview, p. 15). In this statement, it is interesting that Biff says that he is “not Canadian” because just before this statement, he says:

Biff: I’m self assured in who I am as a teacher and as my cultural background, I’m Canadian and I’m Chinese at the same time and which and which uh culture I aspire to? Don’t matter, cause heck, sometimes I think I’m more black than, you know, white but, but at the end of the day, you know, you just gotta, as a teacher, if you don’t know who you are, you shouldn’t be teaching the kids who they’re gonna be. (Biff, Interview, p. 15)

It is clear that he is associating Canadian culture with acting white despite his prior assertions of being both Chinese and Canadian. This brings to mind the notion of the “Canadian-Canadian” or “ordinary Canadian”: a Canadian who does not assert her/his Canadian-ness through hyphens. In a study conducted by Eva Mackey (2002), the Canadian-Canadians that she interviewed were “defending an unmarked and normative white Canadian ethnicity” (p. 157). Biff’s interpretation or his use of the word “Canadian” changes meaning over the course of the interview demonstrating the varying and unstable interpretations of Canadian identity. Speaking of the fluidity of identity, Homi Bhabha (1994) writes “The social articulation of difference from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (p. 2). Biff asserts his Canadian identity in one instance yet denies it in the next. By associating Canadian

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4 “fob” or “fresh off the boat” is a colloquial term denoting recently arrived immigrants and/or those who retain their cultures of origin.
identity with whiteness, he brings to light the changing nature and the hybridity of what being Canadian is interpreted to be.

Biff later clarifies that another reason for his shyness around white people is that he is not confident about his knowledge of contemporary North American culture. He goes on to describe how he isolates himself from the contemporary North American culture that surrounds him by insulating himself in the world of Chinese television. He says that:

Biff: Probably because I’m not so con, I’m not as confident in their [Canadian] culture as I am with the, with the Chinese people. For example, if I hang around pure fobs, I, I, I, become pretty, you know, if I hang around pure fobs, I become pretty closed as well. Right? Um, Pure fobs meaning people who are totally fob, like you know, just like from the other country, no English, no Canadian background whatsoever. You know, you’re not confident in that culture, I think that just what every, all ESL students experience when they’re in a new culture. right? You, You don’t feel that you know their culture enough, you don’t know their jokes well enough, and it just doesn’t click. Right? Same thing uh, with white people, when I hang around white people, I don’t feel that I totally understand the culture. and it’s not, It’s not every, I can’t laugh at everything that they laugh at. Like they can talk about Seinfeld, they can talk about Simpsons, like I don’t watch Seinfeld, Simpsons, I watch like 7:30 Chinese news on Fairchild, right? I guess that’s kind of what it is. (Biff, Interview, pp. 15-16)

Biff’s sentiments echo those of the participants in Lew’s study:

As illustrated, despite the students [sic] identification with ethnic backgrounds, the high-achieving Korean-American students at MH [high school], were painfully aware of how their racial minority status may be used to label them as foreigners or non-American by outsiders, despite their having been born and raised in the US. Therefore, as much as the students identified with their ethnicity, this process is also framed by exclusion and marginalization. (p. 345)

Biff is very aware of his Otherness and the self imposed distance he has created between himself and the racial majority. By creating this distance, he is protecting himself from the possibility of racial rejection and exclusion, a feeling that he encountered as a young, victimized child growing up in a predominantly white neighbourhood. Biff’s reaction to
the racist environment that surrounded him is not a reaction unique to him. Surya Bhattacharya, Ashifa Kassam and Simona Siad (2007) write of the reclamation of ethnic identity by racial minorities who were raised in Canada. In their article, they document the sentiments of many young adults and their feelings of being Canadian by citizenship but not Canadian by culture or socialization. Biff’s return to his parents’ ethnic roots provided a security for him; a security from the racist world around him.

“It’s strange that this is about racial minorities, right?”

Jennifer: It’s strange that this is about racial minorities, right? Like your thing [thesis]...but like, where I taught and like where I’ve lived in [suburb of large urban centre] even though that’s like our technical

Researcher: Term?

Jennifer: Name, but like, like, where I live there’s a lot of Asian and Brown people and like what not, so I don’t actually feel like one.

Researcher: You don’t feel like a minority in the area that you live in?

Jennifer: Yeah, that’s correct. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 10)

Months after completing this interview with Jennifer and after reviewing the transcripts, her comments about the peculiarity of this thesis and her claims of never experiencing racism still haunt me. The primary reason that Jennifer’s words have ruminated in my mind is that her experience is so similar to my own experiences prior to my “awakening.” Before those overtly racist experiences happened to me during the year I completed my teacher education program, I thought in a way that was parallel to Jennifer. Growing up in the same suburb as her and living in a similar environment, it was easy for me to understand how she could have developed this myopia towards the
embedded racism that exists. This is due to the insidious ways that racism works in Canadian society.

Jennifer has bought into the falsities of Canadian multiculturalism; she really believes she has never experienced racism. It may be true that she has never been called racist names or been fearful of her safety as a racial minority but the effects of institutionalized racism and whiteness are apparent in her answers. Thus her very denial of racism in the face of the evidence she provides herself of its existence creates a problematic. The effects of white privilege have become so effective that those who are not taught to see it or those who have never been forced to see it have no comprehension of its inner workings (McIntosh, 1990). Jennifer goes so far as to say that she does not feel like she is a racial minority in the particular area in which she lives and works. In some large urban centres with significant immigrant populations, ethnic enclaves are becoming increasingly prevalent as immigration numbers remain steadily high (Hann, 2005). According to Marina Jiménez (2007), an ethnic enclave can be defined as an area where more than 30% of the population in a given area is represented by one ethnic group. Considering that by her own account, Jennifer lives and works in an ethnic enclave, it is no wonder that she does not feel like a racial minority. The concept of the ethnic enclave is yet another symptom of a culture of whiteness: racial minorities are marginalized and grouped together in order to insulate themselves and protect themselves from the outside world. They live together as a group on the margins of Canadian society.

In spite of the fact that Jennifer does not feel like she is a racial minority, the conversation preceding this revelation is particularly interesting.

Researcher: So have you ever had an experience on practicum that you would identify as racism?
Jennifer: No, I haven’t actually, I was really lucky.

Researcher: Have you ever had a racist incident happen to you?

Jennifer: Uh, like just in like my personal life kind of thing, or professional?

Researcher: Everyday life.

Jennifer: Um

Researcher: Either or both. Whatever you feel comfortable talking about.

Jennifer: Yeah, honestly, I can’t recall one. Mmm, nothing comes up.

Researcher: So how do you define racism then?

Jennifer: Um, it’s unfair prejudice against, against a particular race or culture, often stemming from exaggerated stereotyping and it’s a negative, like it has a negative exaggeration.

Researcher: Now, when we were just talking about having um, racist experiences happen on practicum, you described it as, as yourself being lucky because nothing ever happened to you. Um, Do you know of others who have had rac-racist experiences happen to them or would you say generally that it’s not a common occurrence?

Jennifer: Um, I’m sure it happens to others, I haven’t personally heard of any, I can’t think of any stories off hand, uh, but I do acknowledge like, it’s something, it’s something that does occur. (Jennifer, Interview, pp. 9-10)

This is another example of the way that Jennifer distances herself from the ugliness of racism. By saying that she is “lucky” that she has never experienced any racism, she is keeping the ugliness of racism at an arm’s length; she thinks it occurs but it happens to other people she does not know. It appears that Jennifer is creating an “us” versus “them” attitude towards racism: racism does not take place where she lives or where her friends live, it happens to “them,” others who have the misfortune of encountering the racist world that Jennifer has never been acquainted with. By displacing racism and estranging herself from it, she identifies with the whiteness and the
institutionalized power that it entails. Because she does not speak with an accent or wear clothes native to her ethnicity, she is seen as less threatening to the majority which could be one of the reasons why she has never been forced to see racism. Also, it is important to keep in mind that Jennifer lives and works in a racially mixed environment. Jennifer seems to only remember the positive racial incidents that she has had, incidents that are noted for acceptance and respect for other cultures.

Researcher: So how were these diversity issues dealt with in the classroom?

Jennifer: Diversity issues?

Researcher: Um hmm…[meaning yes]

Jennifer: Um…

Researcher: Was it ever addressed?

Jennifer: No because there were no diversity issues.

Researcher: There were no diversity issues?

Jennifer: Really, if anything, we celebrated diversity, like because I asked them, like, bring in music from your ethnic culture or bring in um, you know, write stories or write poems about, you know, your country or whatever. Like, I really tried to give them a chance to express their, their ethnic culture and their diversity because I thought it was something to be celebrated.

Researcher: Now you say, this celebration of ethnic diversity, and umm, ethnic cultures. Was this a personal stance or was it in the curriculum or in the school?

Jennifer: I think both, I think both. Uh, well, because there was such a, such a culturally diverse classroom and it was, like, it was great to take advantage of that, and I think it’s in the curriculum somewhere, to like, to do something about different cultures, but like even if not, you can totally like, add it in. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 8)

In her assertion that culturally diverse materials can be added even if they are not included in the prescribed curriculum, Jennifer fails to recognize the racism apparent in the curriculum—the lack of perspectives that differ from Eurocentric knowledges that
maintain a culture of whiteness in schools. While these “alternative” perspectives can be added by the individual teacher, it puts the onus on the teacher to be aware of these Other knowledges, transferring the responsibility of delivering a culturally comprehensive curriculum from the school system to the teacher. This further solidifies the normalized Eurocentric curriculum and leads to the continued silencing of racial minority experiences and perspectives. It renders racial minorities invisible in the curriculum and education system. The supposed lack of racism is once again an example of the ways it is present. Jennifer does not see the subtle racism in the curriculum, classroom or education system or, rather, she ignores it, minimizes it, and moves it to the background. This is an example of racial hegemony: racial minorities cannot see their own marginalization and as a result of the hegemony of race, they believe that racism cannot exist. If Jennifer cannot see racism and if it never directly touches her, it will continue to be something that happens to “them,” not to her.

“Miss, where are you from?”

Isabelle: Um, sometimes with those students, they were bold and they’d just say “Oh, Miss, where are you from?” and you’d say “Oh, I’m from Canada” “No, Miss, like, where were you born?” “Ok, I’m from [large urban centre].” “No, Miss, where are your parents from?” They’ll get that specific with you. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 7)

Another common question that was often asked by the school students to the participants was the question, “Where are you from?” To most, this question seems trivial and unsuspicious but upon closer examination this question is an excellent example of racialization and its effect on society. In a multicultural environment, the question “where are you from?” is often heard. The participants, who were asked this question by their students, took this as a harmless question asked in a positive way. They
believed that most of their students were just genuinely interested and curious to know about them. Seeing that Rachel was in an elementary school setting when this question was asked, she used it as a teaching moment, a moment where she could teach the students about geography.

Rachel: I’ve had several students come ask me, they’re like “Oh, where are you from?” They’re so intrigued by it and they try to guess and then, um, we usually pull out a map and look at it and I mean, I go like “Where do you think I’m from?” and then they guess and then I’m like “Ok” and then I kind of situate and kind of close in on the area and I’m like “I’m from Asia” and then look at the countries from Asia and they guess. (Rachel, Interview, p. 9)

The participants who encountered this question generally viewed it positively, as a demonstration of the students’ curiosity and inquisitive nature. However, they do note that they have encountered the other possible negative reason for asking this question.

