

**Smothering Othering:
South Asian Students in K-12 Canadian Classrooms**

by
Rajvinder K. Samra

B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2000

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1994

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Curriculum and Instruction Program
Faculty of Education

© Rajvinder K. Samra 2020
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2020

Copyright in this work rests with the author. Please ensure that any reproduction or re-use is done in accordance with the relevant national copyright legislation.

Approval

Name: Rajvinder K. Samra

Degree: Master of Arts

Title: **Smothering Othering:
South Asian Students in K-12 Canadian
Classrooms**

Examining Committee: **Chair:** Dr. Laura D’Amico
Adjunct Professor

Dr. Dolores van der Wey
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Dr. Ena Lee
Supervisor
Assistant Professor

Dr. Kumari Beck
Internal Examiner
Associate Professor

Date Defended/Approved: April 22, 2020

Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

- c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016

Abstract

As a student, growing up and attending schools in Canada, I found that my racial and cultural identity and experiences were often ignored, questioned, trivialized and/or inferiorized by most of my teachers. Presently, as a teacher, I have born witness to the same type of behaviours within schools albeit, in more covert ways. Such continual oppressive practices prompted this study of how students of South Asian descent describe their educational experiences in K-12 Canadian classrooms. I conducted a qualitative study that was informed by Auto-ethnographic and Critical Ethnographic methods. I used semi-structured interviews to investigate both positive and negative experiences as well as the ways in which participants believed their racial identity may or may not have factored into their schooling. Data was examined using a thematic analysis approach. The themes that emerged were then analyzed through Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Theory, and Anti-racism education lenses. The findings uncovered oppressive practices that contribute to the disaffection of students as well as inclusive practices that lead to validation and engagement. It is hoped that the findings of this study will allow educators to analyze ways in which teacher behaviours and educational institutions perpetuate or combat racism and build or limit the empowerment of their students.

Keywords: structural racism; internalized oppression; microaggressions; inclusion; cultural proficiency; anti-racism education

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and two children who have always had faith in me and convinced me that I was well equipped to engage in this venture.

I also dedicate this thesis to my parents Gurdev S. Johal and Harbans K. Johal for, well, everything.

Acknowledgements

To begin, I would like to thank those who were essential to this study – the participants. If not for their willingness to share their insights and stories, this study would be sorely lacking in richness. They did not hesitate to share their often-emotional memories with me and I appreciate and respect their openness and trust in me.

Pursuing and completing this study would not have occurred if it were not for my senior supervisor, Dr. Dolores van der Wey. Her quiet, unwavering faith in me constantly propelled me forward. In addition, her academic acumen helped clarify many questions and concerns. In addition, her patience will be forever appreciated. I thank Dr. Dolores van der Wey for everything she has done to assist me on this journey. Next, I would like to recognize my supervisor Dr. Ena Lee whose attention to detail and expertise allowed me to bring clarity to this paper and to hone my critical thinking skills. I would also like to thank my internal examiner Dr. Kumari Beck and chairperson Dr. Laura D’Amico for their time, attention, and response to my work.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my core family as defined by my Punjabi culture and upbringing. Inspired, supported, and motivated by my parents, my husband, my siblings and their spouses, my children, and my nephews and my niece, I progressed through this journey of learning and self-discovery.

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Ethics Statement	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Locating Oneself as a Racialized Person.....	3
1.2. Locating Oneself as Researcher	4
1.3. Research Question.....	5
1.4. Research Paradigm	7
1.5. Overview of Thesis.....	9
Chapter 2. Literature Review	11
2.1. Introduction	11
2.2. Structural Racism	13
2.2.1. Whiteness/White Privilege.....	15
2.2.2. Teacher Biases and Attitudes	18
2.2.3. Teacher Behaviours.....	20
2.3. Internalized Oppression.....	21
2.3.1. Cultural Proficiency vs. Cultural Deficit Theory	24
2.4. Anti-racist Education.....	28
2.5. Student and Teacher Relationships	33
2.5.1. Minoritized Students – Perceptions of Caring and Racism	35
2.6. Conclusion.....	36
Chapter 3. Research Methods.....	37
3.1. Introduction	37
3.2. The Participants	38
3.3. Research Protocol.....	40
3.4. Consent Process.....	42
3.5. Preliminary Biases, Suppositions and Hypotheses.....	42
3.6. Interviews	43
3.7. Methods of Analysis.....	45
3.8. Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 4. Racism and Canadian Schools.....	47
4.1. Introduction	47
4.2. Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens.....	49

4.3.	The Formal Curriculum.....	52
4.4.	The Hidden Curriculum.....	56
4.5.	Conclusion.....	61
Chapter 5.	Internalized Oppression	63
5.1.	Introduction	63
5.2.	Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens.....	63
5.3.	Double Consciousness & Belonging – The Inner Dimension of Internalized Oppression.....	65
5.4.	The Model Minority – Interpersonal & Cultural Dimensions.....	69
5.5.	Microaggressions.....	73
5.6.	Conclusion.....	79
Chapter 6.	Cultural Deficiency	80
6.1.	Introduction	80
6.2.	Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens.....	82
6.3.	Cultural Deficit Theory and South Asian Boys.....	84
6.4.	Cultural Deficit Theory and South Asian Girls.....	85
6.5.	Cultural Deficit Theory and South Asian Parents	86
6.6.	Conclusion.....	86
Chapter 7.	Inclusive Education.....	88
7.1.	Introduction	88
7.2.	Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens.....	89
7.3.	Anti-racism Education.....	90
7.4.	Inclusive Curriculum	98
7.5.	Cultural Proficiency and Relational Teaching	102
7.6.	Conclusion.....	105
Chapter 8.	Conclusion	107
References	110
Appendix A.	Letter of Initial Contact	117
Appendix B.	Consent Form.....	118
Appendix C.	Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews	121
Appendix D.	Revised Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews.....	122

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Standing beside my desk, hands clutched in front of me, I recite this foreign prayer every morning during my grade six class. It's 1984 and my eleven-year old self doesn't know that I can protest this daily ritual by proclaiming my support of the separation of church and state or by pontificating on Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantees me my fundamental freedom of religion. What my eleven-year old self knew, and what I still know, is the discomfort that I felt when reciting this prayer and the disdain that I felt for a teacher whom I believed knew very well that everyone in the class didn't adhere to the religion she was directing us to concede to. The claws of assimilation were digging in as I was silently being told that THIS was the religion and belief system that was of most importance and my own beliefs were secondary or irrelevant.

This is a school memory I have not forgotten because of the deep emotional impact it has had on my psyche and sense of identity. Prior to undertaking this study, I reached out to 5 other former students from Canadian classrooms, former students who are of South Asian descent and currently teaching in British Columbia, like myself. I asked whether or not they recalled any personal school experiences related to their racial identity that left an impact upon them. Three of them shared memories of events that affected them.

Navdeep¹ told me about how, in 1982, her grade 3 teacher took her outside the classroom into the hallway one October afternoon and asked her if she could come to class the next day without her headscarf on. In retrospect, she said she believes her teacher probably thought that she would be more accepted by her classmates if she

¹ Pseudonyms have been used for all names for anonymity.

looked more like them; her teacher was considered to be one of the kindest teachers in the school as she was always pleasant, smiling, and seemed to genuinely care for her students. To this day, Navdeep remembers the shock and shame she felt because this request seemed to imply that her teacher thought she was doing something wrong. She remembers nodding in agreement and going back inside. She remembers not telling anyone in her family about this incident and returning to school the next day with her scarf, a symbol of her dedication to her religious beliefs, still affixed to her head. Even though her teacher did not address the topic again, every day that she wore that scarf to school, Navdeep felt she was defying her “kind” teacher and was wracked with feelings of guilt and shame. These feelings accompanied her throughout her school years as she continued to wear her headscarf believing, to some extent, that it was at the cost of not belonging, not being accepted, and not acquiescing to teacher preferences.

Similarly, Parminder shared an incident that took place in 1992 when he was in grade 1 that had a lasting impact in that it was in that moment that he began to feel ashamed of his own name. His teacher had decided to change his name to “Paul” because Parminder was “just too hard to pronounce.” To this day, everyone calls Parminder “Paul.” He accepted this change long ago when he acquiesced to his teacher’s suggestion because he believed that, as the person of authority in the classroom, she knew best. Today, an older and wiser “Paul” feels guilt over not insisting that his name not be changed; allowing someone to change his name was a step towards having a part of his identity changed or ignored.

Last, but not least, Sarbjeet remembers how incredulous she was when her grade ten teacher in 1990 would ask her questions such as: how she felt about her parents giving her brother preferential treatment, if she had to do all the housework at home, leaving her little time for homework, and at what age her parents would arrange her marriage. She felt that her teacher wasn’t bothering to get to know her actual self and was instead, was relying on often out-dated stereotypes to assign an identity to her. This made her feel frustrated and invisible.

All of these incidents elicited feelings of discomfort and inferiority – of not measuring up, of being less than. But, these incidents occurred between the 80’s and early 90’s. Surely, as a brand-new teacher in the year 2000, I could expect a much more evolved experience in the school system; surely classroom dynamics would not carry tones of dominance and racism any longer...

1.1. Locating Oneself as a Racialized Person

Ten years into the profession, I was long past my naïve assumptions of racism-free classrooms and very familiar with the less obvious (usually) but equally damaging tones of racism prevalent in numerous classroom, hallway, and staff room interactions. For example, I was at work one day, standing by the photocopier as it ran off thirty copies of my sheet on Canadian immigration that I would be using as a teaching tool for my ELL class. As I stood there and brainstormed ways to extend this worksheet to include the actual immigration experiences of my multi-level, multi-age high school students, a colleague (another teacher) walked into the teacher prep room. He looked at me and asked, “Do you have a daughter?”

I chuckled, wondering where this was going, and replied, “Yes.”

“Don’t let her marry a brown boy,” he stated.

I was taken aback and not quite sure how best to respond to this. “Why?” I asked incredulously, “I have a son too, and he’s amazing.”

“They’re lazy,” he proclaimed and walked out of the room to return to his class - his class that was comprised mostly of South Asian² students. I was aghast. Thoughts of what I should have said troubled the pit that had formed in my stomach as I watched him walk back to his classroom.

² Though the term “South Asian” will henceforth be used to refer to people living in Canada who are of South Asian descent, it must be noted that the term “of South Asian descent” is more accurate because to refer to people who are Canadian citizens as “South Asians” (rather than as “Canadians of South Asian descent”) implies an *othering* that reifies racism and White hegemony in Canada.

I also remember a comment made to me when the local Chapters bookstore was closing down. I was expressing my disappointment to another teacher and he replied, “Well, I guess the closing down of Chapters confirms what we know about this community.” Again, my response fell short.

I replied, “That’s terrible!” That’s terrible? That’s the only thing I could say? I wanted to ask him how taking that kind of belief into a classroom and teaching the very children of that community affected those students. But, alas, I remained silent because of a lack of confidence in myself and in my knowledge of racial oppressions.

Yet another incident that left me feeling incredulous occurred when I was chatting with a teacher who was teaching Social Justice 12. I asked her how students responded when she covered the topic of racism in her course. She replied, “I don’t need to cover racism in my Social Justice class. This school is 90% brown. They don’t experience racism.”³ I was literally speechless.

1.2. Locating Oneself as Researcher

The aforementioned interactions and many such similar interactions left me disheartened when I thought about our students and how such biases might affect their educational experiences. The few that I have described above serve to demonstrate just how pervasive such attitudes and utterances were (and still are). I wanted to do something or say something that would address what seemed to be a problem of racism in the school. But, I was ill equipped to take this on because I did not have the knowledge or vocabulary needed to articulately problematize such occurrences. In addition, I was also not aware of my own internalized oppression⁴ and thus unable to work through it. .

It is at this point that I came across a Masters program specializing in Equity Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU). I remember my heart racing and the excitement mounting as I read more and more about it. This program was what I needed

³ A fuller account of this incident is shared in Chapter 4.

⁴ This concept is further explored in Chapters 2 and 5.

in my quest to address issues of race in schools. I decided to immediately apply to this program.

SFU's Equity Studies program propelled me into a world ensconced with theories of Whiteness, internalized dominance/oppressions, cultural deficiency, cultural proficiency, and anti-oppression work. I was not aware of these terms until I immersed myself into equity studies, but I was very aware of the essence of them as I reflected on the numerous negative comments that blatantly flew around my place of work - comments that were made by White teachers about South Asian students (often in the presence of South Asian teachers). The ramifications of such comments distressed me as I thought about how such biases could likely impact interactions with and assessments of South Asian students in the classroom.

These ponderings led to my research questions: How do the internalized beliefs and behaviours of teachers affect their students? Specifically, how do the internalized beliefs and behaviours of White teachers affect their South Asian students? This was my initial question. It was reframed many times because the initial question may have appeared to pre-suppose biases and thus, could be seen as a leading and biased question in itself. The inquiry was eventually rephrased as: Examining classroom dynamics and exploring relationships between White teachers and South Asian students. Still apprehensive that, if this research evolved into a workshop for educators, some teachers might be offended or feel attacked because the question included racial identifiers, I altered it. I arrived at either: "How are South Asian high school students engaged and empowered in classroom settings?" or "What factors inhibit or encourage the engagement and empowerment of South Asian high school students?" Though all of these questions revolved around the same subject, they all felt like part of a bigger, overarching question that needed to be asked.

1.3. Research Question

After much thinking, I arrived at the following revised research question:

How do students of South Asian descent describe their educational experiences in Canadian schools? Additionally, what is the impact of teacher behaviours and educational institutions on these experiences?

This inquiry is necessary because although this topic is so relevant to many of our youth who are of South Asian descent, it is understudied, especially in a Canadian context. According to Statistics Canada, the 2016 Census revealed that the South Asian population of Canada was 1,924,635 with 365,705 people from this group residing in British Columbia (BC). Even though there is a fairly large population of South Asian people in Canada, the dynamics that affect their lived experiences are not widely studied. The intent of my research is to uncover and share factors that hinder or support the empowerment and engagement of students of South Asian descent in educational institutions. Minoritized⁵ students need to explore if/how various oppressions affect their lived experiences. For students, building such an awareness allows for an understanding of factors that may be inhibiting their experiences and/or their psyche. This understanding, then, increases the likelihood of students being able to shift the focus from what may be perceived as personal failings to systemic failures; they may be more likely to absolve themselves from feeling that they deserve their own oppression and can possibly become emboldened enough to speak up against such inequities. Such an awareness is also vital for educators teaching South Asian and other racialized students. It is hoped that acknowledging, learning about, and teaching dynamics of dominance and oppression will assist educators in building inclusive teaching beliefs and strategies as well as, consequently, contributing to the building of empowered and engaged identities for their students. Classrooms are sites where such emancipatory strategies can be constructed with the help of teachers and other school staff.

It is also hoped that the dialogues and reflections that occurred during the study will help participants as they work through the various structural factors and personal beliefs that contributed to their interactions, behaviours, and beliefs.

⁵ The term “minoritized” differs from the term “minority” in that the former better describes a group and the active dynamics that lead to its lower status in society “even when the number of members in this group outnumber other groups in a given place” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

As revealed in the next chapter through a literature review, previous studies have delineated ways in which oppression damages relationships between White teachers and minoritized students, but these studies do not give many strategies or rationalize ways to combat damaging occurrences. The lack of actionable solutions to the problems revealed in previous research supports the need for a study that searches for concrete ways in which minoritized students (in this case, South Asian students) are encouraged, engaged, and empowered while in school as well as how they are, conversely, discouraged, disengaged, and disempowered. Thus, the intended audience for this research is primarily teachers of South Asian students and their students.⁶ My research takes the form of a scholarly manuscript but will eventually evolve into a professional development workshop for educators who wish to examine the ways in which educational practices can hinder or help student success. A rationale for the research paradigm that was used as a framework for this study follows.

1.4. Research Paradigm

How do students of South Asian descent describe their educational experiences in Canadian schools and what is the impact of teacher behaviours and educational institutions on these experiences? Furthermore, how are South Asian high school students engaged and empowered in classroom settings? Additionally, what factors inhibit the engagement and empowerment of South Asian high school students? These questions are rooted in the belief that minoritized students may be at a disadvantage in Canadian schools because of ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppressions. This belief stems from a Critical Theory paradigm that concerns itself with power relations and patterns of dominance. Critical Theory explores and challenges the status quo with a goal of transforming society by addressing its oppressions (Asghar, 2013, p. 3123). In this way, this paradigm is transformative in nature.

Following a critical paradigm, a knowledge of reality that questions historical realism is required. Relativist ontology meets this requirement. Historical realism

⁶ The transferability of findings is explored in the final chapter.

ontology asserts that the reality that is deemed real by people today is actually one that was created and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gendered powers in the past. These forces cemented their version of reality onto society and thus, their version of reality was reified into social structures that, today, are generally accepted as obvious reality. Critical theory troubles this form of reality as it ignores a relativist ontology (i.e. the individual reality of a person that is based on their meanings and understandings on social and experiential levels) and how it works in conjunction with the influences of a specific historic reality.

A transactional or subjectivist epistemology complements these ideas as it supports the notion that all inquiry is partial to our own knowledge and researchers cannot separate themselves from this knowledge when conducting research. Furthermore, understanding is constructed as researchers and participants interact and explore meanings together. A suitable methodology for my research paradigm is a qualitative study that is critical in nature and informed by auto-ethnography and critical ethnography. A critical ethnographic methodology endeavours to connect the analyses of an ethnographical study to wider social structures and systems of power relationships. This methodology “takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (Madison, 2004, p. 5). Further to this, an auto-ethnographic approach requires the researcher to write about their own relative personal and interpersonal experiences. After “discerning patterns of cultural experiences evidenced by field notes, interviews, and/or artifacts, [they then] describe these patterns using facets of storytelling” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 277). In this way, analyses of personal experiences contribute to understandings of cultural experiences.

Critical Theory began with the Frankfurt School – a group of German theorists who were linked to the Institute of Social Research in Germany. These theorists, namely Max Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowenthal, and Erich Fromm, altered Marxist concepts to form neo-Marxist ideas that focused on critiquing and changing society with a goal of reducing domination/oppression and promoting freedom. Henry Giroux is a leading theorist of critical pedagogy and his work is greatly influenced

by Paulo Freire. Though critical pedagogy focuses on student-centred approaches, Giroux's (2001) book, Theory and Resistance in Education: Toward a Pedagogy of the Opposition, claims that teachers need to "establish organic connections with those excluded majorities who inhabit the neighbourhoods, towns, and cities in which schools are located" (pp. 237-238). Michael Apple and Peter McLaren further inform this type of critical educational theory. With regard to a focus on Critical Race Theory, Whiteness studies and Anti-racism within an educational framework, numerous scholars including, Carol Tator, Frances Henry, Donna Bivens, Ansari Sayani, Angelina E. Castagno, Gloria Ladson-Billings, George JS Dei, Sabina E. Vaught, and Robin DiAngelo provide a theoretical framework that informs and is foundational to my inquiry.

1.5. Overview of Thesis

This thesis is composed of 8 chapters. Chapter 2 is comprised of a review of literature that presents the themes that currently arise in the study of students of South Asian descent (or minoritized students). This review provided a foundational knowledge before beginning research and exposed the gaps in literature that my research could, perhaps, partially fill. Chapter 3 describes the research method that was used and the participants who were interviewed. It also describes how data was collected and analyzed, the consent process, as well as the processes of confidentiality and data storage. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 elucidate the main themes that emerged through data analyses. Each of these chapters begin with a personal vignette or vignettes that introduce the theme. I then draw upon relevant scholars to introduce an analysis of the vignette(s) followed by participant stories and further analyses. For some chapters, when relevant, I include more personal experiences within the narratives of the participants.

The theme of chapter 4 is racism in Canadian schools. This not only refers to the exclusion of racialized peoples in curriculum, but also includes: the school events, the physical settings of the school, the school calendar, and the behaviours and attitudes of staff members that carry tones of racism in a myriad of ways. Chapter 5 speaks of one of the effects of such racism - namely, internalized oppression and how the dynamics of such oppression manifest themselves in South Asian students and how they continue to

be perpetuated in schools. Chapter 6 takes a closer look at one specific element of internalized oppression that ascribes cultural deficiency to non-White students. It explores examples and ramifications of adhering to this Cultural Deficit Theory. Finally, chapter 7 explores the integration of inclusive practices in teaching. I share participant vignettes that reveal stories of teachers who engaged in cultural proficiency and a relational approach. In addition, there are narratives of classrooms that engaged in inclusive discussions and curriculum. Recommendations and insights from anti-racism scholars are included to inform the narratives and encourage such an approach to education - an approach that attempts to counter racism, internalized oppression, and cultural deficiency found in educational settings and revealed in the participants' narratives.

In chapter 8, I summarize the key themes that arose from the data and clarify those experiences that inhibited the education and psyche of the participants as well as those that validated and engaged them. I discuss the limitations of this study and lastly, I consider the transferability of these findings to other marginalized groups and how this study can be used in the field of education.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

“Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

This quote by a German social activist who protested Nazism speaks of acknowledging and acting against oppressions rather than just railing against them. Anti-oppression work in education requires a similar mind-set. Exploring how students of South Asian descent describe their educational experiences in Canadian schools is a research question that derives from a need to acknowledge and act against oppressions that have remained silent in Euro-centric curricula. In, The Colour of Democracy Racism in Canadian Society, Henry and Tator (2006) delineate how “educational institutions have preserved and perpetuated a system of structured inequality based on race” through a “[c]urriculum [that] has two dimensions: the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum. The formal curriculum consists of content and the processes of instruction” whereas, “[t]he hidden curriculum includes educator’s personal values, the unquestioned assumptions and expectations, and the physical and social environment of the school” (p. 201) with “the most powerful examples of the hidden curriculum [being] the attitudes and practices of educators in the classroom” (p. 205). Additionally, Rita Kohli (2009) asserts that “[t]eachers have the agency to intervene on culturally biased curriculum [and] have the power and responsibility to validate students’ cultures and racial identities” (p. 243).

In exploring the experiences of minoritized students in schools, I searched for information that included key topics such as minoritized students, White teachers, racialization, stereotypes, teacher behaviours and influences, minoritized students, and student-teacher relationships. I initially focused on searching for information about South Asian students but, because there was very little literature on this topic, I broadened the parameters of my search to minoritized students. Though research from many different

countries was available, most of the literature I chose described studies done in either Canada or U.S.A. The research that delineated situations that were closest to schools found in urban cities in B.C. is the research that I found to be the most relevant. The literature led to Whiteness and Critical Race theories and an anti-racism framework. These theoretical frameworks centering teachers and schools as agents of change informed decisions about what to include and exclude.

The literature review revealed themes of Whiteness and White privilege, structural racism, internalized oppression and anti-racism education. Within the latter theme, various sub themes emerged: cultural deficit theory versus cultural proficiency, White teachers (biases, attitudes, and behaviours), student/teacher relationships, and minoritized students' perceptions of caring and racism. Resulting conclusions point to potential strategies for creating safe, equitable spaces for all students. These recommendations need to be enacted to affect true change.

In order to discover the best answers to how students of South Asian descent describe their educational experiences in Canadian schools, I initially focused on searching for information about students of South Asian descent but, because there is very little literature on this population, I broadened the parameters of my search to minoritized students. Though research from many different countries was available, most of the literature I present here describes studies done in either Canada or U.S.A. The research that delineated situations that were closest to schools found in the Greater Vancouver area with South Asian populations is the research that I found to be the most relevant. Many schools in Surrey, B.C. have a student population comprised mostly of students of South Asian descent while most of their teachers are White. Thus, research that described classrooms that had many students belonging to one minoritized group being taught by White teachers is the research that was the most pertinent. Overall, the literature led to a Whiteness theory and anti-racism framework that centered teachers and schools as agents of change within educational institutions.

2.2. Structural Racism

Leading anti-racism scholar, George Dei (1996), asks “why the norms, values, ideas, and perspectives and traditions of one social group should be adopted as standard by the institutions of society” (p. 29). He articulates how this one social group has, at its epitome, straight, wealthy, healthy, Anglo-Canadians and consequently, gives people of colour far less access to high status, prestige, and economic and political power (Dei, 1993, p. 38). The further away one is from having the traits that qualify them for this group/this standard, the more difficult it is for them to access the aforementioned benefits. This disparity in access is why Dei, amongst other scholars, contends that, “the appropriate theoretical approach to anti-racist education in the schools should relate individual and group experiences of students to the power structure of institutions of society” (Dei, 1993, p. 38).

Further to this, hooks (1996) asserts that by “[c]onstantly and passively consuming white supremacist values both in educational systems and via prolonged engagement with mass media, contemporary black folks, and everyone else in the society, are vulnerable to a process of overt colonization that goes easily undetected” (p. 111). Ladson-Billings (1998) supports this idea of undetected colonization in that she describes how racism is “so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people” (p. 11).

