UNCOVERING THE CORE SELF: LISTENING TO BLACK ADULTS IN CANADA

WHO ATTENDED PREDOMINATELY WHITE SCHOOLS

by

GLORY KABARUNGYI MULERA

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The following committee members attest to

the successful completion of this thesis

Marvin McDonald, Ph.D. Thesis Co-Supervisor

Funké Aladejebi, Ph.D. Thesis Co-Supervisor

Tapo Chimbganda, Ph.D. External Examiner

ABSTRACT

A person's perception of their experiences impacts how they perceive themselves. These perceptions shape how they behave, think, and act, as well as the value that they place on their core self (Chimbganda, 2017; Massaquoi, 2004; Spencer et al., 1997). In this study, I explored how Black adults who attended predominantly White schools in Canada perceive themselves at the core of their identity. The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer, 2018) and The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 2015) were chosen to support the design of my study. The struggles with racism in Canada contribute to both physical and mental health challenges for all genders and all ethnic groups (Canadian Psychological Association, 2020). By attending to participants' voices ($N = 3$), deep insight into the complexity of identity and self-perception among Black adults in Canada emerged. Patterns of tensions among participants' multiple voices revealed disconnections between the way stories were told and the way circumstances were experienced. Psychological distress was evident, as participants shared that in predominantly White settings their perception of themselves and others pressured them to selectively share features of their identities in order to negotiate comfort levels for themselves and for others. Forms of resilience and resourcefulness also surfaced, showing the participants' ways of coping with the oppressive dynamics of predominantly White schools in this country. I invite both White and BIPOC clinicians to pay close attention to the subtleties of the internalized voices of the oppressor so that they can further develop their understanding of their Black clients.

Key-words: Core self; resilience; internalized voices of the oppressor

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

One of my earliest memories is being a young girl walking through a hallway at my elementary school. I was a shy child who often withdrew into my imagination as a source of comfort and pleasure. On that day I was not absorbed in my fantasies. Instead, I noticed several students staring at me, and I felt deeply insecure under their gaze. It was a familiar feeling that would come over me occasionally, especially when I was in that school setting. It felt as if my insides could be seen and that my person had been put under evaluation.

Being born and raised in the predominantly White Canadian suburb of Newmarket, Ontario in the early 1990s, I grew to experience racism before I could understand what it meant. My best attempt at overcoming my experiences was to adapt to the circumstances by shifting the focus of others away from my outward appearance. I drew the eyes of the staff and the students around me towards the aspects of my character that I believed would better my chances of being accepted by them. In elementary school I used my humour, generosity, and bravery to gain popularity. By high school I added my social and emotional intelligence, strong sense of fashion, and easy-going nature to my repertoire. Before I knew it, I had several groups of friends, was on numerous school committees, was among the final nominees for prom queen, and attended one of the top universities in the country.

My schooling experiences taught me that to thrive within educational institutions, I had to transform into something that was likeable by the White communities around me. Downplaying my Blackness would better position me to attain safety, connection, and approval. I stepped out of predominantly White settings when I graduated from university in 2016 with my Bachelor of Arts in psychology. In the workforce, most individuals around me were people of colour. In those spaces, I warred between retreating into the comforts of my imagination and broadcasting the

qualities of my character that I had refined over the past decades. Although my employers and colleagues were welcoming and gave me verbal praises, it was difficult to trust that I was worthy of belonging without them first approving the characteristics that I had mastered so well. In hindsight, those post-undergraduate years were a heavenly gift; they were a time to reconnect with the parts of myself that I had laid down to chase acceptance in White communities. When I returned to a predominantly White university in August 2018, I felt a need for me to showcase my repertoire once again. The thought of downplaying my Blackness for a second time was panic inducing; to choose between acceptance and self-preservation felt like a threat to my sense of being.

The ethnic and cultural contexts of my schooling have impacted my relationship with myself. I adapted to these settings by perceiving how I thought White communities viewed me. I emphasized the qualities that they prized and downplayed the qualities that they rejected. Not long into my academic career I saw myself in what I refer to as "existing in the realm of pending approval," the void where I felt the acceptance of others – my White peers, those in surrounding Black communities, significant others, my family, God, and myself – is perpetually out of reach.

Spencer et al. (1997) adopted an approach to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory that considers how individuals perceive or make sense of an experience. They stated that one's perception of one's experience in a cultural setting will impact one's self- perception. Diverse cultural contexts will influence how much they feel valued or valuable and how they give meaning to aspects of themselves. These authors described that one's perception of one's experience shapes how one behaves, thinks, and acts. The perceptual processes that play a role in one's experiences are dependent on social-cognitive processes. The meanings that individuals draw from a particular experience in a culturally different environment include both healthy and unhealthy coping

strategies. Over time, the implementation of the context-linked problem-solving strategies are stabilized and shape one's emergent identity or self-processes.

In my own experience, I pursued corrective problem-solving strategies by accentuating the character traits that I believed would increase my chances of being accepted by White communities around me. These behaviours seemed to tightly weave themselves into my perception of myself, to the extent that I still struggle to distinguish between the behaviours that can be attributed to unhealthy coping responses and the ones that can be attributed to characteristics of my core self. Spencer (2018) stated that, beginning in the first or second grade, some children experience dissonance when they face difficulty understanding the knowledge that they obtain from the world around them (Spencer, 2018). In my personal history, it was challenging for me to comprehend racism as a child. In my early years of grade school, I looked at the behaviours and comments of individuals in my school community to infer messages about who I was. My perception that the staff and the students disapproved of me led to my conclusion that my Black skin reminded them that I was different at my core. I viewed my skin as something that announced my inadequacy and perceived this to be a barrier to acceptance, approval, and connection.

The work of Spencer and her team (2018) has supported the recognition of the impact a culturally different environment on minority individuals. By listening to the experiences of racial minorities who were enrolled in predominantly White schools during their formative years, the discussion of this impact will be extended in this thesis. The scope of my study will address how Black adults who attended predominantly White schools in Canada perceive themselves at the core of their identities. It is pertinent that practicing clinicians, as well as educators of future clinicians, understand how Black people in Canada view themselves. By hearing the voices of the adults who

fit this description, clinicians will be better positioned to attend to the inner parts of their Black clients with a sense of humility, respect, and curiosity.

Key Terms

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a multidimensional component of the self-concept that is taken from one's connection to an ethnic group. (Brown, 2017). Ethnicity refers to cultural elements while race is a social construct that refers to physical attributes such as skin colour.

Self-Concept

Social identity theory explains self-concept as one's perception of self. It stems from knowledge and feelings about one's membership in a social group (Hall, 2001).

Core self

The core is where feelings reside and are expressed as emotions and are mediated by the reflective side. The core of one's being remains intact without being damaged by loss (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007).

Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to cope in spite of adverse experiences even if coping involves suffering (cf., Burnette and Figley, 2016).

Internalized Voices of The Oppressor

Internalized oppression is the concept that depicts the process by which individuals of subordinated, marginalized, or minority groups adopt the ideology of the group that holds domination over them (Tappan, 2006). In this document I refer to the expression of these ideologies as the internalized voices of oppression.

Black Adults in Canada

In this document I used this phrasing to refer to Black people who live in Canada in an effort to respect that not all Black people in this country refer to themselves as Canadians, Black Canadians, or African Canadian, even if they were born in this country.

Epistemic Privilege

Epistemic privilege is knowledge accumulated through disadvantaged and marginalized experiences. If cultivated and nurtured, this privilege offers better critical thinking, adaptable learning, and resiliency in students who view the world from a distinct lens (Chimbganda, 2017).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I outline key positions taken on the topics of identity formation, bioecological theory and significance of school racial composition on self-perception, racialized identities and oppression, and identity formation among racialized individuals in Canada. The purpose of this chapter is to frame the focus of this thesis project, the exploration of how Black adults who attended predominantly White schools in Canada perceive themselves at the core of their identities.

Identity Formation

Identity is a notion that has been explored extensively by scholars. Researchers have determined that identity is a fluid social construct that extends across the life span. Seeing that it is malleable in nature, one's identity is subject to change under the impact of social, political, and historical events. These events can impact an individual's identity whether they are observed during the life span of that individual, during the life span of their family members, or within a group and/or community (Hall, 2001).

Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley uses the metaphor of *the looking glass self* to describe the formation of identity as a reflection of public perception. He contended that one's core identity is fashioned to adapt to the public perceptions of one's social location (Hall, 2001). Similar to Cooley, another sociologist, George Herbert Mead, asserted that identity is a product of social interaction. He stated that one's identity transforms from an "I" to a "me" perception of self. Mead's work was complemented by psychologists, Wade W. Nobles and William E. Cross, who added that through membership in a group, one's perception of self extends to a "we" as well (Hall, 2001).

Identity Crisis

Psychologist Erik Erikson is well known for his work on psychosocial development and identity crisis. He stated that to experience wholeness one must feel a sense of progressive continuity between what one conceives oneself to be and what one perceives others to see and expect of one. As summarized by Waterman,

> Individually speaking, identity includes, but is more than, the sum of all the successive identifications of those earlier years when the child wanted to be, and often was forced to become, like the people he depended on. Identity is a unique product, which now meets a crisis to be solved only in new identifications with age mates and with leader figures outside of the family. (1982, p. 341)

In his descriptions of the processes of identity development, Erikson distinguished between individuals who are born only once and individuals who undergo a second birth or growth crisis as they shape their identity. Those who are born once do not experience difficulty fitting into society. Their childhood identifications progress into their adult experiences without significant doubt or conflict. Those who are born twice experience a crisis of purpose or faith. In their adult years their commitments are developed out of personal choice (Waterman, 1982).

In his own research, psychologist James Marcia extended Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Waterman, 1982). Marcia identified four ego identity statuses that are defined in terms of crisis and commitment. According to his model, crisis refers to the experience of active exploration as one questions or struggles to arrive at aspects of personal identity. Commitment refers to firm and unwavering decision-making in areas of identity, as well as the implementation of related activities. The four ego identity statuses include identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion.

The identity achiever is one who has moved through crisis and whose identity has become committed. Their level of crisis is high, as is their level of commitment. An individual falls under the status of moratorium if their crisis level is high and commitment level is low. Such an individual is seeking alternatives that will enable them to arrive at a choice. One's ego identity status would be categorized as foreclosure if one is committed to a set of goals, values, or beliefs and has never been in a crisis. Their level of crisis is low and commitment level is high. For this individual, their commitments are likely reflected in the wishes of their parents or authority figures. Identity diffusion refers to those who do not have commitments and are not attempting to form them. Their levels of crisis and commitment are both low. These individuals may not have experienced crisis or, if they have, they were unable to resolve it successfully and therefore were never able to make a firm decision (Waterman, 1982).

While Erikson and Marcia have put forth a framework for describing processes involved in identity formation, their assertions lack sufficient consideration of identity crises among visible minorities (see Velez & Spencer, 2018; Waterman, 1982). The need for one to experience a progressive continuity between what one conceives oneself to be and what one perceives others to see and expect of one (Waterman, 1982, p. 341) may become challenging for a person considered a visible minority in a predominantly White setting. Such an individual might perceive that their family and ethnic community holds perceptions and expectations of them that differ from those they perceive are held by the White community. In such cases, the progressive continuity that Erikson stressed as a necessary component for experiencing wholeness would likely be disrupted for this individual.

Psychologist Jean S. Phinney extended Erikson and Marcia's theoretical work to the sphere of ethnic identity (Umana-Taylor et al., 2014). She explained that the development of

ethnic identity occurs as individuals explore the meaningfulness of their ethnicity regarding their lives. Umana-Taylor et al. (2014) wrote that the process of exploring an ethnic identity can be supported by talking about one's ethnicity with others and by participating in activities related to one's ethnic group. This insight raises the question of whether the development of an ethnic identity is supported in the school setting for ethnic minority adolescents at predominantly White educational institutions. In such institutions where these discussions and activities are taking place, it would be appropriate to consider who informs the messages included in these settings, and if they accurately represented the ethnic group(s) in that setting.

An equally important consideration regarding the experience of ethnic minority adolescents at predominantly White schools, is the experience of ethnic minorities who attend predominantly White colleges and universities. In 2003, Samuel & Burney conducted a study on the experiences of 22 South Asian students at a predominantly White university in Ontario, Canada. The students in this study reported their perception of racist attitudes and responses on the part of their professors. All 22 participants expressed "being deeply impacted by these circumstances, and they reported feelings of unfulfillment, lack of accomplishment, and dissatisfaction with both themselves as well as academia" (p. 108). The authors emphasized the importance of faculty-student relationships in the facilitation of a positive learning environment to support the students' identity, self-esteem, and academic success (Samuel & Burney, 2003).

Through this research, one of my aims is to contribute to the literature on the experiences of visible minority adults who have attended predominantly White schools in Canada. As principal investigator, I was curious if distinctive experiences would emerge depending on the province in which each participant attended schools. A brief reflection on this point is included in the discussion chapter.

Ethnic Identity

A strong and positive ethnic identity can be important and meaningful for children and adolescents of an immigrant and/or minority background. Experiencing a positive connection with individuals who are ethnically similar to oneself can help protect one from the negative impacts of racism as well as provide support for positive self-esteem and academic outcomes (Brown, 2017). Consistent with the tendency for most individuals in middle childhood to hold a positive self-esteem, immigrant children and children of immigrant parents who are in middle childhood typically have positive feelings about their ethnic identity. These children often identify with their host culture or country to varying degrees as they go through a dual process of enculturation and acculturation. During enculturation, they learn about and adapt to their ethnic culture; whereas during acculturation, they learn about and adapt to their host culture. The development of ethnic identity typically emerges during early childhood and continues throughout middle childhood.

During middle childhood, one becomes able to perceive racism and discrimination. At this age, self-conceptsgrow increasingly complex and individuals are shaped not only by their school environments and but also by their tendency to compare themselves to others. Research has demonstrated that in schools where messages about diversity are implicit, such as through posters on the walls, library displays, and bulletin board messages, children of a minority background can experience an ethnic identity that is both positive and important (Brown, 2017). The social identities of the children "differ in importance and evaluation based on relationships, settings, and the adaptiveness of that identity to the situation" (Brown, 2017, p. 798). In addition, differences in the importance and evaluation ascribed to a social, ethnic, and racial identity can fluctuate in the lifetime of a single individual.

School Racial Composition, Self-Perception, and Gender

Schools are one of the strongest socializing forces that impact experiences and development among adolescents (Atkin et al., 2018). According to bioecological theorists, the school context directly influences youth development because of the extended time adolescents spend interacting in these environments (Atkin et al., 2018). As such, schools are a potentially powerful source of influence on mental health outcomes. A critical period for identity formation unfolds during adolescence. As individuals in this age group gain a better sense of their identities in connection to their social environments and interactions, they develop an awareness of how they are perceived and treated by the people around them. Racial identity increases in importance for Black youth as they contemplate the meanings of their racial group membership in their daily lives and in broader society. Many of these youth are confronted with experiences that call the meaning and value of their racial identities into question, especially through classroom and peer related forms of discrimination that take place.

Researcher Christia Spears Brown (2017) found that the racial composition of the school setting may act as an important moderating factor in the relationship between internalizing racial myths or stereotypes and psychological distress. Specifically, the adolescents in the study experienced a stronger sense of school belonging as the proportion of same-ethnicity peers at their educational institutions increased. In schools where race-related biases, stereotypes and social comparisons are emphasized, the racial composition of the school may have a significant effect on adolescent development (Atkin et al., 2018).

In terms of child development, bioecological theory thus posits that the nature of the influence that proximal processes have on the development of children depends on the broader structure of the environment. Although the way in which a child views themself may be based on

their interactions with peers and teachers, the importance of these interactions may be either enhanced or diminished based on the ethnic and/or racial composition of the student body. For example, if a boy who immigrates from Somalia to Canada overhears two White students mocking his accent, he might become wounded by this experience. The impact of this experience on his perception of his self-worth might be diminished if the school he attends has a significant Somalian population and if popular students and teachers have accents that sound like his own. It is not only the ethnic and/or racial composition of the school that informs the perception that a child of a minority background develops regarding themself; a school's values about diversity also send a salient message about belonging. As an important source of social mirroring, the attitudes displayed by adults in a school impact how children perceive themselves. Typically, patterns are displayed as a school-wide message informs immigrant children and children of immigrant parents how much their presence is valued and respected (Atkin et al., 2018).

Each gender may experience and respond to racism differently because of misogyny, socialization, and variations in the beliefs ascribed to the meanings of one's racial group (cf., Leath et al., 2019). Both male and female Black youths experience discrimination in school setting; however, the frequency and nature of these experiences may vary. In a study authored by Leath et al. (2019), the researchers determined that among Black middle and high school students who attended a middle-class, suburban school, males reported more experiences of teacher and peer racial discrimination than did females. The authors found that the experiences of racism affected the motivation of the male and female students in distinct ways. For the male students, the racism negatively impacted their academic engagement; whereas, for the female students, the negative impact was experienced in the domain of their psychological adjustment.

