What racism?

An exploration of ideological common sense justifications of racism among educators in Quebec English-language education.

by

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ABSTRACT

This study starts with the observation that Canadians un-self-consciously tend to understate, or fail to recognize, the existence and extent of anti-Black racism in Canada. Canadians also claim that racism is much worse in the United States. Using extensive excerpts from in-depth interviews with Black and White educators in the Quebec English-language school system, the study examines ideological common sense arguments that legitimize, or else, argue away Canadian anti-Black racism. The study also documents the participants' accounts of racism and its effects.

The study exposes arguments used to deny and justify racism, and discusses the disparate understandings of race-related concepts that make it difficult for dominant and oppressed racial groups to see eye-to-eye. The author then uses the findings of the study to answer and critique a 1998 article by S. Davies and N. Guppy that challenges the claim that there is anti-Black racism in Canadian education.

The final chapter of the study suggests that the American literature on race is more relevant to the Canadian context than is often acknowledged. It suggests that anti-racist education in Canada has less to do with "giving teachers . . . strategies" for passing on "tolerance to the next generation" than with teaching teachers to examine their own assumptions. The author recommends that Canadian education be examined through a Critical Race Theory approach, which centers race.

RESUME

Cette étude commence par l'observation selon laquelle, qu'inconsciemment les Canadiens tendent à minimiser ou faillent de reconnaître l'existence ou l'étendue du racisme contre les Noirs au Canada. Les Canadiens prétendent aussi que le racisme est bien pire aux Etats-Unis.

Usant de larges extraits puisés dans les réponses aux entrevues réalisées auprès des professeurs Noirs et Blancs du système scolaire d'éducation anglophone du Québec, l'étude passe au crible les arguments idéologiques communément partagés, qui légitiment le racisme canadien contre les Noirs ou bien le nient tout simplement. De aplus, l'étude fait état des expériences de racisme vécues au Québec par les participants à l'enquête.

L'étude présente d'une part les arguments utilisés pour nier ou justifier le racisme et débat d'autre part des différentes compréhensions attachées au concept de race et qui font qu'entre les groupes raciaux dominant et dominés la vision du problème est diamétralement opposée. C'est ainsi que l'auteur se sert des conclusions de l'étude pour faire la critique de l'article de S. Davies et N. Guppy de 1997 qui conteste l'affirmation selon laquelle, il y a un racisme anti-Noir dans le système éducatif au Canada.

Le dernier chapitre de l'étude suggère que la littérature américaine sur la race est plus éclairante concernant le contexte canadien, qu'il ne l'est souvent reconnu. Il suggère aussi que l'éducation contre le racisme au Canada a moins à donner des stratégies aux enseignants qui permettront aux générations futures de connaître la tolérance, qu'à instruire les professeurs à évaluer leurs propres suppositions sur la question. L'auteur recommande que le système éducatif canadien soit examiné à travers l'approche critique de la théorie de la race qui tourne autour de la race.

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PROLOGUE

Freda, a Black woman, climbs onto a Montreal city bus after work on a cold and weary winter evening. Her eyes search for an empty seat as she is now nearing the last trimester of a pregnancy. She soon notices a seat near a window. Feeling lucky, she approaches the seat. The White woman in the aisle seat seems not to realize that there is anyone there, and is seated so as to completely block access to the empty window seat. Finally, Freda asks her politely, "Would you be able to move over, or let me get past you?" With a dramatic huff, the White woman turns, drawing her coat as close as she can to her so that Freda, who now has to squeeze by, does not touch even her clothing.

On another day at work as a lab technician, Freda learns that her immediate superior is to show the president of the university the newly built facilities of their department. Freda does not expect—or consider that it would be any particular privilege—to be introduced to the president. She is, however, taken aback when her boss opens the door to the room she happens to be in and, clearly startled to see her there, says to the president who is, as yet, out of sight, "Oh, there's no*thing* special to be seen in here," and hurriedly closes the door. Later, at lunch with her friends—two graduate students and the cleaning lady (all three of whom are White)—she must sit and listen as the cleaning lady and students gush about their introductions to and chats with the president.

While Freda and her husband, Ed, were out during the day, they left their toddler in the care of a neighbour who they paid to baby-sit. The neighbour had generously offered to do this for what she seems to have perceived to be a struggling family. This

convenient arrangement came to an abrupt and mysterious end, however, when the neighbour noticed Ed's briefcase and discovered that Ed was a graduate student, not a blue-collar worker, and that Freda was a/n (overqualified) lab technician, not a domestic worker.

Freda and Ed had several similar experiences. Several potential employers unabashedly told them during interviews that they had the right qualifications but the wrong skin colour for the type of job they sought. One such employment story, though, stands out. During his time as a graduate student, Ed worked as assistant director for a research agency. When the White director left the job to pursue doctoral studies, he recommended Ed for the now vacant director's position. However, Ed was informed that the office would be closing—despite the fact that the company was still committed to an office lease that would not expire for another six months. It was not until later, when Ed happened to go in to head office, unannounced, to tie off loose ends, that he discovered that the office had re-opened in another venue, with a White man in the director's seat.

I tell these stories because Ed and Freda are my parents, and I was their toddler. Thus, the reality of racism in Canadian society has affected me since the very early years of my life. However, yet another anecdote illustrates the presence of another intriguing phenomenon that, in part, has inspired this study.

After these and several similar experiences, my parents decided to sell their house and move back to the West Indies. Interestingly, Mom got a teaching position at a school at which one of the other teachers was a White Canadian. When, one day, the topic of racism came up, that teacher proudly asserted, "Oh, but you never experienced anything

like that in Canada, did you? That type of thing only happens in the States." I invite the reader to imagine how incredible this comment must have seemed to my mother!

You see, many White Canadians seem not to have a realistic sense of the racism that has historically pervaded Canadian society. For example, many seem unaware that slavery ever existed at all in Canada ("Didn't slaves come to Canada to *escape* slavery?") As Aylward (1999) discusses, on the national level, Canada proudly touts tolerance, acceptance, and multiculturalism as defining features of its culture, and as a large part of that which distinguishes Canada from the United States. What causes there to be such a vast gulf between Blacks' experiences and White Canadians' understandings? What is the nature of the strategies and arguments used to overlook racism?

In this study, I focus upon the phenomena mentioned above as they occur in a small sector of Canadian society. I investigate ideological common sense justifications of racism within the context of Anglophone education in Montreal, Quebec. I seek answers to the questions raised above through in-depth interviews with several Black and White educators who work, or have worked, in Montreal's English-language educational system.

Now, these experiences are not only a dark shadow of the past. The stories I have shared agree perfectly with my own experiences, my having lived in Montreal as an adult for the past sixteen years. Space and expedience will not permit me to give the details of the racism that we have experienced in recent years: how my parents, after seeing to my grandfather's accounts at the time of his death, found themselves staring into a double-barrel shotgun and surrounded by four police vehicles because, as Mom left the bank, she had wrapped her coat around her and hurried to the car; how for quite some time, I as a

bilingual Ivy-league graduate with a science degree, had to either work the grill at Wendy's or not work at all; how being stopped by the police for a burnt headlight, the police found it necessary to search my car and shine their flashlights into my sleeping baby's face; and on and on. Add to these, my experiences as a teacher, in which I have noticed that Black children are disproportionately coded for all sorts of "challenges"—academic and behavioural, are systematically targeted for expulsion, and are systematically steered into low-stream classes. Not to mention the White parent who threatened to lynch me as well as the school principal, who also *happened* to be Black. Moreover, was it not only recently that it was confirmed that, in Montreal, the employment rate for Black university graduates is equal to that for White high-school dropouts? (Solyom, 2001).

It is with this framework of experience that I come to this research study, and I expect that by fronting my societal location, I give readers the tools to better appraise the study for themselves.

In response to those who retort, "But, how, then, can he do an objective study of racism in Montreal English-language education?" I simply answer that I am not trying to be "objective." Not only do I not believe in the "view from nowhere" (Giroux, 1997, p. 232), but also I understand that this "objective" position has been used for centuries to deny and justify the continuance of societal inequity. This is because, usually, the methods that are valued as producing this alleged objective condition are, in fact, only tools that mystify the situatedness of the researcher's understandings. All social knowledge is a function of the societal location from which it is produced, and all knowledge-making processes are interested and political. I recognize my role in this

endeavour not only as researcher, but also as "research instrument"—socially and historically located and actively involved in the knowledge making process (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Eisner, 1991). However, I have strived to be fair, trustworthy, and mindful of my own location as I conducted and analysed the interviews that comprise the data for this study.

I see this study as providing an analysis of racism in Montreal English-language education from a perspective that is not often heard. It is my hope that the study will provide material for a better grasp of the conflict of understandings that occurs between Black and White educators, and that it will be useful in trying to forge a more just and liveable future for all.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework of this study. The issues and ideas that I discuss here set the stage for how I will look for signs of racism in the data, and for the common sense arguments that justify it. I begin by defining and discussing ideology, and the fact that ideology acts largely through, and finds expression in, the common sense of a society. I then go on to demonstrate this point through a discussion of the ideological nature of a definition of racism, analyzing some common understandings of racism. I show that different understandings of racism serve different interests in society – that is, that any definition of racism is ideological and political (Omi and Winant, 1986, p. 10). I then present a working definition of the concept *racism*. I end with a short note on individual accountability for racism and a justification for investigating the societal common sense arguments that legitimize racism.

1.2.1 Ideology

If the word "discourse" refers to a social arrangement with its accompanying practices, rules, and conventions, and the ways that we talk and write about them (Lather, 1991, p. 89), then *ideology* refers to the tacit theories and assumptions of a discourse (Gee, 1996, p. ix). These theories and assumptions always "crucially involve viewpoints on the distribution of social goods like status, worth, and material goods in society (who should and should not have them)" (Gee, 1996, p. *ix*).

Lemke (1995, p. 11) explains that the concept *ideology* can be conceived in broad or narrow terms. Those who conceive of *ideology* broadly (Gee, 1990; Hodge and Kress, 1988) think of *ideology* as that which supports the meanings that *any* social group makes

– the reasoning that helps group members to make sense of and justify their reality and interests. On the other hand, others (e.g., Fairclough, 1989; Lemke, 1995) prefer to limit the definition of *ideology* to describing the meanings that "contribute directly to the maintenance of social relations of power and privilege" (Lemke, 1995, p. 12) – that is, those meanings that support the interests of *dominant* groups.

These definitions of ideology, and particularly the broader definition, suggest that since ideology always involves competing claims for power, no ideology or subject position is morally better or worse than another. That is, where one has ruled out absolute moral standards, since no ideological position can be neutral, it is impossible to hold one group's claims as being more legitimate than another's. Ideological positions are therefore judged on the basis of their effectiveness at advancing particular causes. The anti-racist stance that I assume in this study unapologetically contests relationships of domination – focussing on those based on race, without diminishing the importance of struggle against other forms of domination (Dei, 1996). To serve the purposes of this stance, then, I hold the narrower definition of ideology – "the very common meanings we have learned to make, and take for granted as common sense, but which support the power of one social group to dominate another" (Lemke, 1995, p. 2).

1.2.2 Ideology and Common sense

To further understand the importance of ideology in social relations of domination, we must understand its most subtle but, arguably, most powerful avenue of expression. In the tradition of Gramsci and Hall, Ferguson points out that "very often, ideology works through what is known as common sense" (1998, p. 38; see also Thomas,

1987, p. 105). Common sense is that knowledge which presents itself as self-evident truth. According to Hall, it is "spontaneous," natural, "refus[es] to be made to examine the premises on which it is founded," and "resist[s] change or correction" (see Hall, cited in Ferguson, 1998, p. 38) and, thus, by its nature, is extremely insidious. The common sense of a particular society will support and justify whatever relationships of domination that exist in that society, making this domination seem to be a part of the natural order of things.

The ideology of White racism is an ideology that presumes the superiority of Whites, and on the basis of this superiority, allows the domination of non-Whites by Whites. Specifically, it espouses White privilege, which is gained through the domination, oppression, and exploitation of non-Whites. Given the discussion above, we can expect that this White racist ideology would be expressed in the common sense of any society in which it exists. In other words, we can say that "in racist society common sense and immediate perception are racialized" (Thompson, 1997, p. 17).

The remaining sections of this chapter will illustrate the expression of racist ideology through common sense by exploring definitions of racism. The common sense definitions of the concept *racism* are only one small example of the pervasive, insidious, ideological justification of racial inequity that occurs in racist society. As we shall see, the spontaneous, common sense definitions of racism tend to support and legitimize the status quo of racial inequity. They create a climate for people to (continue to) be racist without having to have the term "racist," and its accompanying stigmas, attached to them (Thompson, 1997, p. 7). Thus, after demonstrating the inadequacy of these common sense understandings of racism for anti-racist work, I will present a comprehensive

working definition of racism, which is the conception of racism that is to be understood throughout the rest of this study.

1.3 Common sense understandings of the concept *racism*

R*acism* is a concept that most people feel sure they know how to define. However, it turns out to be a much more problematic concept than it first appears.

When asked to define *racism*, people commonly speak in terms of intentional acts of discrimination. They speak of racism as a phenomenon located at the level of the individual, and they feel that racist individuals, particularly in our day, are not typical of the society, but are exceptions, abnormal, rare (Aylward 1999, p. 40; Scheurich and Young, 1997). Such an understanding of racism and of the society in which it occurs leads logically toward the conclusion that where intent cannot be proved, and where no violent or, at least, unusual event has occurred, there has been no racism. As a consequence, solutions to racism are focused upon educating individuals who, it is thought, must be taught tolerance and how to align themselves with the rest of a society that is presumed to be non-racist. There is no interrogation of the nature of the society itself and the assumptions which characterize its thinking.

It is these two matters – intentionality, and the notion of the anomalous racist in non-racist society – that support the status quo of racial inequity, and that fuel much of the arguments against anti-racist efforts. Consequently, those who investigate and live some of the "savage inequalities" (Kozol, 1991) of our society, who recognize that many of these fall out along race lines, and who seek to challenge this state of affairs, seek a more careful definition of racism.

1.3.1 Racism and Intentionality

The notion that racism is always committed intentionally causes many Whites[1] to strongly oppose anti-racist efforts. Wishing to communicate that they do not, on the basis of skin colour (alone), jump (consciously) to pejorative conclusions about non-Whites, they declare themselves non-racist (see Scheurich and Young, 1997). That they do not *intend* to be racist may or may not be true in the case of any particular individual. However this fact holds few guarantees. It is not only possible, but it is, indeed, very often the case that, in spite of oneself, one unintentionally thinks and acts in ways that create, support, and perpetuate societal inequity (Dei, 1996; Gee, 1996, p. 6; Scheurich and Young, 1997). This may occur, for example, where Eurocentric standards are taken as universal, or where decisions that are made on apparently non-racial grounds disproportionately disadvantage one racial group over another.

Consider an example of unintentional racism: In North America, Whites often judge the honesty and integrity of an individual on that individual's ability to "look you in the eye." It so happens that in many non-White cultures, looking someone considered to be an authority in the eye is understood as a sign of defiance and disrespect, while looking downward is considered a sign of respect. One might easily imagine how a White person in a position of power, such as a manager seeking to hire, could misconstrue a Black person's looking downward and consistently reject Black applicants who had not learned or practiced this code of White society. This kind of misinterpretation is common, has existed over time along with other forms of societal racism, and results in the under-representation of Blacks in the work force while guaranteeing that these positions are filled by Whites. Further, this disproportion would be explained in terms of the lack of qualified Blacks – totally skirting a race-based explanation, and absolving the White players of racism. Other examples of the type of

[1] In this study, the racial designation "White" refers to those with White skins whose ancestry has its roots largely or exclusively in Europe.

racism found in contemporary Quebec may be found in Chapter 2.

Not understanding how these unintentionally racist ways of thinking establish and maintain White privilege, many Whites feel that to admit the prevalence of racial inequity and White skin privilege in our society is to simultaneously admit *personal* bigotry. To avoid this undesirable conclusion, they hotly debate and deny the existence of racism in society in any but its most blatant forms. However, this compounds the situation. In denying the existence of racism, these Whites take racism into yet another dimension by suggesting that Blacks' claims of racism are spurious and unfounded. As such, they both discredit all points of view but their own, and must resort to explaining the evident racial inequity in society by suggesting, directly or indirectly, the inferiority of non-Whites.

If it is true, then, that much opposition to anti-racist work grows out of confusions about individual intention, then for a definition of racism to enable effective anti-racist work it must look at racism in terms of its consequences rather than in terms of the intentions of its agents (Essed, 1991, p. *vii*, p. 45; Dei, 1996, p. 253). It should be obvious that, to the victim of racism, it matters little whether or not the perpetrator *intends* to be racist.

1.3.2 Racism, Society, and the Individual

Closely related to the notion that intentionality is a necessary part of a definition of racism is the notion that racism is largely an individual phenomenon. The understanding here is that racism is committed by individuals who are not representative of their society, and who are disapproved of by their society. However, the very prevalent racial inequity in society suggests that the society does not discourage racism, but, instead, provides a climate that overlooks and allows, if not encourages and produces, racism. How might this be?

Through Europe's imperialistic ventures beginning in the late fifteenth century, Europeans encountered what, to them, were "new worlds" and "strange peoples." At that time, *race* became a useful concept, not only to attempt to apprehend the human difference and variability with which they were now confronted (Satzewich 1998), but also by which to create and then legitimize the systems of slavery, domination, and exploitation essential to their empire building (Goldberg, 1993, p. 27). Since these ventures coincided with the onset of the age of modernism, modernism developed concurrently with White supremacist notions (Goldberg, 1993; Scheurich and Young, 1997). The leading thinkers of modernism espoused racist ideas, and these ideas were expressed in their work (Goldberg, 1993). "White racism or White supremacy became interlaced or interwoven into the founding fabric of modernist western civilization" (Scheurich and Young, 1997).

Given the modernist foundations of "Western" society, then, embedded racism, far from being abnormal or aberrant in Europe and those countries that are its cultural dependents, actually characterizes these cultures (Aylward, 1999; Essed, 1991; Goldberg, 1993; Thompson, 1997). Understanding this is a step in the right direction, for "once we recognize that racial oppression is inherent in the nature of the social order, it becomes clear that the real racial drama is not racism but the fact that racism is an everyday problem" (Essed, 1991, p. 10).

Some writers (e.g., Essed, 1991) have suggested that the racism in "Western" society is necessarily that which Whites commit against non-Whites. Such definitions of racism do not intend to imply that non-Whites cannot behave in discriminatory ways against Whites or other non-Whites (whether of their own racial group or another non-

White racial group). Rather, these definitions emphasize the fact that racism is a structural phenomenon. Acts of discrimination, then, must be enabled and supported by embedded racism in the institutions as well as the thinking of a society in such a way as to guarantee the dominance of one group over another/others. In "Western" society, anti-White discrimination is not structurally sanctioned and legitimized in the manner that anti-Black racism and other racisms are. Though injustices may be committed against Whites, these are quickly and easily rectified, as though by reflex, by the institutional arms of the society, which largely exist to defend White interests. This is far from the case for non-Whites.

Many of those who argue against anti-racist strategies (such as affirmative action) oppose them because they fail to understand that racism is a societal phenomenon – that it is an integral part of the normal operation of the society. Liberalism, which is "modernity's definitive doctrine," appeals to notions of the "abstracted Subject," and the primacy of individual over group rights (Goldberg, 1993, p. 4,6). Thus, in a paradoxical manner, liberalism tends to oppose any effort to level the playing field for disenfranchised groups *qua groups*. It refuses to recognize *group* dynamics in society, and the manner in which these privilege Whites *as a group*. Thus, anti-racist efforts to reverse the effects of structural and societal racism, and to give non-Whites access to some of the privileges that are largely guaranteed to Whites on the basis of their racial group membership, are seen as discriminating against *individual* Whites. This "White defensiveness" (Roman 1993) (which is often supported by non-Whites) is based on the notion that *anyone* in any society can be a victim of racism. It must be understood, however, that whether or not Whites choose to be racist on the individual level, Whiteness in "Western" society is a

structurally advantageous position (Roman, 1993). The White racial group "structurally benefits from racism" (Essed, 1991, p. 43), though each White person may not benefit equally because of the intersection of class and gender effects, which are also structurally predetermined.

1.4 Canadian Society and its Contradictions

Compounding the complex ideological nature of racism is the fact that in "Western" society it is no longer in *vogue* to be racist. Circumstances such as the Holocaust and the atrocities of ante-bellum America which were brought to light during the American Civil Rights movement, served to expose "Western" society and the potential for gross inhumanity that exists in societies in which racism is a part of the natural order. As a result, "Western societies," and particularly North American societies, easily name these historical eras as racist. They claim to have learned from these events and to have re-affirmed a commitment to the principles of equity and equal opportunity. However, they overlook the way in which race still structures their societies.

Canada is particularly susceptible to this type of contradiction. As a "Western" nation, it has contained, and does contain, the same racism that other Western nations do – demonstrated, for example, by its policy on Jewish immigration during World War II, which was "none is too many" (Abella and Troper, 1983), or by the fact that unemployment rates for Blacks in Montreal with a university education are equivalent to those for White high school dropouts (Solyom, 2001). With the possible exception of its treatment of Aboriginal peoples, Canada has not had its racism displayed internationally. Thus, Canada tends to, and does, claim superiority with respect to its "tolerance" (see

Aylward, 1999, p. 7). There is, then, an inherent conflict between the "egalitarian values" and the racist character of Canada and other "Western" societies (Aylward 1999; Henry and Tator, 1994). Many scholars have examined this phenomenon, and have named it in several ways. For example, Henry and Tator (1994) speak of "democratic racism," while Essed (1991, p. 30) speaks of "the culturalization of racism." Whatever it is called, this conflict of values along with the common sense nature of racism, suggest that, in order for the racist status quo to have continued to exist, these societies must have developed an abundance of ideological common sense arguments to justify racism. The constant attempt to evade facing the reality of racism results in contradictory positions all working toward the same end – that of "deal[ing] with and deflec[ting racism] in the same moment" (Hall, cited in Henry and Tator, 1994). This study attempts to uncover and examine the nature of these contradictory common sense arguments as they occur among a selection of educators within the English-language educational system in Montreal.

1.5 A definition of racism

Thus far, I have advanced and supported the following claims: that racism does not require intentionality; that racism is a structural and not an individual phenomenon; that racism is expressed through the common sense of a racist society; that racist common sense is contradictory. A definition of racism that encompasses these claims, and which undergirds this study is the following: Racism is

> institutional and structural as well as embodied and cultural . . . a *system* of privilege and oppression, a network of traditions, legitimating standards, material and institutional arrangements, and ideological apparatuses that, together, serve to perpetuate hierarchical social relations based on race.

(Thompson, 1997, p. 9)

1.6. About Individual Accountability

I have already argued that racism is largely a societal phenomenon. Racism exists in the structures, institutions, and thinking of a society in a manner which Sheurich and Young (1997) refer to as "societal and civilizational racism." Thus, before an individual acts, society is already structured in such a way as to predetermine White privilege and non-White disadvantage. As such, as we have already seen, racism is not necessarily related to individual intention.

Unfortunately, some take this to mean that since individuals are constrained by the nature of society, then individuals are not accountable for their racism. However, to say that racism needs to be analyzed at the societal level instead of exclusively at the individual level, and to say that it does not necessarily require intentionality, is not to absolve individuals from all accountability for carelessly perpetuating and/or reaping the benefits of racism. Anti-racist efforts have often suffered by focusing too much on either the micro-level (individual interaction) or the macro-level (societal or structural) to the exclusion of the other (Essed, 1991, p. 36). A comprehensive approach to combating racism requires an analysis that ties these together and fills the gap between them.

Gee points out that individuals are obligated to examine their theories and assumptions "when there is reason to believe that the theory advantages oneself or one's group over other people and other groups" (1996, p. 20). Further, Essed explains that understanding "the relation between ideology and cognitions and between structures and agents acknowledges, on the one hand, structural constraints on human agency and, on the other hand, that within specific boundaries individuals can make their own choices.

They choose how to act. They either uncritically accept a dominant representation of reality or seek alternative views" (1991, p. 46). She points out that to investigate the connection between common sense at the individual level, and racist ideology at the structural level, is to attempt to work in the gap between macro and micro dimensions of racism. This study, then, seeks to examine the common sense arguments that justify racism among educators in Montreal English-language education in order to illuminate the particular nature of the racist ideology that governs it.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

While the American literature on race in education abounds, there are, relatively speaking, few studies that deal specifically with race and education in the Canadian context. Of these, many focus on the experiences and critiques that Black and other racial minority students, teachers, and administrators have of the educational systems in which they are or have been involved (e.g., Dei et al, 1997; Henry, 1998; Solomon, 1997). Others investigate the effect of these educational systems on Black identity formation (e.g., Hoo Kong 1997; Kelly, 1998; Moghaddam et al., 1994), appropriate pedagogy for students of Colour (e.g., Henry, 1993; Henry 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994), how Black students and teachers are perceived by Whites within the educational systems (e.g., Solomon and Brown, 1998), or upon teacher training within the present multicultural education paradigm (e.g., Normand, 1999). In other words, with some exceptions, these studies all focus upon racism at the individual or micro level.

However, as we have seen, there needs to be an analysis of racism that bridges the gap between the micro and macro dimensions of racism. Studying the unexamined arguments, which individuals use in their everyday speech, that serve to justify and perpetuate racism and White skin privilege at the societal level is one means of bridging this gap (Essed, 1990). However, few studies on race in education, Canadian or American, look directly at this ideological common sense – possibly because of the subtle and transparent nature of such common sense racist arguments. Further, regarding the Quebec context in particular, few studies deal with race and education in Quebec. Many

of these (e.g., Barry, 1890/1986; Burton, 1887; Jaffe, 2001) are dated, and/or interpret race as linguistic culture.

Since this study attempts to examine common sense arguments and strategies that support racism among educators in English-language education in Montreal, I have had to sift through several studies for portions that seem to expose these types of arguments. Thus, the studies quoted in this review are varied. Some investigate classrooms, while others investigate schools and school systems; some investigate experienced teachers, others, student teachers; some investigate curriculum, others, policy; some look at elementary schooling, while others look at secondary and tertiary levels. However, they all, at some point, describe racist ideological thinking – whether or not they announce themselves as doing so. In this chapter, then, I hope to paint a picture of, and give the reader a feel for, the types of arguments I will be looking for in the Quebec context.

2.2 Examples of Ideological Thinking that Supports Racism

2.2.1 Blaming the victim: The "deficit model" of Black underachievement (Lipman, 1997)

This type of reasoning understands difference as deficiency (McIntyre, 1997b, p. 102) and results from a failure to acknowledge the structural barriers that non-Whites face in a White dominated society. Omi and Winant (1986) explain that when race is understood as being synonymous with White European ethnicity, one expects the significance of race to decline over time as the significance of European ethnicity does in North America. When these predictions fail because of the structural barriers faced by non-Whites, inter-group differences in social mobility are seen as a result of the different

cultural characteristics and value systems that different groups bring to bear on "common circumstances" (as though their social circumstances were indeed common).

King (1991) found that the pre-service teachers in her study saw Blacks as inherently deficient due to some imagined lasting effect of slavery. Lipman (1997), McIntyre (1997), Hyland (1998), and Kailin (1999) all found that the teachers in their studies conceive of Blacks as having a multitude of deficiencies. They see Blacks as coming from "dysfunctional families" and unsupportive homes, as not having values and "lacking ability and motivation" (McIntyre, 1997a, p. 667). These teachers see such "characteristics" as synonymous with Blackness, and as the cause of school failure. At no time do these teachers question the role of the society (and, therefore, the school) in *creating* these problems. King (1990) refers to this type of thinking as "dysconscious racism."

Illustrating this point further, Shujaa (1995, p. 198) discusses the "racialization of self esteem." This study shows that the "unacceptable" behaviour of Black students [often an understandable response to "school knowledge that inflates the White ego as it deflates the African ego" (Shujaa, 1995, p. 199)] is interpreted as evidence of inherent low self-esteem – despite the fact that studies suggest that Black youth, regardless of socio-economic status, have "above-average levels of self esteem" (Shujaa, 1995, p. 198). Thus, since institutional racism is not acknowledged, problems that result from a poor fit between non-Whites and Eurocentric institutions are blamed on non-Whites rather than upon the *relationship* between them and the social institutions (Shujaa, 1995, p. 199). Goodwin's (1997) study also shows that the onus is placed on the non-White student to "fit into an unaccepting environment rather than upon how the unaccepting environment

should be changed" (p. 135).

