How You Doin'?: Social discrimination and its impact on health among Black men who have sex with men in Montreal.

Kofi Norsah
School Of Social Work
McGill University, Montreal,
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ABSTRACT

This study explores how African and Carribbean immigrant English-speaking men who have sex with men experience social discrimination (homophobia, racism, poverty, etc.) and examines the impact of this social discrimination on their mental and sexual health. Using a phenomenological qualitative research approach informed by intersectionality theory, the author interviewed six Black men who have sex with men (BMSM) about their experiences. The study found that participants' experiences of social discrimination in multiple and intersecting forms, such as racism, homophobia and classism, had an impact upon their identities, relationships with others and sexual and mental health. Participants recommended that a holistic individualized intervention program be used to address the effects of intersectional social discrimination on their identities and well-being.

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Chapter One: Introduction

My struggle has allowed me to transcend that sense of shame and stigma identified with my being a Black gay man. Having come through the fire, they can't touch me. - Marlon Riggs

1.1 *Research Problem Statement*

Canada has made significant advancements in the civil rights of members of sexual and gender minority community(ies)[1]. As far back as 1969, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the then Prime Minister of Canada, expressed his intention to decriminalize homosexuality when he said: "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" (Trudeau, 2015). Subsequently, in the same year, "consensual sexual acts between individuals of the same-sex committed in private were decriminalized… in Canada" (Haggins, 1997,p.105). Since the 1980s, *The Canadian Charter of Rights And Freedoms* and all of the provincial human rights charters recognize members of LGBT communities as a group of people requiring protection from discrimination (Hinrichs, 2011, Warner, 2002). During the past decade, Canadian provincial courts set the standard by legalizing same-sex marriages. In a 2004 unanimous decision in favour of same-sex marriage, the Quebec Court Of Appeals ruled that: "the traditional definition restricting marriage to a union between a man and a woman is discriminatory and unjustified" (Munroe, 2007, p.1). As a result, the federal government legalized same-sex marriage in 2005, making it the fourth country in the world to offer same sex marriage recognition (Hinrichs, 2011). Another example of Canada's

[1] The term "Sexual minority community(ies)" is an umbrella term that describes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community(ies). (Rankin, 2005,p.22; Rocco et al., 2009, p.8). This research work acknowledges the ongoing debate surrounding the use of this term; the personal, cultural, and political meanings attached to the use of language in explaining sexual/gender orientation self-identity and for these reasons respect the use of group/cultural specific and self-affirming terms and language. The term *sexual minority* is used interchangeably with LGB(TQ) in most of the literature. However, the transgender communities are not always identified as sexual minorities in most of the literature reviewed for this work. Though discussions of the transgender communities is beyond the scope of this work, the term sexual minorities in the present work refers to both Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB), transgender (T) and queer (LGBTQ) as their experiences of marginality based on gender and sexuality overlap in general terms. For more specific definition for this research, see page 12.

recognition of LGBT people's equal rights and guaranteed protection is through its immigration policies. Although Canadian immigration policy is not without its critics Canada accepts sexual and gender minorities as refugees requiring protection from persecution in their home countries (Murray, 2014). Canada's second largest city, Montreal, is home to many of these sexual and gender minority immigrants (Hinrichs, 2011).

Despite advances in civil rights, sexual and gender minority communities still face many challenges in the form of discrimination (including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia). The impact of these challenges and stigma facing sexual and gender minorities can pose a significant health risk (Frost et al., 2012; Almeida et al., 2009; Meyers, 2003a,1995; Mays & Cochran, 2001). These communities are disproportionately affected by negative health outcomes related to social discrimination, such as mental health disorders (i.e. depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation) and problems related to sexual health (i.e. elevated rates in Sexually Transmitted Infections (Almeida et al., 2009; Meyers, 2003a; Mays & Cochran, 2001)). Health surveillance data collected from 1979 to 2008 show that men who have sex with men (also known as MSM) are the majority (68%) of Canadians diagnosed with HIV/AIDS (The Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010, p.2). Another health and social challenge facing the community is disproportionate suicidal ideation and suicide rates. For example, researcher Micheal Benibgui (2011) identified that LGBT high school and college students are 14 times more likely to commit suicide compared to their non-LGBT peers. To understand these challenges, it is important to reflect on the intersecting and multiple social, individual, and structural factors that may explain elevated negative mental, physical and sexual health outcomes among members of sexual and gender minority communities (Millet et al., 2012b).

In addition, members of sexual and gender minority communities are not homogenous. For example, sexual and gender minority communities who are also members of ethnocultural minority communities often face additional health risks (Millet et al., 2012a,b). In a meta analysis looking at research on Black Men Who Have Sex With Men (also known as BMSM) in different parts of the world by the Center for Disease Control, estimates that BMSM "are 15 times more likely to be HIV positive compared with general populations and 8.5 times more likely compared with Black population" (Millet et al., 2012a, p.411). The same study noted that BMSM in Quebec "had a greater lifetime prevalence of syphilis or herpes diagnosis than did other MSM" (Millett et al., 2012a, p.419). In investigating the experience of suicidal ideation among the BMSM cohort in the US, Boykin (2012a) stated that 43%[2] were found to have considered suicide. These studies suggest that the intersection of sexual and gender minority status and ethnocultural minority status leads to increased risk of negative mental and sexual health outcomes (Diaz et al., 2004, 2006).

Studies on the association between social discrimination[3] and health status of sexual and gender minorities communities are well documented (Frost et al., 2012; Almeida et al., 2009; Meyers, 2003a,1995; Mays & Cochran, 2001). A ground breaking Canadian study on sexual orientation and health found that in addition to high levels of STI rates and a higher prevalence of psychological distress (anxiety and depression), sexual minorities reported a life-long experience of suicidality when compared to heterosexual men in the general population (Brennan 2010 et

[2] Boykin did not state U.S BMSM rate of suicidality in his book. See (Boykin, 2012a)

[3] Social discrimination (in the context of the general LGBTQ community) is a sociological term and refers to the unfair treatment of a person, belonging to a minority group or groups; it is an individual and/or systemic action based on prejudice. Homophobia, heterosexism, biphobia and transphobia are forms of social discrimination based upon sexuality and gender identity (Warner, 2002, p.9-41;Brotman et al., 2006).

al., p.257). While this study did not look at the underlying factors for the elevated levels of poor mental and sexual health status in its participants, other studies have established a link between sexual minorities' experiences of social discrimination and its negative impact on mental and sexual health outcomes (Diaz et al., 2004, p.265; Meyers,1995). For example, findings from a meta-analysis on the relationship between social prejudice and the health status of sexual and gender minorities revealed that high prevalence of psychological distress in the group may be explained by experiences of social discrimination (Meyers, 2003a). Another study identified "a relatively robust association between experiences of discrimination and indicators of psychiatric [stress]" (Mays & Cochran, 2001, p.1876).

For ethnocultural minority individuals who are also members of sexual and gender minority communities, the multiple experience of social discrimination[4] has been found to play a significant role in explaining the increased risk of negative health outcomes. For example, BMSM were found to experience a higher level of anxiety disorder and depression symptoms compared to White LGBT individuals (Richardson et al., 1997). Given this reality, research has suggested that sexual minorities who are also members of ethnocultural groups experience multiple impact of social discrimination based on sexuality and ethnocultural identity (Diaz & Ayala, 2001a). Extensive studies conducted by Diaz and Ayala on BMSM and Latino immigrantMSM experiences of racism, homophobia and poverty lend support to the idea that social discrimination negatively impacts the mental and sexual health outcomes among BMSM and Latino MSM (Diaz & Ayala, 2001a,b, 2004,2006; Ayala et al., 2012).

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[4] Social discrimination (in the context of ethnocultural sexual minorities) is a sociological term used to refer to the "synchrony" of experiences of racism, homophobia and poverty reported by ethnocultural sexual minorities (Diaz & Ayala, 2006, p.207: Ayala et al., 2012,p.s242). See page 15 for detailed definition.

1.2 *Research Question*

This study seeks to explore the impact of social discrimination on the health-related-outcomes of English-speaking immigrant Black men who have sex with men (BMSM) in Montreal. Through qualitative interviews with English-speaking BMSM in Montreal, the study seeks to understand the experiences of English-speaking BMSM through the exploration of two main questions:

(1) How does social discrimination (operationalized through the lens of poverty, racism, homophobia, language and immigration status) impact health-related outcomes?;

(2) What are the stress management techniques used by BMSM to mediate the effects of social discrimination?

1.3 *Research Objectives*

Since research on the health and social well-being of LGBT communities is still emerging in Canada, examining the experiences of Black Men Who Sex With Men (BMSM) in Montreal, fills a gap in knowledge. A qualitative research approach is employed to explore the narratives of participants in their own voices in order to further an understanding of the impact of social discrimination on the health-related outcomes of immigrant English-Speaking BMSM. The preliminary findings garnered from this qualitative research may provide a nuanced and subjective perspective based upon the unique experiences of BMSM in Montreal. Using these findings to develop group-specific intervention paradigms with the aim of addressing the needs and concerns of the BMSM community is another objective of this research. Key stakeholders, such as

members of the BMSM community involved in organizing and activism may use this research to develop group self-empowerment and critical consciousness building activities and strategies. Moreover, this qualitative pilot study may be useful to professionals in health and social care organizations in order to increase understanding and adapt health and social care services to meet the needs of BMSM.

1.4 *Definition of key words*

1.4.1 *Men Who Have Sex Men (MSM)/Sexual Minority/Same-sex/Non-heterosexual*

The research work acknowledge the ongoing debate surrounding the use of the terms explaining sexual/gender orientation self-identify and for these reasons respect the use of the group/cultural specific and self-affirming terms and language. The behaviour moniker commonly used for participants in the present study is “men who have sex with men” (MSM). The acronym MSM is preferred “on the grounds that they are simply descriptive …which describes a fact without suggesting any kind of firm identity, orientation or larger political agenda" (Epprecht, 2013, p.25). MSM is interchanged with terms like, “sexual minority,” “same-sex,” and “non-heterosexual” for the aforementioned same reasons. MSM is without limitation. In *“The Trouble With MSM and WSW: Erasure of the sexual-Minority Person In Public Health Discourse,”* the authors argue that the term MSM is problematic “because [it] obscures social dimensions of sexuality; undermine the self-labeling of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people; and do not sufficiently describe variations in sexual behaviour” (Young & Meyer, 2005, p.1144; Ratele, 2011, p.410). These critics appear to focus on the social and cultural dimensions of sexual identity expressions erased in adopting the MSM label. However, the acronym MSM is appropriate for this particular

work because it is not mainly concerned with "the social dimension of lesbian, gay and bisexual" sexual identities (the noun), rather with the sexual behaviour (the verb) of men who have sex with men only. In the absence of a single label that all participants agreed on, in naming their sexual behaviour, the acronym BMSM was used to be the most inclusive.

1.4.2 *Gay/Queer/LGBT*

In her book, *Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men*, University of California professor, Jane Ward, notes that sexual behaviour labels carry some degree of socio-cultural/ethnic specific undertones that can not always be used to encompass a universal experience (Ward, 2015). This, in part, influenced her decision not to use the term *Down Low* (a cultural moniker for African American men who have sex with men and identify as straight (Han, 2015[5]; Snorton , 2014; Millett et al, 2005, p.52s), to frame and discuss the unique social and cultural realities of White men who have sex with men and identify as straight in her research.

Similarly, not wanting to connote a specific western expression of non-heterosexual culture, the labels "Gay," "Queer," and "LGBT" are sparingly used in this present study about Black mens' sexuality. Discussion of participants in this study will not be labelled as Gay/Queer/LGBT. Adopting "gay," "queer," and "LGBT" terms, which are historically Eurocentric non-heterosexual terms (Monroe, 2012, Collins, 2004, Lorde, 1994) enforces a hegemonic moniker and is likely to undermine and erase ethnic sexual minorities' attempt to highlight a local self-affirming term reflecting a unique lived cultural and social experience (Vanessa, 2007). Whenever "Gay," "Queer," and "LGBT" are employed in this work, it is within a specific context reflect-

[5] Han (2015) work shows that Black men who engaged in *down low* acts were treated with social contempt by the mainstream media, but White men who engaged in the same sexual acts were given the benefit of the doubt.

ing a specific group of individuals - mostly White non-heterosexual reality (ies) or when documenting previous research that use these terms.

1.4.3 *Black/Black Canadian*

The term “Black” was originally used by African Americans during the American Civil Rights Movement to resist racial oppression (Appiah & Gates, 1999, p.253-62; Riggs 1995). Leaders of the extreme fringe left of the Civil Rights movement appropriated the term “Black,” which until then was a racial slur, to affirm political/social group conscious identity and in response to White-majority oppression (Appiah & Gates, 1999; Riggs 1995). In the post American Civil Rights era, the term “Black” is loosely used as a generic ethnocultural identity label referring to people of African descent in the diaspora (Bowleg et al., 2003, p.104; Appiah & Gates, 1999; Riggs 1995). Similarly, in Canada, the federal government through Census Canada labels people of African ancestry as “Blacks” (Millan & Tran, 2004).

In this research, the ethnocultural identity label “Black” refers to participants who self-identify as people of African descent from the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. Though the term African-Canadian is used sparingly in this work because it does not capture the heterogeneity of the Black communities in Canada, whenever it is used herein, it refers to African-born immigrant Canadians. The majority of Black people in Canada are immigrants from mostly the Caribbean and continental Africa (Chui & Flanders, 2013). As a result, to lump all the different people of African descent under one geographical and culturally specific category, African-Canadian, is fraught with limitations. Though the debate surrounding the terminology for the community is ongoing, the inclusive term of “Black Canadian" is appropriate for this project.

1.4.4 *Migration*

In the 2011 Canadian census, there were 945.665 people of African descent in Canada, making up 2.9% of the general national population (Statistic Canada[6], 2011). More than half the population of Blacks were immigrants (53.1%) (Chui &Flanders, 2013). In the second largest Canadian city of Montreal, there were 216,310 Black Canadians representing the largest visible minority group (at 5.8 % of the general city population) (Statistic Canada, 2011). Predominately from French-speaking Caribbean and African countries, Black immigrants outnumbered Canadian-born Blacks in Montreal (Statistic Canada, 2011; Torczyner, 2010, p.29). Blacks in Montreal are heterogeneous (Statistic Canada, 2011; Torczyner, 2010). For example, there are internal variances within and across communities based on language (French, English, and allophones), religion (Christianity, Islam and animism), economic status, geographical origin (Africa, Caribbean, Latin America etc) and gender (Torczyner, 2010; Milan & Tran, 2004). Little is known about (English-Speaking) Black immigrant sexual minority groups in Montreal[7].

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[6] Statistic Canada is the original source for all Black migration population census data for this work. Black Census data for 2011 are retrieved from Statistic Canada website. However, 2011 census data from Statistic Canada website is not on one page so navigation of the website is required. 2006 Black census data on the other hand is more accessible from multiple second hand sources. In 2006, there were 783,795 Black Canadian who constituted 2.5% of the total national population. 24% Black Canadians resided in the province of Quebec and constituted 4.7 % of the general Montreal population (Torczyner, 2010, p.27).

[7] Research in urban centers in the U.S and Sub-Saharan Africa estimate that the Black sexual minority population is three percent (3%) of the general male population (Binson et al.,1995; Beyer et al., 2011).

1.4.5 *Social Discrimination*

There are several definitions for social discrimination[8]. Social discrimination is the unequal and disadvantageous treatment (i.e., sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism) experienced by an individual, over the life course based upon their membership in a particular social group (Allport,1957). Another definition of social discrimination provided by Dr. Rafael Diaz, psychologist and Dr. George Ayala, the executive director of Global HIV Forum and MSM/HIV (2001a,b,2004,2006,2012), to mean a sociological term that "synchronizes" experiences of racism, homophobia and poverty in numerous studies looking at the role that reported experiences of racism, homophobia, poverty and immigration play in the health and social outcomes of Latino immigrant sexual and gender minorities in the United States.

Diaz & Ayala (2006; 2012) interchange the term "social discrimination" with "triple oppression" and "social oppression." Diaz & Ayala's definition of the concept, in later works, expands to include immigrations-related issues, cultural/language challenges, in-group conflict, barrier in accessing HIV/AIDS prevention/treatment programs among ethnocultural sexual minorities communities. This current research builds on the work of Diaz & Ayala in their use of social discrimination to mean individual experience of anti-Black racism, homophobia, poverty, unemployment, anti-immigration[9] and anti-English language sentiments reported by English-

[8] Researchers such as Meyer (2012, 2003a,1995) and Bowleg (2003) use the term "minority stress" which is similar in concept to "social discrimination," as used by Diaz and Ayala, in whole or in part. *Minority stress* is defined as the result based on one's social status of "stressful stimuli such as prejudice, discrimination and attendant hostility from the social environment" (Moritsugu & Sue,1983, p.164 cited in Bowleg, 2003, p.88).