The struggles with racism in Canada contribute to both physical and mental health challenges for all genders and all ethnic groups (Canadian Psychological Association, 2020). Black scholars of feminist theory were the first to acknowledge that individuals who identify as women experience lives that are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression (Carastathis, 2014). The interweaving between the experience of being a Black individual and the experience of identifying as a female in this country poses increased challenges for Black female students at predominantly White schools. Discriminatory experiences due to gender and racial identity put individuals at an increased risk of harm, including worsened mental and physical health, lowered academic outcomes, and poorer social adjustment. Research indicates that sexist treatment is not only more common among women but also correlated with higher rates of depression for those who identify as women (Bell & Juvonen, 2020). As principal investigator, I expected that distinctive features in the content and in the way stories were told would emerge in the data depending on the participants' gender identities. This issue is addressed in the results and discussion chapters of this document.

Racialized Identities and Oppression in Canada

Oppression, the actions of domination and subordination of one group over another, typically occurs across races, genders, sexual orientations, social classes, age groups, dis/abilities (Massat et al., 2020) and other features of identity. Chao et al. (2013) stated that there are two kinds of oppression: externalized oppression and internalized oppression. Externalized oppression occurs when a group in a position of authority yields their power unjustly over another group. This might include imposing a set of beliefs, a set of values, and a way of life on another group (Chao et al., 2013). For example, externalized oppression takes place in schools when guidance counsellors suggest to Black students that they follow academic and career

pursuits that the students are over-qualified for and yet suggest to White students that they aim

for pursuits that they are adequately- or under-qualified for. This form of oppression can turn

into internalized oppression when the group that is being oppressed takes on the mindset of the

oppressor by believing and acting as if the oppressor's beliefs, values, and ways of life are reality

(Chao et al., 2013). The topic of internalized oppression will be further discussed later in this

chapter.

The focus of this thesis is the oppressive experiences of Black individuals who attended

predominantly White schools in Canada. Notwithstanding efforts designed to promote inclusion,

anti-Black racism continues throughout public educational systems in Canada. Both historically

and presently, oppressive actions are created and reinforced by the policies and practices of

school professionals (Massat et al., 2020). These occurrences frustrate the notion that Canada is a

welcoming place for Black people and the narrative that this country was once a safe haven for

enslaved Africans who were escaping brutality in The United States. The reality stands that

Canada's history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization continues in a legacy

that yields adverse effects on people of African descent (Lopez, 2020).

In both North America and Europe, discourse surrounding education is full of

implications that Black students underachieve or fail (Dei, 2008). In Canada's largest school

board, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), racialized youth have been faced with

sizeable problems in the school system. As early as the 1960s, the difficulties of Black and

minority education in Ontario were being noted. In both the 1960s and 1970s, racialized students

were considered learning-disabled deficit models, and in the two succeeding decades, students

were placed into "basic, general, and advanced" streaming levels (Dei, 2008, p. 349). It was

identified that these youths were disengaged and dissatisfied. These characteristics were

determined to stem from "low teacher expectations", "lack of curricular sophistication", and "absence of Black minority faculty" (Dei, 2008, p. 349). This disengagement was in reference to youths who were physically present in schools but absent in mind and soul, as well as to those who were dropping out or being pushed out due to subtle racist messages (Dei, 2008). More recently, a 2017 study determined that Black students in the TDSB were suspended more often than other students and were put into academic streams that were below their capabilities (Lopez, 2020).

The description made by Dei (2008) of Black youths in schools being physically present but absent in mind and soul resonates strongly with my academic experiences. As a young girl attending schools in the Greater Toronto Area, I often found myself overwhelmed and disengaged in the classroom. Drawing from my education as a therapy client and a counselling psychology graduate student, I am aware that the racism I experienced as a child in my school years was chronically traumatizing. A traumatic experience is defined as the subjective experience of negative and unexpected event that causes the individual to feel overwhelmed, confused, and powerless, with the resources of one who is aged zero to five (Bradshaw, 2020). Psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk stated that children who are chronically traumatized are impacted by alterations in consciousness, including, "amnesia, hypermnesia, dissociation, depersonalization and derealization, flashbacks and nightmares of specific events, school problems, difficulties in attention regulation, with orientation in time and space and they suffer from sensorimotor developmental disorders" (van der Kolk, 2005, p. 7). Adult intervention is necessary to restore safety and control to a child in distress. Without this help, the child is unable to modulate their arousal, which interrupts their capacity to process, integrate, and categorize the traumatic event(s). When distress is experienced chronically, children dissociate. Their relevant

sensations, affects, and cognitions are separated into sensory fragments and they cannot make

sense of what is happening or create an appropriate plan of action (van der Kolk, 2005).

For many of my academic years, I was under performing. Although my parents would

try to encourage me by telling me that I was smart and capable of receiving higher grades in my

schooling, I did not believe them. As much as I wanted to bring home good report cards to avoid

lectures and/or punishment, I would often daydream for hours in the classroom or experience

what felt like memory loss in the weeks or months following a lesson. When I would try

focusing, I found that I needed repetitions and slow, detailed explanations with examples to

understand my teachers' lessons. From grades 7 to 11, my grades were often in the 60%–80%

percent range, though at some points I would rush at the end of the semester to increase my final

marks to the 80%–90% range. I knew that I was uninterested in attending post-secondary schools

and I would openly share this with my mother. In the fall of 2008, my grade 12 year at Sacred

Heart Catholic High School, my White male English teacher, Mr. De Souza, expressed to me

that he recognized the gifts of goodness, intelligence, and creativity within me. He was the first

teacher since junior kindergarten who I felt saw my inner person and in response to his warmth

and attention, I approached his assignments with a newfound sense of joy and confidence. After

receiving an A+ on one of his first assignments, it was as if a new world within me opened up to

my awareness. Although chronic racial trauma continued to impact my life, it seemed as if parts

of my mind and soul were ignited when I saw the potential that Mr. De Souza saw in me. I

recognize his voice of confidence as an agent that God used to restore my journey as one who

deeply enjoys learning. By the end of my grade 12, I received acceptance letters to every

university that I applied to and I started my attendance at McGill University in the fall of 2009.

This part of my narrative is a clear demonstration of White validation. I use this story to illustrate

one the earliest experiences of affirmation that young Black children have outside of their own home. When White teachers and therapists affirm their Black students and clients in this way the impact is so significant since so few people do that for Black children outside of their immediate circles or families.

Internalized Oppression and Resilience

Externalized oppression can lead to a response of internalized oppression and/or resilience. Internalized oppression is the process by which individuals of subordinated, marginalized, or minority groups adopt the ideology of the group that holds domination over them. During this process, the individual member of the subordinate group accepts their status as one that is natural, inevitable, and deserved (Tappan, 2006). In continuing with the previous example of externalized oppression between guidance counsellors and Black students, the student may respond with internalized oppression if after meeting with the counsellor they lower their expectations for themselves, believe they are less qualified than their White counterparts for academic and career options, and do not apply themselves to their full potential in future school or work opportunities.

There is the potential, however, that a student in this scenario may respond to externalized oppression with resilience. Resilience is defined by some researchers as the ability to positively adapt in spite of adverse experiences (Burnette and Figley, 2016). If after receiving subtle and/or overt racial discrimination by a guidance counsellor a Black student were to maintain a sense of stability and internal regulation, they might retain a valid understanding of their cognitive abilities, skills, and talents. With this capacity for resilience, the student may recognize that their potential is not limited to the perspective of the oppressive counsellor and

instead seek support from individuals who encourage them to follow academic and career

pursuits for which they are adequately qualified for.

In defining the construct of resilience, scholars in anglophone psychology have typically

peered through a White, Westernized lens. Through an individualist perspective, factors like

"hardiness" and intelligence are among the traits corelated with resilience (Singh, 2013, p.692).

Other resilience factors have been determined as innate traits that support the capacity for

individuals to steer through life adversities. Some researchers of resilience have considered how

community factors and contextual influences impact resilience. In a 2011 study, researchers who

considered the resiliency of transgender people of colour in the southeastern United States found

strategies that helped participants cope positively with life challenges (Singh, 2013). Participants

identified racial and ethnic pride and gender identity development, as well as the ability to

identify and navigate racism as salient to their resilience. They reported that their resilience was

formed through the process of learning to manage and cope with family relationships, their

access to healthcare and financial resources, their connections with activist communities of other

transgender people of colour, their spiritual beliefs, and the development of hope for the future

(Singh, 2013).

Taking into consideration the harmful impacts of oppression on Black communities in

Canada (see Lopez, 2020), the potential for individuals to respond with positive adaptations to

adverse experiences is promising. As study author, my primary audience is White clinicians in

Canada. As professionals, psychotherapists and psychologists are trained with an understanding

of ethical standards, values, and practices. The *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* holds

individuals in the field to a high level of ethical attitudes and behaviours. As indicated by this

code, psychotherapists and psychologists are to protect and promote the well-being of clients and

to keep well-informed on social issues (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2017). My hope is that this study will encourage mental health clinicians to train themselves in psychological knowledge related to better supporting Black clients who are experiencing identity crises, academic problems, poor social adjustments, and/or racial trauma.

Research Statement

Considering the models offered by researchers of oppression and resilience, it is worthwhile to consider the distinct experiences of Black individuals in Canada. The psychic oppression, management, and control of Black bodies through national policies and practices project the identity of "aliens" onto Black individuals, rather than that of Canadian citizens (Tecle et al., 2017, p. 188). Tecle et al. (2017) use a story to illustrate this statement. The authors describe the experiences of two Black graduate students who attend one of the most diverse and multicultural universities in Canada. At a school community event, these students are the only Black individuals in the room among faculty, staff, and other graduate students and they choose to position themselves in the corner of the room to observe the social exchanges. When the White female senior faculty member invites the two students into a conversation of small talk, she asks them "Are you imposters? Are you here for the free food?" (p. 194). In reading this story, I am reminded of the all-too-common experience of feeling like an unwelcomed visitor in predominantly White spaces.

Antiblackness, surveillance, and racial profiling restrain Black people living in Canada to a place of inferiority and oppression, with social, psychic, spiritual, and moral consequences that take a toll on their mental health and wellbeing (Tecle et al., 2017). Scholars in the field of trauma inform us that when an individual's level of distress is not relieved, their internal resources become limited and they are unable to comprehend what is happening, create a plan of

action, or execute such plans appropriately (see Bradshaw, 2020; van der Kolk, 2005). Such

circumstances challenge one's capacity for resilience. Considering these findings, counselling

psychologists may benefit from learning about the ways in which Black people in this country

face oppressive circumstances on a day-to-day basis. I want to acknowledge the distinctiveness

of the diverse settings that Black people in Canada shape. Ethnicity, class, age, place of birth,

and faith background, for example, are aspects that contribute to uniqueness for each person.

With school context being one of the strongest socializing forces that impacts personal

experiences and human development, the experiences of Black people who attended

predominantly White schools in Canada cannot be overlooked. In this project I recognize

Canadian schools as microcosms of Canadian institutions, which are then a microcosm for

Canadian society. In each of these environments individuals like myself are made to feel othered

and as if they do not belong.

        Spencer et al. (1997) stated that normative developmental patterns, including subjective

self-perceptual processes, grow in complexity due to the character and content of high-risk

environments linked with ethnicity and visibility for minorities in the United States. These

processes can damage the self, especially in chronically high-risk contexts (Spencer et al., 1997).

In my personal narrative, the White community in which I was placed significantly impacted my

academic performance, self-perception, mental health, and my relationship with myself and

others. The adaptive behaviours that I used to thrive in educational settings are seemingly woven

into the fabric of my core being; I am challenged to decipher and disentangle the parts of my

character that are authentic to my core from those features reflecting traumatic coping responses

and processes of internalized oppression. In my recent experiences as a therapist, I have been

given several opportunities to support clients of racialized and non-racialized backgrounds on

their journeys to reclaiming their identities and restoring a positive relationship with their bodies.

In this document I draw from the knowledge that I have generated as a Black woman in Canada,

a counsellor, a client of a White female therapist, and a student in predominantly White schools.

Part of my focus in this research project was to consider how therapists can better understand

their Black clients. By attending to participants' voices, I gained access to deeper insight into the

complexity of identity and self-perception among individuals who fit this description.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the method that was used in this research study. To meet this aim, this chapter has outlined key features of the research design, the background of research participants, the data collection data analysis procedures, and the central features of research rigour adopted for this study.

Design of the Study

The research design of this study is informed by Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), an approach developed by psychologist Margaret B. Spencer. PVEST is a theoretical framework that expands on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory by considering how individuals perceive or make sense of their experiences (Spencer et al., 1997). It is a cyclical, recursive model that contains five components. This framework recycles throughout the lifespan as individuals balance new risks with protective factors, experience new levels of stress, employ various strategies for coping, and redefine their identity (Spencer et al., 2003; Velez & Spencer, 2018).

The five components of PVEST include risk contributors, net stress engagement, reactive coping methods, emergent identities, and life-stage specific coping outcomes. Risk contributors are the factors that might make an individual susceptible to negative outcomes linked to various psychological stressors. Net stress engagement refers to experiences that challenge psychosocial identity and psychological well-being. These are the everyday risk contributors that could be balanced by available supports. Reactive coping methods are the stress responses that are used to reduce the effects of dissonance-producing situations. Emergent identities are the coping methods that have been stabilized through repeated use. Lastly, life-

stage specific coping outcomes are the productive or adverse outcomes that are the results of perceptions and behaviours (Spencer et al., 2003).

I selected PVEST to support this study for several reasons. Firstly, as a systems theory, PVEST addresses the multitude of elements and life stressors that have been at play in the lives of the research participants. Secondly, the ability of PVEST to capture meaning making processes underlying identity development and outcomes (Spencer et al., 2003) supported the research aim of attending to the participant's identity formation and self-perception. Thirdly, I valued that this theory can integrate diverse processes and contexts (Spencer et al., 2003; Velez & Spencer, 2018). This feature of the theory made it suitable for addressing the intersections of oppression that are potentially impacting the research participants.

Fourthly, in combination with Bronfenbrenner's theory, PVEST captures an understanding of societal expectations, stereotypes, and biases (Spencer et al., 1997). This made it helpful to engage the social climate in Canada. In designing this project, I anticipated that the participants may have internalized viewpoints from the dominant Canadian society and integrated these views into their self-perception. Lastly, PVEST can acknowledge the developmental changes in social cognition and social experiences that influence meaning making (Spencer et al., 1997). This emphasis fit well with the purpose of this study because I considered incidents of racism and oppression experienced by the participants as well as their various stages of psychological development. I was mindful that understanding changes in social cognition and social experiences that influence meaning making would become especially relevant if patterns of identity crises were to emerge in the data.

When considering a research method for this study, it was necessary to select one that was congruent with PVEST. The method I chose for this study is The Listening Guide (LG). LG

was developed by American psychologist Carol Gilligan and a team of graduate students. It is

congruent with the assumptions of PVEST as it emphasizes the psychological complexities of

human beings (Woodcock, 2016). LG acknowledges the oppressive structures and contexts that

individuals face. It is concerned with hearing all voices, including those of marginalized and

silenced groups. This method helps researchers listen to what is spoken as well as to what is

unspoken by attending to the contradictory voices, interrupting voices, silencing voices, and

voices that speak indirectly or do not say what they mean (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

Utilizing LG in the context of this study was suitable for attending to both the authentic

and the oppressive voices that I anticipated would emerge in the data. Moreover, as a method

that considers psychological processes and the social and cultural frameworks that impact what

can and cannot be said or heard (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017), LG addressed how these factors

influence the perceptions of the research participants. I combined PVEST and LG based on their

strengths-based approaches. Both reject a deficit approach to understanding how minorities

respond to oppression. Instead, PVEST and LG consider it to be crucial that the strengths people

show even when they have been harmed by oppression are acknowledged.

Research Participants

Participant Characteristics

English-speaking Black adults, between the ages of 20 and 35, were recruited for this

study. To be eligible, participants were required to have a high school diploma and to have

attended a predominantly White school (or schools) in Canada throughout their childhood and

adolescent school years. A minimum completion level of education was included in the criteria

to ensure that all participants had experienced this critical developmental period (i.e.,

adolescence) in a predominantly White school environment. Black individuals who consider

themselves mixed-race were eligible to participate in this study. It was required that participants were either born in Canada or moved to Canada before the age of five. Individuals who moved to Canada after the age of five did not meet the inclusion criteria. This was intended to ensure that identity development through learning and play at the kindergarten or first-grade level that took place outside of Canada was not included in the life experience of participants. Individuals who had a preexisting relationship with me, the principal investigator, were eligible for participation. This aspect of the design is further discussed in the subsections discussing methodological rigour and research ethics. A final requirement was that these individuals were able to meet with me via Zoom (www.zoom.us).

The participants who were selected for this study were one woman and two men. At the time of the interviews, the woman was 30 years old and living in Ontario. Of the two male participants, one was aged 21 and living in Ontario and the other male was aged 33 and living in British Columbia. All the participants have attended predominantly White post-secondary schools. None of the participants are still living in neighbourhoods that are predominantly White. However, each of them often frequents predominantly White institutions, workplaces, public spaces, and neighbourhoods. All the participants reported that their social groups are now multicultural and mainly consist of Black friends and family members.

Recruitment Strategies

Participants were recruited through social media, email, text messaging, and other social networks (see recruitment flyer, Appendix A: Online Recruitment Advertisement). Purposive sampling was used to recruit individuals whose life experiences matched with the research question.