Speaking of this danger, Jennifer states that:

Jennifer: Sometimes, they would ask me “Where are you from?” like, I’m from well, I’m Canadian but I’m Chinese Canadian I guess and it would be, it’d be more of an interest point but I guess, I was pretty lucky in the sense that all the classrooms that I taught in, there was so much diversity already. There so, like there’s already such an eclectic mix of various backgrounds, races, um, and su-such, so people were very tolerant and like me being Asian was not like, it wasn’t even really a point of interest because there were Asian people there and non-Asian people there. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 8)

Jennifer recognizes that this simple question can be loaded with danger if she were in a different kind of classroom, a classroom, which by her inference, was less racially diverse. She is once again “lucky” that her identity as a Chinese Canadian does not interfere with her daily interactions with students and that her ethnicity was a point of interest for her students if it were even interesting to them to begin with. On this same topic, Rachel states:

Rachel: It’s interesting, like, I find myself doing is that when I’m here and people ask me, like in [large urban city], “Oh, what’s your background?” I’m very, you
know, easy with it, I’ll tell them what it is but then when I find that I’m different, like outside and people do ask me like, last week, someone tried to ask me “Oh, where are you from?” or whatever. Knowing that I’m different, I felt like, it’s that “Are they attacking me?” or like, “Are they asking because they want to know?” Like, it was, I felt it was for a different reason that they’re asking me even though it could have been the same thing and I’m wondering to myself, is it because I know I’m different. Is that the only reason why that, that I feel this way? (Rachel, Interview, p. 11)

Rachel notes the very essence of the danger of this question, is she being asked so that it can be used as an attack or is she being asked out of interest? If the question is being asked by students, she says:

Rachel: They knew not to like, you know, be insensitive or ask inappropriate questions and they never did and I never took it. Even if they did, I never took offence to them because I was like “they’re kids, who else are they supposed to ask?” and sometimes you need to be blunt and straightforward with it. So, I’d correct what they say if they say something inappropriate but otherwise, it’s, a lot of, it’s just curiosity and I don’t feel I should punish curiosity. (Rachel, Interview, p. 9)

When faced with the implications of the question “Where are you from” in the classroom, Rachel minimizes the seriousness of the incident by ignoring the ugliness and attributing it to innocent curiosity, ignorance from lack of knowledge. This may be the case considering the age of these inquisitors but what is more notable to consider is how these children had been socialized to ask this question and to attach meaning to the answers provided.

I am often asked this same question and prior to conducting this research, I never thought twice about this; I would always answer in a fashion similar to Isabelle in the opening quotation of this section because I feel a distinct connection to Canada and the city where I was raised but also because I did not feel that my ethnicity or country of origin should matter. Now, with the conceptual and analytic tools that I possess, I can unpack this question and read between the lines, or in this case, hear between the words.
When encountering similar situations of being asked “Where are you from”, Adrienne Shadd (2001) describes that “these situations are very frustrating for me because, as the conversation develops, I realize that the individuals have not grasped the very concept of what I represent, even when I go to the trouble of explaining it to them. Apparently, it is just too baffling to comprehend” (pp. 12-13). When someone asks me or anyone “where are you from?”, in some cases, what the inquisitor is really saying or what they mean to communicate is that they are confused about how to categorize you; they cannot place you racially. It is the subtlety of this question that can pose danger: the inquisitor’s intentions may be that they want to know more about you but it could also be a subtle form of racialization. Isabelle notes her frustration in being asked this question and the subsequent reactions to her responses:

Isabelle: Um, typically, I don’t think most Canadians have the experience of being asked “Oh where are you from?” and then having people not believe that you’re from [large cosmopolitan area] or not believe that you’re really from Appletown. I consider that to be ignorant because even you’re of maybe perhaps a different descent, you still are Canadian, you were born here; you were raised here. You might have some social conventions from another culture but, I mean for me, for example, I feel like I’m Canadian. When I go to the place my parents are from, it’s nice for a vacation but I don’t feel like I really belong there cause I, I didn’t grow up there, I didn’t share the same experience as there [sic]. So I do get really frustrated when people say you know, “where are you really from?” As if I’m not really from [large urban centre] or if I’m not really Canadian. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 13)

Isabelle expresses her confusion about the invisible role that racial minorities play in Canadian multiculturalism. She notes that despite the fact that she was born and raised in Canada, she will never be perceived as fully Canadian because of her race. Gabriel Bedard (2000) explains this sentiment eloquently:

While friends and I were having a heated debate about multiculturalism and Canadian identity one evening, I posed the question “What is a Canadian?” and their responses reflected those multicultural national narratives: there is no single
“true” Canadian, they said, because we are a multicultural and diverse country. I suggested that many would argue that Canadian identity is White, male and heterosexual, but they stuck to their comfortable notion that Canada is multicultural. Some in the room began to understand my position when I asked my non-White friends if they have ever been asked, “Where are you from?” This argument helped them realize that the Canadian multicultural narrative included them superficially but still rendered them invisible. Multiculturalism is a trope to satiate non-White peoples while relieving White anxiety and guilt about their colonial and imperial past. (p. 48)

Bedard points out that the question “where are you from” is another form of racialization that renders racial minorities invisible in the Canadian multicultural discourse. Carl James (2001) emphasizes “that tendency [to ask the question “where are you from?”] is an example of how individuals, consciously, and unconsciously, reaffirm difference and remind those of us who are constructed as “other”—because we do not ‘look and/or sound Canadian’—of our ‘outsider status’” (p. 153). Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1997) describe that:

Racial classification is a matter of identity. One of the first things we notice about people (along with their sex) is their race. We utilize race to provide clues about who a person is and to suggest how we should relate to him or her. This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently categorize racially. Such an encounter becomes a source of discomfort and momentarily, a crisis of racial meaning. People in our culture need to clarify who people are in racial terms. (p. 79)

In a society such as Canada, racialization plays a definite role in the many raced interactions that we have on a daily basis. By asking a question as simple as “where are you from?” we can all be placed into stereotypical categories that may or may not have any relevance or any truth in our lives. Racialization occurs on a daily basis and contributes to the continued discrimination that the racialized minority face. It can be interpreted as the process of associating certain characteristics and stereotypes to particular societal groups. This association is often based on race and/or ethnicity. Vic
Satzewich (1998) adds that “the crucial element to the process of racialization is the
delineation of group boundaries and identities by reference to physical and/or genetic
criteria or by reference to the term race” (p. 32). This creates a dangerous racial
environment that encourages racial categorization and prejudice. It is a means to fit large
groups of people into boxes of identification that can lead to tokenism and racism. As Li
(2007) writes:

Racialization encourages signification based on ‘race’, colour, origin, and other
essentialized features; liberal democracy rejects such signification due to the
principle of equality that recognizes congenital and primordial features as having
no relevance in determining the dignity, capacity and social worth of individuals.
(p. 41)

Racialization promotes division and the dichotomy of Canadian racism is once again
brought to light; when it occurs in a Canadian setting, it creates a binary between the
inherent need to categorize based on race and the democratic and liberal equality that has
been written into law and legislation. It is true that there are worse forms of racialization
that are often more blatant and unconcealed but the hidden discourse of this question is
precisely the reason it should be examined. The danger does not lie in the asking of this
question, rather in the interpretation and the associations made to the answer provided. It
is important to understand that this seemingly uncomplicated question can have both
positive and negative connotations. It is not always used as a tool of racialization but the
possible usages and contexts must be considered.

**Closing Remarks**

In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which whiteness and white privilege
have had an impact on the professional, academic and personal lives of Jennifer, Isabelle,
Rachel, Stephanie and Biff. Each interviewee may not have immediately realized how
racism has impacted on their lives but by sharing their stories, they have already made the first step toward consciousness. These participants have all experienced different expressions of a culture of whiteness, institutionalized racism, and subtle racialization. Most importantly, for a racial minority to claim that they have never experienced racism is in itself, a manifestation of the way that racism and whiteness works in our society. The person who claims that racism does not affect her/his life reinforces the tacit composition of racism and racial hegemony.
CHAPTER SIX

POWER RELATIONS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Racism is not about cultural superiority, but about power over others. (Haynes, 2003, 66)

A key component to racism is power—structural and institutional power. This power is more than the ‘ordinary’ influence an individual might have over another; it is the support of that influence by economic, political and ideological conditions. Often this power is an ‘invisible’ regular and continuous part of everyday human existence, sustained by established law, regulations and/or policies or by accepted conventions and customs. (James, 2007, p. 357)

Racially marked power dynamics and structures impacted the daily interactions of these five participants with the students they taught in the schools, other teachers and other students enrolled in teacher education programs. I discuss how race impacts the teacher candidate’s position within schools. I then examine the ways that equity access admissions have impacted the power relationships between the five participants and other candidates in their teacher education programs.

“What if today is the day a student makes a racist comment towards me?”

Researcher: Does your racial identity affect your self confidence when you are teaching?

Rachel: Um, when I’m teaching, not really, but I think every morning before I go in, I kind of get anxious and worry about “What if today is the day that a student makes a racist comment towards me?” How will I deal with that if I’ve never dealt with it before? (Rachel, Interview, p. 16)

The daily reality that many racial minorities face is that they also wake up in the morning with this thought; the insecurity of not knowing if today will in fact be that day when the ugly face of racism makes itself obvious to their world. This comment that
Rachel so candidly shared with me is a thought that has run through my mind many times before. Following the racist incident that happened to me, every morning as I was driving to school, I would have these same thoughts: “What if they come back and what if it happens again?” These thoughts would continue to mull in my mind until the day was over and I was back in my car, safe for one more day. Somehow this group of students created within me, a sense of insecurity; they had destroyed the confidence and poise that I carried with me into the classroom but upon further reflection, I began to question whether this group of students had stolen the confidence I brought with me or did they tap into insecurities that I previously had?

As racial minorities, we have historically and socially been conditioned to see ourselves as inferior to the dominant. We receive these messages daily through the shows we watch, the words we use, the actions we observe, the books we read, and the lessons we are taught (Dyer, 1997; Ng, 1993a). Especially within the classroom, our actions are coded to signify subordination and for those of us who resist and retaliate, we are labelled as troublemakers (Carty, 1991, p. 36). Race always seems to be the issue and we are told that we just need to develop a thicker skin.

We are often left to “deal with minority issues” as if the issues surrounding race are not a problem that the mainstream population5 encounters. Writing from the position of being a white woman, Peggy McIntosh (1990) describes the privilege that white people have; one being that they have the privilege of not being aware of other cultures or have the privilege of not thinking about race, including their own. Isabelle highlights this when she was discussing one of her first teaching assignments.