[9] 70% of the research participants are immigrant in (Diaz & Ayala, 2001a, p.13) and 75% in (Diaz et al.,2006, p. 211)

speaking BMSM immigrants living in Montreal. The term social discrimination is interchanged with social oppression in this study to mean the same concept (Mullaly, 2010, p.40-63).

1.4.6 *Conclusion*

This thesis describes the experiences of social discrimination among African and Caribbean immigrant English-Speaking MSMs living in Montreal and the impact of this social discrimination on their mental and sexual health. To this end, this research project is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the research project; situates it in a specific location/social context and highlights the objectives of the research. In addition, it offers an overview of key concepts and terms used in this work. Chapter two provides a detailed summary of major relevant literature on the subject. This chapter emphasizes the contributions of authors who are members of the community from which participants are drawn and have a shared general experience with participants in order to enhance understanding from a situated perspective. Chapter three describes the methodological approach and research design of the study with an emphasis on reflexivity and ethical procedures. Chapter four presents major themes with attention to rich description through the use of participant quotes. Chapter five outlines a summary of findings, implications for research and practice and limitations of the project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

It is necessary to constantly remind ourselves that we are not an abomination.- Marlon Riggs

2.1 Introduction: Literature Review

This chapter describes the theoretical framework used in the study as well as the current literature on social discrimination and the experiences of BMSM in both the US and Canada. Despite reported incidents of homophobia facing sexual and gender minority members of Black communities in both the US and Canada, research has only recently begun to investigate this phenomenon. In the context of the current thesis, the relevant literature described includes both published academic articles and books as well as grey literature (i.e. written personal accounts, Non-Governmental Organization reports, and international and local newspaper sources). One of the reasons for adopting this approach is to honour the contributions of authors who have lived these experiences and to ensure the inclusion of current debates and experiences which may not yet have been documented in the research literature.

2.2 Homophobia in Black Communities [10]

The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities, is a collection of accounts of same-sex sexual behaviour across the African diaspora (Constantine-Simms, 2001). In this work, an emergent theme of homophobia is acknowledged as a common social reality (Constantine-Simms, 2001). By highlighting different perspectives on how Black sexual and gender minorities

10 Homophobia in the Black communities is interchanged with *Black homophobia* to mean the same concept in this study. (Boykin, 1997, Battle & Bennett, 2000)

experience homophobia in various Black communities in North America, the United Kingdom and Africa, a consensus emerges that same-sex practices are largely frowned upon in communities of people of African descent (Constantine-Simms, 2001).

While homophobia is a pervasive theme in Black communities, it is important to remember that "Blacks are a not a monolithic heterosexist group" (Bowleg, 2013, p.761). Gevisser, a journalist and the author of *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian lives in South Africa* (1994), in an interview about the legacy of Nelson Mandela and LGBT rights, suggested that the first democratically elected president of South Africa rejected homophobia in South Africa when he legalized homosexuality in 1994 and sex-same marriage in 2006 (Signorile, 2013). Mandela's embrace of sexual and gender minorities, made South Africa the only Sub-Saharan Africa country where sexual and gender minorities have equal legal rights and protection against homophobia.

That said, recent developments regarding LGBT rights in many Sub-Saharan Africa and Caribbean countries are illustrative examples of homophobia in Black communities[11]. A wave of new anti-homosexual legislations is sweeping across many African and Caribbean nations; Nigeria (in 2014), Uganda (in 2013) and Bahamas (in 2011) have successfully passed repressive anti same-sex laws (Robards, 2011). Under the Nigerian law, *Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act*, marriage between sexual and gender minorities is outlawed with a fourteen-year jail time and ten-year jail penalty for associating with same-sex organization as well as attending or patronizing 'homosexual' clubs. (Bowcott, 2014; Gladstone,2014). Despite wide spread international and

[11] I used grey literature to focus on recent developments of homophobic expressions in Black Africa and Caribbean countries because published academic literature do not capture the on-going and influx developments of this subject matter/debate. For information from published academic sources see (Campbell, 2014; Ekine & Abbas, 2013;Murray, 2012;LaSala, 2012;Tamala, 2011;Gaudio, 2009;Doyal et al., 2008;Glave, 2008; Hoad ,2006; Epprecht, 2004/13; Murray & Roscoe, 1998).

local protest in 2013, Uganda passed its controversial *Anti-Homosexual Bill*, which seeks a fourteen-year jail penalty for first time offenders and life imprisonment for repeat offenders found liable for "aggravated homosexuality," promotion and participation in homosexual behaviour, (Cowell, 2014; Raghavan, 2014).

In the Carribbean, the Bahamian government, in July 2011, enacted laws to enshrine the definition of marriage in the island country's constitution as exclusively between members of the opposite gender (Campbell, 2014, p.186). "A marriage is void if it took place between persons who were male and male or female and female. So, in this… Marriage Bill we are stating this fact in the clear positive — a marriage must take place between a male and a female and we want that to be abundantly clear…" the then Bahamian financial minister, Zhivargo Liang, asserted (Robards, 2011). The passage of these oppressive laws were greeted with overwhelming support from many constituencies in these respective countries: Religion (Judeo-Christianity, Islam) is cited as the main influence underpinning heterosexism in these societies (Bowcott, 2014; Millett et al., 2012a, p.416). A 2013 study from the PEW Research Centre, an American polling organization, entitled *Pew Research Global Attitude Project,* found a strong correlation between countries with high religious affiliation and rejection of same-sex sexuality. Of all the countries surveyed, Nigerians most identified as religious (at 98%) and were more likely to share negative views on same-sex relationships:1 in 9 Nigerians rejected same-sex marriage on religious grounds (Gladstone 2014). " [Opposition to same-sex marriage is] in line with the people's cultural and religious inclination. So it is a law that is a reflection of the beliefs and orientation of Nigerian people …Nigerians are pleased with it," Reuben Abati, spokesperson for the Nigerian president, explained the impetus for same-sex oppressive legislation (Bowcott, 2014).

In Canada, two studies highlighted same-sex prejudice in Black Canadian communities. *The MaBwana Black men's study: community and belonging in the lives of African, Caribbean and other Black gay men in Toronto* (George et al., 2012) and *Buller Men and Batty Bwoys: Hidden Men in Toronto and Halifax Black Communities* (Crichlow, 2004). In these two pioneering studies undertaken in Toronto and Halifax, it was found that pervasive negative attitudes against same-sex sexual behaviour ensures that Black sexual minorities hide or live in shame. Non-heterosexual Blacks face ridicule, verbal and psychological abuse from community members in major Canadian urban areas (George et al., 2012; Crichlow, 2004).

These accounts are corroborated by the *Montreal Community Contact*, an English-Speaking newspaper for the Black and Caribbean Communities in Quebec, which featured an article entitled *Homophobia rampant in the community* (Flegel, 2001), wherein two Black university students discussed their inability to disclose their sexual behaviour to relatives as result of heterosexist prejudice. One stated: "I don't want to be the one to tear my family apart. My parents are from the Caribbean, and Caribbean people are very stone-aged with regards to sexuality and stuff" (Flegel 2001, p.16). Another anecdotal illustration of heterosexism in the Black community is the experience of Rudy Mudgenge, a BMSM who immigrated to Montreal from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He shared that his mother preferred the Congo civil war than to have a homosexual son. Speaking to a local Montreal French Newspaper, *Metro*, as part of a campaign to create awareness of homophobia in Quebec, Rudy stated "Ma mere m'a fit quell preferait la guerre a un fils homosexual" (Guthrie, 2010). Upon coming out, Rudy's intolerant mother gave him two options: accept a heterosexual lifestyle or face eviction from the family home; he chose

the latter (Guthrie, 2010). These first-hand accounts resonate with the published research in noting that homophobia within Black communities is an oppressive social force.

2.3 *Anti-Black Racism*

Racial prejudice in Canadian society is a prominent theme in the literature reviewed for this thesis (James et al., 2010; Dreidger & Halli 2000). *Race and Well-Being: The Lives, Hopes and Activism of African Canadians* (James et al., 2010) examined the lived experiences and social and health outcomes of African Canadians in Toronto, Halifax and Calgary. This study, led by Dr. Wanda Bernard, director of the Dalhousie University School Of Social Work, identified that: "Despite the talk about and evidence of diversity and inclusion in Canada today, racism is still well-rooted throughout the [Canadian] society" (James et al., 2010, p.19).

One common form of racism Blacks face is Racial Microaggression (Sue, 2007). Based on Derald Wing Sue's studies on *Racial Microaggression in Everyday Life* (2007), racism in North America was observed as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p.271). Clutching ones' valuables, such as handbags and wallets and putting on car alarms upon the sight of Blacks are some examples of wide-spread racial microaggression revealing a subconscious perception of Blacks as generally untrustworthy and feared (Sue, 2007). Sometimes spurred by racial animus, to devalue the self-worth of ethnic minorities, perpetrators of racial microaggression may not always be aware of their actions, making it difficult to address this type of racism (Sue, 2007; 2010). Evidence of racial micro aggression in Canadian society is provided by Douglas Orville

in his article, *Why I Hate Being A Black Man* (Orville, 2013) The Ontario based essayist relayed that "as a six-foot tall black man with broad shoulders, people are afraid…[and judge me based on my] looks instead of "the content of [my] character" (Orville, 2013).

In addition, social index and government study reports shed light on racial inequalities in the areas of access to social opportunity, structures and social/health outcomes (Sapers 2014; PHAC, 2009; Torczyner, 2010). These studies have observed that Black communities do not fare well compared to other ethnic groups (Torczyner, 2010). Blacks generally face disproportionate rates of unemployment, poverty, incarceration and negative health-related-outcomes (PHAC, 2009, p.2932). *Demographic Challenges Facing The Black Community In Montreal In The 21st Century*, a 2010 study by McGill University School of Social Work, found that although Blacks have comparable education, they index at the lowest percentile when accessing social opportunity structures, such as employment: "Black persons with a graduate degree had higher unemployment rates than non-Black high school drop outs (13.4% vs. 12.0%)" (Torczyner, 2010, p. 34). When Blacks are employed, they tend to be paid less than non-Blacks in the same employment position: "Non-Black managers were three times more likely to earn more than $75,000 compared to Black managers (31.7% vs. 11.9%)". (Torczyner, 2010, p.33).

A government report, *A Case Study Of Diversity In Corrections: The Black Inmates Experience In Federal Penitentiary* (Sapers, 2014), investigating racial differences in incarnation rates in Canada, demonstrated that Blacks are disproportionately incarcerated. According to this report, While 2.9% of Canada's population are people of African descent, they account for 9.3% of the entire federal prison inmate population. The two provinces with the highest Black populations, Ontario (4.3%) and Quebec (3.2%), also have high Black incarceration rates: Ontario at

61% and Quebec at 17%. Between 2002 and 2003, 767 Black Canadians were incarcerated in federal penitentiaries. However, when compared to 2011-12, the population of Black prison inmates have surged to 1,340 representing an increase of 75% in almost ten years (Sapers, 2014). That said, these reports did not conclude that the differences in racial access to social opportunities and negative social outcomes are due to racism in and of itself. Rather, racism is one factor in understanding the realities of being Black Canadian.

Another example of racial prejudice in Canada is racial profiling by law enforcement officers (Cole, 2015, p.39-42). Again, since research on this particular topic of racial profiling in Canada is sparse, most of the published literature on this subject is from anecdotal sources (Fine, 2015). However, primary anecdotal sources raises questions about race and police relationships that is worthy of perusal in this review. Desmond Cole, a Toronto-based journalist, revealed in *THE SKIN I'M IN: I've been interrogated by the police more than 50 times-all because I am Black*". That is, he was arbitrarily stopped, detained and questioned by police more than fifty different times even though he is not a criminal (Cole, 2015, p.39). His article sparked a national debate and brought to the fore a controversial police practice, called "carding." (Cole, 2015, Fine, 2015[12]). Also known as "Street Checks," the practice of "carding" requires police officers in major Canadian cities to arbitrarily stop, detain, search, and question "suspicious looking" men who are not suspect of a crime (Morrow & White, 2015)[13]. While this practice is not exclusively aimed at Black men, young Black men are overwhelming stopped by the police for "Street Checks" (Morrow & White, 2015). After mounting opposition to the practice of "carding,"

which critics viewed as government sanctioned racial profiling in major Canadian cities[14], the new mayor of Canada's biggest city, Toronto, has reversed his initial position (Church & D'aliesio, 2015)

2.4 Sexual Racism[15] in Gay Communities

An emergent theme of ethnic-based Black sexual stereotyping in the White-majority gay community is reported by a number of research projects (Howley, 2015; Helligar, 2014; Wahap , 2009;Warner, 2002). In *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), Fanon offers a historical perspective that Black men were synonymous to sex, were perceived to be "sexual beast (p.135)… and that four black men with their dicks out in the open would fill a Cathedral (p.147)" For these reasons, "White passive homosexuals who visited brothels insisted on being whipped by Black partners " (p.155). Fanon's historic account situates Black mens' (homo)sexuality as deviant and excessive and although Walcott in (2006) critiques Fanon's perspective, the theme of Black predatory (homo) sexuality is a saturated account in the contemporary literature reviewed.

One contemporary literature, *A Meditation On The Measure Of Black Men In America* (Poulson-Bryant, 2005), the author claims that Black sexual minorities are eroticized and exoticized in America's gay communities for the colour and size of their genitalia (Poulson-Bryant, 2005, p.67- 75). A recent British Survey about racism in the gay community, *Racism In The Gay*

[14] The experience of Joel DeBellefeuille, a Black man residing in the Greater Montreal Area, provides evidence that racial profiling practices is not limited to the city of Toronto (Lalonde, 2015).

[15] The origin of the concept of *sexual racism* has been adapted from its original meaning (Fanon, 2008, p.135-55) to include "contemporary" sexual objectification based on ethnocultural background in the LGBTQ context *Sexual racism* is interchanged with *gay racism* and *sexual racialization* to mean the same concept in this study (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012, p.168;Teunis, 2007; Crichlow, 2004, p.160).

Scene: Is The Gay Community Racist [16] (Howley, 2015; Haggas, 2015) validates the experience of Black sexual objectification in mainstream gay communities. In this pioneering study, 850 sexual minorities from various ethnocultural backgrounds participated in interviews. Some of the findings include the fact that 80% of Blacks reported experiencing racism (p.5), 82% felt sexually objectified (p.7) and 63% noted that racism in the gay community is a bigger issue than homophobia (p.5). As part of this study, a separate report entitled: *Dear White Men* (Howley, 2015) surveyed 400 White gay men alone and found that 78% agreed that "Black men have large cocks" (Howley, 2015). For perspective, it is note worthy to mention that there are several empirical accounts in which Black men self-report having above average genitalia, which may help to sustain this myth/perception (Wilson et al., 2009, p.9; Poulson-Bryant, 2005, p.71)[17]. The perceive size of Black men's genitalia is a source of ongoing debate in and outside academic studies (Veale et al., 2015; Orakwe & Ebuh, 2007). However, regardless of the size of Black men's genitalia, not all Black men are comfortable with being sexually objectified (as a dominant stud/"Top"/inserter[18]) in the gay community as deftly pointed out by one Black participant: "I tend to get told how they wanna take my big black cock… I am a bottom for one thing, and prefer not to be objectified" (Howley, 2015).

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[17] This author cites Philippe Ruston as one of his original scientific sources. I am uncomfortable with Dr. Ruston's debunked controversial work on the subject matter, so I referenced a Nigerian study: (Orakwe & Ebuh, 2007)

[18] Two studies, (Moskowitz & Hart, 2011; Grov et al., 2010), albeit not ethnocultural specific, found that sexual positioning is a function of penis size in the gay communities. Participants who reported above average penis size played the inserter sexual positioning role and participants who reported below average penis size also played the receptive sexual positioning role (Grov et al.,2010, p.795). The Second study claims that: "Those with bigger penises penetrate. Those with smaller penises get penetrated (Moskowitz & Hart, 2011, p.840). Three ethnocultural specific studies found that Black sexual minorities are perceived to play the inserter role in interracial copulation (Lick & Johnson, 2015; Wilson et al., 2009; Teunis, 2007). Perception of BMSMs' inserter role/hyper sexuality may or may not suggest that BMSM are well endowed group. However, Paulson-Bryant (2005, p.75) claims that: "The size is the color. The color is the size," implying that the perception of BMSMs' inserter role/hyper sexuality is more than penis size.

In Canada, Black MSM experiences of sexual objectification in the gay community is well documented (Warner, 2002). A review of LGBT newspapers and magazines in Quebec*, The Colour of gayness: Representative of queers of colour in Quebec's gay media* (Roy, 2012), noted that: "… the bodies of men of colour are often fetishized and exoticized as objects of desire on the cover of Quebec's gay magazines" (Roy, 2012, p.181). Collaborating this observation is an interview with a Montreal BMSM teacher, *Double the demons: Gay and lesbians from minority communities face double-barreled discrimination because they encounter racism even in the gay sub-culture where they seek refuge from homophobia* (Burnet, 1999), featured in a local English-Speaking Montreal Newspaper, *The Montreal Gazette,* as part of activities marking the perennial LGBTQ Pride Week in Montreal. In this interview, the BMSM teacher underscored the experience of ethnic-based sexual objectification in Montreal's gay village. The interviewee[19] indicated that when accosted by non-black gays they were more interested in the size and prowess of his genitalia: "You're beautiful, [a non-Black gay said to the interviewee] explaining that he'd been to Spain, where he'd met a Black man with a 12-inch penis. He preferred making love with black men because, [the non-Black gay told the interviewee], they were better lovers and had oversized penis" (Burnett, 1999, p.C3).