The notion that difference is the cause of school failure, of course, gives rise to the idea that non-Whites are culturally inferior (see Goldberg 1993, p. 6), and to the idea that the remedy for this condition is cultural assimilation (Omi and Winant, 1986). Thus, blaming the victim has the effect of pressuring non-Whites to assimilate and of withholding success until they do.

Blaming the victim sometimes goes further – as is demonstrated by Hyland's (1998) study. In instances in which there are, indeed, out-of-school social factors that could impinge upon the education of the student, these social factors are seen as insurmountable limiting factors. Instead of insisting upon education (along with social change) as one means of struggling against these circumstances, the teacher finds an excuse to "abdicate responsibility" for student learning (p. 28). Of course, because these "out of school" problems are also often due to societal racism, and because "social, systemic problems are disproportionately inflicted upon people of color" (Hyland, 1998, p. 25) the result of taking such an approach also disproportionately affects non-Whites.

A more serious consequence of blaming the victim under these circumstances occurs where school personnel "allow behaviours and personal situations to guide academic placement" (Lipman, 1997, p. 27). Lipman's study shows a clear example in which a student who was being considered for promotion to a higher academic stream was denied access because she was a mother. Teachers thought that there was too much homework in the Honours stream for her to be able to cope with homework and a baby at the same time. Another student was denied access to the Honours stream, despite her marks, because of her behaviour (Lipman, 1997, p. 27). Thus, instead of gathering

resources to minimize the possible limiting effects of these circumstances, the school makes sure that they do, indeed, function as limiting factors.

2.2.2 Colourblindness, or "denying the salience of race" (Sleeter, 1993)

A very powerful and prevalent way of thinking discussed in many studies (see Schofield, 1989; Sleeter, 1993; see also Cochran-Smith, 1999; Hyland, 1998; Kailin, 1999; Lipman, 1997; McIntyre 1997a, 1997b) is colourblindness. Colourblindness is well represented by the often heard type of statement, "I really do not see you as a Black person, but, simply, as a person." This type of statement, in one fell swoop, dismisses the significance of a person's societal location, the relationship between race and identity, and the way in which race still limits opportunity and access in North America. Thus, colourblind ideology acknowledges the existence of race, but then trumps it by denying its significance. Both Black and White teachers in Schofield's (1989, p. 50) study showed this kind of thinking when they denied that race had anything to do with student need.

In the extreme, colourblindness manifests itself in an unspoken "taboo" upon even referring to race (Schofield, 1989; see also Kailin, 1999; Lipman, 1997). In Schofield's (1989) study, the mention of a student's race was taken by others in that context as evidence of prejudice. Yet, interestingly, White students and their parents frequently mentioned race as they discussed school issues at home. Likewise, Hyland (1998) also notices that the teacher in her study, though claiming colourblindness, makes observations about her students that are all "related to her perception of race" (p. 7).

It would seem, then, that those claiming colourblindness are not really

colourblind. In her discussion of colourblindness, Sleeter (1993) points out that colourblindness is not a failure to notice race since "people do not deny seeing what they actually do not see" (p. 161). It is oxymoronic to assert that one does not see what one notices, and if one does not notice race, then there are no grounds to deny seeing it. Thus, to deny noticing race, and to insist upon not mentioning it are evidence of an unhealthy understanding of race. Socially, we only hesitate to mention to others those things about them that we think may embarrass them. Using this reasoning, then, Sleeter (1993) suggests that those who subscribe to colourblind thinking have come to accept negative stereotypes about non-Whites – probably because of the evident disparity in social status between Blacks and Whites in a system which Whites conceive to be fair. The colourblind response, then, is really a means of managing these negative stereotypes. These teachers

> conceptualize racism as the unfair application of (probably) accurate generalizations about groups of individuals, in a way that biases one's treatment of them. Individuals should be able to succeed or fail on their own merit and should not be held back by "deficiencies" of their race as a whole. As long as a teacher does not know for certain which students will be held back by "cultural deficiencies," it is best to treat them as if one did not see their skin colour. (Sleeter, 1993, p. 162)

Teachers in McIntyre's (1997a) study also exhibit colourblind thinking in that they wish, themselves, to be seen as colourless, and in that they declare that they attempt to create colourblind classrooms. McIntyre concludes that, in so doing, "their classrooms

become a microcosm of the larger society that needs to believe that skin color is not an issue" (p. 672). Thus, McIntyre suggests another motive for colourblindness. She suggests that colourblindness minimizes the discomfort that Whites feel with respect to the racial drama of the past, and the racially determined reality of the present. This, again, is corroborated by many other studies. Katz's (1983/1991) study of university faculty showed that some White professors avoided contact with Blacks and "looked away from issues of race" through a reluctance to face up to the significance of race in society and in their own lives. Hyland's (1998) case study of a White female mathematics teacher showed that she too was "reluctant to discuss race" (p. 27). Katz's (1983/1991) and McIntyre's teachers also mentioned an apprehension about discussing race-related issues in the classroom for fear of Black anger and, in the Katz study, for the fear of arousing guilt in White students.

2.2.3 "White talk" (McIntyre, 1997b)

The reader will recall the relationship between ideology and societal common sense discussed in Chapter 1. The common sense of a society legitimizes the relationships of domination that exist within it. In this section, we look at some common sense arguments that support, legitimize, and perpetuate racism and the racial status quo in North America.

The common sense arguments and strategies that follow in this section are neatly summed up in the term "White talk" (McIntyre, 1997b). McIntyre uses this term to refer to "talk that serves to insulate white people from examining their/our individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism. It is a result of whites talking uncritically

with/to other whites, all the while, resisting critique and massaging each other's racist attitudes, beliefs, and actions" (McIntyre, 1997b, pp. 45-46). In her chapter on White talk (chap. 4), McIntyre discusses several examples of this phenomenon. Among them are Whites' zero-sum mentality with respect to social goods, how they see themselves as non-racist, and the many excuses they find for not doing anything to combat racism. Below, I discuss at greater length some of McIntyre's examples of White talk and add others from other studies.

- Speaking of racism as a phenomenon of the past

This type of White talk locates racism largely in the past where the middle passage, slavery, Jim Crow, *de jure* segregation, and the like – that is, physically violent forms of racism – abounded. McIntyre (1997b, p. 162) found that the participants in her study had trouble accepting that racism was not a "past sin" committed by "anonymous white people" and understanding that as Whites in a White dominated society, they are implicated in the perpetuation of racism (1997a, p. 664). Instead, by being angry at past racism, they felt they were able to "bond" with their students, while simultaneously absolving themselves of any responsibility for racism in the present (1997b, p. 162).

- Accusations of "Reverse racism"

Failure to recognize systemic racism, Eurocentrism, and colourblind ideology together lead to another phenomenon – that of looking at attempts to fight racism as, themselves, racist. Certainly, if race and racism are treated as though they are non-existent or inconsequential, then efforts to draw attention to discriminatory practices and to reverse the effects of racism in society, precisely because they center race in a

colourblind society, will be understood as "playing the race card" – that is, attempting to acquire unfair advantage and privilege at Whites' expense.

The allegation of reverse racism is a powerful hindrance to anti-racist efforts. We see this in the courts where colourblind ideology has been used to roll back affirmative action and the gains of the civil rights era under the pretext that these measures are a form of anti-White racism (see Aylward, 1999; Parker 1998). There is no accounting for the fact that the society already privileges the White person and puts non-Whites at an unfair disadvantage.

In education, accusations of reverse racism are often laid. In Carr and Klassen's study (1997), some Whites felt that employment equity measures were "creating barriers," and "interfered with the merit principle" and the "principle of seniority" (pp. 73-74). Racial minority teachers were for employment equity but were apprehensive about the fact that it opens them to suggestions from their colleagues that they are incompetent, only having acquired their positions "because of a quota" (p. 73). Similarly, Kailin (1999) reports that some teachers complained that "Black students were enjoying special privileges" (p. 735). One teacher claimed there was a "need to work to eliminate race as an issue in school. Eliminate or change the focus of groups and funds whose membership or allocation is determined by race," and another labeled such practices "racist, maybe reverse discrimination" (p. 735).

Kailin (1999) also finds that "Black staff were sometimes perceived by White teachers as being 'racist' if they ostensibly did not cooperate with or defend the White teachers when the latter were being charged with racism by Black students or parents" (p. 738). Clearly, they reserve to themselves the ability (or privilege) to recognize and label

racism. Unable to see from any but their own White perspectives they silence the voices of entire Black communities if the communities' positions do not agree with their own (see Delpit, 1988).

Thus, unwarranted accusations of "reverse racism" aggressively assert a Eurocentric perspective and an ahistorical view of society, defend White privilege and racist status quo, and stall progress against racism and its cumulative effects over time.

- Coded Language

Less aggressive than the accusation of reverse racism is the "coded language of racism" (Kailin, 1999). If racism is not a significant phenomenon in society today, other markers must be chosen to designate race and its effects. Race and racism must be renamed.

McIntyre (1997a), Lipman (1997), and Kailin (1999) speak of the code phrases used to designate non-Whites. Some of these are "inner city" (Lipman, 1997, p. 19; McIntyre, 1997a, p. 661), "'low-income,' 'low SES,' 'deprived,' 'regulars,' and 'at-risk'" (Lipman, 1997, p. 19) or, simply, phrases such as *"those* people," whether they be "*those* people from Chicago" or "*those* people from the apartments"; or else "a tall skinny *one*" or just "*they*"(Kailin 1999, p. 739, italics added). Thus, race-based observations are still made and discussed through the apparently race-neutral language of alternative designations or the special use of neutral pronouns.

- Pity

One interesting response to the phenomenon of seeing non-Whites as deficient is

pity – a discourse of "nurturing" (Lipman, 1997, pp. 23-25) and "caring and sharing" (McIntyre, 1997a, p. 668). Several studies (Delpit, 1988; Hyland, 1998; Lipman, 1997; McIntyre, 1997a) highlight this phenomenon. Here, since they assume that Black students are from dysfunctional homes, White teachers see themselves and the school community as coming to the rescue and becoming the family that the students do not have (Lipman, 1997). However, McIntyre (1997a) shows that, as well intentioned as it may be, this sort of pity amounts to caring about the consequences of societal racism without critiquing the society that produces it. It "sounds good" and "feels good" (McIntyre, 1997a, p. 674) but stops short of producing the urgency that will engender meaningful social change. In fact, the outrage that should be felt toward a system that treats children this cruelly is displaced by a warm, fuzzy feeling that does little more than soothe the conscience and obscure one's contribution, whether through action or inaction, to such a system (McIntyre, 1997a, p. 668).

Delpit and Lipman also show that paternalism results in a "distorted system of evaluation" (Lipman, 1997, p. 25) where being "nice" results in not teaching the students (Delpit, 1988). While teachers held traditional standards of success for evaluating White students, Black students were thought to be succeeding in school, not if they were achieving academic excellence, but, instead, it they were "feeling good about school" (Lipman, 1997, p. 24). Sleeter (1993) shows that teachers felt it was unreasonable to expect the academic achievement of students in inner-city (read: predominantly non-White) schools to be as high as that of students in suburban (read: predominantly White) schools. These teachers evaded the question when asked "to define exactly what should constitute a high standard of achievement in inner-city schools" (p. 164).

Pity, then, acts ideologically to misdirect efforts against social inequity as well as to reproduce that inequity.

The above should give the reader a feel for the types of things I will be looking for in the Quebec context.

2.3 Research Questions

Inspired by my interests and experience as discussed in the preface, and based upon the literature reviewed in this chapter, this study will attempt to acknowledge and document, and, thus, validate the racialized reality of Blacks in Montreal, Quebec – at least in the education system. The study will also attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What ideological common-sense arguments and thinking show up in the speech of teachers and administrators in the English school system in Montreal?
2. What are the effects of these arguments on the situations of Blacks?
3. How is the ideological common sense that legitimizes racism in English-language education in Montreal similar to and different from that which appears in the (mostly American) literature?

The answers to these questions should give us a clearer understanding of racism in the context of Quebec English-language education in Montreal, and help to construct and strengthen an anti-racist discourse in that context.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I explain and justify the research methods I have used in this study. I begin with a rationale for my use of qualitative research methods. I then explain the rationale for comparing the responses of Black and White participants in attempting to expose dominant societal common sense arguments about race and racism. I then go on to discuss the research setting, the participants, and the data gathering and data analysis methods.

3.1 On Qualitative research

The qualitative research paradigm is one set of philosophical assumptions about how, and how much, we are able to know. The qualitative research paradigm starts by questioning the possibility of ontological objectivity in the quest to "find" knowledge. It posits that the *only* way that we can know the "world" is through our own perceptions and experiences.[1] If this is so, then we have no way of evaluating how close that which we perceive of "reality" comes to "reality" itself, since we do not have access to knowledge of "reality" except via our consciousness (Eisner, 1991, p. 45, 1993; van Manen, 1990). Further, at least with respect to research in the social science domain, there is no way that the researcher, or any knower, can "stand outside" of the research setting. The researcher enters the setting already bearing some relationship to the other people in the setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The researcher's presence in the situation, even if only to do research, changes that setting to some extent. These premises come together to

[1] A discussion of transcendental ways of knowing is beyond the scope of this discussion.

make it clear that the knower is deeply and irrevocably embedded in any effort to know, and that the assumed boundaries between subject and object, knower and known, are blurred in the social science domain (Davies, 1982; Eisner, 1991, p. 52). Social knowledge, then, becomes a function of the human capacity to order, classify, *and interpret* – that is, to "make sense" of – one's myriad experiences, and is dependent upon these experiences.

Though an awareness of the role of subjectivity in research is most salient with respect to research done using qualitative methods and to research done in the social science[2] domain, it is important to recognize its implications in any knowledge-making venture – which would include traditional quantitative research in any field. Even in the hard science domains, the role of extant paradigms (see Kuhn, 1970) and ideology (Lather, 1991), and the way they shape what a researcher is able to conclude about the natural world, is becoming clearer.

We should not conclude, however, that subjectivity is somehow bad. Instead, qualitative research understands that different social subjects actually inhabit different worlds shaped through different experiences (Lather, 1991). Consequently, the greatest understanding of social phenomena comes through exploring them from several vantage points (Eisner, 1991) thus giving rise to the possibility of useful dialogue and solution-finding. In qualitative research, then, subjectivity is an asset, not a liability, and the researcher becomes, at the same time, the research "instrument" (Eisner, 1991; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

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[2]As the acceptable paradigm for knowledge-making in this field shifts, the designation "science" is fitting less neatly than it has in the past.

3.1.1 Subjectivity, Group Consciousness, and Power

The analysis of subject positions or location in a knowledge-making venture and in the social world is not relevant only (or, in this study, most usefully) on the level of the individual. Very important to this study is an analysis on the level of social groups.

To the extent that an individual's subjectivity or consciousness is forged through experience, and to the extent that certain experiences are unique to, or uniquely experienced by, certain groups of people (Delgado, 1990; Tate, 1994), we might be able to speak about group consciousness. For example, since Blacks and women have unique experiences within a society (including racism and sexism, respectively), these groups will have a vantage point that is somewhat shared among them, and that is not shared by other groups in society. Thus, without suggesting that there is a monolithic "Black view" or "Black position," I suggest that the responses of Blacks will provide a shared and unique vantage point on societal racism.

When we raise the discussion of subjectivity from the individual level to the level of social groups, researchers also need to take into account the relationships between subjectivity, societal location, and societal power arrangements (Dei, 1996; Giroux, 1997) and be willing to be up-front about them (Fine, 1994). All knowledge is political and interested (Carr, 1961, p. 27; Dei, 1996). "The processes of creating and legitimizing knowledge about society cannot, and should not, be discussed outside the context, goals and purpose of institutional structures within which knowledge is produced in the first place" (Dei, 1996, p. 253). Qualitative research, then, insists that researchers locate themselves in relation to the work they are doing. Failure to do so is considered dishonest, and is associated with attempts by dominant groups to reinforce their

opportune positions in relationships of domination by making them appear natural and universal (see Asante, 1991; Dei 1996). However, again, as mentioned in the discussion of individual subjectivity, social phenomena are better understood when viewed from several vantage points – particularly when they involve societal power arrangements. Thus, voices that have been marginalized or silenced must be brought to the center.

Thus, because of its potential to understand the relationships between knowledge, social location, and power (Giroux, 1997), I consider qualitative research methodology to be the most appropriate methodology for a research project that seeks to examine one such relationship of domination (racism), and the arguments that seek to legitimize it. My anti-racist stance seeks to overturn race-based relationships of domination (Dei, 1996).

3.2 Design of the study

> *When, as we shall see, racism is transmitted in routine practices that seem 'normal,' at least for the dominant group, this can only mean that racism is not often recognized, not acknowledged – let alone problematized – by the dominant group. To expose racism in the system, we must analyze ambiguous meanings, expose hidden currents, and generally question what seems normal and acceptable. (Essed, 1990, p. 10)*

As mentioned in section 3.1, all social knowledge serves some social end, and the knowledge produced from a particular location in society tends to pivot around the interests of that location (Carr, 1961, p. 27; Dei, 1996). Also, as I argued in Chapter 1, the common sense of a society – that knowledge that seems self-evident – tends to be congruent with the interests of dominant groups. This study attempts to expose for scrutiny the unexamined common-sense arguments about race and racism as spoken of by a selection of teachers and educators in the English-language school system in Montreal. I speak to members of both dominant and dominated groups, hoping to point to dominant

constructions of race and racism and the way they legitimize racial inequity. I present these in contrast to oppositional constructions of race and racism, showing the possibilities for anti-racism that the latter open up.

I do not claim, here, that dominant constructions of race, and the accompanying legitimizing arguments, are held only by members of dominant groups, nor that oppositional positions are held only by the dominated. By means of their control of information dissemination through the media and education, dominant groups are able to circulate, justify, and entrench their versions of relationships of domination. Thus, Whites are by no means the only ones who use unexamined arguments that reinforce the status quo of racial inequity (see Shujaa, 1995). Sadly, it is not unusual to find members of oppressed groups who defend these positions, and their own inferiority, at least as fiercely as do some Whites (Woodson, 1933/1990, pp. 84-85). At the same time, there are those Whites who resist the dominant constructions of the world and "seek alternative views" (Essed, 1991, p. 46). Thus, I do not expect that *all* the non-Whites will articulate oppositional positions, or that all the oppositional positions will be articulated by the non-Whites.

However, it is not unreasonable to expect that there will be a general trend in this direction. Members of dominant groups can, conceivably, live their entire lives without necessarily having dominant constructions of race and racism disrupted. Conversely, as members of dominated groups, and as victims of racism, non-Whites are likely, at some point in their lives, to be exposed to experiences which stimulate them to question dominant positions and readjust their own positions in opposition to these. Narayan (1989) refers to this as "epistemic advantage" (p. 265), explaining that

> it is *easier* and *more likely* for the oppressed to have critical insights into the conditions of their oppression than it is for those who live outside of these structures. Those who actually *live* the oppressions of class, race, or gender have faced the issues that such oppressions generate in a variety of different situations. The insights and emotional responses engendered by these situations are a legacy with which they confront any new issue or situation. (Narayan, 1989, p. 264)

Essed (1991) concurs, saying

> The more experience one has with dealing with racism, the more elaborate and organized one's knowledge becomes about the nature of racism in the system, and the more efficiently one can use general knowledge of racism to understand its specific manifestations in everyday life (pp. 8-9).

In this study, I take advantage of the tensions between that which Whites say and that which Blacks say about racism.

3.3 Setting

I have not restricted this study to a particular school, and the participants have not necessarily met and/or worked with each other. In that I seek to study a societal phenomenon, it has been important for me to gather experiences from a variety of facilities within the Montreal English-language education system(s). However, this does not imply that these accounts will not cohere. Smith observes that

> if you've located an individual experience in the social relations which determine it, then although that individual experience might be idiosyncratic, the social relations are not idiosyncratic. [All experiences]

> are generated out of, and are aspects of the social relations of our time. (cited in Ng, 1993, p. 191)

On the basis of this premise, I feel then, that I can define the setting as "the English educational system in Montreal between the years 1970 and 2001" – the span of time within which the participants' experiences fall – without doing violence to the qualitative concept of the uniqueness of knowledge to a particular setting.

3.4 Participants and Sampling

As I argue above, group consciousness is achieved through common experiences as well as a collective group memory of the group's history. As such, though there are many groups that are subordinated and marginalized on the basis of their race in Canada, each has a somewhat different history, and thus, a somewhat different story to tell. It is not possible to discuss the racism that affects all these groups as though it were one racism. Rather, we might speak in terms of several racisms – each bearing similarity to the others, but at the same time, being unique to the particular relationship between the society and the particular oppressed group. Thus, in order to focus this study and avoid broad generalizations that do not hold true across all racial groups, I limit the discussion of racism in this study to a discussion of White anti-Black racism in Canada. In this study, then, I interview mostly Blacks and Whites. I also interviewed one Asian teacher in order to get at least one non-White, non-Black perspective on anti-Black racism. I made no assumptions about racial identity. The participants were asked to designate their own racial identities.

Beyond the stipulation that the participants in the study would, in most cases, be either Black or White, the sampling method used in this study was "maximum variation

sampling" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 56-57) explain, maximum variation sampling is used to build into the study a variety of relevant perspectives. The researcher determines the different social variables that might enrich the story told in the research report, and draws in those variables that the potential readers of the report might find most useful. This list is used as a guide for choosing participants. The researcher does not attempt to find participants that have all these characteristics but, instead, finds participants having various combinations of these variables.

Apart from race, in this study, other relevant variables were gender, national origin, age, length of experience, language, and title (teacher or administrator). Thus, the sample contains various combinations of these factors. For example, there are pre-service, in-service, and retired educators. There is one older teacher with relatively little experience. There are elementary educators, secondary educators, and an adult educator. There was one Francophone. The fact that I was unable to secure an interview with a White Francophone participant may be a weakness of the study. However, there were also two unplanned, but pleasantly surprising variations in the sample. One participant, who identified himself as Black, was raised in a single-parent home by his White mother – which complicated his experience of race. Another of the participants, who identified himself as White, identified his mother as Jewish. He relates that he had suffered tremendously as a child for being the only child in a small town school who did not attend church on Sunday. This drove him to identify with the only Black child in the school, who was also being ostracized.

Appendix A lists the participants by race. I have, however, refrained from listing all the variables that apply to each participant in order to afford greater confidentiality.

3.5 Data Gathering

In this study, I attempt to understand the common sense assumptions and arguments that (White) Canadians use to deny the existence, the gravity, and the ubiquity of racism in Canada. Thus, I am specifically interested in the meanings that people make of the racial reality. As such, how people speak about race and racism is extremely important. Vygotsky posits that "every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness" (cited in Seidman, 1991, p. 1). Further, Desimone (1993) suggests that "comparing patterns of communication among unequal groups may be useful in deciphering the power relations operating in everyday life. How people talk about race can be an indication of their attitudes, prejudices, and the socialization toward racial issues" (p. 414). I therefore chose to gather the data for this study exclusively through in-depth interviewing – a method that allowed the participants to speak at length[3] and share their perspectives. As Seidman (1991, p. 5) argues, "if the interest is in . . . 'subjective understanding' – then it seems . . . that interviewing, in most cases, may be the best avenue of inquiry." I have deliberately excluded participant observation methods of gathering data as I feel that they do not pay sufficient attention to the subjectivity of the participant. Though I recognize my own role in interpreting what the participants say and choosing what excerpts from their interviews to present, I believe that interviewing is the only method that offers any hope for us to begin to see what *they* see and understand how *they* understand. Thus, triangulation in this study was achieved through having several White and several Black participants whose narratives were compared.

I used an interview guide for the interviews. However, participants were allowed to digress as they saw fit. The interview guide was composed of open-ended questions

that I felt would bring out the common sense that people use to speak about racism. Thus, the interview guide included questions that asked the participants to describe racist incidents they have seen or experienced, comment on whether or not racism was typical in their environment, suggest solutions to racism, and explain racial disparity in our society. A copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix B.

Throughout the interview sessions I attempted to remain open and sympathetic to what the participants were saying. To the extent that this was possible, I suspended entertaining my subjective response to the participants, postponing this process until I was writing my journal later on, several hours after the interview. This does not mean that I did not explore participants' lines of reasoning, or ask for clarification when what they were saying seemed contradictory. However, by deferring and mitigating the extent of my response at the time of the interview, I allowed the participants to elaborate their own thinking and assumptions.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Transcription

I painstakingly transposed each of the eight interviews – word for word – by myself (Appendix C shows a portion of an interview transcript). Of course, names of people and schools mentioned by the participants were changed to preserve confidentiality. I was careful to capture as many of the markers that occur in speech, but which are not easily rendered in writing. Thus, I recorded incidences of laughter, sighing, deep breaths, etc. I also developed symbols to represent short and long pauses,

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[3] Each interview in this study was of a one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half hour duration.

unfinished words and sentences, and emphasis (communicated through tone of voice or striking the desk). Transcription codes are explained in Appendix D.

The benefits of transcribing in this manner were twofold. First, having had to play sections of the interviews multiple times during the transcription, I became extremely familiar with the interview data – so much so that I was usually able to "hear" the participants speaking as I read the transcripts during later stages of analysis.

Second, I believe that the full message of an interview can only be captured through this careful attention to as many communication cues as possible. Devault (1986) argues that since formal speech best serves the interests of men (who have defined the rules of formal speech), much of what a woman desires to communicate is expressed through her struggle to make this language "fit" the ideas she wishes to express. Hesitations and false starts, then, mean a great deal, and may be the most informative parts of an interview that seeks to investigate subordinated experiences. My experience suggests that the same is true for members of other subordinate groups, and possibly even for members of dominant groups where they have to articulate their feelings about the "sticky issues" of relationships of domination from which they benefit.

Thus, the benefits of close transcription outweighed the many hours spent transcribing in this manner.

As I transcribed, I made journal entries that recorded my early impressions of what the participants were saying. Here, I made no effort to mitigate my responses. The reactions recorded at this time became a useful tool to help me to "retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between their [participants'] narratives and [my] interpretations of those narratives" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p. 127). Having recorded these gut-

responses, I was able to compare these to the interpretations I was making later in the analysis process. Where there was a great deal of similarity, I was able to refer to my journal and review my understandings in order to make doubly sure that I was being fair to the participants, and true to what they might have meant to say.

3.6.2 Constructing understandings

In the more formal stages of analysis of the interview data, I paid attention to paradigmatic and syntagmatic (contextualizing and categorizing) approaches to data analysis, and the claim that a combination of these methods gives rise to the richest understandings of qualitative data.

In the contextualizing portion of my analysis, I read each interview at least three times. At this point, the data analysis process was guided by, but not dictated by, Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) discussion of the Voice-centered Relational Method. Thus, using this method, I read the transcript a first time to get a general feel for what the participant was communicating about the topic of race in education. Mauthner and Doucet's process of locating the interview in relation to oneself during this first reading is the one I engaged in, earlier, as I wrote my journal. In a second reading, I identified recurring themes in the interview using a process similar to Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) description of the Constant Comparative method in which categories of data are built by putting units of data together that " look" and "feel" alike. I also identified themes that, though they might have occurred only once, seemed to be windows into the participant's thinking about race and racism. As Maykut and Morehouse advise, I wrote a short paragraph naming and describing each theme and listed references to where they

were found or demonstrated in the interview. All this, however, was done within the context of a single interview and, thus, was still part of a contextualizing analysis strategy. In the third reading, using a hybridization and adaptation of Mauthner and Doucet's second through fourth readings, I highlighted the verbs and adjectives used to describe Blacks, and those used to describe Whites. The usefulness of this process depended heavily upon the extent to which the participant thought of these racial groups as distinct, and understood the behaviour of individuals as being related to their racial group membership. I recorded these words in a second analysis document and summarized the message that these words, by themselves, seemed to give about how that participant thought about Blacks and Whites. As a final contextualizing strategy, I did some free-writing about the message I was getting from each participant's interview based on what I had seen during transcription and in readings one, two, and three.