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that lasted for approximately one to one and a half hours each. I met with each participant twice via Zoom. These meetings included an initial interview and a follow-up interview. The informed consent and interview protocols are included in the appendices of this document (see Appendix B: Informed Consent Form; Appendix C: Interview Outline; Appendix D: Debriefing Script). These interviews were video recorded and transcribed by me. Participants were encouraged to come to the interviews with belongings that were representative of their elementary and secondary school experiences and/or items that reflected their personal and ethnic identity. I suggested that these items might include school photos, clothing and memorabilia associated with school clubs and athletics, and pieces representative of ethnic culture and activities. The purpose of including these items and belongings in the interview process was to evoke memories and emotions related to the participants' childhood and adolescent years. If desired, participants were encouraged to send photos of these items or of significant places to be included as part of their interview.

Data Analysis

LG is commonly used to analyze transcripts from interviews. These transcripts became the primary data source. The LG method requires interviews to be listened to at least four times, while simultaneously reading the transcripts, to cultivate deep familiarity with the data. Data was analyzed using a team approach, involving a team which consisted of me, three other Black women in Canada who are in the field of psychology, and the team videographer. Each transcript line was numbered to make it easier to reference specific features of interviews in communication with research team members. The numbering system also allowed for the data referenced in this thesis document be tracked to their primary sources. A colour-coding system

was used throughout the analysis to organize and communicate visual indicators, including

themes within the data. These themes were noted in a master list that aided examination of

overlapping patterns across participants or sessions (see Woodcock, 2016). The process of the

analysis team is described below in the section on rigour.

During the first listening, the researcher listened for the plot (Gilligan, 2015). The

researcher attended to the stories shared by the interviewee. As the researcher listened, she

noticed who was in the story, who or what was missing from the story, as well as repeated

words, salient themes, striking metaphors or symbols, emotional hot-spots, gaps, contradictions,

or ruptures in the story. The researcher was encouraged to use colours, stars, or other markings

as a trail of evidence that later supported her claims. Next the researcher attended to the silences

that took place through pauses, lowered voices, and voices that trailed off during the interview

(Woodcock, 2016).

Before the second listening, it was recommended that the researchers review the

research question(s) to decide what is necessary to explore in more depth (Woodcock, 2016).

During the second listening, the researcher listened for the I. Attention was paid only to the voice

of the self, usually expressed using the first-person "I," as it speaks about acting and being in the

world. This is a voice that speaks under a surface of dissociation (Gilligan, 2015). By listening to

"the thoughts, wishes, desires, needs, conflicts, and silences" spoken by the interviewee

(Woodcock, 2016, p. 4), the researcher heard a depth in the stories that would have been missed

by only looking at the basic plot and themes in the transcripts. At this stage of analysis, the

researchers made I poems. These poems were created for the purpose of listening to patterns

within the first-person voice and hearing how the interviewee spoke of themself in relation to

themself and others. As the researcher relistened to the interview, she underlined, in the

transcript, phrases that included "I," "me, "we," "they," and "you." The researcher noted the interspersing of ''you'' and ''they'' with ''I'' to attend to the participants' feelings and tensions within a particular theme. Next, the researcher extracted every "I" with the verb and any accompanying information that seemed important. These extractions were laid out in the sequence that they were spoken during the story and then placed in separated lines as a poem (Woodcock, 2016).

During the third and fourth listenings, the researcher listened for contrapuntal voices. At this point of analysis, the research question was used to direct the attention of the researcher to the voices in the text that spoke to her inquiry. Focus was paid to the tensions, harmonies, and dissonances between the different voices. A major aim of the third and fourth listenings was to hear complexity instead of flattening the data (Gilligan, 2015). The researcher extracted two themes "that melodiously react with one another or that are in tension with each other" (Woodcock, 2016, p. 6). This tension or interweaving is what is considered contrapuntal. It was very important that these two themes were considered in relation to one another. The researcher then examined the colour-coded transcripts to observe if these colours overlapped at certain moments in the texts. The contrapuntal listening can uncover vital insight and understanding of how themes intertwine (Woodcock, 2016).

After the fourth listening, I created documents, based on our team's analysis process, to highlight what we learned about each research participant in connection to the research question. Creating these documents made it easier for me to track and identify the themes that were most consistent across the interviews. These documents became the interpretive summaries that I shared with the three participants during the follow-up interviews.

Expressing the Results

During data collection, interviews were recorded using video for illustration purposes. From these recordings, portions of each interview were selected to create a 60-minute video. The video-style was inspired by Trevor Phillips' documentary, Things We Won't Say About Race That Are True, where the interaction of clips between dyads and single individuals are complemented by the inclusion of photography and scenes of relevant settings and backgrounds (Veale et al., 2015). These features were mimicked in this study's video editing. Participants who were uncomfortable having their faces visible on camera were given the option of being recorded with audio only, from their backs only and/or having their faces blurred from the final edit (while still being visible from the neck down). In addition, participants were given the option to have their voices transformed to further disguise markers of identity.

Capturing the interviews on video was intended to enrich the presentation, communication, and clarification of the research in a way that is accessible to a larger audience. The video was able to express aspects of the results that are not presented in the written summaries. Also, since research involving racial minorities is usually limited and/or represented by written expressions and pseudonyms, a video presentation of the participants and myself was meant to resist the invisibility of race in research. To support the depth and quality of the video presentation, only three participants were included in this project. Alongside the video process, LG was formulated in its usual form through the inclusion of quotes and voices summarized in text. The relationship between the text summary of results and the video summary of results was negotiated with research participants. This project's video will be released to accompany the publication of this research study.

Rigour and Quality

To account for rigour and quality, LG requires researchers to note their own responses, questions, and confusions as they listen to the recordings. In LG, this form of reflexivity is referred to as reader response (Woodcock, 2016). These notes were made on a double password protected online database where pseudonyms were incorporated. For additional details, refer to the section on the research team. Researchers who utilize LG are instructed to locate themselves in relation to the data to bring awareness to countertransference and guide researchers away from projecting their feelings, thoughts, and voices onto participants (Gilligan, 2015). As a young Black female who has attended and who continues to attend predominantly White schools, I am a member of the population being studied. The practice of keeping frequent and detailed reader response notes supported me to explore, write about, and discuss my internal responses to the process in which I was engaging in. Alongside note keeping, I brought a lot of what was surfacing for me, in response to participants' narratives into my biweekly sessions with my therapist and my meetings with my co-supervisors. My research team and I shared our internal responses withone another as a team as we sought meaning from the transcripts. The way in which LG attends to researcher voice led me into closeness to my voice in relation to the participants' voices, calling my attention to the moments when my internal experiences were silencing the participants' voices.

An additional step to nurture rigour and quality was through immersion in the data. This required me and the team members to each listen to the full length of each interview at least four different times. Selected themes and interpretations were compared between team members. Although consensus among research team members is not a LG requirement, my assistants and I came to our meetings with similar thoughts and initial interpretations. When our differences

surfaced, we spent longer time in discussion to better understand one another and/or refine our

initial viewpoints. These discussions supported our aim to reach agreement regarding the

participants' voices.

Finally, I accounted for rigour and quality through member-checking. It was essential to

clarify with the participants if my interpretations were accurate representations of their stories.

During the first set of interviews, there were several moments when I asked each participant

clarifying questions to assess whether I was properly understanding their narratives. Examples of

how these questions were phrased includes, "I don't want to make any assumptions about how

you felt in that moment. Can you describe the emotions that came up for you?" and, "When I

hear you share that description I think of _____. Does that fit or is there a different comparison

that might help me better understand how you experienced this?" I found that these efforts

further enriched the quality of the interviews. In clarifying and rewording their interview

responses, additional layers of voices emerged. A description of these layered voices is included

in the results chapter of this document.

The follow-up interview was especially meaningful for honouring participants'

empowerment. It was a chance for me to convey to each participant the cruciality of hearing

them accurately. This second interview was conducted in response to the recognition that

research tends to participate in power structures in a way that can trigger many participants. I

checked in with the participants' senses of whether the results were true to their understanding of

themselves and others and of their recollection of our previous time spent together. To promote

participant empowerment, I made interpretations tentative and explicit and asked the participant

to confirm or correct these interpretations. For example, I used open-ended questions to ask,

"When you said this during our last interview, I thought I heard the voice of the oppressor. What

do you hear?" It was important for me to be aware that a participant may be hesitant to acknowledge oppression, uncertain about their experiences of being oppressed, and/or unwilling to share an interpretation that differed from my own. I also used these second meetings as a chance to speak to the interviewees about their reflections of their participation in this research. More details on the follow-up interviews will be discussed later in this document.

The relationship between the text summary of results and video summary of results was also negotiated with research participants. This joint consideration was intended not only to clarify study interpretation but also to support the quality of the analysis and to enhance the reporting of results. For example, non-verbal expressions that were captured on video were able to point towards possible internal reactions and shifts that are not made clear in the text-based presentation.

Research Team

As previously mentioned, at the stage of data analysis a team-approach was incorporated. I was intentional in choosing Black people in Canada for my analysis team because I wanted to partner with individuals who I believed would approach the analysis with an inner knowing that comes with being a Black individual in this country (cf. Tecle et al., 2017). All team members were required to sign confidentiality agreements (see Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement). At the start of the data analysis process, I met with the research team two separate times via Zoom for training. At the end of the training dates, I emailed the members a two-page explanation of the data analysis steps involved in LG. After these training sessions, I met with the research team members two times per week. The frequency of our meetings increased toward the end of the data analysis process when I met with the team once per week. In total, we had approximately 15 meetings. In our meetings we reviewed interview recordings together using

Zoom's screen share feature, discussed potential interpretations, and considered the creative elements that could be brought into the study's video portion. In addition to our Zoom and/or phone meetings, we stayed in communication using a double password protected online database where pseudonyms were incorporated. The creator who supported the video portion of the study is a Black videographer in Toronto, Ontario. He reviewed the study's abstract and two-page explanation of LG steps of data analysis, studied all the participants videos and transcripts, and participated in research team meetings three to four times per month.

Working alongside this research team during data analysis supported the depth of interpretation. Involving the perspectives of my assistants who were individually immersed in the data, offered insights and analyses that I would not otherwise have had access to if I had I been working alone or with other graduate students at my university. It is worth mentioning that involving team members of various skin tones brought an added layer of nuance to the interpretations, as we noted that a team member of a lighter skin tone initially had less understanding of parts of what was shared by the female participant, who was a Black woman of a darker skin tone. This experience captured colourism, the process of discrimination that privileges lighter skin tones. The concept of colorism explains that the intensity, frequency, and outcomes of discrimination differ by skin tone (Hunter, 2007). This same research team member comes from the same country as one of the male participants and she was able to make note of interpretations of voices spoken by this individual more quickly. Including the insights of the videographer brought a fresh richness to our process. His perspective as a man and as an individual who is not in psychology but rather studied film for his university degree enriched the overall team response to the interviews and brought strong support to the creative angle of analysis and writing.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the results of the analyses that were described in the last section. To clearly focus these results, it is important to think of the research question: What is the impact of predominantly White school environments on Black adults' perceptions of themselves and others? I am hopeful that this research will both empower the voices of Black adults in Canada who have attended predominantly White schools and provide White clinicians with examples of the subtleties of the internalized voices of the oppressor in the lives of Black clients in Canada.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, after interviewing my three participants I worked with three other Black women and one Black man to analyze and present the data. Between the four of us, Ariam Yetbarek and I were most heavily immersed in the data analysis process. The two of us worked with another team member, Deighton Goode, on the video creation process. The final group members, Paula Odenigbo and Winta Ghebremicael, provided support in the beginning and middle stages of the data analysis and video creation processes, but unfortunately had to relieve themselves from the team due to personal reasons. The results chapter provides an overview of the written conclusions that we arrived at by the end of our data analysis process.

This chapter includes descriptions of the participants' stories, the unique ways their semi-structured interviews unfolded, and the voices that emerged during the study. There are some aspects of the participants' life experiences that are not included in the results chapter and will instead be discussed in the discussion chapter. In the first section of this chapter the participants' stories are described in the present-tense, using a style that communicates a personal tenor to that participant. The section on four participant voices is described in a more academic tone.

Participant Stories

Introducing Participant #1

Kabasigyi (real name) is a 30-year-old woman who was born and raised in a predominantly White, small-sized town in Ontario. The close similarity between her name and mine is no coincidence, in fact, Kabasigyi is my biological sister. While Kabarungyi means "daughter of goodness and beauty", Kabasigyi means "daughter of the female warriors". Kabasigyi was born seventeen months before me, giving me the special privilege of being raised somewhat like her twin (which I brag). To honour my sister's individuality, the unique story that she has generously offered to this study, and my role as researcher, I will do my best to describe Kabasigyi's story as if I was not present in her upbringing.

Kabasigyi's family-of-origin consists of her father, her mother, her two older sisters, and her younger sister. Shortly after Kabasigyi turned 11 she became an Auntie, and her family grew to include two nephews and a niece. She considers these three as immediate family members. Kabasigyi's family is from Uganda, and she refers to her cultural background as "Ugandan but born in Canada". When designing this study, I was thrilled when I received approval from my university's HREB to include individuals who I have a pre-existing relationship as part of the participant eligibility criteria. I desired to open the participant pool to family, friends, and/or acquaintances because I anticipated that a pre-existing relationship might act as a catalyst for the interviewees to reveal themselves authentically, which could increase access to the core selves of the participants. Kabasigyi's speedy and sustained manner of revealing her innermost Self surfaced in both of her interviews, as I believe will be made clear in both this thesis document, as well in the creative video element of this study.

At the time of the interviews, Kabasigyi is attending a predominantly White university in the Canadian capital. Although Kabasigyi already has a diploma in business management, she recently returned to the world of academia to complete her university degree. After she finishes her honours degree in psychology, Kabasigyi plans to continue in her studies, carving her path as a future health psychologist.

Kabasigyi's Story

Beginning in her secondary school years, Kabasigyi has made an intentional choice to surround herself with people who are not White. As she met me for our zoom interview from her car in an Ottawa parking space, she described how she often spends time with Africans or "international Ugandans", meaning Ugandans who came to Canada for school or work. When she is in Toronto, however, she is mainly with Ugandans who were born and raised in Canada. She expressed that she feels most comfortable with Ugandans who were born in Canada or who have been living in Canada for some time, though she also enjoys multicultural settings where she can learn about different cultures. Above all, she noted, she is most comfortable in settings where people understand the complexities of being Canadian and coming from another culture, like Sri Lankans and Indians.

Kabasigyi mentioned that after growing up in Newmarket, Ontario and dealing with a lot of racism, prejudice, and stereotypes, she became very bitter towards White people. She did not realize this until after she moved out of her hometown. When she gave her life to Christ, she felt like God was healing a lot of her traumas and experiences with White people. She expressed that she is now making a conscious effort to be comfortable in predominantly White settings and to be more open to having close friendships with White people. Currently, out of over a hundred friends, two of them are White, a stark difference from the large number of White people she has

on her Facebook list. She went on to share with me that there is still an internal discomfort and

uptightness that she experiences in predominantly White settings. At this point in the interview,

she began to cry and said, "Wow, I didn't know that was going to trigger me".

     Kabasigyi: (crying) I guess I just always feel like people are like looking at me, (crying)

like, you know, like I stand out, especially 'cause that was repeated to me a thousand

times growing up, you know, standing out as being Black in Newmarket and in school.

Um, so I feel like I'm more conscious, even the smallest things like my hair. So, for

example, I can, when I'm, when I was living in Scarborough and it's, you know,

predominantly like Brown and Black residents, I can go to the store with like a head

wrap on, or maybe my braids looking a little rough and not feel conscious because I'm

like, these people understand the culture more, especially if they're Black, but now, if

I'm in a White setting, like I'm thinking even how I'm dressed and how my hair is

looking.

     Glory Kabarungyi: Right. Right. Yeah. And, what, because I don't want to make

assumptions, what is the emotion that you're experiencing right now?

     Kabasigyi: Mmm, (pause) I'm not really sure (laughs). I have no idea. I just know that

the thought that... I actually become physically uncomfortable. (crying) Um, I guess I

didn't know that I still felt that way, but I guess it's like, this is how I've grown up. So,

it's just second nature. I don't even really think about it. So, I guess when now that I'm

thinking it through and taking it in, I'm like, wow, like that's almost, like, sad.

     Glory Kabarungyi: Yeah.

     Kabasigyi: That, that, you know, and obviously I need more, uh, healing from that.

As the interview continued, Kabasigyi went on to express that it was not until she met with a counsellor in university that she realized the impact of the racism she experienced in Newmarket. The counsellor she saw was a White man, who reflected that her earlier experiences would have affected her. She recounted never reacting to the things that peers would say, unless they were saying things to me, her younger sister, and that would leave her feeling upset. Looking back, she noted, the racism impacted her self-esteem, and she experienced a sense of sadness as a pre-teen. At this point in the interview, Kabasigyi mentioned dealing with racism is so normal for her and she does not care to fight about anti-Blackness. She expressed that she believes a lot of what she sees going on in the world today about ways to challenge anti-Blackness is fake and performative, and she is not going to believe a change will happen.