Other research in other Canadian cities are consistent with this account. In his seminal book, N*ever going back: A History Of Queer Activism In Canada,* Tom Warner (2002), a researcher at the University of Toronto, described one BMSM's experience in Ottawa's gay scene in the early 1990's: "...some gay men did not want to speak to him because of his colour, while

[19] After this interview was published, there was a backlashed from some members of the Montreal Black community so the interviewee published a rejoinder (Thomas 1999). Zeldin (2015) of the *Daily Xtra* interviewed the same interviewee where he talked about reactions to his coming-out, his community eventual acceptance of his sexuality and his legacy/contribution to the sexual minority movement in his native St. Vincent.

others' tell me that they really like black gays because we're great in bed and we have big dicks" (Warner, 2002, p.320). More recently, Solaimon Giwa, a Social Worker at York University, provided another example of sexual racialization in, *Race Relations and Racism in the LGBT community of Toronto: Perceptions of Gay and Queer Social Service Providers of Color,* (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012), when a participant discussed his apprehension with white gay men who introduced themselves to BMSM as: "Damn you're hot- you must have a big dick" (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012, p.168). Black sexual eroticization and exoticisation as pervasive in the mainstream LGBT community in Canada is underscored by these illustrations.

A team of researchers from the University of Toronto including Dr. Rinaldo Walcott confirm these accounts of BMSM encounters of sexual exoticisation and show how racial exoticisation is played out in inter/intra-racial same-sex relationships. They observed in, *Black gay men as sexual subjects: race racialsation and the social relations of sex among Black gay men in Toronto* (Husbands et al., 2013, p.439), that BMSM were more likely to play a flexible sexual position role (*Bottoms or Tops*) when in relationships involving individuals of the same ethnicity. However, BMSM were more likely to take on a fixed sexual position role (aggressive dominant *Top*) with non-Black sexual partners (Husbands et al., 2013. p.439). Further, the research acknowledged that the expectation of BMSM to play a single prescribed sexual role in inter-racial relationships renders other BMSMS (i.e. Black *Bottoms*) who did not live up to the rigid fetishized role (of aggressive Black *Top*) undesirable by non-Black sexual partners (Husbands et al., 2013, p.443).

Researchers in another study, *The MaBwana Black men's study:community and belonging in the lives of African, Caribbean and other Black gay men in Toronto* (George et al., 2012),

pointed out that the idea of racial sexual objectification is not limited to white gay men only, BMSM immigrants and sexual minorities from other ethnic groups also fetishize white gays, a behaviour known as "reverse exoticisation" (George et al. ,2012, p.557; McKeown et al., 2010, p.849-51). Given this reality, it can be said that ethnic-based sexual objectification "intersects and orders sexual intimacy" in interracial relationships in the LGBT community (Husbands et al., 2013, p.437).

Although *Sexual racism: The emotional barrier to an integrated society* (Stember, 1978), defines sexual racism as "the rejection of the racial minority, the conscious attempt on the part of the majority to prevent interracial cohabitation" (Stember, 1978, p. xi cited in Callander et al., 2005, p.1), there is an ongoing debate about the appropriateness of the label "sexual racism" in the sexual and gender minority communities (Callander et al., 2015). Some community commentators contest that race-based sexual (un)attraction is not *real racism* (Callander, 2015;Warner, 2002). These critics claim that there is a distinction to be made between sexual preference and prejudice and any attempt to label both as one and the same undermines the understanding of the complex personal sexual desires of sexual and gender minorities (Callander et al., 2015; Warner, 2002). Further, they argue that race-based sexual (un)attraction should not be subjected to the same definition of racial discrimination because: "Just because someone isn't sexually attracted to someone of [African] origin does not mean they wouldn't want to work, live next to, or socialize with him or her, or that they believe they are somehow naturally superior to them" (Watts, 2012). Framing their position as sexual libertarianism,[20] these critics argue that sexual libertarianism is an essential value in the LGBT community and offers the ability to choose the type of

[20] Sexual libertarianism in its simplistic sense is defined as the expression of inhibited sexual desires among consenting adults without social constraints. For more information see (Tuenis, 2007;Warner, 2002, p.318).

trait/fetish in a person one want to love or sleep with and that same ability should be extended to include preference for race-based sexual (un)attraction without the judgment and an accusatory label of racial prejudice (Callander et al., 2015; Warner, 2002, p.318).

In *Is Sexual Racism Really Racism? Distinguishing Attitudes Toward Sexual Racism and Generic Racism Among Gay and Bisexual Men* (Callander et al., 2015), an Australian study looks at how members in the LGBTQ communities view and experience sexual racism. This study found that participants conceded that sexual racism poses a challenge while dating on the internet, however the vast majority of participants (at 70%) did not share the view of indicating racial preference in online dating as a form of *real racism* (Callander et al., 2015, p.6). The same study also found a correlation between attitudes towards sexual racism and general attitudes toward racial inclusion and diversity in society (Callander et al., 2015, p.5 - 6). For example, while self-identified White participants were more likely to report positively on sexual racism and negatively on racial diversity and inclusion, non-White participants were less likely to report negatively on sexual racism and positively on racial diversity and inclusion (Callander et al., 2015, p. 8).

Another piece of literature that sheds light on this debate on race-based preference in online dating is *Eggs, Banana and Coconut: Are Gays More Racist* (Weber, 2012). In this article, a self-identified White gay author cites reasons for White-majority gay peoples race-based preferences for dating. Poignant among the reasons cited is the perception among White-majority gay people that ethnic men, such as "Arabs, smell and lie," hence they are unsuitable romantic/sexual partners (Weber, 2012). It can be suggested that such negative race-based generalizations may influence attitude towards ethnocultural men outside of the dating context. Perceiving ethnocul-

tural men as “smelly and untrustworthy” may play a role in decision to live next to or work with them. This perception gives credence to the findings in the aforementioned study that although not all sexual racism (racial preference in dating) may be based on racial prejudice, race-based sexual (un)attraction may be similar to general social attitudes towards racial diversity and inclusion (Callander, 2015, p.5).

2.5 *Eurocentric Hegemony in the Gay Community*

An important schism between the predominantly White-majority LGBTQ movement and identity experiences of BMSM is a cultural dissonance with the formers' identity labels and sexual behaviour conceptualizations/identity models (Epprecht, 2013, p.23-25; Murray, 2012, p.35; Diaz et al., 2011, p.155: Boykin, 2005, p.14-21; King & Hunter, 2004, p.19-24,78;). Researchers have argued that the usage of sexual and gender minority identity labels, such as “queer” and “gay” used by the mainstream LGBT movement represent a culturally and social specific (white-centric male, middle/upper class) experience that renders its application in a cross cultural context problematic (Crichlow, 2004, p.35). They argue that this universal appropriation of Eurocentric LGBTQ terms subsumes diverse cultural, linguistic and socio-economic values, identity conceptualization and labelling (Crichlow, 2004; Murray, 2012). In other words, applying Western same-sex identity labels, “queer” and “gay” on all sexual minorities, irrespective of their linguistic, ethnocultural background and migratory experience, implies that every sexual and gender minority person has the same socio-cultural history and experience(s) with the aforementioned labels (Clarke,2013, p.174-84).

In the context of multicultural studies of sexual minority migrants who speak a diversity of languages, it is relevant to consider alternative, cultural, local and self-affirming same-sex labels (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012, p.169). A respondent in a Canadian study adds to this critique when he said: “We need to understand that not everyone speaks the same language and we cannot always speak in a gay and White Anglo way. We need to complicate all of these labels that we use to define our sexuality and understand that people who speak different languages have different ways of understanding their own sexuality and the sexuality of others” (p.169). That is to say that: “we need to stop labelling people as queer at all, unless they self-identify that way” (Campbell, 2014, p.155).

The absence of diverse same-sex categories, labelling, and identity conceptualization has led activists and researchers to denounce the mainstream LGBTQ community as a colonial and imperialist movement as it is perceived to homogenize all non-heterosexual individuals as “gay” or “queer”: An Asian pacific LGBT activist shares his opposition to the queer movement’s universal appropriation when he said:

> “I found that “gay” communities are always and already contributing to maintaining and reinforcing “colonialism”. “Gay” identity is a European/ American invention ...gay communities take over the bodies and histories of Natives, just as missionaries/white American businessmen did their land ...“Gay” is a colonial remnant and is a function of a colonial reality,” (Collins, 2004, p 17).

For this reason, Cleo Manago, an indigenous African American activist, coined the term "same-gender-loving" in an attempt to provide a Black culturally centered and self-affirming

same-sex identity marker for Black sexual minorities who do not always ascribe to "gay" or "queer" nomenclature (Monroe 2012). For some ethnocultural sexual minorities, the mainstream LGBT movement remains "unresponsive to their needs and unrepresentative of their personal experiences" (Han 2015, p.12; Berube, 2001). That said, it is important to note that in my review of the literature on Black sexual minority studies, most authors such as Roderick Ferguson and Rinaldo Walcott use the Western Anglo label of Q*ueer* (Johnson & Henderson 2005, Ferguson 2004).

2.6 *Poverty and Transactional/Survival Sex*[21]

The relationship between unemployment and poverty is a common theme highlighted in numerous studies on Black sexual minorities (Husbands et al., 2010; Giwa & Greensmith, 2012). A study in Toronto, *MaBwana: Health Community and Vulnerability HIV among African, Caribbean, and Black Gay And Bisexual Men In Toronto* (Husbands et al., 2010), indicates pervasive poverty in the immigrant Black sexual minority community. According to this study, 40% earned less than $20,000, annually (Husband et al., 2010, p.4). While not all the respondents in the MaBwana study were immigrants, findings in that study informs our thinking about the socioeconomic status (SES) of BMSM immigrants in Canada. Low employment prospects and financial hardship often pushes BMSM to resort to alternative employments such as sex work or seek relationships with a financially-advantaged individual (usually an older ma)n with the objective of improving one's lot (Mock, 2014, p.174-7; Joseph et al., 2011;King & Hunter, 2004, p.90). Sex work as a function of LGBT peoples' low socio-economic prospects is reported in *Race Re-*

[21] Transactional sex and survival sex is used interchangeably

lations and Racism In The LGBT Community of Toronto: Perceptions of Gay and Queer Social Service Providers of Colour (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012). The low socioeconomic status (SES) of an ethnic sexual minority immigrant influenced his decision to engage in transactional sex: "It is forced prostitution for survival...Economically disadvantage individuals are placed in untenable positions and forced to enter into relationships with financially secure White partners in exchange for [something]" (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012, p.169). Adding to the growing recognition of the practice of survival sex in the ethnic MSM cohort, the authors of *Older partner selection, sexual risk behaviour and unrecognized HIV infection among black and latino men who have sex with men* (Joseph et al., 2011), suggest that LGBT people of colour have sex with older partners "…in exchange for money, drugs or other "necessities"…(Joseph et al., 2011, p.445).

In a meta analysis published in *The Lancet*, entitled, Common Roots: a contextual review of HIV epidemic in Black men who have sex with men across the African diaspora (Milett et al., 2012a), authors support the recognition that BMSM engage in sex with older men for money: "These findings are important because age-discordance is associated with HIV seropositivity in young Black MSM" (Millett et al.,2012a, p.418; Oster, 2011, p.141). Despite the research that BMSM engage in transactional and survival sex, one study, Racial differences in same-race partnering and the effects of sexual partnership characteristics on HIV risk in MSM: a prospective sexual diary study (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2013), found that BMSM had more protective sex when compared with other different ethnic LGBT groups. However, at the same time, BMSM were more likely than any other ethnic LGBT group to engage in sexual activity with a much older partner,…"a pattern known to spread HIV/AIDS rapidly between the generations" (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2013, p.332). Social determinants such as unemployment and poverty in the

BMSM community play a significant role in sexual behaviour decisions and eventual sexual health-related outcomes (Diaz et al., 2004, p. 265; Dufour et al., 2000, p. 276[22]).

2.7 *Impact of Social Discrimination*

Experiences of marginalization can result in a great deal of social stress among BMSM (Alexander, 2004). Research suggests that social discrimination is a factor in the diminished health status among the population of BMSM (Millett et al., 2012a).Two relevant studies demonstrate a strong relationship between social discrimination and diminished health outcomes among Black MSM in major US cities. The first study, *The Impact of Homophobia, Poverty, and Racism on the Mental Health of Gay and Bisexual Latino Men: Findings from 3 US cities* (Diaz et al., 2001), examines how life-long history and current experience of social discrimination influences the mental health of mostly immigrant ethnic MSM. According to this research the experiences of homophobia, racism and poverty compromised the mental health of participants as evidenced by reported psychologic symptoms of distress, such as suicidal ideation.

Modelling the *Impact of Social Discrimination and Financial Hardship on the Sexual Risk of HIV Among Latino and Black Men Who Have Sex With Men* (Ayala et al., 2012) looked at how poverty, unemployment and social discrimination affected sexual behaviour. An association between low-income status, lack of jobs, social discrimination (racism and homophobia) and heightened risk for acquisition and transmission of sexually transmitted disease was highlighted by investigators. In one Quebec study, on the psychological impact of homophobia on students, authors indicated that LGBT students were 14 times more likely to commit suicide compared to

[22] This study, albeit not ethnocultural specific, found that young MSM in Montreal have sex for money. Supporting studies in other North American cities that MSM sex for money is common.

their heterosexual counterparts (Bunibgui, 2011). This research supports the aforementioned findings that social discrimination strongly correlates with negative health outcomes.

2.8 *Group Support Systems*

While the experience of homophobia and racism have impacted negatively on the mental and sexual health status of BMSM, research also has shown that these men have demonstrated a great deal of agency in their attempts to create an enhanced social support network that buffers the effects of social discrimination (Bunibgui, 2011). For example, evidence of such social support networks can be found in Montreal through several organizations working with BMSM. *African Rainbow*[23] is a community-based organization specifically serving the French-speaking BMSM population and *Soul Brothas' Nite*[24]*, is* a support-group for English-speaking BMSM. In 2012, *African Rainbow* partnered with University of Quebec at Montreal, UQAM, to conduct the first community-based research exploring BMSMs' experiences of social stress in the province of Quebec, entitled, *Les Branchés: Portrait descriptif de santé globale de la population des hommes qui ont des relations sexuelles avec d'autres hommes (HARSAH) d'origine afro-caribéenne de Montréal* (Corneau et al., 2014).

This ground breaking quantitative research highlighted relevant findings that confirm studies on BMSM immigrant realities in other North America cities. The first findings echoed BMSM's experience of sexualized racism in Montreal's "gay" communities. The perception of BMSM as exotic, well-endowed with oversized genitalia and extremely passionate in bed was

[23] http://www.arcencieldafrique.org

[24] In September 2015, *Soul Brothers Night* partnered with Desta Youth Network in Little Burgundy (South West area of Montreal), a historic English-speaking Black neighbourhood to expand it services in the Black community.

pervasive in Montreal's gay communities (Corneau et al., 2014, p.32). The second finding supports BMSM's experience of mental health related issues as they deal with the combined effects of social discrimination based upon racism and homophobia (Corneau et al., 2014, p.45). Thirdly, the study found that while BMSMs' experience of mental health related issues, such as low-esteem, may influence negative sexual behaviour, ethnic cultural taboos impact STIs spread in Montreal's Black French speaking communities (Corneau et al., 2014, p.55). The fourth finding noted a variety of coping strategies explored by French-speaking BMSM to build resistance and resiliency against the adverse effects of multiple social discrimination. Social support systems (relationships with friends or family and participation in community-based-organizations) were found to be an effective coping technique used by this cohort. As one research participant makes clear: "Je crois que sans Arc-En-Ciel d'Afrique, il y a beaucoup de gais qui seraient suicidaires, qui seraient vraiment a terre, parce que sans Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique, tout ce qu'on voit c'est vraiment, sur un piédestal, c'est Blanc, la blancheur (1604-1609)" (Corneau et al., 2014, p.56). While this pioneering research did not include English-Speaking BMSM participants residing in Montreal, it provides a positive example of some of the collaborative work French-Speaking BMSM are doing to help themselves.

2.9 *Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality*

2.9.1 *Evolution of Intersectionality*

This research project uses the framework of intersectionality to support an analysis which takes into account the lived experience of multiple identity and interlocking oppressions. Intersectionality has been defined as both a theory to explain multiple and intersecting experiences of identity and discrimination and as a framework for undertaking research that pays attention to the

fluid and holistic nature of reality among those individuals and groups who face multiple marginalization and exclusion (Bowleg, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991, 1989; Lorde, 1988). The term 'intersectionality theory' was first developed by feminist legal theorists in the United States to explain the interlocking oppressions of racism, sexism and classism (Crenshaw, 1991, 1989). Intersectional theory is defined as: "particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type and that all oppressions work together in producing injustice and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (Collins, 2000, p. 18).