The categorizing strategies I used were as follows: as I analyzed each interview, I noted passages that reminded me, for whatever reason, of passages in other interviews. Thus, I created a document listing themes that occurred in at least two interviews, as well as where they were found. I also created documents that, essentially, juxtaposed the participants' responses to the same or similar questions. There were three of these documents, which divided the questions/responses into three categories – "What the participants see," "How the participants explain what they see," and "Solutions proposed by the participants.

In writing up the data from this study, I make it clear that I ground my understandings in the interview data by including long excerpts from the interview

transcripts. This has contributed to making the next chapter rather long. This, however, seems to be an unavoidable feature of a qualitative research study.

CHAPTER 4

IMAGES OF THE RACIAL TERRAIN IN QUEBEC ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

4.1 Introduction

Photographers are understood to be representing that which really exists, yet they are also understood to be selecting those portions of reality that most intrigue them, or that they feel most need to be told. They then move in, frame, shoot, develop, crop, and juxtapose the images for maximum effect. In short, the role of photographers' subjectivity in the presentation of what they see is understood and appreciated. I use this metaphor to describe the role of my subjectivity in the presentation of my results. In this chapter, I present what, for me, are the most poignant understandings that I have gleaned from my interview data, without putting an undue amount of effort into contriving connections between them. I believe that this presentation is representative of the multi-layered, contradictory, and chaotic nature of the thinking of a society that tries to manage conflicting values of racism and "egalitarianism" (see Henry and Tator, 1994).

This study seeks to understand how Canadians are able to speak as though Canadian society did not operate upon racist principles. What societal common sense governs the thinking of Canadians, resulting in this divergence between the reality lived by Blacks and the "reality" spoken of by many – both White and non-White? In this chapter, I present answers to this question that arose from interviews with teachers and administrators in the Quebec English-language school system. I present this chapter in four sections. Parts 1, 2, and 3 organize the data into categories that I have generated from the data itself, and which describe the bases of the types of racialized ideological

common sense reasoning that supports the racist status quo. Thus, Part 1 deals with the thinking that allows Canadians to deny racism and refuse to deal with it. Part 2 deals with the ways in which different groups can use the same words and mean vastly different things. I present, here, societal common sense arguments and contrast these with the thinking that comes from locations that seek to oppose racism. Part 3 deals with thinking that complicates attempts to solve the racism problem. The final section of the chapter, Part 4, is a response from the data to an article that questions the existence of racism in Canadian education.

PART 1: DENIAL

4.2. Denial through what is said: Unexamined ways of speaking that defend racism

In this section of the chapter, I attempt to present the types of speech that allow individuals to deny their involvement in, and complicity with, racism. The main ways that I have identified in the data were flat-out denial, arguments that distance racism from the individual, the argument that we are all racist, and the tendency to deny the present and speak of conditions as they ought to be instead of how they really are.

4.2.1 Flat-out denial

Since I was primarily interested in common sense arguments that allow individuals to deny the existence in Canada of anything but blatant, intentional, bigoted racism, my interview schedule included the question: "Do you think that the perpetrators of racism would call themselves racist, or recognize what they are doing as racist? If not, how is it that they fail to recognize their racism? If they do, what reasoning might they use to explain it away?" I asked this question after participants had given me examples of racism they had seen or experienced. The answer I

received from some participants was disturbing. They suggested that some of these individuals flatly deny that they have acted in a racist fashion – even when it is obvious to themselves that they have. Three participants speak of this phenomenon:

> Ms. L.: I think most of them, if you accuse them of being racist, they would deny it. They would deny it. If you point it out, they would still be, "Well you have no basis for that, or that is not,, a basis for you—. If ahm, you point it out, probably they would deny it and they'd think you probably have no basis for it. (Le 5:4-9)

Indeed, this flat-out denial actually occurs in a situation that Ms. Le recounts:

> Ms. L.: Like, back in high school, during junior high, I had this teacher. Like, she was very subtle about it, but there was always a group of, like, a group of Indian people where they were always like, it would be the same work, or it, we would be in a team for the lab, but they would always manage to get lower grades. And the teacher,, she would always brush them off and questions would be brushed off. It would be very subtle, but you could tell that she wasn't approachable towards them. But yet it was very different from the rest of the class, you know. And, like, ah, many kids accused her of being racist or whatever, but she would totally deny it. (Le 3:41-48)

Mrs. Page and Mr. Gregory also speak of this phenomenon:

> Mr. G.: Well, who wants to be labelled a racist? Very few people are gonna come out and openly say they're racist, you know. Ahm, someone that you always hear telling, saying racist jokes, you know, day-in, day-out, you ask them, "You racist?" "No-no-no. I'm not racist." "But you tell those jokes everyday," you know. (Gregory 6:47-50)

> Mrs. P.: Well actually, this guy who did this, I said, "You're such a racist!" And he said, he said, "No I'm not." He, he did not see himself as that. Or, ahm, anyone else whose been that blatant, if I, if I say something like, "Well you're {laughing nervously}such a racist," or "You're so bigoted," or whatever it is, ah, they tend to feel that they're not. (Page 4:52-5:3)

This type of talk, this flat-out denial, seems to serve the purpose of stonewalling the accuser. It seems that if the perpetrators are able to succeed in this venture, they will also have succeeded in convincing themselves that they have done nothing wrong.

As I have mentioned, I came to this study expecting that most of the racism in Canadian society is embedded – often imperceptible to the perpetrators and, sometimes, to the victims. The participants' reports of this flat-out denial may indicate that, indeed, a significant amount of the racism in the society is intentional – usually covert, but sometimes overt. This intentional racist behaviour is protected by the belligerent attitudes of the perpetrators, who feel they have the right to behave this

way without being challenged. These individuals, then, do not seem to be managing a conflict between competing values at all. Rather, they espouse racism and appear to be using this flat-out denial in order to avoid having to defend themselves to a society that, at least officially, does not approve of their behaviour.

4.2.2 "It's never me": Distancing the problem from oneself

The existence of intentional racism for which the perpetrator is unapologetic, however, does not preclude the embedded form of racism. This form of racism is still prevalent. As I argued in chapter 1, "Western" society is such that racism is an integral part of its thought and functioning. As such, members of "Western" society, and Whites in particular (as members of the dominant racial group), while often not bigots, usually hold common sense notions that support and produce racial inequity. They often do not intend to be racist, and do have to manage the conflict between racist values and egalitarianism. They are not conscious of the fact that they are really attempting to "cover up" racism. Their thinking is reflex, and the types of arguments they use serve to deny their involvement in racism – even if they agree that there is racism in the society.

One of the most noticeable of such strategies happens where individuals admit the existence of racism in society, but, then, verbally put as much distance as possible between themselves and the problem. In other words, for them, racism is committed by "other Whites" whom they seldom know closely, and usually have never met. M. Frederic speaks of this:

Philip: OK. So then, next question I have to ask you is this. If ~~~[1] well do you think that

[1] See appendix 3 for special notation used in transcription.

Canadians would call themselves racist?

M. Fr.: That's difficult. That's difficult. They--, because the problem is always the other. This is never him, never me. It is always the other. If you immigrant you can't really catch the way of thinking because when they have a contact with you they say, "Ah, me I'm not racist." What does that mean? That mean that the other is racist, him. Every people that you meet say, "Me, oh, you know, me I am not racist." (Frederic 8:13-14, 21-26)

Thus, no one takes responsibility for racism. "It's never me." It is always someone else's problem. We see this demonstrated in the interview data. Every participant, without exception, admitted to the racism in Montreal. Some White participants, however, went on to make it clear that they felt racism was not close to them. Several examples from Mrs. Crystal's interview make the point.

Mrs. C.: People from Labrador {where she is from} are, generally speaking, as you know, are,, really, really unprejudiced, as far as I know in the town I grew up in. (Crystal 2:17-18)

Mrs. C.: . . . this shocked me a lot because I'd never,, had students who were racist, and I've had different races of students (Crystal 2:33-34)

Mrs. C.: They {students involved in racist graffiti} hadn't been in the school for two years. Didn't even know how to sit in a desk. So they weren't a part of our education system really. (Crystal 4:13-14)

Philip: And I was going to ask you have you ever known teachers that are racist?

Mrs. C.: Ahm . . . I don't know. I'm trying to think. I don't think I've ever ~~~. No. I was thinking of Harold, but he just doesn't like a lot of people. But it's not necessarily Black kids. He likes Black kids as well as he likes White kids as long as they're {laughing} not female. No, he's,, he's a prejudiced person in different ways but, ah, race is not-, you know. I don't know any,, no. But if I did know any, yeah. (Crystal 27:8-17)

Racism does not occur where Mrs. Crystal is from, she has never known a racist teacher, and had never taught racist students until two students came out of nowhere into her educational system. Mr. Alexander speaks in a similar way:

Mr. A.: ah, what I'm, what I *really* felt was that ~~~ {sigh} the area had changed immensely from the time that I had grown up in that area. And the social issues that were going on in that area were *really* major issues in that a lot of this was, kind of, learned behaviour from parents. And that's hard to fight up against, you know. (Alexander 4:7-10)

Mr. A.: Ahm, where, where I lived when I was growing up was a street where there were many Black families on the street. So, we kind of grew up together and it wasn't really an issue. But they would tell me it's an issue, because they were experiencing it in other places, here in Canada too, like, you know.

Philip: You mean outside the community?

> Mr. A.: Yes, outside the confines of our friendly little street where everybody knew everybody and everybody was certainly fair. Uh, yeah, I say that, but then I'm sure they were people who weren't, OK. Ahm, but they would leave the confines of-, and, you know, ahm, they would experience racism, you know. (Alexander 10:42-44)

> Mr. A.: Having said that I don't, you know, I, I, believe it, in, in our situations that I've been in ~~~ fortunate to deal with people who for the most part were not racist, were *very* accepting, ah, ahm,, to everybody, OK, and would accept the person for who he or she was – not because of the colour, or the race, or the creed, or the religion -- for the person that that person was in terms of their good character traits and the character traits that have to be worked on. So that was, uh, I think it was very fortunate. Ahm, it would certainly be something that, as an administrator, I would take very, very seriously, and go to any extremes to deal with people who I felt were actually very racist and were trying to, ah, to, ah, let's say to ~~~ to continue that, in that direction. In other words, they are racist and they are going to continue their beliefs, and any chance they get they're going to expose it or, or use it to, to hurt people and stuff. And I, I was fortunate to never have to deal with adults like that. (Alexander 4:37-47)

According to Mr. Alexander, his childhood community, which was now manifesting a great deal of racism, had "totally changed" since his childhood. Though his Black childhood acquaintances would say they experienced racism, it was never on their street or in their community. He has also never known a racist teacher. We might also notice that in this last excerpt, it is necessary for Mr. Alexander to define racism in terms of the most unapologetic acts of bigotry so that he can exempt all his colleagues.

Mrs. Page and Mr. Gregory, who give the impression of being more aware of racism in society, and of being more willing to face it, admit to the presence of racism in the homes in which they grew up. However, we do still see them distancing themselves from it. After relating incidents of racism in the homes in which they grew up, both participants immediately feel the need to mention that they moved out of their homes at a young age, though little in the context constrains them to mention this – except the desire to put distance between themselves and racism.

> Mr. G.: [My grandparents are] very racist against Black people, but not to their face, you know. When I was—, I was going out with a Black girl for a while, and, you know, when I, when I brought her over, which, A) shocked the hell out of them, you know. Polite as anything to her face, you know, they weren't rude to her face at all. When she left, on the other hand, you know, the most vulgar things that you think a human could spit out of their mouth came, came, came rolling out, you know. And a-, at that point I moved out after hearing it for years and

years and years, you know. (Gregory 4:19-25)

Mrs. P.: And, I'm, I'm embarrassed to say, though, that, ahm, my parents –, I really liked this guy Jermaine {laughs} and, and he was Black. And my parents said, "You are not allowed to go out with him. And that was the first experience I ever had at home that just floored me. And I moved out when I was seventeen . . . (Page 10:21-24)

Thus, the distancing of oneself from racism seems to be a common manoeuvre.

A classic Canadian manifestation of distancing racism from oneself is seen where Canadians compare racism in Canada with racism in the United States. Of the three White participants in this study, two feel that racism is worse south of the Canadian border. Mr. Alexander is one of these. Mr. Alexander's interview unwittingly compares similar incidents – one occurring in Canada, and the other occurring in the United States. Though one such comparison, on its own, cannot be taken as proof of any real qualitative difference between racism in the two countries, I present these excerpts here to demonstrate how Mr. Alexander distances himself from racism, making racism worse in the States, when, using his own stories, this conclusion would seem debatable. Speaking of Canada he says:

Mr. A.: And some of the teams that we had, like, you know, would be of-, you know, the kids would be all Black and stuff, and you would be going into a different place, and, you know, you'd try to work through that with our kids. Like, I had, ah, certain staff members of other schools would say, like, "You're gonna stay with the kids, eh? You're not gonna leave?" and stuff [Laugh]. But, you know, and that's the type of thing, you know. Ah, it's not because they're Black that they're gonna do something wrong. . . . Do you deal with that person that's made that comment? Well, sometimes, yeah. You know, ah,, you know, you could say something but you don't wanna c-, cause a confrontation either, you know, also.
(Alexander 13: 46-52; 14:13-15)

In the United States, the situation unfolds as follows.

Mr. A.: Virginia's still a pretty southern state with fairly redneck ideas and, you know, ah, Carol, my daughter, has told me of situations that they've all left, basically, because one or two of their team-mates weren't accepted. "Well, fine, it's off. This is not the place for us,"
(Alexander 11:6-8)

In both instances we see Black members of sports teams being rejected by the teams against which they are scheduled to play. In the Canadian incident, however, no action is

taken against the racism, whereas in the American incident, the Blacks' team-mates refuse to proceed with the game. Thus, the American response took a stand against racism, while the Canadian (lack of) response supported the maintenance of the racist status quo. This seems to support a position that Mr. Bernard holds – that though the racism in the United States tends to be more overt, the responses to it are also more decisive.

> Mr. B.: So, ah, racism? Yes, there's a tremendous amount of racism in this society, and, ah, in some ways, the Blacks who live here, in some ways, are worse off than those who live in the United States because in the United States there are the numbers and you are protected by specific legislation. I read Jet magazine fairly regularly, and almost every week a large corporation is taken to court, and almost every week you see there is a judgment against one of the large corporations that the United States has, judgment against them for racism--any one of them, from Coca-Cola to McDonald's to—, all the large corporations. And in the United States, Blacks can go to court and, ah, defend, and protect, and claim their rights. It doesn't exist in this country. So in that regard, Blacks are worse off here than in the United States. They face the same amount of racism. I don't know, we like to say that the racism here is more subtle than the United States. I have my doubts about that. Racism is racism is racism.
>
> (Bernard 4:22-32)

So, this distancing of oneself makes it difficult for a society to deal with racism since it is so difficult to locate its perpetrators or find individuals who admit that they need to examine themselves and unlearn racism. Section 4.7 deals with this in detail.

4.2.3 "We're all racist"

Another type of talk, which, in effect, functions to deny the significance of one's own involvement with racism, happens when individuals trivialize racism by claiming that everyone is racist, and that racism is found everywhere. Thus, with Ms. Le:

> Ms. L.: I, I do think there is,, racism in Montreal, and it's not just where we live but, everywhere. There is some form of racism, some form of discrimination, one way or not, and it's not,, really where you live, I think it can happen anywhere. Anywhere! In the work place, school place, *anywhere*, you'll see some form of,, racism, some form of discrimination that's gonna happen.
>
> (Le 3:2-5)

> Philip: OK. Have you ever had the unfortunate incident of being accused of racism yourself?

> Ms. L.: Myself? Definitely! [Yeah?] Ah, definitely!

> Philip: Tell me about it.
>
> Ms. L.: Ahm, let's see, ahm, what happened? Let me think of an instance. I was saying, "Yes" because I, I, I don't see how you can't because we all do it, one way or not, indirectly, you know. (Le 6:39-48)

And with Mr Gregory:

> Mr. G.: Yeah. A hundred, a hundred percent there's racism in Montreal. There's racism, you know, there is racism throughout the world. I, I don't believe there is one place on the entire planet where there is no form of discrimination in any way, shape, or form. (Gregory 3:29-31)

What this argument does is to trivialize and normalize racism. It suggests that discrimination of any sort is the same as racism – that is, that all forms of discrimination are equivalent, whether or not there is an accompanying socially sanctioned and embedded component. It also seems to be a consequence of liberalism's pre-occupation with individual rights over group rights (Goldberg, 1993, p. 6), thus making discrimination against individuals equivalent to discrimination against individuals on the basis of group membership. Thus, by the "We're all racist" argument, *any* differential treatment accorded to *any* group *or individual* on the basis of *any* identifying feature – genetic, behavioural, or otherwise – is labelled racism. We see the extent to which this trivializes the concept of racism in the following excerpt:

> Mr. G.: And, ah, about that yearbook incident and drawing swastikas on the desks, you know, I confronted him, I told him, "I don't tolerate racism at all," I said, "and unfortunately I have to label myself a racist because I have no tolerance for racists. I'll discriminate against racists anyway possible because I have no tolerance for people that are that blinded." (Gregory 5:18-22)

Whether or not Mr. Gregory says this tongue-in-cheek, he clearly feels that society understands racism in a manner that construes all distinguishing between individuals, on whatever basis, as racism. Thus, in this case, taking a moral stand against racism, and therefore racists, is itself, somehow understood as racist. Definitions like these have the potential to undermine anti-racism efforts by removing the means of opposing racism

without being charged with the same.

Ms. Le also demonstrates this confusion between differential treatment and socially embedded injustice that is ideologically legitimized:

> Ms. L.: I think we all discriminate on something, you know.
>
> Philip: That's probably true.
>
> Ms. L.: Definitely! I mean, we're all biased toward something, and,, whether,, people deny it or anything, I think it's, it's so true. It is so true. Like even *me*, when I realize that sometimes, when I'm correcting *papers*, it's like, "OK well I know Sharon always does well, so, I know she'll do well, and therefore you're more entitled, 'cause-, to think, "OK, she's gonna get a good grade, so I'm gonna give her a good grade," you know. You see we do it in-, like I notice when I do that too, like, it's unintentional, but I do it, you know? (Le 5:19-26)

So, favouring a good student is made equivalent to racism. However wrong this type of favouring students may be, it cannot be compared with racism. The student is being favoured on the basis of a fairly consistent track record of her own merit. In racism, entire groups, individual by individual, are systematically repressed and denied on the basis of their racial group membership, in spite of whatever merit they do or do not exhibit. Further, this repression is embedded – a part of the nature and normal functioning of the society in which it occurs. We get a vivid picture of exactly what this racism looks like in an excerpt from Mr. Bernard's interview:

> Mr. B.: I remember best when I was teaching at the, either at Manor Place or Central High. The Black Liaison Officer was Jerry Mohais in those days, he got in touch with me and said, "Look, there's a student from Trinidad who is living over on $$ Drive and he's having some problems at the school up there." This is a fairly capable young man who came from Trinidad, but he is put in a class for retarded students. He's put in the very slow stream, and doesn't know what to do; his mother has approached the school about it and that type of thing. Well, we eventually got him into the regular stream ~~~ then in grade eleven, he was placed in the slow math stream. And we made representation to the school and, ahm we said, "Look, this guy should be in Functions" – which was the regular math stream in those days – and, ah, . . . they refused. So again we made representation and said, you know, "Look, I will personally take responsibility for this young man, and I will work with him." Well, I had to write a letter to Jackson High School saying that I was the department head of mathematics at Central High, and I would be responsible for working with this young man and seeing that he keeps up with the rest of the class if he's put into regular math -- which was functions, which I suppose is roughly equivalent to the 536 now. And they accepted that, and he was placed in this math class. Well, this child, ah, this young man, eventually scored in the mid nineties in math, and not only that, he went on to university and majored in mathematics. And, ahm, ~~~ the last*I*heard, he ~~~ is an actuary

> in Toronto. Now, ah, here is a child, really, which is being dumped upon by the powers that be in the society. His ability and talent are being denied. "It doesn't exist, it simply doesn't exist, and we'll do whatever we can to destroy it," which, ah, you know, they attempted to do with this young man. And this is still far too common in this society – very common in this society. It exists at *every* level in this society. Not so long ago when this economy was booming and jobs were easy to come by, I still meet a lot of Blacks all over the place who are *very* highly qualified who simply cannot find jobs. So, if that child found himself without strong, home support, *very* strong home support, very *determined* home support, that refused to accept what they were saying out there about this young man—. Here is this child being brutalized, really, at a very early age. This child is being turned and channeled in a very negative direction. This child is being *denied*, his native abilities. "You are not what you think you are. You are not what your parents claim you are. You are what we say you are. Go out and sell dope,! We'll feel much better about that. They'll just have to bail you out of jail or," or some such thing. You are not even allowed to become what you can. (Bernard 3:45-6:19, 48-7:4)

This "brutality" can hardly be compared with favouring a hard-working student!

Thus, the "We're all racist" argument trivializes racism and suggests that racism is inevitable and that to point to it in a society is to blow a mundane situation out of proportion. If this argument is extrapolated, it suggests that to try to eradicate racism in a society is futile. Most importantly, to use the "We're all racist" argument is to pave the way to being able to identify racism in oneself or community without having to ask oneself the hard questions that one might otherwise ask.

4.2.4 "All or Nothing"

Somewhat related to "We're all racist" arguments are "All or nothing" arguments. These arguments occur in two forms. They either claim that it is unacceptable to attempt to address the racism that one group experiences without simultaneously addressing the racism that all other groups experience; or they claim that partial measures that do not move to an ideal situation immediately are unacceptable. Mr. Gregory demonstrates this type of thinking in action. As he discusses his feelings about reporting academic achievement by race, he says

> Philip: Ahm, what do you think about the concept generally?

> Mr. G.: The concept of breaking it down? [Yeah] Ahm, I dunno. I don't, ah, I might not see the point in it if, a>h, if you don't know a) how to fix it, you know b) ah, regardless of race, you know, there's a high dropout rate in Quebec. So to focus on one individual group, you know, is like, ah, you know, having frostbite on five toes but examining the pinkie. You know, I mean, it's a problem that seems to, ah, defy, ah, race, and language, and religious boundaries, you know. There's a reason why Quebec has the highest illiteracy rate in Canada.
>
> (Gregory 17:36-44)

And with reference to Black History month, he says

> Mr. G.: Ahm, {cough} one thing I have problems with is Black History Month, you know. Why should Black History be crammed into a month? Ah, it should be taught throughout the curriculum, without putting emphasis, you know, "We're studying this because it was written by a *Black* woman," you know. That, that, that's like a slap in the face to begin with. Why do you have to identify as the author is a Black woman. "We are reading a book by Alice Walker," [Right] OK. %It doesn't need any, you know, what difference does it make if she, if she's White or if she's Black? You know, you know, putting, putting the emphasis on it, I find, is a little discriminating. Ahm, also, there's, you know, if you have *Black* History Month, you know, what about everybody else? You know, we hear about the same, you know, the old White dead guys, and we have Black History *Month*, you know, but there are other, you know, religious and ethnic denominations in the school. I think every class has to be thoroughly mixed up, you know, (Gregory 9:48-10:7)

Mr. Bernard responds to these ideas as though he were speaking directly to Mr. Gregory

> Mr. B.: Ahm, and if I may just digress here for a while: ahm, there *is* Black History month, and, ah, part of the powerlessness of Black people in this country and this city in education, is there is a *concerted* effort by a very *determined* group of educators to destroy, undermine and remove Black History Month from the calendar. A number of educators, a *number* of educators in this city – and there was reference to this in the Gazette recently – insist on calling Black History Month "Multicultural month." Ahm, again, they say it's unfair to pay that much attention to quote-unquote, one group. I find that as ~~~ obscene and as absurd as saying that maybe we should not observe, you know, Ramadan. "We should not have Ramadan or Hanukkah where we pay, you know, attention to Jews," or "we should not pay attention to Moslems," or, "let's just get it all in Christmas. Why, why have all this nonsense on the side?" That is the same sort of argument that they are making when they say that there should not be a Black History Month. And a number of educators *in schools*, throughout this city, ahm, have been, ah, very actively, during Black History Month, been calling it, Multicultural Month and, ahm, making these *kinds* of observations throughout. I've not been able to see this kind of contestation in the United States. I haven't seen it anywhere in the Unites States where people attempt to, you know, contest Black History Month. I have seen Blacks up here attempt to do so, I've seen Blacks up here make this very silly argument, ahm, we should not observe Black History Month, we should have black History every day, and so on. Yes fine, that's a wonderful idea, but we gotta begin somewhere, and don't *deny* it in order to have a better beginning. (Bernard 5:26-48)

The problem with these arguments, of course, is that they paralyse any attempt to move forward toward eradicating the racist status quo. Indeed, addressing *all* groups' needs *simultaneously*, and making the knowledge of non-White groups a permanent and integral part of the school curriculum are worthwhile ideals. However, they are also very lofty

and impossible to achieve in a single step. Thus smaller steps in the right direction should not be challenged and discouraged as, somehow, themselves racist. To do so is, again, to guarantee the maintainance of the racist status quo.

4.2.5. Speaking the Way to a Better Tomorrow Through Denying Today's Reality

Other ways of dealing with dissonant feelings about racism are even more subtle and embedded. These occur on both the individual and societal levels.

In some cases, the conflict between racism and egalitarianism is managed by simply imagining that what *should* be is what actually exists, and speaking accordingly. Mr. Alexander speaks of this phenomenon:

> Mr. A.: I kinda think that in the perfect school, you, you'd have to,, realize that there is a problem and an issue, OK. Ahm, tend sometimes to not really be, ahm, ah, as, as *true* to what really is going on. We see it as the way we would like to see it, not as the way it is, OK.
> (Alexander 6:46-48)

Ms. Le demonstrates this kind of reasoning in action as she speaks about the prevalence of subtle racism in education:

> Ms. L.: Ahm . . . I don't, I wouldn't say it's atypical, but it's not typical too because, as educators, we're-, . . . I'm not saying that you're supposed to be a certain way, but I think we're, we're, we're very open to many things and, certainly we shouldn't, we shouldn't have this, this problem of racism or whatever, but ah, it, it does happen. It does happen where some teachers, you know, are biased toward certain things. (Le 4:12-16)

Thus, for Ms. Le, racism is not typical in education for no other reason than that it shouldn't be. She seems to struggle between believing her experience, which suggests that racism is not atypical in education, and believing her ideal of the profession she has recently entered.