Because the “standards” that Dei speaks of are, in fact, our societal norms, there is very little questioning of our adherence to them. We are conditioned to accept, while remaining blind to the idea, that when it comes to race, the White lens is superior. Pyke (2010) refers to Foucault (1977) when she states that, “[the] dominant group controls the construction of reality through the production of ideologies or ‘knowledge’ that circulate throughout society where they inform social norms [and] organizational practices” and follows up with how “[i]n this way, the interests of the oppressors are presented as reflecting everyone’s best interests, thereby getting oppressed groups to accept the dominant groups interests as their own” (p. 556).

Essentially, the “normative cultural practices of Whiteness are pervasive throughout levels of schooling from administrative to textbooks to all manner of interpersonal actions” (St. Denis, 2005, p. 304). These contentions, although blatant upon examination, are often denied by educators.

Castagno (2008) suggests that, “through th[e] consistent denial of systemic inequities, privileges, and oppressions associated with race, Whiteness is maintained. Students are being schooled in both the ideological and institutional aspects of Whiteness even when teachers don’t say a word” (p. 324). This relates to Henry and Tator’s (2006) description of how educational institutions have preserved and perpetuated a system of structured inequality based on race through a curriculum that has two dimensions: the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum, with the most powerful examples of the hidden curriculum being the attitudes and practices of educators in the classroom. This “hidden curriculum and construction of otherness” (p. 202) is one of many manifestations of racism in the education system. Others include Euro-centric/Anglo-centric curriculum; culturally biased assessment practices; racial harassment and racial incidents; streaming of minority students; school disciplinary policies and practices; an assimilationist culture of the school; lack of representation in curricula, administration, and staffing; and devaluing the role and participation of parents and community (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 202). This extensive list elucidates how structural racism permeates through our schools.

Huber, Johnson, and Kholi (2006) corroborate this contention through their depictions of Malcolm X describing how his school perpetuated a racial hierarchy when his teacher told him that his goal of becoming a lawyer was unrealistic because of the colour of his skin. bell hooks discussion of how teachers’ biased perspectives kept Black students out of gifted classes, and of a teacher removing two Black students from her class when they wanted to discuss the use of a derogatory term that was used in a novel are further examples of structural racism in educational settings. The first two scenarios imply that non-white students are not smart enough, while the last illustrates how they must accept racism if they wish to succeed academically.

Canadian educators might argue that these claims are more relevant in the United States of America because Canada supports a multicultural and colour-blind ideology within its educational institutions. A colour-blind approach encompasses an idea that people are judged based solely on their actions and character and that the colour of their skin or their ethnicity does not factor in. The problem with this ideology is that it “has served to deny the reality of racism and thus hold it in place” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 108). Scholars such as Srivastava (2007), have critically analyzed the argument that the prevalence of multiculturalism in Canadian schools implies an absence of structural racism. Their analyses reveal that multiculturalism barely acknowledges the historical inequities and systemic racism; “it celebrates dance, dress, and dining, but it fails to take into account the multiple dimensions of racial and social inequality” (Srivastava, 2007, p. 291).

Remaining silent around issues of racism that occur every day in society does not prove that racism does not exist in Canada just as aligning oneself to a colour-blind ideology does not prove that inequity does not exist. In fact, “[d]isavowing institutional racism, the colour-blind approach reinforces white privilege while enabling white people to consider themselves non-racist” (Pease, 2010, p. 111). An adherence to such an approach coupled with the erasure of race centred discussions in schools denies the lived experiences of non-White students. How can misconstrued interpretations of multicultural policies that have such devastating effects on non-White students continue to hold dominance in educational settings? In order for educational experiences to genuinely validate *all* students, we must begin by examining how “education is a tool used to maintain a racial hierarchy [that] socializes white to the notion of superiority while simultaneously internalizing a self hatred within [non-White] students” (Huber et al., 2006, p. 187).

2.2.1. Whiteness/White Privilege

The literature reviewed, centred on antiracism research and utilized frameworks of Whiteness and ideas of White privilege. Whiteness can be defined as a social construct like “colour” and “Blackness”.

The power of Whiteness, however, is manifested by the ways in which racialized Whiteness becomes transformed into social, political, economic, and cultural behavior. White culture, norms, and values in all these areas become normative natural. They become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior. (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 46)

Two key theorists in this field, Garner (2007) and Dyer (1997), assert the need to use Whiteness as a lens in order to expose a normative privileged identity that perpetuates the status quo while remaining invisible. Dyer (1997) contends that Whiteness needs to be acknowledged “as a racial category so that White teachers can be enveloped into the problems of racism and White privilege rather than allow for non-invested scrutiny from the outside looking in” (p. 3). He describes how White people essentially speak for themselves when they claim to speak for humanity because, by not being racially seen and named, they function as the human norm. He continues to explain that media, politics and education maintain and perpetuate the power that White people enjoy.

Pease (2010) concurs and asserts that we “need to engage in processes that challenge the institutionalization of privilege within political, economic, religious, and educational systems” while also examining how “levels of privilege are sustained and reproduced by the conscious and unconscious beliefs and the habitual practices of individuals in privileged groups” (p. 170). Whiteness “names and critiques hegemonic beliefs and practices that designate white people as ‘normal’ and racially ‘unmarked’ (Garner, 2007, p. 5) and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) allows for an examination of “why [W]hites believe they are not part of race when they actively invest in white racial production[s that] are maintained in education through tracking, teacher beliefs, funding inequities, school disciplining, and overrepresentation in special education” (Matias, Viesca, Garisson-Wade, Tandon & Galindo, 2014, p. 291).

When exploring the relationships between White teachers and minoritized students, a Whiteness lens allows for an exploration of the positionality of White teachers and possible factors that contribute to inequitable situations. Garner (2007) stresses that Whiteness can be used to ground social science researchers by reminding them of the problems surrounding the effacing of racialization - a phenomenon that occurs when

teachers practice a colour-blind approach in their classrooms. The literature that was reviewed lends support to the use of a Whiteness lens when studying classroom dynamics pertaining to minoritized students.

In a personal account of her racialized awakening, Summer (2014) contends that racism has to be recognized and named if one is to interrupt it; colour-blindness actually contradicts anti-oppressive education. This assertion aligns with Garner's claims. Similarly, Vaught and Castagno's (2008) ethnographic study, which employed a Whiteness lens to study teacher's attitudes about race, racism, and White privilege, describes how some teachers, even after anti-bias training, did not include the concept of White privilege in their discourse and attributed any differences to "cultural differences." Those teachers who did recognize stereotyping and White privilege did so in very limited ways. They saw it as having the freedom to enter places and be free of scrutiny but not as something that gives Whites power over others and benefits Whites individually and as a whole.

These studies highlight the dangers of misunderstanding White privilege. If one misunderstands or does not acknowledge White privilege, a Whiteness lens cannot be employed when partaking in antiracism work and such a lens is essential to such work.

Conversely, Shokley & Banks' (2011) ethnographic study of a two-year transformative learning program lead teachers to recognize that White privilege is a systemic and institutional problem that wears away at human relationships. In the program, Peggy McIntosh's (1989) "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" was used to present evidence of the existence of White privilege. This idea was only introduced once a safe place for dialogue was created. McIntosh's work is also used by Dyer to clarify the notions of White privilege. An ideology of Whiteness and concepts of White privilege need to be recognized and accepted as essential first steps to antiracism work before introducing to White teachers structural oppressions that may expose their complicity.

2.2.2. Teacher Biases and Attitudes

Kozlowski (2014) asserts that, “a long line of research indicates that teachers, the institutional gatekeepers of students’ success, can be biased towards and against students based on their race, ethnicity, and class...some teachers negatively perceive and differentially punish some minority students, even when they exhibit the same styles and behaviours as white students” (pp. 45-46).

As previously mentioned, Shokley & Banks’ (2011) ethnographic study of a two-year transformative learning program investigates how participants transformed their ideas around race and cultural bias over time. To expand, a group of three university faculty members in a program called “Initiatives in Educational Transformation” created safe spaces for 60 (mostly White - 88%) teachers to discuss and explore their attitudes and beliefs about race and culture. These “safe spaces” were said to be created through a gradual process that involved participants examining their individual privileges regardless of race. After an examination of this, it was established that *most* people have *some* privileges. It was felt that knowing that everyone had privileges allowed for Whites to examine their racial privilege less defensively (the idea of creating “safe spaces” for White people is further discussed below). At the beginning of this program, teachers saw “bias as a problem that resides outside of them” (Shokley & Banks, 2011, p. 230). After a year of anti-oppression coursework that included taking the Implicit Association Test (a test that measures personal bias), teachers showed more understanding of others and were able to identify and be honest about their own biases. By the end of the program, there was tremendous growth in the teacher’s awareness of their own biases as well a greater acceptance and understanding of others. This study shows how anti-oppressive programs that are grounded in social justice work towards equity.

It should be noted that “creating a safe space” for racial discussions comes with many challenges. Some facilitators may feel that safe spaces can be created by: creating physical spaces that are more comfortable (such as sitting in a circle with the group), sharing personal stories, incorporating culturally diverse readings that include perspectives of White people, and eliciting online feedback so that White students don’t

feel attacked (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015). But, this supports a prioritization of the need to move to spaces of comfort over disrupting a status quo that creates discomfort for the dominant group (Whites).

DiAngelo and Sensoy (2014) contend that it is important to be mindful that “the positioning of cross-racial discussions as ‘unsafe’ for Whites” in a way, “ensure[s that] White supremacy is reinforced and protected” (p. 104). In other words, when people of colour raise race issues and such conversations evoke a tension that leaves Whites feeling attacked and defensive, these people of colour are then positioned as the offenders who are creating such a tense atmosphere. At the same time, White people take on the role of victims who, despite supporting equality through colour-blind and meritocratic ideology, are being labelled oppressors. Such dynamics make the race issues raised by the people of colour secondary to the offense that is being felt by White people. Hence, reinforcing White supremacy.

Shokley & Banks’ (2011) study shows that assumptions and biases can be changed *over time* once they are exposed; however, Vaught and Castagno (2008) claim that biased assumptions being challenged in the schools (through district mandated professional development) can be challenging because “there is an inherent and problematic tension in attempting to address a systemic and structural problem...through individual transformation” (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 98). This highlights the idea that institutional concepts such as a Euro-centric curriculum and school culture must also be acknowledged and problematized in the pursuit of inclusive practices.

Clark and Zygmunt (2014) conducted a study that identified and typified teacher biases in the hopes of providing strategies to mediate biases and develop equity. Their qualitative study included having 302 American K-12 teachers (92% White) complete tests on race and skin tone. These teachers were then informed that 96% of them indicated a preference for European American and light skin. The researchers then explored the teachers’ reactions to these results. Their reactions to the identification and realization of their own biases fell into one of five categories: disregard, disbelief, acceptance, discomfort, or despair. Pedagogical strategies for addressing bias differed

based on the category of reactions. They included providing more information about the tests, having conversations about findings, providing intentional strategies to challenge comfort levels with scores, acknowledging biases, and, finally, building new supportive schema. This study also looked to address teacher bias as necessary individual acts of transformation rather than looking at the systemic, structural implications found in these biases.

In his literature review of the cultural capital of non-White students, Goldenberg (2014) positions himself in between these studies. He asserts that “White teachers must first recognize that their classroom is part of the larger dominant-non-dominant framework that encompasses society and they must then understand that the lens they view students through is a function of this society” (Goldenberg, 2014, p. 121). In conjunction with this lens, “a teacher’s cultural frame of reference influences the way in which they view the world - including their students of colo[u]r” (Goldenberg, 2014, p. 121). Essentially, both educational institutions as microcosms of society and the individual lenses of teachers should be examined when working to improve inclusive and equitable practices.

Summer (2014) explains how society embodies biases that we have been socialized to accept and members of that society (including teachers) do not question these biases. Therefore, racism exists because it has been woven into the status quo of society and we must admit that it exists (p. 195). Subsequently, Summer (2014) supports the need to recognize the role of society in teacher biases and *also* lists ways in which individual teachers can counter these biases within schools. Tackling biases includes examining one's behaviour as well as the ways in which it implies both overtly and covertly said biases.

2.2.3. Teacher Behaviours

In a study conducted by Castagno (2008), data from a year-long ethnographic study that included classroom observations and formal and informal interviews of twenty-four teachers in two different schools was collected and analyzed to examine how silence around race contributes to sustaining and legitimizing Whiteness within schools.

In addition, interviews with school and district administrators and observations of faculty meetings, school events, district level professional development, and board meetings were included in the data. The data revealed that issues of race are silenced through coded language⁷ among teachers; through teacher silence; through the silencing of students' inquiries around race; and through the conflating of culture and race, equality and equity, and difference and deficit. These behaviours serve to erase race issues and, hence, erase teacher biases around race. These behaviours (be they conscious or unconscious) need to be examined in conjunction with examinations of teacher bias.

Aujla-Bhullar's (2011) research examined whether professional development about deconstructing diversity increased an awareness of diversity issues that influence teaching. Open-ended questionnaires revealed that teachers expressed an appreciation for being able to work on such issues in spaces where apprehensions and stereotypes could be discussed. They also felt that continued effort and support, especially Professional Development opportunities, are necessary to changing behaviours and biases. Though there is often initial hesitation and denial on the part of White teachers when acknowledging personal biases and behaviours that have oppressive undertones, these studies concur with the idea that biases translate into behaviours so both must be examined during transformative, anti-oppressive work that includes genuine relationship building with students of Colour. Such individual inquiries that lead to improved relations can then transition to classroom inquiries (teachers with students) of systems of oppression. An element of such relationship building includes acquiring knowledge of and acknowledging internalized oppression and how it impacts students.

2.3. Internalized Oppression

Kohli (2014) describes internalized oppression as “the turning upon ourselves, our families, and our people – the distressed patterns of behavio[u]r that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society” (pp. 371-372). Sensoy & DiAngelo

⁷ Coded language is the substituting of a potentially offensive term with a more vague term that implies the same meaning. For example, using the term “this community” when speaking of “the South Asian community”.

(2012) explain how internalized dominance refers to the internalizing and acting out (often unintentionally) the constant messages circulating in the culture that you and your group are superior to the minoritized group and thus entitled to your higher position. Internalized oppression, on the other hand, is an internalizing and acting out (often unintentionally) the constant message that you and your group are inferior to the dominant group and thus deserving of your lower position (pp. 48-49).

It has been established that the norms of Canadian society are Euro-centric. Because almost all norms are established by the dominant culture, it can be concluded that people who are White and of European descent carry notions of dominance while those who are non-White adopt inferior identities. Patterns of dominance/oppression can be found in various forms of inequity including race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and ability.

With specific reference to race, internalized racial oppression “occurs when a person of Colo[u]r consciously and subconsciously, accepts the negative representation or invisibility of people of Colo[u]r in media, education, medicine, science, and all other aspects of society” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 113). Huber, Johnson, and Kohli (2006) concur with these definitions of internalized racism through their contention that it is the internalizing of the beliefs, values and worldviews built into White supremacy - all of which can result in negative perceptions of one’s self and/or one’s racial group. The impact of such internalization is tremendous and manifests itself in a variety of ways.

Bivens (2005) lists four dimensions ascribed to internalized oppression: inner, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural (p. 46). The inner dimension of internalized oppression includes a sense of inferiority and feelings of being overwhelmed and emotionally drained. These sentiments are intensified by a constant focus on trying to ‘read’ and manoeuvre amongst the dominant group. Meanwhile, the dominant group, who is free from such feelings, exercises its White privilege when they are able to use their time and energy, instead, for self-development. Conversely, non-White people sacrifice this time for self-development as they navigate the uncertainties of this dimension of internalized oppression. Another effect of such navigations is the impact on

the ability of people of Colour to maintain relationships; this leads to the interpersonal dimension.

People of Colour may feel rage towards those in privileged positions, especially if they are unaware of or unwilling to take responsibility for their privilege. Conversely, they might place White people at higher levels of esteem while simultaneously accepting their own inferiority and stereotypes and projecting them onto those of their own racial background. They may distrust themselves and any other non-Whites while recognizing the knowledge of Whites as being the authority. Furthermore, they may lack confidence in themselves and other non-Whites in positions of authority and fail to support and/or accept these positions of authority. “[T]he formation of negative sub-ethnic identities within the group” also falls under this dimension. “By attributing the negative stereotypes and images that the dominant society associates with the racial/ethnic group to ‘other’ members within the group, the subordinated can distance themselves from the negative stereotype...and attempt to join the dominant group” (p. 55).

For those who feel powerless in their lives, such snippets of false power may, unfortunately, be empowering enough to encourage such behaviour. I contend that this is false power because such actions driven by an attempt to join the dominant group don’t result in actually joining the dominant group. If anything, they have merely moved up a notch on the hierarchy of subordination while contributing to divisiveness amongst their own ethnic group.

Regarding the institutional dimension of internalized oppression, Bivens (2005) contends that,

[s]tructurally, there is a system in place that rewards people of colo[u]r who support white supremacy and power and coerces or punishes those who do not...[additionally,] people of colo[u]r may be stumped as to how to get access to resources for [their] own communities. (p. 48)

The last dimension of internalized racism is cultural. Within this dimension, the standards of behaviour that people of Colour perceive as “normal” are accepted Euro-centric standards and within this context, any issues of race are misnamed as economic, political, or emotional issues caused wholly or in part, by people of Colour. Bivens

(2005) gives the example of how, within this dimension, some people of Colour will readily believe they are more violent than White people because this is the stereotype perpetuated by the Euro-centric, authoritative discourse.

This idea aligns with Kohli's (2014) reference to Frantz Fanon (1963) who argues, "when a dominated community has been subjected to a hierarchy of power for so long, they no longer see the value of their native culture and instead wish to embody the culture of their oppressor" (p. 370). Bivens (2005) approaches this concept more pointedly by claiming that as people of colour are victimized by racism, they internalize it; there is a system in place that actively discourages and undermines the power of people and communities of colour and mires them in their own oppression (p. 44).

Huber et al. (2006) claim that, within education settings, teachers, curriculum, and school resources may represent or perpetuate discourses that contribute to internalized racism. Therefore, when considering the school's role in fostering internalized racism, it is important to examine educators, their pedagogy and their sensitivity to issues of race and racism. Bivens (2005), Kohli (2014) and Pyke (2010) all speak to the need for developing an understanding of oppression and how it is internalized while also learning about and valuing the histories and cultures of people of Colour.

2.3.1. Cultural Proficiency vs. Cultural Deficit Theory

Cultural Deficit theory subscribes to the idea that "minoritized groups do not achieve in society because they lack the appropriate cultural values...or because their culture is deficient in some other way" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 59). This viewpoint supports using negative stereotypes of minoritized people to explain deficits in their achievement. Studies reveal that many teachers ascribe this theory to many of their minoritized students. Sayani (2014) cites Valencia and Solórzano (1997, 2004) to explain how,

the narratives of deficit thinking are so prevalent in schools that they consciously or unconsciously shape teacher's practices. Essentially, this deficit way of seeing and doing strategically blames the culture and

environment of the home and family for the students' professed educational 'deficit'. (p. 97)

Marx (2004) also discusses how students of colour may be seen as "disadvantaged by various aspects of their culture" and expands on how teachers may view students as being deficit in culture, language, intelligence, and esteem and how "families that choose to retain aspects of their culture, such as home language and home values, are often misunderstood and, thus, disparaged by those in the dominant culture" (pp. 35-36). This ideology shifts the blame to students and absolves teachers and schools from examining their own roles in "unjust and harmful educational strategies" (Sayani, 2014, p. 97). In this way, educators are able to deflect responsibility for any student deficits (see also Castagno, 2014). Adhering to cultural deficiency ideas allows educators to avoid any examination of their own role or the school's role in the students' levels of engagement and achievement. Furthermore, not having such ideas challenged or examined, prevents such teachers from determining whether or not these beliefs are valid.

In the same vein, a study of three Los Angeles schools conducted by Anderson (2011) revealed that most teachers ascribe to a cultural deficit theory in that they do not see the students' homes being supportive of schooling. Even when these students articulated that they felt their families or homes supported their education, many of their teachers did not agree with these assertions and believed the opposite. This conclusion was reached after analyzing electronic questionnaires administered to 195, mostly White, teachers that examined their beliefs about working with students of various cultures, particularly ethnic-minority, working-class students; and their perceptions in general about how they and the school as a whole work within a culturally diverse community (see also Nunn, 2011).

Goldenberg (2014) states that:

the cultural capital-and cultural beliefs in general-of students of colo[u]r are seen as deficient and in some way 'worse' than the cultural capital of the dominant (White) society...White teachers may be led to believe that students do not have cultural capital, at least any that can be beneficial in the classroom...It is the responsibility of the teacher to recognize capital and

pedagogically utilize it in the classroom in ways that enhance student learning. (pp. 116-117)

Dei (1996) supports this assertion and emphasizes how “[e]ducators must be able to locate the sources of disempowerment of marginalized students in the convenient 'blame the victim' approach and/or the 'culture-deficit' model of understanding societal problems” (p. 38). In addition, it is important to “not view the home culture as a stumbling block, but rather as a resource” (Anderson, 2011, p. 33).

According to Anderson (2001), “[u]sing cultural proficiency - the ability of an educator from one cultural background to effectively teach, interact and connect with students of a different cultural background” (p. 32) is essential to teaching minoritized students. Furthermore, Adair (2008) asserts the importance of White teachers being aware of the limitations of their Whiteness and finding value in the perspectives of other cultures in order to be successful in classrooms. As a student in Anderson’s (2011) study stated:

it is important for teachers to understand our home lives so they have a better understanding of us. It is often times easier for teachers to interact, help and even teach students when they understand them. It is easier for almost anyone to just be around people they know more about and understand. (p. 33)

Similarly, Tosolt’s survey of 825 sixth grade students (2009) contends that an awareness of home culture helps build caring encounters in the classroom.

Sayani (2014) too submits that:

Educators and educational leaders at all schools must begin to recognize in their minoritized students the strength and validity of a plurality of ways of thinking, behaving, relating, and learning...they must begin to mobilize the identities of their minoritized students because they understand that these students who come from different social locations have different meaning systems, and although they may apprehend the world differently, their many ways of knowing are as valid as that of the dominant culture’s privileged way of knowing. (p. 200)

In support of cultural proficiency, Sandhu and Nayar (2008) also emphasize a “need to utilize innovative approaches to making the classroom experience more than the simple

acquisition of skills and knowledge, and rather to regard it as an opportunity to be welcomed, supported, and validated” (p. 43).

Though these studies emphasize the importance of adopting cultural proficiency approaches, they do not specify ways in which to do this. Summer’s (2014) article does provide specific ways for doing this. She implies that the cultural deficit theory contributes to and maintains racism and other oppressions in schools. In her personal account of her racialized awakening, she problematizes the colour-blind approach in addressing this problem in that it contradicts anti-oppressive education and the need to confront the conditions that keep people in ignorance. Instead, she discovers the need to interrupt deficit-based perspectives and talk about race with her students (Summer, 2014, p. 197). Further to this, she states, “[White] teachers must take responsibility to learn about [their] own and others’ cultures” (Summer, 2014, p. 198). As a White educator, herself, she hopes to do this by informally interviewing parents for feedback, analyzing home-school communications so that information is accessible and free of bias, and looking for hidden examples of inequities inherent in school practices and policies. She plans to analyze practices and policies looking for and questioning who is excluded. This includes looking at which events are recognized at school and which are not. This also applies to looking at the teaching staff and how many of the teachers share the same ethnic background as their students. Furthermore, she commits to interrupting deficit-based perspectives with optimistic viewpoints. Lastly, she will use children’s literature that leads to conversations about race, and listening to and incorporating counter narratives.

The importance Summer (2014) gives to parent input is supported by Dei (1996) with his belief that “tapping into the cultural knowledge of parents, guardians, and community...break[s] down the false separation between the school and community” (p. 38). Huber et al (2006) lend support to these ideas and contend that:

Students of Colo[u]r must have teachers who are knowledgeable about their cultures and willing to incorporate them into the classroom. This cultural knowledge should extend beyond knowing the famed food dishes and musical heritage of a culture. Culture is inclusive of worldviews, language, religion, traditions, as well as historical memory. (p. 204)

All of these strategies speak of building cultural proficiency in specific ways that require an examination of one's own biases and attitudes in the process. Such a process is part of anti-racist education.