The central ideas of intersectionality have been taken up within several disciplines including post-colonial and Black feminist theory (Hull et al., 1982; Eisenstein, 1978) even prior to its articulation by leading Black legal scholar and womanist Dr. Kimberle Williams Crenshaw (1991,1989). For example, In *Conflict in Feminism* (Hirsch & Fox, 1990), bell hooks, an African American Womanist[25] scholar, explains the basic idea of intersectionality when she said: "None of us experience ourselves solely as gendered [or ethnic] subjects. We experience ourselves everyday as subjects of race, class and gender." (Hirsch & Fox, 1990, p.68). Dr Crenshaw popularized "intersectionality" as a theory sensitive to multiple oppression and identity in 1989 (Crenshaw, 1991, 1989). Based on this premise, one can say that peoples' lived realities are complex and not shaped by one identity alone. A confluence of social categories, such as race, gender, socio-economic status (SES) shape individual experiences and as such, to effectively under-

[25] The use of the label "Womanist" reflect my preference and intellectual leanings and not that of bell hooks. She does not use the label, "Womanist" in her work. Rather, she uses "Feminist" label as she believes in building solidarity with White Feminists. For More information on this discussion see her public talk, *This ain't no pussy shit*, at The New School, The Eugene Lang College, NYC, on September 9th, 2015 or (hooks, 1984, p.43-65).

stand these experiences, one has to take into account the effects of multiple social locations operating together simultaneously (Hankivsky, 2014, p.3).

In her seminal article, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics* (Crenshaw ,1989), Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw used the combined interaction of race and gender to illustrate intersectional theory from a historical point of view (Crenshaw, 1989). According to this analytical theorist, Black women did not neatly fit into the Women's Rights agenda because this agenda was not concerned with member differences within the group. Women's Rights groups, which were predominantly led by white middle class women, presented all women (regardless of class and ethnicity) as homogenous who were oppressed by patriarchy. Bell hooks, in *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women And Feminism* (1999), and Hull, in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Hull et al.,1982), agree with Crenshaw's argument that traditional feminist groups have historically focused on a single model of gender oppression to the exclusion of other forms of social oppression. This approach functioned to alienate women with multiple categories of identities who in addition to being a woman faced other forms of social oppression, such as race and class.

Furthermore, the inaccurate representation of women of colour in the Women's Rights Movement simultaneously occurred with the anti-racist movement where the overlapping needs and concerns of gender and race were once again over looked, this time by the heterosexual[26] male-dominated agenda of this movement. However, in his autobiography, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the leader of Civil Rights Movement, praised the invaluable contributions of Mrs. Cor-

[26] Black heterosexual male civil rights leaders purposefully excluded same-gender-loving men like Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin. For more information see: (Singer & Kates, 2010; Garrow, 2004).

reta King in the struggle for racial equality when he said: "[Mrs. Correta King] saw the greatness of the movement and had a unique willingness to sacrifice herself for its continuation" (Carson, 1998,p.37). This quote can serve to temper the analysis that leaders of the American civil rights movement, such as Dr. King, did not care about Black women's compound identity struggles, they did. However, it can be deduced that Black women's issues were not the centrepiece of the civil right movement's mandate.

As Dr. Crenshaw deftly put it: "Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender" (Crenshaw, 1989, p.40) Therefore, intersectional theory challenged the notion that rights-based groups should be predicated on only one form of discrimination based on a single category of identity. Instead, intersectionality scholars and activists called for an approach which combined categories of identities and also emphasize the experiences of discrimination among individuals with multidimensional identities and their relationship with anti-discrimination law or macro social structures (Crenshaw, 1989).

It is worth mentioning that intersectional theory is not without its critics (Bowleg, 2013, 2008b; Nash, 2008; Collins, 2002). In *Rethinking-intersectionality* (2008), Nash criticizes traditional premise of intersectionality in four main ways including the idea that "black women are used as quintessential intersectional subjects" in intersectional theory (Nash, 2008,p.1). Patricia Hills Collins in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and The Politics of Empowerment* (2000), aggress with Nash's critique of intersectionality when she advocated for the expansion of intersectionality analysis beyond Black women's realities (p.227). She calls for the

inclusion of other oppressed groups with multiple identities, such as SES, sexual and gender minorities, immigrants, linguistic minorities (to name a few) (Collins, 2000). In her critique, she explains that social locations are marked by fluidity and these identities can function to privilege or penalize ("penalty/privilege") an individual depending on the context and time in history (Collins, 2000). To illustrate her point, she argues that male gender alone can serve as a source of social privilege, but when male gender intersects with other oppressive social categories, such as SES, ethnocultural background, ability, and/or sexual identity, male gender privilege becomes conditional (Collins, 2000; Hirsch & Fox, 1990, p.68). That is to say that, since no one lives as gendered/racial subject alone, one can say that social categories of identities are not fixed and stable.

Professor Athena Mutua, from State University of New York, in her article *Multidimensionality Is To Masculinities What Intersectionality Is To Feminism* (Mutua, 2013), agrees with Crenshaw and Nash when she writes that the original interpretation of intersectionality was framed in an essentialist and simplistic idea that Black men were privileged by gender and oppressed by race. "Intuitively this notion seemed correct. Yet, the interpretation of black men as privileged by gender and oppressed by race appeared incorrect in our observations of racial profiling" (Mutua 2013, p.345). As Dr. Mutua explains, there is evidence supporting the argument that Black men are not always privileged by gender. While gender wage gaps demonstrates Black men's gender privilege, gender disparity in the experience of racial micro aggression, hyper incarceration, homicide, suicide, and unemployment complicates the notion of Black men's gender privilege (Mutua, 2013).

"These [gender disparities against Black men] almost seemed to negate the idea that black men had any male privilege at all as posited by feminist theorizing" (Mutua, 2013, p.346). In view of this, professor Athena Mutua also coined a term, *gendered racism,* to describe Black mens' experience of intersectional oppression based on gender and race. That said, professor Mutua concedes that most of the critiques of intersectionality has been incorporated in the expansion of the theory and is now more responsive to the complicated interactions of identities in its theorizing (Mutua, 2013, p.355). For example, contemporary interpretations of intersectionality posits that:"People can experience privilege and oppression simultaneously …depending on what situation or specific context they are in" (Hankivsky, 2014,p.3).

Challenging the traditional premise of intersectionality has enabled other historically oppressed groups to demand recognition in intersectional analysis (Bowleg, 2008b; Nash, 2008; Collins, 2000). One such group of individuals increasingly demanding recognition for standing at the intersection of multiple identities and experiencing intersectional erasures are Black sexual and gender minorities (Bowleg, 2013). In an interview with *Lambda Book Report*, entitled "I Don't Discuss Myself In Halves," James Earl Hardy, an acclaimed African American same-gender-loving fictional author, discusses his experiences with racism, homophobia, and racial profiling. When Mr. Hardy was asked in the interview: "What has affected your life more - homophobia or racism? he answered: "That question is a variation on the "Is it harder being gay or African American?" and I don't discuss myself in halves, nor have I measured the level of bigotry thrown at me over the years due to racism or homophobia" (Herren, 2001,p.9). Mr. Hardy's refusal to (re)present himself as a member of two distinct groups affirms his implicit understanding of his his multidimensional or intersectional reality as a Black same-gender-loving man.

Once You've Blended the Cake, You Can't Take the Parts Back to the Main Ingredients: Black Gay and Bisexual Men's Descriptions and Experiences of Intersectionality[27] (Bowleg, 2013) is a ground breaking study that specifically looks at the intersectional experience of being Black and MSM based upon race, gender, sexuality and SES. In describing their intersectional experiences, participants were not always forthcoming in explaining it in "explicit intellectual terms" (Bowleg, 2013). Participants did not use the academic term "intersectionality" in their descriptive narratives. However, they eloquently describe their intersectional reality in "implicit terms." When a participant was asked to describe his experience of intersectionality, he answered: "once you've blended the cake, you can't take the parts back to the main ingredients. I am gay …and a Black man" (Bowleg, 2013,p.5). In answering the same question, another participant added: "it would be hard to separate [my race, gender, and sexual identity] and set them out on the table or compartmentalize, or to really say where one ends and the other begins because I really don't experience it that way" (Bowleg, 2013,p.5). These narratives of BMSM intersectional experiences as mutually constitutive (inherently joined, interactive and synergistic) and non-additive (add on, separate and additive) reinforce the basic tenets of intersectionality and demonstrate that BMSMs have a nuanced understanding of their lived intersectional identities (Bowleg, 2013).

2.9.2 Application of Intersectionality

In *LGBTQ People And Social Work: Intersectional Perspectives* (O' Neil et al., 2015), a pioneer Canadian research examines LGBTQ individuals experience of intersectionality, such as disability, aging and ethnicity and the need for social work practice to apply intersectional perspectives in improving the quality of lives for sexual minorities whose identities intersect. Build-

[27] This study has four key themes: (1) Description of intersectional identity; (2) Primary of intersectionality ; (3)Challenges and negative stereotype associated with intersectional identity; (4) Benefits of intersectional identity. For the purpose of this work, I focus on one relevant key theme, (1).

ing on some of the intersectional perspectives raised in this aforementioned work (p.3750), an intersectional analytical framework facilitates an explanation of findings from present research in three main ways. Intersectional identity experiences of BMSM are: (1) individually unique, nuanced, local and fluid based upon time and location; (2) heterogeneous; (3) shaped by multiple forms of social discrimination which are mutually constitutive; and (4) explicitly and implicitly connected to structural forms of oppression.

(1) Intersectional Identity experiences is individually unique, nuanced, local and fluid based upon time and location

The intersectionality analysis used in the present work challenges the assumption that individuals live a single-issue life, which problematizes many studies on sexual minorities in Montreal (Dufour et al., 2000; Emond et al., 2010)[28]. These works tend to focus on a single-category of oppression (heterosexism) and present community(ies) as homogenous and at the same time frame sexual minorities' discussions of homophobia within White-gay experiences, with some notable exceptions[29]. Using the White-gay majority experience to shape the discourse of sexual minority communities gives the impression that the all sexual minorities have a single-category issue of oppression, namely heterosexism (Daley et al., 2007). In challenging this assumption, intersectionality theory echoes Audre lord's position that: single-category forms of oppression are not the lived experience of all the members of the sexual minority community (Lorde, 1994). The single-issue approach of looking at sexual minorities in Montreal as without

[28] (Juster et al., 2013; The Argus Study by Lambert et al, 2006; The Omega Study by Dufour et al., 2000)

[29] Notable works that included ethnic sexual minorities lump various ethnocultural communities together as "non-white/ethnicultural/non-Canadian-born" and therefore overlook unique group differences(Roy, 2012;The Spot Study by Emond et al., 2010; Poon, 2011),

ethnicity, put the White-gay majority, their western language, sensibilities, identity labels and conceptualization as the norm/ideal and thereby undermines discussion and representation of multi-dimensional realities of oppression that co-exist with heterosexism.

Furthermore, in challenging this single-category model of oppression, intersectional analysis decentralizes White-gays centrality in Canadian sexual minorities' narratives (Brotman & Lee, 2011). Similarly, the experiences of White Gays as the standard representation in the sexual minority community (ies) undermines the representation of ethnocultural "gays" unique experiences in the community (Roy, 2012; Berube, 2001; Riggs 2008). Therefore, application of an intersectional analysis in this work attempts to de-centralize Whiteness as the normative sexual minority experience by including discussion and representations of race/racism, migratory experience, non-native European language speakers contributions, poverty and other issues of marginality in explaining the lived experiences of sexual minorities of colour (Rwigema et al., 2015; Bowleg, 2003). In decentralizing Whiteness, this work complicates the relationship the White-gay majority community has with issues of multiculturalism including White-gay racism in LGBTQ communities (Howley, 2015; Husbands et al., 2013). This approach, in part, disrupts the notion that the White-led LGBT community is a model for inclusion, diversity, tolerance and the only space for sexual minorities and brings to the fore other non-White-gay sexual minorities spaces created to reflect cultural sensitivity and inclusion (Stephens, 2014; Walcott, 2006; Canbrera, 2002; Hawkeswood, 1997). In other words, an intersectional application challenges White-gay supremacy by examining the multi-faceted experiences of marginalization that exist within the LGBTQ community in Montreal.

(2) Intersectional Identity experience of BMSM is heterogeneous

While the experiences of multiple and interlocking forms of social discrimination (homophobia, racism, gendered racism and low SES) among BMSM in North America are well documented (Corneau et al., 2014; Bowleg, 2013, 2008; Husband et al., 2010), the BMSM communities, like other marginal groups, are not a homogenous group and as such do not share the same single-issue needs or concerns (Bowleg, 2013; Hunter, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991, 1989). For example, most of the studies on BMSMs' experiences of social discrimination referenced in this research are US centred and tend to be limited to intersectional analysis of immigration and culture/language proficiency. The few Canadian BMSM studies referenced herein, on the other hand, show immigration-related and social integration challenges (operationalized as insecure residency status and lack of cultural/language proficiency, respectively), which support the observation that US and Canadian BMSM are heterogeneous groups. Therefore, intersectionality analysis enables this research to examine Canadian BMSM experiences of discrimination by departing from the trend of US centered BMSM studies and highlights multiple-issues of marginality that are not captured by these studies. Specifically, an evolution of intersectionality identity analysis will include an examination of immigration and language/culture proficiency in addition to race, sexuality and low SES (Daley et al., 2007).

(3) Intersectional Identity experiences of BMSMs' social discrimination is mutually constitutive

Traditional intersectional work, which focused on Black women's intersecting identities demonstrates that the experiences of discrimination based upon race, gender and low SES as operating-together simultaneously (Nash, 2008). Similarly, Canadian BMSM lived realities of addi-

tive social discrimination (race, gender, lowSES) is also experienced as intersectional. Two examples of social discrimination illustrate the concept of intersectional identity oppression among BMSM: *gendered racism and sexual racism* (Mutua, 2013; Bowleg, 2013; Giwa & Greensmith 2012; Crichlow 2004). Intersectionality applications highlighted in this study demonstrate that Black sexual minorities' experience of racial profiling/racism is not based on their ethnocultural identity alone, but rather an interactive combination of being Black and male, a reality called *Gendered racism* (Mutua, 2013). In the same vein, intersectional analysis unpacks BMSM experiences of intersectional identity discrimination (called *sexual racism*) in the LGBTQ community where they are sexually objectified based on their race and gender (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012). These concepts of intersectional identity marginality serve as analytical framework tools to further an understanding of how these multiple experiences of exclusion and oppression function in both mainstream society and LGBTQ spaces, recognizing that the reality of BMSM's experience of *gendered racism* and *sexual racism are* not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually constitutive.

(4) Intersectional Identity of BMSM Experiences connect to structural oppression

By connecting intersectional identity experiences to structural intersectional oppression, this study unpacks the root causes of disproportionate rates of negative social and health outcomes in Black sexual minority communities (Lee & Brotman, 2013; Millett et al., 2012a; Brotman & Lee, 2011). For example, one reason associated with HIV prevalence among Black Canadians is pervasive stigma associated with sexual orientation (Millett et al., 2012b; PHAC, 2009). In this context, this study adopts an intersectional analysis to challenge the structural oppression

that results in negative self-concept among Black sexual minorities. Identity disclosure, expression and affirmation should not "be depended on the domain" and that those standing at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality and class should not be forced to "fragment and dichotomize their identities, themselves and realities" by adopting a "self-monitory and code-switching strategies" in order to present an "acceptable image" to family members, friends and coworkers (Norsah, 2015; Bowleg, 2003,p.96-7; Bowleg et al., 2008a,p.79; Lorde,1984,p.121-2). Regulation of intersectional identity expression functions to perpetuate shaming and stigma making prevention strategies less effective.

An Intersectional framework is particularly useful for social work as it underscores the structural oppression inherent in mainstream health and social care services by critiquing ineffective models of interventions in addressing health disparities in the community. Canadian BMSM's access to effective health and social care services are impacted when health and social care providers are not well equipped to address their needs and concerns, making prevention and intervention more difficult (George et al., 2014,p.2). Research indicates that "structural barriers such as insufficient funding and ill-informed policies" may be associated with negative sexual health-outcomes among BMSM (George et al.,2014,p.2; Millett et al., 2012b). Therefore, intersectional analyses of structural oppression in health and social care services is necessary to redress inaccessibility and inappropriateness of services, including such issues as the recruitment of members of the BMSM community as health/social care providers, adoption of a culturally diverse/group specific/individualized plan for outreach and intervention and building community partnership programs with community members as part of the decision making process (Rwigema et al., 2015: Corneau et al., 2014).