When this phenomenon is examined on the societal, rather than the individual level, we find that the society at large also denies the existence of racism. This is strongly demonstrated in school curricula, which do not acknowledge Canada's racist

history. Again, several participants speak of this phenomenon:

> Mr. B: Okay, ahm I believe it's a matter of two things here. Ahm, the history of Blacks in this country is not well known, even among Blacks. Ahm, people are surprised to discover that there was slavery in Montreal, not on the scale as in the United States, but there was slavery in Montreal and the same sort of heinous acts were committed against slaves—, ahm, Marie Angelique is the example that we always talk about. There's the matter of the history of Blacks in this country which, on both sides of the divide we are blissfully ignorant of that history. (Bernard 5:20-26)

> Mrs. M.: How many teachers in high school teach about the holocaust? How many teachers teach about slavery? How many teachers teach about the Japanese interment? H-, how many teachers go beyond . . . the curriculum to give the kids another slice of life as not being ideal for some groups? (Matthews 7:43-46)

> Mr. G.: 'Cause people like to forget, forget the truth, you know. You, you don't hear in very many history classrooms, you know, that we interned Japanese and Italians during the war and put them into labour camps, stole their properties, you know, beat people up. You don't, you don't hear that we, we stole Natives and put them into, to, ah, English Catholic schools to civilize them, you know. That, that, that's a hundred percent, you know, race motivated. It's not, it's not because we're doing it for good deeds, you know. A lot of students don't know, in World War I, some of the best fighters and snipers were Aboriginals that had joined the army. And when France, in particular, wanted to decorate them with medals, the Canadian government told them, "No! What're you doing? These are Aboriginals. They're inferior. It's gonna go-, you know, they don't get medals, you know." Part of our history, but you don't hear about that, you know. (Gregory 8:33-38, 44-50)

M. Frederic thinks of this as collective amnesia on the part of a society

> M. Fr.: It's the slavery first time, because there were-, there was Black people in slavery here. That, they try to forget it, they don't admit it, OK. If you see, there is a problem of collective memory. They erase, they erase this. (Frederic 9:50-10:2)

The problem is not only that these things are not spoken about, but that on the societal level, this aspect of what Canada is and was is denied. However, Mr. Gregory speaks about Canada's national self-image of tolerance and the cultural mosaic

> Mr. G.: They even, they even try and, and remind people of that in that "I am Canadian" commercial, that beer commercial with Bob, when he says, you know, "I live in a country that's a cultural mosaic, where we believe in freedom of speech and, and,, and, ah, . . . I don't remember verbatim, but he says that, ah, it's a cultural mosaic and not a,, not like a society that discriminates you know. Which is, which is, ask any Native, it's a slap in the face, you know. But they don't want people to remember these things. They don't want this being taught. That's why it's not in the history curriculum. Why, why should students be taught and feel guilt over this? (Gregory 8:50-9:5)

Despite the possible inaccuracy of Mr. Gregory's description of this commercial, he points to the fact that, given the past and present treatment of "minorities" in this country

(here illustrated by the position of Canada's Native people) it is simply dishonest to speak of Canada in these glowing terms. However, through failing to teach the ignominious parts of Canada's history, while rehearsing an unrealistically positive image, generations of Canadians think of Canada in terms of what it feels it should be, rather than as what it actually is and has been.

What, then, would be Canada's motive for engaging in this type of denial? Is this an example, on the administrative level, of the flat-out denial we have already discussed in section 4.2.1? M. Frederic suggests that this is not the case. M. Frederic suggests that this is how Canada makes progress from its racist past through to an egalitarian future it would like to feel it will have. Using the example of anti-Semitism, he shows that in the not so distant past, people were able to be overtly racist.

> M. Fr.: Mais I think, ah-. But recently, a little before the second world war, people was, in North America, not only in Canada, people in North American overtly say that they was anti-Semitist. OK, they was anti-Semitist, they say that overtly because it was a good, socially it was a good thing (Frederic 10:2-5)

It was during this time that Canada's Jewish immigration policy was "none is too many" (Abella and Troper, 1983). However, the outcome of World War II and the revealing of the atrocities of the Holocaust abruptly made such attitudes unacceptable:

> M. Fr.: But there is a revolution in this idea because there is another kind of thinking. But it was after the war when they know about the holocaust, they feel guilty, something like that, because it was some people like them do it, OK. And they try to make a mea culpa from this. . . . it become a bad evil thing to be an anti-Semite, OK (Frederic 10:8-11, 13)

Suddenly where racism had been accepted and acceptable, the society now had to re-create itself in an image that was diametrically opposed to its original stance.

> M. Fr.: Yes I think they know. And I think also on a-, globally on a big echelle [scale] yes, I think they *try,* they try to, they try to, ahm, to be not racist. (Frederic 9:48-49)

This paradigm change, then, would be accomplished primarily at the official level in laws and official slogans, attempting to create a reality that, until then, did not exist and was

not an aspiration. Thus, this form of denial forms a bridge between the past when racism was acceptable, the present when it exists but is not acceptable, and an imagined future when Canada is no longer racist.

> M. Fr.: That they want to show because I-, if they take this position to say they are not, and also, even in the administration, they make the law for this OK, they do that, they make the law, that mean that they don't want to be like this, OK. That is the reason to say they don't want, officially they don't want to be like this. They don't want to be racist.

M. Frederic suggests that, through this process, progress is indeed gained.

> M. Fr.: I, I, I don't think they want to remain racist. And with this understanding that came along to not overtly express these things, these efforts are the leitmotifs of the generation to come. So, if this new generation does not hear these types of {racist} expressions, they won't have known them and will not reproduce them. (Frederic 11:17-21, translated from French)

If M. Frederic is correct, then, through denial on an official level, Canada understands itself to be making progress against racism. Unfortunately this occurs while negating the lived experiences, past and present, of the victims of Canada's racism.

4.3 Supporting racism through what is *not* said

As I have begun to argue, denial of racism in society may occur as much through what is *not* said, as through what is said. While Canada speaks of its self-image of tolerance (itself an inappropriate description of an ideal society), it also *does not speak* of its history of racism nor of its present racial inequity and mistreatment of non-Whites. This section offers further examples of denial through what is not said – that is, the reluctance and refusal to lay accusations of racism where they are warranted.

4.3.1 Refusing to lay accusations of racism

Several participants interviewed for this study speak in a way that suggests a tacit understanding that it is socially unacceptable to accuse Whites of racism. However, there

seems to be no such taboo about the parallel act of accusing Blacks of "reverse racism." For an example, we look at the following statement by Ms. Le:

> Ms. L.: But is that something people would actually come up and accuse? I, I would-, I wouldn't be comfortable accusing someone of being a racist. I would probably say it to the neighbour, "You know I think so-and-so is," but to actually come up and say it? That's another thing. (L6:39-7:1)

Further, as Ms. Le continues to speak, it seems that even when she is quite certain that there has been racism, she hesitates to name it and express objection. After describing a situation that Ms. Le is certain is racism – where, over time, the boss on her part-time job has always seemed to hire Whites despite the credentials of Black applicants – I asked Ms. Le what one does in such a situation. Her reply:

> Ms. L.: As an employee, how do you address that? You don't!
>
> Philip: Uh, you don't?
>
> Ms. L.: 'Cause you don't have, you don't have a say in it. You shouldn't, you shouldn't even, 'cause we're all afraid of the consequences, if anything. Like we speak about it amongst each other, but that's about it. They'll never get into the boss's ear or whatever. (L7:52-8:4)

Since, I saw the problem with dealing with such a situation from a subordinate position, I asked how she would address the situation from a management position where she would be talking to another manager at her level. Her response was still reluctant, though she starts out by assuring me that she would address the situation:

> Ms. L.: Oh, definitely it will be discussed.
>
> Philip: And how do you deal with that now? Ahm, because then you've gotta get back to your employees and/
>
> Ms. L.: Ah, definitely. Ah, maybe I would try to,, talk to the person subtly, like, like,, *Why* is it that you wouldn't pick-, select person A over--. Why not – if it's the same qualifications, you know? Why couldn't you take both? Wha-, or,, why wouldn't you take person A? Maybe just . . . subtle (L8:8-19)

Thus, even in the face of blatant racism, and in the absence of power issues, we see reticence to openly address the racist incident in a straightforward manner. Instead, Ms. Le would use subtlety.

Mrs. Page is a bit different. Motivated by a moral obligation to oppose racism, Mrs. Page seems to be less reluctant to say something when she feels a colleague has been racist.

> Mrs. P.: Ahm,, well I had a, a centre director {subordinate to Mrs Page} one time, ah, used terms that I found very offensive. And I was shocked. And I thought, "How can you even be here if that's the way you think," you know? And I actually confronted him on it because too many times we face that, you know, I guess I'd say ignorance [Right]. So that {laughs}, you know, I confront the person with it head on . . . (Page 4:14-18)

and

> Mrs. P.: Well actually, this guy who did this, I said, "You're such a racist!" (Page 4:52)

However, Mrs. Page's "head on" confrontation still seems a bit reticent.

> Mrs. P.: So that, {laughs} you know I confront the person with it head on and I say, you know, maybe in a joking way, I have-, I tend to be a bit of a, a, you know, put humour into things, so, maybe, say something so, you know, back. So that's how I address that. (Page 4:18-20)

> Mrs. P.: Or, ahm, anyone else whose been that blatant, if I, if I say something like, "Well you're {laughing nervously} such a racist," or "You're so bigoted," or whatever it is, ah, they tend to feel that they're not. (Page 5:1-3)

Mrs. Page's nervous laughter as she speaks about this, and the fact that she feels the need to put humour into addressing an issue as serious as racism, both seem to point to the apparent unspoken taboo against accusing someone of racism – even where it is clearly justified.

Mrs. Matthews, also, relates an incident where a person in the position to confront racism failed to do so. Mrs. Matthews was at a teacher's workshop on children's literature conducted by an author of children's literature.

> Mrs. M.: So there was a teacher in the front row, and she spoke up and she said – (he was giving titles of books, what you consider good books). So she said, "I have a wonderful book I use every year. I have been using it every year, and it's Topsy." This was three years ago! Topsy was banned in the United States! The Blacks finally got it removed in, I do believe, if my memory serves me correctly, in the fifties. *In* the fifties! You are not allowed to teach Topsy in the United States. §. Three years ago she was telling us one of her favourite books is Topsy. It's so hilarious, the kids love it. (Matthews 19:41-47)

Mrs. Matthews was concerned that the presenter did not comment about this teacher's choice of racist material:

> Mrs. M.: I was *very, very,* upset. I didn't speak to her. I spoke to *him*. He is the conference leader. He never* opened* his mouth*! Never opened his mouth. After the presentation was over, I went up to him,, and I said, "I'm very disturbed by that teacher," and they were there. I said, "I'm very disturbed by that teacher who said that no matter what people think," (this is what she said, "No matter what people think," ahm, she teaches Topsy, she reads Topsy to her kids, and she doesn't care who likes it and who doesn't). So I went, I said, "I'm very disturbed by a teacher with that attitude." I said, "That is a terribly racist attitude," and the teachers were all there. I said, "That's a racist attitude because she is telling me that she does not have any problems with denigrating the Black children in her class." And I said, "I am very,, upset and disappointed that *you*,, did not challenge,, her remarks." He said, "Well you know, ah, it's only a worksho-, it's only, ahm, a conference and, you know, some people they're so entrenched in their b-," (Matthews 19:51-21:10)

It is quite likely that any Blacks involved in these types of situations see this reticence to challenge racism and wonder where the White person's loyalties lie. Whose side is s/he on? Is s/he siding with or against racism? Mrs. Matthews shows that, in her mind, the presenter had chosen to side with the teacher instead of with the Black children she was harming, and the Black teachers who were in his audience.

> Mrs. M.: I know he couldn't change her mind, but he might have influenced—. He might, if he had o' said something, because he's quite well known and she was there to hear him. My issue was, he didn't even offer a comment, and I feel that, ah>, he should have. He should have. But this is-, he wants to sell books, and he wants to just come and give a nice presentation without anybody making any waves, and go back to Toronto and, fine. But it's not fine, because if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem, and to me, he became part of the problem right there and then . . . because he could have influenced her on some level, and he didn't even try. (Matthews 20:15-17, 19-20, 23-27)

Mr. Alexander speaks about being involved in the same types of situations. He speaks of taking majority Black sports teams to other schools and of the responses that come from teachers at these schools because of his team-members' race.

> Mr. A.: Like, I had, ah, certain staff members of other schools would say, like, "You're gonna stay with the kids, eh? You're not gonna leave?" and stuff [Laugh]. But, you know, and that's the type of thing, you know. Ah, it's not because they're Black that they're gonna do something wrong. There may be a kid that's not a good kid in this group here [Mm hm] but don't judge them because they're all Black, like, you know,

Does Mr. Alexander confront these White teachers?

> Mr. A.: Do you deal with that person that's made that comment? Well, sometimes, yeah. You know, ah,, you know, you could say something but you don't wanna c-, cause a confrontation either, you know, also. You may speak to the person afterwards, and say, you know, "Why did you feel that way?" you know. "Well, you know, that's not right. These kids haven't done anything."

So, it is not certain that Mr. Alexander will deal with the problem because he is afraid of causing a "confrontation." It does not occur to him that the racists in this situation have already created an unpleasant situation – at least for the Blacks present, if not for Mr. Alexander. Indeed, his response does not provide much assurance that there are many instances in which Mr. Alexander *would* address the racist behaviour.

What is particularly disturbing is that while Mr. Alexander fails to appropriately address racism, he also seems more concerned with making sure that the Blacks in these situations have what, to him, is the right attitude and response.

> Mr. A.: You know, so-, and the kids sense that at times, and you have to talk about it with the kids and stuff, like, you know what I mean? And you don't wanna make excuses for this person's ignorance, OK, but you don't want them to react in a fashion–, you want them to try to understand and, not like it, but not react in a fashion to give them more, ahm, ah, you know, ammunition, "Oh I told you so. Look what they did," like, you know? You know, that type of thing. But that's a slow process and, and, you know, a long process. (Alexander 14:2-8)

In fact, Mr. Alexander seems to place a great deal of value upon passive reactions from Blacks in these circumstances. Speaking about a situation at his school, Mr. Alexander says:

> Mr. A.: Ahm, then it-, certainly when we moved into the other building, {racism} was very blatant, it was very obvious. Ah, and I give the kids credit for having stuck it out, because for the most part they were very, very reasonable. They were very, very, ahm, how would I say, euh, they were reasonable, and even sometimes were very tolerant of the,, attitudes coming from

> some other people on the other side and,, would listen to reason and would understand it's not right, but there are ways to try to deal with that, and physical violence isn't one way. (Alexander 3:40-49)

Though, by his own admission, Mr. Alexander felt that this developing situation would hinder the Black victims from achieving at their full potential, he still preferred *not* to name and confront the racism but, rather, to have the Black students "stick it out."

> Mr. A.: . . . unfortunately it was a very, very unhealthy situation, but that's why I give credit to our kids who stuck it out and were able to still,, in their own little way, do what was necessary to get by because, you know, any one day it could have been an eruption of anything. That safe environment, to me, is so important to be able to be your self and to be able to achieve to your maximum. When you don't know what your environment's gonna bring in the sense of, you know, trouble and fights, it's tough to function in that environment. (Alexander 5:42-48)

Thus, so far, I have argued that there seems to be a general reluctance to name racism. This reticence seems to occur particularly where the perpetrator of racism is White, and happens even in situations where the racism is unmistakable. There seems to be more concern about hurting the feelings of the White racist than for the feelings or rights of the victims of the racism. Thus, individuals are not even likely to speak up in the name of justice and fairness.

4.3.2 Accusing Blacks of Reverse Racism

There is a line of reasoning that corresponds to and supports the reticence to accuse Whites of racism. It is easier to justify not accusing a White person of racism if, in general, Blacks are imagining racism where it is not. Thus, there is a tendency to accuse Blacks of "reverse racism" – and there is no apparent taboo associated with doing this. We see examples of the willingness to accuse Blacks of "reverse racism" from Ms. Le and Mrs. Crystal. In the example that follows, Ms. Le was speaking about what she has done where she felt a Black person raised issues of race where they were irrelevant. She says:

> Ms. L.: Well, maybe, maybe we just need to underline to them that it's, it's, maybe if there's disagreements in something, then,, right away, you shouldn't think it's because of your colour. "Maybe you should look at the issue itself. Maybe it has nothing to do with your race. Maybe we could look into that *first*, you know, and see how you feel about it. I mean, it doesn't have anything to do with your race. And if it doesn't then maybe you're the one crossing the line, you know, and maybe we should deal with that issue instead of the race issue." (Le 14:14-34)

We notice that Ms. Le, who, above, was so timid about addressing racism perpetrated against Blacks, deals very differently where she thinks that a Black person is engaging in "reverse racism." She is very forthright about telling this person that they seem to be racist ("crossing the line") and that this is a problem that must be fixed ("maybe we should deal with that issue"). This seems even more strange when we consider the covert, "hidden," "polite" nature of racism spoken about by many participants (see section 5.2) which might give Blacks fair reason to expect that they are being discriminated against, or to feel that a particular incident is yet another case of racism calling itself something else (see section 4.5). Under these circumstances, we might at least understand why this person (mistakenly?) raised the issue of race.

Ms. Le is not the only person who is more likely to think that a Black person is engaging in "reverse racism" rather than entertain the notion that there just might be validity to their claims that they are discriminated against. Consider Mrs. Crystal:

> Philip: OK last question is, have you found that people of Colour sometimes raise issues of race when they're irrelevant? And if so, can you relate an incident that might back/
>
> Mrs. C.: Ah, when Keisha {Black} was writing her English exam, because they had asked me a couple questions another day, I went to see how they were doing. And, ah, I was reading Keisha's, and she was saying that teachers failed her because she was Black. She was, it was, like, the fifth, ah, she was supposed to be finished part 2 of the essay, and they had had four other periods at least, and she had hardly anything done {laugh}. But she was going round and round in circles with this, ahm, this, ahm, teachers were failing her because she was Black. But in fact she hadn't yet done all the parts of the exam she was supposed to do, and she was, ah, they were fooling around, you know. And so I thought, "OK, Keisha, ahm,-" But I didn't say it to her then because I didn't want to upset her because she was so far behind. And, ah, I just said, "Better get on with it because," I had to say, "you're behind," but I didn't wanna say, "You're actually-," because the others were finished part 2 and she was still on part 1. And so I thought, "That's a shame," because,, I like Keisha, and I, I mean I've never taught her so I have no idea, but I thought, "That's a shame," because she's wasted her time now and now she's going to say {laughing}, "Well I probably failed because I'm Black," – which actually she

> didn't fail. She passed in the end, ah, because I checked. But, ah, I, I think that's a shame when somebody doesn't work and uses it, you know. (Crystal 26:10-12, 16-33)

Here, we see Mrs. Crystal immediately dismissing Keisha's claim of having been a victim of racism. Though Keisha was not speaking of the exam she was currently writing, Mrs. Crystal immediately tried to re-attribute what Keisha called racism to what she saw as Keisha's own slothfulness. She would rather believe, and try to prove, that Keisha was engaging in "reverse racism" than pause to hear and entertain what she was saying. To compound the issue, Keisha did not fail the exam that Mrs. Crystal felt sure she would – attesting to the weakness of Mrs. Crystal's alternative reasoning and arguments. Keisha, then, was not trying to justify doing poorly on the exam she was taking.

In summary, I suggest that there is a reticence to openly identify and appropriately sanction White racist behaviour, while there is no such reticence about claiming that Blacks are being "reverse racists." There is also an expectation of "appropriate" Black responses, and distaste for Black responses that are deemed to be inappropriate.

PART 2: DISPARATE UNDERSTANDINGS AND CONCEPTUAL IMPASSES

4.4. Introduction

In this section, we will consider a somewhat different type of societal common sense. Whereas, in the previous sections, we have looked at reflex ways of speaking (or *not* speaking) which serve to defend racism, this section will speak of disparate understandings and meanings surrounding racial issues, which make mutual understanding between races all but impossible. Because of very different basic assumptions, individuals caught in a racial conflict construct the situation very differently and are unable, despite what they may desire, to come to any agreement. Sometimes these misunderstandings involve the use of convergent language to

express very divergent meanings. In other words, communication is complicated when people use the same words to mean different things.

In this section, I draw attention to ways in which Whites construct situations differently than Blacks or other non-Whites, pointing to the ways in which they present their unexamined arguments as common sense – obvious and irrefutable. That they thought their arguments were common sense becomes even more clear when we consider that they were speaking to me, a Black interviewer, who, they might suspect, would have a different perspective from theirs on matters of race. Had it occurred to them that I might have misunderstood what they were saying, they might have mentioned this and then attempted to elaborate their meanings. Instead, in most cases, they did not.

Section 4.5 will discuss the disparate understandings of what it means when there are several interacting social phenomena, including racism, involved in a particular incident or group of incidents. Do we or do we not treat this situation as an instance of racism? Section 4.6 will look at how notions of non-White inferiority result in disparate ways of determining whether one is acting for or against racism. The conceptual impasses spoken of in these sections are what cause racism to be so intractable in Canada, since, in any such instance, the final official position taken will likely be that of the dominant, more socially powerful, White group.

4.5. Racism by Any Other Name . . .

Often, where it seems that race is an issue, individuals will reconstruct the problem, attempting to identify other possible causes, thus, deflecting attention away from race. This phenomenon showed up in at least two interviews. Mr. Alexander and

Mrs. Crystal speak of the events that occurred at the beginning of a school year in which Truman High School moved into the same building as Farley Comprehensive School. Truman had a multicultural student population. No more than four or five students at Farley could be considered non-White, and most of these had one White parent. Shortly after the school year opened, there was an outbreak of blatantly racist graffiti. The basketball backboards on the school grounds had "Niggers go home" written on them, and certain water fountains in the building were marked, Jim Crow style, "Whites only" and "Blacks only." A third fountain was marked "Outlaws only" for the gang responsible for most of these acts. Whatever else might have been the case, race played a significant role in what was happening. However, Mr Alexander and Mrs. Crystal introduce other causes:

> Mr. Alexander: . . . but they were just ignorant people who had, ahm, unfortunately, very, very one-sided beliefs, an>d, it wasn't, I'm not su-, even sure if it was, you know – it certainly had to do with colour -- but it also had to do with territory. We were coming and taking their territory and they didn't want us to take their territory. They didn't want that. It happened that most of our kids were Black.[2] So, not only were we taking the territory, but the Blacks were gonna move in and take their school and so on and so forth, you know. (Alexander 5:34-40)

> Mrs. C.: I think territory was a big thing too, you know. Obviously, when, when, there was a couple of things happened,, before the move was made. First of all, the move shouldn't have been made unless we were all put together, instead of like taking two—. Also Truman and Farley Comprehensive High, (which I didn't teach in at the time), they were always enemies. So there was—, it goes way back {laugh}. Again, territorial. Apparently there always used to be fights between them. I didn't-, it would appear that way. And so it goes back and back and back. And then, ah, the fight for students between Farley Comprehensive and Truman – not necessarily the teachers, but--. When I taught elementary school it was always this, "Truman is a private school. Farley Comprehensive is –." So, on the one hand you had this inferiority complex coming from a lot of the Farley Comprehensive students, that "this school, they think they're hoity-toity," you know. Farley Comprehensive saw itself as kind of a-, the underdog, you know. (Crystal 6:26-40)

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[2] The statement, "most of our kids were Black" is an interesting one. When I came across this statement during transcription, I stopped immediately and went to check the school yearbook for the year in question. It turns out that there were 236 Truman students that year of which 74 were Black. If other people of Colour are included in this count, there were 83. Thus, there were 31.36% Blacks or 35.17% people of Colour – by no means most of the students in the school!

In both instances, the participant goes to some lengths to suggest causes for the conflict that were not related to race. This is somewhat peculiar in the context of our discussion, which was about race, and where, in each case, the incident was brought up by the participant her/himself as an example of racism.

In these instances, neither participant denies that race was a part of how the problem manifested. What, then, is the purpose or benefit of trying to find other explanations for this example of racism of the most bigoted type? It might be that they felt that mentioning other possible reasons for the incidents would somehow mitigate the apparent extent of the racism. It might also be that this way of thinking about the incidents freed them to avoid laying accusations of racism (see section 4.3.1) and justified solutions that did not front race and racism.

However, there are other possibilities. It is possible that this is an example of how the social locations of participants in a social situation affect knowledge production. In this case, my identity as a Black man may well have affected how the participants responded. Both participants knew that I was very much aware of the incidents that had transpired in their building, and they may have suspected (correctly) that I had not been satisfied with how the incidents were handled. As one of the clearest and most recent racist incidents we had experienced together, they may have felt obligated to mention it in response to my request for examples of racist incidents. The other reasons they offered, then, may grow out of their reluctance to think of the incidents in racial terms.

Though I might agree with Mr. Alexander and Mrs. Crystal that territory *triggered* the incidents, the fact that the conflict manifested itself in racial terms, to me, points toward a deeper, more fundamental problem of race. Mr. Alexander and Mrs. Crystal

seem to hope to downplay the racial problem by mentioning the matter of territory. Through a reflex type of reasoning, they seem to assume that the presence of other motives may mean that the situation only *appears* to be racist when it is, in fact, not. As such they can "deal with the situation" without dealing with racism. I, however, see the racial manifestation of a territorial problem as an indication of an underlying, festering sore of racism that breaks open and spews its infection at the slightest touch.

Mr. Henry has similar feelings to mine about incidents like these:

> Mr. H.: If you're in an argument with someone or in a fight with someone and you don't consider yourself a racist, but when you're fighting with that person, like, argumentative, not physically but verbally, and,, a word comes out like "nigger" or "Black ass" or "Honkey" or "White pig," if those words come outta your mouth, then there *is* some racist,, racism in you because you shouldn't be fighting with those words. You can call someone, "You know what? You're an idiot." You're picking on the individual, something they could change. They can't change what they look like or, what colour their eyes are or their hair, so don't ~~~ don't even bother with that because it shouldn't be a thing. (Henry 7:11-18)

Mr. Gregory also expresses similar ideas:

> Mr. G.: Even when it's your own friend you're playing around with, you know, and saying things, I hear it, I hear it in my classroom, you know, ah, you know, think of things to say, but it shouldn't be, it shouldn't be, you know, race or ethnically motivated. If you're gonna call your buddy something, you know, call him something general as opposed to being specific, you know, ah, you know, don't call your friend, ah, you know, "C'mere you Vietnamese Kook," you know. That's, you know, that's . . . I dunno,, I dunno if you wanna say it's a form of racism, you know, you're talking to your buddy. I guess you'd have to say, "Yeah it is," you know. Why, why does he have to be a Viet-, Vietnamese Kook, you know? Why can't it be, you know, why can't it just be a dumb idiot, you know (Gregory 23:3-12)

but at one point, Mr. Gregory too seems to hesitate to name a racist incident for what it is.

> I dunno if you wanna say it's a form of racism, you know, you're talking to your buddy. (Gregory 23:9-10)

What we are seeing here, then, is the tendency to look at racism in terms of the intentions of its agents rather than in terms of its effects. The reasoning is that if other concurrent motives can be found, then there may really be no racism. The result

is that racism is ignored. This is particularly dangerous in a context where, indeed, many racist incidents pose as non-racist. If in instances where the racial terms are as clear as they are in the above instances, this waffling about naming a racist incident occurs, what might happen when the racial terms are not as clear? We have already discussed the tendency to deny racism (see section 4.2). Re-attributing the cause of (and thus re-naming) racism in these instances can serve to totally obscure the racism and ensure that it is not dealt with accordingly. Mr Gregory discusses this:

> Mr. G.: I dunno, people always try and find justification, 'cause like I said, no one wants to be labelled a racist, you know. They're always gonna have a reason for doing it, and, you know, moving from, say, student to,, you know, employer or teacher, you know, who don't wanna be labelled racist, you know, there's always things, you know. If you look at something, you could find a reason to dislike it, you know. If you're looking at applications and you wanna make sure that you're only hiring, you know, White Catholics, you know, you could find things in their first day on the job, or in their application to, to pick out, you know. And you say, "Well I'm not racist *but*, you know, ah,, these, these guys stayed like, five minutes after work and did a little bit o' extra. He didn't!" Or, you know, "He took two minutes extra on his lunch-break," you know, or, you know, "He only did 8000, you know, pieces on the assembly-line this afternoon. This, other, this other guy did eight-thousand twen-," you know, you could find little things to try and pick at to try and justify this so you don't have to, you know, have someone say you're racist. (Gregory 7:28-40)

He also offers an example from his experience:

> Mr. G.: But, ah, here in Montreal, I mean, I've seen, I've seen blatant, ahm, discrimination. I remember one incident, I was downtown with, ah, a friend of mine who's Black and we were going to $$ on $$ street. I'd been there a couple of times. And, ah, we were walking down, and,, he was behind me, and I walked in and just after I walked in, the doorman stepped in front of my friend and said, "It's, it's-, tonight you have to be over 21," knowing that we weren't over 21. We were both 18. And I said, "Say, well that's funny. You didn't stop me and ask for ID or anything," you know. And then when I said that, then he said, "Well I need ID. You have to be 21 to get in." I said, "I've never heard this before at this club ever," you know. And he started to get a, a bit flustered. He was losing his patience quickly, you know. Maybe they had problems with people that night or the week before but,, it was not 21 and over night, you know. That was pretty obvious. You know, you peek in the door and you don't, you don't see any non-White faces. (Gregory 3:41-4:1)

Here, then, by the simple expedient of re-naming the race-based motive with a title not obviously related to race, the means by which the incident can be identified as what it really is (racist) becomes much more difficult. As Mr Gregory says:

> Mr. G.: Like the doorman didn't say, you know, "Hey! No Blacks allowed!" [Right] you know. He said, "It's over 21 tonight, guys," you know. [Mm hm] (Gregory 4:31-33)

Thus, in a context where there is covert racism – where race motivated incidents are deliberately made to seem otherwise, the common sense notion that the presence of other possible motives for an incident that manifests in racial terms lessens the impact of the racism is unjustified. Instead, this mode of reasoning serves to maintain the racist status quo by appealing to colourblindness and focussing upon motives and intentionality. Race is not made explicit, and thus, racism is not dealt with.