2.4. Anti-racist Education

Including anti-racism education in pedagogical practices is sometimes met with resistance for a variety of reasons. One reason includes a lack of knowledge about racial issues. Donaldson (2001) explicates how,

Anti-racist education practice begins with educating administrators and teachers to understand racial oppression and racial identity issues, as well as racist conditioning and internalized oppression. Anti-racist education challenges the total school environment to understand the ways in which racism is manifested in schools and society. It encourages educators to integrate anti-racist concepts into all subject areas...The challenge of accepting anti-racist education as viable pedagogy is dealing with fear and resistance. (p. 17)

Kohli (2014) adds to this with her assertion that "...consciousness [is] an important tool in thwarting internalized racism" (p. 378). But how is such wilful consciousness to be prioritized if, as Castagno (2008) contends, issues of race are muted or ignored by educators thereby conditioning students to be silent despite the omnipresence of race in school related discourses, practice and policies?

George Dei (2014) emphasizes the need for educators and school leaders to take the lead in initiating and allowing for alternative, non-hegemonic viewpoints. He "defin[es] anti-racism education as an action-oriented educational practice to address racism and the interstices of difference (such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, language, and religion) in the educational system" (p. 240). Further to this, he stresses how "[r]ace powerfully implicates and orients schooling, and any education that sweeps race under the carpet is a miseducation of the learner" (2014, p. 240).

On a broader level, Agyepong (2010) points out the need for firstly naming and addressing racism in schools and then encouraging cognitive skills that allow students to work through issues of discrimination. Further to this, Dei (1999) and Landsman and

Lewis (2006) highlight the commonplace practice of talking about White people as “raceless” and the impact that comes with such a privilege. Pearse (2012) supports their assertions with her claim that discussions about culture and difference must include analyses of White groups, so that the neutrality and invisibility of Whiteness, and thus its unacknowledged dominance, is challenged.

Incorporating discussions of the role of White as a racial construct contributes to a more thorough understanding of issues of race. As Srivastava (2007) highlights, “[t]here is an assumption...that knowledge of racism is best acquired by examining the lives of people of colour—rather than by acknowledging and challenging the array of racist knowledge and practices” (p. 304). This shift in central focus from racialized identity to White identity is included in Dei’s (1999) ten principles connected to anti-racism education. Other principles articulated by Dei (1999) include: recognizing the social affects of race, having an awareness of intersectionality, examining the marginalization of certain voices, learning about identity, developing a holistic understanding of human experiences, acknowledging that educators and educational institutions continue the cycle of inequalities and acknowledging the need to confront this phenomenon, and examining pathologizing behaviours that blame students and their families for their problems.⁸

Summer (2014) emphasizes listening to students in our classes as a strategy for anti-racism education because counter-narratives tell the stories that the mainstream narrative tends to silence. Another vital element of counter-narratives is emphasized by Ullucci’s (2010) claim that asking students to look at life from the perspective of another ethnicity fosters a kind of critical race reflection that switches perspective away from oneself. This allows for a world where multiple realities can coexist. Adair (2008) reverberates the idea of storytelling as a powerful tool to expose racism and break down White privilege and hegemony because “storytelling is not just about the stories but who gets to tell which stories” (p. 199). Sayani (2014) similarly asserts that teachers need to create opportunities for their students to speak from the epistemic stand that their multiple identities provide. Bradbury (2014) describes how Critical Race Theory

⁸ These principles are further explored in Chapter 7.

scholars support these assertions and ask educators to explore how racism operates within the everyday workings of the education system “through the use of counter-stories to illustrate how racist outcomes can result from apparently innocuous practices or reforms” (p. 21).

One must take care, however, when employing strategies of storytelling because of the ever-present possibility that the raw, emotional stories of marginalized people become trivialized or evoke a sense of what may be called the sublime – “the pleasurable experience in representation of that which would be painful or terrifying in reality” (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 16). Bishop (2018) suggests that storytelling by marginalized people could “put them at risk of inviting sedentary bingeing and even voyeurism” (p. 130). She refers to bell hook’s when she calls “such voyeurism ‘eating the other’ – a satisfaction of a kind of sensual longing for difference” (Bishop, 2018, p. 130). These types of responses do much to reinforce hierarchies and little to forward the causes of anti-racism education.

In addition to anti-racism educators allowing for multiple voices and lenses, “indicators of high-quality teaching for children of colo[u]r as determined by key scholars in [the anti-racist education field]...includ[e] maintaining high expectations of all children, diversifying the curriculum and understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of teaching” (Ulluci, 2010, p. 141). Dei (1996) explains how a school’s curriculum works to define what counts as valid knowledge. If curriculum is Euro-centric, then all non-White knowledge is conversely invalidated. Huber et al (2006) agree and assert that curriculum serves as an authority on who is important. Similarly, James (2007) contends that marginalized students are further marginalized when they are erased from the curriculum.

Dei (1996) promotes anti-racism education because it tackles this oppressive, binary framing of curriculum (of White versus non-White) through the creation of possibilities for students to be able to recognize their individual and group ancestry and cultural heritage as powerful sources of knowledge. “[R]epresentation in education

means ‘describing a world with everybody in it and reversing the effect of invisibility’ (Agyepong, 2010, p. 3). As made explicit by Michael & Harper (2015):

It goes beyond an additive holidays and heroes approach to change the entire structure of the school year so that all students develop the capacity to understand the complexity of... society, to see contemporary and historical events from the perspective of diverse groups, and then to problem-solve about current day problems...An anti-racist classroom encourages students to recognize a hidden curriculum and to critically analyze it...(pp. 82-83)

Not only does inclusion in curriculum engage and validate students but, when students learn to draw upon various perspectives and challenge notions of a single narrative, they are then able to transfer these skills of analyses to other avenues of their lives (Pearce, 2012).

An additional element of anti-racism education is the need for training/professional development. Tator and Henry (2006) warn of the dangers of failing to provide teachers with the knowledge, tools, and skills to address racism. They emphasize how racialized beliefs, assumptions, and norms are reinforced as a result of lack of training: “Professional development opportunities in diversity education provide an important arena for practicing teachers to expand their consciousness about race, racism, and whiteness and to gain support to apply that awareness to their practice” (Schniedewind, 2005, p. 280).

Training new and current teachers in anti-racism practices though, may be met with some resistance. Dlamini (2002) explains how teachers might resist because they see this practice as challenging established practices and beliefs, they may believe that minoritized peoples need to assimilate and diversity education that problematizes Whiteness will give them privileges. They may also believe that it encourages racist attitudes instead of eradicating them. Henry & Tator (2006) further elucidate this obstacle by maintaining that “[m]any educators resist anti-racism and equity initiatives because they are unwilling to question their own belief and value systems, teaching practices, and positions of power and privilege within the school and the society” (p. 223). Pearce (2012) supports this claim with her reference to many recent studies of

White pre-service teachers who want to resist ideas of Whiteness, dominance, and inequity in favour of meritocracy.

Similar to the “colour-blind” approach, meritocracy ignores realities of racism and other forms of discrimination in its exclamation that anyone can achieve anything if they *just work hard enough*. Fear of being labelled as undereducated in understanding race and racial groups, being labelled a racist, or realizing that their egalitarian model of teaching is actually unfair also leads to a resistance of adopting anti-racism frameworks of teaching (Stevenson, 2008).

The extra work required in learning and implementing an anti-racist framework, as well as some or all of the justifications listed above, may lead educators to shy away from anti-racism education within their teaching. Henry & Tator (2006) would argue that “the silence that generally pervades the classroom on the subject of racism echoes loudly in the attitudes of students, who daily struggle to affirm their identities in an institutionalized culture that denies their feelings, stories, and experiences” (p. 206) and that educators need to centralize these histories and experiences in order to foster empowerment and critical reflection practices. Michael & Harper (2015) call this “building more whole people and communities” (p. 121) and Ryan (2006) calls it “liberating” (p. 12). In the words of hooks (1996),

Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world...The notion that differences of skin colo[u]r, class background, and cultural heritage must be erased for justice and equality to prevail is a brand of popular false consciousness that helps keep racist thinking and action intact. (p. 265)

Finally, when it comes to anti-racism education, teachers should “work to get to know students and their families, their interests and their ideas. Teachers should have the racial proficiency and social skills to be able to form relationships with and ask questions of all students and their families” (Michael & Harper, 2015, p. 82).

2.5. Student and Teacher Relationships

One of the themes of this review is the dynamics between teachers and their students. If a teacher partakes in relationship building, then students will be more inclined to be cooperative in classrooms and have trust in their teacher. This in turn, leads to greater engagement and fewer disciplinary matters. Viewing teachers as legitimate authority figures also results from a relational approach to teaching. These correlations were ascertained by Gregory & Ripski (2008) after an analysis of data they collected that examined teachers' relational approach as a predictor of high school students' behaviour and their trust in teacher authority. Findings from interviews and surveys with 32 teachers (91% White, 9% of other racial/ethnic groups) and 32 discipline-referred students (63% White, 22% Black, and 15% of other racial/ethnic groups) supported the importance of relationship building. More specifically, seventeen of the teachers (53%) were coded as using a relational approach and fifteen of those seventeen teachers (88%) had been nominated by the interviewed students because they were identified as the teacher who the student got along with the most. These nominations reveal the connections between a relational approach and student trust. Examples of this approach include incidents where

[t]wo teachers spoke about their success at eliciting cooperation from two of their Black students who were perceived by other teachers as defiant. One teacher said, 'If he feels like a teacher cares about him and wants the best for him, then he's going to respond to them,' and another teacher said, 'The one thing that seems to mean the most to her is my affection and my caring about her as a person'. (Gregory & Ripsky, 2008, p. 346)

A cross-sectional and longitudinal study in the form of surveys conducted by Hallinan (2008) yielded similar findings. Furthermore, older students in this study revealed that such traits lead to a greater liking of school and better academic achievement.

Moving from findings that pertain to all students in general, a qualitative comparative study conducted by Nunn (2011) explores how classroom dynamics exacerbate or alleviate ethno-racial tensions for Latino American students. Data was amassed from field notes in classrooms and student interviews to reveal, much like the former two studies, that pedagogical approaches made a difference to students in that authentic caring translated to feelings of validation, encouragement, and higher

achievement. But, data also revealed that schools, overall, exacerbate ethno-racial tensions through low track curricula - streaming students into classes that have lowered academic expectations and fewer options for post-secondary pursuits. If students are in high track classrooms, silences around issues of race work to create similar tensions.

Daniels' (2011) study claims that teachers need to better understand why young adolescents do or do not achieve. Daniels utilized surveys and interviews with middle school students to examine what motivates them and found that when teachers create motivating learning environments, student behaviour and achievement is positively affected. The article then offers some specific suggestions from students about how teachers can create more motivating learning environments: "One of the most effective ways to get to know your students is to greet them at the door – gain insights – [this] makes teachers more approachable and shows they are interested and then students behave better" (Daniels, 2011, p. 33). Displaying genuine like and respect for students, being available for conferencing, and teaching time management and workload balancing strategies all help build rapport and result in better student behaviour.

All of the aforementioned findings align with Henry & Tator's (2006) assertion that, "[m]inority students are 'empowered' or 'disabled' as a direct result of their interactions with educators in school. This leads to the importance and power of the educator to play an advocacy role" (p. 207). Further to this, "[i]f teachers are unable to connect across races because of unexamined biases or simply not feeling as at ease with students or families of color, students will experience a greater sense of marginalization" (Michael & Harper, 2015, p. 9). Roorda et al (2011) and Sayani (2014) also cite greater engagement and motivation as effects of affective Teacher-Student relationship. If students:

feel that their teachers have regard for them... and are interested in their welfare, they will react positively. For positive or negative teacher-student interactions to generalize to feelings about school, they need to occur consistently in a stable, enduring environment. (Hallinan, 2008, p. 273)

A relational approach within the context of an anti-racist teaching framework is instrumental to success. The degree to which schools and teachers adopt a relational

approach influences the perceptions that minoritized students have of caring and racism in classrooms and in the school. These perceptions, overall, are a theme that bears further exploration.

2.5.1. Minoritized Students – Perceptions of Caring and Racism

Samuel's (2005) doctoral dissertation explores South Asian students' perspectives on racism in academe. An ethnographic interview method was used to determine that, of the forty students who were interviewed, all revealed "beliefs that overt and covert racism is widespread in faculty-student relationships and in the Eurocentric curriculum" (p. 313). Similarly, Sayani's (2014) book delineates an eight-month narrative inquiry of an eleventh-grade Canadian high school classroom that was largely comprised of South Asian students and uncovers how South Asian boys felt they were "unfairly profiled and a target of surveillance" (p. 187) and that teachers and non-South Asian students believed that they "lack intellectual ambition and abilities" (p. 189). These beliefs in academic inferiority are "disabling and defeating" (Sayani, 2014, 189).

Relatedly, a study conducted by Anderson (2011) that examined how students perceived their own treatment as it relates to school disciplinary practices found that racially and ethnically diverse students in Toronto high schools believed that they faced discrimination much more than White students do. Data analysis of questionnaires showed that this discrimination is perceived to be experienced with White teachers, administrators, and school police officers.

These studies speak to a lack of connection between teachers and students that leads to students' feelings of inferiority and perceptions of teachers as uncaring and prejudiced. Hallinan (2008) articulates how teachers demonstrate that they care about their students when they listen to the students, encourage their efforts, and provide a warm atmosphere that enables them to feel safe and secure. Teachers also show interest in students by respecting them and their familial and peer cultures and giving them a sense of inclusion in the school community. Another way that teachers support students is by being fair in their dealing with them. When teachers follow norms of equity and treat everyone fairly and compassionately, students feel respected. If students perceive

that their teachers are being unfair to them or their peers and are violating norms of equity, they feel that their teachers have low regard for them. In addition to showing caring and respect and treating students fairly, supportive teachers praise students for their effort to learn, as well as for their academic and social accomplishments.

Tosolt (2009) argues that understanding which behaviours students perceive as caring will assist teachers in building more caring connections. A relational approach within the context of anti-racism education can only be successful if students perceive caring and efforts to be genuine.

2.6. Conclusion

When exploring the school experiences of minoritized students, the literature reviewed all point to a need for building awareness of inequities in classrooms in order to affect change. Subsequently, actions can then be taken to change current oppressive practices into equitable conditions. Findings from the literature will be applied to analyze incidents that were recounted and explain ideas that were expressed during this research. Additionally, they will be utilized to corroborate conclusions throughout this thesis. Before exploring the vignettes and analyzing the themes that emerged from the data, it is necessary to become familiar with the research methods of this study.

Chapter 3.

Research Methods

3.1. Introduction

The literature reviewed in the previous chapter reveals a general consensus about factors that encourage or inhibit the engagement and validation of minoritized students. The information gleaned from these works assisted in directing the research methodology I would use. Many of them involved qualitative research including qualitative interviews of participants about their experiences followed by analyses of the responses. My own study involves examining the lived educational experiences of students and then analyzing them through a critical lens that examines the role of institutions and power in educational settings. Therefore, my research method, similar to many of the studies explored in the literature review, is informed by critical ethnography.

Ethnography, in itself, is considered a culture of studying people, whereas critical ethnography “attempts to link the detailed analysis of ethnography to wider social structures and systems of power relationships” (O’Neill, 2016). In my case, I am hoping to analyze students’ experiences to determine if they reflect societal norms and if these students’ educators and curriculum perpetuated these norms. These “norms” will also be problematized throughout analyses in an effort to reveal inherent inequities.

Major authors who have described this type of research and whom I refer to for my study are D. Soyani Madison, Jim Thomas, Phil Francis Carspecken, and Geoffrey Walford. Madison (2005) describes how critical ethnography includes ethically addressing injustices and working towards freedom and equity. This is done by disrupting the status quo and highlighting operations of power and control that are often unquestioned, taken-for-granted assumptions.

I eventually decided to add another element to this method in that I wanted to include personal experiences to further enhance analyses and understandings of

participant experiences. This concept directed me towards a critical auto-ethnography. What really resonates with this approach is how the purpose of my study (to explore practices in educational settings that influence the experiences of racially minoritized students) ties in with the purpose of critical auto-ethnography which is to move beyond exploring what is on the surface level and encourage researchers to dig deeper and challenge the status quo by creating an awareness of hidden operations of power and control (Madison, 2005). Reviewing the experiences of recent high school graduates coupled with my own relatable experiences strengthens an exposition of operations of power.

3.2. The Participants

Seven people were chosen from the original application base of ten who volunteered to be interviewed. The seven who were interviewed, were chosen because they responded to the call for participants and met the criteria of being of South Asian descent and graduating from high school within the last ten years. It was a coincident that they attended schools in different districts in the area, thus allowing for an exploration of student experiences from different school districts. Regarding the three volunteers who were not included, one of them was a sibling of a participant I had already interviewed and I was acquainted enough with the other two, that my objectivity may have been affected.

Participants chose the location for their interview. Six interviews were conducted face-to-face while one was completed via Skype as the participant is currently attending university outside of Canada. Descriptions of the participants follow. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality.

1. Inder – Inder was the first person I interviewed. He graduated from a high school in Surrey, BC in 2016. He was born in Canada and has lived in Surrey his whole life attending both elementary and high school in his neighbourhood. Currently, he attends a local university. It was after my interview with Inder that I realized that my interview questions needed to be more specific. Many of his responses were short and did not delve deeply into the topics.

2. Uma – Uma also graduated from high school in 2016. She was born and raised in Delta, BC, and attended schools in her neighbourhood. Currently, she is a student at an eastern Canadian university.
3. Harleen – Harleen was born in Surrey, BC, and moved briefly to Langley, BC before moving back to Surrey. She attended elementary and secondary school in Surrey graduating in 2013. She completed her post-secondary education at a local university with a B.A. in Sociology and then a completion of the Teacher Education Program in 2017. Currently, she is a teacher in a school district with a high population of South Asian students.
4. Ompreet – Ompreet was born in Abbotsford, BC. She attended both elementary and high school in Abbotsford and graduated in 2010. After graduation, she completed her post-secondary degrees at a local university and earned a Bachelors degree in Science (Biology/Kinesiology) and a Bachelors of Education. She currently teaches at a high school in a school district with a relatively high South Asian student population.
5. Kiran – Kiran was born in Richmond, BC. Her family later moved to Surrey, BC where she attended grades K to three. They then moved to Abbotsford, BC where she completed her elementary and secondary education and graduated in 2011. She completed her post-secondary degrees at a local university where she earned a Bachelors degree in Science (Biology/Kinesiology) and a Bachelor's in Education. Currently, she is a teacher at a high school in a school district with a relatively high South Asian student population.
6. Sammy – Sammy was born in Delta, BC, and attended school in his neighbourhood. He graduated in 2014 and enrolled in local post-secondary institutions to complete his Bachelors degree. Currently, he is completing graduate studies in the United Kingdom
7. Baldish – Baldish graduated from secondary school in 2016. She was born in Vancouver, BC, and attended an independent girl's school in the same city. She is currently attending a local university and is completing a combined bachelors/masters degree.

There is no universal standard for how many participants would be ideal for semi-structured interviews; importance is placed more on the data that is collected during interviews. The idea is to “collect sufficient data to represent the experience[s being] investigat[ed]” (Arthur, Waring, Coe, & Hedges, 2013, p. 171). Saturation occurs when

an interviewer hears nothing new in their interviews, at this point, interviews and data collection can stop. I believe seven participants provided sufficient data.

3.3. Research Protocol

In order to solicit participants, I sent out emails to university and college clubs/organizations in the Lower Mainland that have a high South Asian population. I also shared this email on Facebook and twitter pages of similar clubs/organizations. Lastly, I sent out emails to friends of family whom I do not know personally. Once two participants had been secured, snowball sampling occurred with these participants informing other potential participants about my study and asking them if they would agree to having their contact information sent to me.

Two versions of interview questions were used during data collection. The first version included questions that revolved around educational experiences (negative and positive). These original interview questions were only used to interview the first candidate because my post-interview reflections revealed the need to make revisions and include questions specific to racial identity. As my research question specifies exploring the experiences of a specific racial group (South Asian), it was important for interviewees to speak of their experiences as a racialized student and not just as *a* student. The questions I was asking in the first interview did not reflect this requirement. In addition, because I did not open up the space for such conversations, this could have led the participant to feeling or assuming that this topic was to be avoided or not considered a valid lived experience worth exploring. The participant could have then viewed the interview as an extension of the way in which many schools and classrooms operate - often ignoring or avoiding discussions and elements of race and racism. Such ideas may have then led the participant to believe that a “successful” interview would involve exhibiting model minority behaviour. Model minority behaviour can be defined as performing extremely well academically and finding financial success within our current society and its systems. It denies inequities within these systems and perpetuates a colour

blind and meritocratic approach.⁹ The participant's responses to my questions mainly involved speaking of his successes and achievements in school thus modelling exemplary minority behaviour.

Without making it explicit that race was to be part of our conversations, I realized that participants could not be sure that I was open to race based discussions. Consequently, the second version of interview questions revolved around educational experiences (negative and positive) *and* racial identity. Both sets of questions can be found in the appendix.

During interviews, I was empathetic and encouraging while being mindful not to lead informants with my own opinions. To protect the rights of all my participants, I shared my transcripts of their interviews with them and asked for feedback. Though none of the participants responded to this invitation, it was necessary to offer it because such a process allowed participants an opportunity to review what they said during their interview to determine if they were comfortable with sharing this information and having it analyzed. If they did not agree with the transcript or wanted any part omitted, they had the right to have it changed or removed. The idea was to construct meaning together and discover what dynamics lead to engagement and empowerment as well as what contributed to feelings of inferiority, and/or disengagement.

Confidentiality is ensured for all interviewees as pseudonyms are used and any institutions or educators discussed are not identified. Also, if a participant wished to withdraw at any point, their data would have been removed and shredded. All data and consent forms are stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected PC. Once the study is completed and approved, data will be uploaded to an online repository (SFU RADAR) with all files being stripped of any information that could identify participants. Once data is uploaded to this online repository, consent forms will also be destroyed to ensure complete anonymity.

⁹ This idea is further discussed in Chapter 5.

As a racialized South Asian person, student, and teacher I believe that I have an advantage when it comes to having a deeper understanding of many of the experiences shared by the participants as well as knowledge of general classroom practices, curriculum and policies. I have lived through similar experiences that participants describe and my occupation as a high school teacher allows me to have an understanding of the dynamics at play when each experience is being shared. These factors assisted in my conversations with participants. For example, when they described curriculum that was being covered in a Social Studies classroom, or the concern around overcrowding in hallways, I was familiar with these things and able to respond to them and converse about them in genuine ways. When participants described feelings of isolation and invisibility, I was able to empathize and evoke richer responses because there was a recognition on the part of the participants that I understood the context, meaning, and magnitude of their experiences and had probably lived through very similar occurrences.

3.4. Consent Process

A letter of initial contact (Appendix A) was sent via email to potential participants asking for a response within ten days. Although it had initially been determined during the initial research design that five participants would be interviewed, because there were more who expressed interest, seven participants (out of the ten who expressed interest) were interviewed. Acceptance was based on factors such as age (varying ages are preferred), gender (an even number of males and females was preferred as the experiences would differ based on gender) and schooling locations (various districts). Once participants were confirmed, they were presented with two copies of a consent form (Appendix B) to sign; one copy was for my records and the other was for the participant.

3.5. Preliminary Biases, Suppositions and Hypotheses

As a person of South Asian descent living and educated in Canada, I have had my own experiences with racism and suppositions of cultural deficiency as a student in a Canadian classroom. I have also been privy to conversations with minoritized classmates

during this time that spoke of disaffection and disengagement with school. Furthermore, I have witnessed, as a teacher, the behaviour of some teachers and students that reveal internalized dominance and internalized oppression. All of these experiences have influenced the way I conceptualized my research. Once data was analyzed through theoretical lenses, only then did I tie in my own related experiences in order to strengthen the study. This practice of bracketing contributed to the integrity of my study.

Le Roux (2017) suggests criteria with which to evaluate the rigour of qualitative research that is grounded in auto-ethnographic study. This criteria is composed of five indicators of excellence: subjectivity (the self is visible in the research), self-reflexivity (the researcher is aware of their role in relation to the research), resonance (the audience is able to connect to the writer's story with a sense of commonality), credibility (the research should appear true, plausible, and honest), and contribution (the study should teach, generate further study, empower, improve practice, or contribute to change). My own stories interspersed throughout the study make me visible in the research, thus speaking to subjectivity. I was continually self-reflective before and during the research and, as well, shared some of my reflexive process in the thesis. It was important to me to remain aware that my role was to share personal and participant experiences, supported by scholarship, in order to highlight both what is detrimental and what is beneficial to the school experiences of South Asian students. With regard to resonance, a goal is that the audience will connect with the findings of the study because they are invested in re-examining their own educational practices and/or building awareness of their own or others' oppressions and inequitable realities. For this reason, this study is aimed at teaching, empowering, and improving practice. Lastly, all attempts were made to ensure credibility through a sharing of data with participants and inviting their feedback before conducting any analyses.