Kabasigyi reflected that she learned so much more about herself when she stepped outside of predominantly White communities. She learned how to love her natural hair, how creative she was, and how much she loved learning about multiple cultures. She expressed that outside of White communities she felt a sense of belonging and that she finally felt good and normal. She went on to state that she also learned how uncomfortable she was in White settings and how free she was around people who looked more like her or who had similar cultural backgrounds. She was quick to add that she would not go to China or India by herself, or any place that looks down on dark skin. I asked Kabasigyi what someone would see if they were to look at the deepest, most core part of her being. She took a long pause before responding, "A delicate heart?", and then she laughed.

Glory Kabarungyi: Okay. Um, and if they were to look and see that delicate, you said delicate heart, right?

Kabasigyi: Yeah.

Glory Kabarungyi: What do you think that they might feel when they see that delicate heart?

Kabasigyi: Sad (laughs). But yeah, um, sad.

Glory Kabarungyi: (smiles) Why do you laugh?

Kabasigyi: (continues to laugh heartily) Because it's like, that's just funny, like that's the first thing that comes to my mind, it's just... I don't know, I don't why I am laughing, I just thought it was hilarious, like... Yeah, maybe sad, but then now when I think about it too, like when I think of the core, part of my core, even though delicate heart, also, um, inner like, like something like laughter like I feel like that's part of my resilience is I can maybe disassociate, but also, you know, sometimes you just get to this space where you're like, "Everything's okay" and where you just, "It's not that serious" and I don't know whether it's a coping mechanism that our family does, but I, I like it. I like the feeling of laughter and I do think that it's something that I do a lot. Like I, you know, um, I cry, or I laugh. And so, yeah, so, so, the question, yeah, so sad is what they would see or feel. Yeah. Sad. And I think it's just because they wouldn't realize it… from the outside, but I, I do feel that way that there is not even like, okay, every day I'm feeling sad, but I do feel that there is the sadness in my core, (laughter followed by tears), yeah.

Kabasigyi went on to share that she would be hesitant for anybody to see all of her core, even the people who are closest to her and those who she can be open with. She said she has never wanted to feel like a burden to anyone and has always wanted to just get things figured things out and collect her life just by herself.

The image that came to Kabasigyi's mind when I asked her to think about the most core part of her being was that of a sunflower that was bent over with a lot of its' petals fallen off. When I asked her what this might represent about her, she responded between tears, that she guesses it might go back to her resilience. That she is still there, and although the flower is dying it is not dead. When I asked her what this might represent about the world around her, she responded that oftentimes she has heard that plants are affected by their environments. The image of the sunflower reflects her life and how she has gone through a lot of different things. She stated that environments affect her a lot and even though the flower is bent, dying inside, and its' petals are falling off, it's in the right garden now and things are going to get better.

Introducing Participant #2

Michael (pseudonym) is a 20-year-old man who was born and raised in a predominantly White, mid-sized town in Ontario. His family-of-origin consists of his mother, his father, and his brother who is two years older than him. Michael's family is from Uganda, and he refers to his cultural background as "East African and then Canadian as well, I suppose". I met Michael as a young child, much earlier than my memory reaches, as both of his parents are good friends of my own parents. I lived in admiration of his father's humour and skills on the barbecue, and a fearful respect of his mother's strong sense of faith and discipline. Michael and his brother were my little cousins growing up, and I enjoyed the occasional times we spent together running around our homes, watching television, and imitating our parent's Ugandan accents. When I left Ontario in 2009 for university, I lost touch with Michael and his family. In the last couple years, Michael and I have added one another on Instagram, and he responded to the participant recruitment flyer that I posted to my Instagram story. While I was hoping to travel to Ontario and visit Michael in person for this interview, I was unable to do so due to the current COVID-19 pandemic

restrictions. To make do, we met via Zoom, with him seated against the wall of his bedroom. It was fascinating to interact with Michael as an adult, now a young Black man with a mustache, beard, high-top haircut, and deep voice. On screen Michael sat nestled into his heather grey Champion hoodie, seemingly comfortable in this position.

Currently, Michael is attending a predominantly White university in London, Ontario. After our first interview, Michael contacted me to inform me that he had changed his major at his university to a focus in psychology. He shared, "our convo made me realize how much damage a lot of Black kids have undertaken, would love to play a role in changing the narrative". After completing his undergraduate degree, Michael plans to continue with further studies, with the intention of pursuing a career as a psychologist.

Michael's Story

During the first round of interviews, Michael's time with me was the shortest of the three, lasting 50 minutes and 47 seconds. His speed of speech was noticeably quicker than the other participants and he tended to show how quickly he understood the directions I was heading in with my questions. I took these as possible indications of Michael's sharp intellect, youthful enthusiasm, and inner anxieties. Michael shared with me that he spends most of his time in the school setting, which he described as "Eurocentric essentially, cause it's not really Canadian". He prefers settings that are more multicultural. He described himself as African American, expressing that part of the African American experience is always being aware of your race and how your actions appear to people who already have preconceptions about you. Michael used this description to explain why he is more comfortable in environments where he is around racial minorities since in those spaces, he does not need to adjust his behaviour.

In this interview Michael shared his perception that the White community he was raised in had, in his words, "this whole blanket ideology of what we're supposed to be, or we're supposed to act like". He said that the White people were often surprised Michael was not their stereotypical image of aggressive and uneducated. Michael stated, "They're surprised that I was educated, or they're surprised that both my parents have two degrees and I'm not an idiot, so, yeah". Since Michael referred to him being educated numerous times, it seemed to me like his education was an important piece to him.

> Glory Kabarungyi: In terms of, like, if they're perceiving you as more aggressive and less educated than you are, what are they missing about you in particular? What are they not seeing about you?

> Michael: Um, I think they're missing that, like, I'm a pretty empathetic person, like overall. Like I definitely enjoy leveling with people and having just like complete like honesty. I think that's pretty, that's pretty valued. Um, and that's like something that like kind of counters aggression in a way, because that sort of communication and discourse is impossible if like, you know, someone's feeling an aggressive energy to it. Um, I think they're also missing that, like, I'm educated just like anyone else. Like I went to school like your kids, you know, Like, and I think also it's like this concept of immigrant energy, which kind of drives me further in my education, if anything. So, the fact that my parents, like, which often is an excuse for them seeing me that way, is that like, Oh, your parents were from abroad, so what can they know? So, I think they misinterpret that as well.

Glory Kabarungyi: Yeah. And by, what does the fact that you're educated? What does

that say about who you are as a person? Like the real, the inner, the inner you, the core

you, of who you are, what does it say about you that you're educated?

Michael: I think it means that you have like a drive for knowledge and like you

understand, um, the importance of kind of like, just like bettering yourself and like

learning things and not having this really closed off mindset that like, I don't need to

know anymore, or if it doesn't affect my day to day, I don't need to know it. I think that

also ties into like that empathy that I was talking about. I think it defines that

perspective from others' views.

Michael described what exists of him beyond his skin colour and hair texture as him

being a creative who is empathic and who has always loved music, art, and design. He said he

enjoy various cultures and is pretty open-minded in that sense. He enjoys travel and he guesses

that his identity is a student who is trying to figure out what is going on, what he would like to

learn, and what he would like to pursue lifelong.

As the interview continued, Michael added that when he is in multicultural settings or

spaces with people who look like him, he faces less presumptions. He perceives that in contrast

to interactions with White people, these individuals "get like right to the real me first". To

combat the preconceptions that were held of him in the White community where he grew up,

Michael intentionally strayed away from the stereotypical behaviours that were expected of him.

This straying away lasted until his high school years when the predominantly White secondary

school that he attended had a few Black students.

Michael: So I went to high school after eight years, or like of elementary, avoiding, and

now I'm like confronted with a bunch of Black people who, you know, didn't avoid, the

kind of Black people who were just okay with it, which is cool and like whatever, but, um, so it was kind of like, now playing the other side where I'm kind of like trying to like assimilate back to my culture in a way, because now, like I'm like kind of an outsider because of all this work I put into not to be the stereotype.

Michael continued to express that during his high school years he transitioned into a new kind of hiding, or what in his words was a "constant balancing act". He looked away from me and shares that the interests and behaviours he engaged in during his elementary years were unaccepted in the Black community at his high school. He noted that while being surrounded by more Black people, they started having conversations about their experiences with racism. This gave him a sense of belonging to a community and an understanding of why things were happening, which made it easier to be in the predominantly White setting.

As we kept speaking, Michael shared more about his school experiences. He expressed an appreciation for his growing awareness of the racial dynamics at play in oppressive institutions. Thirty-four minutes into the interview, we transitioned into a narrowed focus on how Michael perceives his core self. When I asked him what somebody would see if they could look into the deepest and most core part of him, Michael expressed that he wishes he knew the answer to this. He said he is still trying to figure himself out, but he thinks creativity and the flaws of low self-esteem and comparing himself to others would be at his core. His flaws are the parts of his core that he would not want others to see.

Glory Kabarungyi: Would you feel any differently if it was a Black person who was able to see that part of you versus a White person, or is it as general and that's something that you wouldn't want anybody to see?

Michael: Generally, I wouldn't, but if I was forced to, like, I'd definitely choose the Black person, actually... I don't know. I don't know. That's a hard one. I'd probably choose the White person, just so they can like have the opportunity to see like how, how, like my worldview of being black has affected my self-esteem and like that comparison and then that sort of stuff, because like a Black person will just level with me. Like, they'll just understand that and be like, okay, so yeah, yeah, let's give them some education on that front.

The colour that Michael said comes to his mind when he thinks about who he is at this core level is a lot of grey. He said this colour represents the middle ground of being between two things. He compares this to a juggling act of being too Black for White people and too White for Black people. We end our time together with Michael stating that in this conversation he is realizing that he does not know himself nearly as much as he thinks and that even if he is hiding something from himself, he will eventually dig it out.

Introducing Participant #3

Bernard (pseudonym) is a 33-year-old man who was born and raised in a predominantly White, mid-sized town in British Columbia. Unlike the other two participants, Bernard and I were strangers prior to our first interview. He responded to the recruitment flyer that I posted on my Instagram story after our mutual friend reposted it to his own profile. Bernard's family-of-origin consists of his father, his mother, his brother, and his sister. Bernard's family is from Eritrea and when I asked him how he describes his cultural background he said "I'm Eritrean. I grew up in an Eritrean household, my parents are both raised there". During the short time we spent together, it was easy for me to pick up on Bernard's personability. He was gracious, friendly, and good-humoured. The energy that he carried was one of a man who seems to be

comfortable in himself, not necessarily one with a high level of pride or confidence, but a man who was well acquainted with his own company. In turn, this made me feel comfortable in his presence.

Although Bernard and I live close enough for our interviews to have been held in a socially distanced in-person setting, the HREB policies surrounding data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic required us to meet via video conference. In this virtual space, Bernard sat in front of me with mega headphones and a dress shirt on. It was a nighttime interview, one of the last items on his list after a long day working as an accountant.

Bernard's Story

As with the other participants, Bernard's interview began with a description of his cultural background. He shared that when he is with his cousins on his dad's side, he is quite immersed in their Eritrean culture, and when he is with his mom's side, they are more Westernized. In the household where he grew up the environment is filled with cultural customs, with things like Eritrean foods, music, and YouTube videos of Eritrean politics filling the atmosphere. Although at home he is spoken to in their mother tongue, Bernard responds to his family in English.

The setting in which Bernard spends most of his time is his workplace. Similarly, to the schools he attended since he was a young child, Bernard's workplace is predominantly White. He described that he is like a chameleon who can blend in and connect with people, getting along with others pretty easily. In the same breath he made it clear that there are levels to his comfort.

Bernard: I feel most comfortable when I'm around people who look like me, so, which

isn't often in Vancouver of cause, ehmm, but a lot of my friends are you know Eritrean

or Black and I feel most comfortable when I'm in those groups I would say. But that's

not to say I feel uncomfortable at work.

Glory Kabarungyi: Right, right.

Bernard: It's just you know you can sort of relax a bit easier or not feel like you have to

say certain things or act certain ways you can just sort of just let your guards down in a

way.

Our time together continued, and Bernard expressed that there is so much about him that exists

beyond his skin colour. He mentioned that he can be an entertaining person, a man who cares

about how other people feel, a bit of a people pleaser, and one who is concerned for others before

himself. He said that he is "just normal guy" who wants to be happy and healthy, who wants

others around him to do well, who wants to be kind to people and to make them feel comfortable.

He said he wants to be surrounded by good, genuine, well-intentioned people who do not need

anything from him, and vice versa. He admitted that it is tough for him to say who he is and that

he only knows how he is.

When we got to discussing who Bernard was as a very young child, before the age of

six, he expressed that who he was then and who he is now has changed to a certain degree. He

shared that he was very insecure as a kid. He said that like how he is now, as a child Bernard was

easily entertained and easily pleased. He would do whatever his older cousins asked of him as

long as they would allow him to hang out with them. Bernard recounted those years to me and

laughed, stating that these same cousins are now his best friends. As he spoke about his school

years, he mentioned that outside of the classroom he was rarely in spaces where he was around

White people since his parents made him return home after school. Prior to high school he had

two friends in middle school, both of whom were Indian. During his earlier elementary school

years, he had one friend, a boy who was Chinese. Bernard never looked at his world through a racial lens until somebody called him the N-word in middle school and one of his friends told him that that was wrong. This friend reported the incident to the teacher on Bernard's behalf. During Bernard's high school years, there was a larger population of Black students, including about a dozen in his graduating class. This was a big shift from his pre-secondary school years, when Bernard, his sister, and his cousin were the only Black students in the schools he attended. He recalled forming really close friendships with his Black peers during his high school years. These friendships brought him a lot of comfort, security, and a sense of community among some of the "stupid behaviour" that surrounded their high school experiences.

Towards the end of our interview, I asked Bernard more of the same questions that I asked Kabsigyi and Michael. I queried what someone would see if they were to look at the deepest, most core part of his being. Bernard responded that they would probably just see a big kid laughing! He emphasized he is just a big kid who is trying to be happy. I became curious if what would be seen would change depending on the race of the person who was looking at him and Bernard stated between chuckles that this would depend on what they knew made him laugh and how much information they got access to.

Glory Kabarungyi Yes! And are there parts of this core inner part of yourself that you would be hesitant to have others see?

Bernard: You know again…I don't want to make people feel uncomfortable but… yeah. The answer is yes, of course! And I know that very surface example would be they are certain videos that I watch that I wouldn't want some of my White coworkers to watch or know that I am watching.

Glory Kabarungyi: Like which videos? You don't have to say it if you don't want to.

Bernard: Like certain Black empowerment videos to sum it up.

Glory Kabarungyi: Okay. And does that go back to …

Bernard: …maybe it's not like want, maybe I shouldn't say I don't want them to know that I'm watching it, it's more that I don't want them to feel uncomfortable.

Bernard and I spent the final moments in the interview discussing his draw towards comfort, and his desire to make sure that others around him do not feel uncomfortable. He expressed that as much as he wants White and other non-Black people to learn about the system of White supremacy that both he and they live in, he does not want them to feel like he is trying to tell them what to do and how to act, or telling them to listen to him, or speaking down to them. He is not sure why comfort is very important to him, and asks, "Aren't we all trying to feel comfortable though?"

Four Participant Voices

After thoroughly immersing ourselves in the data, my research team and I selected themes and interpretations that we felt best reflected the participants' narratives. Through hours of reflection, we arrived in an agreement of fours voices that "melodiously react with one another or that are in tension with each other" (see Woodcock, 2016, p. 6). The four voices that we selected were: the voice of authenticity, the voice of concealment, the voice of oppression, and the voice of resilience. In this section of the results, I discuss the similar and distinctive features of each participant voice, followed by an integrative summary of the voices.

Voice of Authenticity

We used the title "voice of authenticity" to describe the voice that reveals the inner person of the participant. This voice manifests the participants' cores and declares the truest thoughts and feelings of each participant with certainty and bravery. At times, the voice of

authenticity shares the participants' insecurities, and other times it expresses the things that the

participants are confident about. A similar feature of the voice of authenticity between all four

participants is that this voice recalls their experiences with certainty.

       For Kabasigyi, however, the voice of authenticity is distinctive in the way it boldly

expresses her feelings, often using specific emotion words, laughter, and tears. An example of

this expression is given in the previous section of this chapter, when Kabasigyi describes

between tears and laughter that she has sadness in her core. Kabasigyi's voice of authenticity

also declares her lived experiences, stating that she experiences a shift in her perception of

herself and of others. This voice shares with confidence that her inner experience changes

depending on the racial background of the individuals in her surroundings.

       Glory Kabarungyi: And when, the times, when you did feel like, feel like an outsider

       was there emotion attached to that feeling? And then when, the times when you didn't

       feel like you were an outsider, was there emotion attached to that feeling or that

       experience?

       Kabasigyi: Um, I'm not sure what emotion, but I can just say that when I felt like an

       outsider, I was just conscious. It was like, I probably told myself a thousand times

       you're Black. You're different. This is awkward. I felt uncomfortable. And then when I

       didn't feel like an outsider, I was just more comfortable. It's just like I am who I am.

       Glory Kabarungyi: Right. So, it seems like, there, was it like that feeling of being on

       guard?

       Kabasigyi: Yeah.

       Glory Kabarungyi: Would that on guard feeling, could it be more of like a fear, or

       shame, um, or an anger, sadness, or not even any of those? Or numbness?