Chapter Three: Methodology:

As long as I have work then I'm not going to die, cause work is a living spirit in me - that which wants to connect with other people and pass on something to them which they can use in their own lives and grow from.-Marlon Riggs

3.1 *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter describes the methodology of my study, phenomenology and the research design and process in detail. It is divided into nine sections and each section describes a relevant research concept. The first section focuses on an explanation of phenomenology, its relevance and how it facilitates an understanding of the lived experiences of social discrimination among BMSM in Montreal. The section on reflexivity highlights the role of social location in influencing data collection and analysis. Overall research design is discussed with a focus on outlining the step by step process of data collection and analysis. In the section on trustworthiness/validity I highlight the importance of prolonged engagement, and member checking among other concepts. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of the present study.

3.2 *What is Phenomenology?*

The term “phenomenology” is defined as: "the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview" (Marshal & Rossman, 1999, p.112). The phenomenological approach in qualitative inquiry identifies shared lived experience(s) of a group of people of an identified social phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p.76). Phenomenology focuses on the same phenomenon as encountered by those that live the experience and highlights the reoccurring themes of their experience(s) by examining what they have experienced and how

they experienced it (Creswell, 2013, p.76). According to Creswell (2013), "the primary objective of phenomenological research is to reduce individual experiences with a common phenomenon to the construction of the universal essence" (Creswell, 2013, p.76). In order to achieve the goal of constructing the "essence" of shared lived experiences, first, one must collect data through interviews focusing on what and how research subjects experienced an identified phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

3.3 *Relevance*

The phenomenological research approach is a relevant qualitative methodology for this study because it facilitates the description of subjective experiences by examining the social experiences and health-related status of a small sample of participants (Creswell, 2013, Padgett 2008). Furthermore, phenomenology provides a description of particular or "epoch" moments of individual experiences (Creswell, 2013, p.190). Another important rationale for using phenomenology is the emphasis on the concept of 'intentionality of consciousness' which refers to the idea that the perception of experience is always understood in relation to one's consciousness. One single meaning can not be ascribed to a perceived phenomenon and experiences may be understood as having "multiple meanings" (Creswell, 2013). In other words, as a BMSM researcher with a "community consciousness", the concept of "intentionality of consciousness" is poignant in this context as it allows me to explore a diverse spectrum of interpretations of BMSMs' experiences of social discrimination that may not always be in line with other research on Black immigrant sexual minorities in North America. For example, in addition to the social challenges of racism, homophobia and poverty which have been documented previously and with which I am

concerned about in the current study, BMSM may also struggle with internalized racism and homophobia that may have an impact upon social cohesion. Therefore, “intentionality of consciousness” provides the frame of reference within which understandings of the unique realities of the participants in this study can be illuminated and explored.

3.4 *Application/Design*

Specific to this study, the identified phenomenon is social discrimination. The Phenomenological research paradigm facilitates the description of the shared experience(s) of social discrimination encountered by BMSM English-speaking immigrants in Montreal. Six participants were interviewed using a broad and open-ended set of questions and discussion topics as a guide for the interview (Padgett, 2008, p.36). Multiple meetings were arranged to ensure a detailed understanding of each participant’s lived experiences (p.36). A preliminary meeting was held with each participant prior to undertaking the formal interview in order to verify that inclusion criteria were met (English speaking, immigrant, country of origin and sexual and gender minority status), to ensure that participants felt comfortable discussing social discrimination experiences and to build rapport.

In order to obtain a detailed account of respondents’ lived experience of the phenomenon under study, I inquired from each BMSM participant "how was it to experience social discrimination in Montreal?". The use of "how it was experienced" in describing the social phenomenon is also known as the structural description of themes (Creswell, 2013, p.81). This detailed narrative (of “what and how it was experienced”) is important for the basic objective of the phenomenological approach, that is to formulate the "universal essence" of participants’ shared lived ex-

perience(s). The "essence" of shared lived experience(s) of these participants is constructed through the examination of key words and phrases in both structural and textual descriptions. (Creswell, 2013, p.81).

3.5 *Reflexivity*

The concept of reflexivity in social work research can be generally defined as a form of critical self-thinking (self-reflection), inner conversation and reflexive practice; the researcher critically examines the role of “the self” in the epistemology of knowledge and its inherent social power characteristics (class, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, education) in the process of knowledge construction and working with clients (D’cruz et al., 2007).

My social location and its attendant social characteristics (allophone, immigrant Black MSM, working class, third gender) impact this research in two different ways. First, although there are BMSM authors in this field of studies, these researchers are still a peripheral group. My insider status as a member of the community being researched disrupts the normative paradigm of knowledge construction as predominately White, middle class, heterosexual and European-native-Language-speakers (Collins, 2000,p.251-7). Second, as an immigrant BMSM, I am able to present (one of the many) unique experiential perspective(s) of the out-of-sight behaviour and culturally-and-class-specific conceptualization(s) of English-Speaking immigrant BMSMs’ reality in Montreal.

However, one of the concerns of having a status as insider-researcher, is the tendency to sometimes overly sympathize with researched participants’ experience of intersectional marginality. Given this possibility, I recognize that knowledge construction is almost always subjective :

“all representation is constructed and thus partial - it can never fully reproduce reality. It is always interpreted by a particular system of thought” (Crichlow, 2004, p.43). That is to say that knowledge construction is subject to the limitation of a filtered lens of understanding. Similarly, as an insider status researcher, my understanding of participants’ reality is filtered and thus limited.

One way I addressed some of the concerns regarding my dual status as a member of the community being researched and a researcher is the use of phenomenological methodological approach. This methodological approach requires that research begins without explicit assumptions about the background of subjects. Hence, I attempted to shelve all my presuppositions, ideas and beliefs I had about my research participants at the beginning of this research. Moreover, the concept of researcher bracketing (also known as epoch) (Creswell, 2013) enabled me to be aware of my potential shared lived experiences with participants and at the same time “partly set [my experiences] aside so that [I] can focus on the experiences of the participants in the study” (Creswell, 2013,p.78). By being conscious of my potential bias as a member of the community I was conducting research in, I was able to suspend judgement of participants,’ “until they [were] founded on a more certain basis” (Padgett 2008). A Phenomenological methodological approach facilities the development of an accurate profile of the experiences of BMSM by being aware of my own filtered lens and biases (Creswell, 2013, p.77).

3.6 *Research Design*

3.6.1 *Recruitment*

Six research participants were recruited from an African and Caribbean LGBT community based organization (CBO) in Montreal. The criteria for participation in the research was (1) participants must be 18 years or older, (2) English-speaking Black (African or Caribbean) immigrants residing in the Greater Montreal Area and (3) openly self-identify as MSM. A flyer was displayed at the organization's office, which identified the researcher's name and phone number so that individuals could call the researcher if they were interested in participating (see Appendix A). Since the majority of members are French-speaking, English-speaking BMSM were also contacted through word of mouth (snowball sampling). Research participants were not given any compensation for participating in this project. This study adhered to McGill University's ethical guidelines on recruitment. All six respondents agreed to take part in this research of their own volition.

3.7 *Ethical Concerns and Informed Consent*

Before commencing the two-hour, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews all six research participants signed the informed consent document (see Appendix B). The consent form explained the rights and responsibilities of participants. For instance, the six research subjects were informed in written form (and also orally) of their right to withdraw from the study any time they wished without fear of repercussions. Research participants' permission was sought

before switching on the audio tape to record the entire interview. All interview materials, such as notes pad, audio records, consent forms) were stored in a safe locker and only the researcher had access to them. Research respondents were interviewed in a confidential location either at McGill University or in a private residence in which there were no other people present. After the interviews, all identifying information were removed from the transcripts. Only anonymized transcripts were shared with the researcher's supervisor and also stored under lock and key.

Research has documented the pervasiveness of mental health related challenges in the cohort of BMSM (Clay & Craigwell, 2012; Alexander, 2011; Diaz et al., 2004). Being aware of this reality, this research made arrangements to address possible "distress and emotional harm" (Padgett, 2008, p.69) instigated by the interview procedure that may have required participants to recount potentially sensitive lived experiences of social discrimination. Referring "affected" participants to appropriate professionals was one of such arrangements. Furthermore, while no participant showed emotional distress, I was open to the idea of following up with participants who experienced emotional discomfort triggered by sensitive interview topics.

Participants were also informed of the research project's utmost respect for their privacy and confidentiality: what they said at the interview could not be traced back to them during data analysis and subsequent publication of the thesis. To this end, participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms. The closely knit nature of the English-speaking BMSM constituency in Montreal, or specifically in community organizations in which BMSM participate, required the research to also replace respondents' countries of origin and any other identifying information.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that no monetary compensation was offered during the process of conducting this study. While I understand that there is ongoing debate about the

merit and demerit of providing various forms of honorarium (cash, snack, services) to research participants, I have taken the position that within this qualitative research, giving an honorarium to participants has ethical implication that may undermine the integrity or rigor of the study (Padgett, 2008, p.70). Especially in a vulnerable community, such as exists among BMSM where poverty is commonplace, monetary compensation may influence power dynamics in favour of the researcher, who will likely be seen as a provider of funds, and the participant, may feel compelled to reciprocate by participating.

3.8 *Trustworthiness in Research*

A study demonstrates trustworthiness or rigor when it fairly and accurately represents the accounts of the lived experiences of its respondents (Steinmetz, 1991; Padgett, 2008). This study employed four strategies to demonstrate trustworthiness: "prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing and support and auditing" (Padgett, 2008, p.185).

In terms of prolonged engagement, I have been involved in BMSM research and activism for the past ten years. Also, I have worked for BMSMs' Community-Based Organizations, attended national and international seminars, coordinated social programs (support-groups and community film festival) and engaged in civil rights activism. These activities demonstrate my level of prolonged engagement in the community which has facilitated my understanding of the community and helped to support trust-building efforts.

Member checking or cross examination of data is when researchers contact participant(s) for further explanation or clarification of initial collected data (Crewell, 2013; Brotman, 2007). The process can be in the form of a meeting arrangement or phone/email discussion. In present

study, member checking was done by meeting up with one participate (BMSM4) to seek further clarification for his narrative, because the audio recording was unclear in several places. I met the participant at a mutually agreed upon and private location where he answered a couple of questions that were not clearly picked up by the audio recording device.

Peer debriefing encouraged the discussion of my ongoing ideas and analysis with my colleagues with shared interest who offered constructive feedback and support (Padgett, p.186). One colleague was a McGill Social Work PHD student whose work touches upon similar topics including intersectionality based upon ethnocultural and sexual and gender identity and immigration. A draft copy of present thesis work was reviewed by this colleague. We discussed his review and I made changes and adjustment reflecting his comments. In addition to my colleague, I also met with my thesis supervisor for no more than five meetings to discuss relevant themes and ideas arising from my analysis. Her feedback and questions facilitated me to fine tune my research ideas. In terms of auditing, I journaled the research process, including thoughts and observations of ideas that influenced my analysis as well as engaged in self-reflection through journaling from the beginning of this project until its completion. This also supported efforts to bracket as is consistent with a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013).

3.9 *Data Analysis*

The data analysis process was inspired by the phenomenological approach's emphasis on the construction of meaning of respondents' lived experience (Creswell, 2013), in this case of the experience of social discrimination and its impact. To this end, data analysis commenced by manually transcribing audio interviews using the line format technique (Padgett, 2008, p.163).

The transcripts were coded; the process of highlighting reoccurring words and phrases in each transcript as “chunks of words or meaning units” and noting them at the end of each text was undertaken. Identified “chunks of words” from each transcript were then categorized as “conceptual bins or “theme areas” relevant to each respondent (Brotman, 2012, p.11; Padgett, 2008, p. 150). The process of coding was undertaken, first for each participant transcript as a unique individual. Once all six transcripts were coded for both meaning units and conceptual themes, analysis of themes was undertaken across participant stories of their lived experience. These common themes with emphasis on "what was experienced" is known as textual description of themes (Creswell, 2013, p.81;Campbell 2010). All six transcripts were used to inform my thinking about common themes discussed. During this process of coding, there was no co-coder or computer software used.

Moreover, the coding process enabled the identification of common themes that were reported by all participants and as well as those that were unique. The diversity of respondents’ accounts demonstrated the multiple and varied ways they attributed meanings to their lived experiences of social discrimination and to the unique aspects of their realities related to living in Montreal. Member checking and referential adequacy were implemented in the data interpretation process. While member checking required the researcher to contact respondents to verify the authenticity of recognized themes, referential adequacy situated developed themes from data analysis within the appropriate and relevant academic work (Brotman, 2007). Interpretation of developed themes were supported by respondents and other relevant extant research on the same topic.

3.10 *Limitations*

The research methodology used in in the present work is not without its limitations. The use of phenomenological methods, which emphasizes perception, feelings, beliefs and lived experiences renders participants' narratives as inherently subjective and unverifiable. As a qualitative study the sample size of six participants makes it difficult to generalize and replicate. For example, the theories employed in current work cannot be used to explain the realities of the general (sub) population of BMSM in a different city. Another area of concern is that the scope of present thesis is not broad enough to reflect the specific experiences of BMSM realities in Montreal. In addition, the duration of data collection was extended thus it can be argued that the time frame of two years to collect data for a small sample is a limitation in the sense that participants' experiences may have changed during the duration of research.

Subsequently, this research does not address the time sensitive realities/challenges of participants. While the section on reflexivity has already outlined potential bias, it is worth mentioning that as a context specific qualitative study, this study also reflects other biases including language and audience. The context of my thesis work is an academic one. Therefore, it is expected that I adopt an academic style of writing. Given this context, it can be argued that the use of academic language throughout this research process may alienate participants. That said, I have addressed this potential bias by informing participants of my willingness to facilitate their understanding of any formal report they struggle to understand by engaging in discussion and interpretation of results.

Chapter Four: Findings

Silence kills the soul; it diminishes its possibilities to rise and fly and explore. Silence withers what makes you human. The soul shrinks, until it's nothing - Marlon Riggs.

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter reports on the findings of themes emerging form an analysis of the shared meaning of social discrimination and its impact among the six participants interviewed. These theme areas are presented sequentially with thick description in the form of participant quotes to substantiate the emerging themes. Individual sections on demographic characteristics of participants (with some aspects changed or obscured to ensure anonymity), after which individual sections on various forms of social discrimination are presented. Quotes are identified by a particular code referring to the order in which participants were interviewed. Each quote is followed by this code (i.e. B1 to B6) and the line numbers from the transcript where the quote was located in order to facilitate auditing. Finally, the chapter ends with an analysis of the intersectional nature of social discrimination which brings together the experiences of anti-Black racism, Black homophobia, raced-based sexual objectification, intra-group hostility and its impact on the sexual and mental health of participants.

4.2 *Demographic Profile of Respondents*

Overall, six participants were interviewed over a period of six months. Three participants were from English-Speaking Sub-Saharan African countries and the remaining three from English-Speaking Caribbean countries. African languages were claimed as mother tongue by all

African BMSM. English language was learned earlier on in native countries before immigrating to Canada. For Carribbean BMSM, the English-language was recognized as the mother tongue of participants interviewed. It must be noted that four of the participants also described themselves as being fluent in French.

All participants but one had a university education with three of five having attained a graduate degree. Four of the BMSM who participated in the study were employed on a full-time basis, one was a student and one was unemployed. All participants were over eighteen years of age; two were in their twenties, two were in their thirties; one was in his forties; and one was in his sixties. The age of the participants strongly correlated with the number of years spent in Montreal, with younger BMSMs more recently settled as new immigrants (four years or less), and older BMSMs having settled in Canada for over two decades. Arrival in Canada amongst the younger participants ranged from eight months to four years. Those who have settled in Canada over two decades were more likely to be employed, proficient in the French language and a Canadian citizen. At the time of conducting interviews, four participants had their Canadian citizenship[30], one was on a student visa and one was on a visitor's visa.

4.3 *Theme One:*

Homophobia within Black Communities

Homophobia as a form of social discrimination experienced within Black communities was a common theme among participants. Five of the six participants reported experiencing "anti-gay" treatment in the Black communities in Montreal with which they were familiar.

[30] Immigration status and type were not described by participants as it was beyond the scope of this study. For more information on immigration status or type of LGBTQ immigrants in Canada (Murray, 2014; Lee & Brotman, 2011).

...like I had nieces and nephews that were born here, and they have been through a lot of problems, that got me thinking, what if one of them was gay? and I am not surprised they are not accepting,they've been brought up homophobic, because of me, mostly, their father brought them up homophobic Yea, because he didn't like me, why?, I have no idea. Uh, No, he made his kids hate me because I am gay. And so they associate gay with bad uncle, I don't know what he told them, so surprisingly, for Canadian-born-kids, they are a little too homophobic that I could ever imagined[…] (B6, LINES 1078-95)

Two main reasons were given for the wide spread experience of "anti-same-sex behaviour" within Black communities. First, Black Christians' rejection of same-gender loving behaviour was framed within a strict and literal interpretation of Judeo-Christian tenants. According to some participants, the Black Christian world view condemns the expression of sexual plurality. In this context of religious inspired discrimination, BMSM struggled to gain acceptance in their own community.