Mr. Bernard shows a very different way of reasoning in circumstances where multiple causes may be working alongside racism. Mr. Bernard, like the other participants, was asked whether schools and the school system should play a role in the combating of racism in society. If the participant answered, "yes," s/he was then asked to describe her/his ideal school and how it would operate to achieve such a goal. Mr. Bernard begins his response with:

> Mr. B.: The school I'd like to see, ah, must be cross-cultural ~~~ right across the cultural and economic spectrum (Bernard 13:50-52)

and as he continues to describe his school, Mr Bernard's strategies for dealing with racism often brought in matters of low socio-economic status. For example:

> Mr. B.: The parents of Monson[3] desperately wanted,, uniforms in that school, and I believe that the ideal school, in order to remove the, ah, some of the economic disparities, should have all the children wearing the same things. We don't have to be fanatical about it, but to remove that tremendous competition where children will go and steal in order to look good at school. (Bernard 15:1-4)

Also,

> Mr. B.: OK, so looking at, ah, parental representation, an attempt must be made, call it affirmative action, to have the concerns of all parents addressed. And the example I go back to is Mark Sailes

[3] Monson is a municipality with a high percentage of black residents.

> High where the parents from Monson were made to feel very unwelcome. I remember very well sitting at a parents' committee meeting, and we were sitting around before the meeting began. It was the first meeting for the year, and we had worked hard to get some parents from Monson there. And they were at the table and there was some cross-talking. But what, what was the talk?
> -- "Jim did you take the boat out of the lake?
> -- "Oh my-, I had such a terrible time in getting that boat out of the lake, and, ah, the children want to have this party up there." And "my boat this, and my cabin this, and, "on the lake you know what it's like" and the Black parents who have no lake, or boat, they're sinking under the table because it's literally saying, "This does not include you." I, I don't know if that was deliberate, but you get these kinds of situations when, ah, parents from the lower socio-economic, ah, levels attempt to participate in the life of the school.
>
> (Bernard 15:26-41)

Why might Mr. Bernard seem to be dealing with race and socio-economic status simultaneously? Being Black himself, and not poor, Mr. Bernard is not likely to be thinking of all Blacks as poor or that Blackness is synonymous with poverty. However, it would appear that his reasoning is that these socio-economic factors disproportionately affected Blacks in his school. However, he does not use the presence of these other factors as an excuse to ignore race. Rather, he seems to reason that wherever some apparently non-race based factor has a disproportionate negative effect upon one (or more) race(s), the society must give this factor *more* attention in order to avoid racialized outcomes. This theme carries through Mr. Bernard's entire interview. Indeed, when asked whether there was anything he wanted to emphasize at the end of his interview, he concluded with the following comments:

> Mr. B.: I had talked about the need for, ah, children seeing themselves represented in the school, on the staff. And, ah, this is something that the educational institutions, both the schools and the education faculties, *must* begin to address. You've gotta find ways to have*education*faculties*graduate*, ah, you know, people who are representative of the face of the new Montreal. You can build quite an argument, to exclude people. But our position is just this, that you've gotta find ways to have*education*faculties*graduate*, ah, you know, people who are representative of the face of the new Montreal. Montreal is not the all White, society that it used to be. They've got to put the kinds of programs in place, if Blacks are not making it, to support Blacks so that they will qualify to enter. We're not talking about lowering standards. They don't have to lower the standards. But you've got to do what's necessary to correct the kind of discrepancies you have in your society. And if you've got schools where, ah, large sectors of the population . . . are not represented, well there's something wrong with the system and you've got to do something so that they can find a place.
>
> (Bernard 20:40-42, 20:51-21:2, 21:8-10, 23-26)

Thus, Mr. Bernard feels that it is the responsibility of the school or school system to "do the things, whatever these things are, that are necessary" to overcome the effect of low socio-economic status and other factors that seem not to involve race, but which have a racialized effect. To *not* do so, by his reasoning, would be racist.

To summarize, then, one form of societal common sense tends in the direction of finding non-race-based causes for conditions that manifest in a racist manner. If factors other than race come into play, the racial aspect is completely ignored and the society is absolved of the guilt of racism. The oppositional anti-racist position might be to take *any* situation that has a disproportionate racial effect and give it appropriate attention. For the society to fail to do so is for the society to demonstrate its apathy about racial inequity and for it to sanction societal racism.

4.5.1. The example of Skyview

One very poignant example of what can and does occur when policies that have a disproportionately racist effect are not looked at as racism is exemplified by the following discussion.

One interview question was: "The Toronto Board of Education has found that Blacks are over-represented among the low achieving, bottom stream, "at-risk" students. Do you get the sense that the same is true in Quebec?" Both Mr. Bernard and Mr. Henry respond to this question with reference to Skyview High School, a school for students with "special needs." However, they respond in very different ways:

> Mr. B: I would be very surprised if it's not. As a matter of fact, *my* experience tells me that it is. Ahm, and of course, I go back to Skyview high school which is a school for the mentally retarded. And although Blacks have represented, I think, at the highest level, maybe 15, 20% of the population of the school board, they were always more than 50% of that Skyview population

~~~hmpph ~~~ even up to this day. (Bernard 12:48-52)

As Mr. Bernard discusses Skyview, it is clear that he feels that racism is the reason for the preponderance of Blacks at Skyview.

Mr. B.: but the majority of the students in there are still Black for all kinds of reasons, race being, you know, the main one (Bernard 7:47-48)

He explains that Black children coming from the West Indies were assumed to be mentally retarded for several reasons. First, the fact that they spoke with accents, and sometimes in forms of English that were not standard Canadian English, led to communication difficulties between students and teachers.

Mr. B.: what they were doing in those days . . .ah, when the children arrived and,, the teacher would complain that, "I cannot understand what they're saying, and they cannot understand me,. We'd better test this child. Maybe this child is mentally retarded," they were given intelligence tests, and on the basis of these intelligence tests, they were placed in, the school or the stream for the mentally handicapped, the mentally challenged. (Bernard 7:48-8:1)

Also, students who had recently moved to Canada from the West Indies suffered from culture shock. They were not accustomed to the manner in which the society operated, and schools were doing nothing to help acclimatize them. In fact, they were exacerbating the situation.

Mr. B.: One of the things we were able to do in the Board of Black educators is to make educators aware of the culture shock which Blacks coming from outside of this society experience. I have . . . ah, two examples come to mind. One, and these were, ah, so horrific, it's not as bad now, but I remember an example of a child in some very low grade, grade one, two, or three, something like that, in an elementary school. This child was in shock and was hiding beneath the desk, OK. Now, this child needed reassurance and comfort, and support, and this type of thing. Instead of this, the teacher saw this as disruption and reported it to the principal. And the principal's response was to call the mother of the child who was, ah, who was very pregnant at the time – huge stomach in front of her – ah, call and say, "Look here, Ma'am, your child is disturbing the class. Come and get your child from the school." And the poor mother, new to the country, not really knowing her rights and so on, she rushed over to the school, got there just in time to see the caretaker, you know, pushing the child out the building. (Bernard 7:31-44)

Thus, Black students were being placed in Skyview School because White teachers and a White school-system were unable to understand these children, their cultures, and their unique circumstances. If one is to give the White educators in this instance the benefit of
~~~

the doubt that they were not trying to discriminate racially, one must assume that they understand such situations in a colourblind fashion. They would, thus, be able to cite a number of alternative reasons for their decisions. As happens all too often in these circumstances in schools, learning disability and behavioural challenges would be among the first to be named. Later, investigations into students' home lives (where social workers might not find the cultural trappings associated with Canadian understandings of good child-rearing practices) and parents' lack of cooperation with efforts to code their children, would provide rich sources of other means to blame the victim and deflect attention from what is, in actual fact, systemic racism.

Anyone seeing this situation, and taking the position that Mr. Bernard might take – that is, that racial disparity suggests policies that are racist in their effects – would quickly have examined the disproportion at Skyview, discovered the source of the problem, and tried to take steps to rectify it (as the Quebec Board of Black Educators did, indeed, attempt to do). Instead, it would seem that the school board(s) to which this school belonged never found the racial disproportion alarming. They saw no racism. Mr. Henry's comments illustrate this perspective. Mr. Henry taught at Skyview earlier in his career, and claims[4]:

> Mr. H.: In my other school, no. Not a thing that was racial in my other school. You, you would s-, it wa-, you would say, "*What*? That's hard to believe," but in a way, if I told you what school, say Skyview High School. What kind of school was it? Special needs. Everybody in that school was a special needs teacher. They've seen,, everything -- especially because they're more accepting to different problems [Right] be it mental disability, physical disability, you know, we, ah, schizophrenia -- any type of student that we've had there has multitudes of problems. The teachers there *relate* and they have to *accept.*
>
> (Henry 13:39-45)

Mr. Henry sees no racism at Skyview. Obviously, in this case, his definition of racism corresponds to the dominant common-sense definition – intentional bigotry on an

individual level. Here we can note the effects of such colourblind thinking. Mr. Henry is Black, but in understanding racism this way, the situation at Skyview caused him to have a dim view of the intelligence of Blacks. Asked the same question as Mr. Bernard about over representation of Blacks in lower streams, he responds:

> Mr. H.: {Long pause} Before, {laughs} before I came to work at this school, I might have said, yeah, I believe it's probably true. You know, I might just, just from what you see, I guess it really depends on what school you're teaching at, which area you're teaching at, you know. But I would say, "No it's not true." Right now, after working here, I would say, "No. It's not true." (Henry 20:7-11)
>
> Philip: OK. But you're saying before you came to this school that you're working at now, that you might have thought so. Is that on the basis of,, your last school teaching experience or what?
>
> Mr. H.: I guess,, my last school {Skyview} teaching experience, yeah, because I was in a special needs school there was a, a lot of special needs at my school that were not Caucasian, a lot of visible minorities, but it was simply because, you know, for the most part, I would say,, half the students in that school that were sent there because of low grades in the previous school was because of our language policies (Henry 20:20-28)

First, Mr. Henry hears the question about over-representation in non-academic streams as a question about Black intelligence. Then, he says that, previously, on the basis of the ratio of the Whites to non-Whites at Skyview, he would have judged Blacks as less intelligent. He does all this without realizing that he has, indeed, answered that Blacks are over-represented in lower streams – in this case Skyview school. This is an excellent example of how conceiving of race as ethnicity results in blaming the victims of racism for their plight (Omi and Winant, 1986; Sleeter, 1993). In this case, Mr. Henry's colourblindness has caused him to have a negative evaluation of his own racial group. One can only guess the number of other such situations in his life and wonder about their psychological impact upon him. Fortunately, from experience in another school, he no longer has as dim a view of Black intelligence. As he reflected upon the situation during

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[4] It seems clear that Mr Henry's experiences at Skyview were post Bill 101, while the experiences that Mr. Bernard describes are pre- Bill 101—though he emphasizes that the ratios are similar today.

the interview, he began to feel that Skyview was a trap for many non-Whites,

> Mr. H.: Few. Few will get a high school leaving certificate. You might get one or two each year,, out of a class of fifty, let's say. 'Cause some of them at that school, they're not all the same, right. Some *are* special needs, really special needs. Some are just,, educational-wise, language-wise. (Henry 22:17-20)

> Mr. H.: It sort of is a trap, yeah. . . . It sort of is a trap,, for those high school years. (Henry 23:29)

However, in the interview it never becomes clear that he understands it as racism. Indeed, though in the society at large, Bill 101might be seen as "racist" because of how it affects Anglophones in general, it is seldom, if ever understood or discussed, at that level, as having racist effects for non-Whites based on their cultural/racial/national group identities. This law needs serious examination through an approach that makes race explicit. Again, to not do so is to ignore racism and, through an act of omission, be racist.

4.6. Will the Real Racist Please Stand Up: Common sense understandings of what it means to be racist

One question on the interview guide read, "The Toronto Board of Education reports educational achievement by race (among other social categories). This is not the case in Quebec. Why do you feel this is so, and what do you feel about this practice?" The question was designed to probe the participants' feelings about colourblindness. There was a knee jerk negative reaction from most of the participants.

> Mrs. C.: I'm not crazy about it -- the idea. (Crystal 23:49)

> Mrs. P.: Well I can't imagine why. (Page 11:36)

> Ms L.: Well it's the first time I hear about it. Ahm,, it's a little,, unusual. What's, what's the relevancy? (Le 10:37-38)

> Mr. A.: I would ask why do they feel that they have to report it by race. (Alexander 12:20)

M. Fr.: I think this is a not a very good idea. (Frederic 13:31)

Interestingly, the three responses that were not immediately negative came from Black participants. In fact, two of these were enthusiastically positive. Using the reasoning mentioned above (in section 4.5), Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews both felt that this reporting by race would bring to the forefront the racial inequity in society:

Mr. B.: I would prefer it, that kind of reporting by race as is done in Toronto. I, I know that they'll probably resist it like hell here. I have always been in favour of schools being evaluated, of teachers being evaluated, of children being evaluated. Not evaluated in a punitive way, but evaluated so that resources can be brought to bear on difficult situations. If they begin to do evaluation and report it by racial categories, then, ah, the question must arise, "Why are the schools with majority Black populations doing so poorly academically?" Then, ah, people will be forced to deal with these kinds of situations. "Why school X which has 70% non-Whites/ Blacks, why is that school doing so poorly? Why in the grade six board-wide or province-wide examination or evaluation, ah, that school is doing so poorly? Is it that teachers in that school are not performing. Is it a matter of resources? Do you need different kinds of resources, not necessarily more, but different kinds? And should the resources be used in a different kind of way? Ah, those questions will arise, but, ahm, I'm in favour of reporting the way that they do in Toronto. And if they do that consistently and really look at the result, they will be forced ~~~ to address that situation ~~~ in a way that I guess it's not being addressed at the present time.
(Bernard 13:11-25)

Mrs. M: I think it's a very good way to bring it down to that-, to really* do* a* valid* comparison. You know, where this group is compared to this group, and you can just, you can just put your race down as your parameter and can go right across. And you can see who's on the bottom rung of the ladder. I think it's very good in the sense that it'll give you a -. Without sifting through this and this and this and this, you just look at that and you can see where everyone's at. I find, I, I find that it's a,, a good yardstick.
(Matthews 23:5-13)

Clearly, Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews reason that systemic racism would be the cause of whatever disparity this type of reporting might uncover. This is evident as they discuss the reasons that Quebec does not do this type of reporting, as Mrs. Matthews does in the following excerpts:

Mrs. M: So, I think Quebec will always shun such a thing because they try to make that they are such a inclusive society, that they do operate to include visible minorities, that we *do* have access to education, employment, our opportunities are as great as anyone, so it's-, I do not think that Quebec wants to see on paper that they are totally racist! (Matthews 23:24-27)

It is interesting to note, here, that Mr. Bernard is very consistent in his stance toward the equality of social groups and the meaning of disparity of achievement between them. The 1991 Canadian Census found that a higher percentage of Black men in the 55 – 64 age range hold university degrees than the national average for all Canadian men in that age group. At the same time, Black women in the same age range are below the national average. When asked to suggest an explanation, Mr. Bernard says this:

> Mr. B.: Ahm, in the sixties, when there were all kinds of changes in the immigration laws, Blacks came here in significant numbers to go to school. Occurring at the same time was what was called the domestic scheme, where Black women were brought up here to work in homes, and some of those women have done extremely well like, ah, $ $ the, MP in Ontario . . .{But} a large number of women were brought up to do domestic work, and I think that may be responsible for that imbalance there between male and female and the number with degrees. For a long time, because of the immigration restrictions and laws and so on, Blacks, ah, were more qualified or had more university, ah, years of schooling, as a group than Whites because, ah, Blacks were only allowed here to go to school, and only after going to school you could have, you know, become an immigrant. So, ahm, Blacks were more qualified, they have more degrees and etcetera, etcetera, in that older age group and, ahm, and of course the imbalance is because of the domestic scheme. (Bernard 10:7-25)

Thus, in neither case is Mr. Bernard willing to essentialize. Both in cases where Blacks are ahead of the average, and in those where they are behind, Mr. Bernard explains racial disparity by citing external social influences – even in this case where essentializing might flatter the group(s) to which he belongs (i.e., Black men). This is consistent with a stance that truly believes that no race is inferior to another.

Mr. Henry also responds positively to the notion of reporting by race, but with some reserve. He fears that if these results are publicized, those with preconceived notions about non-Whites will conclude that disparity means non-White inferiority. Yet Mr. Henry still suggests that racial disparity needs attention, and thus, he sees a point behind reporting by race.

> Mr. H: First e-, ah, for statistics, it should be done, maybe. For stats only, Stats Canada, can do it – fill their boots and do that. Any other reason to post it or publicize it, I don't necessarily think it has to be done. Stats Canada can do it, just to keep a tab on –, see what's changing in our, in

> our country. I don't think it should be publicized {laughing} beyond the people that need to just watch statistics and try and do something to increase it, 'cause I think at the same time, you tell people that and {laugh} again, it's that hidden thing in their brain, it says "Oh, they're-," Click! "Oh yeah. OK. So this Black student is not being this." Or, "In this area, these White students are trash and they're not going to aspire to much anyway." So they start to accept it, and they start taking lower quality work from them, and they demand less of them. So I don't think, teachers need to know it. I don't think principals at a high school level need to know it at all.
> (Henry 19:17-19, 20, 47-20:1)

In summary, then, Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews are in favour of reporting educational achievement by race so that systemic inequity can be exposed. Mr Henry is also in favour of this type of reporting in order to create an awareness of "how things are changing," but insists that the results should not be publicized "beyond the people that need to just watch statistics," lest disparity be taken to mean inferiority by minds pre-disposed to racist thinking.

I explored the responses of those participants who did not favour reporting educational results by race to find out what the source of their discomfort might be. I found that Mrs. Page, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Alexander and Mrs. Crystal all realize, after their initial reactions, that there could be some merit to this reporting in that it would reveal racial disparity and help governments understand where they need to allocate resources. However, they remain uncomfortable with the idea.

Mrs. Crystal, for example, is able to see the merit of the idea only when she makes a comparison with reporting by gender, which she is not against. However, she still concludes by asserting her discomfort with reporting by race.

> Mrs. C.: Well, it would only be helpful in the case of . . . if, if it were understood – same thing with how women are doing. But in, in another way it ~~~ seems, ah, like a s-, ~~~ like a segregated way of doing it. But maybe that's wrong. I,, I dunno. Just my first – . My instinct, my instinct is that I don't really like it because it's too much division, you know. Like, this group and that group.
>
> Philip: What about gender? They do it by gender as well.
>
> Mrs. C.: Yeah, see. This is the only way I could understand it. 'Cause,, 'cause, ah, there's a,

> there's a saying. What is it? The a-, like the power structure. White male. Yeah, well if you're gonna do it about women then why not do it by race? But then, race is so much more –. So, yeah! Ah, I, I, dunno, I just don't like it done on race because . . . then they're doing it on a lot of categories and they're saying §these people, §these people, §these people, §these people. Like, you know? (Crystal 24:2-11, 16-17, 26-28)

What, then is the reason behind the initial negative reactions? Why continue to be against reporting by race even when you acknowledge that it may lead to responsible allocation of resources? What is the source of the discomfort and this appeal to colourblindness? An exploration of the rest of what Mr. Alexander and Ms. Le have to say suggests an answer:

> Ms. Le.: I don't think it's,, relevant, or even,, associated. Th-, there shouldn't be a relationship, you know, between your race and achievement.
>
> Philip: I agree there shouldn't be, {Laughing} They do it anyway. Ahm, so, you think that's no good?
>
> Ms. L.: I don't think it's fair. No. (Le 10:42-48)

and

> Mr. A.: I would ask why do they feel that they have to report it by race. Why is it so important to say that these students are doing well but they're of that race, you know. I think . . . treat people the same, you know. (Alexander 12:20-22)

and

> Mr. A.: Why are you bothering? Does it really matter if that person is White, Black, ah, Oriental, ah, you know. I-, to me, it should make no difference. (Alexander 12:29-31)

There is a disturbing aspect to these responses. Neither Ms. Le's nor Mr. Alexander's major concern seems to be that disparity might be taken to mean inferiority. If it had been, then like Mr. Henry, they would be more likely to speak in terms of how the information should be handled rather than about uncovering the information in the first place. Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews, who both start from an assumption that the races are equal, are in favour of publicizing disparity because they reason that any disparity that shows up would necessarily be due to external societal factors – whether or

not one assumes that racism is that factor.

> Mrs. M.: So you have to make an interpretation. And it would show that this group is here, and here, and this group is up here, and all the other groups are here then there's,, an imbalance. So there's something in-between here that is *favouring* the ones up here, *and* inhibiting the ones here. There has to be some interpretation. (Matthews 23:37-41)

Instead, Ms. Le is concerned about fairness, and Mr. Alexander says "treat people the same." Both responses suggest that they feel that any disparity revealed by reporting achievement by race would be indicative of inherent and essential differences between races. Thus, in an effort not to seem racist, they are inclined to not talk about these "differences." They feel that to do so is equivalent to pointing out the shortcomings of Blacks, and that this would be unfair or might result in unfair differential treatment.

Other responses from Mr. Alexander support the interpretation that Mr. Alexander holds notions of Black inferiority – at least academically. Mr. Alexander was asked to respond to this question: "The Toronto Board of Education has found that Blacks are over-represented among low achieving, bottom-stream, "at-risk" students. Do you get the sense that the same is true in Quebec? Why might this be so (in Toronto and/or in Quebec)? As part of his response, he says:

> Mr. A.: {Long pause} You know, why are they not achieving, ah, or why are they the majority of students not achieving? {Sigh} ~~~~~~ ah, is it because they don't have the ability, or is it because,, of the expectations that we have? Ahm, you know, I, I, we're not all equal, we're not all-, ah, we don't have all the same strengths is what I mean by not being all equal, OK. We don't have all the same positive attributes and we're all a little bit different. But why is one particular group leading the numbers of students in difficulty, with special needs and stuff, I-you know, I don't know. (Alexander 11:22-28)

First, Mr. Alexander's very interpretation of the question – that Blacks are "the majority of students not achieving," and are "*leading* the numbers of students in difficulty" (italics added), when the question only suggests that Blacks are over-represented in this group, are evidence of racist predisposition. Further, he uses language associated with notions of

inferiority to answer this question. He clearly states that, in his eyes, "we're not all equal." His position seems to be that people should be treated fairly and equitably despite the fact that they may not be equally talented. Thus, this line of reasoning, which may be acceptable on the individual level is being (mis)applied to racial groups in a manner that clearly points toward notions of biological race and essential Black inferiority. As he continues with his answer, he displays this position in greater detail:

> Philip: Ahm, you mentioned opportunities, ah, you said it's possible that they're giving,, different opportunities. Ahm, what/
>
> Mr. A.: Well, you know, you know, are we, are we really giving everybody the same chance at success?
>
> Philip: In what way?
>
> Mr. A.: Are they being, are they being, ahm, given the opportunity to be the best that they can? Which would mean that are we looking at what the §needs are and §addressing those §needs, or are we saying, "This is the way it's §gotta be because §this is the way it has to be all the time? I think, in different situations, you have to look at the needs of that situation, and then you have to provide services to handle the needs of the situation. [Mm hm] If the needs are, are greater, then you have to provide more services and put more into it to be able to help them. So, that, to me, is the opportunity. Are they being given that opportunity? 'Cause if there are specific needs, well then they have to be dealt with. If there are very specific §needs for that school, then you have to modify and adapt and adjust to the needs of all. So maybe, maybe that's why they're not getting the same opportunity -- because they're coming in with different needs
>
> (Alexander 11:48-12:14)

For Mr. Alexander, then, equal opportunity means giving those who have less ability a leg-up. Society must bend to accommodate its "weakest groups." This is a very different argument from suggesting that because of cultural differences, different methods might be more appropriate. Mr. Alexander's discourse is one of disability and inferiority. He displays this through his belief that we are not all equal, through the use of such words as "needs," "services," and "opportunity," and through his discussion that Blacks should be "given the opportunity to be the best *that they can*" (italics added).

What I find extremely disturbing about what is happening here is that Mr. Alexander is understanding himself to be non-racist, fair, and equitable at the precise moment that he

is, indeed, demonstrating his racist mindset. A similar situation shows up in Mr. Gregory's interview:

> Mr. G.: that movie kinda leaves you, like, wondering, you know. [The main character] starts off non-racist, becomes racist, ends up not racist. But then his brother, his younger brother get, gets, gets killed by a Black gang member. And it leaves you wondering, is he gonna go back to the racist side? Is he gonna stay non-racist and just, you know, look at it as one individual who killed another individual as opposed to, like, attaching race to it? So, it was good. It leaves you wondering.
>
> Philip: I never trust in a lot of media presentations, but, ah/
>
> Mr. G.: They did an all right job on that, I must say. I must say, yeah.
>
> Philip: 'Cause, I'm not sure if you leave a movie hanging with, ahm, the last major event sort of was this murder by a Black gang member [Yep] , I'm not so sure that you've done anything, in the end, to refute stereotypes.
>
> Mr. G.: Well, I mean, they bal-, they balance out the killing, you know, so it's not one-sided, you know. But it's more leaving you hanging on how is this going to affect the main character. Ahm,, I honestly, I honestly think they did, they did a, a good, a good job of, like, looking at both sides. You know, they didn't discriminate one way or another. Basically everything was done to open up the eyes of the main character who, who starts off non-racist, becomes racist after his father is killed -- he's a fireman and he dies in a fire trying to save some, some crackheads. [Mm hm] That makes the main character get really upset that, you know, his father died trying to save, you know, these, these Black people that were just interested in drugs and were too, like, stoned out to even save themselves, you know. And then he ends up, he ends up, ah, getting into some fights, and, and, and killing a Black guy who's stealing his truck, you know. And then in prison he gets in with another bunch of Aryans until he finds out that, you know, they're not as pure as they say they are. And he has a problem with them. And then he, he gets raped by a group of them, you know. And while he's in prison, they pair him up in a laundry working with a Black guy, you know, which is probably his first real close contact, you know, with a Black individual and, you know, through his time there he, you know, kinda dispels the myth and stereotype, you know. Plus he sees, you know, how these Aryans really are – that they're not pure to the cause, at first. 'Cause, I think, he gets upset that some of these Aryans are buying drugs from Hispanics to sell to Blacks and, you know, he was, he was saying that you shouldn't be dealing with them, and you shouldn't be selling to them, you know, and, ah, he sees that they're full o' crap. And the one guy who was looking out for him was, like, his favourite teacher from high school. I don't wanna give away all the movie. It is, it is worth the rental. It was a good movie. So, Hollywood didn't do, do a terrible job of screwing this up.
>
> (Gregory 13:29 – 14:13)

Obviously, the movie that Mr. Gregory describes severely lacks positive and sufficiently varied images of Blacks and, instead, abounds in stereotypical images of Blacks as criminal. Further, it seems that the plot centers around the main character's struggle to maintain a positive image of Blacks despite the fact that, with one exception, his every encounter with Blacks is an extremely traumatic one that violently robs him of the people

and things he holds dear. The message of the movie seems to be that the essence of being non-racist is to overlook the negative or inferior traits that are reasonably associated with Blacks, and to treat Blacks fairly in spite of themselves. Sleeter (1993) speaks of this view of what it is to be racist and the resulting motive for being colourblind:

> they conceptualize[. . .] racism as the unfair application of (probably) accurate generalizations about groups of individuals, in a way that biases one's treatment of them. Individuals should be able to succeed or fail on their own merit and should not be held back by "deficiencies" of their race as a whole. As long as a teacher does not know for certain which students will be held back by "cultural deficiencies," it is best to treat them as if one did not see their skin colour. (Sleeter, 1993:162)

This seems to be the understanding of racism that Mr. Alexander and Mr. Gregory espouse.