Kabasigyi: I think a numbness and just feeling awkward and uncomfortable.

In continuing to describe her lived experiences, the voice of authenticity reveals with certainty that Kabasigyi's responses to how her Blackness was perceived by others was also shaped by the interpretations and responses of others.

Kabasigyi: But I definitely think, like when I look back, I definitely know, I must have numbed myself from a lot of it because like I said some of my friends, like Kaitlin, you know, when, when a guy called me a "Black bitch", when we were playing soccer or being called the N-word, all this stuff, like I would just like, not know how to react. And I guess also it's like, you know, we come, we were going home to parents who grew up in Africa and any type of racism they experienced it's not like they shared with us until we shared. And then they're like, oh yeah, someone said this to me, and they laugh it off. So, I'm like, I don't know how to react to this. I mean, I remember someone saying, "Oh, you're from Africa!", 'cause I was, I thought I was born in Africa for the longest time, "Oh, you're from Africa, you play with monkeys?" And I was like, "Yeah", like I thought, I didn't think that was a big deal.

Glory Kabarungyi: Right, right.

Kabasigyi: Um, but then my friend, you know, people were like, "How do you say that?! You can't say that!". I remember when the guy called me the N-word, my friend went and told the teacher, the teacher was like freaking out over it and I was like, what is happening?

Glory Kabarungyi: Do you remember how old would you have been?

Kabasigyi: That was grade five. I think when that happened. I remember 'cause I remember that specifically. So that's what, 11? or, 10?

As mentioned previously, a similar feature of the voice of authenticity between all four participants is that this voice recalls their experiences with certainty. Michael's voice of authenticity announces the way he has responded to his experience growing up and attending schools in predominantly White environments. Unlike Kabasigyi's voice of authenticity, however, Michael's rarely reveals itself using specific emotional language or outward displays of emotional experiences. Distinctively, Michael's authentic voice tends to express itself with references to the academic concepts he has learned as a student of sociology.

> Glory Kabarungyi: Yeah. Yeah. And was there a feeling attached to that awareness of
> being an outsider?
>
> Michael: Um, not at the time, because I think I was like, well, I guess in the early
> stages, you know, and then the older stages, I think when, like I became more aware of
> like racialized stuff, I think so. Yeah. When I was a kid, it was just kind of like up until I
> think like, probably like grade six, it was just like, we were just raised different. And
> then that was like, that was like, wasn't a big deal to me. But then when, like these
> differences started like manifesting, I think that's when my, it took like a turn to be
> more racialized.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Right, right. And what would the feeling have been once it took a
> turn, or the emotion?
>
> Michael: It was like, I don't know. I think like I was fortunate enough that like I was
> socialized slowly. So, even though, like, I did eventually understand the racialized
> aspects of it, and I knew I was an outsider, the feelings have never been negative cause
> it's like, I have been always able to reflect on the past when it was also present. So it's
> always been like, uh, uh, so like that's why it's such and such like, occurred. So like, it's

like constantly as I grow, like recalling that, like, I was still an outsider from the beginning, if I'm kind of making sense. So it's not like feelings changed. Like, I'm not like, I can't feel negative about it 'cause I've been going through it for so long in a way. So, it's almost like odd to develop a whole emotion to attach to that like I've been going through it. I will continue to go through it.

This voice of authenticity continues on, delving more deeply into Michael's true feelings in relation to being an outsider.

Glory Kabarungyi: And did you see, you know, in hindsight, do you see, Oh, this, this, uh, influenced how I saw myself or my self-esteem or anything like that?

Michael: Definitely, definitely. I can definitely see that looking back for sure. I think about it as like, for example, just like simply raised in a community where people look more like me, I think I'd just have a higher self-esteem overall, because um, I guess when like the model figure, like it looks like you and you're surrounded by people who also don't look like you I think that does something to you, psychologically.

Glory Kabarungyi: What do you imagine that it does psychologically?

Michael: I think like, it paints this picture of the ideal self or like the society's ideal, like conception of what a person should be like and you'll never be able to achieve that because that's just like innately not you like biologically, you're not going to become White. Like it's just not going to happen. You know? And it also puts I think a sense of shame into, um, your cultural practices and who you are as a person, despite nothing being wrong with them because you know, it's different and even though it's not wrong, it's kind of being pitched as, as wrong. I feel like.

Glory Kabarungyi: Yeah. Yeah. And so, as you grew older and you were able to even

grasp like, Oh, racism is real, this is the reasoning for, for these experiences, did that

shame or did that shame leave? Did your self-esteem just come back up or, or what

happens to that effect of things?

Michael: I think it'd be ideal with my self-esteem just shot up, it's kind of like the idea

of like closure where you think like, figuring it all out will like, give you closure, but it

really doesn't so like, you know, cause you're still living through that reality and it

doesn't change the fact that like you still experienced the things you did and like you

will. So, like, yeah. Although it's definitely given me a peace of mind that I can like

explain stuff now. Um, I think that still has an effect for sure.

In a similar fashion as with the other participants, Bernard's voice of authenticity makes

references to his lived experiences with certainty. This voice recounts with bravery what it has

been like for him to feel like an outsider. The tone of this voice is calm and light-hearted.

Distinctively, the voice of authenticity in Bernard's narrative describes his inner experience in

specific detail, but without outward displays of emotion.

Glory Kabarungyi: So, what would you describe it? Let's say you are talking to an alien

or someone who's never has experience being an outsider, what would you describe like

being an outsider as a kid felt like this, and being an outsider now as an adult feels like

this?

Bernard: I would say, an outsider when I was a kid felt like you didn't know where to

be, you didn't know where to feel that sense of acceptance which we all need in life

from our peers, not only from our family. It was nice, you know, I know when I came

home my mom and dad are going to accept me, my family is going to accept me but, so

much of the day you are out and you need that sense of acceptance from your peers especially when, I always describe it as you don't know where to stand because it was when I would get that anxiety, when I would get dropped off at school and I'd see kids in groups standing and nowhere to stand, right?

Glory Kabarungyi: Yeah.

Bernard: And that was like the loneliest feeling, you'd feel lonely but now as an adult, its different because it's more, in my current state it's more self-imposed so, I know there's places for me to stand but I just want to stand here where no one is. Right now I'm not in this current space you know that I'm in because and its self-imposed I feel like I'm in control and if you're in control then it's all good, you're not going to feel bad about it

Glory Kabarungyi: Right, right.

Bernard: You know? And also, as you get older you get more mature and you get more comfortable in your own skin, and I'm definitely way more comfortable in my own skin now, I'm just at that age.

Glory Kabarungyi: And when you're talking about the control is it because back then you didn't have a choice whether you were an outside or not? It wasn't like you had a place to stand and you were choosing not to, so there's wasn't much control back then but now you have that control because you are choosing to stay on the outside.

Bernard: Yeah. That's absolutely exactly how it is now.

   It important to mention the gendered contexts of emotional experience. As recently noted, throughout the interviews Kabasigyi often used explicit expressions of emotional experiences through laughter, tears, changes in tone, and specific emotion words. The two men, however,

rarely used specific emotional language or outward displays. This aspect of the results reflects

the racialization and socialization of Black men under the patriarchal gaze who are pressured to

not demonstrate emotion.

Voice of Concealment

We used the title "voice of concealment" to describe the voice that hides the

participants' core. Similarly, across all three participants, this voice manifests more about the

participants' internal states. The voice of concealment declares itself timidly. It speaks with

uncertainty as it shares the participants' confusions and doubts. For Kabasigyi in particular, the

voice of concealment hides her truest thoughts. It presents Kabasigyi as unfamiliar with herself,

suggesting to others that Kabasigyi is unsure of who she is at her core. As this voice of

concealment speaks, it often uses phrases such as, "I don't know", and asks, "What do you

think?", as if it trusts the other more than the Self.

> Glory Kabarungyi: Um, if someone were to look at the deepest, the most core part of
>
> your being, what would they see?
>
> Kabasigyi: (long pause) A delicate heart? (laughs). I don't know.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Mhmm.
>
> Kabasigyi: Um (pause), yeah, probably just something delicate. I don't know though.
>
> (pause) I'm not sure, I'd have to ask people like you and other people that know me. I
>
> don't know.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Mhmm. And what wouldn't be there. Like, what would they not see?
>
> Kabasigyi: (long pause) I want to say that they won't see anger, a lot of anger, but
>
> mmm, maybe it's a suppressed anger and I don't know it. Um, but they wouldn't see, I

don't know. I don't know. I think for both of those things, I would need examples 'cause I don't know how to answer that.

A similar feature of the voice of concealment across all three participants is that as it expresses the participants' stories, thoughts, and feelings, it declares itself discreetly. It seems as if Michael's voice of concealment might deflect others from seeing the individuality inherent to his core self. The voice distinctively positions Michael as one who is part of the collective. In doing so, this voice offers an authority to speak on behalf of others. It is possible Michael's voice of concealment dissociates the Self from personal reflections. This voice responds to personal questions with "we" statements instead of "I" statements. In time, however, the voice of authenticity breaks through to speak on behalf of the "I". The following excerpt is an example of the melodious interaction between these two voices.

> Glory Kabarungyi: Okay. And choosing any of the settings where, we can go with school, any of the settings where it's predominantly White, um, you know, or, if you want to talk about church, we can do that, but how do you think the people in that, in that particular setting, how do they perceive you?
>
> Michael: I think. I think. Okay. So given like, again, like being raised in like a largely White community, most of these people have little interaction with like, I guess Black people, so they often had like this whole blanket ideology of what we're supposed to be, or we're supposed to act like, so I found like interacting with these people they were often surprised that I wasn't their stereotypical image. You know what I'm saying? They're surprised that I was educated, or they're surprised that both my parents have two degrees and I'm not an idiot, so, yeah.

As mentioned recently, the voice of concealment speaks with timidity. Bernard's voice of concealment seems to be apprehensive, and it keeps our conversation in the realm of his behaviours. In Bernard's narrative, the voice of concealment is distinct in that it steers the focus away from his internal states and towards a reflection of the internal states of the White people who he interacts with. This voice of concealment appears in the same excerpt referenced earlier in this chapter.

> Glory Kabarungyi: And are there parts of this core inner part of yourself that you would be hesitant to have others see?
>
> Bernard: You know again...I don't want to make people feel uncomfortable but... yeah. The answer is yes, of course! And I know that very surface example would be they are certain videos that I watch that I wouldn't want some of my White coworkers to watch or know that I am watching
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Like which videos? You don't have to say it if you don't want to
>
> Bernard: Like certain Black empowerment videos to sum it up
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Okay. And does that go back to...
>
> Bernard: ...maybe it's not like want, maybe I shouldn't say I don't want them to know that I'm watching it, it's more that I don't want them to feel uncomfortable.

With both Bernard and Michael, there is the possibility that the voice of concealment spoke as a form of deflection. The emergence of this voice might reflect points when I had not earned the right to encounter these participants' cores, indicating that comfort and safety had not been fully established in these spaces.

Voice of Oppression

My research team and I used the title "voice of oppression" to describe the voice that revealed the thoughts and feelings that represent the internalized voice of the oppressor. This voice minimizes the realities of racial dynamics. It declares itself with self-criticism and disdain towards Blackness. A similar feature of the voice of oppression across all three participants is that at times it speaks through subtleties and at other times it expresses overt racism. Kabasigyi's voice of oppression positions African and Japanese people as inferior to Europeans. A distinct feature of this voice is that as it speaks, it often competes with the fourth participant voice, the voice of resilience, which calls attention to the oppressive voice. This tension is most noticeable following my question for Kabasigyi about what she remembers about any parts of herself that she tried to keep hidden from teachers and peers in elementary school.

> Kabasigyi: Even like food too, like our cultural food, sometimes I wouldn't want, especially elementary school. Like, no, cause it, it looks different than Canadian food or like, regular, whatever food - So bad even saying regular food, like what does that look like, (laughs), right? Um, Yeah. Oh, and also my middle name, my middle name. Remember how, yeah, that was another thing too. Like I could deal with Kabasigyi and everyone calling me CG, but Bakahondo? No. So, well you know how we did that, we pretended we had European names, so I was, my middle name was Kate and by the time I got to high school since I could change and not have my middle name, I didn't have them put my middle name (shakes head) so no one knew my middle name unless they asked.

> Glory Kabarungyi: What was the difference between Kabasigyi and Bakahondo?

> Kabasigyi: Kabasigyi I think because it has the nickname that can be CG, it's just easier on the tongue, but Bakahondo is a very intense name (laughs), even when I tell some

people they're like, that sounds like super African or Japanese, like, you know, so that's why. And then also just the combination, like having Kabasigyi Bakahondo Mulera versus just like, Kabasigyi. Okay. and Mulera. Cause we were - Oh my goodness, I almost said it, I almost, we were lucky or blessed. Can you imagine? Because our name was Mulera because it sounds like, you know, Italian, we know that Italians and Irish people have that same last name, but it's just, you know, it's not, it doesn't sound super African.

The voice of oppression expresses itself in Kabasigyi's narrative when it silences her reality in favour for what she has been told by White people and by those in positions of authority. Even in our interview, there are moments when she seeks my perspective as researcher to inform her of her own internal experience.

Kabasigyi: - Obviously I need more healing from that.

Glory Kabarungyi: And if your tears were able to speak, what would they say? Would they say the same thing that you've just shared with me now or would your tears have a different message?

Kabasigyi: Ummm (long pause), I don't know. I'm not sure. Yeah. I don't know. Maybe you can give me some feedback on that (laughs).

Glory Kabarungyi: What you're expressing is it seems like there's a bit of a, like you, like you haven't been living with the… I don't want to say awareness, but you just, haven't been thinking about this, this part of, of your life and how you are interacting with the world. And then as you're recognizing it again at this time... so I'm wondering if, if maybe what, if the tears would be communicating some sort of... like shock or surprise to that recognition of, "Oh yeah, this is how I experienced the world".

> Kabasigyi: Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's very correct.

Despite Kabasigyi's statements that she has ongoing experiences of racial trauma since her earliest years growing up in Newmarket, the oppressive voice speaks of this reality as if it conflicts with the perception that the ultimate authority, God Himself, holds of racial dynamics. The following excerpt makes it evident that the voice of oppression places Kabasigyi's reality as one that clashes with God's reality.

> Kabasigyi: Especially, you know, there's, especially as a believer, right? There's a constant clash between your history (crying), what you've experienced, what you see and, and what God says about you and the world. So, you know, like I can recognize the ways in which God has brought situations into my life or people into my life and I'm using them as an opportunity to like, you know, heal but then now in this conversation, I'm like, I think I also like... like there's still more because even at the churches that I went to, the White churches that I went to, I only really was close enough to anyone who I felt didn't have to remind me that I was Black.

As mentioned, the voice of oppression revealed the thoughts and feelings that represent the internalized voice of the oppressor. A distinctive feature of Michael's voice of oppression is that it silences part of his inner experiencing, not permitting his core self to feel and/or express itself until it satisfies logical reasoning. This voice does not allow Michael to develop emotions in response to racial trauma and White supremacy.

> Glory Kabarungyi: Okay. So, it's a, do you feel like, um, like indifferent or is it like apathy or numbness, I guess?
>
> Michael: I guess, yeah, you're right. You're right. A feeling doesn't have to necessarily be negative. So, um, I think it'd definitely be probably just indifferent. I just, yeah, I

think I just like, know like I'm indifferent in a sense I think it's definitely the best way to put it. I don't think there's like a negative emotion attached to it. It's just like, an awareness of like what's going on.

Glory Kabarungyi: Right, right. And if you could compare it to something, if you could compare that, like, would it be like finding out, um, Oh, I'm left-handed and majority of people are right-handed. Is it like that type of awareness and it doesn't really have an emotion attached? It's just, "Oh, this is, this is a fact". Or maybe there's something else you could compare it to, to help me to understand how you experience it.

Michael: Yeah, You're right. You're right. In analogy, you'd probably do best. Um, I would say, okay, like up into a point, it was just like, because I didn't have justifications for example, in like high school. So, it's like, again, I'm in the stage of just realizing stuff is happening, but I can't really identify why, so I didn't attach like a feeling to it. I just like knew, okay, we were different. But I think now that like, I've gone to college and I've learned about like the structural and systemic things that like made things happen as they did, and I've been able, I've been given the resources to explain, like what happened in my childhood in those moments. Um, I think it's more-so negative now. It's definitely a bit more of negative feelings cause it's like, it's just injustice. You know what I mean?

As the voice of oppression in Bernard's narrative represents the internalized voice of the oppressor, it minimizes racism. When it speaks, this voice places the origin of his outsider experiences in his childhood on reasons that are separate from his skin colour and racial background. This voice speaks in a manner of gratitude towards others, and as it continues it is

close in harmony with the first and fourth participant voices, the voice of authenticity and the

voice of resilience.