3.6. Interviews

Thomas (1993) asserts that “[c]ritical ethnographers use their work to aid emancipatory goals or to negate the repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination of all groups. *Emancipation* refers to the process of separation from

constraining modes of thinking or acting that limit perception of and action toward realizing alternative possibilities” (p. 4). These philosophies align with my own positionality as a researcher and serve to guide me. In Critical Ethnography in Educational Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide, Carspecken (1996) describes qualitative research, ontological realms, and dialogical interviews and data analyses. Walford’s (2001) book, Doing Qualitative Educational Research: A Personal Guide to the Research Process provides further information on interviewing and data analysis; specifically, the subjective nature of ethnographic research and the reflexivity it requires. Such guidance was essential to this study. Further to this, my research procedure was comprised of semi-structured interviews that took a dialogical approach in that rather than a straight question-answer format; a conversational style was utilized during interviews with participants.

Such interviews use “open-ended questions to explore participants’ experiences and understandings...[they] are purposeful interactions in which an investigator attempts to learn what another person knows about a topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced, what he or she thinks and feels about it, and what significance or meaning it might have” (Arthur, Waring, Coe, & Hedges, 2013, p. 170). Individual interviews were preferable to focus groups as private conversations allowed for a greater likelihood of sensitive matters being shared. Participants may have been less inclined to open-up and share personal information in focus groups due to fears of judgment and loss of privacy. There are challenges, however, that may arise with semi-structured interviewing; namely, “it requires patience, demands considerable time and energy, and involves coordinating your schedule with the busy calendars of others...[and] there’s always an element of unpredictability” (Arthur et al., 2013, p. 173). A participant might choose to discontinue or cancel an interview, the interview might go off track, or the participant might have little to say. Many of these challenges required a mindful factoring in of the logistics involved.

Using a relational approach allowed participants to comfortably speak of dominance and oppression. Fujii (2018) describes such an approach as one that has an “ethos [that] is human-ist...[its] main ingredient is reflexivity...[and its] guiding

principle is the ethical treatment of all its participants” (p. 1). Reflexivity requires a researcher to constantly examine the way in which they engage with participants while continuously being aware of their own positionality. Such an approach combined with an interactive and dialogical process contributed to a relationship that fostered rich responses.

Guiding questions (Appendices C & D) were used during the interviews and these open-ended questions allowed me to “follow the train of thought and response of the respondent” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 435). Interviews were conducted in an agreed-upon location where the participant felt comfortable. Each interview was approximately an hour in length. During interviews, I voice recorded the conversations using the Dictaphone app on my iPhone (an electronic backup was also in use). I also took brief notes during interviews and wrote them up immediately after the interview. In addition, I recorded personal observations and thoughts, connections with other interviewees and overarching issues in a memo after each interview. I then transcribed the interviews (a professional transcriber transcribed three of the interviews for the sake of expedition). Once all interviews were conducted and transcribed, I emailed the participants the transcription of their interview so that they could review the transcripts and give feedback. I then reviewed the transcripts and began coding.

3.7. Methods of Analysis

After each interview, I made notes on my thoughts and feelings to build “reflexive awareness” (O’Neill, 2016). Once interviews were transcribed, I began “by reading and re-reading the text...think[ing] of the text as a ‘story’...[examining] language...[and] ‘narrative tone’” (O’Neill, 2016). I then used a thematic analysis (TA) approach to code categories and develop themes. Once key themes had been deciphered, critical education theories and any other relevant critical theories were applied to analyze how these themes support or discourage oppressions.

This research paradigm endeavours to connect the analyses of the study to wider social structures and systems of power relationships. Educators/educational institutions

hold positions of power and interactions with students can either respect or abuse this power be it consciously, subconsciously, or even unconsciously. Analyses of data examined classroom experiences and how these positions of power were navigated.

3.8. Conclusion

A critical paradigm that includes a subjectivist epistemology and a relativist ontology provides the framework for this qualitative research. Additionally, concepts of auto-ethnography and ethnography informed this study. I conducted this study by interviewing 7 former K-12 students who graduated from high schools in British Columbia (the Greater Vancouver area) with a Dogwood diploma between the years 2010-2020. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews using a dialogical approach. Themes that emerged from analyses of this data include racism in schools, internalized oppression, cultural deficiency, and inclusive education. The next chapter explores the first of these four themes.

Chapter 4.

Racism and Canadian Schools

4.1. Introduction

In 1982, my younger brother was a Kindergarten student in the same elementary school my sister and I attended. Every school day, he headed to school looking clean and chic, ready to learn and be a part of a mysterious world his older sisters had talked about for years. He would don an impeccable, smart sweater and wait for my mom to comb and style his hair. At that time, his hair was long and unshorn as per the requirements of practicing Sikhs. My mom would sleepily comb his hair, tie it in a topknot and then place a stylish white kerchief on top of it, securing it with an elastic band.

He enjoyed school and as a kindergarten student, he engaged in the usual games, activity centres, and songs. Over time, we came to know of one particular game that wasn't quite making sense to him.

A common game in the kindergarten classroom is the "Cookie Jar" game. Some days, his teacher would have the class sit on the floor, in a circle, around her and they would then begin a game called "Cookie Jar" by chanting in unison, "Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar, was it you number one?" His teacher, Ms. B., would then point to a student who was to say, "Who me? Couldn't be." And then the chant would continue as Ms. B found another student to question and have them give the same reply. After a few attempts at finding the culprit, Ms. B would point at my brother. He was required to respond, "Yes, me."

Ms. B. had explained the procedures of this game before playing it for the first time. At that time, she also told my brother, in front of the class, that he was to always end the game when she pointed at him by saying, "Yes, me." She stated that she chose him for this game-concluding role because his topknot looked like the lid of a cookie jar.

My brother felt uncomfortable about this, which is probably why he told us. We, in turn, were outraged. As children, we knew this was wrong and discriminatory; we felt this in our guts but we weren't equipped to deal with this. Considering we were children, this was understandable. But what about his teacher? Why did she not know that this was wrong and that she was, in kindergarten, relegating my brother to the role of "other" (the subordinated, the minoritized) within the school system?

Another incident that has remained lodged in the memory of one of my other siblings is one that took place in 1987 during my older sister's Grade 12 year. Towards the end of the school year, the grad class was abuzz with excitement over their Grade 12 graduation prom. Students were required to attend in pairs and couples were chosen randomly by teachers and the Grad Council (the racial make-up of this group of teachers and the Grad Council was 100% White). The whole concept of requiring and then procuring prom dates in such a fashion was daunting, not to mention archaic, to say the least. Female students were in one room and male students were in another. When a student's name was called, they would individually walk to the library where they would meet their "date".

My sister was one of six South Asian students in her class; most of the students were White. When it was her turn, she took the nerve-wracking journey to the library and saw that she had been paired with Gurmeet, one of the three South Asian male students in the school. The four remaining South Asian students (two females and two males) were *coincidentally* paired together through this "random" lottery. When she arrived home and told us who her grad date was, my younger sister and I rolled our eyes. Of course. Why did the adults in charge not realize that this intentional, race-based pairing was reifying and advertising the belief that racial groups need to "stay with their own kind"? Additionally, why did they not realize that it was possibly confirming to young, impressionable, racialized students, their beliefs that they were not "good enough" to be with White people?

Although there are many stories within my own family that would fall under this theme of racism, I will share but one more. In 1985, when I was in grade 7, I began to

experience friction with some of the other girls in my class. As ridiculous as it may sound, the tension started over a hockey game that took place in the school gym during our P.E. block. The boys in our class had to pick a female partner they would hand over their hockey sticks to when their shift ended and it was time for the girl's shift. One of the White girls in my class became angry with me because the boy who gave me his stick was "her crush." This was enough to trigger a hailstorm of sneering, snide comments and eventually, racial taunts. I remember sitting on the stage in the gym with the other girls watching the boys play and waiting for my turn. My newly acquired enemy was standing towards the back of the stage mocking my hair, my clothes, and my ethnicity. She then formed a circle with her friends and began prancing in a circle making war cries. I remember looking at her and rather evenly saying, "Wrong Indian."¹⁰ Even though her actions revealed, to me at least, a plethora of ignorance, I was nevertheless deeply hurt by the hate that was coming from girls who, up until now, had been my friends.

When I think about this incident today, I do not dwell on her actions for a number of hopefully obvious reasons. I do, however, fixate on my teacher. He was standing on that same stage, watching everything transpire. To this day, three decades later, I still remember the colour and style of his dress, down to the colour of his whistle. I remember I watched him intently and his actions to follow. He had seen and heard everything and we all froze when we realized this. My paralysis was triggered by a hope for justice while the other girls were immobilized by fear. I watched my teacher with anticipation while dread seeped through the other girls. Mr. G. blew his whistle, looked at all of us, and yelled, "Switch!" Why did he not address what had just happened?

4.2. Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens

It can be noted that the incidents described above all took place over twenty-five years ago. Subsequently, many will assume that teachers and schools in today's society, a society that *seems* to articulate issues of race and equity more readily, willingly and

¹⁰ Education on Indigenous issues and the importance of accurate terminology has been undertaken since the utterance of this phrase. It must be acknowledged that the use of this term to refer to the Indigenous People of Canada is in no way appropriate and is not condoned by the author.

prolifically, would engage in anti-racist education and practices. The introduction of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act into law in 1988 and subsequent teacher education programs that worked in elements of inclusive education may have influenced some educators to incorporate more multicultural practices into their teaching practices. It must be restated though, that multicultural practices imply an absence of structural racism. They often superficially focus on learning about and incorporating cultural dances, clothing, and food without discussing racial and social inequities. While there are some educators who are becoming aware of the limitation of a multicultural approach and turning towards anti-racism education, many educators are still either holding fast to the concept of multiculturalism or avoiding inclusive practice altogether. Various interactions that I have been a part of as a teacher attest to this.

A few years ago, I was having a conversation with our school's Social Justice 12 teacher. As it was a topic of great personal interest, I asked her many questions about the course and the students. She spent much of the time sharing how important it was for her to cover issues of gender equity and sexism "especially in this school" (a school comprised of mostly students of South Asian descent). I was taken aback by this comment. This teacher was implying erroneous stereotypes of South Asian people: boys having more value than girls, boys having to do very little in life while girls are forced to take on all household chores, and parents limiting opportunities for South Asian daughters. This teacher was racializing her students with stereotypes that I commonly heard from her during many of our interactions.

I continued our conversation despite my distaste. I remember excitedly asking her how the students reacted when she covered issues of race. She looked at me blankly and responded, "Ninety percent of my class is Brown, they don't experience racism so we didn't cover it." I am pretty sure my jaw visibly dropped; I was astounded. I can say unequivocally that, yes, they do experience racism - which I will address later in this chapter.

Henry and Tator (2006) emphasize the importance of the role of the educational system in ensuring students' full participation and integration into Canadian society and

conclude that a “significant body of evidence, however, demonstrates that educational institutions have preserved and perpetuated a system of structured inequality based on race” (p. 200). My brother’s role as the cookie jar thief and my sister’s same-race date are examples of such structured inequality. Such classroom and school practices operate to place racialized students in positions of inferiority. They are being told that they are less than and that they are the other versus being told that they are valuable and belong. Consequently, such students may disengage with educational practices and institutions as their sense of belonging decreases with each incident.

Mr. G’s silence during my PE class implied that race and racism either do not exist or were unnecessary topics of discussion in school settings (Castagno, 2008). He also may have felt uncomfortable or ill equipped to tackle issues of race. Nonetheless, not only did his lack of action further damage my psyche but, it reinforced the idea that through “consistent denial of systemic inequities, privileges, and oppressions associated with race, Whiteness is maintained. Students are being schooled in both the ideological and institutional aspects of Whiteness even when teachers don’t say a word” (Castagno, 2008, p. 324). I was schooled during this incident as I learned that a racist, verbal attack on me did not warrant acknowledgment or consequences. Regardless of the motivation behind Mr. G’s inaction, his lack of action maintained, and emphasized, to me, a world where Whiteness is supreme and my mistreatment irrelevant. A student who feels irrelevant, is less likely to participate in school. As articulated by Dei and James (2002), a significant number of “minoritized” groups have become disengaged from their educational experience (p. 63) due to exclusionary, educational practices. In this particular case, the exclusion arose from the teacher’s unwillingness to problematize my very real racial experiences thus leading me to believe that I was not as important as the White students in my class.

Likewise, my colleague’s belief that she did not need to discuss issues of race with her racialized students was a misleading message to her students that they do not face inequities and oppressions because they live in an area where people of their racial background are the majority. The fallacy of this argument lies in the idea that racism can only occur when a particular racial group is the minority in any given environment.

Racism, though, occurs when a person belonging to and representing a powerful institution enacts discrimination upon a racialized person. This can be an educator, a police officer, a clerk in an unemployment office etc. Therefore, the students in my colleague's Social Justice class could absolutely experience racism at any given time. This is true not only for racism but, also applies to all other forms of oppression including gender inequity and sexism.

“Othering” orchestrated or supported by teachers and administrators contributes to schooling experiences that reinforce racism while denying its very existence. When my brother was singled out to be the cookie thief, his teacher was initiating his five-year-old self into the world of being subordinated/othered and pathologized. When my sister was paired with a same-race partner, she was reminded of the inequity and hierarchy within our educational systems. Moreover, her overall experience with this situation led us to once again question “why the norms, values, ideas, perspectives and traditions of one social group should be adopted as standard by the institutions of society” (Dei, 1993, p. 38). In actuality, our cultural and family rules did not permit any form of dating including the “coupling” of people of the opposite sex together, as was required for this prom. But, once again, my siblings and I silently answered “because they know how to do it properly.”¹¹ Such messages and experiences may lead to the disengagement of racialized students in educational settings. For this reason, it is essential to examine the role of schools and teachers in the experiences of South Asian Students.

4.3. The Formal Curriculum

Henry and Tator (2006) contend that “schools marginalize minority students and either exclude or minimize their experiences, history, and contributions to Canada as a nation” (p. 199). They argue that racism manifests itself through two dimensions of curriculum found in schools: the formal and the hidden. The formal curriculum is described as the content and processes of instruction - what is being taught, how it's being taught and how it is then assessed. Further to this, Henry and Tator (2006) cite a

¹¹ Chapter 5 explores this phenomenon of internalized oppression.

report that was published in 1992 by four levels of government in conjunction with an African Canadian Working Group that argues that an “assault on racial-minority students’ identity is the direct consequence of bias and exclusion in curriculum content” (p. 201). Exclusion from curriculum relates to the formal curriculum whereas listing bias as one of the factors responsible for the assault on the identities of racial-minority students, highlights the role of the hidden curriculum in schools. The hidden curriculum encompasses educators’ values, expectations, and assumptions as well as the overall social and physical environment of the school.

During our interview, when asked about the lessons that were covered during her time in K-12 classes, Uma¹² shared how “you just learn about White Canadians, a little bit of cutesy Indigenous stuff, and then it’s like, that’s it. So, including the history of other people settling in Canada could probably be constructive.” After a pause, she continued: “...it was all so very Eurocentric, opening it up to include more present-day stuff or even just more conversations about how, even just how non-White kids are feeling in the current climate or whatever and trying to relate that to how things have gone on, just something like that...it just felt really like, really distant.” Her desire to emphatically continue a lengthy discussion of this particular topic was testament to how strongly the curriculum that she was presented impacted her:

It was definitely really isolating. Like if Canada was built by White people and it was all White people, what am I doing here? What have I, what have my people done? We just showed up and it was all done? Which is definitely not the case. So, there was definitely like, an isolation type of thing where you’re like, okay, so Canada was here, and we got here and that’s it...so I’m learning about all these other people and I know nothing about me and...I don’t know, it was just weird ‘cuz you know immigrants have played a huge role in Canada and Canada’s growth but you learn nothing about it so you’re kind of like, we’re just here and everyone kind of hates us so it’s just kind of a weird thing ‘cuz you learn about people hating immigrants and the whole backlash against immigrants but you don’t learn about how they’re contributing, what they’ve done to make Canada what it is today and just stuff like that. So, it just feels really isolating.

Huber et al (2006) explain how “the constant bombardment of messages embedded in curriculum about the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of non-Whites

¹² Please refer to pages 37 - 39 of the thesis for a brief description of each participant.

(which can be explicit or implicit) can indoctrinate students about their placement on the racial hierarchy” (p. 196). When students don’t read about and learn about people similar to themselves, they feel devalued. Conversely, students who relate to the group of people who dominate curricular content are more likely to feel valued. Coupled with these feelings is the establishment or confirmation of a hierarchy that carries on throughout the lives of these students. When students don’t see themselves in the curriculum, their othering becomes entrenched and they are less likely to engage with classroom interactions and activities.

Uma was not the only participant to feel disenchanted with the curriculum. Kiran shared how she felt that the curriculum “was about Caucasians and that was pretty much it... I don’t think it went beyond that...what you’re exposed to impacts you ...if teachers had introduced other people...it might have sparked something.” While Harleen stated that “...because you have no connection to the material, it would be hard to understand it...if you’re only given one perspective and that perspective is different than what you know, you just wouldn’t absorb it.”

When Ompreet was questioned about the implications of a curriculum that is exclusive to Eurocentric experiences, her reply referred back to a story she told me at the beginning of the interview about being a first-year teacher at her school. A White, male student had mistaken her for a fellow student when she was walking to her car and yelled at her to “go back to [her] country.” Ompreet shared how she believed the implication of implementing formal curriculum that is not racially inclusive is revealed in “how that child made that comment of, ‘Go back to your country’. That is the implication...If you don’t...you’re still saying that these people are, like, kind of, visitors.” Such an awareness of the ramifications of a limited education on the mind-set of a nation’s people is extremely crucial if we are to genuinely move towards equitable and inclusive societies. This is especially important for educators because of the great impact they have on the mind-sets of students - the future leaders of society.

The President of the United States, the leader of the most powerful nation in the world and Canada’s neighbour and ally, sent out a tweet (a message via social media) on

July 14th, 2019 aimed at four, female politicians of colour. He stated, “Why don’t they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came” (Trump, 2019). What Trump didn’t understand however, was that all four women are American citizens and three of them were, in fact, born in the United States. Subsequently, at a rally a few days later in Greenville, North Carolina, when Donald Trump spoke of one of the women, his supporters broke out into loud boisterous chants of, “Send her back!” Such vitriol can possibly be contained through inclusive education. The message that Trump conveyed and his supporters adopted, is that non-Whites do not belong in the country as much as White people do. Such messages can also be found in educational institutions.

Landsman & Lewis (2011) assert that a

...diversified curriculum drawing from varied perspectives and challenging the notion of a single historical narrative helps all students develop a deeper and more complete understanding of history as well as the present. And this awareness is transferable. Students who grasp the complexity of a multi-perspective history will also begin to apply similar reflection to news programs and publications, Web sites, and any other single source of information. (pp. 69-70)

Developing such an awareness with students in schools then allows them to carry these lenses forward into all aspects of their adult lives.

A multi-perspective, diversified curriculum can counter feelings of isolation such as those expressed by the participants above and by Baldish who stated:

I didn't feel connected to the learning...we have been taught to believe that White is the default whether it be in society, in the media and our history and our learning...it either forces us to be othered or conform or both at the same time.

Sammy seemed to encapsulate the feelings of all participants when he stated, “Maybe, for a country that’s got it in their charter that we embrace multiculturalism, maybe we should be learning about the contributions people of other ethnic backgrounds have made to Canadian society.” Although the Canadian curriculum covers topics such as Chinese Canadians and the railroad, South Asians and the Komagata Maru, and Indian residential schools, such coverage is just a tiny fraction of the overall curriculum. Furthermore,

assuming that one incident, such as the Komagata Maru incident, covers all Canadian experiences and contributions of a specific racial group is problematic in itself. Overall, a more inclusive focus in the formal curriculum can only occur if the hidden curriculum in schools aligns with such a model.

4.4. The Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum is found in the social, cultural, and physical environment of schools. This dimension of racism is tacitly conveyed to students through the assumptions, values, and norms of those who work in the schools. These assumptions, values, and norms that are transferred to students can be personal, professional or organizational. Through the hidden curriculum, the hegemony of racism appears and continues the marginalization of non-White students in schools. (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 204). A teacher's insistence that a proper dinner must include meat and potatoes, a drumline class that does not include drums common to certain cultures, a classroom that only displays posters of White, male, heterosexual, Christians, and a school or district that only recognizes specific mainstream holidays and birthdays, are all examples of such hidden curriculum. The hidden messages conveyed through everyday interactions and procedures in schools as well policies and events determined by school districts all work to announce to students what and who is valuable. This must be recognized so that such institutions can begin the work of examining and addressing this hidden curriculum.

Furthermore, Henry & Tator (2006) assert that "the most powerful examples of the hidden curriculum are the attitudes and practices of educators in the classroom" (p. 205). During our interview, Uma disclosed incidents that silently emphasized her inferior place. For example:

There were awards I wasn't nominated for even though I deserved them and White kids all got them. I felt like there was an expectation that if a White dude does a bunch of work, he's going to get the recognition for it because like, 'Wow, it's a White dude doing work, that's super good that he would do these things like fundraisers for Uganda'."

She explained how she had worked twice as hard as the student who was nominated but received a fraction of the recognition by her teachers. Uma's mind-set here echoes Dei's

(1993) claim that people of colour have far less access when compared to straight, wealthy, healthy, Anglo-Canadians (p. 38).

Another example of the hidden curriculum in action is how some educators encouraged her to apply to less rigorous post-secondary schools rather than the prestigious one she wanted to attend. She felt that some of them

make you lower your expectations already and you kind of get into that habit. Like, I want to do this but I should probably go lower a little bit. Definitely, the counsellors were pretty bad for that and you get into that habit and pattern.

Much like the example of Malcolm X being told by his teacher that his goal of being a lawyer was unrealistic because of the colour of his skin (Huber, Johnson, and Kholi, 2006), this is an example of how the attitude and practice of an educator devalued and inferiorized a student based on race. This is how racism can covertly work within an institution. Such an example can serve as a reminder to educators that we must examine our attitudes and practices through an anti-racism lens for the betterment of our student's lives.

Other experiences that Uma troubled revolved around teacher silence; she felt that teachers were unwilling to discuss issues of race to the detriment of racially marginalized students.

...teachers in high school especially, really didn't want to acknowledge that, 'Oh, you're not White, you're Brown and you're a girl in society,' not wanting to be like 'It's gonna be hard'. It was like, 'No, you have the same opportunities and you're just as good'. But, at the end of the day, I don't and those are going to be obstacles for me. Just that refusal to acknowledge that the playing field is nowhere near even was also super frustrating.

During her interview, Harleen shared similar ideas and felt that there were “a lot of teachers who just didn't address any [racial issues] and you could tell kind of by the way they handled certain conversations...they were awkward and uncomfortable with it and so they didn't talk about it.” An unwillingness to acknowledge and incorporate the realities of students' lived experiences within classroom lessons is one way in which racial hegemony is maintained. As stated earlier when examining my teacher, Mr. G.'s,

behaviour, “teacher silence in response to students’ race talk is another important mechanism for legitimating Whiteness in schools” (Castagno, 2008, p. 324).

Some educators may assume that silence around racial issues or advocating for a colour-blind approach is the best way to convey messages of equity. But what they may fail to see are the fallacies of meritocracy – namely, that racism, in reality, does exist in every facet of society and it negatively affects the life chances of racialized people. Pease (2010) describes how “[d]isavowing institutional racism and the colour-blind approach reinforces white privilege while enabling white people to consider themselves non-racist” (p. 111). Educators whose values include a belief in meritocracy and a colour-blind approach, who assume that race is not an important factor in minoritized students’ lives, who consciously or unconsciously believe in and teach White norms and standards, participate in the manifestation of racism. At the same time, advertently or inadvertently, they absolve themselves of being or participating in racism through this popular yet erroneous mind-set. This is an example of how an element of the hidden curriculum, specifically teacher’s attitudes and beliefs, contributes to racism in schools.

The hidden curriculum also manifests itself through “the kinds of behaviours tolerated” in schools (Henry & Tator, 2006, 204). I would argue that this not only includes the toleration of behaviours such as racial harassment (for example, the racial harassment I experienced in my grade seven P.E. class that was met with teacher silence), but it also includes behaviours that are *not* tolerated because they do not fit White norms. One practice that many participants commiserated about was the practice of separating male South Asian students who congregated in large groups. Uma revealed how, “the principal literally would take them aside and say, ‘I don’t like you walking around all together ‘cuz you look like an Indo-Canadian gang’.” Uma explained that, “They’re just kids hanging out with each other ‘cuz they have that connection and they can’t without it being seen that way which is kind of sad.”