As a final (and extreme) example of this, we will consider Mrs. Crystal. First we consider an exchange that occurred between Mrs. Matthews and Mrs. Crystal in a staff meeting, of which they both speak in their interviews. (Neither was aware that I interviewed the other). In this particular staff meeting, student misbehaviour, and the way that the administration was dealing with it were being discussed. In Mrs. Crystal's own words:

> Mrs. C.: Well something-, the thing that happened to me at the meeting last year was, like, a bolt? It was the worst thing that happened to me. And this-, I could have been accused of subtle racism. Ahm, ever since we opened Dunrobin High, I figured we had a new start, and it seemed to come together with the kids and all that. And then the fact that, ahm, we were not following the rules, like, if a teacher is told off, or if a kid hurts another kid or-. And so I've always been on the side of kids, but I'm also of the opinion that, hey, when they do something wrong they should be punished, you know, in some way – that there's some consequence and that they understand the consequence, and then forget about it. It's over then. And so I was at that meeting where I wasn't understanding. Again we were trying to, ahm, talk about consequences for kids [Mm hm] where there were no consequences. So I ended up saying

> that comment, "We should not be discriminating against our kids," was my point, because, to me, not punishing them or not having consequences for them was discrimination. And then I happened to say, "And I don't care what colour they were," and I meant that very sincerely, because-. And somehow, ah, and then I remember Mara [Matthews] got up, she was very upset. Anyway, I was *very* upset. I was, like, Oh my G-d! It was, like, the most upsetting thing for me, you know [Mm hm]. Ahm,, and I really,, was,, saying, "Let's not discriminate against our kids. Yes some of our kids are poor. Yes some of our kids come from poor homes. No matter-, it doesn't matter who they are, where they come from." But when I said Black and White, it was like, "Haugh!" you know.
>
> (Crystal 13:46-48, 49-52; 14:2-7, 12-19, 21)

About this incident, Mrs. Matthews says:

> Mrs. M.: At a staff meeting,, a person said, ahm, "Well you know I don't care what race they are." What relevance did that have to our discussion about student discipline? But this is what I'm saying. It's so internalized, so entrenched, that when-, they don't even realize that they're saying something that might offend somebody or could *lead* to something that might offend somebody, because it's *so* common. She just said it. (Matthews 34:31-35)

Indeed, Mrs. Crystal seems oblivious to what it is she said that could have been understood as racist – especially since she was, in her opinion, speaking out *against* "discrimination." She fails to realize that she is being racist to the extent that she is associating a particular negative type of behaviour with Blackness where there was no reason for this association.

> Philip: I wanna clarify on the one hand, how do you think it was being taken [what you said in the meeting?
>
> Mrs. C.: I think it was being taken] that I mentioned Black and White and that the mere mention of that, that I, I figured-, it was a very heated meeting anyway. Maybe I expressed myself badly, which I often do at meetings, I don't know. But I, I took it that people were thinking that I was,, but how, I didn't understand how they could think that because I started by saying/
>
> Philip: Thinking that you were . . . ?
>
> Mrs. C.: That I was racist, yeah, in saying that. (Crystal 15:37-44)

And

> Mrs. C.: In the case of, ah . . . I know Mara was upset because she left right away
>
> Philip: Right. Did you ever talk about it with her?
>
> Mrs. C.: Yes.
>
> Philip: And did she, did she give you a reason for why she was, ah, upset?

Mrs. C.: No. ~~~ No, I, I just,, I apologized and said, "Obviously I said something upsetting and,"

Philip: And do you think you understand why she might have been upset? Or can you guess [why she was upset?

Mrs. C.: Oh. Oh yeah!] Yeah

Philip: What would be that reason?

Mrs. C.: Well I thought she was,, very sensitive. I, that's what I thought. [Mm hm] And that I should have phrased it better in that case, yeah. [Mm hm] Yeah.

Philip: How would you phrase it better? . . . I'm not, I, like, I'm not meaning to gruel you, [Yes] but I'm just saying, [I guess what I'm trying to get at

Mrs. C.: I would say why are we d-] I should have stopped at why are we discriminating against our own students (Crystal 16:8-33)

Indeed, stopping there might have avoided the conflict that occurred, but that would have done nothing to solve the underlying problem.

Mrs. Crystal relates another incident of this sort as she discusses cultural differences and the benefits there may be to recognizing them. In this context, she describes a discussion she had engaged in with her son's South American girlfriend about how she was dressed. Mrs. Crystal had recently moved from "municipality 1" to "municipality 2," which she perceived as being more multicultural.

Mrs. C.: Anyway, so, I noticed that Magda would go to the bus-stop and she might have on something-, and . . . in {municipality 1}, it wasn't, I dunno, you know, we were, I lived on one of the quieter streets, and a lot of older people, but—, and right opposite the church, but then I said to her, "You know, there are a lot of different cultures here in {municipality 2}," and I found myself saying this to her, "I think you shouldn't go out, like, with your, you know,"

Philip: Low cut thing (I'm just saying this for the benefit of those who cannot see your gestures)

Mrs. C.: Yeah, it was low cut. And she was quite upset by my saying that because she said that that was a problem if I said that, you know. And I said, "Well, no!" I said, "You know, there are people,, of different cultures who are more of-, ah, offended by,, low cut clothes, or the opposite, or may think, you know, [Mm hm] different of you because you're wearing them, you know. So she was-. So we had quite a discussion about that. She's a very nice,, girl and she's the kind you could really have discussions with. Anyway, she, she was very upset that that should be, and she couldn't really say-, she should not, I mean I wasn't giving her orders, she knows that. I was just giving her advice, because she was going to the bus-stop, sometimes later, you know. Or she's just going, in the day-time going to the store, and, and, you know. And she's quite a, sort of a flirty kind of girl anyway, and I was just trying to say to her, "You know, I think you should-." But then it's probably because I'm in a smaller

> place. In,, {municipality 1} I probably wouldn't notice what she was wearing because the house was really big, so, you know [Mm hm]. But I *was* worried about that. So, cultural difference, yeah, there are diff- (Crystal 8:22 –43)

Again, Mrs. Crystal does not seem to understand exactly why Magda might have been upset. However, she does realize that it has something to do with the fact that she mentioned other cultures. Thus, without understanding why she should have to, she tries to give several "acceptable" reasons for her racialized reasoning. First, she claims that the reason that she even notices what Magda is wearing now is not because they have moved to a more multicultural area, but because she is in a smaller apartment. Second, she suggests people from different cultures might be more offended by Magda's mode of dress than Whites would be. However, the more she talks, the more her stereotypes of the violent "Other" come out

> Mrs. C.: I was just giving her advice, because she was going to the bus-stop sometimes later, you know.

and maybe even a stereotype of the "hot-blooded Spanish girl":

> or may think, you know, [Mm hm] different of you because you're wearing them, you know.

> And she's quite a, sort of a flirty kind of girl anyway, and I was just trying to say to her, "You know, I think you should-."

Thus, we see that in both instances Mrs. Crystal has trouble understanding that it is not the mention of race that is offensive. Rather, it is the *contexts* in which she mentions race – which demonstrate that she implicitly associates race with characteristics like bad behaviour, or violence – that offend.

As a final point here, I suggest that it is the inability to make the distinction between mentioning race and mentioning race *in a pejorative context* that leads to the "taboo" on mentioning race that I mention in the literature review (Chapter 2). If one is

going to get in trouble every time one mentions race – even at those precise moments when one perceives oneself as being non-racist – it may be better not to ever mention race at all.

> Mrs. C.: Well I thought she was,, very sensitive. I, that's what I thought. [Mm hm] And that I should have phrased it better in that case, yeah. [Mm hm] Yeah.
>
> Philip: How would you phrase it better? . . . I'm not, I, like, I'm not meaning to gruel you, [Yes] but I'm just saying, [I guess what I'm trying to get at
>
> Mrs. C.: I would say why are we d-] I should have stopped at why are we discriminating against our own students. (Crystal 16:26-33)

PART 3: BREAKDOWN OF ATTEMPTS TO RECTIFY THE RACISM PROBLEM

4.7. Inability to Entertain the Possibility of Racism in Oneself.

The interviews in this study suggest that many Whites are brought up in home environments that either covertly or overtly hold racist beliefs and/or assumptions of non-White inferiority. For example, Mr. Alexander claims that the students responsible for bigotry in his school had learned their bigotry at home:

> Mr. A.: most of the times, when you started to really dig deep down, it tended to come from the homefront. It *tended* to come from the homefront and that's something that was learnt at home. (Alexander 4:52-5:2)
>
> Mr. A.: And some of the education they get at home is pretty poor too in a sense of going in the reverse direction of being, maybe, very racist. (Alexander 6:32-34)

Mrs. Crystal concurs:

> Mrs. C.: . . . it was his relatives who had written a lot of those words {racist graffiti} – older, they weren't even in school. (Crystal 4:49-50)

as does Mr. Gregory who speaking about yet another student in another school:

> Mr. G.: I've spoken with his sister, he does have, multi-ethnic friends. But he puts on this persona here because he's getting indoctrinated, ah, by his father at home who just lives and breathes, ah, hatred and racism (Gregory 5:16-18)

In these excerpts, the participants speak of blatantly and intentionally racist individuals. However, Mr. Gregory and Mrs. Page, who could not be described as intentional racists, also relate childhood experiences at home which suggest that it is not only blatant racists who have been brought up around racism:

> Mr. G.: [My grandparents are] very racist against Black people, but not to their face, you know. When I was—, I was going out with a Black girl for a while, and, you know, when I, when I brought her over, which, A) shocked the hell out of them, you know. Polite as anything to her face, you know, they weren't rude to her face at all. When she left, on the other hand, you know, the most vulgar things that you think a human could spit out of their mouth came, came, came rolling out, you know. (Gregory 4:19-24)

> Mrs. P.: And, I'm, I'm embarrassed to say, though, that, ahm, my parents –, I really liked this guy Jermaine {laughs} and, and he was Black. And my parents said, "You are not allowed to go out with him. And that was the first experience I ever had at home that just floored me. (Page 10:21-24)

I now let M. Frederic summarize this phenomenon with his understanding of the situation. M. Frederic says that, according to his experience, Whites are always ill at ease in the company of Blacks because they assume that the Black person is thinking that they are racist.

> M. Fr.: Yes. That is a problem of race. That is a race problem because they know that there are many among them who are racist. And they are thinking that there are many among them who are racist because when they are together, and in any case, throughout their lives, they have always heard jokes, racist jokes, about, for example, Blacks, about others, about the Chinese, etcetera. So, this has flourished in their lives from youth through to adulthood. (Frederic 4:30-32, translated from French)

Without any doubt, this kind of home environment affects the consciousnesses, and, thus, the behaviour of these individuals – sowing seeds of racism and White superiority. Moreover, the effect of an inequitable education system exacerbates this problem, as Mrs. Matthews points out in the following excerpt:

> Mrs. M.: And I really believe that we are all racist[5] – that we all have our own biases against certain groups. We have certain ideas about particular groups in the sense that, when you're going to school, every group is negative. Every group is negative. And when you go through so many years of schooling, and you hear certain negatives about,, groups, and you have never met the groups, you have a tendency—, I feel we have a tendency to remember those negative things. Sometimes we get the opportunity to *disprove* what we have been told – what's been drilled into us – by interactions with those, ah, some group members. However, on the other hand, if you're just exposed to all of this negativity, and you never have the chance to interact with members of that group, and all you have learned is negative things, what would change your mind? What would change your mind so that it could remove the negative, ahm, ah,, beliefs you had about a certain group without interaction? So when you're raised like that, and you haven't been exposed to members of that group – or suppose you've been exposed to one, that's not enough to give you an understanding of that group – so therefore your negativity, even if you met one member, your negativity's still intact. So, I think that once it's drilled into us—, and this is why we still have so many problems with racism because so many Whites have *been* raised with negatives such as Topsy, Uncle Remus, Bunga and Simba.

Mrs. Matthews helps us to understand that in a society in which the education system is Eurocentric – and sometimes blatantly racist – it is reasonable to expect that members of that society, White and non-White, will be pre-programmed to hold racist opinions and concepts. However, for non-Whites, who are the victims in this societal arrangement, it is likely, though not inevitable, that these Eurocentric understandings will be disrupted to varying degrees [recall the discussion of epistemic advantage (Narayan, 1989) in chapter 3]. On the contrary, Whites could quite conceivably continue for a lifetime without encountering situations that force them to examine their concepts. As such, if we are to strive for an equitable society, it is essential that Whites realize that they have the potential to be (unintentionally) racist, and for them to seriously consider the perspectives and opinions of non-Whites when and where the groups' opinions diverge. Unfortunately, this is not what seems to occur. The data in this study seem to suggest that Whites have a difficult time entertaining accusations of racism against themselves, and, in

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[5] Note that what Mrs. Matthews is saying here is qualitatively quite different from the "We're all racist" argument discussed in section 4.2.3. While the "We're all racist" argument, as spoken of by Ms. Le and Mr. Gregory, trivializes racism as something universal and unimportant, Mrs. Matthews suggests that the result of growing up in a racist society with racist education is that we all hold racist views. However, for her, this is neither normal nor unimportant. It is not to be ignored but, rather, contested.

so doing, reject and refuse to consider the perspectives of non-Whites. We see an example with Mr. Gregory

> Mr. G.: OK. If someone were to make an accusation against me, and let's just say for arguments sake that it's false, OK. They got a bad mark. They think that they got a bad mark because they're of a minority different from me, and that's what they're blaming it. Whether it's true or it's not true, if they feel that they've been discriminated against they're gonna believe that they've been discriminated against, even if it's not true. And it's hard, it's hard to kind of explain to them, it's hard to kind of, you know, do things to rectify the situation because they're not gonna want to see it any other way. 'Cause to see it any other way means that they got a bad mark because of them. So, you know, i-, it's a tough situation. I mean, if, if I ever had a situation, you know, I'd try, and, and, and speak with the student or try and speak with the parents. Ahm, you know, but i-, it just might not fly.
>
> Philip: Is it something you're willing to live with?
>
> Mr. G.: It's, it's something, it's something you have to live with. I mean, if you can't change something, as much as you don't like it, you can't change it. If someone is gonna believe you discriminated against them and you're a racist, you know, you could talk 'til you're blue in the face and promise them the moon, you know, but it's not gonna, it's not gonna change anything, so, you know. (Gregory 12:35-52)

Mr. Gregory's answer demonstrates his general stance toward an accusation of racism against him. Even as he complains about the other person's lack of openness to his position, he does not seem to recognize his lack of openness to theirs. He does not recognize his own reflex self-preservation, demonstrated by his not being first willing to check himself for whether or not he might, indeed, have acted – unconsciously or dysconsciously (King, 1991) – in a racist fashion. He does not even seem to recognize that this is possible. In Mr. Gregory's mind, there is no room for negotiation about the interpretation of the incident, and the "victim" plays no role in deciding whether or not s/he has been subject to racism. Indeed, Mr. Gregory is predisposed to think that the "victim" is not capable of such negotiation. Apparently fraught with feelings of inferiority, the victim will persist irrationally with an accusation of racism in order to cover up her/his inadequacies. Negotiation, then, is futile. What Mr. Gregory is saying is that if he does not understand the situation as having been an incident of racism, then it

was not. Yet the "victim" will never admit this lest s/he at the same time admit her/his inferiority. If, as we have seen in section 4.6, Whites might indeed believe that non-Whites are inherently inferior, and if the White person only sees racism where it was intentional, we can see that non-Whites' complaints about racism will often be given short shrift. They will be seen as troublemaking, or "playing the race card" (if they perceive the "victim" as knowing that the accusation is spurious), or as a pathetic attempt to deal with one's inability to measure up. At the same time, the accused White person, humbly accepting the "White man's burden" to have to grin and bear it, may "generously" withdraw from a conflict he feels he cannot win, so as not to make the other's cruel realization any more difficult. All ground for mutual understanding has been completely removed and the parties have come to an impasse.

Of course, this inability to entertain an accusation of racism against oneself has its roots in the understanding that racism must always be intentional. Since the White person feels that s/he has not acted in an intentionally racist manner, s/he feels that there has been no racism. However, related to this is another interesting phenomenon that arises from the data – the notion of the essential racist. Many White participants spoke in terms that made it obvious that they saw racism as an essential, almost genetic, trait. Instead of evaluating how they have behaved in each instance – whether something they did or said had a racist effect – they speak of being or not being racist.

> Mr. A.: And I said something to make a point, and I don't know if it was the exact words, but it could have been perceived that I was a racist, and the gentleman stood up right away and did indicate that. Ahm, now I did explain it to him. I don't think he ever believed me, I wasn't racist. (Alexander 9:19-22)

> Mr. G.: I think he doesn't know. I don't think, I don't think he's **naturally** racist. (Gregory 5:40, emphasis added)

> Mr. G.: And the main character doesn't start off as racist, and he doesn't end as racist, but through events that happen in the middle, he becomes racist so—. And I don't think, and and he points

> out, that those, you know, at the end, those **aren't his true colours**, you know,
> (Gregory 5:44-46, emphasis added)

This subtle, but important, distinction between *being* racist, as opposed to having committed an *act* that is racist, has massive implications. The White person who thinks this way treats each incident with trepidation as though it might be the dreaded one that reveals to her/him that s/he is, in fact, fundamentally racist – and has been all along. A racist incident, then, has the potential to change *who* s/he is. Thus:

> Mrs. C.: And prejudice against all* types* I've always been so against. And that day I thought, "Oh no. What if-, what if I am prejudiced?" [Mm hm] Like, what if, you know, what if-, the way I said it, what if I'm prejudiced? 'Cause-, but I really don't think I am but I-, you have to ask yourself that if you've upset people. (Crystal 17:44-47)

Accompanying this notion of the essential racist is the bizarre notion of people becoming and unbecoming racist.

> Mr. G.: that movie kinda leaves you, like, wondering, you know. Starts off non-racist, becomes racist, ends up not racist, but then his brother, his younger brother get, gets, gets killed by a Black gang member. And it leaves you wondering, is he gonna go back to the racist side?
> (Gregory 13:28-30)

Individuals are not seen as generally capable of racism under specific circumstances because of unchallenged ideas that they hold. It is not understood that racist actions result from specific combinations of external circumstances that trigger the expression of these dormant concepts. Instead, the individual is seen to become and un-become racist, and the un-becoming can apparently happen without any real change of philosophy or outlook. Thus "becoming non-racist" in this context really only means that the concepts that the person holds, which make them capable of racism, have been submerged and are not being manifested. I would argue that the movie-character that Mr. Gregory speaks of never "became non-racist," and the uncertainty about whether he would "become racist again" really is a function of the fact that his thought patterns have never really been challenged and dealt with.

This type of reasoning hinders progress against racism by focussing upon the symptoms of the problem rather than upon the problem itself. There might be a great deal of progress if, instead, we were to understand each incident as pointing to thought patterns that have racist effects. We could then focus attention upon helping individuals to understand how their thinking might have racist effects, with a view to having them rethink their concepts. As such, the chances of individuals committing the types of racist acts that result from that type of thinking are drastically reduced. As a bonus, this can be done without ever challenging the person's self-concept. We place the blame, instead, on a society that has taught and fostered racist thinking.

4.8. Workshops: Not Allowing Blacks To Be Partners In Solution Finding

One might well imagine that the climate formed by the social taboo about making accusations of racism against Whites, and the inability of Whites to entertain such accusations of racism against themselves, is a difficult one in which to create a truly effective forum for addressing issues of multiculturalism and racism.

Superficially, there is an understanding that there is a need for educators to attend workshops on these topics. However, there also seems to be some agreement that many of these workshops are inadequate. They do not do enough to address racism. Ms Le and Mr. Gregory speak of university classes they attended, which, at least by name, claimed to deal with issues of race:

> Ms. L.: The focus of the class was, ah, more or less inclusive education kind of thing. Understanding everyone's different,, ethnic background and, sorta like, use it, build on it in your lesson plans, things like that. Not more than that.
>
> Philip: Not more than that?
>
> Ms. L.: It was more or less like, it was just a class to,, basically, in a nutshell, to say, "OK, accept everyone as who, as who they are." (Le 12:36-43)

> Mr. G.: Ah, if it was meant to sensitize students to the needs of multicultural students, it fell far from the mark,, you know. I mean, just, ah, just to be the natural, troublemaker that I am, you know, I was able to do all three assignments, you know, on, on street kids (Gregory 20:19-22)

From what Ms. Le and Mr Gregory tell us, it would appear that these classes operated under the premise that all discrimination is racism – an argument that accompanies the "We're all racist" argument (see section 4.2.3). They also seemed to focus upon individual differences. Thus, these classes seemed to equate all differences in a way that might place the Black student in the same position as the student who chooses to dye her hair green. Again, a failure to understand the embeddedness and the normalcy of racism in our society causes racism not to get the degree of attention that it deserves. Mrs. Page agrees that these workshops tend to skirt the real issues:

> Mrs. P.: but I've never really been in anything where they're really talking about, like, "Let's talk about racism." It's always been very fluffy and happy and good and never really dealing with any poignant issues or what have you – you know, in your face kind of thing.
>
> Philip: Is that a good thing?
>
> Mrs. P.: No. You know, sometimes I think when you're just pretending that it doesn't exist, you know, ahm, I, I think—. I don't know if I'd want to be the person giving the workshop, but I'd love to go to a workshop like that {laughing} you know. I, I think it'd be really interesting to hear other,, opinions and experiences (Page 15:1-7)

Thus, these workshops seem to be superficial, with an emphasis upon not making waves, and not making participants uncomfortable. On this topic, Mrs. Matthews speaks quite eloquently. She raises a number of concerns with these workshops:

> Mrs. M.: I don't usually go to workshops on multiculturalism, anything like that, because it's a waste of time, for one thing. I've given them and what I did was I ensured that there was a representative from almost every group to make us diverse. But I had the misfortune to go to one workshop at the teacher's conference, two years ago, I think, and it was on multiculturalism in education. So I said, "Well, you know, I will go down. I'm going to the conference, I'll check this out." And it was given–, and I have no problem with White people giving these conferences if they know what they're talking about, but shortly after she started, I just walked out §. I walked out §. I can't tell people what it's like to be White. I really can't. I have no clue what it's like to be White with all that privilege, just your Whiteness be your ticket to everything. I have no idea. So I don't see why I need to have White people tell me what it's like to be Black. I don't give that very much relevance. Standing up there, "Oh, well, I know how you feel." No! No-ho! You don't know how I feel, or how I felt, or how I will feel. Because I don't know how I will feel. So, I don't, ah,, give that,, any validity. Some White

people think, "Well I know how you feel." No. No. I just walked out. And my friend who was White, she walked out as well. It was horrific.

Philip: Was it the focus that disturbed you or/

Mrs. M.: I find that what they do is, they have something that they read, "Well, you know, what we should be doing is this, and the way to reach and include the Black kids is to do this." I really,, I really think that's a waste of time. How many times has that been done and how many times have the results been positive? Nobody, nobody listens to that. (Matthews:28:51-29:23)

Mrs. Matthews complains that the workshops are often given by Whites who are poorly qualified to run them. Their understanding of the subject seems to be superficial, and they attempt to speak for non-Whites. On the other hand, the people who are socially located to speak from actual experience are conspicuously absent. The following excerpt from Mr. Alexander's interview sheds some light on why this might be the case:

Mr. A.: Ah, you know, ah, when we give something on racism, do we try to get a Black female to come in and talk about racism, like, you know,, which is, like, the stereotype? No, you just get anybody to come in. It doesn't have to be a certain group coming in like, you know,
(Alexander 15:37-40)

Mr. Alexander seems to resent when the presenter at a multicultural or anti-racism workshop is from a minority group. However, for him to assume that the "Black female" presenter is there *because* she is a Black female and not because she is among the "anybody" you can get to come in, results in a no win situation for Blacks. Blacks are seen to be presenting on the basis of their racial group membership rather than on the basis of any credentials they, in actual fact, might have.

In any case, it should seem appropriate to have a presenter who can speak from personal experience, or from *both* personal experience *as well as* more formal credentials; instead, through a bizarre form of paradoxical common sense reasoning, Mr. Alexander uses Blacks' racial group membership to *disqualify* them as presenters at such workshops. In effect, what Mr. Alexander is really saying is that he tends to be suspicious of workshops about race issues *unless* the presenter is White.

Why might this discomfort with non-White presenters arise? I suggest that it might be because racism is a normal part of the functioning of the society, and that Whites, in general, benefit from this arrangement. As such, the social will and urgency to change the status quo, in many, is limited, and workshops are used as a method to superficially address racism without making waves (see 4.3.1). Thus, the input of Blacks/non-Whites is rejected – probably because of the discomfort these insights might cause Whites. On the other hand, White presenters working under these constraints, but needing to defend their legitimacy to speak on the topic by including the voices of the victims of racism, attempt to present Black/non-White perspectives based on second-hand information.

Mrs. Matthews also complains that the workshops are too superficial. She says:

> Mrs. M.: and as soon as things become a little controversial, they want to move along. "Well we spent enough time on that. Can we move along?" So I don't, ah-, there's no depth, ah, there's no depth to these things. They,, very superficially, one hour, what can you do? Two hours, what can you do? (Matthews 29:37-40)

The following excerpt from Mrs. Page's interview illustrates the superficial nature of workshops run by uninformed Whites, as well as the rejection of Black input. The reader will recall that Mrs. Page spoke of the need for workshops that were "in your face" rather than "fluffy." However, here, where it comes to workshops she has designed, she seems to demonstrate a contrary position

> Mrs. P.: Another incident that sticks out in my mind is, ah, I created a workshop for multiculturalism and education, and Wendy, who helped create it with me, was piloting it at the annual general meeting. And, ah, she had a great deal of difficulty with a woman in the group who, every time she was trying to do something would talk about "you don't know what I went through." And, and the whole thing Wendy's just saying, "I just asked you your name," you know {Laughs}. And she's saying, you know, ah, "You don't understand where, where I'm coming from and what I've been through, and you all sit here looking at this and it's not a game," and, and she sort of-, she went there almost like she had an agenda to,, I dunno, ah, attack. Apparently throughout the workshop she, she would attack the presenter's presentation, and it was just meant to be, "How to bring about multiculturalism within a classroom." How to, you know, do some activities and, you know, that sort of thing. [And she made it into
>
> Philip: So these were other teachers?]

> Mrs. P.: Other, tutors and teachers. And I just remember it was a whole big deal that I, I, I'm not sure exactly, ahm, what was said, I just remember something, it had to do with the names and her, say, accusing Wendy of,, not understanding and [like she said
>
> Philip: Was this a Black woman?]
>
> Mrs. P.: Yes. It just had to do with her, her, it started with a name. So it didn't matter what she did, and so I don't know how-. I, I had wished that they had come to tell me so that I could speak to the person and find out what was going on and what was offensive in the material because obviously, the idea was not to offend anyone, you know. It was meant to enlighten and educate so—. But that's something I heard of that happened, it was a big, a big, ah, blowout.
> (Crystal 3:14-40)

The Black woman spoken of here was, obviously, deeply disturbed about the workshop, and felt that it was trivializing her experience with racism. Her input at this point might have been just the catalyst needed to move the workshop out of "fluffy" and into "dealing with . . . poignant issues." However, the White presenters saw her as a troublemaker with an agenda to attack. Though Mrs. Page says that she would have wanted to hear what the woman had to say, she paints this woman as an adversary – a threat to the "fluffy" presentation that she had developed.