> Glory Kabarungyi: And again, as you look back to primary and those middle school,
>
> all that elementary school timing before you became more comfortable, do you see in
>
> hindsight some of the ways it might have impacted you to not have that sense of
>
> comfort and community at your school?
>
> Bernard: Hmmm (thinking) You know, I don't know how it really impacted me to be
>
> honest with you. I'm actually thankful that I had that experience without it because
>
> like I mentioned earlier, up until high school I didn't really have that many friends.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Right.
>
> Bernard: ... and so, I knew what it was like to be an outsider, not because of my race,
>
> but just because I didn't have any friends, so that in itself, if you don't have friends let
>
> alone if they are Black or White or brown or Asian like if you don't have friends, you
>
> don't have friends, like you're going to always feel like an outsider if I had friends and
>
> they were not Black, they were predominantly White, if I had a big crew of friends and
>
> they were they were predominantly White I think the way I thought of it back then was
>
> I would take that over not having any friends because you just want some sort of, you
>
> want that friendship
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Yes, yeah.
>
> Bernard: ... I always felt like for whatever reason, I didn't have that many people that
>
> really like me, not that they didn't really like me, I think that they didn't get the time
>
> to get to know me, and I think a lot of it had to do with my physical appearance like I
>
> was slightly overweight as a child at the same time I had, I needed to correct my teeth

so I'd get bullied for how my teeth looked and I was feeling insecure, and so when I

lost a bit of weight I also got some braces then all of a sudden people want to be

friends and that kind of coincided with me having friends available to me that looked

like me not only did I appreciate that sense of comradery around those brothers that I

made, but I also remember, and that why I said I appreciate having gone through that

sort of phase where people didn't want to necessary be friends with me, I appreciate

that because I never have forgotten what that felt like and so I carry that with me to

this day, and that's why to this I am very aware of people feeling uncomfortable

around me. If there's a new person who starts in the office, I want to make them feel

welcome to the office because I know what it feels like to be that new person in the

office and not having anyone and it's the same feelings I had going to school as a kid

and not having any friends walking in to the school at the beginning of the day and

there's all these kids playing and you don't know where to stand and I hate that

feeling, I never forgot that feeling so I carried that with me and I appreciate that those

moments because it built that character in me to this day.

Voice of Resilience

We used the title "voice of resilience" to describe the voice that reveals the inner

resources of the participant. A similar feature of this voice in each of the narratives is that it

points towards the participant's ways of coping. This voice highlights the participant's ability to

resist, rise above, or simply respond to the influences of racism and White supremacy. At times,

the voice of resilience declares itself with an assertive forcefulness, and at other moments it

speaks in a casual and gentle manner.

Kabasigyi's voice of resilience expresses the beauty she sees in herself at her core. This voice recognizes that the racial trauma Kabasigyi experienced in her upbringing is one of the several factors that shaped the woman she is today. This voice was referenced earlier in this chapter when I mentioned she expressed her resilient nature is captured by the image of her core self, the sunflower that is bent over with fallen petals. At that point in the interview, the voice of resilience described that although the flower has gone through a lot and it is bent, dying inside, and its' petals are falling, it's in the right garden now and things are going to get better. At a second point in this interview, this voice of resilience reaffirms that despite Kabasigyi's past and current pains, she looks at her future with a hope and positivity that is grounded in her internal resources of faith and in her awareness of her core self. In the following excerpt it is evident that as this voice speaks, it expresses itself in harmony with the soundwaves of the authentic voice and in tension with the disruptions of concealing and oppressive voices.

> Glory Kabarungyi: If you are to just take one more look into that deeper core part of
> yourself, and sometimes that can require you to like, just take a moment to close your
> eyes or look down at the floor or anything like that, but just taking one more look, what
> else do you see about your core self?
>
> Kabasigyi: (pause) A diamond is the next thing that came to my mind.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: A diamond. Okay. What does that say? What, what might that
> represent about you?
>
> Kabasigyi: I don't know. I just think about, now I'm thinking about Dylon. Um, I don't
> know. I mean, now I think of Dylon. Diamondz. Nothing's tougher than a diamond. But
> um, no when I, I, a diamond (pause). I don't know, I guess just like something that has

been, something that's inside that's yet to be revealed. And, um, (pause). Yeah, that's

another thing that I see. Um, yeah, I don't, I don't know.

Michael's voice of resilience expresses the efforts he takes to guard his true identity.

This voice recognizes that he does not reveal his whole self to others but chooses instead to

reserve parts of himself for himself only, and for those who are in his inner circle. In doing so,

Michael's core self remains preserved despite experiences of being defined by White people and

people in authority. Similarly, to Kabasigyi's voice of resilience, this voice expresses itself in

tension with the disruptions of concealing and oppressive voices.

> Michael: Uh, yeah, it's just like a lot of figuring out and I think I really came to the
>
> realization that yeah, like I really am not my truest self with the majority of people.
>
> Which is interesting. It's never something I considered and it's not by like intention of
>
> like, you know, like hiding one's personality or aspects of oneself. It's just like, that
>
> naturally occurs.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Yeah. Yeah. And what do you think is behind that, that natural
>
> process? Like, do you think that's, that's just how human beings are, there's no way for
>
> you to not be that way?
>
> Michael: That's a good question. I think, um, (pause) can you repeat the question one
>
> more time?
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: When you're, when you were saying like, it's just a natural process
>
> to keep some things hidden,
>
> Michael: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.
>
> Glory Kabarungyi: Why do you think that that's something that you naturally do or
>
> automatically do?

Michael: I think it's something that we probably automatically do because we might think that like parts of our being, or they might actually just be like, uh, slightly un-normative, I guess, in like larger society so we tend to like perform these activities or behaviors or values or whatever it may be in like the private of like our own homes or whenever like we know we're alone, like, you know, they say like your truest self is when you're completely by yourself. So, um, you know, cause there's like just a complete lack of influence or concern for the norms of others. So, I think, uh, I don't know if it's possible to ever be like your truest, truest self with other people, not with everything, not with everyone.

As recently mentioned, the voice of resilience in the participants narratives reveals their strength and resources. Bernard's voice of resilience expresses the sense of safety and stability he finds in positive relationships. It shares that Bernard surrounds himself with those who can relate with him on a level of humour, and in doing so, Bernard maintains a connection with his core self (i.e., the big kid laughing). When this voice of resilience speaks, it closely overlaps with the voice of authenticity as it declares Bernard's lived experiences with confidence.

Glory Kabarungyi: This big kid laughing, what might that represent about the world around you?

Bernard: I think it represents that I, like I've got a lot of my personality from being around people who taken that we spend a lot of time just having fun. Around me I grew up in a house that, you know, we did a lot of laughing and in my affirmative years, my closest friends we do a lot of joking, you know? That all we did with one another, just jabs at one another, and we were all just jokers, maybe all the way you know, so that's all we did was crack joke every day, it was crack jokes, crack jokes, crack jokes and so

that's just a big part of how I am. Everyone around me knows that because there're, in a way, that they are like that too. The closest people to me, when we are together, we just do a lot of laughing.

Integrated Summary of the Voices

My research team and I noticed that the four voices that we selected often related to one another in similar patterns across each participant interview. The voice of authenticity, for example, was less active at the start of the interviews, picked up speed towards the middle of the interviews, and most active at the end of the interviews. This was unsurprising, considering both myself and my participants were still getting acquainted with the interview process during the first 10-15 minutes of our meetings. As our time together continued however, the voice of authenticity spoke frequently, answering questions related to the participants encounters in predominantly White settings and their perceptions of their core identities. This voice spoke in close harmony with the voice of resilience as it announced the participants' lived experiences alongside the voice of resilience's statements about their internal resources. A notable feature of the voice of concealment is that it tended to interrupt each of the voices. At times, it closely overlapped with the voices of oppression and voices of authenticity, to either silence the participant or speak honestly about their uncertainties. The overlapping between the voice of concealment and the voice of authenticity also protected the vulnerability of the core self. For example, Michael's tendency to refer to academic concepts and speak on behalf of the collective spoke of his experiences with certainty while at the same time positioning himself in strength. My research team and I arrived at our conclusions through discussions around the context of what the participant was sharing and we later confirmed with each participant our tentative interpretations about which voice was speaking.

The voice of oppression was the most subtle voice in the participants' narratives. It either positioned the participant as inferior to White people or it reduced them to being an object for the use and pleasure of their White peers, colleagues, and authority figures. The voice of oppression related to the voices of authenticity and resilience in tension as it competed with these other voices to take the lead over a story. It did not surprise us when this voice was in close harmony with the voice of concealment because of the tendency of the concealing voice to make the participants appear as being unsure of themselves paired well with the oppressive voice's manner of minimizing the participants lived experiences.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

To clearly start a discussion of the project, I call attention to the focus of this research: The purpose of this study was to listen to the voices of Black adults who attended predominantly White schools in Canada. My interest was in hearing how these adults perceive themselves at the cores of their identities and to also listen to how they perceive others. In reviewing selected literature, I noticed that most of the research on the experiences of Black minorities in predominantly White schools was focused on the experiences of African American people. As a graduate student, I wanted to join others to contribute to the Canadian literature with a focus on the stories of Black individuals who were raised in this country. While Listening Guide was the main analysis model used in this project, I chose to integrate a multiple case-study design to honour the depth of each participants' personhood and to incorporate a video element to resist the invisibility of race in research. I invite both White and BIPOC therapists who would like to contest anti-Blackness in our profession to listen and learn from the narratives and interpretations shared by myself and my participants.

While working alongside my research team in the process of data analysis, I noticed that in addition to distinct differences in the ways each participant told their story, similar themes related to anxiety and resistance were apparent. These themes are discussed in this chapter. A noticeable feature that came up during the data analysis was psychological distress. Participants shared that in predominantly White settings their perceptions of themselves and others pressured them to selectively reveal or conceal features of their identities to negotiate among comfort levels for themselves and for others. Patterns of tensions among participants' multiple voices were also noted, highlighting disconnections between the way stories were told and the way circumstances were experienced. Finally, forms of resilience and resourcefulness surfaced,

indicating the participants' ways of coping with oppressive dynamics of predominantly White schools in Canada. In this chapter I will position myself, my research team, and my participants as partners, speaking from the place of epistemological privilege (Chimbganda, 2017).

This discussion chapter begins with a review of my experience as principal investigator. Next, I give an overview of a selection of what participants shared with me during their follow-up interviews as I relate the study findings to the relevant literature. The aspects of insight shared in these two sections build on and go further than what was shared in the results section. Theoretical and counselling contributions will be mentioned afterwards, followed by a consideration of my thoughts on the limitations of the study and potential directions for future research.

My Experiences as Principal Investigator

This study was born in on a weekday in November 2019. From what I remember of that day, it was a typical day for me; I woke up groggily, attended class at my university, took an afternoon nap, watched television, and headed to Langley for an evening counselling session. Sitting on the couch of my White therapist, I shared with her my inner world. I told her about my relentless feeling of being unworthy of love, as if I was born with a part that was missing and would forever qualify me as almost good, but not good enough. I described to her my thoughts on what it is like to exist in the realm of pending approval. I shared the emptiness that comes with feeling like the acceptance of others, myself, and even God, is perpetually out of my reach. As the brilliant, compassionate, and nurturing trauma-informed professional that she is, my therapist gently invited me to close my eyes or lower my gaze. She spoke softly, requesting that I think of the first time I remember feeling this way. I closed my eyes and after a moment the image of me as a young girl walking through a hallway at my elementary school came to my

mind's eye. In session I felt a jolt in my stomach, as if my gut was constricting towards an emptiness inside of me. I told my therapist about what was happening for me, explaining the time when several students were staring at me, and I felt deeply insecure under their gaze.

That moment in November was the first time in a long while that I cried during session. Though I had been engaging in months and months of personal trauma work with this therapist who I feel closely connected to, it was in that session that I felt a new breakthrough. The tears poured down my face and suddenly, my experiences, both as a young girl and as a young adult, were making more sense. It became clear to me that my ten weeks of insomnia and two weeks of nausea were not flu-related, but in fact, trigger responses to the months of racism that I was witnessing at in my graduate program at Trinity Western University. I left my session with a determination to speak alongside racialized students like myself who have experienced silencing and othering in the schools that uphold White supremacy in this country.

After receiving approval from my university to change the topic of my research from listening to Black men who experience a major life chapter without a father to listening to Black adults in Canada who attended predominantly White schools, I started making notes on my experiences as the principal investigator of this study. To account for rigour and quality, LG requires researchers to note their own responses, questions, and confusions as they listen to the recordings. In LG, this form of reflexivity is referred to as reader response (Woodcock, 2016). These notes were made on a double password protected online database where pseudonyms were incorporated. As I began my survey of the literature on the wider topic of minorities in predominantly White schools, I felt frustrated by what to me seemed like a narrow scope in the literature. I was thinking, "So what, if we aren't at-risk African American youth living in poverty then our stories aren't worth hearing?" Amidst these feelings of frustration came feelings of

shame, as I considered that maybe someone like me who was born and raised in a financially stable two-parent family home with no history of US slavery in my lineage does not have an important story to tell. With these thoughts my emotions kept turning. The shame transitioned to anger, as I reflected on the heaps of literature on the experiences of White people from all backgrounds and paths of life. After taking some time to pray, I thanked Jesus for the uniqueness of my personal story, with my sister Kabasigyi and I being the only ones in our large family who were born and raised in Newmaket. I believed that there was a purpose for which I was born at the time and in the place that I was, and my focus was once again reignited. I reminded myself that this project was a starting opportunity for me to make meaning out of my circumstances.

My personal responses while working on this research project came most heavily during the first round of participant interviews and the preceding data analysis. I experienced bouts of inner excitement and anxiety as interviewer, as I tried to juggle the tasks of attending to my participants, holding loosely the interview protocols, trying to guide the discussion towards a deeper reflection of the participants core selves, and keeping track of our time. I was aware of my feelings of entitlement as a therapist, recognizing the part of me that felt like my participants should quickly expose themselves by allowing me full access to know and look into the core of their beings. I became frustrated with the voices of concealment, and I took it personally when this voice would speak in vague, general terms. As a woman I struggled with the pacing of the emotional openness during my interviews with the men. I had to remind myself to slow down, knowing that these interactions were of a different nature than the weekly sessions I have gotten used to with the clients I have built a closer rapport with. I also reminded myself that my close relationship with my sister became a catalyst for the depth of emotional openness. After becoming aware of this frustration and entitlement within myself, I was more easily able to

approach the work of principal investigator with gratitude for whatever came up in the data, realizing that every voice was rich with information.

At some points during my listening of the first set of interviews, I was experiencing hot flashes in my body. As I was recognizing the importance of the stories being told, I knew that many of my colleagues who sat in silence and/or expressed microaggressions and overt racism in our classroom would be graduating in just a short number of weeks. I felt angry that the chances of them hearing my participants' stories was very slim. I knew that in the two years they spent studying to become therapists they denied the reality of White supremacy and the need for clinicians to be equipped to face racial trauma as a presenting problem in their counselling rooms. In my reader response notes I documented my experiences reviewing interview recordings.

> *I'm realizing just how important this project is for all clinicians because it would be so easy for anyone, and especially White clinicians, to miss the depth of all these layers. Before I was a bit nervous to share this work with my White colleagues and faculty at Trinity Western, but now I'm actually excited to present and defend this in front of a White audience... as frustrating as it is, I feel like this project is allowing me to finally be seen, heard, and received by White academia if only I hide behind the project and distance myself from the audience (and vice versa), these truths may finally be received by them. As I write that I experience nervousness that I will cry during the presentation and once again be reduced to their perception of me. Once again be dismissed as uneducated. Once again be discredited and seen as unprofessional, bitter, a problem, an attacker, an instigator who is only speaking from a place of personal trauma and not reality.*

The layers that I was referring to in this note were the tensions between the emergent voices and the subtleties of the internalized voices of the oppressor in the bodies of my participants. When I heard the layers, I felt a strain in my heart; the pain that I experienced in response to the voices of oppression came from a place of resonance.

My journey as principal investigator also led me to places of resolve within myself and in continued relationship with communities outside of the predominantly White spaces where I visit. After spending decades in these schools, I had unintentionally limited my gaze to looking for acceptance in a community that was not my own. While interviewing my participants, I was inspired by their personal commitments to find connection and belonging with individuals who they did not need to negotiate with to be seen and accepted. The resilient nature of my participants filled me with feelings of admiration.

> *There's something about the way in which my participants declare their core selves that touches me deeply. They announce with immediacy, "This is who I am". There's something freeing about hearing a Black person speak about themselves without mentioning the colour of their skin, and yet fully embodying their Blackness. I smile and I stretch. I admire them and while I can't be certain, I sure hope that they feel seen by me.*

Follow-up Interviews

The follow-up interviews were an opportunity to express to each participant the cruciality of hearing them accurately. In these second meetings, I asked the participants if they felt our tentative interpretations were accurate understandings of their narratives and fair recollections of our previous time spent together. In addition, the follow-up interviews were used as a chance to hear their reflections on their participation in the study. In this section, I describe a

selection of what was shared during these three interviews, relating Kabasigyi, Michael, and Bernard's narratives to the relevant literature.