"It really, it's always the kiss of death when someone say to me, then they will always, they will always follow it up and always going through a list of things they think I will not do: "oh you are such a good person, you don't do this, you're not doing all all these gay people stuff. You're not doing all this, all that. That is the worse thing about that community, the Christian side of the Black Community, they just not open to it. They discriminate blatantly. (B1, LINES 878-90)

Moreover, some participants relayed that members of the Black community who frowned on "openly gay" behaviour were motivated by the notion of "the gay lifestyle" as a foreign impo-

sition. They (some members of the Black community) stated that "open" same-sex sexual practices are not organic to Black culture and Black men are adopting a "gay" lifestyle because of their association with mainstream Eurocentric society. In their attempt to reinforce this cultural schism, some members of the Black community employed ethnic and gender stereotypes to support the idea of homosexuality as an alien practice.

> *"Yes, it's because for the mentality what we've been brought up that being gay is a white man's disease. That is what more or less, I was heard it when I was growing up. It is a White man's' disease. That is a White man, they're gay, black are not gays. Blacks are strong, burly men, who go out and have kids and lots of kids, fight lions and all sorts of shit like that. And cut trees down and build houses. They are not home in bed with another man having sexual stuff together. (B4, LINES 158-66)"*

In this context of Black homophobia, one of the main themes that emerged related to the reasons that participants gave for not being able to be themselves within their own communities. BMSM6, for example, stated that he could not have "healthy" relationships with his relatives and as a result avoided attending family gatherings and events as he struggles with explaining his lifestyle to them.

> *"... I can not discuss with them, sexual, I can't take a boy friend or I can not came up with kids, I wouldn't know how to explain my life, there would be, there would be tension, there would be like my peers would be having wedding parties, or adults you have gotten over that,*

would be taking their kids, would be showing off their kids, what they're doing, what their kids are doing, that kind of stuff, but I can't do that, that is not good, (B6, LINES 190-98)"

Black homophobia was a common theme experienced by the participants. In Montreal's various Black communities, conservative interpretations of religious values and cultural essentialism (or purity) seemed to underpin expressions of social discrimination and to their generalized acceptance.

4.4 *Theme Two:*

Anti-Black Racism in Montreal

The reality of racism was another major emerging theme from this study. It was a shared social discrimination for all of the participants. Participants described various forms of racism they have encountered since immigrating to Montreal. Interviewees with a longer duration of resettlement in the Greater Montreal Area recounted their experiences of racism when they arrived in the early 1970's. For example, BMSM5 who has been in the city for over three decades, recounted the anti-Black treatment he experienced upon his arrival in the 1970's.

"*I made an appointment and was asked to come in for an interview and the fellow looked at me and said what's your name? and I said, in those days I used my official name, [David Arthur], and he said oh, we were expecting somebody from England, and you know, there were obviously expecting a white person and they saw a Black person and they just ignored the Black person and that was it. The interview never*

took place, nothing ever happened etc, etc, Uh, a few weeks after that, I remember going to an employment agency and as soon I got to the door somebody called out from the back to the receptionist in front and said tell that young man we don't place janitors here. Um, you know, I didn't go there to apply for a job as a janitor, I was a civil servant when I left [Azania] and certainly was looking for a clerical position and um that was what they were offering, um, that was that, the I certainly heard things for example, um, ok, let me just say that most of the discrimination, there certainly was discrimination in the housing, almost impossible in the early seventies if you were Black, to rent an apartment, in certain areas, they just didn't rent you." (B5, LINES 120-41)

Some participants agreed that racism still exists in various forms. One illustration of contemporary racism was expressed as the low-expectation related to the employment opportunities for BMSM. Full-time employed participants acknowledged that they were subjected to delayed employment promotion.

"I applied for a job in that department, I have applied for tones of jobs, which I never got any. My goodness, over my life span of working for that institution, may be thirty, forty, Yea, at the same institution, so I was only able to climb up the corporate ladder only two steps and nothing after. Working there like my peers and most of my peers staff, were able to move, is not a huge difference in the classifi-

cations, there are four steps and I have been able to move from the entry level and I stuck at the second level so, where were we going with this? No, except, nothing passed midlevel. Why is it an issue, it's an issue for me because I have had that as a job experience, at least, thirty years of spending it at an institution, I have the education qualifications to do the job, and more so actually, the entry level requests, requires a high school or a high school education and I have a university education and I qualify, I think I qualify and can do the job, yes, I can definitely do the job, is there some training missing, maybe, could I be trained, absolutely, I can. I am very adaptable, I adapt to situations, I have adapted to living here so there is no issue, that should not be an obstacle, adapting is not an obstacle, for me, it's not an obstacle (B6, Lines 514-47)"

Experiencing a glass ceiling or/and doubts about employment competency was shared by another BMSM who despite his advanced education struggled to find work commensurate with his professional training.

"The thing is, what I do is highly specialized [job] and it not something that traditionally a Black male would do. Sorry, Blacks would do. Much less a Black male. Black female would do. And so when the clients come, if they are not warned by people before that I am Black, it kinda throw them off and you could clearly see that it throws them off, clearly see it, (B3, LINES 388-94)"... "because they are seeing a

Black male in an academic environment; that is something that they are not used to in this place and so especially with my background and pedigree it is a constant battle. So a lot of the people who come to me, they grudgingly come to me because they have no choice because what I do is highly specialized and so they usually put up a lot of resistance or you know, whatever, but that is that, so that's race. (B3, LINES 434-441)

Another emerging theme of contemporary racism pointed out by recently settled BMSM immigrants interviewed in this study is subtle forms of racism. For them, subtle racism exists as: racially tinged stereotypes, and insensitive or psychological putdown remarks made by non-Black friends and strangers.

"*so many people have come up to me and they, it almost like they group [inaudible] they always expect a certain behaviour from me being an immigrant, African immigrant, they have always expected me to behave in a certain way, a certain personality and because I don't really have, what this generic personality is? a lot of people have expressed their great joy that I am not that and I, because, the reason that, I mean even, back when I was in [Ottawa], a boss of mine did mention to that to me That: "oh you are so great and blah blah for a black guy", for a black African guy" and I personally find that very sad. I try my best not to be a stereotype, but I would hate to think that we are in a world where people discriminate against stereotypes, I mean stereotypes stem from the basic fact that same people do have*

those personality or characters and I think even if a person does, you should not judge them ahead of time. (B1, LINE 148 -64)

An example of the subtle nature of racism, is BMSMs' preoccupation with understanding and explaining the meaning of anti-Black racism treatment in Montreal. Subtle racism engendered insidious side effects that resulted in participants doubting themselves and the very reality of racism.

"*So it is just that constant thinking [about racism] because it becomes so subtle, I think, I mean spending more time thinking about it than it actually happening to me. I am not sure; maybe it does happen sometimes and I just close myself to [it]." (B1, LINES 337-41)*

Although participants did not report contemporary experiences of "blatant" racism, four of six participants relayed stories of other forms of anti-Black racism in Montreal, such as daily micro aggressions involving comments and attitudes of key gatekeepers to employment and various health and social care services. These micro aggressions were viewed as significant and disturbing to participants as they adversely effected their sense of security and possibility to self actualize.

4.5 *Theme Three:*

Cultural Dissonance and Sexual Objectification in the LGBT Community

The theme of cultural dissonance with Western (white) LGBT conceptualization of sexual minority group identity development, models and labels was reported. BMSM's discussed cultural and social separation in the area of identifying (with the values and understanding of group

identity labels) of the mainstream LGBT movement, which were framed within an Eurocentric value system. Hence, BMSM sometimes felt disconnected with the cultural specificity of the Western LGBT community world view and lifestyle.

> *"...a friend of mine from Montreal came to [Sherbrooke], specifically for [gay pride parade] and he was staying at my place and I sort of felt duty bound to go, but, I, somehow, the carnivalesque nature of much of what passes for gay reality, um, I'm not at peace with it. So that is what I meant. ... I'm erotically aroused by men, so I say same-gender sexuality or same-sex sexuality [instead of "queer" or "gay" or "LGBT"]" (B5, LINES 63-70).*

This theme of cultural and social disconnection with mainstream LGBT identity monikers was not expressed in the same way by all participants. Although participants shared various forms of general ease with mainstream LGBT monikers, some preferred LGBT labels for a variety of practical reasons (such as a cultural lingo/slang, building solidarity with mainstream), and one BMSM rejected its usage. This may suggest that participants did not share the same cultural dissonance with mainstream LGBT identity conceptualizations as is represented in the literature.

A theme shared by all participants relates to the experience of sexual objectification in the LGBT Community. Participants faced a unique social discrimination in the LBGT community, largely, stemming from the intersection of being Black and gay. One pervasive social discrimination in the "Gay Village" is the race-based stereotype of BMSM as individuals with oversized

phallus and an aggressive/virile "top." Given this reality, all BMSMs interviewed expressed concern regarding this overgeneralization of Black sexuality in LBGT spaces.

> **"***you've certainly in terms of when people meet you, if you go clubbing, for instance, people try to pick you up, they have notions of what your anatomy should look like… If you are Black they expect you to have a big dick. … and so on and so forth and they tell you that, in [Sherbrooke,Qc], that is the question I was frequently asked when I went into the clubs. You know, um, and people got into arguments with me. sometimes they were from Montreal, they got into huge arguments with me and I'm like, come on, we [BMSM] are like all other human beings and we range the gamut and huge arguments and you can not convince, you know, sometimes, there is a little, most of the times, guys I've slept with, had been with Black and you know, I've encountered everything from almost nothing to monstrosities, so, back, yea, um, being transformed into a myth, is that, in that sense, you know, a kind of, to me that is discrimination. The other thing is that they always come with a formulae and the oversized penis is almost half the formulae is a small brain, if you take, um, as Philip Rushton very well put it, …(B5, LINES 161-87)*

Overgeneralization of BMSM's sexual anatomy, as well-endowed, and sexual role, as the exclusive dominant "inserter", marginalizes individual BMSMs who do not neatly fit into this racist sexual stereotype. BMSM identifying as "Bottoms" (or those who prefer the "passive role"

in copulation) narrated their experiences of undesirability and limited opportunities in finding and making love in the predominantly non-Black "gay" social interface.

> *"…the whites gays would be like oh my god, you' re a Black bottom? Well that sucks because, you want a big dick when you're a bottom? I want my ass fucked, I'm a bottom, this doesn't work for me, right? While the black top they have such an array of out there, of choices, of selections that is like whatever, so the Black Bottom is like damn it, I gotta compete with the few Blacks who're better looking than me…,"(B4,714-21).*

BMSM 3, who identifies as a Black Bottom, added:

> *"So the problem is that most of the people who come after Blacks or are interested in dating Blacks, that is what they are coming for, which includes a lot of, I guess, chocolate queens, that is the new term. I have heard of rice queens, [a] chocolate queens, so the guys, the non-Black guys who go after Black guys, so you have a lot of those in Montreal, if a guy approaches you, nine times out of ten, actually ninety nine times out of a hundred, he is trying to get you to fuck him… Because most of the white tops, they want white guys or Asian men. They don't date, in general, from my experience, they don't date Black Bottoms. And as for the Black men, they're, is kinda what you were alluding to a while ago are busy prostituting themselves and a lot of them, not necessarily prostituting themselves, but conveniently tak-*

ing advantage of the [pause; searching for the word] what is the word?, of their status. Their desirability, they are in this sort of relationships with these white guys, they are a lot of them, you know, they've been,they are using each other: one is providing sex, the dick and the other one may be providing some sort of financial support and I am not one, I am not a sugar daddy type or sugar mummy, whatever you want to put it" (B3, Lines 1321-1364)

Reports from participants demonstrate that some members of the BMSM community conform to or fit (or both) (homo)sexual stereotypes in the Gay Village. BMSM4, for instance, admitted to being a stereotypical active Black interested in passive non-Black gay men.

"*Well, I consider myself a "top" so I guess, I fit that stereotype of what they're looking for. They fit [my] stereotype of what I'm looking for as being white bottom and who loves to get fuck by Blacks. I see that fitting, right?" (B4, LINES 320-24)*

BMSM "tops" perpetuate racial sexual tropes for a confluence of many factors. Providing clarifications for this behaviour, BMSMs highlighted acquiescence and poverty as some of the factors.

"...Because, I look at how Black gay men live their lives, how they swallow the stereotypes, and just simply fall into whatever role, predetermined role… Society has set out for them. Because it is easier to live that way, it is easier to live that way [to be a stereotype]… (B5, LINES 540-4).

In terms of poverty:

> *"...if we allow, these Black tops were not financially strapped, being discriminated for ages then that would not put them in a lot of compromising position that a lot of them are in now. That they have to be fucking for money from these white dudes and so they would be a lot more Black on Black regular relationship and dating so then, it not directly, my issues are not directly race related, but they are indirectly, related to that. (B3, LINES 1394-1402)"*

According to participants, the intersections of racism and homophobia played a significant role in how the sexuality of BMSM is perceived in Montreal's gay community. For example, BMSM were expected to have oversized genitalia and play a hyper sexual, aggressive "inserter" role, during copulation, in inter-ethnic relationships. They added that while BMSM Tops are mostly desired, BMSM Bottoms face isolation in the LGBT community. Participants claimed that acquiescence and poverty may explain the reason why BMSM accept and internalize this rigid sexual position expectation in their interactions with the gay community.

4.6 *Theme Four:*

BMSM In-Group Conflict

This research highlights the emerging theme of in-group conflict/tension/hostility among members of the BMSM community in Montreal. Information provided supports the observation that relationship between BMSM can sometimes be fraught with conflict. For example, BMSM4 passionately expressed his experience of in-group tension with other members of the community.

According to him, other BMSM showed jealousy, resented him for choosing to date outside of the BMSM community, and as a result gossiped and fabricated stories about his relationship.

> *"...creating a gossip or story that never existed, inventing stuff that took place, uh, let's say you seeing someone who is non-Black. They don't like the fact that you're seeing a non-Black, they will create, they created a problem (B4, LINES 229-233)"*

Another BMSM adds credence to this observation of in-group tension in the community. According to him, there were also conflicts associated with differential educational attainment and perceived social status among members. As an educated BMSM, he recounted being ridiculed by other BMSMs after encouraging them to show an interest in university education.

> *"Yea, and a lot of them spent their nights in the clubs looking for pleasure, and I did at times talk to some of them and asked them why they're not improving their lives and so on and so forth to the point where they dubbed me the "walking University". ... yea, "here comes the walking university". So, I, you know, yea, yea, yea, I, there was one other chap going to University and the ones I talked to asked me "if I made love to my books, you know, how did they [loving making with books] feel," you know, stuff like that. Of course, of course, of course, I mean, it's not an accident that most of my friends, the overwhelming majority of my friends, are straight. (B5, LINES 641-55)"*

BMSMs' in-group conflict is a reality that adds another layer of social challenge to a sexual minority group already dealing with multiple forms of social discrimination. BMSM in-group tension can be explained by a complex relationship of sociocultural and personal factors. One of

those factors is internalized operation. Proponents of BMSM in-group conflict as stemming from internalized operation posit that in the context of pro-long exposure to social discrimination, BMSM have overtime accepted and absorbed negative stereotypes associated with the BMSM community. Subliminally, having imbued these these negative stereotypes, they act it out on each other leading to in-group conflict. In tandem with or in addition, another relevant factor that explains in-group tension is ineffective personal stress/healing management strategies. In the absence of an effective stress/healing coping skills, BMSM are more likely to vent their pent up frustrations and stress from social discrimination on each other thereby leading to in group-tension and social dissipation.

4.7 Theme Five:

The Social Experience of Immigration Status, Language, Unemployment and Poverty

The social experiences of language (knowledge of French), immigration status, employment and poverty are interrelated to the extent that they cannot easily be examined in isolation from each other. In this study, more recently settled English-speaking immigrant Some BMSM discussed challenges of their limited French language proficiency, which reduced employment opportunities. English-Speaking BMSM1 discussed the challenges posed by a lack of French language proficiency and its relationship to unemployment. The inability to speak and understand the French language seemed to block employment options in Montreal, according to participants. With limited employment avenues, BMSM found themselves in dire financial straits where they were willing to try other alternatives to pay bills and settle debts.

"...I felt pressured to, you know, do my own thing and of course I was facing so much discrimination because I did not speak French even though I was what is supposed to be a bilingual language city, I mean, actually, I tried to get a job at [grocery store] to lift boxes and the manager was so rude to me because I did not speak French, it was actually very embarrassing, he almost gave me like on the counter interview and pretty much embarrassed me in front of all the people who were in [grocery store]. So, for a moment I did consider, I guess for me, the idea of having a sugar daddy had, I would much rather, I mean, if it is a question of whoring yourself [he laughs, he hesitates, long pause]," (B1, LINES 453-65).

Apart from lowered job prospects, inaccessibility to government health and social service programs was mentioned as another limitation presented by immigration status insecurity:

"My access to health care for example, so any time I have to go to the clinic, there're some of the clinics, I can not use because some of the programs in those clinics I can not use because they are available [exclusively] to residents" (B2, Lines 76-80).