Mr. Alexander also exhibits the ambivalence that Whites may feel in these instances:

> Mr. A.: You have to be diplomatic in these types of situations, OK. Ahm, and, to me, the people who were giving it weren't very diplomatic, OK, ~~~ to the point where I felt accused sometimes of {laughing} being racist,, like, you know. And, to me, th-, that's not the approach to take with people, OK. The approach is to try to show the importance of it, OK, but not to make people feel accused that, ah, ahm, you know, "That's why I'm here. Because I'm racist," you know
> (Alexander 15:52-16:5)

Here, and in other places, Mr. Alexander says that he feels anti-racism workshops are important. However, through the attitude that "It's never me" (see Section 4.2.2) he undermines this position. Mr. Alexander's ambivalence is clearly displayed in the next excerpt:

> Mr. A.: Was it necessary? Sure it was necessary. I think it's something that you should be doing on a regular basis, OK, and it makes people reflect and think, like, you know, e-, even if I don't

> get much out of something sometimes, it still makes me reflect and think about it, and maybe I'll just choose to leave it, or I'll choose to take part of it, or I'll choose to take a lot of it. In my pers-, given my own,, you know, beliefs and how I feel about things, and my own biases and my own, you know, ah, ah,, what I feel is important in life, OK, ahm, and how to act, and how to behave and s-, maybe I'll take some of that stuff. So I, I think they, they are necessary
> (Alexander 15:23-30)

Mr. Alexander does not want to be made to feel uncomfortable by having to entertain that the workshops may have something to say to him. He selects what he wants to hear from the workshops "given my own biases" and, essentially, leaves as he came – unchanged. The workshop, in his case, has accomplished *nothing*.

Finally, Mrs. Matthews complains that workshops on these topics are poorly attended – whether or not the presenters are White.

> Mrs. M.: And even when you see how the workshop is attended, it shows you what value is placed on, on that. The workshop was almost empty. And at the same time, it was the year the Missing Pages came out. I didn't know, but they were giving a workshop unveiling the Missing Pages there as well, and my friend was in that workshop, another teacher, he was in that workshop, and he said it was a handful of people in that workshop. So I ~~~ what, what, what, what is the priorities? And the most people that go to multicultural are people of, of Colour. So, I mean, who are we trying to get the message out to? So I, I, I don't really attend workshops on these, ahm, issues. Really, I, I try not to. (Matthews 29:23-33)

Mrs. Matthews points to the fact that those most needing to attend these workshops – those who are a part of dominant groups in society, and who are most likely to commit (unintentional) racism – are the ones who do not go. Instead these workshops are attended by non-Whites. Mrs. Matthews suggests that Whites feel that racism and anti-racism are non-White concerns as opposed to societal concerns.

In summary, then, I suggest that denial of the ubiquity of racism in society results in White ambivalence toward anti-racism workshops. The effort to balance addressing the problem while making the workshop inoffensive to Whites results in workshops that are too superficial to effect any change.

A heartening end to this section is Mrs. Matthews' experience of a university multicultural course, taught by a White professor, which, though she did not enjoy, she

judged to have been "worth the effort." Mrs. Matthews seems to have approved of this class because the White professor recognized and acknowledged the limitations that her social location imposed upon her, and took the class beyond "fluffy" into difficult, but relevant, discussions that opposed dominant constructions of people of Colour.

> Mrs. M.: the students were racist. Oh my gosh, they were racist! "West Indian mothers are, are, are used to coming to Canada and abandoning their children. It's part of their culture." I mean, these were the type of things. "Ahm, when the immigrants come, they want too many things. We give 'em too much." (Matthews 29:48; 30:3-5:12-13)

> Mrs. M.: It was taught by a White person, a White female, who did one of the best, most fair courses that I've ever taken. She was just new in town from Toronto. They hired her for this. The first time I met her, I'm a early person, so her and I were in class alone, the first day she came. So she said, ahm, "You know, I know I shouldn't be teaching this course." She said, "They should have chosen someone else to teach this course." And she said, "I'm a White, middle-class WASP from Texas," {but} she would not allow [the students] to get away with anything unless there was factual proof, there was written proof, they had researched-. You had* to have* the facts. And she was fair. And you couldn't* ask* for anything* more* than have* a professor* or anyone else who is fair. She was *totally* fair. And she would challenge what the students said, and she would say, "No. You need to do research. That's not true." So, but the class was, for her part, it was excellent, but as far as the,, interactions between the students, Dear L-rd! It was not good, but it was a good course. It was, because she was very firm, very firm. (M29:42-44, 50-54; 30:5-10, 17-19)

PART 4: RETURN TO THE LITERATURE: A RESPONSE TO DAVIES AND GUPPY (1998)

4.9. Racial disparity *does* suggest racism

It seems that a fitting end to this chapter would be a response to a Canadian article about Canadian education that seems to demonstrate some of the types of racist common-sense reasoning that we have seen in earlier sections. This article is an excellent example of the way in which Canadians argue racism away, and provides a forum for presenting how the foregoing analysis might be used to combat the racist common sense that supports the racist status quo in this country.

Davies and Guppy (1998) take it upon themselves to argue that there is no institutional racism in Canadian schools. They appeal to the 1991 census data to support their claims.

Davies and Guppy begin by "clarify[ing] the standards of reasoning and evidence" they use. The problems with their arguments begin here. They argue that one cannot look at racial disparity "as direct evidence of institutional racism and discriminatory practice," and that "charges of institutional racism ought to be based on systematic evidence of objective [sic] discrimination that is rooted specifically in race and not some other social category" (p. 132).

First, as I have argued in section 4.5, racial disparity *must* be investigated as indicating racism. Those who know that notions of biological race cannot be supported and are no longer seriously engaged in scientific or academic circles (see e.g., Rose et al., 1984), who know that genetic variation within races is greater than that between races (Lopez, 1994), should also understand that the law of averages dictates that racial disparity is highly unlikely to occur and remain unless there is, indeed, some race-related factor causing and maintaining it.

Second, to attempt to neatly separate race from other social categories is unrealistic. In their article, Davies and Guppy dismiss racial disparity as being caused by socio-economic factors rather than racial factors. However, the question still remains, "Why are Blacks predominating among the poor?" I argue that the historical treatment of Blacks on the basis of their race is the cause of this socio-economic disparity. In light of this situation created by past racism, to fail to address the present consequences with respect to race is simply to sanction and agree with what has happened in the past, and

perpetuate it today. The truth is that it is very difficult to separate racism from other social ills such as sexism and discrimination against the poor. Though these are not all one and the same thing, the patterns of domination in society make it such that they overlap and are inter-related in complex ways that are difficult to unravel (Dei, 1996; Ng, 1993a; Ng, 1993b). This means that arguments that re-name racial disparity, saying that it is the result of other social factors, are based on overly-simplistic conceptions of racism and other "isms." Further, once those that use these arguments have re-attributed the problem to some other social dynamic, and absolved themselves of accusations of racism, they seldom do anything to address this other social dynamic. The argument is motivated, then, by a desire to escape acknowledging that the society is structured by race, rather than by a will to change an untenable situation. The status quo of racial disparity is maintained.

At the same time, claiming that racial disparity is caused by "other social factors" allows covertly held notions of Black inferiority to be upheld. Indeed, Davies and Guppy state that "it is unrealistic to completely disregard the role of particular group traditions, conditions, and histories" (p. 133). This exposes their belief that educational disparity might well be caused by inferior cultural traits (group traditions) – an idea that reeks of Social Darwinistic thought. The conditions and histories they mention are, indeed, important to consider, but it would not take much investigation to show that these conditions and histories have been determined and structured, in large part, by racism.

As a further effort to deny the possibility of institutional racism in Canadian education, Davies and Guppy go on to show from the 1991 census data that "Canadian-born White students achieve, on average, less in our schools than do immigrants and

visible minorities" (p. 133). They facetiously comment, "though it would be consistent with the principle of proportional representation, few would conclude that Canadian education is systematically biased against Whites, Anglo-Saxons, and the native-born" (pp. 133-134). However, my argument has been that instances of racial disparity must be investigated to discover the race-related factors that may cause them. In this case, and as we have seen in section 4.6, Mr. Bernard suggests that the disparity may well be the result of the strict (racist) immigration laws to which Blacks were subject in earlier generations. These laws often only allowed Blacks into the country for the purposes of academic study, and made it impossible for Blacks to be even considered for immigrant status without certain academic credentials. This is borne out in the fact that the statistics under consideration refer to Canadians 20 years of age and older.

A number of other race-related reasons are also possible. As an example, one might simply refer to the data from the 1996 census that shows that unemployment rates for university educated Blacks are on par with those for White high-school dropouts (Torczyner et al., cited in Solyom, 2001). Such a reality might well cause Blacks as a group to intensify their determination to attain an education *despite* the racism and institutional baffles they face in the process, if they intend to survive in this society. Thus, the statistics at the high school level may yet point to institutionalized anti-Black racism, though it appears that Blacks are ahead of Whites.

4.10. Dismissing the unfortunate evidence

As discussed above, when Davies and Guppy present the finding that, in Toronto, "Blacks are over-represented among low-achieving, bottom stream, 'at-risk' students" (p.

135), they point to socio-economic status as the probable reason, without problematizing the over-representation of Blacks below the poverty line. However, they also quickly dismiss this finding with the unconvincing statement that "current Toronto patterns for Blacks *may be unique* from the rest of Canada" (italics added), without suggesting why this might be so.

The authors also present a table: "Percentage of People Holding University Degrees by Ethnic Group, Age Group, and Sex" (p. 137). In this particular table, it is clear that Blacks, in general, are below the national averages – the only exception being Black males between 55 and 64 years of age. Davies and Guppy also dismiss this evidence that contests their argument. In a move similar to that seen in "All or Nothing" arguments (section 4.2.4.), and which demonstrates why this study does not attempt to look at the situations of all visible minorities, they move quickly to looking at all visible minorities together, rather than looking separately at each group. Of course, this dilutes the findings and fails to deal specifically with the perplexing Black situation. Mr. Bernard, however, gives us a useful analysis of the data. As we have seen in section 4.6, Mr. Bernard attributes the older males' above-average achievement to the stringent immigration requirements of their time. He attributes the older females' below-average achievement to the domestic scheme, under which Black women were allowed to come to Canada to serve as maids, and which freed some of them from the academic requirements for immigration. However, about the younger Blacks, he says

> Mr. B.: But the young age group is, ahm, what a number of us have been observing in that, ahm, whatever exists in the society, the children of those immigrants, who did so well in terms of going to university and getting degrees and so on, ah, their children are not doing as well. And it's significant that their, ah, children are not doing as well because whereas Blacks from the Caribbean came from a different sort of background, a different sort of society where the, ahm, where not all things but most things were possible. (They came from countries where you *could* have become a judge, where you *could* have become a lawyer, where you could have become ~~ whatever, from bus-driver to policeman to, ahm, whatever else) and they came here and they did

> reasonably well, but their children are the products of a different society. And although their children *begin* with what *should* be an advantage in that they're coming from homes where the parents have university training and that type of thing, the children are not achieving as well, the children are not achieving. As a matter of fact, I can think of instances right now, whereas when we first came here, the justice system was something very removed and very foreign to us, but I can think right*now* of friends whose children have been to jail! Friends! So, ahm, ahm what is there in the society that causes the tremendous difference between the, the parents' generation and the generation of the children, ah, how they achieve? Well, I, I think it's living in a racist society – the results of living in a very*racist* society. (Bernard 10:25-41)

4.11. Other arguments: Is Canadian Education Eurocentric?

In attempting to deny claims that Canadian educational methods and content are Eurocentric, Davies and Guppy make the point that "forms and content of modern educational institutions around the globe have continually converged since the 1940s. School systems in countries across the Third World and Europe, as well as Canada and the United States, have adopted remarkably similar methods and practices." The authors then go on to suggest that this has occurred because of some imagined mutual sharing of cultural insight among the many nations of the world. It is difficult to understand how the authors miss the circular nature of their reasoning in failing to recognize the hegemonic influence (and imposition) of Eurocentric standards upon developing nations, which has accompanied globalization and trans-national monetary "aid."

While Davies and Guppy suggest that their readers "may find it difficult to see just how the teaching of Grade 12 physics, or Grade 2 phonics, is 'White'," the reader of this study might find it difficult to see how Davies and Guppy so easily claim that it is not. Could they be ignorant of the effect of the "hidden curriculum" in the teaching of these matters? Could they really not understand that while teaching Grade 2 phonics, the reading material and class discussions often bear little relation to the lived realities of non-White students, and often serve to mystify the relationships of domination to which they are subject (see Henry, 1993, 1994)? Could they not know that in high school

Physics, not one of the physicists highlighted is non-White – or could they think that this does not matter?

Davies and Guppy also attempt to argue against the assumption that curriculum material by, about, and for Canadian Blacks, for example, is more appropriate than curriculum material by and about Whites, but intended for use by all (pp. 140-145). Besides the fact that the burden of proof should rest upon Davies and Guppy (contrary to what they suggest), the authors seem to be oblivious to the effect of race upon identity formation. They seem unaware of the how early children pick up dominant, societally sanctioned racial messages and stereotypes (e.g., Rizvi, 1993) and the need for material written by non-Whites about themselves to challenge these messages (e.g., Delpit, 1988; Giroux, 1997; Sleeter, 1993). They miss the common sense nature of racism in White society, and, thus, do not understand that material by well-intentioned White writers cannot be sufficient, as it may carry these common sense racist assumptions. Davies and Guppy's argument about these matters seems like little more than a thinly veiled attempt to justify the status quo of curricula and curriculum materials that, in racial terms, are clearly unbalanced. This is precisely the type of ideological common sense racism that this study has attempted to explore.

CHAPTER 5
INTERLUDE: THE IMPACT OF DENYING RACISM UPON INDIVIDUAL BLACKS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 4, I discuss the many ways in which Whites deny the existence of, and their complicity with the racial inequity in society. We have also seen the reluctance to confront racist behaviour, as well as the divergent ways in which groups understand matters of race and racism which make mutual understanding difficult. I have attempted to show that these strategies support the status quo of racial inequity, making it difficult to eradicate racism.

As far as effects of this denial of reality are concerned, in section 4.5.1, I discuss an example of the way in which the failure to acknowledge racism creates and perpetuates situations in which Blacks, *as a group*, are railroaded and trapped in dead-end situations that essentially guarantee their disadvantage. However, what might the consequences of a society's denial of racism be upon *individual* Blacks? That is, how does having to deal with racism in a society that does not acknowledge racism affect the consciousnesses and emotional circumstances of individual Blacks? This section attempts to answer this question by illustrating some of the effects of living in this atmosphere of denial upon Black adults and Black children.

5.2 Effects Upon Adults

Several participants speak of the covert, "hidden," "polite" form of racism in Canada. Mr. Gregory refers to it, saying

> Mr. G.: Ahm . . . {sigh} it's, ah, normally you have more of a polite racism here in Montreal. (Gregory 3:31-32)

after which he goes on to speak about his grandparents' reaction to his Black girlfriend (as we saw in sections 4.2.2 and 4.6). M. Frederic also refers to covert racism:

> M. Fr.: So, if a certain White person were to have a car accident involving a Black driver, he will say, "I just had an accident with a damned Black person. Nearly killed me," things like that. He will come into the room and say things like this to the others in the room because they are all White. But if there is a Black person in the room, he wouldn't be able to say it like that. And the person in that situation, in some circumstances, feels guilty. And in the presence of Blacks he will take a great deal of precaution not to say derogatory things about Blacks.
> (Frederic 4:34-39, translated from French)

Mr. Henry also speaks about covert racism in his interview. He uses the word hidden several times (n=7) in this context. These participants claim that racism is very real in Montreal, but that it is carried out in subtle, covert, underhanded ways that make it difficult to pinpoint.

Mr. Henry and M. Frederic also refer to the "feel,'' that they have developed:

> Mr. H.: And it's not so bad on the front, I'm telling you, but, when you get deeper and deeper inside of something, you could feel it. It is there. (Henry 3:18-19)

> Mr. H.: And now today, I could meet someone, business people, and,, it's not always there on the outside, but you can pick* up* a feeling* of,, someone – the way they feel about you , or they think you* are* out* of* place* where you are. (Henry 3:41-44)

> M. Fr.: You can feel. You can feel. For example, when you went somewhere and there is a group of – especially French Canadian, Quebecois – you feel, you see that there is-, when you enter as a Black man, a Black person, there is some, ah, difference of, difference of, ah,, atmosphere. There is a little tension. (Frederic 4:5-9)

This "feel" – an almost sixth sense – alerts them that Whites are thinking of them as outsiders or inferiors, or are otherwise subjecting them to unwelcome differential treatment on the basis of their race. Generally, Mr. Henry and M. Frederic are able to corroborate this "feel" by comparing the frequency with which it seems to happen to them to the fact that it does not seem to happen to others – that is, Whites. M. Frederic talks about being left out in schools at which he has worked as a substitute teacher,

demonstrating the difference between the ways that he and White substitute teachers are treated.

> M. Fr.: So, right there you are able to identify a kind of difference between the two situations. Because why is it that I have been coming to the school –, I have already been there three or four times, but him {a White substitute} he has been to the school barely twice—. I might seem mean, but so does he. So how is it that they {White teachers at the school} seem to accept him as part of the circle more than I? There is a little race problem.
> (Frederic 7:35-39, translated from French)

Mr. Henry talks about the consistency with which he is mistreated in expensive jewellery stores. He claims, "it's *always* happened."

> Mr. H.: You go to the mall and walk inside {expensive jewellery store}, and I've *done* it, and you feel, I feel the tension for myself before* I walk* through* the door* of {expensive jewellery store}, *knowing* that soon as I walk through, the security guard's gonna look at me,, and at least two store clerks will turn and look at me and eye* me down* the aisle*. It's *always* happened. {Expensive jewellery store} downtown, same thing. I don't wear gloves when I walk into this place, you know {smiling}. And I don't make movements from,, my hands to my pockets. It's like this weird sort of feeling you know, that,, you know-, I'm gonna take a Kleenex, blow my nose, and someone's gonna ask me to step over to the side. (Henry 4:27-31)

Thus, in a society in which racism is not acknowledged, these Blacks have developed a means of picking up the subtle cues that tell them they are in a situation in which race dynamics are working against them. This would seem to agree with Henry and Tator's (1994) observation:

> Another important dimension of racism is its ability to be so subtly expressed or indirectly implied that its targets are not even aware of it. Conversely, racism is sometimes visible only to its victims. It remains indiscernible to others who therefore deny its existence. (p. 3)

At the same time, this situation – having to rely on a sense that others do not have, that allows one to see what others do not and cannot see, that allows one to detect racism when the perpetrators have taken pains to camouflage and deny it, or else, really do not see it at all – is a difficult one that has its consequences. Beyond the

indignity of having others claim that you are making it all up (see section 4.3.2), there is the more serious problem of believing them. "Maybe I *am* making this up!" And, reinforced by a genuine wish to believe the best of the society in which they live, they too will try to convince themselves that there is some other explanation for what they are experiencing – that it is all their fault. This gives rise to second-guessing oneself and a self-doubt, which M. Frederic and Mr. Henry demonstrate, and of which they speak.

> M. Fr.: Yes, in some school, when I go to make substitution, for example, the first time I enter in the staff room, OK, you see there is some, ah, people are uncomfortable. Me, always I say that I am the reason of that, because I am new, they don't know me, I am dressed some way, they can feel some impression. They can also—, *bon*, there is a this kind of interpretation from me. And also, at least, I can say maybe it's also my character, OK. People can feel uncomfortable with me sometime. (Frederic 7:18-24)

> Mr. H.: You know, and sometimes in, in your head . . . you have this feeling, "Is it just me because I'm,, a visible minority, I'm Black? Or is it, is he going to do that with the White person that's gonna walk through this door and who might be dressed the same way as me?" You gotta think about that, say, "Why, wh-, . . ." If it, if he's gonna do that same thing to that person, then I'm outta place, I'm mistaken. But if he's *not*, then there's a major problem here. But there's still tension to this day. (Henry 4:5-10)

> Mr. H: But it's just this, it's just, it's this weird thing that I, I sort of go through, you know, knowing, expecting this, you know. Like, it's gonna happen, it's this weird, th—. Maybe I haven't gotten over stuff, but,, I feel that, you know, that, that exists, though, it's just this sort of feeling, you know. I look at people watch when I go through {Expensive jewellery store} or something like that they'll be watching, but I hope they're watching everybody. But I don't think they are. (Henry 4:44-49)

Clearly, the psychological pressure involved with this type of self-doubt is immense. One is caught between allowing the "feel" to work, thus being on-guard at all times, or turning the "feel" off, making oneself vulnerable to racist attacks. To illustrate the hazards of turning the "feel" off, we will consider Mr. Henry a bit more closely.

5.2.1 Mr. Henry: Living off-guard

In the previous section we discussed the "feel" that alerts Mr. Henry and M. Frederic (and, I would argue, most other Blacks) to a racist climate in which they are

likely to experience some expression of the racism embedded in society. Mr. Henry clearly uses this "feel" in public situations where he is not acquainted with those who treat him in a racist fashion. This stance serves him well, as we see in the following incident

> Mr. H.: I'll go to a store, Philip, and,, walk through the store, could be an expensive store, a wine store downtown, you know, very expensive wine store, because, you know, I collect wine, my wife collects wine. And,, sometimes I feel like telling the shop clerk, "Come here. Here's my wallet. I know how much money is in there. I know my credit cards. When I'm ready to leave, you can give it back. Until then, leave me alone!" And this goes through my head to this day in Montreal because ~~~ there's still that,, feeling that, you know, I still have in my head that,, this person sees me as a Black person who is going to rob* their* store. So, to let them lay off, I give {laughing} them my wallet, like just to be a sarcastic to them, it's like, "Here! I'm not gonna steal from you. I'm not gonna rob you. Take my wallet, Mr. Fool, and back off." [snicker]
>
> Philip: Have you actually, ever actually done it?
>
> Mr. H.: Once, to a store clerk, and he just backed away, he was stunned. (Henry 3:45-4:4)

Thus, in a situation where an over-zealous store clerk was allowing his race-based distrust of Mr. Henry to cause him to hover too close, Mr. Henry's sixth sense alerted him, and allowed him to take the offensive. He achieved the desired result, which was some room to browse in peace.

However, though he has experienced so much racism in the society, Mr. Henry refuses to see racism as a characteristic feature of the society in which he lives – despite the fact that he claims to see "isolated" incidents of racism "everywhere." In the following excerpt from his interview, we see Mr. Henry convincing himself that racism is not typical of the society. He "hopes" that it is not typical, until finally, he is sure that it is not.

> Mr. H.: Is it typical -- the whole situation? I don't think so. I think,, in our society today and in our, our building, there's a lot of . . . I hope it's not typical. I guess, you know, if we look, if we walk around with a, a, black cloud on our head we wouldn't get too far everyday, we wouldn't want to step outside our house, and we can only hope for better. Is it typical? I say, "No." Is-, isolated? I hope it's isol-, a lot of these are isolated situations,, between people that are uneducated,, uneducated in the way of,, not books, but uneducated in life,, about the people that live in the society they live around, you know? Isolated here. Isolated incidents out in the city,

> you know, isolated things at work . . . everywhere. But typical? No. . . . So I hope it's isolated. I'm sure it's isolated. (Henry 12:50-13:5, 13)

As such, Mr. Henry puts the reality of racism out of his mind, and, apparently, consciously turns the "feel" off – particularly in situations in which he is dealing with acquaintances. It appears that his own mixed race heritage, as well as his need to belong, move him to take a colourblind position. He feels he can facilitate his fitting in by forgetting his race, and not paying attention to the racism he experiences. He, too, thinks that colourblindness is an admirable quality, and seems to confuse taking account of race with being racist, as many Canadians do.

> Mr. H.: I don't see racism all the tim-, I try, ~~~ except for when I-, what I discussed with you about walking into stores and having problems with people, adjusting to that because all they see is—. When I'm in this building working with the kids § I don't see, I *really* don't see colours of the kids. I couldn't do that. I couldn't ~~~ do that because I, the position I grew up in as a kid {laughing} having a White mother and a Black father. I didn't care who I was playing with. It did not matter to me. I was in sports. I played *hockey*, I played hockey from the age I was ten all the way to the age I was eighteen I was in hockey teams. I tell you, there wasn't any other Black kids that were in my hockey team. They were all White kids. So I didn't ~~~ see,, colours because I wanted to be accepted all the time. You know, I didn't-, I knew I was Black inside, but I was a hockey player when I was playing hockey.
> (Henry 10:49-11:6)

We immediately see, however, that this strategy for fitting in is not successful, and he comes up against racism in these situations as well.

> Mr. H.: So I didn't ~~~ see,, colours because I wanted to be accepted all the time. You know, I didn't-, I knew I was Black inside, but I was a hockey player when I was playing hockey. I didn't see . . . colour of a person until they told it to me or yelled something at me from the other team. (Henry 11:5-8)

Thus, ignoring race and racism does not exempt Mr. Henry from having to experience the sting of racism. All that this stance seems to do is to put him "off guard." He is then unprepared for the assumptions that people make about him based on his racial identity. And he encounters this racism from unexpected quarters – that is, from the very people

with whom he has let down his guard, and by whom he wishes to be accepted. We see this illustrated clearly in an incident from Mr. Henry's adult life.

Mr. Henry, a teacher, tends to be a strict disciplinarian and has many altercations with students. According to him, his disciplinary actions are not racially motivated, and this seems to be substantiated by the fact that he seems to have as many altercations with White students as with Black students.

> Mr. H.: You know, so when I'm teaching here {claps hands} I'm disciplining the child, I don't *care* what colour that child is at* all*! I'll treat* them* a>>ll the same*. They step outta {laughing} line, I *discipline* them. If they break the rules, they, they, they get what's expected by the rules, they get sent to the office. When I'm disciplining a child, and that child has a conniption fit and explodes, I'm not gonna tolerate it, it doesn't matter whether the kid is White or Black, I'm *not* gonna tolerate it. (Henry 11:8-14)

But Mr. Henry is unprepared for the way in which his colleagues, all acquaintances with whom he thinks he gets along well, react:

> Mr. H.: But after the situation's been dealt with, and I hear,, that,, *staff* members,, through the grapevine, are concerned about what has happened because, it *seems* that it's always the White student that's getting in trouble or getting, you know, in conflict like that, I'm taken back because I'm sayin', "Whoa! ~~~ Whoa!" (Henry 11:14-17)

> Mr. H.: It bothered me that—. You're, you're taken aback by, you know, someone you deal with everyday and you think nothin's wrong, but all of a sudden you're, pshht, take your hit from the side and you go, "Where did that come from?" (Henry 11:51-12:2)

Thus, by turning off the feel, and not acknowledging the lenses of race through which most things are structured in his society, Mr. Henry is caught off-guard.

5.2.2. Mrs. Matthews: Always on-guard

It is interesting to note here that Mr. Henry's situation contrasts sharply with Mrs. Matthew's position. She will not turn her "feel" off. She is always on-guard. After describing an incident in which a store clerk fails to notice a White shoplifter because the store clerk was so preoccupied with watching Mrs. Matthews, Mrs. Matthews says:

> Mrs. M.: So it's, it's these type o' incidents that just, that just make you want to put on a suit of armour every* day* you go out*. You need to have on an invisible suit of armour everyday you go out because you *know* you are going to meet someone who is going to say something that is racist. You *know* that! (Matthews 5: 16-19)

Mrs. Matthews refers to her preparedness for racism as her armour. She mentions her armour again while speaking about how Black students are steered away from higher education. She recounts an experience she had upon returning to school after raising her children. At the time of the incident, Mrs. Matthews was about to graduate from an Adult Education center and further her education at tertiary levels (she eventually attained a Masters degree and a teaching diploma). However, the guidance counselor was attempting to steer her into a vocational cooking career despite her straight "A" average.

> Mrs. M.: She wanted to put us in cooking school because that's what we were good at! Why did we want to go through the hassle of college? So, I mean, these are—. And I-, and I'm an adult. I'm not seventeen or eighteen years old. Can you imagine how demoralizing that is for someone seventeen? When I had the reaction I had as a woman *forty plus*? So,, I know how I felt, "Here it comes again! Here it comes again! The armour's intact because here it comes again." (Matthews 22:30-35)

And a final reference to her armour

> Mrs. M.: And for people who think they have succeeded in White society by telling me, "I have sat at tables with some of the, the most important White people in Montreal," well,, you have not impressed me at all, because passivity, and sitting with White people is not* my* aim*. That is not my aim. It is not necessary to my Blackness. It is not necessary to my life. And if that's the pinnacle of your success, that's fine! However, I am very radical and I find that,, answering White people with their rudeness and ignorance, with hostility is the best way to deal with it. So, I'm not nice. And it's not that I don't want to be nice, it's that they take that avenue away from me with their ignorance and stupidity. They have removed the avenue of niceness from me. Because I can't be nice if I need my *armour* every day just to get ready for the blow you might strike. (Matthews 26:4-13)

So Mrs. Matthews prefers not to be off guard. However, she has also been accused of being bitter.