In my second meeting with Kabasigyi, she started us off with a retelling of her recent experiences at two walk-in clinics in Ottawa. At one clinic, she was seen by a male Nigerian doctor. Kabasigyi noted that although this doctor treated her with professionalism, warmth, and care, she had a preference to seen by a female doctor. This doctor kindly referred her to another clinic, Appletree Medical Clinic, and at this clinic Kabasigyi was seen by a younger, White female doctor. Kabasigyi referenced the microaggressions that she experienced at this clinic. In her descriptions, she mentioned that this second doctor was irritable, suspicious of her need for medical attention, interrogative, and unhelpful. She overheard this doctor and her medical assistant making fun of the fact that Kabasigyi had been referred to their clinic, despite Kabasigyi's explanation that she wanted to be seen by a female physician. At this clinic she felt tense and frustrated, but she told herself to remain calm to avoid looking like "an angry Black woman". When she returned to her vehicle, however, she broke down and cried for a long period.

Kabasigyi explained that her encounter at Appletree Medical Clinic was triggering for her because in the recent years she has been discriminated against, overlooked, and tossed back and forth in the medical health care system by White and East Asian doctors, noting positive experiences with Black and South Asian physicians. Similar, to her experiences in predominantly White schools and neighbourhoods, she chooses to wear wigs that resemble the hair texture of White women during medical appointments so as "to look normal, Black acceptable enough to be treated like a human". The treatment that Kabasigyi received at Appletree Medical Clinic triggered her racial trauma growing up in Newmarket. After recounting this experience,

Kabasigyi stated to me that since our first interview it has been challenging for her to suppress

her responses to racism or pretend that it does not affect her. She stated, "After the first interview

that's when I realized, oh my goodness, this stuff has affected me so much, like so deeply. So

deeply rooted, you know?" Since then, she has felt driven even more to pursue a career in health

psychology and share her story because now she does not feel silenced.

Simone Browne, author of *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (2015),

stated that surveillance is an essential feature of Black life (Tecle et al. 2017). This study created

a necessary understanding of Black bodies in the US as taboo. Tecle et al. (2017) described the

surveillance of Black lives in Canada. They used the concept of castration, the punishment

received for violating taboos, to describe the psychic impact of this surveillance. These authors

stated that "castration refers to the psychic oppression, management, and control of Black lives

through policies and practices that cast Black people in the role of aliens rather than citizens

within Canada" (p. 188). As a result, anti-Blackness, surveillance, and racial profiling are means

of enforcing inferiority and oppression on the lives of Black people in this country. These

authors affirmed that surveillance, racial profiling, and management are prohibitions against

perceived taboos that serve to legitimize White supremacy (Tecle et al., 2017).

In her own words, Kabasigyi's description of the racist treatment she has received by

medical professionals highlighted the anti-Blackness, surveillance, and racial profiling she

experiences as a Black woman living in Canada. The unhelpfulness, irritability, suspiciousness,

and interrogative nature of the doctor at Appletree Medical Clinic was like the characteristics of

the White and East Asian doctors she has seen in the past. These oppressive encounters

suggested that she was undeserving of appropriate medical care and triggered feelings of

inferiority due to her skin tone and hair texture.

The insights that Kabasigyi shared during her follow-up interview were similarly expressed by Michael in my second meeting with him. Michael started us off by sharing some of the reflections that came up for him after our first interview. He said that it was really interesting to consider how his educational experiences differed from his White peers. Michael remembered that a lot of his peers that were Black were streamed into applied courses based on the recommendations of the school guidance counsellor. He said that during his high school years he was either the only Black student or one of two Black students placed in the academic stream. He said he definitely feels weird in White spaces, especially in schools where he finds himself wondering if he is being looked at as less than his White peers. He described this as a feeling of inherent inferiority, going on to state that this has had a huge effect on his relationships. He described the reality that he could walk into a classroom where despite having great interactions and learning experiences, in his mind he remembers past messages that Black people cannot be smart.

In the second chapter of this document, I introduced the definition of internalized oppression put forth by Tappan (2006). This author wrote that internalized oppression is a concept that depicts the process by which individuals of subordinated, marginalized, or minority groups adopt the ideology of the group that holds domination over them (Tappan, 2006). As my follow-up interview Kabsigyi continued, we turned our focus to her experiences with mental health professionals. Over the years Kabasigyi has sought therapeutic services from Black and White therapists and psychologists. She said her counselling experiences have been up and down, but an overall better experience than with physical health professionals. The first counsellor she saw was the White older male university counsellor who told her that her history in Newmarket would affect her. At this point in the interview, she began to cry, stating that

hearing that from a White older man was especially moving. She recalled thinking to herself, "wow, this has to be true if he's saying this". She said that she has been more likely to brush things off from Black people because the pain of Black people is usually silenced and/or Black people are told to brush their pain off. Kabasigyi's recollection of these thoughts exemplify the impact of internalized oppression, as she admits that in the past, she placed a higher regard on the knowledge shared a White individual than on the knowledge spoken by Black people.

As my follow-up interview with Michael continued, he stated with certainty that his upbringing impacted his perception but noted that his perception could also be impacted by anxiety. In the chapter Tecle et al., (2017) wrote in *Spaces of Surveillance*, they stated that the experiences of castration results in anxiety. These authors explained, "castration anxiety is the undeserved psychic suffering of those under the punitive eye of society" (p. 191). The White gaze is a term used to describe the assumption that Whiteness is equal to wholeness and superiority, that it is the sole signification of power, prestige, and progress, and that it is the central point against which racialized persons appear as regressive, incomplete, inferior, and deviants (Pailey, 2019). These experiences were described several times during my interviews with all three participants, who each noted moments of feeling discomfort around White people. In the first interview with Bernard, he recounted how the Blackness of him and his friends was received in predominantly White neighbourhoods.

> I always like, when I think about 'oh trying to make people feel comfortable', I
> remember these conversations we would have even back then me and friends about
> how, say there, say we are just walking down the street and there's an older (White)
> person or a family and we are about to cross each other's path, if it's, if it was another
> group of young kids we wouldn't feel any pressure because we don't think of them

feeling any sort of type of way with us because there was this feeling of like 'okay I

have to make them feel comfortable about me, about my presence and in order I have to

make eye contact, I've got to smile, I've got to say hi' to show that, you know, just to

make them feel comfortable and now when you think about it, it's like to make them

think that I'm not a threat.

Tecle et al. (2017) stated that the White gaze threatens the Black body with castration and that

the anxiety that ensues is an outcome of trauma, loss, and grief in the pursuit of freedom.

Michael shared his encouragement towards Black people to seek therapy. He said that

Black people in Canada would benefit from therapy due to the amount of trauma we experience

in this country. His view on the need for therapy is influenced by his lived experience of racism

that impacted his self-worth and self-perception. He expressed his opinion that it would be best

for minorities to see minority therapists because these clients would be unlikely to open up or

feel completely safe with White therapists. He noted that there might be an exception to this if

the White therapist could understand the minority experience, but then added that the White

therapist could never fully understand the minority experience. Following these statements,

Michael stated that White therapists who are willing to listen can still provide meaningful help to

their Black clients. When I queried Michael's personal experiences, he stated that his therapist is

"White as hell", and then laughed. He said his therapist can understand him and connect with

him on a general level. He went on to say he does not talk to his therapist about racial issues,

though there was one-time race came up in passing. During that session Michael found that his

therapist listened and shared that it was the least he could do with his White privilege. This

encounter made Michael feel good knowing he would at least be comfortable if race was brought

up again in a future session.

In my second meeting with Kabasigyi, she shared that recently she has been seeing a Black, Christian, female therapist who grew up in Canada. She affirmed that her preference is to be seen by a Black female therapist who is qualified to treat complex post-traumatic stress disorder (complex PTSD). She mentioned that when she is in the therapeutic room it is important for her to feel like "the therapist gets me in my soul". She is confident that her intuitive sense can pick up on the energy of the therapist, revealing whether or not that therapist was able to understand her on a soul-level. She expressed that she experiences an inner knowing that her current therapist can connect with her at this level and appreciates her therapist's use of statements like "we as women" and "we as Black women". This communication helps Kabasigyi to feel understood in their client-therapist relationship. Similarly, to Michael, she believes that it is possible for a White therapist or psychologist to meet her at the soul level to some extent but not entirely. She shared her suspicion that old souls, i.e., those who have lived through adversities, will have an easier time connecting with her. She also included that she has had experiences with Black therapists becoming overly familiar with her, treating her more like a sister, daughter, or niece, instead of a client, which can induce new sets of triggers.

In chapter two of this document, I referred to Burnette and Figley (2016) who stated that resilience is defined by some researchers as the ability to adapt in the face of adverse experiences. In my follow-up interview with Bernard, his focus was largely on his tendency to live in the moment and seek happiness. He admitted that after our last interview he has not thought much about his participation in the study. He said he has not done much reflecting on what was discussed and could hardly remember the questions that I had asked, to which I laughed and responded that I appreciated his honesty. I checked in with Bernard how well our data analysis process captured an understanding of him. He confirmed our interpretation of him

having a grounding, confidence, and resiliency during adversities comes to his favour in terms of his mental well-being. He expressed, "I am comfortable with who I am at this stage, you know, where I may not have had that confidence as a child, I am more confident in, you know, as I exist in this society."

During my second meeting with Bernard, I asked him if he remembered how he described his core self during our previous encounter. He responded that he probably described that at his core he is someone who just wants to happy and just wants to laugh. As I confirmed this to Bernard, he shared that this is still accurate to who he is, adding that he tries to be light-hearted, that he just wants to have a good time, and that he enjoys socializing with his close cousins. I asked him where he believes that wisdom or perspective comes from, and he said he does not know. He said he guesses it comes from himself because that is just how he feels. Bernard's viewpoints, inclinations, relationships, and confident traits can be considered as supports of his resiliency, confirming the assertions presented by Singh (2013), who stated that among resilience factors are innate traits and community factors that support the capacity for individuals to steer life adversities.

As my conversation with Bernard continued, I queried the difference between the child Bernard and the man that he is today in relation to confidence. He responded that he experienced changes in his early 20s when he became more comfortable in his own skin and stopped caring about what others thought of him. As he engaged in the practice of presenting himself to others more often, this eventually became more natural to him. In this response, Bernard has supported the assertion made by psychology Erik Erikson, who distinguished between individuals who are born only once and individuals who undergo a second birth or growth crisis as they shape their identity. Erikson stated that people who are born once do not experience difficulty in fitting into

society, while those who are born twice experience a crisis of purpose or faith. In their adult

years their commitments are developed out of personal choice (Waterman, 1982).

In her own words, Kabasigyi echoed that she experienced a second birth in her adult

years. She mentioned that a recent crisis of faith led her to step away from a lot of people's

opinions by creating boundaries and leaving her previous church. In her current faith journey,

she is trying to distinguish between false doctrine and the truth of who Jesus is and what Jesus

says. Her sense of identity and self-worth has been enhanced in this process, as she deepens her

understanding of Christian spirituality in relation to Blackness. She expressed feeling inspired by

individuals like Harriett Tubman and Prophet Moses. She connected this inspiration to her

awakening professional identity and felt sense of purpose to help others out of oppression

through the realms of psychology and spirituality. With this deepened sense of connection to her

core identity and her Creator, she is working on loving her hair again. She refuses to keep

changing her name, Kabasigyi Mulera, to fit an Anglicized or European standard even if that

would better her chances of avoiding comments, receiving acceptance, or attaining a ticket into

an interview, a job, or a country.

Towards the end of my second meeting with Michael, he responded that the education

system in Canada is not built for Black people. He stated that he has noticed in academia there is

a pattern of White leaders pushing Black students towards jobs that steer them away from the

professional world. He recounts an experience in high school when he and his friends skipped

class and played basketball in the gym. On this day their principal saw them skipping class,

waved to them, and kept walking. In our interview Michael exclaimed, "He knew damn well it

was class time! He didn't say shit to any of us, he let us keep playing! We were high school kids,

not old enough to make decisions like that but he just allowed us to potentially mess up our

lives." He added that he believes the principal would have sent them to class had they been White students.

Participants' Final Thoughts

While sharing his final thoughts, Bernard stated that he found a couple of these questions difficult to answer. He refers to my query about where his wisdom comes from, and he reflected that he finds it weird to think of himself as saying something wise. He explained that he simply answers questions the best way he can, and he cannot describe sharing his thoughts as sharing something wise. He also recalled that in our first meeting he struggled to answer my questions about his core self when I asked, "When you think of your core self, is there a message or a colour, maybe an image or a metaphor that comes to your mind?" Bernard remembered that in responding to that question he was thinking about what was literally inside of him. He thought about his rib cage and vital organs, and even though he knew what I meant in my question, he could not get away from thinking literally. He added that he does not express himself in an artistically expressive way and that he felt like he was being a bad interviewee. I assured Bernard that it was a rich experience for me to speak to someone who does not think in the same way as me.

While sharing his final thoughts, Michael added that he believes teachers have a genuine lack of awareness as to what goes on inside various communities and that needs to be addressed as well because students are being blamed for their circumstances. He added the example of a Black student who is distracted, possibly having ADHD, but instead labelled as being uninterested in school. Michael expressed that such a student should be engaged with and given access to supportive resources. Michael's statements reminded me of the concept of privileged space put forward by Dr. Tapo Chimbganda. In her book, *The Classroom as*

Privileged Space, Chimbganda (2017) stated, "I advocate for a space in which the subjective experience may find relevance, even where it might present as disruptions, eruptions, omissions, and worries over the personal". She continues to state her proposition that classrooms are used as spaces for social justice intervention. Michael reflects these notions in his final reflections as he goes on to make the claim that White teachers are ignorant of the experiences of Black students. He remembered worrying about how his White teacher was looking at him in his younger years and described the intensity that pressure brings, especially combined with his East African background where education is highly valued. He feels that his striving to be educated is "so much bigger than just about me". He stated that teachers should be taught the dynamics that go on in the classroom whether that be related to race, gender, or sexual orientation. He added that he would want his future children to be placed in an alternative school because he does not believe that the traditional school system in Canada is as effective for Black students as it is for White students.

In relation to participating in this study, Michael stated that reflecting on how his race affects his daily life is hard and a lot to deal with, but he has normalized this practice. He described that even when he tries to give himself pity, he thinks, "Why are you complaining? It is what it is on this side. That's just how it is for us, it's not going to change shit, if anything it's just making myself weaker". He reflected that making himself weaker would be done by over acknowledging that being Black is a hardship. He concluded that moping about racist encounters allows the racist to win and that even though there are experiences that hurt him, it is not worth his mental energy. Michael stated he would encourage other Black people who go through what he goes through to not ignore racism.

Yes, your struggle is real and don't just sweep it under the rug, like it's worthy of

acknowledgement and like you're not crazy like this shit is hard but you know like

don't let that turn into an excuse to stop fighting or to sell yourself short or to give up or

to half ass it or to settle for your goals or do less like, if anything you have to prove

yourself more now". I asked him what fighting would look like – "At least for me like

I'm just trying fight this shit by everyday just doing the complete opposite of what's

expected of me like I said last time. Like if you say like, if you're expecting Black

people to fail then, okay great, like I am going to attempt to get like the best grades I

can. If you're expecting me to not be a community leader or to be active in my

community, cool, like I'm going to go volunteer for a bunch of shit. You know, It's not

only for the sake of countering people for those things, some of those things I'm just

already doing you know like naturally, for my own self wants and shit but I think we

can do a lot to, I don't know though, actually, shit, at the same time, I don't think we

don't owe it to people to prove their stereotypes wrong…Just don't turn into one of

those people who complain about their circumstances but aren't willing to do anything

at all to change them.

Michael ended our meeting by sharing that after participating in this study he decided to pursue a

career in psychology to support Black children and youth.

When sharing her final thoughts, Kabasigyi stated that it was during our first interview

that she realized she had suppressed trauma. She mentioned that my presence as a Black woman

who she has a pre-existing relationship with created a safe space for her to express the

complexities of her feelings. She explained that for these conversations to take place in a

meaningful manner, she needs to have someone who understands her to the extent of having

similar or shared stories. In these encounters she does not need to run away or escape from her

authentic self and experiences, adding that this is the same for therapeutic relationships.

Similarly, to Michael, Kabasigyi shared that the beginning process of her participation in

this study was difficult for her. At that time she was face-to-face with one of the most painful

experiences of her life, an experience that she has buried for quite some time. As somebody who

has coped through escapism, compartmentalization, and suppression of thoughts and feelings, it

has been difficult for Kabasigyi to begin to feel, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and

while not knowing what to do to care for herself and receive care from others. She said that

although having access to online resources and to people who speak about how to overcome

racial trauma has been a helpful relief for her, she needs more support. She added that she wishes

more people who are not Black would understand the experiences of Black people "and not

make it a fight, political, or religious thing". She wishes that non-Black people would hold

consistent space without speaking about the experiences of other racialized persons. She wishes

that they would listen without silencing or being intimidated by Black people, or without passing

those who need space off to the next person. She expressed that she is tired of needing to explain

why she is frustrated or triggered. With her final thoughts, Kabasigyi expressed gratitude for her

participation in this study, stating that it has been very, very powerful for her.