Ompreet shared how the staff at the school where she teaches often discusses the issue of “Brown Boys Congregating.” This is seen as a problematic issue by many educators who believe that a large congregation of South Asian male students in school

hallways or rooms may imitate a gathering of gangsters. Ompreet's school had decided to try to actively contain this. It should be noted that in racially mixed schools, there are often large groups of White students sitting together as well but people rarely comment about that (Tatum, 2003, p. 55).

Ompreet explained how the staff discussed that it "may be as simple as when a child is wearing all black, it's to look intimidating. Or maybe if they wear a different colour, we can, kind of, take that personality or that ego apart a little bit." There seemed to be an implication here that the staff discussed enforcing a rule that forbade the wearing of all black clothing in an attempt to tear down a perceived sense of arrogance and overconfidence embodied by such "Brown boys." Such perceived arrogance and overconfidence was being associated with belonging to a criminal gang and hence, needed to be diminished.

Educators placing their values and assumptions on these students and strongly suggesting alternate ways of dressing and behaving with friends sends the message that one must align with their prescribed, Eurocentric norms and beliefs or face consequences. This is problematic because it reifies the idea that the "dominant group controls the construction of reality throughout the production of ideologies or 'knowledge' that circulate throughout society where they inform social norms [and] organization practices" (Pyke, 2010, p. 556). This forces the non-dominant group to accept the interests of the dominant group as their own, thereby suppressing their own interests. In this way, dynamics of internalized dominance and oppressions are strengthened while true equity and inclusion is ignored. In addition, labelling young, South Asian males as gangsters and treating them as such, while remaining silent about the congregation of White students, is an act of racism.

Similarly, when his principal confronted him about being part of a large group during lunchtime and looking like they were in a criminal "gang", Sammy tried to respond by arguing that she was "making that assumption." He exclaimed how it was "ridiculous – she would complain about the way we'd dress, 'you guys are all wearing these black hoodies walking around together'. I was like, it doesn't matter. We don't

have to dress a certain way to prove that we're not dangerous." When I asked Sammy what the end result of this interaction was, he resignedly replied, "The end result was that we had to not walk together because everybody else was scared." At the time, he had wanted to argue his case further but his friends told him, "It's not worth it."

Because these boys did not form groups and behave in ways that met White norms about Brown bodies, they were pathologized. Sayani (2014) describes pathologizing, in an educational context, as the ways in which "the hegemonic apparatuses of the dominant groups ascribe deficiency to difference and re-code diversity as deviance; in this way, any aspect of life, outside the norms as defined by the dominant group, is marked abnormal or aberrant" (p. 182). Once again, these practices evince racism. Furthermore, fear of repercussions kept Sammy and his friends from speaking up against such blatant oppression. Such fear keeps racialized students in oppressed positions. Additionally, if one juxtapositions the obvious grouping of South Asians during my sister's prom match-ups with these attempts to de-group South Asians during lunch time, a single, recurring theme emerges - continual racism against minoritized students that simultaneously maintains White hegemony.

Sammy spoke of another incident when he tried to speak up and contradict an idea presented by a teacher. The teacher replied by asking, "Why are you even in this class? You're going to fail anyway." Overall, he felt that teachers "were trying to have you see things one way all the time rather than letting you be yourself." Sammy also remembers being told that he "was going to be homeless by [his] Planning teacher." Such articulations of teachers' low expectations are further examples of hidden curriculum. If students are made to feel that they cannot accomplish much, they will contain their aspirations due to a lack of confidence and a belief that they are not capable. An educator encourages such feelings every time they articulate lower expectations for a student.

The assumptions and expectations that educators reveal about their students are examples of hidden curriculum. Teacher attitudes and behaviours such as ascribing the trope of gangsters to Brown boys do not just have an impact within schools, they carry-

over into the lives of students outside of school. The impact of a racist, hidden curriculum can be seen in Sammy's dejected explanation of how

the way we were perceived in school, affected us outside of the class, people were just scared of us all the time. I would go to house parties and, like – I don't know...all the White kids were just scared. After a while, you just couldn't get away from it. It was just like, this is who you are. It was predetermined for you.

Additional ways in which the hidden curriculum manifests itself is through “school calendars (in their choice of which holidays are celebrated and which are ignored), concerts and festivals, bulletin board and hallway displays, collections in school libraries, [and] school clubs” (Henry & Tator, 2006). One last example elucidates how something that seems so innocuous can, in fact, reify racial hegemony in schools. Kiran recalled when they used to celebrate Vaisakhi¹³ at school until a White student complained and asked why that day in particular had to be celebrated over any other day. This student proposed a Multicultural Day instead. To this day, Kiran is perplexed by this as she commented, “But it's Vaisakhi, why can't we celebrate it for what it is? We still celebrate Christmas, we still celebrate Easter and have all these days off, why separate that from everything else? But, we stopped celebrating Vaisakhi and called it Multicultural Day...” This is an example of how which festivals are highlighted and what is deemed important on school calendars can reify Whiteness while maintaining the marginalization of racialized groups.

4.5. Conclusion

The hidden curriculum is comprised of so many things. Not only does it include the attitudes and practices of educators within a classroom, it is also formed by the norms, assumptions, and values of all who work in the school. Together, this generates the climate of the school – its social and cultural environment. Examples of the hidden curriculum in action include students who are: overlooked for awards, encouraged to aim lower, told what to wear, instructed on how to congregate, and directed on what to celebrate. Silencing or ignoring the lived experiences of racialized students is another

¹³ A South Asian harvest festival that also celebrates a significant Sikh event.

example of how the hidden curriculum works in conveying messages of White hegemony. My brother's assigned role of cookie thief, my sister's same-race pairing, my grade 7 teacher's inaction in response to witnessing my encounter with racism, and participant experiences that were shared during this chapter symbolize the reality of such factors. The hidden curriculum is insidious and often hard to pinpoint; it is the dark cloud that looms over many schools. This, when coupled with the formal curriculum – the more tangible content that is or is not covered in the classroom – is how racism manifests itself in schools.

Summer (2014) contends that, “as microcosms of society, schools cannot be free of institutional racism” (p. 195). Our schools are small replicas of our outside world, the society we live in. Because this society includes racism and power dynamics, such conditions transfer into our schools. If educators do not incorporate anti-racism into their practices and work to empower marginalized students, the same racism and power dynamics will channel back into society when students graduate and enmesh themselves into their communities. This cycle of racism hinders the evolution of an equitable society and contributes to the continued external and internalized oppression of racially minoritized people. The concept of internalized oppression is further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5.

Internalized Oppression

5.1. Introduction

As a young girl enrolled in grade six at the local elementary school in Burnaby, British Columbia, I was keenly interested in the idea of international pen pals. I signed up for a pen pal program and was introduced to two young girls: one from Egypt and the other from England. My British friend was (and probably still is) White, while my Egyptian friend was, well, Egyptian. But, to my eleven-year-old self, she looked White. We corresponded for a few months and the excitement of sending and receiving those letters was indescribable.

As is standard pen pal protocol, after a few months, both of my pen pals sent me their pictures and asked for mine in return. This request sent me into a panic. I had just received my typically unflattering school pictures for that year but the thought of clipping two out and sending them to my new friends terrified me and therefore, never translated into action. If I sent a picture of myself, they would know I was of South Asian descent. They would then reject me. Those two letters requesting my pictures were the end of my pen pal fantasies. My pictures remained amongst the dusty mountain of all our other school pictures and the scissors sat silently. Why would an 11-year-old child assume that White people would reject her?

5.2. Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens

What made me so sure about rejection? And I was convinced of it. In my mind, it was not a possibility it was a fact. Was it the two men in a dirty, red pick up truck that pulled over next to me when I was a four-year-old playing outside? Did their livid faces, and demands that I “go back to my country” make me feel this way? Was it the angry passenger with long, greasy brown hair, two-day old stubble and green hate filled eyes who pulled out his wallet and bellowed his willingness to pay for my ticket *back* to

India? A country, I might add, that I had yet to see. Or was it my younger sister's classmate who threw dog feces at us when we walked home because we "looked like dog shit"? Was it the TV shows I watched after school that didn't have a single South Asian character? Or the novels and history books I read in school that said nothing about me or my people? Maybe it was my teacher who made me say Christian prayers every morning despite my adherence to Sikhism?

My eleven-year-old self could not critically analyze her fear, all she knew was that she was exponentially inferior to White people and being White, is "not anything really, not an identity, not a particularizing quality, because it is everything" (Dyer, 1997, p. 45). My "East Indian"¹⁴ identity – a term ascribed upon me by the dominant group – was a marking that placed me on the side-lines as "other." To not have a defined identity, means that you are the opposite of "the other," you are the norm. I learned very early on living in Canada, that I was less than the norm. I was not everything; maybe I was nothing.

Kohli (2014) explains how internalized racism is a concept that explains when people of colour consciously or unconsciously accept a racial hierarchy; it has many consequences for young people of colour. It can impact their self-esteem and their perception of their family or community (p. 368). Such a racial hierarchy prioritizes Whiteness and White norms. As a child, I did not concretely know that "white power/privilege...masquerades as normal, universal, reasonable, and natural to the extent that those punished by such power may even develop...aspirations of whiteness" (Dei, 2014, p. 240) but I did enact it. I was hoping that my pen pals would think I was White and therefore, accept me. I chuckle to myself today when I think about this – how could I have missed that my name would have given away my racial identity?

¹⁴ During this time, East Indian was a term used to describe people of South Asian descent. South Asians did not necessarily coin this term; it was more likely ascribed to them by the dominant group.

5.3. Double Consciousness & Belonging – The Inner Dimension of Internalized Oppression

Fast forward more than three decades and one would hope that any type of racial inequity and hierarchies in the lives of children are things of the past. But findings from my interviews tell similar stories, in different ways.

Uma's stories of elementary school experiences reveal the beginnings of her foray into W. E. B. Dubois' (1989) coined state of double consciousness. Double consciousness can be explained as looking at oneself through the lens of the dominant (White) group and adjusting oneself accordingly so that you are in line with and thus, accepted by, this group. As a young student, Uma came to the realization that her natural identity was going to have to change once she was at school. She describes how in elementary school,

Brown kids would bring Punjabi food to school and if it smelled bad, you would be like, 'Oh ya, I know, my Mom makes that all the time and I hate it,' meanwhile I'm at home and eating that up 'cuz I love it and just like having to put forth this kind of distancing of myself from it just to make [White students] more comfortable.

Thus, Uma began “kind of distancing [herself] from [her] identity and being like, no, it's okay, you can talk to me, I'm normal, it's all good.” This idea that she had to prove her “normalcy” by denying her cultural identity speaks to Sensoy & DiAngelo's (2012) paraphrasing of W. E. B. DuBois' (1989) contention that “minoritized group members carry the extra burden of duality...of having to perform the dominant culture's norms as well as your own” (p. 46). It is the need for this duality that young students adopt as they internalize their own oppression. Knowing that there is a racial hierarchy that determines norms and that they are not at the top of that hierarchy, will prompt young children to aspire towards the top of the hierarchy in their attempts to be “normal”, to be accepted. But at what cost?

As Huber et al (2006) contend, “[s]tudents of Colo[u]r are plagued with internalized racism and can develop an inferiority complex” (p. 200) that has far reaching consequences including: rejecting cherished family/cultural ways or traditions, low self-

esteem, lower academic achievement, discomfort around who they are, and a confused sense of belonging. Uma tried to explain this, in part, when she stated:

I feel like a lot of my identity as a person in school, even now, is trying to not make White people uncomfortable, which I hate. I try to mould myself to base my existence on trying to make White people as comfortable as possible with who I am so that they don't get offended or, like, scared or...I feel like a lot of my being is trying to make other people comfortable with my being, which I don't like.

As a young woman, Uma can reflect and critically examine this state of being. As a child, how could it not have affected her educational experiences? One of the priority practices of all schools is to empower students by building confidence and an awareness of self and others - a component of social and emotional learning. If minoritized students experience their daily classroom interactions from positions of internalized oppression, they operate from places of disadvantage while students belonging to the dominant group, often obliviously, enjoy the privilege of a single existence that does nothing to hinder their sense of self, sense of belonging, and sense of confidence.

Uma shared examples of how she responded to her internalizing of perceived inferiority: She did not speak up when culturally or racially inappropriate comments were made because she would always wonder, "...are they gonna not want to be around me anymore because they think they can't be comfortable around me?" She articulates how she did not put her hair in a braid because, "I didn't want to be one of the Brown girls with braids... [because] 'they have long braids and they smell bad 'cuz they put oil in their hair'...it was like one of those things, like, oh ya, I don't do that...I would distance myself from them..." As previously mentioned, Uma also recalled having to reconsider her career aspirations and felt that schools "make you lower your expectations already and you kind of get into that habit."

Feeling unable to speak up to in defence of herself and her people, distancing herself from her cultural practices, and believing that she had to aim lower for her goals are a few consequences of the dynamics of internalized oppressions that played out in Uma's school experiences. She compartmentalized aspects of her being, in order to be accepted, as best she could, by the dominant group. The continuous struggle of

conforming herself has left her in position where she, to this day, questions where she fully belongs.

A second participant, Harleen, shared similar experiences of discomfort during times when cultural identity that was often suppressed during school hours came into contact with school life. During noon hour Vaisakhi celebrations (a South Asian Harvest Festival), Harleen recalls the following:

Harleen: ...at that time it was kind of like...like, it felt like almost uncomfortable about what people, non-Indian kids or teachers, would think. Kind of like we have taken over instead of, like, assimilating which is really stupid to think about now.

Interviewer: Taking over what?

Harleen: This is very dramatic but, like, Canada and the Canadian identity and, like, the space and, like un-Canadianizing [sic] certain...even though, like....

Sensoy & DiAngelo (2012) list examples of internalized oppression that include “behaving in ways that please the dominant group and do not challenge the legitimacy of its position (i.e. ‘the model minority’ discourse)” (p. 48-49). The fear that these bi-annual lunch hour celebrations could be seen as an attempt to take control of a space meant for the dominant group, induced feelings of uneasiness in Harleen. The challenge to this space, even for half an hour, and the idea that a take-over by any non-White celebration would be considered a usurpation of Canadian identity, indicates that Harleen synonymizes Canadian with White. Such a revelation implies an adherence to the aforementioned dynamics of internalized dominance and oppression prevalent in Canadian schools. Uncertainties about where exactly they belong and concerns around being perceived as “not knowing their place” and defying the hierarchy are legitimate issues that students such as Harleen face. These concerns are yet again, a result of internalized oppression and undoubtedly affect school experiences in negative ways.

In their Parliamentary Background paper that provides an in-depth study of Canadian Multiculturalism, Brosseau & Dewing (2018) reiterate that the Canadian Multicultural Act of 1988 emphasizes retaining one’s right to full and equitable participation in Canadian society and expecting Government agencies and departments to

provide leadership in advancing multiculturalism at an institutional level. If students like Harleen feel that a celebration related to their culture is an attempt to take over Canadianism and find such occasions uncomfortable for that reason, it could be argued that schools (government agencies) may be lagging in advancing the ideas of genuine multiculturalism. Uma and Harleen both shared how they silence elements of themselves in order to find acceptance and a sense of belonging.

The constant struggle of wondering how much to be one's genuine self and who that genuine self actually is, as well as where they fall within society, is something students of South Asian descent grapple with on a daily basis in Canada. Baldish, another participant, concurs through the following statement:

I like to use this term, living in the hyphen, because as an Indo-Canadian, I don't fully connect with my roots as an Indian person but I don't really feel Canadian a lot of the time. So, I live in this hyphenated space between these two worlds ...this in-between place where I fit into both places but also into neither.

Uma concurred with this idea as revealed in her statement, "...with issues like belonging, now I don't know where I belong because I *am* kinda in between two groups..." Further to this, she shares, "I've moulded myself to have other people be comfortable around me and now I'm not comfortable around anyone." Such positionality coincides with Pyke's (2010) reference to W.E.B. DuBois: "[i]t is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 46). This speaks to the impressions that minoritized students have that though they crave and do what they can to gain positions of equity, dominant groups and systems will never allow for genuine equity and belonging.

Donna Bivens (2005) describes four dimensions of internalized racism. Dealing with a double-consciousness while grappling with concepts of belonging, falls under the inner dimension. This dimension attends to the inner lives of people of colour and how "it offers people of colo[u]r a very limited sense of self" (p. 46). Manifestations of this dimension include having a sense of inferiority and "[b]eing overwhelmed and drained by the emotions we must navigate as a result of having this limited identity thrust upon us"

(p. 46). Essentially, the dominant group prescribes minoritized people certain traits and qualities. Minoritized people then, spend much of their time grappling with and fighting these presumptions and how they do or do not apply to them. Those who are part of the dominant group do not have to spend any of their time navigating such issues.

5.4. The Model Minority – Interpersonal & Cultural Dimensions

In response to experiencing inferiority and navigating emotions related to identity and belonging, minoritized students react in a variety of ways. One reaction speaks to an aspect of the second dimension of internalized oppression – the interpersonal dimension. This dimension expounds the relationships of minoritized people with those who have White privilege. Dynamics of this relationship include behaviours such as “putting white people on a pedestal and relating to them as [their] inferior” and/or “projecting one’s own sense of inferiority and inadequacy onto those of the same race” (Bivens, 2005, p. 47). Sensoy & DiAngelo (2012) reference Adair and Howell (2007) to support the ideas of this interpersonal dimension as they cite examples of internalized oppression that include: a belief that the dominant group is more qualified and deserving of their positions, seeking the approval of and spending a majority of one’s time with the dominant group, and conducting oneself in ways that please the dominant group while not challenging the legitimacy of its position (this is known as the ‘model minority’ discourse). Essentially it favours complacency and silence from a member of an oppressed group in deference to the dominant group.

It could be said that Harleen was displaying model minority behaviour when she preferred to not engage in cultural lunch hour celebrations because she feared that they might be viewed as challenges to the legitimacy of the dominant group’s position. Other participants interviewed during the course of this study also revealed ‘model minority’ behaviour as an element of their own internalized oppression. Uma recalled many instances when she chose to not speak up to explain or argue against racial or cultural suppositions. She felt that speaking up often resulted in “a wall that goes up and you can feel it when it happens. It’s like, you’re never going to get to that level because they feel they can’t joke around you, they can’t be real with you because their being real is super

offensive.” To avoid the possibility that such a wall would influence her interactions and relationships with the dominant group, Uma chose to remain silent on issues about race and/or culture that she found to be offensive.

Another participant, Sammy, shared one possible consequence of speaking up. He described a classroom interaction that took place in his grade 8 social studies class. The topic under discussion was caste systems in India and Sammy’s White teacher used Sammy, his friend Avvy, and a young girl as examples. Because the young girl was darker skinned, his teacher made the assumption that she would be of a lower class. He recalled thinking, “Who are you to pass judgement?” and told his teacher that she “couldn’t say stuff like that.” The ensuing discussion resulted in Sammy using an expletive towards the teacher in his frustration and then being kicked out of class and sent to the office where he received admonishment for his behaviour. This example shows how, “[b]y placing the critical examination of racism in opposition with academic success, this teacher has developed a space in school where success is the acceptance of racism; thus perpetuating the schools role in internalized racism” (Huber et al., 2006, p. 192). Sammy spoke up in his classroom and the subsequent handling of the conversation led to frustration on Sammy’s part and resulted in disciplinary action. A minoritized student may choose to remain silent and complacent in order to avoid similar reactions.

Because challenging the status quo is so uncomfortable and so rarely ends advantageously for these students, these students internalize the idea that “model minority” behaviour is a beneficial form of self-preservation. Not only do they suppress their disagreements, but they may perceive any discussion of race that make White people agitated as extremely uncomfortable and at times, uncalled for. Harleen recounted an incident in her Social Justice 12 class when the topic of White privilege was introduced:

Harleen: I think sometimes, but I think sometimes - - I mean, it wouldn’t necessarily make the more privileged students comfortable.

Interviewer: So how could your teacher have made the quote, unquote, privileged feel comfortable?

Harleen; Like, I think just being very careful and teaching kids how to use appropriate language and not saying things like “your people” or “you” and like, very like, accusing them of something they had just done instead of using potentially more inclusive language or like non-hostile...

Interviewer: How do you think it made the other kids who are not - - let’s say “White” feel? How did these conversations make them feel? Did it help them? Did it make things worse?

Harleen: I think, in a lot of cases, it just riled people up. Like, I think that - - Yeah. I get like - - You should be angry about some things, but, like, I don’t think - - I think you have to be really careful about how you direct that anger.

Harleen’s discomfort in this situation reveals the tensions that come with straying from the persona of model minority. This discussion was seen as a challenge to the legitimacy of Canada’s racial hierarchy and subsequent internalized feelings of dominance and oppression - *even when the topic of white privilege had been introduced by the teacher.*

Srivastava (1997) maintains that “[s]peaking out assumes prerogative. Speaking out is an exercise in privilege. Speaking out takes practice. Silence ensures invisibility. Silence provides protection. Silence masks” (p. 118). Adopting a model minority persona allows people living with internalized oppression to protect themselves as they manoeuvre around in a world where they are constantly “othered” – albeit in varying degrees. For some of my participants, model minority behaviour that included remaining silent and being unwilling to challenge present day circumstances continued into adulthood.

Kiran, who is now a high school teacher, explained how, when her South Asian students would call a White teacher racist while having a discussion in her class, she would not further those discussions because she didn’t know if there were other factors at play regarding interactions with that teacher. She explains, “I mean we don’t know - some teachers might be or can be - I try to tell them that they’re not, like, this is all in your head.” This may signify a need to maintain silence on the issue of racism so as to remain a model minority who is not disruptive. Unfortunately, this personifies Castagno’s (2014) argument that “teacher silence around issues of race sends the message race and racism are either nonexistent-figments, perhaps, of students’ imagination or

unnecessary topics of thought and conversation: something students use to try to divert attention or stir up controversy” (pp. 89-90). If students lived experiences are being downplayed and silenced, they then learn that they need to silence their struggles with racism in order to be accepted.

Yet another participant, Ompreet, who also went on to become a high school teacher, spoke of having wonderful teaching experiences where she believed race was never a factor in her day-to-day interactions. She shared the following viewpoint: “I think people are very appreciative of our culture. They want to know more. They like it. They respect it. If they do make a joke, it’s usually in a joking tone or always from that sense.”

Excusing racial comments as jokes, implying that student’s assumptions of racism may be inaccurate, and feeling extreme discomfort around racial discussions that might make the dominant group uncomfortable all speak to a cultural dimension of internalized oppression that manifests in “misnam[ing] the problem of racism as a problem of or caused by people of colo[u]r...” (Bivens, 2005, p. 49). Such a deflection puts the onus onto the oppressed and absolves the oppressors; the racist jokester is not questioned, the potentially racist teacher is not examined, the racial conversations are not furthered, and those who are subjected to the racism and further internalizing of oppression are silenced and made to feel that they were in the wrong.

Not only is model minority behaviour a form of self-preservation, but it also allows a person to deal with institutional dimensions of internalized oppression since “[s]tructurally, there is a system in place that rewards people of colo[u]r who support White supremacy and power and coerces or punishes those who do not” (Bivens, 2005, p. 48). Participants in this study shared stories that exemplified internalized oppression in its many forms.

Further to this, there was one element of internalized oppression mentioned frequently enough during interviews that it calls for further examination. Participants shared several incidents that, to this day, remain embedded in their minds because they

injured them in ways they were not able to articulate. Such incidents fall under the term microaggressions.

5.5. Microaggressions

Michael & Harper (2015) define microaggressions as:

A phenomena that significantly affects the lives of people of colo[u]r while being practically invisible to witnesses, particular witnesses of other racial groups. Racial microaggressions are tiny, barely perceptible racial slights that have a significant impact both because of their cumulative affect and the underlying message that is communicated by them. (p. 30)

The underlying message of microaggressions is that the recipient of the comment does not belong – that this person is the “other”. Hearing the same subtle and seemingly innocent comments repeatedly and internalizing the message that comes with it, is what Michael & Harper (2015) call the cumulative affect. Sue, D.W, Capldilup, C.M., Torino, G.C., Bucceri, J.M., Holder, A.M.B., Nadal, K.L., & Esquilin, M. (2007) categorize microaggressions into three forms: microassaults, microinvalidations, and microinsults. Participant interviews revealed incidents of each type.

Microassaults are often conscious and more aligned with traditional ideas of racism; “[a] microassault is an explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavio[u]r, or purposeful discriminatory actions” (Sue et. al, 2007, p. 274). They are often enacted at individual levels and occur in spaces that are considered safe by the perpetrator. Examples include: referring to someone by their racial identity, displaying symbols of racial superiority or hatred, excluding minorities or favouring Whites over minorities, discouraging interracial interactions, and racially disparaging a minoritized person.