Without evaluating these positions (off-guard or on-guard) at this time, we can clearly see the psychological pressures involved with either of them. In the following section we will continue what Mrs. Matthews started above – a comparison between how these pressures affect adults and how they affect children.

5.3 Effects Upon Children

It is not difficult to imagine that the psychological pressures and negative effects of living in a society that denies racism are multiplied many times over in a child's world. Mr. Bernard describes how young students react to racism in school

> Mr. B.: And, ah, what's unfortunate about this is this: that, ahm, ah, because we are dealing with children, they do not really differentiate and recognize the nuances of what's going on in this society. "Teacher A doesn't, ah, like me in grade one so I, ah, begin to unload and discard. School is an environment that's hostile, and I'll react in this kind of way. I'll protect myself." And, ah, this child gets to grade three and may have a *ver>>y* conscientious and caring teacher, but, but the damage has been done. Ah, there was a book which was written about this by a teacher in the Boston area. It was called, ahm, ah, Death at an Early Age. After you do that damage in grade one, or grade two, or grade three, that child is dead. That child is dead, that child is hostile, that child cannot really achieve in school. And we see the kinds of problems, and I noticed a report in yesterday's Gazette again about, difficult, ah, difficult children in elementary schools etcetera, etcetera. The numbers are increasing all the time. I'm sure that a very high percentage of that—, ahm, a disproportionately large number of those are Black. And once the damage is done in grade one, or grade two, or grade three, the damage is done.
>
> (Bernard 11:43-46)

It is precisely because children are too young to have yet developed a "feel," or "armour" that they become vulnerable to racism. Further, as Mr. Bernard points out, their responses are often not in their own best interest – a point that Mrs. Matthews also mentions

> Mrs. M.: You see how these kids they don't have that preparation. The Black kids "go off" and they confront the teachers, the principal, they confront anybody. And what they're doing is reinforcing a teacher's dislike of them. It's all to do with that. Then the teacher has you already marked. Because you swore at her or something, she *"will not tolerate—."* "I don't *tolerate that child in my class.* I want that child *out* of my class!" §§ So, you, you, you've killed yourself. (Matthews 32:23-28)

The extent of the damage that these children suffer and do to themselves is emphasized by the metaphor of death that both Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews use.

However, both Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews blame those parents who, off-guard themselves, send their children to school off-guard and fail to advocate for their children as necessary. In the following lengthy excerpts, both Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews show the contrast between parents like this, and those who are wiser

Mr. B.: A friend of mine . . . ah, her grandson attends a school around here, and she had to intervene very actively just recently. Ahm, a little incident in school, something with equipment, not having equipment, or some little thing like that. Ah, the teacher's reaction was to, ah, detain that child, have that child miss the school bus on a cold day, and then didn't*give*a damn* how that child got home. Just, "OK, I detain you, you have missed your bus." Deliberately made that child miss that bus, and then, ahm, just ignore the child from there on in. The child had to walk home on a very cold day. Ah, fortunately the child was old enough to find his way home, but here you have an instance where a teacher shows such callous disregard for the well-being of the child. And when we see these instances, we've, ah, got to recognize them as the iceberg where, where, you know, only a small part of it is above the water. You see, ah, Black parents are trusting souls, and although they would go out and work and experience all kinds of racism in their lives, and in their working lives, they will still trust their children to the schools implicitly, you know. Just, ahm, accept whatever the school does or says about them. . . . And, I believe that that multiplied a thousand-fold or a million-fold is the reality of Black children's lives in the schools, and this is why we are seeing this problem. As I said earlier on, I, I don't think I know of a Black family who has not experienced racism in the schools with their children, OK – although they want to believe it. (Bernard 11:3-26)

Mrs. M.: My kids went to Montrose High, so when the kids were calling them "Brown Cow" and this, that, and the other, and "Chocolate Milk," my kids already knew. They had already known how to negotiate that system and how to combat those type of remarks*, because I *told* them, "This is what you're gonna confront in school. You're not going to fight, you're not going to be punching people out. This is how you're gonna negotiate that system. And you're gonna get through it successfully because, I'm telling you, this is the way it is. It doesn't matter who is your friend, they'll turn around and call you just what you don't expect. So you're prepared for that." So when the kids got called names, oh, . . . they all knew. So they need to learn that this is a possibility, probability. "And this is how you handle yourself in this situation, if it comes from the teacher or if it comes from your peers, this is how you handle the situation. And I told them, "You never talk back to any teacher. They're right, they're wrong, never talk back. That's not how you negotiate the system as a student. You come and tell *me*, and I will handle this." But students, they don't realize . . . they do not have anything with the teacher on that level. I did at parents-teachers. They just sit there and don't talk back. That's why they have me. . . . The problem is, a lot of people, a lot of Black people in Montreal did not go to this school system. They didn't go. And their children experience racism that is *un*believable. They have no idea. They didn't go to the school system. Why would you think your child was getting the same education as the White student? But a lot of Black parents didn't go to school here, and the children were born here and went to school here. Oh my *G-d*! Because my friend, he's from Barbados, so I know the horror stories. I know them. The only time they ever spoke to him was when he played sports. Other than that, he didn't exist. His accent, the teacher told him, "Are you speaking English? What language are you speaking?" That's what she asked him ,"What language are you speaking, you 're not speaking English. You need to learn how to speak English. So, they were unprepared, his Mom and Dad came from Barbados. He was born in Barbados. He was not prepared for this type of system, and that's part of the culture shock. Wasn't prepared. Parents didn't do anything. What could they do? So, I taught my kids how to negotiate, because I knew the system hadn't changed much from when I was a kid. It didn't change. People were still racist. Teachers were still racist. I knew they hadn't changed, so I prepared them to enter that system and succeed. And that's the greatest thing you could do for kids at school. . . . my kids were not going to kill themselves.

(Matthews 31:45-32:4, 8-23, 28)

Mrs. M.: So, these are the things that have to be done for kids. It's difficult to be Black in these schools, but it can be a little bit easier. It can be so that the children have a certain immunity based on understanding who they are, knowing who they are, and understanding that this could happen to them. They have, ahm, built up some defences already. But to get a child, throw a child in there totally defenceless is cruel. Awh! Elementary! I taught pre-K, for God's sake! I taught pre-K, and school can be so horrific. And to expose kids to that without preparing them

> is cruel. Yeah, it is! When I see a lot of these parents won't come in for their kids and things, I feel badly for them because then the kids take on the role of the parent and they try to fight in their defence. And boy are they sinking themselves! They sink themselves.
>
> (Matthews 32:29-38)

Thus, Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews begin to suggest solutions. They suggest that Black parents need to make their children aware of the likelihood that they will confront racism, and take the steps, not only to prepare them to "negotiate the system successfully" – that is to respond in ways that are not to their detriment – but also be ready themselves, as parents, to intervene when their children face racism.[1] We shall consider these ideas further in the next chapter, but, as M. Frederic points out, though White Canada may try to get over its racism through denying it (see section 4.2.4), Black Canadians, — adults, adolescents, and children — suffer immensely as a result of this denial. Racism is still very real to them.

> M. Fr: They try to set up barriers that will stop people from cultivating racist ideas. That's the government's job, OK. This does give results. People don't openly show themselves to be racist. We find that people are more tolerant than before. They are less racist, let's say. However, we cannot neglect the fact that racism still exists. It's still there. It's still there. So what I am saying to you is that what we were finding {among Haitian youth} was disillusionment. That is, they think—, they are frustrated about the society in which they live. They see no future. (Frederic 12:52-13:8 Translated from French)

The unwillingness of many individuals, White and non-White, to make race explicit and face-up to the racist nature of the society – an attitude that is generated and reinforced by the society – causes immense psychological pressure, and does not serve the victims of racism very well.

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[1] Note that this response is not to be confused with what Mr. Alexander does when he tries to teach Black students the "correct" way to respond to racism (see section 4. 3.1). By failing to appropriately deal with racism either before or after racist incidents Mr. Alexander effectively silences black indignation. Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews advise children of their vulnerability if they respond unwisely to racism, but are willing to advocate on the children's behalves.

CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

6.1. Summary

This study has investigated ideological common sense about race and racism as it is discussed and demonstrated by teachers in the Quebec English Language Education System. Part 1 of Chapter 4 has served to show that this ideological common sense clusters around the tendency to deny the types of racism that are most prevalent in the society. Though most of the participants were willing to admit the presence of racism in the society, they conceive of this racism in a way that exempts themselves and their acquaintances (section 4.2.2.), or conceive of it in a manner so trivial that they are willing to say, "We're all racist" (section 4.2.3). We also saw that this denial happens on the governmental and administrative levels, and that denial may be the way that Canada and Canadians have chosen to make progress toward a non-racist, egalitarian future (section 4.2.5).

Part 2 of Chapter 4 explored the way in which what appears to be the denial of racism may, in fact, be the result of very different understandings of the society and very different understandings of key concepts in the racism debate.

Part 3 of Chapter 4 examined the difficulty involved with trying to combat racism. I argued that many Whites are simply unable to entertain the idea that they could unintentionally hold ideas that have racist effects and which perpetuate racial disparity in society. This was illustrated through the difficulties involved with creating effective anti-racist workshops.

Finally, section 4.5.1 and Chapter 5 discussed some of the effects that living in a climate of denial has upon Blacks, while part 4 of chapter 4 discussed the above-

mentioned arguments as they occur in Davies and Guppy's (1998) article, which attempts to argue against the existence of institutional racism in Canadian education.

6.2. Some Conclusions

What are some conclusions that can be drawn from this study?

First, a comparison to some of the American literature on racism (Schofield, 1989; King, 1991; Sleeter, 1993; Desimone, 1993; Shujaa, 1995; Lipman, 1997; McIntyre, 1997 a, 1997b; Thompson, 1997; Kailin, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1998) and Canadian studies that compare racism in Canada and the United States (e.g., Reitz and Breton, 1998) suggests that there is not a great deal of difference between the racism in these two countries. However, Canadians seem to have a great deal more difficulty in acknowledging their racism and in coming forth with definite solutions to, and sanctions for, racism (Aylward, 1999, p. 40). Thus, Canada and Canadians seem to put more effort into the denial of racism than Americans. On the basis of this point, then, I might emphasize that, contrary to what many would suggest, the American literature on racism, and the American approaches to anti-racism are relevant in Canada. Thus, the remaining conclusions I make are strongly supported by the American literature on race, and race in education.

Second, because of the subtle, pervasive common sense nature of racism in Canada, I suggest that addressing racism in education in Canada is not a matter of giving teachers lesson plans and you-can-try-this-tomorrow instructional strategies that will assist them in passing on tolerance to the next generation. Instead, this study demonstrates that teachers need first to be taught to interrogate their society, their own

assumptions, and their/the society's common-sense (Kailin, 1999; Sleeter, 1993; Thompson, 1997). White teachers must explore the meanings of their own (neglected) racial identities and privilege, and how these impact upon their roles as teachers.

Third, the prevalence of an attitude of denial about racism in Canada suggests that there needs to be the publication and dissemination of stories and representations "from the margins" (Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Delgado, 1990; Henry, 1993; Tate, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998) – even more so than is argued for in the United States. These suggestions are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

6.3. Centering race: Critical Race Theory

If, as we have seen, racist ideology is so embedded in "Western" society that it has become invisible – a part of the common sense of "Western" civilization – then how does one combat this racism? The answer cannot be to deny race and racism and, thus, wish it away. It seems obvious that the more fruitful route would be to face fully the central role that race plays in the structuring of society and its institutions. As Lopez observes, "in order to get beyond racism we must first take account of race. There is no other way" (Lopez, 1996 cited in Aylward, 1999, p. 32). Omi and Winant insist that race be a "central axis" of social analysis (1986, p. 61). By thus refusing to make the discussion of race and racism taboo (Schofield, 1989), this approach deals with these matters at precisely the level at which they operate.

Critical Race Theory is a discourse that has endeavoured to take this approach to legal matters. It recognizes that though the law may be used as a weapon against racism, the state and the law really do not exist outside of the society to "interven[e] in racial conflicts," but is, instead, "a site of racial conflict" (Omi and Winant, 1986, p. 76) – "both product and promoter of racism" (Matsuda, in Aylward 1999, p. 30). It realizes that

"rights discourse" will not necessarily effect change on its own, as legal rights are constructed to defend the position of the dominant group. Critical Race Theory, therefore, attempts to determine those legal cases in which race is, indeed, operating or has operated as a crucial factor, calculates whether drawing attention to this will benefit the client, and, if it will, the critical race litigator proceeds to contextualize the case, often through narrative, in order to increase the likelihood of a fair outcome. Thus, the racism legitimizing tendencies of colourblindness are challenged and overcome. Unfortunately, this is often seen as "playing the race card." However, this critical race litigation is not an attempt to bring in race where it is irrelevant, but rather an effort to expose the central operation of race where it is being denied.

What does this Critical Race Theory and centering race have to do with education? Education in "Western" society, as an institution in "Western" society, carries the embedded racism and racist common sense that is characteristic of "Western" society. Further, the law defines education, thus that which applies to the law will also affect education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Finally, given that education can be broadly conceived as that which has to do with the making and acquisition of knowledge, and given the postmodern realization that *all* knowledge is political in that it serves some group's ends, it is not difficult to see that education is a site of racism and, potentially, a site for anti-racist struggle.

Ladson-Billings (1998) and others discuss the utility of a critical anti-racist approach to education. First, it exposes the central position of race in education. It recognizes the need to "redress past inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1998), to expose the Eurocentric master narratives that pose as neutral knowledge and (re)introduce the perspectives that arise from other societal locations (Asante, 1991; Dei, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1998; see also Giroux, 1997), to expose and eradicate race-based/race-biased assessment and evaluation (Ladson-Billings, 1998), to look critically at the ways in which the structure and funding of schools supports racist status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1998),

and to center race in curriculum and instruction, helping students to truly acquire a critical consciousness of the society in which they live (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Thomas, 1987; Thompson, 1997). As with critical race litigation, centering race in curriculum is not politicizing an apolitical domain. Instead, since "race is central to all structures, institutions and social discourses in Euro-Canadian/American society" (Dei, 1996, p. 256), it follows that organizing curriculum in this manner is the *only* way to help students, and thus, citizens, to arrive at a realistic understanding of their society. As Thompson (1997) argues, education that does not pay attention to race:

> is miseducative insofar as it ignores the social fact of racism in a society. In so doing, it teaches students not to think about race, promoting ignorance as if it were innocence. Indeed, it is not merely that such education prepares students to misunderstand the conditions of their society, but that, as Woodson argues, it does so in collusion with prevailing power relations, thereby reinforcing racist social structures. (pp. 15-16)

Mrs. Bernard and Mrs. Matthews, participants in this study, suggest that there need to be support workers and departments in schools and school systems who occupy themselves exclusively with issues of culture and race. Mrs. Matthews goes as far as saying that if this cannot be accomplished in public schools as they now exist, there may need to be the creation of Black-focussed schools. She notes the danger that these schools would have of excluding everyone else, and so, explains that these schools must not narrowly pre-occupy themselves with Black interests, but, rather, must teach the real nature of society "as not being ideal for some groups" (Matthews 7:45). The focus of the school would be to foster a high sense of self-esteem and pride in one's identity. Asante (1991) concurs with this position:

> It must be emphasized that Afrocentricity is *not* a Black version of Eurocentricity (Asante, 1987). Eurocentricity is based on White supremacist notions whose purposes are to protect White privilege and advantage in education, economics, politics, and so forth. Unlike Eurocentricity, Afrocentricity does not condone ethnocentric valorization at the expense of degrading other groups' perspectives. (pp. 171-172)

The Black focused school is simply a site where it is acceptable and expected that the salience of race, the ubiquity of racism, and strategies of anti-racism will be discussed. This is not often accomplished in mixed school since some teachers, both Black and White, who are "colourblind" or, at least, do not politicize their teaching, in racially integrated schools, report that in Black schools they are much more explicit about the racist nature of society and the implications of this fact for students. Black teachers in particular, though they favour desegregation, complain that the freedom to politicize their teaching and, thus, "get to my people and tell them all the things they [need] to know," (Foster, 1990) is compromised in desegregated schools as they operate presently.

6.4. Being Explicit about Racism

Not only must we pay attention to race, and acknowledge it as an organizing principle in our society, we must also be explicit about racism. Katz (1983/1991) concludes that "one effective way of countering racism in the classroom is to bring the facts of the black situation into the open in the classroom and to give black and white students full opportunity to express their views, attitudes and feelings about them" (p. 195). We have already seen in chapter 5 that Mrs. Matthews feels that parents should teach their young children to expect racism outside the home, and teach them how to respond. Ladson Billings (1994) agrees

> African American children cannot afford the luxury of shielding themselves with a sugar-coated vision of the world. When their parents or neighbours suffer personal humiliation and discrimination because of their race, parents, teachers and neighbours need to explain why. . . . parents, teachers, and neighbours need to help arm African American children with the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed to struggle successfully against oppression. ***This,*** more than test scores, more than high grade-point averages, are the critical features of education for African Americans. (p. 139)

6.5. Telling our stories

In Chapter 5, I demonstrated from the experiences of some participants the immense psychological pressures on Blacks of living in a society that denies the racism that one is experiencing. Tate and Ladson-Billings make a similar point – that the constant subordination and denial of the stories of the marginalized often leads to demoralization and self-condemnation, even a questioning of one's own sanity (Tate, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998). An obvious and powerful way of combating this is for Blacks to share their stories – a process that serves to validate ones experiences and conclusions, and give greater understanding of the society in which one lives (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1994). Storytelling from the margins serves to help one "realiz[e] . . . how one came to be oppressed and subjugated, thus allowing one to stop inflicting mental violence on oneself," and thus, storytelling and voices from marginalized locations work toward the "psychic [sic] preservation" of the marginalized (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1994).

Given that the societal common sense about racism in Canada seems to be characterized by denial, the necessity for such storytelling is multiplied. A suggestion I make here for the direction of further research is that any such research done on race and education, particularly in Quebec, cannot focus narrowly upon theory. Rather, it should, like this study has attempted to, embed theoretical discussion within vivid accounts of experiences of racism.

6.6. Teaching Teachers

Given our discussion in part 3 of Chapter 4 of the complexity involved with trying to create effective anti-racism workshops, it should be clear that teaching teachers anti-racism will not be an easy task. Indeed, studies of anti-racist workshops have shown that Whites tend to use the new knowledge they gain in these circumstances and fit it into their existing frameworks for understanding the "Other" (Haberman and Post, 1992). Mr Alexander in this study demonstrated this clearly during his discussion of equal opportunity (see section 4.6), which turned out to be far different from what a Black person might be thinking of when using this term. This is an example of the way in which members of dominant groups co-opt the resistance language of dominated groups in order to reinforce their dominant status (Ng, 1993).

Workshops intended to teach White teachers anti-racism must begin with a definition of terms at the most basic level. What is race? What is racism? They must even bring in statistics that demonstrate the racial inequity in *Canadian* society. Canadians must understand that we have a significant racism problem here too.

Teachers attending anti-racism workshops such as these must come to understand that they are not coming as much to study the "Other" (the non-White, or the other White person who is racist) as to study themselves, their privilege, and the structure of society (Sleeter, 1993). They will also need to come to recognize the "White talk" and reasoning in which they engage themselves in an effort to avoid challenging the status quo of White privilege (Sleeter, 1993). It might also be beneficial to prepare them for the adverse reactions – that is, feelings of being accused or persecuted – that they are likely to experience in the beginning (Tatum, 1992). Whites are not accustomed to being othered and scrutinized.

In addition to all this, we need to realize that the job will not be complete without the influx of many more educators of colour. As well meaning as any White educator might be, and however thorough their anti-racist training, the perspectives of those who experience racism as its victims must be sought and included (Delpit, 1988; Razack, 1998; Sleeter, 1993).

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS BY RACIAL DESIGNATION

The participants were asked to categorize themselves racially. The essence of each participant's answer is quoted below.

Black Participants

Mr Bernard – "I can identify myself in no other way, but as a Black man, a Black person of African descent."

Mrs. Matthews – "Scotian, and I would prefer Black."

Mr. Henry – "I don't have a problem with telling people I'm, that I'm Black, and I'm a visible minority and whatever."

M. Frederic – "It is clear that I'm a Black man, all right? I'm a Black man."

Asian Participant

Ms. Le – "I would tick "other." If they get into more specifics like Chinese or whatever, I would *definitely* pick who I think I am — which I am Chinese."

White participants

Mr. Alexander – "I'll be very honest with you, I wouldn't think twice about answering that. I don't, ah, I don't read anything into it besides wanting to know, so I just, I just fill it out.
Philip: So, White?
Mr. A.: Yes

Mr. Gregory – "How would I, ah, {exhale audibly} racially, I see myself as a . . . I dunno, a White male."

Mrs. Page – "I guess I'd just say White married female."

Mrs. Crystal – "I assume I'd say White."

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

1. Please tell me about your own background, childhood, schooling, and how you came to teaching.

2. When you have to self-identify, how do you identify yourself racially?

3a. Montreal is a culturally and racially diverse society. Do you think there is racism in our society? Please relate incidents or examples that you feel support your answer.

3b. How do you think any racism here compares to racism in the United States?

4. Do you feel schools/the school system should play any role in preventing or combating racism in society? (If not, why not.)

(If so) Please describe your ideal school/school system and how it would operate to achieve such a goal. This school is not the perfect school in that race is a non-issue, but it is ideal in the way it attempts to prepare students to prevent and combat racism in the school and in society. Take me on a tour of this school (on a typical day) that shows me the important features of what happens in the school in general and in particular classrooms, in staff meetings and student activities. Resource-wise, the sky is the limit. You may also include whatever out of school support you think will be necessary.

5a. Please relate an incident (or situation) that concerned or troubled you (several incidents, one at a time is OK) that you have experienced, seen or had happen in your school or in your career as an educator that involved racism or issues of race. Feel free to say there have been none if that is true. Relate it as if you were videotaping it.

What was this like for you, why do you think this happened, what did you do, if anything, how did the victim feel?

5b. Would you say such an occurrence is regular or typical? Why?

6. Are all instances of racism this easy to recognize? If not, give an example. How are racists able to get away with this behaviour? How do they justify their behaviour to themselves, to others?

7. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that race was playing a central role but that this was not being acknowledged? If so, please recount it.

8. Given the constraints that you work under, can you relate an example of how you may have worked against racism in your career. Could you/should you do more? What limits what you can do?

8. Have you ever been accused of racism yourself? Please relate this incident. (Remember you are videotaping.)

How was this for you? feelings, justified or not? What did you/can you do about this?

9. Have you attended any workshops/in-service training that dealt with issues of race (or prejudice)? If so, please describe the focus of the workshop(s). How did you feel about it/them?

10. Canadian 1991 census data shows that the percentage of Blacks holding university degrees in the 25-34 age bracket is below the national average for 25 – 34 year olds. What explanation might you offer for this observation? (Women 55-64 also below avg; men 55-64-above avg)

11. The Toronto Board of Education now reports educational achievement by race (among other social categories). How do you feel about this reporting? This kind of reporting is not done in Montreal. Why do you feel this is so?

12. The TBE has found that Blacks are over-represented among the low achieving, bottom stream. "at-risk" students. Do you get the sense that the same is true in Quebec? Why?

13. Have you found that people of Colour sometimes raise issues of race when they are irrelevant? Can you relate such an incident?

14. Is there anything else you would like to say? Are there any questions you would like to ask me -- on or off the record?

APPENDIX C

Sample page from a transcript

Mrs. C.: What I found was-, because I'm from an island {laughing} there are positive ones in many cases, most cases. And Juan {Black}, for example, was writing about his island. And I had just got back from my island, which is not as, obviously, not as, not as warm and everything, but from Labrador/Newfoundland. And he was missing his island -- he sat right down in that desk. And I found that sometimes I can really identify with people who come from an island [Mm hm] because even if, even if they don't come from it right now and they go back in the summer and they write about it. And it's true. There is something near the ocean which is timeless, which is [mm hm] and all other problems seem very,, small in comparison sometimes, you know, because the ocean's so infinite. Ahm, so that would be one. Ahm, the other would be, ahm, Newfoundlanders are very often prejudiced against in Canada -- especially in Toronto [Mm hm, mm hm] I haven't heard-, my, my girlfriend is telling me, ahm, and they had all these Newfie jokes, you know. And they're usually, ex-, ex-, interchangeable with Polish jokes, with [Right] right? And they're, actually Newfoundland jokes are much funnier, {laughs}. So anyway, ahm, my friend was telling me from Toronto, she said that, ahm, people would, ahm, want her to hang around with more people from Newfoundland. And she said, "Well that's fine, but the people on my street who are from Newfoundland, I look out my window one day and they were standing-, there were 2 guys standing on a car with no shirt on yelling {laughing} 'I'm a Newfie,' and beating his chest." She said, "I wouldn't hang around with him, like, down home. How am I supposed to hang around with him here?" So, you know? So, I know what she means 'cause, you know, you meet someone from down home who you wouldn't hang with. Why would you hang around with them here? So, I, I,, I have been very aware of prejudice on La Salle at times, and-, but mostly from people who are not that smart. {laughs} And, ahm,

Philip: So how does this come into the cultural difference,, thing?

Mrs. C.: Because I understand, then, if someone feels [OK] do you know what I mean? Cultur-, so it is culturally different to me to be from Newfoundland [OK] in a way [Mm hm] so therefore I can identify with the person who,, yeah, who feels that they're being put down,, for a *ridiculous* reason [Mm hm] And, and its so annoying, because sometimes its by someone who is so far beneath you, you know [Mm hm] And so I feel the-, I can feel their . . . to a certain extent their, you know . . . hurt, but also their,, total disgust of it, you know [Mm hm] And its, i-, it's,, it's not as prevalent now as it u-, but i-, bit it's still there. OK the other thing is I felt that there are cultural differences in spirituality. I notice, this might be prejudice in reverse, but I find that a lot of,, Black students, I'm more in synch with them spiritually or something, or that, ahm, . . . are more spiritual. Maybe they are

Philip: When you say spiritual meaning,, [Yeah I don't] because that, that word is defined [I also, I know]

Mrs. C.: I also mean religiously, but more than that, you know [Mm hm] But al-, religiously, yes, but more than that. I remember one day a whole bunch of kids were in my class and Mary Hunter came to visit, and it was, ah, it was this year, and I'd taught them last year like, ah, Shanita {Black}, Laverne {Black},, I think Rashida Jackson {Black} was there too, yes she was -- even though I didn't teach her, I guess she's the one. And she goes-,, oh and-,, 'cause Mary came in and it just happened that for some reason we were praying, 'cause I do it as a joke sometimes If someone's being,,, bad or something, I go, "Oh, I'll have to pray for you now," you know. Or I'll [Mm hm] And it just normally comes from my background that-, not that I'm narrowly religious, but I would say, ahm-. So, so anyway, Rashida Jackson says, ahm, "The de-," and, you know, she says, "Miss, ah, you know, I can't pray because the devil is in me." And I said, "No, he might be beside you or somewhere, but he's not in you," you know [Mmm] And so I-, we joked with her and the other girls and I-, and they sang beautiful songs, beautiful hymns [Oh] Yes! And so, ah. and before Rashida left I said, "God bless you, Rashida," and she looked at me and she smiled. And I met her in the hallway the next day and she smiled, beautiful smile, and said, "God bless you, Miss." And I, I was, like, floored. It was like, you know. [Mm hm] Yeah, they sang. Ah, Angela, Shanita, Sidonne, Rashida Jackson-. I don't remember who the other one-, might

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPTION CODES

/	—	cut off by next speaker
[ ]	—	speakers overlap
„	—	short pause
italics	—	more intense tone
>>	—	elongated vowel/word
§	—	hits desk
$$	—	omission for confidentiality
*	—	emphasized words
~	—	long pause
{ }	—	non-verbal communication or author's clarifications and editorial comments