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5 In using the term mainstream population, I am referring to the white racial majority
Isabelle: During black history, uh black history month, um, at the first school that I taught at, they, they wanted to plan something and I wasn’t going to be there because I was moving onto another position at a different school, um, and they were saying, you know, “it’s really important to have black history” while the kids didn’t really appreciate it and at this particular school, there weren’t a lot of black students, this is also the school where I was mistaken for the other black teacher. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 13)

While Isabelle does not explicitly state that she was in charge of planning the events that were to take place during “Black History month”, it appears from the way that she speaks about this that she was expected to play an active role in organizing and planning because she was a History teacher who happened to be black. By having to state explicitly that “they,” meaning the other teachers in the department, wanted to plan something and that she was moving onto another school in the next term, it suggests that she was expected to help with the planning. It became “her” issue and an issue from which the white teachers could distance themselves. R. Patrick Solomon (1997) contends that:

To delegate to teachers of colour the responsibility for providing a culturally relevant curriculum for students may initially be a pragmatic strategy, but, used repeatedly, it may signal dominant-group teachers' ideological motivation to distance themselves from racial and ethnocultural issues in the schooling process. Many conservative dominant-group teachers take the stance that if minorities want culturally-inclusive schooling they have to initiate and sustain it themselves. They have adopted an "it's your responsibility" attitude. (p. 406)

As racial minorities, race and racism are normalized issues that we confront on a daily basis; we do not have the privilege of not dealing with it or pushing it onto someone else. All of the participants recognized the possibility that they could be victims of racism while in the school environment, if they had not already identified themselves as victims. They all understood the danger that the school environment posed for them regardless of the authority they were supposed to embody.
For the five teacher candidates who chose to participate in this study, a heightened sense of alertness to their racial Otherness in the schools was a common sentiment but the situation was undoubtedly intensified for the four female racial minority teacher candidates in this study. Being both a woman and a racial minority further jeopardizes our positions as authority figures and teachers. Roxana Ng (1995) eloquently articulates this concept when she explains “if a teacher is a female and/or a member of a racial minority and engages in critical teaching, she is in a position of double jeopardy [italics added]” (p. 136). This notion of “double jeopardy” is an issue that all racial minority females face in their everyday lives regardless of profession; the authority of our work, thoughts, ideas, and efforts is repeatedly undermined by the simple reason of being a woman who is not white (Bannerji, 1987, 1991; Razack, 1998; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). We are doubly placed at a disadvantage; not only do we fight the binds of patriarchy and sexism, but we also fight the binds of racism. Ng (1993a) explains that:

Acts of sexism and racism go beyond personal intentions and attitudes precisely because they are embedded in institutions and because individuals have different (and at times multiple and contradictory) locations within institutions. Sexism and racism are power relations that have crystallized in organizational actions in which we are implicated by virtue of our membership in institutions. (p. 195)

Within the context of education, the knowledge that we transmit is often treated as questionable, as if our non-white eyes read and understand the text differently from those who are in white bodies (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Vargas, 1999). Speaking specifically about racial minority female educators, Ng (1993a) further explains this identity:

As a member of a racial minority and a woman, I have no authority despite my formal position. But it is not only my authority that is at stake here. The knowledge I embody and transmit is also suspect—I am a woman out of control. The sexism and racism in this case is based not only on the student’s attitude
toward minorities in general; it is also about minorities in positions of authority whose knowledge and expertise is dubious. (p. 197)

To further this notion of double jeopardy for female racial minority teachers, the situation is even more distressing for racial minority female students in teacher education programs. Not only do they have to mediate their roles as women and as racial minorities, but they must also manage their relatively weak position as student teachers considering that student teachers are automatically placed in imbalanced power relations (Crozier & Menter, 1993; Jones, Maguire & Watson, 1997; St. Maurice, 1987). They are in a position of *triple jeopardy*; their social positions as racial minority women are further weakened by their positions as student teachers. It is a dangerous game for the racial minority female students in teacher education programs and the stakes are high, they must assert their authority or risk losing control of their classes, and risk losing respect.

During practicum, it becomes painfully obvious that these racial minority female teacher candidates had to work harder than their white counterparts. When asked about the challenges that she faced while on practicum, Jennifer explains that her biggest challenge was:

Jennifer: Getting taken seriously. Um because like I, you know, I’m petite and I don’t even really look, like, old or like, you know, like a teacher, no matter how I dress, like I try to you know, dress professionally but it still doesn’t work really, and like even the staff would mistaken [sic] me for a student, as a student often.

Researcher: Umm hmm.

Jennifer: So that was kind of frustrating. I think that was probably my biggest struggle, just taken, being taken seriously. And, I noticed that like, cause um, in the practicum experience I had, um, the other student teachers, like, well, the other, the other fellow, he was like a larger male, and so he looked much more, like he had, just like, this presence, he just took a lot more authority and it really made me realize just how much appearance counts. (Jennifer, Interview, pp. 4-5)
Jennifer attributes her lack of authority to her petite size and youth; these may also be contributing factors to her perceived lack of presence in the school but it is obvious that her race and gender have also played a role in this struggle. This situation was further exacerbated by the other teachers on staff who also mistook her for a student despite her professional attire. Based on the information that Jennifer provides, the school and the staff were racially mixed further problematizing her dilemma. Even though she was among a racially mixed staff, she still encountered these issues of not being taken seriously.

Jennifer’s positioning as a female racial minority teacher candidate jeopardized her position in the school and further reveals how racialization is systemically entrenched within a social institution that is so deeply founded on a culture of whiteness and power. This is another example of the ways in which racial minorities are structurally and institutionally subordinated; it is a testament to racial hegemony. It is so engrained in the institution of schooling that we, as a society, begin to believe the “truth” that the powerful have forced to be true. Ng (1993b) states “In this context [colonization of Canada] education played a central role in the entrenchment of racist and sexist ideologies. In Canada formal education has always served as an assimilationist tool” (p. 54). Jennifer even states that she does not look like a “teacher”; this raises the question of what a teacher is supposed to look like. This suggests that the notion of the “powerful white teacher” is so embedded into the system that it is systemic to the thinking of both racial minority and mainstream students and teachers. Frantz Fanon (1967) theorizes that “It becomes obvious that the white man [sic] acts in obedience to an authority complex, a leadership complex” and Ng (1993a) supports this:
White’ European men, especially those of British and sometimes French descent, will typically see themselves as superior to women and to people with other ethnic and racial origins. Systems of ideas and practices have been developed to justify and support this notion of superiority. In Canada these ideas and practices originate in colonization by the Anglo-Saxons and the French. Over time, ideas about the superiority and inferiority of different groups become accepted ways of thinking and being. Certain behaviours and modes of operation are taken for granted: they become ways of excluding those who do not belong to the dominant group(s). (p. 194)

Ng explains the way that whiteness became the norm in Canada and how it can be used as a way of excluding those who do not fit the dominant group. The teachers in this study are not members of the dominant racial group and thus have been excluded. This situation has been so normalized that a culture of whiteness is enveloped into the entire concept of schooling and the entire school culture (Bedard, 2000; Dei, 2000). Carl James (2001) offers an analysis of the powerful white teacher in describing his experiences as an African Canadian professor. He affirms that:

If all of their [his students] elementary and high school teachers had been white, it would only seem logical to them that their post-secondary teachers would also be white. My presence therefore was an anomaly—a deviation from the norm; it was something for which the students were unprepared, something that, as some of them would have us believe, they were unable to handle because they had no previous experiences to call upon. (pp. 151-152)

The presence of racial minority teachers is a departure from the norm of the “powerful, white teacher.” Students are not used to seeing racial minorities in positions of power within education systems and, as James notes, are unprepared to handle the situation.

Respect for Jennifer’s position was triply endangered by her identity and, as a result, caused her to have a difficult time negotiating power and authority. This weak power position as a student teacher is emphasized by Jennifer:

Researcher: Did you feel the students perceived you as being different?

Jennifer: Different how so?
Researcher: Different in any capacity.

Jennifer: Different? Definitely different. Like, I was definitely a student teacher, not a teacher.

Researcher: Right.

Jennifer: And umm, yeah, definitely different.

Researcher: Why or why not?

Jennifer: Why?

Researcher: Why, why do you think the students perceived you as being different?

Jennifer: Um, I dunno, because I’m a student teacher. It’s like, it’s like I’m under the teacher and I have almost as much power as the teacher but not quite and that’s sort of the impression that I got from them. (Jennifer, Interview, pp. 6-7)

Issues related to power dynamics greatly affect how student teachers perceive their own authority, autonomy, and power in the relationships that were fostered in the schools and also in relationships where the classroom was the mise en scène. Jennifer notes above that she does not feel like a full teacher, she realizes that within this particular power network, she is under the teacher and does not have as much power as the teacher she is working with.

This notion of being under the teacher brings to mind the work of Michel Foucault and his conceptualization of power. Foucault (1980a) reminds us that:

One doesn’t have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over the others. It’s a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom, it is exercised….Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns. Certainly everyone doesn’t occupy the same position; certain positions preponderate and permit an effect of supremacy to be produced. (p. 156)
From this Foucauldian perspective, working within the mechanism of school power relations, associate/host teachers hold positions that dominate and allow them to have a certain amount of superiority over the student teachers that they are supervising. Biff notes that “the teachers feel us student teachers were like, you know, the lower level people or something” (Biff, Interview, p. 6). Racial minority student teachers must work within two different machines of power, the machine of student teaching and the machine of race, each which assigns them a position of inferiority.

Faced with the triple jeopardy of being racial minority female teacher candidate, Stephanie decides to avoid conflict or further subordination by doing exactly as her associate teacher asks, a difficult task considering that Stephanie did not get along with her associate teacher. We shared the following exchange:

Researcher: Now, what were some of the challenges that you faced in regard to your associate or host teachers?

Stephanie: Um, well, for the, I mean the only time that I faced any real challenge was with the second practicum with the French host teacher and the first and the third ones, that I worked with for the other, the other subjects I didn’t have any major problem with them. But I guess, um, like I said, kind of personality clash, difference in teaching philosophy, and difference in styles of teaching. Like she wanted me to do exactly the same thing that she was doing and although I tried my best, I wasn’t able to you know, basically be her in the classroom so that was hard.

Researcher: How did you overcome these challenges?

Stephanie: Mmm...I guess, I just kind of put more time, I mean, I, I feel like I was trying to put as much time as I could but basically toward the end, I was just, like that was all I was doing. Sleeping and preparing for classes and marking. So I just tried to, um, work harder and really conform to what she expected but at the end of the day actually, I ended up asking to go to another school because um, I wasn’t having a good experience there.

Researcher: Did you end up switching then?

Stephanie: Yeah, that’s when I went to the French Immersion school.
Researcher: Ok, and was that um, during the placement?

Stephanie: No,

Researcher: Or was that after?

Stephanie: No I finished up the placement and the third placement I did at another school.

Researcher: Ok. you just briefly described um, feeling like you had to conform.

Stephanie: Mmhmm.

Researcher: Can you just elaborate a bit more on that?