Uma recalled an incident in her grade 9 English class where her teacher “would make fun of kid’s turbans and stuff – just be like, ‘Oh, is that thing on too tight that you’re not listening to me?’.” At another time, “there was this Chinese kid who fell asleep and she was like, ‘I know you’re probably dreaming about noodles or

something’.” Such blatantly racist comments were made by a teacher who felt safe in her classroom space, in her position of authority. Baldish also shared a similar story:

There was a little girl in our class and she was squatting on the carpet frog style and she was hopping around. My Australian teacher, an Australian White lady, says, ‘what are you doing on the floor? You look like an Indian – like a little Indian looking for scraps’ and I remember hearing that, not knowing anything about racism, I was in the second grade and just feeling so upset about it.

When minoritized students as young as six years of age bear witness to such obvious forms of racial microaggressions, a sense of inferiority, that is implied by teachers who have power and influence over their student’s lives is inevitably internalized.

Microinvalidations are a second form of microaggressions. They are often unconscious and are “characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of colo[u]r” (Sue et. al., 2007, p. 274). Examples of this include: expressing surprise when a minoritized person, born in Canada, does not speak with an accent (negating their sense of belonging), supporting a colour blind approach to teaching (negating that lived experiences are influenced by racialization), and downplaying the racist experiences of minoritized people (nullifying the experience and signifying it as not important). One theme attached to this type of microaggression is the idea of being an “alien in one’s own land” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 276). Comments made towards minoritized people that suggest that the speaker belongs to the country while the recipient of the remark is more of a foreigner fall under this theme.

Uma experienced this when she was “learning about Hinduism or just anything that was kind of Brown and [teachers] would be like, ‘oh, do you know anything about this? Do you want to tell the class?’.” She recalls another time when there was a class discussion about slavery and her teacher said, “Well, you kinda know ‘cuz your parents came on boats.” Other incidents she shared include a teacher commenting on Punjabi weddings by saying, “Oh, Brown weddings are so beautiful, it’s so exotic and I love it!” and a shop teacher excusing a missed project with the following request: “If you don’t want to finish your project, just get me some samosas and I will give you a mark.” Such

comments chip away at a person as they work to point out that they are different than the norm and thus do not belong as much.

Sammy also alluded to this phenomenon when he spoke of

people assuming that you are dumb or that you didn't speak English or that your name wasn't Sammy. Stuff like that. Like – you'd have substitute teachers and they'd be like, 'Sammy?' and I'd put my hand up and they'd be like, 'Oh, is that your actual name?' and stuff like that and people would laugh. I'm like, 'yeah, that my actual name'.”

Because Sammy's “White” name does not match his physical appearance, he has been singled out on numerous occasions and has had his sense of belonging and ability to rightfully own his name, negated.

Sammy also spoke of an incident that exposes another theme – “ascription of intelligence” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 276). This theme assigns intelligence to a minoritized person based on their race or gender. Being surprised by a person's achievements because they are a person of colour or expecting an Asian person to be good at Math are examples of this type of microaggression. Sammy experienced a similar incident:

I would score really good on tests and teachers would be surprised when they'd give the tests back and stuff. Like, you'd see the look on their faces – hand out a 95 to Ryan, and then they'd hand out a 98 to me and it's like, 'What!?! This is you? Are you kidding me?' They would make little comments like, 'Wow. That's really good' and stuff like that. But it's the way they would say it, like, wow, that's really good for some Brown guy wearing a hoodie in the classroom, you know?

Such comments from teachers convey the message that high intelligence is not perceived to be characteristic of “Brown” (South Asian) boys thus ascribing low intelligence to such students based on stereotypes. The damage occurs when students begin to internalize this type of ideology since people in positions of authority are suggesting it. This theme of microaggressions falls under the category of microinsults. A microinsult is “characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. Microinsults represent subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of colo[u]r” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Although such communications are often not blatantly offensive, the messages behind them are offensive and contribute to

inferiorizing minoritized peoples. In Sammy's case, he was being given the message that boys who look like him, who dress like him, are not expected to be high achieving.

Another theme found in this category is that of pathologizing. As stated earlier, in an educational context, pathologizing occurs when "the hegemonic apparatuses of the dominant group ascribe deficiency to difference and recode diversity as deviance; in this way, an aspect of life, outside the norms as defined by the dominant group, is marked abnormal or aberrant" (Sayani, 2014, p. 53). Within the context of microinsults/microaggressions, ascribing deficiency to the cultural values and communication styles of non-White people and/or assigning criminality or a criminal status to such people is seen as pathologizing behaviour. Examples of each include criticizing the style of someone's speech, trivializing cultural or racial discussions, not wanting to be alone in an elevator with a person of colour, surveilling a person of colour in a place of business, and the clutching of the purse when a person of colour, often male, is in the vicinity.

The pathologizing of cultural values became apparent in 5 of my 7 interviews. Kiran recalled a co-worker, a teacher,

making comments like, 'these students have never gone snowboarding, they've never gone skiing, I don't get it.' But a lot of their parents are probably immigrants just like my parents. I know my parents never took me. So one thing to remember is that these parents are worried about getting their kids to school and raising them...

There is a message in such comments that there is a need to assimilate to the dominant culture via such things as sporting practices. A deeper message is to leave "your cultural baggage behind; [t]here is no room for difference" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 276). Though Kiran understood that new immigrant parents may not have the time or resources for such expensive outings and that doesn't mean they are not doing a good job of being parents, her White co-worker's comment, a microinsult, implied that such students and parents are less than. During this discussion, Kiran emphasized a need for teachers to be aware of different perspectives and possibilities before making rash judgements and making comments that act as microaggressions.

Harleen also shared an incident where her co-worker brought up the topic of a domestic dispute that was in the news with the comment, “Well, that’s just like, no offense, but that’s just like part of the culture.” Harleen shared how angry this made her but she did not respond because the woman was her superior and she “didn’t want to create a situation where you wouldn’t have your job anymore.” Such unchecked microaggressions breed prejudice while simultaneously reminding the recipient of their inferiority.

A pervasive issue in the interviews was the portrayal of White teachers as authorities on “Brown” culture, especially when it came to discussing differences in the treatment of boys versus girls. Sammy rather eloquently responded to this in the following way:

when they talk to, like, Brown girls -- it's like they're trying to free them from the oppression of Brown men all the time... It's like, 'Oh, sweetie, you must have it so hard at home washing everyone's expletive dishes and, like, picking up after everybody. And you probably have so much potential, but you'll never find out about it because these people over there are holding you back. Don't worry, Western society will save you from all that stuff.' And for us it's like, you monsters, look at what you do to the women in your life -- Man. You don't know anything about me and my house or where I came from -- and then they act like Western society isn't paternalistic and patriarchal anyway... It just felt like they're making you out to be a monster in a different way too now. It's like, not only is everybody scared of you, but, you're holding back all the women in your life because your culture inherently is like that.

This passage illustrates how such comments from teachers make severe, often erroneous judgements of people and perpetuate stereotypes whilst further oppressing those who are the subjects of such microaggressions. In this passage Sammy also alluded to the idea that teachers make male South Asian students out to be “monsters” and this speaks to the assumption of criminality that students like Sammy face in their school lives.

Uma was also aware of this phenomena and discussed how “the experience of a Brown boy is so crazy different from a Brown girl - you’re seen as a threat almost once you get to high school.” As discussed in 4.4, she remembered when South Asian males would stand together in a group and the principal would say that he didn’t like them walking around all together because they look like an Indo-Canadian gang. She

commiserated because she felt “they were just kids hanging out with each other ‘cuz they have that connection and they can’t without it being seen that way, which is kind of sad.”

As mentioned previously, Ompreet also shared how the teachers in the school where she works would tell the kids not to group up and stand in front of the school because it was intimidating people and not to travel in packs or wear the colour black. Though Ompreet acknowledged that travelling in packs “builds your confidence, it feels better,” she also supported the school initiatives of minimizing South Asians grouping together and enforcing the push to minimize the wearing of black clothing. This speaks to the precarious role of South Asian teachers as they consciously or unconsciously adhere to model minority behaviour so that the institutions that employ them do not punish them. Those who speak out are often labelled as troublemakers and see their professional relationships and career advancements suffer.

What many teacher fail to acknowledge is that being in groups “provides a sense of identity and safety” (Sayani, 2014, p. 80), something that any person dealing with internalized oppression needs. Microaggressions that filter through the pathologizing of South Asians bear the message that such students are dangerous and/or inferior. Such messages continue the cycle of racism in schools while solidifying the dynamics of internalized dominance and internalized oppression.

Microaggressions are challenging to address and the person pointing it out may be seen as “overreacting”. Uma shared how “it’s hard when it’s subtle because it’s like, did they mean it like that, or did they not realize and then you start going in a circle in your own head.” Herein lies the crux of the matter. Because microaggressions are subtle, often unconscious, and have a cumulative affect, it is often difficult to make them apparent to those who do not see them or are not affected by them. Summer (2014) articulates how everyday conversations and actions of well-intentioned teachers can unknowingly contribute to and maintain racism and other types of oppressions in schools. Therefore, when it comes to microaggressions, one must be very mindful of the effect that their comments are having.

5.6. Conclusion

It can be argued that not only do minoritized students experience internalized oppression in Canadian schools where they consciously or unconsciously accept a hierarchy but, within this acceptance of a lower place in society, are complex issues of exactly where that position is on this hierarchical spectrum. Furthermore, what does that position entail. Students of South Asian descent face the on-going battle of adjusting their genuine selves to fit with the standards of the dominant norms. This leaves them questioning where, exactly, they belong. Their endeavours to belong may require model minority behaviour of them, which often comes at the cost of silencing themselves. Despite their best attempts, various microaggressions serve to remind them that they will never fully belong, that they are inferior, thus strengthening the dynamics of oppression.

As an educator myself, it astounds me that the phenomena of internalized oppression is silently ubiquitous and almost never explored or explained in any classroom. The lack of knowledge/attention around this is detrimental to the development and experiences of minoritized students. Before delving into how inclusive education may present possibilities for positive student development and experiences in chapter 7, the next chapter further explores one of the more harmful forms of microaggressions – adhering to cultural deficiency theories.

Chapter 6.

Cultural Deficiency

6.1. Introduction

In my senior year of high school, I began my classes with a greater sense of confidence. I had survived grades 8-11 navigating numerous social perils somewhat successfully. I was excited as I began grade 12 by the prospect of challenging courses that would begin to pave my way to university and interesting courses such as Psychology, Western Civilization, Literature, and Law that were sure to expand my thinking and build my knowledge base.

Western Civilization soon became one of my favourite classes. We learned about famous paintings, artists, poets, architecture, and much more. I'll admit, I was somewhat confused by the title of the course – Western Civilization. If we lived in Canada, wouldn't Europe be east of us? Shouldn't the course be called Eastern Civilization? And if it that was the case, what were Indian and other Asian civilizations called? I was so naïve and so far from realizing that I was enrolled in a course that was disseminating the history of a hegemonic culture while simultaneously reifying that very hegemony. It was lost on me that because this course on the study of civilizations was the only one available to me at the time thus; at the time, I was being told that it was the only one that mattered.

But I digress. I nonetheless enjoyed this class, learning about multiple artists and poets. My teacher was also quite wonderful. She spent much of the time in class discussing the subject in very engaging and interactive ways. It always felt more like a book club meeting than a didactic classroom. At the end of the year, instead of writing a final exam, we were given the opportunity to present our learning using a medium of our choice. As a lover of poetry I decided to write poems based on some of the paintings and sculptures we had studied. I wrote six or seven poems including one on Bernini's sculpture of Apollo and Daphne, one about Giorgione's painting – The Old Woman, and

a poem I titled, “The Nun’s Tale” and wrote in iambic pentameter following the style of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. This last poem created a bit of a situation.

I had put a lot of time and effort into this poem ensuring that each line was in iambic pentameter and that each stanza imitated the rhyme scheme and style of Chaucerian poetry. I proudly submitted my completed project to my teacher, a project I had joyfully put so much effort into.

A few days later, my teacher asked to speak to me after school. My expectations of praise soon deflated as she questioned the authenticity of my work. She asked me if I had taken the poems from another book (this was the pre-internet era). I vehemently and hurtfully denied the accusation. She was not convinced and this puzzled me. I did well in school academically, especially in my English classes. I was an avid reader and had been reading advanced literature since elementary school. I had also written poetry as a hobby for years. My teacher then asked me if I spoke English at home or another language, if my parents spoke English, and who helped me write these poems. The implication was obvious and I was shocked, then heartbroken, then disenchanted, and finally disengaged. I no longer cared what mark I got on that project. In the end, she gave me an A+ but I am sure she still wasn’t convinced that I had written it on my own. I mean how could I have such a grasp of the English language being a person of South Asian descent?

Another incident that occurred at the very end of my grade 12 year, on the heels of this previous situation, was an interaction that I had with a teacher I had the pleasure of learning from on three different occasions. He was my teacher in grade 9, grade 11, and grade 12. We had a great rapport and he was one of the few teachers who, in my opinion, actually *saw* his students. During the last week of school, when classes were no longer in session and exams were being administered, I went to visit him in his classroom. I wanted to say goodbye and ask him to sign my yearbook.

We had a nice chat about my future plans and during this time he said something that revealed so much to me. To this day, I remember him telling me how much he admired my spunk. He said he knew that most “East Indian” girls would do what their

parents told them to and be submissive to their wishes but he could see me rebelling and being defiant enough to challenge things. He was confident I would boldly pursue post-secondary education even if my family was against it. He smiled as he “complimented” me and I smiled back and thanked him.

But I walked out of his room suddenly feeling less than. All these years when he was my teacher, his perception of me was so off the mark. I didn’t need to rebel to attend post-secondary school, my parents insisted on it. Also, they would never force me to do something that was against my wishes. And finally, I was not even all that spunky.

6.2. Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens

These two events occurred at the absolute end of my high school career and had such a profound impact on my overall perception of my time there. Had these two incidents not transpired, I would have walked out naively still believing that teachers come to their classrooms free of biases, regarding each of their students as individual entities. My Western Civilization teacher’s assumption that my cultural background would have made it impossible for me to articulate myself well in the English language was a form of deficit thinking and “[d]eficit thinking has profound implications for teachers and their students, for deficit thinking prevents educational stakeholders from recognizing and acknowledging their students’ strengths” (Allen et al, 2013, p. 122). My teacher was unable to accept that I was capable of writing in the English language at an advanced level. Such a belief would lead her to have lower expectations for me and students like me. How are students expected to strive to reach their potential if some of their teachers lead them to believe that they are not able to reach high levels of success?

Additionally, my teacher of three classes revealed the lack of value and respect he had for my culture and home life and hence, me, in his parting comments. Henry and Tator (2006) express how “[r]esearchers have been able to show that many White middle-class educators have constructed (perhaps unconsciously) a model of the ‘good’ parent; and, in this relationship, ethno-racial parents do not measure up” (p. 208). My teacher’s comments that were intended to commend and motivate me actually exposed

his adherence to a racial hierarchy that placed me lower than my White classmates and devalued my home life and family. I was being encouraged to aspire to rise up despite the obstacles I would face – non-existent obstacles that were being projected onto me while solidifying the disconnects between the school system and my home.

Such deficit thinking can still be found in schools today. I have sat in many staff meetings where teachers complain that “the parents in this community won’t come to their kid’s athletic events” or “this community doesn’t value fine arts programs” or the “kids in this school don’t read” or “the boys in our classes don’t care about getting in trouble because their moms enable them.” One administrator when speaking to me about a Muslim student who was being disciplined stated rather boldly and unapologetically, “That community lies all the time”. Two grade 7 teachers who brought their students to the high school for grade 8 orientation met with the school counsellor and a few teachers to discuss their students. They described one of their male students as having “The Prince Syndrome” where his mother does everything for him as is common in “the [South Asian] community.” These same grade 7 teachers also expressed their concern for a female student who came “from a *traditional* South Asian family where the father rules the house” and she often came to school “covering up her arms with long sleeves.” There was an implication here that this female student was being physically abused at home by her strict father. This suspected abuse was being associated with the practices of a traditional South Asian family.

The examples are so numerous that it would take up many pages to articulate all of them. Suffice to say, all of these examples use coded language¹⁵ to highlight racial differences under the guise of cultural differences. Such differences keep minoritized students oppressed via “the explanation that minoritized groups do not achieve in society because they lack the appropriate cultural values (e.g., ‘They just don’t value education’) or because their culture is deficient some other way” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 59; Payne, 2005). In other words, through the adoption of a cultural deficit theory that finds

¹⁵ Coded language involves substituting terms associated with racial identity with terms that seem race-neutral so as to disguise overt or subtle forms of racial language and racism. An example would be using the term “this community” as a substitute for this community that is comprised of South Asian people.

racialized communities lacking in the appropriate values, educators continue the oppression of students from these communities. Examples of this theory in action were revealed during interviews and are shared in the next sections.

6.3. Cultural Deficit Theory and South Asian Boys

One frequent topic of discussion during interviews was the trope of “Brown boys” as gangsters. Uma lamented how “parents are working so hard to keep their kids out of that type of thing so just for that to be implied is super insulting.” Uma shared how parents are working hard to ensure their kids do not join gangs, yet many people in society often jump to the conclusion that young, South Asian men are either part of or affiliated with a gang. I have been privy to conversations where some teachers have gone as far as implying that a lack of proper parenting caused boys to join gangs. Sayani (2014) describes common presumptions held by some teachers about South Asian boys: they lack motivation, they are not smart, they do not value education and they live privileged lives. An attestation of this is Sam’s experiences with teachers who presumed low academic performance from him. He shared how teachers were often visibly surprised when he scored top marks in class. A further example of this comes from my own son.

One day, during dinner, my son explained how he loved it when he started a new class and wrote his first exam. He described how it was so satisfying to see the look on his teacher’s face when they handed back the graded test with a mark that was in the high 90s - thus disproving the teacher’s pre-conceived perceptions of him. He laughed about it while I was left with a sense of sorrow. When he asked about my reaction, I explained how unfortunate it was that he had to prove himself every single time he started a new class, how he had to prove that he was intelligent and valuable in order to be treated as an intelligent and valuable person, and how wrong it was for a teacher to assign deficiencies to a student before knowing them.

Sayani (2014) asserts how “the deficit way of positioning the Brown boys was perhaps the most hurtful and damaging to [their] collective psyche” (p. 96). He further

contends that “this deficit way of seeing and doing strategically blames the culture and environment of the home and family” (p. 97). Factors that fall under this discourse of blame include student’s race, class, genetics, culture, language, family and religion. Those who ascribe to cultural deficit theory believe that these factors influence the educational competence, or incompetence, of students. Conveniently, such a theory absolves its followers from examining their own practices and taking responsibility of “wittingly or unwittingly contribut[ing] to unjust and harmful education strategies” (Sayani, 2014, p. 97). It is essential for educators to examine their biases and how they may be affecting students’ school experiences and successes.

6.4. Cultural Deficit Theory and South Asian Girls

Another stereotype internalized by many White teachers and verbalized by some is that of the oppressed South Asian female. Sam provided a lengthy but insightful discussion of this when he spoke of his female friend who was being encouraged by a teacher to pursue computer science. The teacher assumed her parents would probably object.

Sam’s frustration was clearly evident as he expressed multiple stereotypes about his gender and culture that he faced regularly while in school. Marx (2004) contends that teachers may view students as being deficit in culture, language, intelligence, and esteem and their families’ choice to retain aspects of their culture such as their home language and values is often met with misunderstandings and disparaged by those in the dominant culture. As Sam implied, each household is unique in their meshing of cultures, languages, and values. Consequently, teachers should not presuppose a student’s reality as they have not experienced that student’s life wholly and it is not their truth to comment on. As stated by Sayani (2014), “The most important determinant in the academic success of minoritized students is the explicit rejection of deficit thinking by educators” (p. 98). If educators adhere to the idea that racialized students are deficient because of their background, they may likely hinder the success and psyche of their students.

6.5. Cultural Deficit Theory and South Asian Parents

Ompreet shed light on another issue of concern. She spoke of a sense of disconnect that some parents might feel, a disconnect that may be misconstrued by some educators as disinterest. She rationalized how, “they’ve never experienced it so why should they know right? That’s the challenging part of having parents that did not go through the same system that I did.” She spoke of difficulties that arose when explaining school experiences to parents who did not participate in the same educational system as her and how that sometimes resulted in confusion about school requirements and events.

Further to this, discomfort is common amongst parents who have not participated in a Canadian school system. This discomfort is then further agitated by staff members who believe that such parents distance themselves from their children’s schools because of a lack of interest rather than a lack of confidence. Leonardo (2012) describes how some teachers assume that unsuccessful students are fruits from a rotten tree and that minority parents often arrive at school events intimidated and deferential to teachers. He asserts that these parents are then viewed as a drain on the system – this, in turn, does nothing to integrate their children into schooling nor does it tap the talents and social networks of the parents. Viewing parents and communities as sources of information and support rather than detriments to student learning, is beneficial for the success of students and the education of educators. Pre-conceived notions held by some educators can be addressed when students’ families are integrated into school experiences. Additionally, students from non-dominant groups may then experience increases in school engagement, personal confidence and pride when they see their families and backgrounds valued by educational institutions.

6.6. Conclusion

Educators often analyze factors that may be contributing to the progress or lack thereof of their students. For some, their conclusions are rash, superficial, and/or baseless. Defaulting to a cultural deficit theory that explains low achievement as a result of a lack of appropriate values or some other cultural deficiency is not only an adherence

to overarching stereotypes and generalizations based on half-truths, but it is also a cop-out. Supporting the cultural deficit theory allows one to avoid analyzing personal biases and teaching practices. As stated in Is Everyone Really Equal? (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), “cultural deficit theory blames people of Colo[u]r for their struggles with a racist society while obscuring larger structural barriers. Cultural deficit theory also exempts the dominant culture from the need to play any role in the eradication of racism” (pp. 106-107).

The need for anti-racism education is paramount and “[o]ne tangible step towards anti-oppressive education is interrupting deficit-based perspectives” (Summer, 2014, p. 198). An important element of such interruption includes a cultural proficiency approach namely, “the ability of an educator from one cultural background to effectively teach, interact, and connect with students of a different cultural background” (Anderson, 2011, p. 32). Moreover, Anderson (2011) asserts that teacher’s perceptions of minoritized parents need to change and they need to be viewed as parents who value and support their children’s education. Teachers need to show that they value their student’s parents and homes in order to create healthy learning environments. Developing cultural proficiency in addition to other anti-racism strategies such as inclusive curriculum and adopting a relational approach are further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7.

Inclusive Education

7.1. Introduction

In 1975, my older sister was a kindergarten student in Squamish, BC. At that time, it wasn't the developed, tourist attraction it currently is. It was a smaller town where many South Asians chose to settle because of work in either the local mill or at B.C. Rail. My sister's teacher was a sweet, young woman who delighted in the various cultural backgrounds of her students. This teacher had organized a cultural event at the school where my Mom was invited to come in and tie a sari¹⁶ around this teacher. The teacher also asked one of the boys in the class to volunteer as a model so my Mom could tie a turban on his head. According to my Mother, everyone was very respectful and they all seemed to have fun. My sister was especially happy because she felt recognized that day; and even more so, she felt important. We have pictures of that day in our album and every time we have gone through that album, my sister fondly shares this memory.

A similar memory that I have is of a project that I completed when I was in grade six. Our class had been learning about countries in Europe and Asia and towards the end of the unit, we were told to choose a country to further study and present our findings to the class. My friend and I chose India. We were both so excited to talk about something we knew so much about – the foods, the languages, the clothes, the religions etc. We put so much time and effort into that project, creating poster after poster to display all of our examples and artifacts. I know now that we had oversaturated those posters, and when we presented them, the sheer amount of information we included no doubt overwhelmed and disengaged the rest of the students. But, boy did we have fun!

One other memory I have of a teacher who engaged with my own lived experiences, involves the concept of racial identity in a much different way. During a

¹⁶ Often worn by South Asian women, a sari is length of fabric that is draped around a person in an elaborate style.

classroom discussion, my teacher who told us that he was French-Canadian described an encounter he had the previous weekend while he was in an elevator in Vancouver, BC. He had been conversing with a stranger he met on the elevator and at some point during their elevator pleasantries, he had revealed that he was French-Canadian and originally from Quebec. We half-listened to this story, as it seemed pretty uninteresting. But then his facial expression and tone changed and we sat up in our chairs. He was visibly upset as he described how this stranger, upon arriving at his floor, turned to my teacher and spewed derogatory remarks at him related to his ethnicity.