> From this study I am taking away the power that I gave to this White supremacist
>
> system or whatever you want to call it, and I am going to hold my power that God
>
> created me to have and I am going to make a difference and I am going to re-write the
>
> narrative of my story, and I am thankful that I have my sister, I have other Black
>
> Canadian women, you know, who have very similar experiences and are doing the same
>
> because that is keeping me going, you know, like, you are a huge motivation in my life

right now, you know, and even just like in our childhood too there are so many different

ways in which you chose to be yourself regardless of what people thought of you, you

know, and so it's just, and then you also encouraging me and reminding me of who I am

and the good in me, so yeah. This has been really, really, really, really, um, monumental

(laughs) and very significant in my healing journey and so I thank you and I'm so

thankful to, you know, the faculty and professors and anyone who allowed you to

interview your sister because this has been one of the most powerful experiences that I

have needed (laughs). Because literally, because I do run away, you know, I needed this

because there isn't any other person or space that would be able to take me through this

and get it, and me be comfortable enough to go there so it's a huge, huge deal for me.

Theoretical contributions

This project contributes to the Canadian literature on the experiences of Black

individuals in predominantly White settings as well as the literatures on identity development

and self-perception. In this study I had a supportive research team who became my key

informants, that is, people with relevant experience to the research question, to assist with insight

making and interpreting the data. As a result, a distinctive factor of this project was achieved

through my combination of relevant US and Canadian literature, collected research data, and key

informants. This combination supported the conceptual and theoretical elaborations expressed in

both the results and discussion chapters of this document. Additionally, another noteworthy

factor of this study is the fact that the data collection, data analysis, and video creation meetings

were all done entirely via Zoom, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This factor situates

the study among other recent projects that have been conducted during this globally significant

time, informing individuals of emerging possibilities of how qualitative research can be

conducted.

Counselling contributions

In this study I have shared the stories of three different Black adults who were raised in

Canada. To benefit from hearing these stories, therapists need to consider their own awareness of

White supremacy and the subtleties of the internalized voices of oppression, their level of

preparedness to respond to racial trauma, and their training in cultural sensitivity. Additionally,

therapists in this country need to reflect on the epistemological privilege of Black clients. These

efforts are in line with their commitment to upholding the ethical principles outlined by the

Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) for respect for the dignity of person's and people, as

per general respect item I.I, "demonstrate appropriate respect for the knowledge, insight,

experience, areas of expertise, and cultural perspectives and values of others, including those that

are different from their own" (CPA, 2017, p. 12). In adhering to this code, therapists must

recognize and respect that Black clients understand not only their own experience, but also

oppression and the privilege of White Canadians. Seeing as nearly 1.2 million individuals in

Canada reported being Black (Statistics Canada, 2016), therapists should strive to maintain

ethical behaviour in relation to the CPA's principle of responsibility to society. This is important

for all therapists, and especially crucial for White therapists who work with Black clients. In this

code, item IV.15 states that psychologists and psychotherapists are to, "acquire an adequate

knowledge of the culture, social structure, history, customs, and laws or policies of

organizations, communities, and peoples before beginning any major work there, obtaining

guidance from appropriate members of the organization, community, or people as needed"

(CPA, 2017, p. 33). A crucial point for acquiring knowledge of the realities of Black experiences

in Canada is through listening to the collective and individual voices of Black people, realizing the epistemological privilege grounded in those insights of oppression.

Limitations and Future Research

This project offers a start to addressing some of the questions related to how Black adults who attended predominantly White schools perceive themselves at the core of their identities. There are other unanswered questions that the results raise. Opportunities that this project shows for additional research to address includes an exploration of Canadian contexts in comparison to US contexts, as well as a more thorough class and gendered analysis that considers the narratives of people of varying social class backgrounds and gender identities. Another study could consider the experiences of Black adults who did not pursue post-secondary education. Additionally, there is an opportunity for future research to address similarities and distinctions between how Black individuals in different provinces and territories across Canada share their experiences in predominantly White schools. As someone who has lived in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia, I have noticed that my experiences as a racialized person differed slightly in each of these provinces. Speaking very generally about my subjective experiences in each of these provinces, I found non-racialized people in the Greater Toronto Area to be more outspoken about anti-Blackness and non-racialized people in the Greater Vancouver Area to be more outspoken about their racism towards Indigenous and South Asian people. It is possible that my participants geographic contexts contributed to distinctions between the way they shared their experiences, however this aspect was not explored in the interviews.

Although this study by itself is not an entire program of research for multiple studies, it is a study that sheds light on what needs to be an ongoing program of research of Black

individuals in Canada and identity development. These efforts should be done in such a way as to inform the research and clinical community as a whole.

Conclusion

In Canadian contexts, a multitude of African communities are taking shape as a community of solidarity where individuals may find it advantageous to identify as one group, "Black people", who experience connection through common experiences such as immigration, racism, and a quest for belonging in Canadian society (see Massaquoi, 2004). Environmental racialization identifies ways that individuals experience a disproportionate burden of environmental risk in achieving normative developmental patterns because of their race or perceived undesirability (Teelucksingh, 2007). The environmental racism that Teelucksignh points out in the community applies to schools as well. According to bioecological theorists, the school context directly influences youth development because of the long periods spent interacting in these environments (see Atkin et al., 2018). Anti-Blackness, surveillance, and racial profiling restrain Black people living in Canada to a place of inferiority and oppression, with social, psychic, spiritual, and moral consequences on their mental health and wellbeing (Tecle et al., 2017). For Black students who attend predominantly White schools in Canada, the White gaze serves to disrupt healthy identity development and self-esteem. Moreover, the prolonged stress impacts their internal resources which then increases their difficulty in retaining a capacity for resilience (see Bradshaw, 2020; van der Kolk, 2005). In this project I recognized Canadian schools as microcosm of Canadian institutions, which are then a microcosm for Canadian society. I invite both White and BIPOC therapists who would like to contest anti-Blackness in our profession to listen and learn from the narratives and interpretations shared by myself and my participants.

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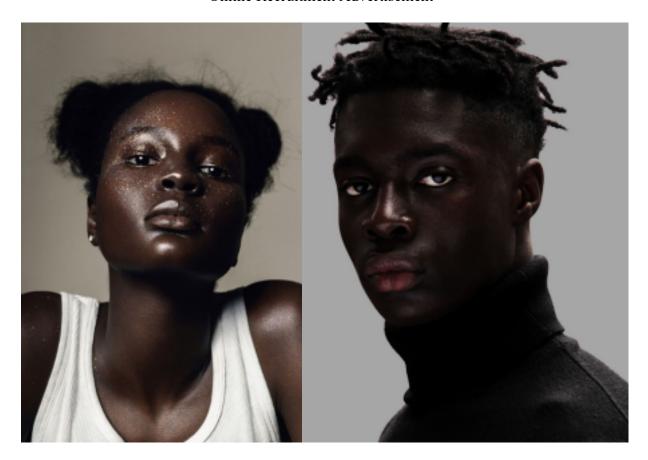
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APPENDIX A

Online Recruitment Advertisement

MA CPSY RESEARCH STUDY

UNCOVERING THE CORE SELF

We are looking to hear how Black Canadians who attended predominantly White schools perceive themselves and others. Participation involves two 45-120 minute online interviews that will be recorded. To thank you for your time, you will be gifted a $50 Amazon gift card.

Eligibility:

English fluency

Age 19-35

Minimum high school diploma

Born in Canada or moved to Canada before age 5

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Uncovering the Core Self: Listening to Black Canadians Who Attended Predominantly White Educational Institutions

Principal Investigator (Researcher): Glory Mulera, M.A. Student in Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University. Contact number 604-537-5046. Contact email address: uncoveringthecore@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Marvin McDonald, Associate Professor, Counselling Psychology Department, Trinity Western University. Contact number: 604-513-2034 ext. 3223. Contact email address: mcdonald@twu.ca

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to empower the voices of Black Canadians who have attended predominantly White schools. Researchers hope to gather knowledge of how individuals in these communities perceive their identities. This study is designed to provide clinicians with a deeper understanding of the impact of these environments on participants' perceptions of themselves and others.

Procedures: The method chosen for this study is well established. It effectively gives research participants an opportunity to express their personal perspectives in a safe environment. There will be an emphasis on how the individuals who participate in the study perceive themselves and others. To be eligible, you must be an English-speaking Black adult, aged 19 to 35 years old, who has completed a minimum of a high school diploma. You must have attended a predominantly White school at the elementary and secondary level, and it is required that you were either born in Canada or moved to Canada before the age of five.

Each participant will partake in two semi-structured interviews where the researcher will ask you questions about your experiences in predominantly White settings. Each interview will last approximately 45-120 minutes and will be audio-recorded for transcription at a later time. Participants will have the option to have their interviews included in a video presentation. The purpose of the video is to enrich the presentation, communication, and clarification of the research in a way that is accessible to a larger audience. Participants will have full control over major choices in the video editing and the choice to conceal markers of identity. The second interview will focus on discussing our interpretations of the previous interview, debriefing the entire study, and reviewing the video for the participants who have chosen to take part in this portion of the study. Once the study is complete, both the completed video and written document will be made available to you should you be interested.

Potential Risks & Discomforts: You may experience some emotional discomfort while sharing your experiences, particularly if you experience(d) racism and oppression in predominantly White settings. Since the design of the study includes an optional video element, there is the risk that if you choose to reveal your face and/or real names on camera then you will experience a

loss of privacy. Both of the interviews will be conducted by a researcher who has training in the research and clinical aspects of counselling psychology. Though the researcher will not counsel you herself, she will create a safe place for you to share your experience. She can also provide you with a referral information on support and counselling resources in your home community if that is of interest to you.

Potential Benefits to Participants: Some participants may find that this study will strengthen their personal journey towards overcoming the experiences of racism and oppression. Participants who choose to fully (or partially) reveal their identities might gain a sense of empowerment. Participants who do not choose to reveal their identities will also benefit from the opportunity to lift up their voices in a safe space. This study could potentially benefit Black communities in Canada through the empowerment of voices of Black individuals who attended predominantly White schools. Also, participants will be given an opportunity to contribute to resistance of the invisibility of race in scientific research. Since this study may help clinicians gain a deeper understanding of Black Canadians who attend predominantly White schools, this may be of benefit for participants who are counselled by clinicians who have reviewed this study. Finally, as an expression of appreciation for your willingness to share your experience and insights, each participant will receive a $50 Amazon gift card at the start of the first interview.

Confidentiality: Participants will be given the choice to fully (or partially) reveal their identities or to conceal all markers of their identity. Concealing markers of identity can be accomplished by using fake names, deleting certain pieces of information, blurring images, and/or transforming your voice. In such cases, your identity will be concealed to the best of our ability. It should be noted that information that you share during the interview may make it possible for some people to identify you. Nonetheless, anything that you share with the researcher will only be included in the project with your permission. The raw data will be viewed by the research team for the duration of the study, and the video will be viewed by each participant during the second interview. All recordings will be kept on a secured laptop that belongs to the researcher. Any paper copies of signed documents and interview transcripts will be locked in a drawer that is located inside the researcher's locked office. In accordance with the policy of Trinity Western University, all transcripts and all recordings will be kept indefinitely. This data will be kept for future use after the study is completed to strengthen the archives of research with Black Canadians.

Consent: Your participation in this study will always remain voluntary. You may choose to with- draw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher via Zoom, telephone, or email. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you are free to keep the $50 Amazon gift card and the data that has been gathered will be destroyed by the researcher. Please note that you may choose to withdraw from the study (or video portion only) even after it has been completed, however, it will be impossible to withdraw your data from the copies that have been distributed prior to your request.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Glory Mulera, uncoveringthecore@gmail.com or her research supervisor, Dr. Marvin McDonald, mcdonald@twu.ca.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research participants: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact Elizabeth Kreiter in the Office of Research, Trinity Western University at 604-513-2167 or researchethicsboard@twu.ca.

Signatures

Your signature below indicates that you have had your questions about the study answered to your satisfaction and have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study and that your responses may be put in anonymous form and kept for further use after the completion of this study.

Research Participant's name (printed): _____

Research Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the video portion of the study as described above.

Research Participant's name (printed): _____

Research Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Interview Outline

This outline is intended to be a guide for the interviewer. The interviewer may modify the questions to adapt to the language and style of the interviewee, or based on the flow of the conversation. Maintaining a good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee is an important priority. Positive communication can be facilitated through smiles, eye contact, open-posture, clear pronunciation, and allowing for pauses and silences as needed. The interviewer will set the interviewees at ease by informing them that they can ask for a question to be repeated, reworded, further explained, or skipped, and they can withdraw from the study at anytime during the interview.

Questions

1. How do you like to describe your cultural background?
2. Do you often spend time in settings related to your cultural background?

3. What settings do you spend most of your time in? What are the cultural backgrounds of the people in each of these settings?

a. What settings do you like to be in?
b. In which settings do you feel like you can relax and be yourself?

4. Would you say you behave more similarly or differently in these different settings in your life?

5. How do you think the people in _____ perceive you? (e.g., school, home, work)

6. How well do most people in _____ understand you? How much do they really get you? a. What do they see?

b. Do they ever misunderstand you?
c. Why do you think they misunderstand you?

7. If you consider what exists of you beyond your skin colour, what else is there to you? Do you feel people in _____ recognize those parts of you? What do they see?

a. What do they appreciate?
b. What do they miss? (i.e., not recognize)

8. Focusing on your elementary school years, are there any parts of yourself that you kept hidden from your peers? Your teachers? What would some of those parts be?

a. High school?
b. College/University?

9. Were there any parts of yourself that you felt more comfortable showing around your family compared to when you were around people at school?

a. Did you see different parts of yourself when you were outside of the White dominated community? What parts of yourself came out when you stepped outside of those settings?

10. When you were at school, did you think of yourself as a minority person (an outsider, radicalized)?

a. Was there ever a feeling attached to that? What's your earliest memory of feeling that way?
b. Was there ever a time that you felt most challenged by the reality that you were a minority (an outsider, racialized) at your school?

c. Was there ever a time that you felt your minority status was rewarded or received to your benefit?

11. Were there times when you tried to fit in or to not be seen as a minority?
a. How were you when you were being yourself and not trying to fit in?
b. How are you now when you're being yourself?
c. Were there times when you wanted to be recognized as distinctive (e.g., Kenyan)?

12. What is it like to be both (e.g., Kenyan) and Canadian? Would you say that others in your family (or in the Kenyan community in Canada) feel similarly?

a. In what ways do you see yourself as similar to most other black people in Canada?
b. In what ways do you see yourself as different from most other black people in Canada?

13. If someone were to look at the deepest, most core part of your being, what would they see?

14. When you think about this core part of yourself, is there a message, a colour, an image, or a metaphor that comes to mind?

a. Can you describe that to me?
b. What might that represent about you?
c. What might that represent about the world around you?

15. What aspects of your core self does the world see

a. What does the dominant White culture see?
b. What does the Black culture see?
c. What do you see?

APPENDIX D

Debriefing Script

Thank you for returning for our second interview! At this time, we will discuss our interpretations of the previous interview, debrief the entire study, and review the video to make sure that you comfortable with the edits. It is important to me that you feel I have accurately represented you and included what you view as important to what we spoke about last time. I am happy to make any changes to the interpretations and/or video based on your feedback. Also, today I will ask you a few final questions and offer you space to ask me questions as well. How does that sound?

(Please note the wording might be adapted for a specific research participant. Participants who have chosen to not participate in the video will not discuss or review the video.)

1. After seeing this video, do you feel that you have been accurately represented? a. What was captured well?

b. Were there any parts of you that I missed?
c. What parts of the video stood out to you while you were watching it?
d. Is there anything that you wish I had done differently?
e. Do you have any questions about the choices I made while editing video?

2. In the last interview you said _____. Hearing that again now, what are your thoughts on what you said?

a. When I reflect on what you said in the last interview, my interpretation is _____. What are your thoughts on my interpretation?

i. Is there anything you would like to modify about my interpretation?

3. Have any reflections, discoveries, or insights come to your mind since the last interview? a. What has it been like for you to reflect on these thoughts?
b. Has any part of this process been difficult for you?

4. Is there anything that I have not asked you about that you feel would be important for us to discuss?

a. Is there anything that you would suggest I should ask future participants?

5. Do you have any questions about this study?
a. Are there parts of this study that you feel you understood well?
b. Are there parts of this study that you have found to be confusing?
c. Is there more information that you would like me to tell you in regards to this study?

6. Do you have any other questions for me?

7. Can you share what you are taking away from participating in this study?

8. Do you feel it would be helpful for you to speak with your support person after this study?

(Remind participant of the person that they had named prior to the first interview and of other local resources for psychological and community support)

Just a reminder, once the study is complete, the final versions of the video and the written document will be made available to you. Please feel free to contact me at uncoveringthecore@gmail.com. Thank you again for your participation in this study. I am so very grateful for your time, your openness, and your contribution to this research!

APPENDIX E

Confidentiality Agreement

<u>Confidentiality Agreement</u>

**Uncovering the Core Self: Listening to Black Canadians Who Attended
Predominantly White Schools**

This form may be used for individuals conducting specific research tasks for this MA CPSY thesis project, e.g., recording or editing image or sound data, transcribing, interpreting, translating, entering data, destroying data.

I, ‚ am a _____ . I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., USB sticks, printed material, transcripts) with anyone other than Glory Mulera.

 2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., USB sticks, printed material, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., USB sticks, printed material, transcripts) to Glory Mulera when I have completed the research tasks.

4. after consulting with Glory Mulera, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Principal Investigator* (e.g., information stored on iCloud or computer hard drive).

Research Team Member

*(*Print Full Name)   (Signature)   (Date)

Principal Investigator

(Print Full Name)   (Signature)   (Date)