Stephanie: Ok, um, well, in terms of you know, like if she had a certain activity in mind, then, even if I had something else that I would prefer to do, I would just do what she wanted me to do and like if she said “Ok, I want you to make a worksheet about this or that, you know about the passé composé I want you to give them a quiz on Thursday.” Then I would just do that and not put any of my own ideas into it and try to follow as closely with what she was planning to do in the first place. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 6)

According to Stephanie, there was not only a clash of personalities with that associate teacher, but also a clash in personal teaching styles. She speaks of having to conform to that particular teacher’s expectation that she would be just like her. She was not able to test her own methods in the classroom; the associate teacher had certain expectations of how things should be taught and these expectations were different from those of Stephanie. When discussing issues of conformity in teacher education, Deborah Britzman (1991) writes “conformity, in its adherences to the dictates of social convention, privileges routinized behaviour over critical action. Its centripetal force pulls toward reproducing the status quo in behaviour as it mediates our subjective capacity to intervene in the world” (p. 29). Britzman highlights the suppression of personal style and
individuality in favour of maintaining the norm. In this context, conformity helps to uphold the status quo of Eurocentrism and ignores distinctiveness. Similar to Jennifer’s situation, Biff was also mistaken for a student and openly expresses his surprise. He tells the following story:

Biff: I walked into the staffroom once and this lady told me that, this Asian lady told me that, you know “oh, uh, no, no students allowed in here.” And I was like “Yo, I’m a teacher here!” and then she was “Oh, I’m sorry.” Right? I was thinking “Man! Girl, you’re an Asian too! Like, I know us Asians look young but you got like, you know, don’t do that to me!” (Biff, Interview, p. 14)

It is apparent that both Biff and Jennifer do not seem to acknowledge the subtle racialization or the everyday racism that they encountered when they were mistaken as students. During this interaction with another teacher who is a racial minority, he conveys his disappointment that she cannot distinguish him as a teacher despite his attire and attitude. In his eyes, this is a lack of camaraderie among the small number of racial minority educators. His reaction to this incident is telling about the lack of racial minority teachers in the education system and it also supports the notion that his appearance as a racial minority male betrays his position of power. Seeing that he was an Asian male entering the staffroom, this teacher assumed that he was a student, once again reinforcing the notion of the “powerful, white teacher.” His youth was of course a factor in this situation but his place as a young, Asian male undoubtedly jeopardized his appearance of authority. As Jennifer said during her interview, “Certain appearances have certain connotations associated with it” (Jennifer, Interview, p. 11).

Isabelle was also mistaken for a student while on placement and she recounts:

Isabelle: So being mistaken for a high school student, that happened to me a few times. Um, in one situation I was actually covering a class for my associate student, and I walked out ahead of, oh sorry, my associate teacher, and I walked out ahead of my associate teacher, I walked out of the classroom ahead of my
associate teacher and another teacher came in to relieve us of our half of the period we were covering, our on call period. She started screaming, “What is she doing? Get her back in here!” and I turned around to see what the big commotion was and she had mistaken me for a student um, instead of being a teacher. So, I felt a little bit out of place. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 6)

To make matters worse, once Isabelle began teaching, she was often mistaken for the other black teachers who also worked at the school.

Isabelle: Another experience I had at school, I was confused for another black teacher. There were 3 black teachers at the school. Most of the teachers were white though and I was confused for another one and the three of us could not have looked more different. Like, I’m really fair, the other ones were dark. One has long braided extensions which I don’t have. My hair is like, medium brown, almost light brown and definitely no extensions. The other one was really short which I’m not, I’m pretty tall, pretty dark and had really short like chin length hair. So, we were, people would always confuse which teacher was which but we don’t look anything alike.

Researcher: how did it make you feel when you were confused for this other teacher?

Isabelle: (giggles) I was a bit annoyed because I thought I was so much better looking than the other teacher! (giggles) How could you, she’s very nice but how could you confuse us? I am good looking! (chuckles) I also didn’t understand how people could like, honestly, we look so different. I don’t understand how people, could think we look anything alike. We just, we laughed about it but, because it, it happened to the other teachers as well. They would, they would talk about you know, the, the teacher who helped out with choir and they would go up to another one of the black teachers and be like “oh, you help out with the choir” and she was like “No, no, that’s Miss Timberlake [Isabelle]!” (Isabelle, Interview, p. 9)

Isabelle highlights in this story the subtle racialization that she has just encountered. By her account, despite the fact that they each looked very different, the other white teachers refused to see them individually as people but rather, grouped them together by ignoring their individual looks. She even notes her disbelief in the confusion between herself and the other African Canadian teachers and that they laughed about the confusion together because it had also happened to them. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997)
speaks of “laughing off” the ugliness of racism when she analyses an essay written by C. Carr. In the analysis, Carr describes how her grandfather recounts the story of an attempted lynching and at its conclusion, the author’s family members laughed off the ugliness of racism recounted in the story. Ellsworth explains there were two possible ways to react to this racist incident and racism in general: either keep silent about the situation and go numb to the racism or laugh it off. Given the choices, Isabelle and the other black teachers have decided to laugh about the incident as opposed to facing the ugliness of the racism. It is a mechanism to soften the impact of the racialization and racism they faced.

Rachel did not encounter many of these issues related to appearance during her practicum, perhaps due to the fact that she was teaching in an elementary school and the age difference is more noticeable but she did mention that she encountered these issues of appearance while in the job market.

Rachel: I question my abilities because I’m so, I find them, like [I ask myself] “Is it my abilities that’s not landing me jobs or is it basically what I present the um, the people that I’m going to interview for, physically?” So for me, it’s not so much race but I also feel like I look young. (Rachel, Interview, p. 16)

She says that she does not believe that her trouble finding a job is associated to her race but rather to her youthful appearance. This is in contradiction to a statement she made just before:

Rachel: So, I feel like it’s kind of bad to say, but I feel like when I’m gonna get a job, it’s probably gonna be by someone who’s also a minority and knows what I went through and [they will] be like “maybe I should give her a chance.” We tend to be, sympathize with those people that we tend to relate to and I think that’s what’s going to happen and I think I’ll probably get a job at places where there’s a lot more, there is diversity, there are minorities, um, students, um, the principal or vice principal wants there to be, like, the kids to be represented in the staff. (Rachel, Interview, p. 15)

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In one instance, Rachel attributes her inability to find a job to the fact that she looks young but she realizes that her race also affects this. She is unable to name this as racism despite the fact that she believes that race is a factor in employment. She highlights the interconnectedness of these two factors in her inability to find a job. Sherene Razack (1998) highlights the interlocking nature of oppressive forces and she maintains that one cannot be separated from the other. Yanick St. Jean and Joe Feagin (1998) further support this:

> Because racial and gender characteristics are often blended, they may trigger individual and collective reactions by whites that are also fused. This real-world blending often makes it difficult to know the separate contributions of each element in particular situations that involve both racial and gender barriers to social mobility and personal achievement. (p. 16)

It is difficult to dissect oppressive forces from one another because of their interconnectedness. The notion of the interweaving of oppressive forces is also one of the key components of integrative anti-racism. Rachel’s youthful and racially minoritized appearance plays a role in her inability to get a job.

> “What are they saying? Our abilities are not the same?”

Rachel: I feel like the quality [of academic programs], kind of, is compromised when we do that [equity admissions] because we’re [saying] like “just because you, you are a certain way or a certain thing like sex or um, age or um, minority, um, we’re gonna,” you know, “change this [admission criteria] so you can get in.” Like, what are they saying? Our abilities are not the same? So, I figured we should all be treated fair in that sense. (Rachel, Interview, p. 17)

Another issue that every participant discussed in some form was the concept of equity hiring and equity admissions into teacher education programs. It is important to discuss that equity access admissions have effects on the ways that these racial minority teacher candidates interacted with other teacher candidates while they were completing
their teacher education programs. Equity access admissions demonstrate the way that power works within the relationships between these racial minority teacher candidates and their peers. Carl James (2007) explains that “they [equity programs] are meant to remove barriers that have traditionally advantaged some groups and disadvantaged others. Further, such programs seek to address the impact of practices that have operated on the basis of white males’ norms” (p. 357). Within the context of teacher education, equity admission programs have been designed to recruit students from groups who were historically disadvantaged such as Aboriginal persons, racial minorities and persons who are differently abled.

The participants all understand the paradox that equity admissions and equity hiring present: there is a need for an increase in the number of racial minorities who hold positions within any institution, but by institutionalizing and structuring the process of hiring racial minorities, there have been a number of disadvantages and issues that have surfaced. In their interviews with me, All the participants have encountered or expressed a number of the issues discussed by Frances Henry, Carol Tator, Winston Mattis and Tim Rees (2000) when they summarize the common issues surrounding equity employment and admissions (pp. 364-366). In the following exchange, Jennifer reveals her feelings about equity hiring practices.

Researcher: How do you think that it [race] will play a role in your career?

Jennifer: Um... good and bad I think. Umm I guess a bad situation would be like, you know, being a racial minority and like not, like, to be in a classroom or in a setting where you’re not, you are a minority and it’s like, you’re not necessarily understood. Or like you know, there might be you know, um, communication problems or what-not. So I think there’s potential of that and you know, negative stereotyping of Asians or what not, right? Um. But on a positive note, um, I think people I think it helps because um, for like hiring practices they have to like hire
a certain percentage of, of whatever racial minorities, and I actually like, I feel that it does help in some way. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 10)

She understands that equity practices could place racial minority applicants in situations where, in her own words, they are not “necessarily understood” but she made sure to emphasize that she felt that equity practices were advantageous and helped racial minorities. Once again, Jennifer cannot name racism and she minimizes its impact by calling a possible racist situation, a situation where the racial minority is not necessarily understood.

In the opening quotation of this section, Rachel describes one of the main issues that equity hiring and equity admissions create: an imagined sense of inadequacy amongst racial minorities, that in some way, we do not measure up to the white population and that standards are lowered in order to achieve diversity hiring and admission goals. Subsequently, Rachel said that she believed that all people should be treated fairly in that respect, further galvanizing the danger that this can cause. Henry et al. (2000) explained that by not accommodating difference and by treating all people equally, we are being discriminatory (p. 366). A key factor to treating all people equitably involves redressing issues that can place certain groups of people at a disadvantage; in contrast to the discourse of equity, the discourse of equality further subordinates racial minorities and as Henry et al. have noted, it is discriminatory.

Isabelle echoed this notion of racial minority inadequacy when she spoke specifically of the conversations that she had with her white friends about equity admissions. She said:

Isabelle: There were some people, some of my friends who aren’t of a visible minority say it’s not fair um because it means that maybe other people who aren’t, maybe other people who are qualified aren’t getting the job simply
because they’re not a visible minority. Personally, I think I had, I had really good marks, I wrote really good applications, um, and I think regardless of my ethnicity I would have gotten in. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 8)

When asked about the reactions of her white friends, Isabelle explained:

Isabelle: At times, I was a bit annoyed by the comments [referring to their perception of unfairness in equity admissions], um, but I understand the principle behind it and I feel like if somebody has the merit to get into the program, they deserve to get in.... I felt a little bit hurt because I felt that at times they didn’t think I would have gotten in if I wasn’t a minority, um, but I’m sure that in reality they know that I got in because I was an excellent candidate, I was a strong candidate. (Isabelle, Interview, pp. 16-17)

In having these conversations with her white friends, Isabelle had once again subtly undergone the process of racialization. Her white friends demonstrated the power that their white skin gave them: the ability to question the worthiness of her entry into the teacher education program and, basically, question her abilities. By doing this, they reinforced the privilege that their whiteness affords them; they feel unjustly treated by these equity admissions and they have the power to doubt Isabelle’s abilities, strengthening racial hierarchy and racial power relations once more. Frantz Fanon (1967) states:

The first encounter with a white man [sic] oppresses him [the black person] with the whole weight of his blackness. Then there is the unconscious. Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to ‘make it unconscious.’ (p. 150)

The weight of her marginalization is evident in her interactions with her friends. Isabelle does not feel inferior until she encountered the whiteness exhibited by her white friends. Through this process of racialization, she has been oppressed and made aware of her “blackness” or her status as a racial minority within the racial social order.