Many of my classmates were embarrassed at his display of emotion and remained motionless. I, on the other hand, sat riveted, on the edge of my seat. I recognized the pain in his voice as he conveyed his story and, by the age of eleven, I had a treasure trove full of similar narratives. I was intensely interested in what he was saying and how he was going to explain it; I just knew it was going to help me make sense of so many of my own lived experiences. My teacher paused after his story and looked at all of us. I don't know what he saw or thought in that moment, but his face took on a neutral expression and he asked us to take out our math books.

7.2. Through a Critical Auto-ethnographic Lens

When I reflect back on the first two stories I am struck by the joy that both my sister and I experienced when sharing a part of ourselves that we normally silenced when at school. In order to fit in and be accepted, we innocently embraced the world of double consciousness and even the slightest opportunity to incorporate our authentic selves into our academic days brought so much excitement. I can only imagine how delighted and connected we would feel if such occurrences were not only regularly a part of our everyday education, but if they were also deep enough to go beyond “traditional multicultural education courses [that] provide generalizations about cultural groups that tend to reinforce stereotypes, misconceptions, and biases” (Ukpokodu, 2004, p. 20). In addition to sharing our modes of dress, foods of choice, and celebrating our dances, what if we could experience pedagogy that incorporated South Asian people and concepts into

classroom/school practice on a regular basis? The experiences of South Asian students would be enhanced as this would increase their levels of engagement.

In addition, if my French-Canadian teacher had decided to continue with his discussion of ethnicity and prejudice, my own traumatic, overt encounters with racism as well as the everyday tacit racism I experienced, perhaps could have been acknowledged in some way and explained to such a degree that my sense of shame and confusion could have been at least partially addressed. Not only that, but perhaps my feelings and thoughts around this could have been validated thus validating my, and other minoritized students', sense of self. Castagno (2008) discusses how silence around issues of race on the part of educators leads to the silencing of students thus forming a norm of silence around these topics. Even though issues of race are always present, they are often silenced, muted, or ignored within schools. The consequences of this include the maintenance of White hegemony and the invalidation of many realities experienced by racially minoritized groups.

This chapter extends on the “what-ifs” discussed in the two paragraphs just above as it explores concepts of anti-racism education, inclusive curriculum, building cultural proficiency and a relational approach, and how they can enhance the educational experiences of minoritized students and create environments of equitable education.

7.3. Anti-racism Education

It cannot be said that Canadian schools today do not incorporate elements of multicultural education as mandated by our governments. Unfortunately, however, this inclusion is far from equitable. As, Castagno (2008) explains, teachers may understand and engage multicultural education as power-blind sameness and colour-blind differences but such approaches do little to nothing in confronting the elements of power and oppression present in every facet of society – including in the lives of K-12 students. Although such an approach is often well intentioned, the subsequent effects of operating through this type of a multicultural lens are often left unexamined. Such effects include having the perspectives and knowledge of the majority be normalized

while race, structural arrangements, and inequity become obscured or ignored. Thus, any students who face marginalization due to race, structural arrangements, and inequity also become obscured or ignored.

As previously mentioned in chapter 4, Uma shared how she felt that her teacher in high school did not explicitly discuss the barriers she would face in society due to her race and gender. Instead, they seemed to imply that she would have the same opportunities as everyone else. Uma felt that their refusal to acknowledge that the playing field was nowhere near even was super frustrating. With so many students experiencing racial and other inequities in their daily lives, the muting of such lived experiences nullifies any part of themselves that does not align with what is being taught in the classrooms. Thus, dynamics of internalized dominance and oppression are reinforced while further damaging the self-esteem and psyche of such students.

Henry & Tator (2006) provide the following analysis of multicultural education in Canadian schools:

Perhaps the most serious weakness of multicultural education was its failure to acknowledge that racism was endemic in Canadian society. While schools attempted to 'respond to special needs' by celebrating festivals' and by teaching 'mother' (heritage) languages, 'multicultural' history, and non-Western music, the real problem of racial inequality was ignored. (p. 214)

Essentially, multicultural education as it is today, does not address issues of race and life chances. Racialized students may consider their education somewhat disingenuous if it does not even address their lived experiences and problematize the issues around them.

James (2007) concurs with the ideas of Henry and Tator (2006) as revealed in his statement:

[a]s critics attest, marginalized students – those for whom [multicultural] program initiatives are purportedly designed, to accommodate and integrate them into the educational system - tend to find that what is presented to them as multicultural education is in fact, irrelevant, especially in contexts where teachers fail to recognize the political nature of their work. (p. 17)

This highlights a key point: classrooms are ideal spaces for anti-racism education and importantly, validating minoritized students and their experiences while simultaneously empowering them.

Similarly, Landsman & Lewis (2011) agree that, when it comes to multicultural education, “[i]n place of equity and social justice, we offer festivals, sensitivity training, and cultural tourism, often resulting in little more than a deeper entrenchment of stereotypes and assumptions” (p. 71). Landsman & Lewis (2011) do not disregard the value of some programs - some may be a step towards multicultural education. The problem arises when this step is considered the beginning *and* the end of multicultural education. Ompreet concurred with these ideas when she shared how celebrating cultural days

definitely helps because it raises questions for people, it raises curiosity for people. But there's so much more than that. In order to understand different cultures, you need to, obviously, go much deeper and see where their values come from and why they do certain things a certain way.

During our interview, when I asked Baldish why many students might feel “othered” while in school, in addition to problematizing the curriculum (explored in the next section of this chapter), she explained how “it’s the school culture and the professors, the teachers. But it’s hard because everything is so intertwined.” Baldish’s reference to the school culture speaks to the concept of the hidden curriculum that is explored in chapter 4. The hidden curriculum conveys White hegemony through the attitudes and practices of educators within a classroom as well as the norms, assumptions, and values conveyed throughout the school. When asked what could be done to change such a culture, she replied, “That’s such a large question. I think more of an understanding that White is not the default and it doesn’t need to be the default.”

St. Denis’ (2005) statement that “[t]he multicultural approach to education sanctions ignorance of racializing systems including the production of white identities and the taken-for-grantedness of racial dominance” (St. Denis, 2005, p. 307) supports Baldish’s argument. The current incorporation of multiculturalism in classrooms is usually limited to an exploration of a culture’s foods, dances, and way of dressing

through a White lens. This often results in superficial, limited and often, exoticized understandings of any culture that is not White. At the same time, the White lens and its dominance is typically left unexamined. Thus, multiculturalism in schools becomes non-performative: it does not bring into effect that which it names.

Ahmed (2006) describes non-performativity as institutional speech acts that find success in their failure; “it ‘works’ *because* it fails to bring about what it names” (p. 105). In this case, multiculturalism fails because a superficial coverage of it in educational institutions does very little to retain the right of a minoritized person to equitable participation in Canadian society. White hegemony in schools may sabotage this right that is outlined in the Canadian Multicultural Act of 1988. Ahmed’s contention is that governments intend for initiatives such as the Multicultural Act to fail. Thus, such failure is seen as a success to those in power because the status quo is maintained. In order to counter this, current practices of multiculturalism in schools need to be used as springboards into deeper, relevant practices.

As explored in previous chapters, racialized students often struggle with where they belong on the spectrum of society. As educators, one of the goals of teachings and practices is to challenge the existence of any such spectrum that incorporates ideas of hierarchy and, consequently, dominance/oppression. But, this cannot be done if our current day multicultural exercises reify the very idea of such a spectrum. In Uma’s words, if a teacher is, “just being like, ‘I don’t see race’, I don’t see that as constructive at all.” Similarly, Landsman & Lewis (2011) argue that “[m]ulticultural education must be explicitly anti-oppression, consciously taking a social justice stand against discrimination” (p. 65-66). If teachers claim to not see colour, they deny the existence of any oppression in their students’ lives, much less validate and trouble it. This blindness silences the problems internalized by students and works to continue their oppression.

Dei (2014) emphasizes the importance of schools and the education system in “meeting the challenges and possibilities of diversity and difference” (p. 240). He explains how, “in beginning this process, education must be able to engage race and social differences as intrinsic to identities and lived experiences of learners” (p. 240). He

calls this the crux of anti-racism education. He further defines this concept as, “an action-oriented educational practice to address racism and the interstices of difference (such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, language, and religion) in the educational system. (p. 240). In his words, “[r]ace powerfully implicates and orients schooling, and any education that sweeps race under the carpet is a miseducation of the learner” (p. 240). Basically, it is important to name and discuss issues of race and other oppression in schools and then to take specific actions as educators in an attempt to tackle this.

Dei’s (1996) ten principles of anti-racism education (alluded to in chapter two and paraphrased below) can be used when incorporating this concept in teaching practice.

1. Recognizing the social affects of race (we need to always be mindful that we are talking about people’s actual lived experiences of being violated, constrained, and dominated).
2. Incorporating gender, class, and sexuality as fundamental and relational aspects of human experiences that intersect in peoples’ lives both historically and currently.
3. Interrogating White privilege and ideologies that support/maintain Whiteness as a social identity and the dominant institutions of society.
4. Problematizing the marginalization of certain voices and the delegitimizing of the knowledge and experience of subordinated groups.
5. Providing a holistic understanding and appreciation of the human experience.
6. Focusing on learning about “identity” and how it is linked to schooling.
7. Acknowledging the pedagogic need to confront the challenge of diversity and difference in Canadian society (seeking peaceful coexistence through instilling mutual respect, collective work, and collective responsibility).
8. Acknowledging the traditional role of the education system in producing and reproducing inequalities.

9. Examining the material and ideological circumstances of students who encounter problems in school rather than trying to understand such problems in isolation from the aforementioned circumstances.
10. Questioning pathological explanations of the “family” or “home environment” as the source of problems that some youth face in schools (shifting responsibility from or denying responsibility of self avoids critically examining what happens in schools).

When Uma spoke of teachers whose pedagogies mirrored Dei’s principles into their teachings, she described a teacher who would stop everything when something big was happening in the world and focus on that event. For example, “when the whole Idle No More thing was happening, he stopped everything we were doing, and he was like, ‘Okay, this is happening right now, this is what it’s about.’” This teacher delved into the issues that were being made visible during protests and problematized the marginalization of certain voices while making students aware of the social effects of race.

Uma also described a Social Studies teacher who taught the prescribed textbook and more, “he went out of his way because he said the textbook they gave [him] isn’t very good and doesn’t tell the whole story.” Uma recalled how there was so much humanity in that course and there was so much “urging you to see that other people are out there and the way you act affects everyone.” She described this teacher’s class as a good place to go as she and other students did not feel invisible when there, therefore, feeling really represented there. He was a White teacher she said, but she felt he seemed to get what she felt. When asked for specifics, Uma described learning about: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Indigenous history before colonization and during World War 1, South Asian men in the British Army, fighting for England as a result of being colonized in India, and racial tensions in Canada throughout time. Whatever was being studied in the textbook, this teacher would bring in things that were happening in other communities at that time. During these times, he was able to problematize White hegemony and the dominant institutions of society while making evident how experiences of subordinated groups are ignored.

This teacher presented the prescribed, hegemonic, formal curriculum but was still able to “do” social justice in and through this curriculum. For those educators who feel that they cannot change the curriculum in a structural sense, this teacher’s approach reveals how their own agency can work within hegemonic structures. In such ways, educators can take responsibility for anti-racist education rather than absolving themselves of it due to institutionally pre-determined formal curricula.

When asked how students received this teacher and the way he was teaching, Uma replied:

The White students found it super sobering. They had no idea this was happening or had happened and were really shocked. I feel like especially in Canada, we put off this image of Utopia, there’s no racism, it’s great, America sucks, we’re so good...also, there was a kind of affirmation to the non-White kids like, yeah, this happened to your people and I’m talking about it and now these people know about it. Kind of like, validating everything that our people had gone through and kind of forcing the White kids to acknowledge it and that it happened so that there’s kind of a balance of education there now. Like, we both have the same baseline knowledge of what happened.

Pease (2010) describes how people are likely to be aware of any forms of oppression they may experience but, may not be aware of any aspects of privilege they enjoy. Therefore, those who do not experience oppressions have little to no comprehension of them. In other words, “those privileged by prized statuses often remain blithely unaware of them” (Pease, 2010, p. 10). For this reason, it is important to bring forth and discuss experiences of oppression.

When Uma stated that the White students found discussions of the reality of oppressions in Canada super sobering, it is because many of them had just been introduced to their own privileges in relation to others’ oppressions. In addition, the shared baseline knowledge that Uma refers to elucidates the problem with Euro-centric teachings being the only form of acceptable knowledge in schools. Students who come from non-European backgrounds have a bevy of additional forms of knowledge and experiences that are left unacknowledged and unknown. When their narratives and ways of being and doing are shared and valued, and the various oppressions faced by marginalized students are exposed, it is then that we can say that all students are on

equitable footing within the curriculum. Furthermore, as stated by Uma, this type of teaching and learning lent to “digging deeper and seeing the underlying power dynamics at play”; pedagogically speaking, it involved critical thinking.

It should be noted that the assumption that, “knowledge of racism is best acquired by examining the lives of people of colour rather than by acknowledging and challenging the array of racist knowledge and practices” (Srivastava, 2007, p. 304) is problematic and should not be the only means by which anti-racism education is enacted. Anti-racist practices should also be “built on the assumption that racism and racialization stem from relations of power embedded in institutions and social practices, rather than from individual attitudes, prejudices, or cultural misunderstandings” (Srivastava, 2007, p. 291). A comprehensive combination of personal narratives and a study of systemic and institutional racism are necessary to anti-racism education.

Donaldson (2001) articulates how integrating the principles of anti-racism into teaching “facilitate[s] positive change and empowerment for students” (p. 75). She describes anti-racist education as “a give-and-take process. As students view their teacher’s intolerance of racism and other biases, they become empowered to do likewise” (p. 17). For students who experience such oppressions, the benefits of this are immeasurable.

Baldish shared memories of two teachers during her senior year who practiced anti-racist education. I share one of these memories below:

[His classroom] was a safe space for me as a student because I could go “there”, especially with the AP [Advanced Placement] Literature professor. He was a Black man so there was a common ground there which I think helped me feel less out of place as one of the very few Brown girls in this school of White people...There was just a lot of conversations about race and intersections of like, race and class and gender and sexuality in the classroom and a lot of that was understanding how these intersections played into each other.

Baldish’s comment that she felt she could “go there” reveals that she felt comfortable sharing her opinion of racism and oppression in this teacher’s classroom. This teacher emulated the idea that anti-racist teachers “feel comfortable raising race questions, even ‘untouchable’ ones,” (Michael & Harper, 2015, p. 83). Michael & Harper (2015) also

argue that racial competence can be learned and emphasize that “[t]alking about race is not racist” (p. 83). These ideas align with Dei’s (1996) principles that problematize Whiteness and the silencing of marginalized voices and focus on learning about identity. Before practicing this arm of pedagogy, beginner anti-racist educators can begin by questioning the traditional role of education in relation to inequities as well as the challenges of how diversity and difference are currently addressed. A variety of inequities are experienced by many people. These include inequitable practices based on: sex, gender, religion, class, and ability. The interconnected of these categories speaks to intersectionality and race talk and concepts of intersectionality can also be incorporated into classroom interactions at this point.

The benefits of this approach can be extracted from Uma’s suppositions about having more teachers who follow this pedagogy:

I probably would be more confident in my own abilities and like, feel more confident in my potential...it's just super discouraging to think that all of these things are against me... It's kind of like you settle into these more 'realistic' goals for yourself but if everyone was like that teacher [her teacher who engaged in anti-racist educational practices], I would be, like, 'I'm going to be an astrophysicist'. Like, just something more crazy and I would feel like I could do it, probably, legitimately.

Ensuring a safe, anti-racist classroom climate counters previously discussed concerns regarding the hidden curriculum in schools. Another aspect of inclusive education involves analyzing and improving upon the formal curriculum.

7.4. Inclusive Curriculum

The Canadian curriculum as it stands today, “is dominated by hegemonic notions of whiteness [with] little understanding among many teachers of what a more inclusive curriculum might look like” (Pearse, 2012, p. 470). When asked about the curriculum while she was in school, Uma described it as “very Eurocentric” and “really distant”. Similarly, Harleen described

learning about residential schools in a paragraph, like, throughout all of my high school. And there was never any discussion of what happened or what the other countries went through when they were invaded or when they were colonized. It

was always, like, they invaded because they wanted this resource, but never really spoke about what was done to achieve that.

Baldish also found the curriculum lacking –

I felt, like in terms of what I was learning, our education was very tailored to like, here's the White experience, here is European history and we are going to read European authors and we are going to learn about stuff that happened in Canada but it really has nothing to do with Indigenous people or anybody else, it just has to do with the White experience.

Sam's opinion on the Canadian curriculum was: "we didn't learn nowhere near enough about Indigenous culture, Indigenous history, the treatment of Indigenous people throughout the history of Canada. First and foremost, I think that was kind of ridiculous."

Anti-racist scholar George S. Dei has stated that when he was in school, he was not necessarily frustrated by what the colonial curriculum taught him, but even to this day, he is angry about what was not taught (Dei, 1996, p. 15). The participants of this study seem to echo this sentiment. Kohli (2014) speaks of a Sikh, South Asian woman in her study who explained that her culture was invisible in the curriculum and thus, she felt no pride (p. 376). It can be argued that not only do students who do not see themselves in the curriculum lack pride; they also feel like they lack power. Invisibility leads to feelings of irrelevance and low self-esteem; such students are being told that they do not matter in the world. Huber et. al (2006) support this argument as they state that messages in the curriculum that imply the superiority of Whites and inferiority of non-Whites "can contribute to internalized racism, and potentially damage the self-concept of non-white students" (p. 193).

If one hopes for a society composed of empowered citizens who strive for the betterment of all conditions, then it is crucial to pay close attention to their schooling. It is important that "[a]ll students should see themselves in a curriculum that broadly includes textbooks and teaching methods, as well as the whole culture, environment, and the socio-organizational lives of schools" (Dei, 2014, p. 244).

Furthermore, it must be recognized that “[b]ias in the classics and the Eurocentrism that permeates other texts and teaching materials have an impact on the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of both minority and mainstream students” (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 201). These resources imply that those of European descent are the ones who matter, the ones who belong in the dominant group. These ideas are an important part of anti-racist education and “[a] curriculum that is anti-oppressive needs to examine the production of racial identifications, including the construction of whiteness in a Canadian context, where racism often exists in denial” (St. Denis, 2005, p. 2). Such examinations can then disrupt present systems and begin the construction of new ones. Thus, a consistent inclusion of all types of peoples in curriculum while troubling the effects of Eurocentrism and White hegemony is essential to building inclusive curriculum.

The following statement from Baldish illustrates how this approach can be beneficial:

So, we read Lazarus' poem about, like, 'bring me your huddled, masses', it's the poem about the Statue of Liberty and how she's welcoming all these immigrants and we had this packet of all of these different works of literature by people of colour and then we actually synthesized a lot of the sources and wrote an essay on how they relate back to the poem about immigrants coming. It was really interesting because we were understanding this idea, this idea that I brought up of living in this hyphenated space and that sort of struggle that people face with, you know, you're not in your home place because you have clearly left, but not fitting into America and what America is because America is, again, Colonial White.

One could even expand on this assignment by examining comments made on August 13th, 2019 by Kenneth T. Cuccinelli II, one of President Trump's administration's top immigration official. He had altered the words from the original poem written by Emma Lazarus found on the base of the Statute of Liberty and changed it from, “Give me your tired, you poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” to “Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet, and who will not become a public charge” (Fortin, 2019). His comment revealed a government's change in attitude about what type of immigrant is considered acceptable in the United States as the ideal shifted from anyone who is yearning for freedom and better opportunities to those who will be self sufficient as soon as they arrive on American soil. A critical examination of this can

lend to rich and valuable discussions about immigration over time, belonging, discrimination, and a bevy of other political and social issues. In addition, such a lesson illustrates how teachers can be attuned to what is happening in the world and how they can relate it to curriculum. This type of instructional strategy is an effective tool for inclusive education.

When asked how this type of curriculum compared to what she had previously described as “curriculum that made her feel othered because of its Euro-centrism”, Baldish replied, “it was a positive shift because I could really understand and relate to the material and I could produce my work with this greater understanding.” Choosing alternate resources does not negate the ministry-mandated content and competencies that students are expected to practice, but it does contribute towards more encompassing and positive identity development.

Dei (1996) articulates what many may argue when he states that, “the ultimate question is how schools and well-intentioned educators can realistically accomplish education change, given the constraints imposed by the lack of budgetary and resource materials, as well as the dearth of teachers professionally adept in anti-racism” (p. 103). He responds to this concern by asserting that “measures to make schooling more inclusive must not be bogged down due to lack of material resources. Summary re-organization of priorities may be required in a climate of dwindling resources” (Dei, 1996, p. 103). Educators and communities overall, must value the importance of building empowered and emancipatory identities for all students and prioritize any changes deemed necessary to achieving this. If school districts value this, then money will be put into it.

As stated by Huber et al. (2006), “[t]o make this a reality will take the cooperation of teachers, school leadership, local and state educational agencies, and government” (p. 204). One important element of this renovation is that “[s]tudents of colo[u]r must have their cultures incorporated and reflected in a positive light in educational setting on a consistent basis (Huber et al., 2006, p. 204). This call to action requires an adherence to cultural proficiency.

7.5. Cultural Proficiency and Relational Teaching

A student's learning in the classroom is negatively affected if they "experience a discontinuity, or a mismatch between their home and their school culture" (Mitchell, 2016, p. 3). Ompreet shared a story that was quite impactful as an illustration of having to sacrifice an admirable cultural practice in order to fit into a prescribed, Euro-centric norm:

I remember, back in the day, we used to live with our uncle and in elementary school, my teacher asked, 'How many people do you have in your family?' I remember saying, 'seven or eight'. She looked at me and she was like, 'Seven!?' And I was like, 'yeah'. I didn't know why that was surprising to her and then I came home and I was like, 'Mom, she was so surprised', and she said, 'Well, the family they are referring to is your nuclear family'. And it took time to understand. Like, 'what do you mean? Why are they not counting their uncles and aunts and grandparents? Right?'

This "mismatch" in family definitions demonstrates how a "predominately [W]hite teaching force can have adverse effects on a student's self-perception especially if these teachers have minimal cultural understanding" (Huber et al., 2006, p. 190). Ompreet was forced to alter her views of her extended family being her core family because of White norms that were being imposed on her. This commendable understanding of family was deemed surprising, confusing, and inappropriate.

Similarly, both of my children grew up with the idea that my sisters' children were their siblings as well. According to this, my children felt that they had four siblings instead of one. When they entered pre-school they were quickly corrected and told that they had one sibling and three cousins. I recall feeling saddened by the fact that their relationships were being forcefully redefined and diminished and because I was conceding to White definitions of relationships. I did this because I didn't want them to face confusion when questioned about it next time.

Mitchell (2016) emphasizes the importance of bridging the gaps between home and school cultures and teachers helping "culturally diverse students to retain their own cultural identity while functioning in a different cultural milieu [like] the school" (p. 13). In order for this to occur, it is important for teachers to be knowledgeable about and

value the cultures of the students they teach. This speaks to cultural proficiency. Included within this practice is what Summer (2014) describes as interrupting deficit-based perspectives as a tangible step towards anti-oppressive practices. It is crucial that deficit-based thinking be problematized and shifted to a culturally proficient approach.

Anderson (2011) describes cultural proficiency as the ability of an educator from one cultural background to effectively teach, interact and connect with students of a different cultural background. This practice improves parents' and students' sense of belonging and thus academic success of students. Crucial to this concept is "leading a change of perceptions about working class, ethnic-minority parents as parents who value and support their children's education" (Anderson, 2011, p. 32). Some educators may believe that the families of minoritized students do not care about the education of their children. Such unsubstantiated beliefs need to be troubled. Educators need to learn about the different ways that various cultures might approach the education of their children. Just because their methods may not align with Eurocentric norms, does not mean that non-White cultures do not value education.

Ageypong (2010) expands on this with the idea that:

Teachers trained in anti-racism education should be able to recognize students, parents, and community workers and care givers as genuine partners in the production and dissemination of school and social knowledge...It is important that educators find ways to involve community workers, parents, guardians and care givers in their teaching practices.

Kiran described how, in her opinion, South Asian students connected with teachers who were perceived to be open-minded, approachable, and who "also understood where we were and where we came from." It is important to "recognize students' non dominant culture and learn how to engage with it pedagogically" (Goldenberg, 2014, p. 113). This includes "seeking the assistance of community members with extensive cultural knowledge of the school's student population" (Dei, 1996, p. 30).