Further, the emergent theme of poverty was a common reality shared by participants. Already stated, the complex interaction of insecure immigration status, French language limitation and unemployment engender a unique situation where English-Speaking BMSM struggle to make ends meet.

"Yes not having the money, I can see in terms of health and not eating well, yes. There is a period in time, where, when, I, you know, you living on five bucks an you saying ok, so the MacDonald's double cheese Burger is about one something, one ninety-nine, two six, you can get that keeps you full for a while like I have been through that. So, I, from that stand point yes, that is impact your health? Yes. Do you have money to go to a Dentist, do you have money to, you know, do basic things, I have experience that as well" (B3,LINES 1223-33).

The combined experience of insecure immigration status, lack of the French language proficiency, unemployment and poverty together limited options and thereby exacerbated the precarious situations of those BMSM interviewed for this study.

4.8 *Theme six:*

The Effects of Intersectional Social Discrimination on Sexual and Mental Health Outcomes

Social discrimination and its impact on sexual and mental-health-related outcomes among BMSMs were discussed by participants. Self-acceptance of same-sex romantic and sexual expression in a homophobic context poses distinct challenges to BMSM and is characterized by high risk for risky behavior and negative health outcomes. One such negative health behaviour experienced by participants was suicidal ideation. For example, BMSM1 admitted to suicidal ideation in the process of "coming out" because he could not accept himself as a sexual minority person in the context of the reality of Black homophobia and generalized racism to which he was subject.

"I really felt the social discrimination based on immigration status and poverty. Before that when I was depressed and everything, I was having trouble, coming out, but I think that was discrimination based on sexuality, you know, I stayed in [Ottawa] back then, few Blacks I knew were these really intense Christian Black people. I just really didn't think I could really come out to anybody. (B1, LINES 742-49)… I strongly considered, I just wanted to end my whole life." (B1,LINES 980-81)

Poverty, a social discrimination, can sometimes lead to risky decisions regarding sexual behaviour as a means of coping. Among some participants, there was recognition of the fact that a lack of money, largely as a consequence of unemployment, sometimes encouraged BMSM to explore the feasibility of sex work as a viable option, particularly for English-Speaking BMSM. BMSM1 narrated his experience of exploring sex work:

"At first, I was just gonna feel it out [sex work]. Kinda just go there. I guess I was almost hoping they will tell me that there is no way you can do it or something. I don't know. It was one of those things where I was looking for a job online and no money, I was looking for jobs, I could not get them because of the language thing and there was just this sex work. Escorting and I thought, (B1, LINE 493-97)…I strongly considered it, I came close. I mean it is almost like, I did everything else, but actually have sex for money (B1, LINE 474-76)… […] I was now more open to any job opportunity. If I could not get the bare min-

imum, you know, I just felt like I could be more flexible. At that point, I abandoned any kind of social, any kind of cultural laws or restrictions or anything. (B1, LINES 639-43)…I was much more open to it. Back when I was in that position, when I felt like I really needed the money, it was certainly, it shocked me how much open I was to do it. The fact that I was even there, you know?"(B1, LINES 706-10)

Moreover, the reality was that for many unemployed BMSM with no financial resources the experience of eviction from home (by relatives for same-sex be haviour), resulted in home lessness. BMSM who found themselves in the situation of homelessness had to"put up with" or reasonably accommodate unwarranted sexual advances from friends in exchange for a place to stay during difficult times. This experience functioned to compromise sexual behaviour and health decisions.

"*I somewhat felt, the time I come closest to that was when my cousins put me out because when the friend that I was living with, there was this kinda of quasi, like you "fooled" around before, but it was clear that we were not dating. Here it is that I am living with somebody, I have no choice, yes you always have choice, but whatever, here it is, this person has taken me in and if this person want to have sex with me do I pass it up? If you put up a resistance how does it look on, upon, and it's not necessary that the behaviour was at risk per say, but I think it always affect you psychologically because you feel as though you are trashing and not worthy especially for somebody like me with*

my educational background is like "are you kidding me"? This is what my life has deteriorated into and that can lead to uh, a lot of negative thoughts and I think its more, not so much the physical, and the depression, anxiety has physical ramifications uh I guess I am lucky in the sense that I don't have too much of that. But little do I know, I don't know, it gonna manifest itself in time, but I have not had that burden. I have come close to it, uh". (B3, LINES 1202-23)

It appears that social discrimination negatively affected the psychological health and emotional well-being of research participants. BMSM relayed experiences of depression and anxiety. They ascribed this to not feeling part of mainstream society. Their lives appeared to be marked by feelings of isolation and they did not fully engage with others. Some participants also expressed the desire to conceal a part of themselves and their identities in the context of social interactions. This, they believed did not only stifle their selfhood, but it also took a psychological toll on their emotional wellbeing. Complete avoidance of social interactions was seen as another impact of social discrimination on BMSM's social experiences.

"*Um, I think it does because, I feel as though I am shutting down, I feel though, you always,quasi-depressed, you kinda used to it so… I feel though that I am not existing, I am not myself. I feel as though, I am a shell of myself. Where I see it, when I go outside and interact with[a] friends. Maybe because is, being gay and in the Black community you are not used to presenting your full self, you are used to always hiding, you're always compensating not compensating, you are*

always used to holding back things, yourself and not being your true self and I have done that for so long now that I don't naturally talk about myself. Well part of it is that I have nothing to talk about, sometime is like I am not fully present. I am not fully engaged and so for me I just don't feel fully alive, in a way and I know that a lot of that has to do with intersection of being here in this place where you are, you are here,but not really here, right? And I think that sort of combination is very dangerous, very dangerous, like I speak, go home and I speak with my friends and they would be talking and you would be very conscious as though you see your body there , but you are on the outside of it and you kinda listening to this conversation, but you are not fully participating in it and a lot that [a]" (B3, LINES 1119-46)

Participants' accounts show how the experience of social discrimination can negatively impact the sexual and mental health status of BMSM in Montreal.

4.9 *Theme Seven:*

Coping Strategies Employed By English-Speaking BMSM

A variety of coping strategies were explored by BMSM to mitigate effects of social discrimination. These included voluntary withdrawal from social interactions; aggressive responses to racial and "gay" harassment; psycho-social support from friends; consumption of substance (illicit drugs) and alcohol were highlighted. For example, a participant with insomnia complica-

tions stemming from immigration status insecurity conceded to consuming excessive amounts of alcohol and marijuana as a sleeping aid.

> *"I think, my drinking increased substantially, my last few years in the U.S. and I think it has was just been consistent I don actually notice, every now and then, especially if I get stressed out with projects and immigration issue, I might increase drinking or I might add some thing else or some other substance to it. Marijuana, that one I have been smoking a little bit more consistently last few months. Yes. I have only ever smoked in the U.S once, but in Canada I smoke a lot more. It is my coping, it helps me cope. It also, I do it because I feel like it helps me sleep better. Also, the way I sleep. I have problems sleeping and always worried about immigration issue so I feel like doing weed or whatever helps me sleep better so… (B2, LINES 532-51)*

It was noticed that the behaviour of "sexualizing frustration" is another coping strategy used by BMSM. One participant (BMSM6) communicated his practice of "sexualizing his frustration." That is, he sexualized his feelings of stress and anxiety.

> *"… a friend of mine brought up a while ago, that uh, that my frustrations,do sometimes manifest as, just as uh, I sexualize my frustrations, How? I get fucked up and I wanna go out and see how getting "fucked up" is like. Like the real experience so, is a matter of language, right? Well, I deliberately use the word "fucked up"….. It's very good use of language. [giggling] Are you serious? Is like, that is the worse case*

scenario that getting "fucked up", so there is no, there is not a day goes by without me not thinking about getting "fucked up." Yea. But the experience are different, like every body else the same experience is difference, It's a different experience, getting "fucked up" in the sense of having sex is totally different experience than getting "fucked up". Syntax [giggles] Yea, if I am sexualizing my frustration, that is exactly what happens. Um, what do I mean by "sexualizing my frustrations"? I give it a sexual identity, a sexual entity, " fucked", again the word, "fucked up", uh, how does it feel like to get "fucked up", the real thing of getting "fucked up". Because it's a human experience, right? is an easy thing to do" (B6, LINES 709-50)

Those who sought the guidance of professional help in times of heightened stress found it effective and expressed a desire to continue seeking professional help.

"It wasn't a joke, seeing a psychologist is almost like being in a meaningful and uh, yea, in a very meaningful marriage because I get a point of view; a well-thought-of point of view from my therapist. Uh, from different angles, I don't get this kind of audience with anybody, I don't know if it's the way I interact or the system that forces this kind of, this lack of interaction between members of the society, um, I am sure I am not the exception but I think, Iike I can't talk to my friends about most of the things I talk to my therapist because there is a lack of time, or even if I do talk to them about it there is not going to be any

feedback or attention or lack of experience or "I don't know to tell you kinda of thing", So is very fulfilling to talk to a therapist, like a fantastic experience, it given me that, uh that added security of having a person to talk to." (B6,LINES 652-67)

Participants employed a variety of coping strategies to alleviate the negative effects of social discrimination. Some of these coping strategies supported good physical and mental health while others put BMSM further at risk. Participants recognized this contradiction and made several suggestions for addressing social discrimination in its many forms and for the development of support services.

4.10 *Theme Eight*

Recommendations to Address Social Discrimination

In an attempt to provide effective solutions to mitigate their unique experiences of social discrimination, BMSM offered many recommendations. Overall they suggested holistic as well as customized approaches. For example, participants mentioned a tailored social service program highlighting the specificity of the intersectional reality of sexual, linguistic, ethnic minorities and unemployment.

"...I think is more career guidance, career support, jobs search support, may be even, um, housing type support, because I look at my own situation and like you kinda of, you not finding a job, you have no money, you end up in compromising situations and so maybe half-way housing, some sort of living situation, may help ease that sort of bur-

den, uh, I am trying to think of what else? Well there all these sort of health and sort of counselling, I think, a lot of, um setting up that space is to make people feel comfortable so that they can receive that counselling, I think it also important so it's a whole, is a full fledged uh, response, um, like I said, what ever you do, it has some web presence and people would have to access it…" (B3, LINES 1769-1827)

Nonetheless, not all BMSM recommended customized culturally sensitive intervention programs. Some called for social programs outside the influence of their cultural milieu, where they could find a "generic setting" of detached and reduced cultural judgement, which they suggested is more effective in dealing with the impact of social discrimination. In this regard, one participant perceived his white psychologist without a "foreign accent" (absence of "foreign accent" implies a removal from his specific cultural context) as "normal," detached and effective.

"… it kinda and to be honest with you I feel like I was talking to uh, because he was from an ethnic background, talking to my parents, again, that was not a good experience. Like, uh, where I am from, you don't talk about sexuality with your parents, it's a taboo. They do it to get you and that's it [giggles] is not something you discuss with your parents and I felt like maybe he was harassing, if I don't, I felt like, this wasn't working, I finally when, I had the normal psychologist, the "normal" white psychologist, I think, it was properly my own bias, I think of myself oh God it would be so easier if it was one person, they don't care about me, Somehow, I don't know, I don't know if its my own

association, I created an association that did not exist. Um, but it was just a feeling…totally, my feelings, my gut feelings. Today, am I, is more functioning with this psychologist, the last psychologist, who is a white person? yea, it feels like there is enough detachment for me to make conversation with her.Somehow, it seems to be, like, yea, I guess, that's what they have to be, they have to be detachment, she tells me.You're not saying much. In this case it works for me because, it works for me so this is the better…[searching for words]. Better option." (B6, Lines 942-78)

The various recommendations (culturally sensitive, English-Speaking youth shelters, employment programs and mental health support) both inside and outside communities offered by participants highlights a salient desire for an individualized and customized intervention approach in addressing the negative impact of social discrimination.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Black men loving Black men is THE revolutionary act. - Marlon Riggs

5.1 *Introduction*

The objective of this qualitative project is to understand the relationship between social discrimination and the health of English-Speaking immigrant Black men who have sex with men (BMSM) in the Greater Montreal Area. Using a phenomenological approach enabled participants to tell their stories in a way that was meaningful to them and included challenges to health, identity and belonging across a range of communities (both within their Black communities and within mainstream gay communities). Six adult BMSM, were interviewed for the study. The participants were immigrants from both sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean and represented recent and older (arrival in Canada over 10 years ago) immigrant cohorts. After analyzing transcripts of interviews with participants, eight emerging themes, representing the essence of their experiences of discrimination, identity and health, were identified.

5.2 *Discussion*

The emerging theme of Black homophobia was recognized by all BMSM involved in this research. Apart from the generalized experiences of "anti-gay" slurs, psychological harassment, avoidance, and rejection, homophobic and heterosexist discrimination in the Black community was identified as being the result of several forces including strict, literal interpretations of religious values and worldview. Cultural purity was another issue participants identified as

contributing to homophobic beliefs including the association of same-sex attraction to white western influences.

Anti-Black racism was also identified by participants as a source of social discrimination. Specific examples of racism shed light on how previously settled BMSM immigrants encountered racism including lack of access to employment and advancement opportunities due to race bias. All participants identified subtle expressions of racism as being common place. The insidious side-effect of this social discrimination included social stress, self-doubt and self-imposed isolation from mainstream society.

Another emerging theme from the stories of BMSM related to social discrimination in the LGBT community. This form of discrimination was marked by cultural dissonance and ethnic-based sexual objectification. Participants expressed the opinion that dominant white socio-cultural specific experiences and values embedded in mainstream LGBT communities facilitated cultural dissonance, especially among sexual minorities from non-white socio-cultural backgrounds. Given this construct, culturally appropriate, as well as self-affirming language and identity monikers, were used by BMSM in this study. The theme of ethnic-based sexual stereotyping was shared by all participants. It is worth mentioning that this theme highlighted the unique ways BMSMs' multiple identities, mostly ethnicity and sexual orientation, intersected to frame their reality in the LGBT community. Participants' accounts revealed that they were reduced to racially stereotyped images of the sexual trope. Prominent among these stereotypes was the perception of BMSM as well-endowed with aggressive and virile sexual prowess. Whereas these stereotypes elevated, Black "Tops" as desirable, it furthered the marginalization of BMSM "Bot-

toms" who do not live up to the racial cliché expectation. It was also stated that Black "Tops" perpetuate (or fit) this stereotype for a variety of reasons including convenience and poverty.

Intra-group conflict was another emerging theme. In-group tension generally took the form of jealousy and schadenfreude. Examples provided show members of this sexual minority group did not always support each other: those who chose to date outside of the community were resented by those who did not. Another illustration of within-group conflict was the tension between university educated BMSM and their non-educated counterpart. In this research, non-university educated BMSM ridiculed other BMSM for showing interest in advanced university education. Subsequently, within-group tension influenced BMSM to isolate themselves from one another, which may limit social support network options. A complex interaction of socio-cultural, (operationalized as internalized oppression) and personal factors (operationalized as poor stress coping skills) can shed light on BMSMs' within-group conflict.

The combined experience of insecure immigration status, language, unemployment and poverty was discussed by participants. This theme highlighted BMSMs' social discrimination as multiple and intertwined. BMSM who faced insecure immigration status also lacked French language proficiency, had low employment prospects and experienced poverty. In this milieu of limited opportunity, alternative employment options, such as sex work or seeking a romantic partner, usually an older guy with a financial objective, colloquially known as "sugar daddy," were considered by some participants.

Finally, it was observed that social discrimination impacted the health outcomes of participants. Participants offered accounts to explain this emerging theme. For some BMSM, the intersections of social discrimination influenced suicidal ideation. For others, eviction from

home for same-sex behaviour without French language proficiency and employment put them in situations, where their decisions to engage in (transactional survival) sex were considered and where they did not always have the full agency to negotiate safe(r) sex practices. This report demonstrates that there is a strong link between social discrimination and negative mental and sexual health outcomes for BMSM.

Coping strategies employed by BMSM ranged from seeking professional health and social service care help, to engaging in positive health habits such as diet and exercise and other stress management techniques in an effort to mitigate the harsh impact of social discrimination. However, for some of the participants coping involved risky behaviours including consumption of illicit drugs, alcohol and sexualizing stress.

In offering recommendations for solutions aimed at addressing the effects of social discrimination, participants suggested that designed solutions should reflect cultural sensitivity and linguistic accessibility concerns. Concrete examples of intervention programs included youth shelters and job search programs. It is worth mentioning that not all participants argued for a customized solution: some preferred a "generic" detached intervention program. Overall, participants did not believe in one-size-fits-all solutions.