Similar to Isabelle, I have had conversations with white friends about equity admissions in teacher education programs and have received the same type of hostility
and misunderstanding. It is as if the bar must be lowered in order for racial minorities to make the cut. By enacting these equity policies, white populations are perceived to be disadvantaged and that racial minorities are taking away spots that are meant for white applicants. This is another demonstration of the culture of whiteness that is embedded in the structure of schooling and admissions; through the maintenance of a supposed meritocracy, it creates a presupposition of inferiority where racial minorities do not measure up to white students and that well deserving white students are having their rightful spots stolen. It encourages an uneven power structure amongst students in teacher education programs that continues to perpetuate an unbalanced racial hierarchy. This is not to say that all white students feel entitled or that they do not understand the concepts or reasons behind equity admissions but these attitudes are facilitated and tolerated in an environment where a culture of whiteness is deeply entrenched into the entire concept of schooling.

**Closing Remarks**

In this chapter, I have discussed the unbalanced power relationships that students in teacher education programs are constantly negotiating. As student teachers, their positions of authority and power are undermined and they are placed in weak positions of power. This situation is intensified for these participants considering that their racial identities play a factor in their subordinated positions. Through an examination of their experiences, it becomes apparent that the ideal of the “white powerful teacher” is systemically entrenched into the entire concept of schooling seeing that the teacher plays a central role in the classroom. Not “looking like a teacher” was problematic for these young teacher candidates because their identities betrayed their assertion of power and
authority. Within the context of equity admission processes, racial minority students often come face to face with white privilege—a culture of whiteness is shown to them in preconceived notions about abilities and meritocracy. It becomes obvious that racial minority teachers must navigate through different networks of power from lower positions.
CHAPTER SEVEN
RESISTANCE TO THE CULTURE OF WHITENESS

Education is a political act and the role of the teacher should be that of an activist for democratic reforms in the school setting. (Alladin, 1996, p. 16)

At times it seemed like these participants did not recognize the culture of whiteness that enveloped their experiences on practicum except for the whiteness that they encountered in the Eurocentric curriculum that they were supposed to teach. While they may not have been aware of the resistance they showed to the culture of whiteness, in this chapter, I highlight the ways in which these participants tried to challenge the white norm in the education system and thereby offer resistance. By diversifying the curriculum and telling their students about their life experiences, the participants countered the Eurocentric curriculum and culture of whiteness that surrounded them. They enhanced the students’ learning and provided them with a more comprehensive perspective that did not focus solely on Eurocentric views. By being able to relate to their students and also, by trying to be role models to them, these participants showed their students that their sheer presence was a form of resistance that disrupted the cultural norm. Demonstrating to these students that racial minorities are capable of achieving and succeeding in an educational setting is an example of the ways in which they challenged and consequentially resisted the Eurocentric education system.

“All the curriculum were without minority characters”

Researcher: Did diversity issues surface in the curriculum?

Stephanie: Umm, no, I mean, I guess, well, all the curriculum like in the English classes um, that I can remember all the curriculum were without minority characters so maybe that would make a minority student feel a little bit weird but I don’t know. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 10)
The issue of racial diversification within the curriculum was treated differently by each participant. The opinions on this issue are varied but it is important to note that each participant made it clear that if racial diversity was incorporated into the curriculum, it was done due to a personal effort by the participants themselves. It becomes apparent that curricula in the various subjects are Eurocentric and that any racial diversification that was found in the curricula was usually inserted through the teacher’s own accord. As Frances Henry, Carol Tator, Winston Mattis and Tim Rees (2000) state “The perspectives of novelists and poets who reflect the history and experiences of non-Western cultures are generally ignored in the Eurocentric curriculum” (p. 234). Despite the fact that the school population at the school where Stephanie completed her placement was predominantly white, it is still important to instil within students a holistic cultural experience that includes the stories of racial minorities in texts. The lack of minority representation in curriculum also paints an unrealistic picture for these students by only speaking of the lives of white characters. By only presenting materials that are Eurocentric, large segments of the Canadian population are not being represented and their voices and experiences are being silenced.

When we were discussing issues related to racial identity, confidence, and teaching, Stephanie draws on her experience as a youth leader in her church to discuss how she tries to introduce pieces of her own culture to a group of youth. In other words, she raises the notion of racial diversification in an environment where young adults are learning. She explains that:

Stephanie: So, I’m happy that, and I don’t think any of them [youth group participants] really have heard a lot of like black gospel music so in that sense it increases my confidence to be able to share some of my, um, well, I don’t know if
I would say race but um, to share a different culture with other people, it does increase my confidence and I’m really happy that I can do that. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 15)

Even though Stephanie was not in a structured school environment, in her capacity as teacher and leader, she is able to share her culture with a group of youth who had little to no previous experience with it. Despite the informal learning environment, the teaching of culture is still something that Stephanie feels was important. By sharing her culture and being able to show the students a part of herself, she was accepted for who she was and, thus, she was confident in this environment. This is in stark contrast to her practicum placements where she was often isolated as the only teacher candidate in the school and also one of the only racial minorities within the building. In her church, Stephanie feels comfortable and accepted which enables her to share important cultural aspects of her life.

Also completing her practicum placements in a mono-cultural environment, Rachel found it peculiar that other cultures were only discussed in compartmentalized ways; for example, in the Grade two Geography curriculum, there is a unit of study called “Cultures around the world”. She elaborates:

Rachel: I think, just like, in general, how we have one month for black history month but what about the other millions of cultures out there. What about them? When do you get to celebrate them? When do we get to learn about them? So that was my only issue with that. Um, as well as, I find, in the curriculum, we only discussed it under Geography um, I think it was the Grade two curriculum they have “Cultures around the world”. They have a unit for that one aspect. What about everyday life? How would that affect them? Because kids come from different parts of the world all the time. (Rachel, Interview, p. 11)

Here, Rachel emphasizes the need for a revision to the curriculum so that it is not just focused on the achievements of the Western World; she demonstrates her awareness of the lack of discussion surrounding “Other” histories. The tokenism and the
compartamentalized teaching of culture are perpetuated through the delivery of this curricular aspect as an isolated unit in the Grade two curriculum. This is detrimental to the awareness and comprehension that is necessary for young children to become socially responsible citizens; it promotes the stereotyping of cultures that differ from the Western culture of whiteness.

As a teacher candidate in a predominantly white school, Rachel felt that she could share her cultural experiences with the class. She taught her classes about large multicultural centres and, also, about her place of origin.

Rachel: When we actually did anything about cultures and stuff like that, I brought in my own experience and um, especially when I was in Plumville doing placements. I talked a lot about [large cosmopolitan city] and then where I came from and the kids were really interested in all that. (Rachel, Interview, p. 9)

These conversations interested the children and she felt that she was empowering them to overcome the racial stereotyping that surrounds their environments. In her words,

Rachel: Knowledge is power and then kids need to be aware that there are differences and how to go about dealing with that and if they’re, if they have more knowledge, um, and they’re educated about it, then they’re not going to be so ignorant about it. (Rachel, Interview, p. 9)

Rachel feels that by teaching her students about “Other” cultures in a non-judgemental and accepting environment, the students will be empowered to overcome the biases and stereotypes that they are often taught. Rachel has taken a position as a multicultural educator. As George Dei and Agnes Calliste (2000a) confirm: “Multiculturalism presents the mechanism of redress through education-sharing and exchange of ideas” (p. 21). By teaching these students about other cultures and instilling within them a sense of knowledge and understanding, Rachel believes that her multicultural approach will help to combat ignorance and open these children’s minds to other possibilities.
In a completely different situation where the student population was intensely racially diverse, Isabelle also shares knowledge about “other cultures” that is not commonly known. Isabelle explains:

Isabelle: With respect to History, um, because there’s a lot of the school I’m at now, there’s a lot of visible minorities in the classroom, I try and explain maybe what the experience of other minorities would have been. Even if that culture isn’t really represented in the time period in Canadian history, I don’t think it hurts by any means to explain, like you know, if you talk about people who were voting, there’s a lot of people, there’s a lot of minorities who aren’t able to vote so I say, or I make reference to that. I’ll make reference to the fact, you know, it wasn’t until the 1960’s that a lot of natives themselves were able to vote. That sort of thing, I’ll explain I guess, it’s something I’m probably more conscious of because I am a visible minority but I think it’s also relevant to them because they’re visible minorities as well. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 9)

Isabelle emphasizes here that she feels that it is necessary to explain the experiences of racial minorities over Canada’s history when she is teaching Canadian History because she thinks that it will keep the students engaged. Also, so that the students can relate to the material being taught, she often inserts these facts to educate the students about the histories of groups that are often silenced. She elaborates later that she feels that it is important to expose the racial reality that we have here in Canada: many of her racial minority students who are new immigrants or second generation Canadians who were raised in the post-Trudeau multicultural era of Canadian history, tend to have a very optimistic and naïve perspective on Canadian multiculturalism and they do not know about the ugly racist history that Canada has successfully tried to hide. She says that:

Isabelle: I think there’s a lot of truth that people aren’t willing to accept in respect to race so I try and I try and make them more aware of it. Um, like the treatment of the Jews during the 1930s in Canada, like the riot in Christie Pits, stuff like that. Like I don’t think students really realize very much about that. Oh, they just think, oh they just keep hearing “oh, Canada’s such a nice place!” It is, it’s a very diverse place and in some areas, it really is but I don’t think they really see a lot of the negatives that go along with that. (Isabelle, Interview, pp. 9-10)
Isabelle makes it her responsibility to present a perspective that differs from the formal curriculum. Similar to Rachel, she is using her power as a teacher to control the knowledge that the students learn and to introduce the students to a different type of historical knowledge that is not the discourse of the dominant. Mary Phillips Manke (1997) explains “in traditional sociological and political analysis, the power to define what will count as knowledge is assigned to the teacher” (p. 92). Using her position of power to communicate the histories of groups that are often silenced, Isabelle tries to present a more realistic picture of how Canada was formed and how past historical events have affected current social conditions. Maud Blair and Uvanney Maylor (1993) studied the experiences of black female student teachers in England and note that “they actively attempted to influence the curriculum by suggesting topics or contributing materials which add to its range and diversity” (p. 61). Isabelle is able to disrupt the Eurocentric curriculum by presenting histories that are alternative to the dominant discourse that is often taught in our school system.

Jennifer also had a similar experience while she was on practicum; she integrated the students’ interests and cultures into the class. Teaching in an environment that was racially mixed, she tried to emphasize the importance of cultural plurality. She says:

Jennifer: One of the assignments I did was to create a CD with all your, choose a theme and then choose music to reflect that theme. And well, most of the kids did it on themselves, they chose music that they enjoyed and they got to present clips of that to the class. And like some kids brought in their Tamil music, and then they got to share some of it. You know, they would, you know, name the instruments that was in it, and you know why they were, why they’re important and such. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 9)

As a music teacher on this placement, Jennifer tried to incorporate a more culturally diverse perspective within her classroom and did so because she thought that it was
important for the students to learn about other cultures from each other. It is evident that she tried to create a collaborative environment that respected the various cultures that were represented in her class and in the school.

This is in contrast to Biff who was also an instrumental teacher. When asked about diversity issues in the classroom, he says: “in a music band classroom, we all spoke English so it wasn’t an issue” (Biff, Interview, p. 8). He seems to think that the treatment and presence of “diversity issues” is dependent on the subject matter or discipline: he makes it obvious that issues related to cultural diversity often arose in his ESL classes but were not prevalent in other classes he had taught or observed such as the music classes.