Understanding and valuing students' home culture rather than blaming it for perceived student problems or misbehaviours, is a fundamental part of inclusive education. In addition to adopting these ideals, an overall relational approach allows

teachers to better engage with and include students. Pearce (2012) references bell hooks (1992) in her statement that stereotypes come about when there is distance, and in the absence of personal relationships and first hand knowledge on which to base judgements, we fall back on stereotypes: “[o]nce a network of relationships is established, stereotypes fall away as meaningless and trite in the face of the complexity of individual lives” (Pearce, 2012, p. 115). Thus, a lack of a relational approach in teaching results in reifying cultural deficit theories by falling back on stereotypes.

When Kiran was asked to describe her favourite teachers she described teachers who were

super focused on teaching every student, each individual. It wasn't just talking to them as a group. Even coming around and getting to know the person one by one, even if it's making one comment to that student in the day right? You just kind of realize that I'm here and she recognized me.

When asked the same question, Sam described a teacher who “treated everyone equally. He didn't go out of his way to accommodate any of the Brown students or anything, but he just treated us the same as everyone else. And he, I don't know, he, like, believed in us.” Sam also described his appreciation of how this teacher:

would acknowledge what the other teachers were like too. He'd be like, “Yo, I know the other teachers say this and that to you, they try and like, tear you down or whatever, but, I know that you guys are special and you're going to be able to do whatever you want to do... He was aware of the environment that we had to put up with and he would just encourage us to work through it.

This particular statement of Sam's demonstrates that “[s]tudents appreciate the adults on campus recognizing the challenges they face outside the classroom” (Daniels, 2011, p. 34). These examples overall, confirm that “[b]y providing social and emotional support, teachers increase students' liking for school, which, in turn, improves student's academic and social outcomes” (Hallinan, 2008, p. 282). Furthermore, “teachers who support their students by caring about them and by respecting and praising them, satisfy students' needs and, in doing so, increase student's attachment to school” (Hallinan, 2008, p. 282).

When Harleen was asked what qualities embody a caring teacher, she replied:

Someone who's generally interested in the lives of their students. Someone who understands that if the student is acting like an expletive, there might not be – like, there must be something going on... I think, just listening to any personal issues even and just going that extra mile, I guess.

Ompreet similarly shared how you know that teachers care when they are

having conversations or listening to stories or asking more questions about things that are not maybe school related right? Or just investing time. [The] biggest way a teacher can show caring is if you tell them, like, I'm going through this or whatever and they ask you about it later, without you reminding them.

Nunn (2011) supports the above discussed ideas in her assertion that research on caring teachers who engage in conversations with students about their lives and current events in relation to their lives, teachers who develop a rapport with their students, are important sources of validation and encouragement, particularly for students who are marginalized in school. Additionally, Sayani (2014) shares how educators who have knowledge of their students' lives can strategically and purposively weave this knowledge into their teaching, thereby increasing their students' motivation to learn. In sum, educators who adopt a relational approach validate and encourage students, improve their outcomes, and increase their motivation.

Hallinan (2008) provides a list of how teachers can demonstrate care that includes: listening to students, encouraging their efforts, providing a safe and secure, warm atmosphere, respecting students and their familial and peer cultures, giving them a sense of inclusion in the community, being fair, following norms of equity, and praising them for academic and social accomplishments. This list coupled with genuine interest in their lives and lived experiences, translates into a relational approach. As stated by Sayani (2014), how can we influence them if they think we don't care?

7.6. Conclusion

Anti-racism education problematizes current practices of multicultural education and encourages an inclusion of the challenges and realities of marginalized peoples. This practice, coupled with a curriculum that includes stories and perspectives of all cultures rather than mainly Eurocentric voices works to validate marginalized students and

contributes to their engagement and empowerment. Furthermore, acknowledging, valuing, and including students' home culture rather than blaming it for student deficits also increases connections. Lastly, a relational approach where educators exhibit knowledge and care for their students increases motivation, attachment, and success.

A combination of these approaches, an anti-racist, relational and culturally proficient approach that includes holistic curriculum, can be defined as inclusive education. Such education benefits not just non-White students, but *all* students. In the words of Ageypong (2011), “equitable education based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students is where students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment in which diversity is honoured and all individuals respected” (p. 4).

Chapter 8.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, some of my interviews were transcribed by an outside agency. Coincidentally, the transcriber is a South Asian woman. This transcriber, a woman I did not know, a person I did not seek out as a participant, shared some of her stories in an email after completing her transcriptions. The subject matter struck such a cord with her that her message to me included the following statement: “I just find your interviews so interesting because I can relate to all of these stories. If you don’t mind, I’d like to tell you one of my experiences that I keep thinking about while transcribing this file.”

She told me that she had attended a high school that was predominantly White up until Grade 11 and in Grade 11, she transferred to another school to be closer to her friends. This school was predominately South Asian. Both schools were in Richmond, B.C.

Because she had to take many buses to get to her new school, she was often late and would be severely reprimanded by her teacher, often missing much of the day’s lesson sitting in the hallway as part of her consequences. She was a straight A student, a strong athlete, and an all-around good student. For these reasons, the severity of her treatment surprised her, especially considering how hard she was trying to get to school on time despite the many obstacles she was facing. She shared the following thoughts:

I tried talking with my teacher after class one day and these were his words to me: “I know your type. You think you can do whatever you want and not try and that everything will be handed to you. You’re probably from one of those families where you don’t have to lift a finger. Well, if you’re not coming to my class on time then I’m not feeding you with a silver spoon.” This was over 11 years ago and I have not forgotten it. I found this to be so hurtful and shocking because I felt like I was trying so hard and he knew nothing about my personal life. I had also never had a teacher who didn’t believe in me. Eventually, if I was going to be even 1 minute late to class, I didn’t bother going.

She also shared a memory about a school policy regarding group congregation on school grounds:

I remember that there was a rule that we could only walk in groups of five in the hallways. It did not matter if we were Indian girls or boys or a mixed group of both boys and girls. The number was five. I remember thinking about how sad this was because the only reason was because of our skin colour. I had never been subjected to this kind of treatment before, especially in school.

Her email to me ended with the following reflection: “I always thought this only happened at my high school. It makes me sad to think that this happened elsewhere as well.”

I include this interaction to illustrate just how pervasive and impactful negative school experiences related to various forms of oppression are. Additionally, the impact is lifelong. Students don’t forget school experiences after five or ten years, they build on them and live with them for the rest of their lives. The magnitude of this should propel a revisiting and analyses of school and teacher practices. Throughout this study, it has been revealed by the participants, numerous scholars, as well as my own supporting narratives, that many factors contribute to detrimental school experiences for South Asian students. These factors include a formal and hidden curriculum that reifies oppressive practices in institutions such as schools, and an interplay between internalized dominance and oppression that leads to issues of double consciousness, belongingness, destructive adherence to a ‘model minority’ practice, and a persistence of harmful microaggressions.

Building emancipatory and empowered identities through school experiences begins with examining and acknowledging the aforementioned practices before engaging in more inclusive education. Inclusive education incorporates anti-racism education, a holistic curriculum, and a relational and culturally proficient prioritization. This may seem like a monumental shift for educators who do not currently engage in this type of pedagogy but the likely outcomes of this approach make it a necessity. Logically speaking, practicing teachers can begin this process through professional development while pre-service teachers should have this ideology ingrained into their teacher education. In either situation, this study can be used to introduce and highlight the

benefits and types of inclusive educations as well as the dangers in continuing with more Euro-centric practices.

When examining the limitations of this study, teachers who are resistant to re-thinking and changing the status quo when it comes to the formal and hidden curriculum found in schools, may choose to not accept the findings of this study. Such resistance may result from an unwillingness to commit time and effort for change or a belief that current practices are acceptable and do not need to change. Lastly, although the previous chapter lists anti-racism education as one of the keys to equitable education, I would argue that many of the principles discussed in that section can be used for any type of anti-oppression education. Issues faced by students who are marginalized because of their gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, or physical limitations also need to have their lived experiences validated and included in school curricula. Further to this, although this study focuses on the experiences of South Asian students, many of the findings and conclusions could transfer to other minoritized groups.

Overall, “[i]t is only when we understand that social inequalities are human creations designed to benefit a few that we can see the possibilities for challenging inequality” (Pease, 2010, p. 14). Ladson-Billings (1998) agrees with this claim and argues that “racism requires sweeping changes” (p.12). With this in mind, we can then move forward with the recognition that, “[a]lthough we may have only a year-long interaction with students, we automatically have a lifelong impact on who they become and the kind of society in which we all will ultimately live” (Landsman & Lewis, 2011, p. 40).

References

- Adair, J. (2008). White pre-service teachers and "de-privileged spaces." *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(4), 189-206.
- Adair, M., & Howell, S. (2007). Common behavioral patterns that perpetuate power and relations of domination. *Tools for Change*. Available at <http://www.toolsforchange.org/resources/org-handouts/patterns%20.pdf>
- Ahmed, S. (2006). The nonperformativity of antiracism. *Meridians*, 7(1), 104-126.
- Allen, A., Scott, L., & Lewis, C. (2013). Racial microaggressions and African American and Hispanic students in urban Schools: A call for culturally affirming education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 3(2), 117-129.
- Anderson, M. (2011). Teacher & student perspectives on cultural proficiency. *Leadership*, 40(5), 32-35.
- Agyepong, R. (2010). Rethinking anti-racism and equity education: Issues of curriculum and development of teachers. *Our Schools, Our Selves*, 19(3), 75-85.
- Arthur, J., Waring M., Coe R., & Hedges L. (2012). *Research methods and methodologies in education*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: SAGE.
- Asghar, J. (2013). Critical paradigm: A preamble for novice researchers. *Life Sciences*, 10(4), 3121-3127.
- Aujla-Bhullar, S. (2011). Deconstructing diversity: Professional Development for elementary teachers. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 5(4), 266-276.
- Bivens, D. (2005). *What is internalized racism*. In M. Poptapchuck, S. Leiderman, D. Bivens, & B. Major, *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building* (pp. 43-53). Baltimore, MD: MP Associates Inc.
- Bradbury, A. (2014) Identity Performance and Race: The Use of Critical Race Theory in Understanding Institutional Racism and Discrimination in Schools. In: Race R. and Lander V. (Eds) *Advancing Race and Ethnicity in Education* (pp. 17-31). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brosseau, L., & Dewing, M. (2018). *Canadian Multiculturalism* (Background Paper (Parliamentary Information and Research Service)). Parliamentary Information and Research Service.

- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12*(1).
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Castagno, A. (2008). I don't want to hear that!: Legitimizing whiteness through silence in schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 314-333.
- Castagno E. A. (2014). *Educated in whiteness: Good intentions and diversity in schools*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Clark, P., & Zygmunt, E. (2014). A close encounter with personal bias: Pedagogical implications for teacher education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 83*(2), 147-161.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (1993). *Research methods in education*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Daniels, E. (2011). Creating motivating learning environments: Teachers matter. *Middle School Journal, 43*(2), 32.
- Dei, G. S. (1996). *Anti-racism education: Theory and practice*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Pub.
- Dei, G., & James, I. (2002). Beyond the rhetoric: Moving from exclusion, reaching for inclusion in Canadian schools. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 48*(1), 61-87.
- Dei, G. S. (2014). Personal reflections on anti-racism education for a global context. *Encounters on Education, 15*, 239-249.
- Dei, G. S. (1993). The challenges of anti-racist education in Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 25*(2), 36-51.
- DiAngelo, R., & Sensoy, O. (2014). Getting slammed: White depictions of race discussions as arenas of violence. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 17*(1), 103-128.
- Delano-Oriaran, O., & Parks, M. (2015). One Black, One White: Power, White Privilege, & Creating Safe Spaces. *Multicultural Education, 22*, (15-4), 15-19.
- Dlamini, S. (2002). From the other side of the desk: Notes on teaching about race when racialised. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 5*(1), 51-66.

- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1989). *The souls of Black folk*. New York: Bantam Books. (Original work published 1903).
- Dyer, R. (1997). *White*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Donaldson, K. (2001). *Shattering the denial protocols for the classroom and beyond / Karen B. McLean Donaldson; foreword by Christine Sleeter*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Eliot, T. (1965). *To criticize the critic, and other writings*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Fortin, J. (2019, August 14). 'Huddled masses' in statue of liberty poem are European, Trump official says. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://columbiacollegeca.libguides.com/apa/newspapers>
- Fujii, L. A. (2018). *Interviewing in social science research: A relational approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Garner, S. (2007). *Whiteness: An introduction*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Giroux, Henry A. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Goldenberg, B. M. (2014). White teachers in urban classrooms: Embracing non-white students' cultural capital for better teaching and learning. *Urban Education*, 49(1), 111-144.
- Gregory, A., & Ripski, M. B. (2008). Adolescent trust in teachers: Implications for behavior in the high school classroom. *School Psychology Review*, 37(3), 337-353.
- Hallinan, M. (2008). Teacher influences on students' attachment to school. *Sociology of Education*, 81(3), 271-283.
- Henry, F., & Tator, C. (2006). *The colour of democracy: Racism in Canadian society*. 3rd Ed. Toronto: Nelson.
- Henze, R., Lucas, T., & Scott, B. (1998). Dancing with the monster: Teachers discuss racism, power, and white privilege in education. *The Urban Review*, 30(3), 187-210.
- hooks, b. (1995). *Killing rage: Ending racism*. New York: H. Holt and Co.

- Huber, L., Johnson, R., & Kohli, R. (2006). Naming Racism: A Conceptual Look at Internalized Racism in U.S. Schools. *Chicana/o Latina/o Law Review*, 26(1), 183-206.
- James, C. (2007). Negotiating school: Marginalized students' participation in their education process. In Johnson G. & Enomoto R. (Eds.), *Race, racialization and antiracism in Canada and beyond* (pp. 17-36). Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press.
- Kohli, R. (2009). Critical race reflections: Valuing the experiences of teachers of color in teacher education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 235-251.
- Kohli, R. (2014). Unpacking internalized racism: Teachers of color striving for racially just classrooms. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 17(3), 367-387.
- Kozlowski, K. P. (2015). Culture or teacher bias? Racial and ethnic variation in student-teacher effort assessment match/mismatch. *Race and Social Problems*, 7(1), 43-59.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Landsman, J., & Lewis, C. W. (2006). *White teachers, diverse classrooms : A guide to building inclusive schools, promoting high expectations, and eliminating racism*. Sterling, VA.: Stylus Pub.
- Landsman, J., & Lewis, C. (2011). *White teachers, diverse classrooms: Creating inclusive schools, building on students' diversity, and providing true educational equity*. Sterling, Va.: Stylus Publ.
- Le Roux, C. (2017). Exploring rigour in autoethnographic research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20(2), 195-207.
- Leonardo, Z. (2012). Racism in schools. In J. A. Banks (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of diversity in education* (pp. 1763-1765). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Marx, S. (2004). Regarding whiteness: exploring and intervening in the effects of White racism in teacher education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 37(1), 31-43.

- Marx, S., Pennington, J., & Chang, H. (2017). Critical autoethnography in pursuit of educational equity: Introduction to the IJME special issue. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(1), 1-6.
- Matias, C.E., Viesca, K.M., Garrison-Wade, D.F., Tandon, M., & Galindo, R. (2014). "What is critical whiteness doing in OUR nice field like critical race theory?" Applying CRT to CWS to understand the white imaginations of white teacher candidates. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(3), 289-304.
- McIntosh, P. (1989, July/August). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and Freedom*, 49, 10-12.
- Michael, A., & Harper, S. (2015). *Raising race questions: Whiteness and inquiry in education*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An introduction to visual culture*. London: Routledge.
- Mitchell, L. (2016). *Becoming culturally responsive teachers : A journey described by preservice and classroom teachers*. Champaign, IL: Common Ground Publishing.
- Northcote, M. (2012). Selecting criteria to evaluate qualitative research. *Education Papers and Journal Articles*, Paper 38.
- Nunn, L. M. (2011). Classrooms as racialized spaces: Dynamics of collaboration, tension, and student attitudes in urban and suburban high schools. *Urban Education*, 46(6), 1226-1255.
- O'Neill, S. (2016). *Introduction to Qualitative Analysis of Participant's Accounts of their Experience*. [Class handout]. Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University, BLU10921.
- Payne, R. K. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highlands, TX: Aha! Process.
- Pease, B. (2010). Challenging the reproduction of privilege from within. In *Undoing privilege: Unearned advantage in a divided world* (pp. 139-187). London, GBR: Zed books.
- Pearce, S. (2012). Confronting dominant whiteness in the primary classroom: Progressive student teachers' dilemmas and constraints. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(4), 455-472.
- Pyke, K. (2010). What is internalized racial oppression and why don't we study it? Acknowledging racism's hidden injuries. *Sociological Perspectives*, 53(4), 551-572.

- realDonaldTrump. (2019, June 14). Why don't they go back to help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how...[Tweet]. Retrieved from URL
- Roorda, D., Koomen, H., Spilt, J., & Oort, F. (2011). The influence of affective teacher–student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(4), 493-529.
- Samuel, E. (2005). *Integrative antiracism: South Asians in Canadian academe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Sandhu, J. S., & Nayar, K. E. (2008). Studying the Sikh diaspora: First-year university experiences of Punjabi Sikh students. *Sikh Formations, 4*(1), 33-46.
- Sayani, A. (2014). *The pathologizing and complicity of "brown boys": Minoritized high school students in danger*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo, R. J. (2012). *Is everyone really equal?: An introduction to key concepts in social justice education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- St. Denis, V. (2005). Troubling national discourses in anti-racist curricular planning. *Canadian Journal of Education, 28*(3), 295-317.
- Schniedewind, N. (2005). "There ain't no White people here!": The transforming impact of teachers' racial consciousness on students and schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 38*(4), 280-289.
- Shockley, K. G., & Banks, J. (2011). Perceptions of teacher transformation on issues of racial and cultural bias. *Journal of Transformative Education, 9*(4), 222-241.
- Srivastava, S. (2007). "Troubles with 'anti-racist multiculturalism': The challenges of anti-racist and feminist activism," In S. Hier and B.S. Singh (Eds), *Race and racism in 21st century Canada: Continuity, complexity, and change* (pp. 291-311). Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.
- Statistics Canada. 2016. Visible minority (South Asian), both sexes, age (total), Canada, British Columbia and census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, 2016 Census – 25% sample data (table). "Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity Highligh Tables." "Data Products, 2016." *Census*. Last updated February 20, 2019. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/imm/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=42&geo=59&vismin=3&age=1&sex=1&SP=1> (accessed April 29, 2020).
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life. *American Psychologist, 62*(4), 271–286.

- Summer, M. (2014). "You are a racist": An early childhood educator's racialized awakening. *The Social Studies*, 105(4), 193-200.
- Tatum, B. D. (2003). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?": And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.
- Thomas, J. (1993). *Qualitative Research Methods: Doing critical ethnography*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Tosolt, B. (2009). Middle school students' perceptions of caring teacher behaviors: Differences by minority status. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(4), 405-416.
- Ukpokodu, O. (2004). The impact of shadowing culturally different students on preservice teachers' disposition toward diversity. *Multicultural Education*, 12(2), 19-28.
- Ullucci, K. (2010). What works in race-conscious teacher education? Reflections from educators in the field. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 137-156.
- Vaught, S. E., & Castagno, A. E. (2008). "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical race theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11(2), 95-113.
- Walford, G. (2001). *Doing qualitative educational research: A personal guide to the research process*. London; New York: Continuum.

Appendix A.

Letter of Initial Contact

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Raj Samra and I am a student at Simon Fraser University in the Faculty of Education. I am currently enrolled in a M.A. program studying Equity in Education. Through this program, I would like to explore how students of South Asian descent describe their educational experiences in Canadian, K-12 classrooms. The goals of my research are to build awareness of the school experiences of South Asian students and to reveal how identity may or may not be perceived to come into play during schooling. It is hoped that this information will be helpful to educators. I would like to invite you to participate in an individual interview that will support my study.

There is one phase to this study: individual semi-structured interviews. I plan to interview you (in a location of your choice) about your experiences as a student during your K-12 years. I will ask open-ended questions that lend to a more conversational style and all questions will be relevant to my research goals. The interview will be approximately 1 hour in length and it will be audio recorded. You will be given access to the transcript of the interview if you would like to clarify or change anything before it is analyzed.

Your confidentiality is assured and a pseudonym will be given for your identity as well as any educators or institutions identified. Further to this, any information collected will be kept secured. If, at any time, you wish to discontinue, you may decline participation in this study (without explanation) and any information relevant to you will be destroyed.

Once transcripts have been analyzed and a write up has been completed, you will have the choice of reviewing the findings. This may be beneficial to you as it may lead you to view your experiences in alternate ways. This study will also benefit educators who wish to improve their practice by learning about the experiences of students.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my project. Your participation would be very much appreciated. If you would like to participate or have further questions, please contact me.

Thank you,

Raj Samra

Appendix B.

Consent Form

An Exploration of How Students of South Asian Descent Describe Their School Experiences in Canadian, K-12 Classrooms

Who is Conducting the Study

Principal Investigator: Rajvinder Samra – Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Dolores van der Wey – Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser

This study is intended as research for a thesis in pursuant of a Master’s degree.

Why Take Part in this Study?

The purpose of this study is to build awareness of the school experiences of South Asian students and to reveal how identity comes into play during schooling. It is hoped that this information will be helpful to educators. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are of South Asian descent and have received some or all of your K-12 schooling in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. I want to learn more about how to support students of South Asian descent who are currently enrolled in Canadian elementary or secondary schools and this study will help me discover what contributed to positive and/or negative experiences.

Your Participation is Voluntary

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any questions or negative consequences and any information relevant to you will be destroyed.

If You Say ‘YES’

If you say 'Yes,' I will interview you (in a location of your choice) about your experiences as a student during your K-12 years. I will ask open-ended questions that lend to a more conversational style and all questions will be relevant to my research goals. The interview will be approximately 1 hour in length and it will be audio recorded. You will be given access to the transcript of the interview if you would like to clarify or change anything before it is analyzed.

A follow-up session may occur if you would like to discuss further a part of your interview or the interview transcript. I may also contact you via phone or email if clarification is needed.

Lastly, if any of the questions seem too sensitive or personal, you do not have to answer.

Risks – Can This Study Be Bad for You?

There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study.

What are the Benefits of Participating?

This may be beneficial to you as it may lead you to view your experiences in alternate ways. This study will also benefit educators who wish to improve their practice by learning about the experiences of students.

Will You be Paid for Taking Part in this Research?

You will not be paid for the time you take to be in this study

Measures to Maintain Confidentiality

Your confidentiality is assured and a pseudonym will be given for your identity as well as any educators or institutions identified. Further to this, any information collected will be kept secured in either a locked filing cabinet or a password protected PC. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Study Results

The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books. In addition, once the study is completed, data will be uploaded to an online repository (SFU RADAR) with all files being stripped of any information that could identify participants. The report on the findings can also be made available to you if you wish to receive this information.

Who Can You Contact if You Have Questions About the Study?

I am available to answer any inquiries concerning this study. My contact information as well as the contact information for my supervisor, Dr. Dolores van der Wey, can be found at the beginning of this form.

Who Can You Contact if You Have Complaints or Concerns About the Study?

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative consequences.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study.

Participant Signature

Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

Printed Name

Appendix C.

Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself/tell me a little about your childhood.
2. How would you describe your K-12 educational experience?
3. Tell me stories or incidents of some positive experiences at school?
4. Tell me stories or incidents that you found challenging?
5. Can you tell me about your favourite subject and/or teacher?
6. What qualities would you say embody a “caring” teacher?
7. Was there a teacher/subject you disliked or had problems with?
8. What are your thoughts on the curriculum overall?
9. Can you remember any time that you felt discouraged or de-motivated in a classroom?
10. Can tell me about a time that you felt particularly encouraged or motivated in a classroom?

Appendix D.

Revised Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

1. Tell me a little bit about your educational experiences.
2. How would you define the term “racial identity”?
3. How would you describe your racial identity?
4. How did your racial identity influence your experiences in school, if at all?
5. Tell me stories or incidents of some positive experiences at school.
6. Tell me stories or incidents that you found challenging.
7. Can you tell me about your favourite subject and/or teacher?
8. What qualities would you say embody a “caring” teacher?
9. Was there a teacher/subject you disliked or had problems with?
10. Did you experience or witness incidents/comments (inside or outside of the classroom) that were racist or had undertones of racism? If yes, any involving teachers?
11. What are your thoughts on the curriculum and how “others” are represented in curriculum? What are the implications of this?
12. Can you remember any time that you felt discouraged or de-motivated in a classroom?
13. Can tell me about a time that you felt particularly encouraged or motivated in a classroom?