He states that:

Biff: Like there’s so many things that you gotta to do in ESL that you just don’t think of in a regular classroom cause everyone’s already, you know, bam bam bam in their language but uh, in my, in my case, it was a lot tougher. (Biff, Interview, p. 9)

This is further confirmed in the following exchange:

Researcher: Did diversity issues surface in the classroom?

Biff: Yeah for sure. Um, because, well, first of all, I guess I’m kind of different from your average interviewee because uh, not many people have the experience to teach in an ESL classroom during practicums. I was, I was fortunate enough to teach all ESL, so diversity was huge. (Biff, Interview, p. 8)

Biff believes that diversity issues only surface in the ESL classroom because of the number of cultures that can be found in this type of classroom considering that ESL classrooms are directed at non-English speakers. Peter Li (2007) discusses the problematic issue surrounding the word ‘diversity’ and its implied meaning in a Canadian context. He states that:

The term *diversity* refers unmistakably to non-white immigrants and to the substantial difference they are deemed to have brought to Canada, differences that
To Biff, diversity issues only surfaced in the ESL classrooms because of the number of non-white students he was teaching in that particular setting.

It became apparent that over the course of the interviews, each of the participants tried to communicate their commitment to teaching in a way that enabled them to create environments that facilitated the sharing of different cultures, whether it was their own culture or that of the students. They each emphasize the significance of cultural plurality and, in some cases, present perspectives that challenge the conventional notion of what the current curriculum entails. By creating collaborative learning communities that encourage the sharing of cultures, knowledge is also shared in an attempt to combat the effects of whiteness in the education system.

“Being able to relate to them better”

Stephanie: and I think that um, the teaching practicums, although at the time, um, they were really difficult, I think that they did, just having the experience did um, help me in like that kind of church work for example. By just thinking of new activities for the kids to do and being able to relate to them better. (Stephanie, Interview, pp. 14-15)

Another important theme that all the participants address is that as racial minority teachers, they can relate well to their students. Stephanie explains that even though her experiences on practicum were difficult, she realizes the importance of the experience she gained. It enabled her to have an array of activities to use with her Church group and students and it helped her to relate to her students better. In their study of two racial minority teacher candidates, Don Kauchuk and Mary Burbank (2003) found that the teacher candidate who was more successful in her placement also felt a great deal of
relation with the students. They contend that their participant “could relate well with her minority students, especially with those with whom she shared cultural and language connections” (p. 72). This sentiment of connecting well with students, especially those who share a similar cultural background as the teacher candidate, is echoed by Biff. One of the reasons why he enjoys teaching ESL so much is because he feels a high degree of relation and connection with the students, especially those who are of Asian descent. He explains that:

Biff: I can relate to Korean, Korean and Chinese, Asian students better, right? I’m Asian myself but um, I could um, but that’s, that’s a high degree of like relat-, feeling of relation that I can get with them. As for other immigrants, I could relate at another level, not as high but uh, I can relate to them you know adapting and you know not knowing a language, not knowing something about a culture. (Biff, interview, p. 13)

Biff feels comfortable in the ESL classroom because he shares a similar cultural background with the Asian students and he can relate to the other students’ feelings of being an outsider as an Asian male growing up in a predominantly white environment. He felt that teaching a class of students who were mostly new immigrants to the country could provide a safe space for him, as a racial minority teacher.

When she was teaching in a school where the teaching staff did not reflect the racial diversity in the student body, Isabelle felt that being a racial minority helped her to connect closely in an environment where the students did not foster close relationships with their teachers. She says that:

Isabelle: I find that students are even, might be more willing to confide in you because you are a minority or because you are the same background as them or in some way, maybe you are. Um, I noticed that the school I was teaching at in [suburb of a large urban area], most of the students were visible minorities and that wasn’t reflected in the teaching population and they were very reluctant to confide in the teachers of what was going on in the school and what was going on in their peer groups. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 18)
The students in the school notice and consider the racial difference between themselves and the teachers, causing serious and negative repercussions in an environment that is supposed to be a safe and accepting space. She continues that she has observed students to not only be defiant but quick to accuse the white teachers of racism when they received a bad mark:

Isabelle: And again, one bad mark, well it’s because the teacher’s racist. I think the students, in some cases, are way too willing to accept that, I think it’s that they almost put up their own barrier and make themselves feel like more of a target than they really are. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 19)

When pressed further about this, Isabelle admits that racism could be a factor in the marking but she is quick to defend her colleagues’ professionalism.

Researcher: Going back to um, the comment about the students willing to accept that racism is a, is a factor in the marking.

Isabelle: Ummhmm.

Researcher: Or receiving of marks. Um, how do you feel about that?

Isabelle: I mean it very well could be a factor. I don’t want to say that in all cases it’s not but I think that in most cases, it probably isn’t the reason why they might not be doing well. You have a student, they might be an incredibly nice student, show up, you know, for class, and maybe they make positive contributions to class. If they’re not taking the feedback they’re getting on their work and applying it to the next project and if you’re writing essays and you’re told you need to maybe link this idea back to your main argument and if you’re not consistently doing that, the marks aren’t going to improve. It has nothing to do with racism, it’s whether or not you’re taking that feedback or not. Um, it’s possible that there are cases where you know, maybe the teacher is racist and is ignorant. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 19)

According to Isabelle, she thinks the students in the school see the teachers as being in a position of power that further maintains the culture of whiteness that surrounds their lives. Even though the student population is mostly not white, those who hold positions of power are, for the most part, all white. Isabelle explains that there is a problem with
gangs in the school and she feels that this is worsened by a lack of closeness the students feel with the staff. She says “even though we knew there was an issue with drugs, there was an issue with gangs going on, I found that the students especially didn’t want to go and talk to the teachers” (Isabelle, Interview, p. 19). Isabelle attributes the gang problem within the school to a lack of connection felt between the students and the teachers.

Considering that most of Rachel’s teaching and practicum experiences have taken place in environments where she was the only racial minority, she made the following observation:

Researcher: Did you feel that the students perceived you as being different?

Rachel: In, possibly the grade one two class cause they noticed it but then the fact that they said it wasn’t [an issue], um, that’s probably it and then the other two schools, where [there were] the kids that were a minority, um, they tended to associate me with them [their own ancestries] and it’s kind of sad that they don’t realize that there’s so many people who are different and come from different parts of the world and they totally assume that I’m just from the same place they are. (Rachel, Interview, p. 9)

Rachel points out that minority students felt that they could relate to her because they felt a common bond with her that was based on their identities as the racial Other in a mono-racial environment. It appears that the students in her class tried to form closer associations with her despite their confusion about Rachel’s ancestry; they assumed that since she was a minority like them, she originated from the same part of the world as them.

“They were really great role models”

Jennifer: I was really inspired by some really great teachers I had. They were really great role models and um, I just, yeah. I was really fascinated with what they did and I thought it was something I could do to contribute to society. (Jennifer, Interview, p. 1)
A common sentiment that the participants discussed was the feeling of being a role model to their students. Without explicitly stating that she feels that she is a role model for her students, one of Jennifer’s main reasons for entering the profession is because she herself had great teacher role models and she felt that she could make a positive contribution to society as she explains in the opening statement of this section. This desire to become a role model for racial minority students is consistent with previous studies that have documented the reasons why racial minorities enter the teaching profession (Basit & McNamara, 2004; Blair & Maylor, 1993; Carrington & Tomlin, 2000; Jones, Maguire & Watson, 1997; Kauchuk & Burbank, 2003; Solomon, 1997). Jennifer stresses the altruistic reasons for entering the teacher profession, by highlighting the positive influence that teachers can play in the lives of their students. In an institution where many of the persons who hold positions of power are white, role models that are racial minorities are imperative to demonstrate that it is possible for young students who are also racial minorities to succeed in institutions that foster cultures of whiteness.

This sentiment is echoed by Isabelle.

Isabelle: I still have role models, even though, like I’m a teacher, I feel that I am a role model myself. It’s mentoring that really helps you a lot to develop as a person, um, I think having role models in the context of being the same nationality as you or being a visible minority, it probably opens up people’s eyes to what they can achieve. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 18)

Isabelle is very direct about this feeling. As a result of her experiences teaching in multiracial environments where the students were predominantly first or second generation Canadians, she feels that, as a successful and well educated racial minority female, she can act as a role model and show the students what is possible for them to
achieve. For Isabelle, being a role model is linked to having a deeper connection with the students; her role as teacher goes further than the instruction of curriculum requirements, it involves helping the students to see their own potential and capabilities. She feels that she can help them through difficult times because of this. She says: “sometimes I find that students are even, might be more willing to confide in you because you are a minority or because you are the same background as them or in some way maybe you are” (Isabelle, Interview, p. 18). She also understands that the students see her as someone who they could relate to and who in their eyes, could understand the problems they faced regularly. She explains:

Isabelle: Um, but I think a lot of students when they’re talking about their home situation if they want to bring that up in a class discussion, uh, if they know that they’re the same background as you, they’ll be like “Oh, Miss, you know how it is” they feel like they can relate to you in a way which I guess is positive because I mean it’s nice for kids to see people who are from the same background or partially from the same background that they can look up to and relate to as a positive role model. I don’t think role models should be you know, necessarily determined by race or religion or colour, but definitely not, but at the same time, if they find that there’s a positive role model who maybe comes from the same background or shares a similar experience as them, if it can help them in a difficult time. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 8)

She reiterates that students feel more comfortable confiding in her because she is different from the other teachers on staff. When her students say “oh Miss, you know how it is,” it is suggesting that Isabelle and the racial minority students have a shared understanding of the way things work; the students believe that no explanation is required because Isabelle, as another racial minority understands the circumstances, regardless of whether she possesses this knowledge or not. By sharing an experience of being different from society’s norm, the students feel that Isabelle understands their
situations better than the white female teachers even though this may not necessarily be the case. Isabelle notes:

Isabelle: I found that the students, especially didn’t want to go and talk to the teachers cause they felt that they weren’t like them, they didn’t look like them. They didn’t understand their culture, even though in reality, a lot of these teachers probably did have a good understanding of what the culture was like. Um, they probably had friends of their own that were the same ethnicity as the students but the students themselves seemed so unwilling to accept them as role models. (Isabelle, Interview, p. 19)

Isabelle points out once again the ways in which power relations and race continue to play a role in the schooling system. The combination of the uneven power structure within the student/teacher relationship and the added uneven racial power structure strengthen the division that is apparent. These students appear to feel alienated within this institution; they seem to feel powerless because of their relatively weak positions within the power structure. While their race does not necessarily imply that they will fail, it does place them at a disadvantage because of the embedded racial hegemony that is built into the system of schooling. As a racial minority teacher within the school, Isabelle feels that she can act as a bridge between the two worlds; she uses her race as an advantage to help the students connect with a power structure where they hold little power.

As an extension, while he did not talk at length about being a role model for students, Biff explains that he feels that it is important for teachers to show a great deal of passion and sincerity with their students. He says that:

Biff: Oh I think uh, being different and being passionate and just being myself in the classroom, students could tell I was genuine. And I think it really, you know, it really came through to them and I think, my, myself being genuine to them, they, they were genuine to me. (Biff, Interview, p. 7)

Because he felt like he was different and he thought that the students perceived him as different, he feels that the students connected with him in a deeper and different way.
They could see that he was passionate about his work and, in his opinion, different from the rest of the teachers.

“I was able to incorporate more of my life experiences”

Stephanie: I remember, like I had to teach something about some math concept and I brought in um, some pictures from Taiwan as an illustration, so um, that was, I think, I was able to incorporate more of my life experiences into what I was doing…actually, when I was teaching the two English classes as well, I was able to kind of use my own um, life stories as examples, so that was good. (Stephanie, Interview, p. 9)

One significant point that each participant discussed was incorporating their lived experiences into the lessons that they taught during their placements. In some form, all participants describe the importance of being able to talk about their lives. Considering that racial minority teachers and teacher candidates bring a different perspective to the institution, it is important to share their stories and unique experiences with their students in order to provide an alternative to the dominant discourse. Stephanie describes that she incorporated her own personal experiences into the lessons that she taught. By telling her personal stories and sharing her life experiences with her students, it makes Stephanie feel like she was not just teaching curriculum but enriching the curriculum through sharing her stories. All teachers teach from positions that they know and embody. H. Richard Milner (2005) emphasizes that:

What and how a teacher teaches reflect how that teacher perceives himself and herself and who and what a teacher stands for. Moreover, we know that who teachers are, their experiences and stories often find themselves in their work with students. (p. 421)

The concept of storytelling is a key concept to teaching; in this case, storytelling is used as an instrument to share lived experiences and help the students understand the social context that the student teacher came from and, also, the context that shapes and
defines all of our lives. Writing about the feminist focus on storytelling, Magda Lewis (1993) observes:

The importance of the feminist focus on ‘the story’ born of experience is not the vacuous and gratuitous telling of our private stories as a cathartic moment, but, indeed, to emphasize that subordinate groups live subordination and marginality through our subjectivity, that we live it though social relations which are inscribed in personal practices which are, in turn, reflective and constitutive of our social organization. (pp. 9-10)

As noted by Lewis, these student teachers do not share their stories so that their students know more about them or for the simple reason of just sharing a story, but stories are told to show the students that subordination is lived through the daily social interactions that constitute our lives. As a way to relate to the students’ lives and make the curriculum relevant to the students, the student teachers inserted their own stories and life experiences into the lessons so that the students understood the context from which they were teaching. It was a way for the teacher candidates to connect to the students and build relationships with them; it was a way to relate to the students’ cultural contexts.

In addition to this, within the context of Critical Race Theory, storytelling helps to dispel the social myths that we have accepted as true. These student teachers understand the power of sharing personal experiences and telling stories. As Delgado (1995b) notes “Stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset—the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdsoms, and shared understandings against a background of which legal and political discourse takes place” (p. 65). While Delgado mentions only the common legal and political discourses, I would also add the educational discourses given that education is highly political (Alladin, 1996; Friere, 1970; Giroux, 1992). Education and educational policy change are often influenced by the political powers that are in charge at any given moment and even
within the classroom, politics play a large role in the ways that students, teachers, and student teachers interact. It is for this reason that storytelling plays a significant role in the teaching pedagogies and philosophies for these student teachers; they understand that they each come from a series of social, cultural, political, and educational contexts that differ from person to person. This point is illustrated by Rachel in the following exchange:

Researcher: Do you believe that your race, your colour, your ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability or ability or gender will affect your practice as a teacher?

Rachel: I think I’d be lying and again ignorant if I didn’t say it didn’t [sic] because those all affect who I am and who I am today. So in that sense, it has made me who I am so obviously it’s going to have an effect because the person that stands before you today, is a person that’s going to go out there teaching and that person came from a certain background and that person came from a different race, or cultures, and practices and traditions that are different from someone else. (Rachel, Interview, p. 15)

Rachel is aware that all of these factors affect who she is as a person and who she is as a teacher. It is these components of her character that she will bring forth into the classroom and that all teachers bring into the classroom.

For teachers who choose not to share their experiences with their students, it can sometimes lead to failure in the classroom. Don Kauchuk and Mary Burbank (2003) suggest that the success of the two teacher candidates they studied was hinged on their different teaching philosophies. One of the teacher candidates shared her life experiences with her students and thought that she had been successful while completing her placement. The other teacher candidate focused mainly on the delivery of curriculum; her main objective being to teach the prescribed curriculum effectively so that the students would grasp the subject matter. While the teacher candidate who shared her life
experiences perceived her placements to be successful, the other teacher candidate who was focused on the curriculum experienced more difficulties within the classroom. This supports the notion that teachers who have a teaching pedagogy and teaching practice that involves sharing their lived experiences with their students can provide a more holistic worldview; by learning and sharing the contexts in which we live, students gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which our daily social interactions are affected by the experiences we have lived or not lived.

This point is additionally supported by Biff when he speaks about how he would address diversity issues if they surface within the classroom. He states:

I tell them my experiences, I give them my honest answer and don’t disrespect anybody…So how do I deal with it? I just tell them my stories and just be and just be em-em-empathetic. Just understand, try to understand them. It’s not easy, it’s not easy to be an ESL student. (Biff, Interview, p. 10)

His use of storytelling in this situation with ESL students highlights the salience of sharing experiences within the classroom to try to dissipate issues related to culture and diversity. It is a way for student teachers to not only relate to the students but also to come to an understanding of their own cultural, social, and political contexts. Cathy Coulter, Charles Michael, and Leslie Poynor (2007) discuss the use of storytelling as pedagogy through the experiences of two young teachers. They reveal that the use of storytelling by pre-service teachers and new teachers enhances their practice through reflection and encourages a pedagogy of teaching for social change. Coulter et al. share that “knowledge emerges through narrative when it is used strategically and connected in an ongoing dialogic between ‘telling’ and ‘doing’, between narrative, reflection and praxis (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, 172)” (pp. 120-121). Storytelling is a way for teachers
and students to learn from one another and gain a better understanding of the thoughts, events, interactions, and words that have shaped and continue to shape our lives.

Closing Remarks

In this chapter, I have presented the ways that the participants attempted to break through the Eurocentric curriculum and show perspectives that differ from those that are usually heard. Even though these teachers could not see or acknowledge their own racial subordination, they identified that the curriculum did not properly address issues of race and ethnicity. It is important to keep in mind the important role that racial minority teachers can play in the classroom; their simple presence within a school can begin to weaken the culture of whiteness, especially in schools that have large student populations that are racially mixed. These five racial minority teachers show us that resistance is possible and that we must begin by taking little steps even if we are not fully aware of the magnitude of the entire situation.
CHAPTER EIGHT

PARTING WORDS

I would like to suggest another way to go further toward a new economy of power relations....It consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. (Foucault, 1994, 128)

People cannot choose to remove themselves from the racist system and become ‘non-racist’, because it is impossible not to participate in an institutionally racist system. However, they can choose to change it—to consciously seek to reduce and eventually eliminate racism and in its place to create new institutional relationships not dependent on domination and subordination of any racial groups. (Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997, 23)

A common title for the final chapter of a thesis is “conclusion” but I do not see this chapter as a conclusion. The word “conclusion” sounds so final and so finite, in fact, I see this chapter as the opposite; this thesis is the first step to the longer journey that is ahead. This is the beginning to a life of research in the area of anti-racist research. At times, the long journey seems completely disheartening and futile. The world will not change and the cycle of discrimination will continue. However, we must begin from somewhere and it takes people who understand the complexity of the issues to fight the battle.

As Foucault suggests above, we can only begin to improve situations of power imbalances by examining the current systems of power and understanding how they function. He offers a starting point on how we can begin to free ourselves from power. This is precisely the approach that I have tried to take in my research, as Foucault encourages us to resist power in different and varied ways; we must also keep in mind the significance of revealing the imbalance of power, locating its position and exposing its
function and purpose. In order to overcome the power of racism and the racial hierarchy and hegemony we live in, we must examine it more closely and reveal it to those who refuse to admit its existence. By investigating the ways that race and racism affect racial minority teacher candidates we can begin to understand the reality that we have created in hopes of improvement.

In order to affect improvement, I have taken an anti-racist approach to teaching and researching as another way to disrupting the norm of whiteness. According to Okolie (2005) “anti-racism research must seek to assist the subjects to recover their voices and dignity, to tell their stories and narrate their experiences, hopes and fears”(p. 254). In this thesis, I have tried to not just communicate the stories of these five participants but I have tried to provide an understanding of the ways that they have constructed their worlds in an attempt to empower them and other racial minorities to share their stories. Delgado (1995b) explains that “narrative habits, patterns of seeing, shape what we see and that to which we aspire” (p. 66). By offering a perspective that differs from the norm, we can begin to disturb the stories that have been forced into reality. This is not to say that we can achieve an end to racism through sharing our experiences and stories, but it is one avenue through which we can comprehend how racism operates in society.

What does this mean?

As I reflect upon the writing of this thesis, I ask myself the question: “What does this all mean?” What does it mean to be a racial minority teacher candidate in an education system that has been built to cultivate racial hierarchy and racial hegemony? I have discovered that there is no answer to this question seeing that each person has a different experience with the institution of schooling but what becomes apparent is that
there is systemic discrimination that continues in our schools. It is perpetrated against racial minorities who hold any position within its network and it is disguised by an erroneous belief in Canadian multiculturalism. It is this belief that supports the continued marginalization of racial minorities. But how can we alleviate this? Frantz Fanon (1967) suggests:

In no way should my color be regarded as a flaw. From the moment the Negro \[sic\] accepts the separation imposed by the European, he has no further respite, and “is it not understandable that thenceforward he will try to elevate himself to the white man’s \[sic\] level? To elevate himself in the range of colors to which he attributes a kind of hierarchy?” We shall see another solution is possible. It implies a restructuring of the world. (pp. 81-82)

Fanon highlights the permanence of the racial hierarchy and the injustices that are a result of it. Also, he notes how we can move toward change. It would not be just a restructuring of the education system but it would require an entire reorganization of all social institutions and relations. He emphasizes the interconnected nature of all social institutions and oppressions, which is one of the key components of integrative anti-racism. If we are to envision and hope for change, we must take a step back and not only examine the education system but we must re-examine society as a whole. As long as whiteness is considered to be the norm and the ideal to which we compare and measure our lives, race will continue to play an important role in society that will require mediation, negotiation, and interpretation.

Here I have attempted to expose the reality that racial minority teachers and teacher candidates must work and live in a culture of whiteness that envelopes our work environments, our places of learning and our lives. This has truly been one of the hardest things to communicate. For me, racial issues seem self-evident, it seems so obvious that racial minority teacher candidates are disadvantaged but the difficulty lies in explaining
its complexity and intricacy. When speaking to people who do not see the ways that race affects our daily existence, I often feel like I am speaking a different language, but this is where the work lies. It is finding the words, the language, the sentences, the thoughts that articulate the issues that seem clear but are not.

It has taken me two years to reach the understanding that I have about what it means to be a racial minority teacher candidate in Canada and this continues to evolve and change as I take my next step and return to the classroom. In the coming years, I hope the lessons that I have learned from these five participants will have an effect on the way that I teach and learn.

What have I learned?

I have learned that race and racism are concepts that are intensely personal and subjective and that their meanings will continue to change over time. Racism will never be eradicated from society as long as race continues to be a characteristic by which we can categorize and stereotype other people. We may all embody different positions within the institutional power structures but we must challenge these positions and resist these categorizations. We must find ways to not only navigate through the system but also succeed at manipulating our surroundings to facilitate the work that is required in order to achieve equity. This has been the most revealing discovery, that as a racial minority female working within an institution that maintains a culture of whiteness, I do not have to accept the position that I embody and I can use my efforts to continue to work toward a reconceptualization of racial hierarchy. It has been an arduous process that was filled with challenges and obstacles but I am truly proud of the work that I have presented here and the hope that I have in working towards new possibilities.
Aside from the challenges of graduate school, the biggest challenge I have faced has been from friends and acquaintances who have no comprehension of how deeply the problem of racism runs. I always find it interesting to see other people’s reactions when I tell them what my thesis is about. Some will be bold enough to challenge me and ask me how I plan to conduct this research considering that racism no longer exists in Canada. I usually answer with a witty remark and slight chuckle because I know their question already speaks volumes to the reason why I needed to do this research. Dealing with this typical reaction has been difficult to say the least. Fanon (1967) best articulates the way that I used to feel about other people’s reactions: “From time to time, one would like to stop. To state reality is a wearing task. But when one has taken it into one’s head to try to express existence, one runs the risk of finding only the nonexistent” (p. 137). There were times along the journey when I wished to just stop because I could only see the continuance of a racial hierarchy but there would always be something—an incident, a movie, a reading, a conversation that would remind me of the merit in this work.

This point was made evident in the interviews that I conducted with these five racial minority teacher candidates. They showed me that a culture of whiteness continues to pervade our society and our education system and that, in many ways, racial minorities aid the continuation of this through the belief in the myth of cultural and racial equality. In analysing the data, I realized the participants held such narrow views and definitions of what racism entailed. All five of these teacher candidates failed to see the ways that institutionalized racism affected their everyday lives and interactions. This may have been the most painful lesson to learn and accept, seeing that before my own awakening to the disillusion of race in Canada, I thought in a similar way.
Another important challenge that presented itself over the course of this research has been having the honesty and courage to confront the discomfort surrounding race and racism. It has not been easy confronting my own prejudices and misconceptions but it has been a revealing learning experience that has taught me to problematize and question the instances, words, actions, and interactions that may appear to be mundane and routine but reveal race and racism. Now that I can see and understand the role that race plays in daily life, it feels like I was going through life with my eyes closed, until of course, I entered my teacher education program and my conceptualization of what it meant to be a racial minority in Canada was shattered. Through reading the different theorists and scholars, I was able to rebuild my notions and understandings of race and racism and establish a framework upon which this research is based.

**Moving Forward**

The perpetuation and entrenchment of a culture of whiteness in our education system and within society can at times be overwhelming but it is important to remember that we must begin to work for change from some point, no matter how big or small the project may be. I suggest that we begin with teacher education programs. It is important for faculties of education and policy makers to realize that despite the magnitude of the issue, we must start from somewhere and break the cycle. By educating our teachers about more inclusive practices as opposed to educating them about more tolerant practices, we can begin the process of dismantling the culture of whiteness that is perpetuated in the school system. As educators, we have the potential to influence a large number of curious minds and by teaching educators to think and teach in integrative anti-
racist ways, they can begin to affect change to create inclusive and accepting learning environments.

Moving forward with the knowledge that I now possess, it is important for me to continue teaching, working, and living in an integrative anti-racist approach. It is my duty to talk to students, colleagues, friends and family members and bring forth issues of social justice. It is about questioning the preconceived notions that are accepted as “truth” and helping others to realize that we can challenge these prejudices. Hopefully, this will help others to see how we can begin to resist the powerful forces that continue the subordination of all minoritized groups.

From a professional standpoint, I aim to diversify the curriculum that I am teaching at any given time, by decentering the Eurocentric curriculum and showing students and other teachers that there are alternative perspectives to those that we learn in school. I aspire to create learning environments that are safe and accepting for all students to share their opinions and ask questions. I hope to teach students about the more subtle ways that subordination takes place such as the lack of representation of alternative perspectives, the generalization and stereotyping of minority issues, the presence of a culture of whiteness and the silencing of minority populations. I plan to talk to other educators and administrators in hopes of incorporating anti-racist approaches and initiatives and, if they resist, then I will continue fighting and challenging their opposition. Finding allies and networks of other resisters will be important to this fight. If more teachers and educators had goals similar to these, we could all begin to work towards a collective improvement to not just the education system but also, to society. In our academic, professional and
personal lives, we all need to give a voice to the silenced and make the invisible visible.

It is a long and challenging journey that has only just begun.
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APPENDIX A: EMAIL RECRUITMENT NOTICE

I am a Master’s in education student who is currently seeking B.Ed students who are racial minorities who completed their practicum in an Ontario secondary school to participate in a study entitled “the Experiences of Racial Minority Teacher Candidates on Practicum”. In this study, I am hoping to record the experiences of racial minority teacher candidates so that a voice can be given to this small segment of the teaching population. Detailed information about the project and other information for participants is attached to this email.

In order to participate in this study, you must:
(a) self-identify as a racial minority and as defined by the Government of Canada are: “persons, other than aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”6,
(b) have taught in an Ontario secondary school on your practicum placement
(c) feel that you may have experienced overt or covert racial discrimination while on practicum
(c) be able to volunteer your time to complete interviews in August (three interviews lasting approximately one hour in length each)
(d) be comfortable in discussing your experiences in depth on audiotape

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and it will be kept confidential to the furthest extent possible. It will have no effect on your academic standing. You may withdraw from this study at any time for any reason without consequence. To maintain confidentiality, Your name and the names of the schools, administrators and teachers will not will not be used in the study, a pseudonym will be used and locations will only be described in general terms without any distinguishing features.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Angel Lau at: 4apl@qlink.queensu.ca

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APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Thank you for replying to the initial email request for racial minority teacher candidates who would be interested in participating in this study. The goal of this research is to document the experiences of racial minority teacher candidates on practicum so that we can better understand the challenges they face and also, so that we can better understand how we can support them. I am a Master’s in Education student at Queen’s University in Kingston and this research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board.

In this study, I plan to record the practicum experiences of racial minority teacher candidates. This will involve a series of three face-to-face interviews that will be audio taped. These interviews will be arranged to be held at times that are convenient for you and they will be held in a neutral location. Each interview will last approximately one hour. These taped interviews will then be transcribed and given to you for approval. Subsequently, the tapes will be destroyed. In the analysis, you may be directly quoted but your name will not be revealed. Your name and the names of the schools, administrators and teachers will not be used in any part of the research; pseudonyms will be used and the schools will always be described in general terms with no identifying characteristics. School locations will be described by large geographic areas (such as the Greater Toronto Area, South-western Ontario, South-eastern Ontario, etc.) Your identity will only be accessible to the researcher and the collected data will only be accessible to the researcher and the thesis committee. However, due to the nature of this study, it may be relevant to identify your ethnic background during the analysis. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the furthest extent possible.

There are no anticipated risks to your participation in this research. However, if participation in this research causes emotional distress, Queen’s University offers counselling services for all students. They can be reached by telephone at (613) 533-2506. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time, for any reason without consequence. During the course of the interviews, you may also refuse to answer any questions that you consider to be questionable or objectionable. You may also request that certain or entire parts of the collected data be removed from the transcripts.

This research will result in the formulation of a master’s thesis and possibly, publications. Your name and the names of the schools, administrators and teachers will not be used seeing that pseudonyms will be utilized and attached to all collected data involving you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (416)895-4191 or 4apl@qlink.queensu.ca or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Shehla Burney at (613)533-3030 or burneys@educ.queensu.ca. If you have any questions or concerns about the ethics of this research, please do not hesitate to contact: the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré at (613)533-6210 or brunojor@educ.queensu.ca, or the
Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Stephen Leighton at (613) 533-6000 X:77034 or greb.chair@queensu.ca

Sincerely,
Angel Lau
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

I, ____________________________ (print name clearly) agree that:

- I have read and kept a copy of the letter of information that was provided to me by the researcher, Angel Lau, who is a Master’s in Education student at Queen’s University in Kingston
- I understand that I will be participating in the study “Experiences of Racial Minority Teacher Candidates on Practicum”
- I will participate in three interviews that will last approximately one hour each
- I understand that the goal of this study is to record the experiences of racial minority teacher candidates so that we can gain a better understanding of the challenges they face and the support that we can offer
- I understand that there are no known risks in participating in this study
- I understand that my participation in this study will be kept confidential and that my privacy will be maintained to the best of the researcher’s ability
- I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time without consequence
- I can refuse to answer any questions that I think are inappropriate and I can ask that any part of the collected data be removed
- If I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Angel Lau, the researcher at any time at (416)895-4191 or 4apl@qlink.queensu.ca or Dr. Shehla Burney, the thesis supervisor at (613)533-3030 or burneys@educ.queensu.ca.
- If I have any questions, concerns or complaints about the ethics of this research, I can contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré at (613) 533-6210, or brunojor@educ.queensu.ca, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Stephen Leighton at (613)533-6000 X:77034 or greb.chair@queensu.ca
- Please sign one copy of this consent form and return to Angel Lau. Retain the second copy for your records.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

_________________________________    __________________
Signature          Date

By initializing the statements below:

_________ I agree to be audio taped.

_________ I grant permission to be quoted and I understand that a pseudonym will be attributed to these quoted statements.
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

So where are you from originally?

How did you decide that you wanted to be teacher?

Did you do the concurrent ed program?

How much student teaching experience did you have prior to practicum?

How many weeks of practicum did you have?

What grade(s) did you teach?

What subject(s) did you teach?

Describe in general terms the area where your school was located.

How would you describe the population of the school?

What about the teaching population?

What about the administration?

Would you say that it was racially mixed?

How did you find your practicum experience?

If you could change one thing about practicum, what would that have been?

Did you feel ready for practicum?
What were some of the challenges that you faced while you were on practicum?

What were some of the challenges that you faced in regard to the school environment?

What were some of the challenges that you faced in regard to your associate or host teacher?

How did you overcome these challenges?

Did anyone help you or give you advice on how to overcome these obstacles? If yes, who?

Did you think the faculty prepare you for the challenges that you faced on practicum?

Describe any situations or experiences that you had while you were on practicum where you were made to feel different or out of place.

Was this because of race/ethnicity/religion/sexual orientation/disability?

How do you think that race/ethnicity/colour/religion/sexual orientation/disability will affect your career?

Did you feel that the students perceived you as being different? Why or why not?

Do you perceive this as being positive or negative? Why?

Did you feel that the lessons that you taught were reflective of your uniqueness? Why or why not?

Did diversity issues surface in the classroom?
How were they dealt with?

How would you have dealt with them?

Did diversity issues surface in the curriculum?

Were they dealt with?

Have you ever had an experience on practicum that you would identify as racism?

► or, Have you ever had a racist experience happen to you?

How would you define racism?

Do you believe that your race/colour/ethnicity/religion/sexual orientation/disability will affect your practice as a teacher?

Do you think that race will play a role in your career?

How do you think your practicum experiences will impact your teaching career?

How has practicum affected your teaching practice?

How has it affected your self confidence?

Does your racial identity affect your self confidence when you are teaching?