5.3 *Research Findings Collaboration with Extant Literature*

In general, this study confirms findings in the existing literature in the following ways: Firstly, intersectional experiences of homophobia in the Black communities was a widespread reality in Montreal (Corneau et al., 2014; Laurence, 2012; Vincent, 1998). Participant experiences of Black homophobia was not independent of, but rather jointly related to gender and race

and the diverse experiences of Black homophobia is a testament to its pervasiveness in Montreal's Black English-speaking communities. The experience of Black homophobia hinges on two main ideas: strict interpretation of Judea Christian religious tenets and cultural purity (Anderson et al., 2014; Laurence, 2012; Battle & Bennett, 2000; Constantine-sims 2001; Crichlow 1997). This finding is consistent with findings from other studies looking at BMSMs' experience of same-sex behaviour rejection in Black communities (Amola & Grimmett, 2015; Campbell 2014; Eskine & Abbas 2013; Millet et al., 2012a; Griffin, 2010).

Secondly, this study confirms findings in existing literature by highlighting the intersectional experience of social discrimination in the form of anti-Black racism in Montreal. The experience of racial micro aggressions, the most widely reported experience of anti-Black racism, is consistent with several US and Canadian studies (Bowleg, 2013; Sue, 2010; Alexander, 2004; James et al., 2010). As one US studies evoke this theme: "…Black gay men are not treated any differently than their Black heterosexual counterpart…they are denied jobs,… are followed around in department stores by security personnel,… and stopped and/or harassed by the police because they are Black, not because they are homosexuals" (Alexander, 2004, p.77). A Public Health expert, Meyer (2003b) believes that the impact of these frequent and subtle forms of racial prejudice can be more harmful to the health outcomes of Blacks men compared with blatant acts of prejudice .

Thirdly, the finding of gay racism in the present study collaborates findings in the extant literature (Howleg 2015; Diaz et al., 2006, p.212-213; Boykin, 1996,p. 216). Here, as in other published studies, mainstream LGBTQ communities were found to be discriminatory; participants were discriminated against when treated as exotic objects of desire for their assumed over-

sized phallus and as hyper sexual “tops”. This prescribed role for BMSM in the White-majority gay communities is a saturated theme identified in the several literature (Corneau et al., 2014; Husbands et al., 2013; McKeown et al., 2010). This study adds to the literature in the following ways, BMSM individuals in Montreal who prefer the submissive sexual role (“Black bottoms”) in interracial copulation reported facing social isolation and rejection in the LGBT community because they don’t fit/conform to the expectation/stereotype of the hyper sexual dominant top/ insertive Black male. On the other hand, BMSM individuals who prefer the dominant sexual role (“Black Tops”) in interracial relationships reported complicated experiences in the White-majority LGBT community. While some BMSM “tops” shared that non-Black sexual partners were only interested in their genitalia for sexual gratification, other Black tops described their encounters of sexual objectification by non-Black sexual partners as mutually beneficial (McKeown et al., 2010).

Finally, this study adds to the literature for its accounting of the internal conflict in the BMSM sub-group population (Husbands et al., 2013, p.443; Bird & Dexter, 2013, p.2196; Giwa, 2010; Diaz et al., 2006, p.213). In-group tension is a noteworthy addition to the extant literature, especially in the context of Montreal, where immigrant English-speaking BMSM are a sparse demographic for whom a sense of social support can be created to buffer the effects of social discrimination. The absence of social cohesion as demonstrated in the existence of within-group tension undermines attempts for members of this vulnerable population to build social support networks, crucial in addressing the negative effects of social discrimination. This phenomenon of in-group tension in the BMSM community can be ascribed to interpersonal jealousy, resentment for those who date outside of the community and for those who seek to improve themselves

through advanced formal education. The expression of within-group conflict among BMSM can also serve to reveal and explain the impact of internalized oppression and/or ineffective personal coping skills in the community.

5.4 *Usefulness of Intersectionality Theory*

Intersectionality theory is a powerful tool to help understand the particular experiences of social discrimination among English-speaking BMSM. Using intersectionality theory as a framework can also serve to explain links between this social discrimination and health outcomes. Intersectionality theory tells us that identity based upon marginalized social categories like race, gender and sexual orientation cannot be falsely separated but that these must be understood in their full specificity and subjectivity. Although early literature on BMSM focused more specifically on the negotiation of bifurcated identities (namely race and sexual orientation), (Hunter, 2010; Conerly, 2001; Hemphill, 1991; Riggs, 1989; Beam 1983). More recent theorizing, such as *Intersecting Race and Gender Cues are Associated with Perceptions of Gay Men's Preferred Sexual Roles* (Lick & Johnson 2015)[31], has included a more nuanced approached connecting multiple identities and has explored BMSM intersectional sub-identity[32] experiences in

[31] This article explores the perception of sexual roles in the gay community by ethnocultural background. Findings from this US study suggest that Blacks are "Tops", Asians are "Bottoms" and Whites are fluid (Lick & Johnson, 2015,p.1478). The article does not look at intra BMSM differences of intersectional experience of race, sexuality, gender and sub-identity (bottom/top/versatile). Rather it looks at inter ethnocultural differences of sexual role perception/identification. Moreover, most of the studies on Black sub-identity of sexual positioning roles focus on Black *Tops* to the exclusion of Black Bottoms (Lick & Johnson, 2015; Wilson et al., 2009;Teunis, 2007).

[32] Sub-Identity(ies) among BMSM includes light skin versus dark skin complexion dynamics also known as *colorism* (Wilson et al., 2009,p.11). Although, this present study did not examine differences in skin tone complexion among BMSM, the literature show that there are differences in experiences based on skin tone complexion among Black sexual minorities (Glave, 2014, p.46). Sub-identities, such as skin tone complexion, sexual position and body types intersect with race, sexuality and class in shaping the experiences of BMSMs in the LGBTQ communities. For more information on skin tone complexion experience of discrimination in the general Black community see (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007).

addition to those of race and sexuality. These studies focus on intersectional sub-identity experience in relation to sexual identity and how expression of these roles influence a particular experience of oppression or power imbalance (Husbands et al., 2013, p.436-40). Similarly, this study uses intersectionality to add to the new emerging research exploring intersectional identity experiences associated with sexual identity and experiences. For instance, BMSM who identify as "tops" have a different experience of social discrimination in the LGBT community compared to BMSM who identify as "bottoms"[33]; BMSM who play the "passive" role are more likely to experience social isolation in the context of interracial relationships wherein they are perceived as sexually undesirable. This nuanced exploration of BMSM intersectional sub-identity expression support an expanded understanding of the impact of social discrimination on the intimate lives of BMSM.

In addition, intersectionality is useful in this work because it encourages a multi-prong strategy in addressing disproportionate rates of negative health-outcomes in the community, wherein, holistic intervention program sensitive is to the synergistic-effect of social discrimination are considered. In studying men's health, intersectionality has proven to be useful in understanding men's health and how maleness co-constitutes with other social locations, such as race, sexuality, immigration and class (Evans et al., 2013). Specifically, the usefulness of intersectionality allows this research to challenge intervention models based on single-category struggles of White-centric experiences/cultural sensibilities and advocates instead for effective culturally sensitive intervention paradigms that serve to be responsive to the unique realities of intersectional

[33] In one research, albeit not ethnocultural-specific, found that gay men who played a *top* role in sexual positioning reported more diagnosis of STIs while gay men who play a *bottom* role in sexual positioning reported more diagnosis of psychosocial challenges. (Grov et al., 2010, p.795). This finding highlights one difference in the experiences of sexual positioning roles in the community.

forms of oppression (Rwigema et al., 2015, p.46; Joseph & Kuo, 2009) which are reflective of the heterogeneity of the community.

5. 5 *Implications for Research*

There are several implications from findings gathered in this research. This author has chosen to reflect on relevant implications to present study findings. Although present work did not provide an in-depth analysis of the role of Quebec's French language and culture on the experiences of English-speaking BMSM, it is worth noting that some participants lives were negatively impacted by Quebec's French language and cultural regulations. In the context of Bilingual[34] Montreal, where French language is the lingua Franca, newly arrived BMSM immigrants who lack French language proficiency skills have a higher chance of experiencing unemployment/poverty and social isolation. The dearth of social work research on this social phenomenon does not facilitate a comprehensive understanding of how these combined experiences of lack of French language proficiency, homophobia and immigration put members of the English-speaking BMSM community at elevated risk for adverse health-related outcome. Hopefully, this pioneering research draws attention to this gap in literature.

Another research implication relating to language and culture is how ethnocultural language and culture play a role in BMSM immigrants' conceptualization and labeling of their same-sex behaviour in Montreal. In this study, BMSM immigrants expressed that they had a (hybrid) multilingual and multicultural background and that might play a role in their conceptualization/labeling and understanding of their sexual behaviour in their newly adopted country. BMSM

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[34] Bilingual in Montreal, Qc, means English and French language proficiency.

individuals in this research identified with the mainstream LGBTQ community's conceptualization/labeling for a variety of reasons. For some BMSM, the use of mainstream LGBT identity monikers and cultural conceptualization is an expression of solidarity with the White-gay majority community. For others, in the context of immigration, cultural and linguistic appropriation of White-gay majority identity conceptualization/labels reveal a pragmatic purpose.

5.6 *Implications for Policy and Practice*

This work has made a number of contributions to research in this area. Firstly, it has added to the existing body of work and highlighted BMSMs' social challenges as a complex interaction of a multitude of socio-cultural and economic factors. Focusing on a single issue of BMSM's social location is not only an ineffective social policy initiative, but unlikely to yield lasting beneficial results. With this in mind, policy designed to combat homophobia or racism, for instance, should not be insulated from other social challenges such as poverty, language or degree of cultural acculturation, among others.

Findings from this research have illustrated that without a holistic perspective of understanding of the realities, needs and concerns of this cohort, stakeholders may run the risk of creating cosmetic, and short term solutions. This research proposes that adopting a holistic view, would enable policy makers both within mainstream and LGBT environments to be more accessible to community input in policy design, which may encourage partnership building and ultimately foster a sense of empowerment and agency among this community. Finally, for the most part, community-based organizations do not find the works of the scientific research community accessible. This study attempts to bridge this difference between the academic community and

grass roots community: for example, most of the findings identified in this research were used to design a private same-status support-group for members of the BMSM English-speaking BMSM community in Montreal for over two years. “Soul Brothers Night,” the name of the private BMSM support-group, inspired by this research, provided a space for communal healing, discussion and psychosocial support building. Adopting this approach of community engagement as model in conducting studies and policy design in the BMSM community could be the next step for research in this area.

Finally, intervention programs designed to address principal concerns and needs of this cohort, should treat BMSMs’ marginalization as multiple and interrelated. BMSMs’ identities cannot be separated and insulated from one another in the context of social discrimination and it impact on health-related outcomes. In other words a complex interaction of factors, not a single risk factor, determines the negative mental and sexual health-related outcomes of BMSM who encounter social discrimination. As a consequence, tailored intervention programs in the context of social and health care service organizations and as well as community organization should be responsive to the diverse impact of social discrimination. In this effort, one-size-does-not-fit-all approaches should be an overarching theme in designing tailored programs that are culturally competent and sensitive.

5.7 *Limitations*

This study is subject to several limitations; all experiences were self-reported. Language is another limitation of this research as the principal researcher and three respondents were not native English-speakers. Discussions of intimate behaviour in a cross-cultural context, wherein

language and culture frames understanding of same-sex sexual intimacy and experience, may inhibit effective communication of concepts and sentiments aligned with ones' cultural codes and specificities. Like most qualitative studies, the sample size of six English-speaking (three self-identified allophone) immigrant BMSM in Montreal may not reflect the general sub-group population and to this end research findings are not generalizable. This research is also subject to selection bias; respondents were not a hard-to-reach group, most were open about their sexual orientation to family and friends and as a result may experience different forms of social discrimination compared to other BMSMs who were "closeted." Educational achievement was high among respondents; all, but one had University level education. It can be speculated that post-secondary education experience facilitated their understanding and ability to make meaning or explain their unique intersectional identity realities to the extent that an uneducated BMSM might not. Given these limitations, findings should be regarded as preliminary and not definitive as more research is needed to address gaps in present qualitative research. Nonetheless, this pioneer study is a welcome addition to the scarce body of knowledge on the experiences of non-Canadian born, linguistic, sexual and ethnic minorities in Quebec: English-speaking Black-same-gender-loving men.

5.8 Conclusion

In closing, I would like to call attention to a salient theme that permeates this study: English-speaking immigrant BMSM living in Montreal have multiple minority identities and, as a result, face multiple social challenges. In an attempt to address the paucity of studies on this issue and create awareness about their reality of multiple exclusion, this research hopes to bring to

the fore their unique oppression and resilience. To this end, BMSM's lived experiences are effectively understood within an intersectional lens, which highlights the reality of BMSM interlocking experiences of oppression as multiple and non-mutually exclusive. It complicates BMSMs' social discrimination beyond single strand model oppression theorizing resulting in layered forms of identity-based as well as structural discrimination (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). That said, although this research found that BMSM share common social challenges, their experience of social discrimination does not make them a homogenous group. As a result, intervention program should always be customized to reflect the complex intersection of dominant/ sub-identities. Programs designed to address challenges should be holistic in approach emphasizing individualized concerns and needs. Working with BMSMs, in the context of social work research and practice, can provide a unique opportunity to understand the human condition of overcoming life's challenges, which can serve as an intervention paradigm for other vulnerable minorities beyond the confines of ethnicity, sexuality, immigration and among others. It is when we use this specific example of human adversity to understand the universal human reality of life's challenges do we give meaning to BMSMs lives as a fine balance between hope and despair[35].

[35] The phrase "a fine balance between hope and despair" is borrowed from Mistry's (1997) novel: *A Fine Balance*.

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Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

Many More Rivers to Cross: The Impact of Social Stress on Social behavior and health outcomes among Black men who have sex with men in, Montreal, Quebec.

(2013)

I, _____, have read and understand the goals of this project and my involvement as a research participant. I understand that the project is to better understand the experiences of Black men who have sex with men (MSM). This research explores how social stress impact on social behavior and health outcomes among the aforementioned cohort. Their coping strategies is also examined in this study. It has been explained that:

- Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I can leave the study at any time and I can ask that my interview not be included in the study
- I agree to an oral interview, lasting about 2 hours to be conducted by the research team.
- I agree to have my interview audio recorded _____ yes _____ no
- I understand that I can ask speak off the record, and what I say will not be used.
- I understand that I can choose not to answer any question that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- I am aware that all of the research team members have sworn an oath of confidentiality. This oath requires to keep my involvement in the project and anything I say confidential and anonymous at all times.

- I understand that the audio-tape will be typed up and all identifying information about myself and/or others will be removed before storing it and sharing it with the research team.
- I am aware that my interview tape and transcript will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the research team can access.
- I understand that the audiotape will be destroyed one year after the completion of the project in December 2013 and the transcripts will continue to be stored under lock and key.
- I understand that the things that I say may be used in the final report and future articles, but no personal identifying information will be shared.
- The information letter that I have received about the project has been explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I will be provided with information about counselors, resources, and services available to me.
- At the end of the study a summary report will be available to me upon request.

♦♦♦

I hereby certify that I am signing this form of my own free will, with no pressure from others to do so, and that I do so after been given all the facts I need to make this choice. In witness there-of, I have signed this form on this the _____ day of _____, 2013.

_____ _____

Name (or initials) Signature

_____ _____

Witness Signature

Please keep one signed copy of this form for your records.

For more information, please contact any one of the following:

McGill University - McGill School of Social Work

Shari Brotman, Principal Researcher (514) 398-7055 shari.brotman@staff.mcgill.ca
Kofi Norsah, Project Coordinator (514) 691-1085 kofi.norsah@mail.mcgill.ca

Appendix 2: Sample Question Guideline

TIME OF INTERVIEW:

DATE:

PLACE:

INTERVIEWER:

INTERVIEWEE:

CODE #:

QUESTIONS:

1.How do you describe your sexual preference or sexual orientation?

2.Tell us about how you ended up in Montreal? What country were you born and how long have you lived in Montreal?

3.How do you describe yourself in terms of race, ethnicity and language?

4.I define social discrimination as: an individual experiences of social exclusion and marginalization based on race, homosexual orientation, poverty, immigration status and language.

5. Is this the way you would define social discrimination. If not, can you describe what you think social stress means to you?

6. In your experience, have you encountered social discrimination since you arrived in Montreal? How would you describe it?

6a. Can you give me an example of a situation in which you experienced social discrimination?

7. How did it affect you? How did you react?

8a. Do you think social discrimination (note to interviewer to consider keywords of racism, homophobia, discrimination, immigration, poverty…) impacts you're health?

8b. Do you think social discrimination (note to interviewer to consider keywords of racism, homophobia, discrimination, immigration status,…) impacts you're decisions about what you do about your health?

8c. Do you think social discrimination (note to interviewer to consider keywords of racism, homophobia, discrimination, immigration status,…) impacts your activities (sexual or social)?

8d. Do you think social discrimination (note to interviewer to consider keywords of racism, homophobia, discrimination, immigration status…) impacts your interactions with the community (LGBT, ethno-cultural)?

8e. Do you think social discrimination (note to interviewer to consider keywords of racism, homophobia, discrimination, immigration status,…) impacts your access to services? (note to interviewer to ask participant to consider these questions in the context of being BMSM or in general where appropriate.

9. Can you tell me a bit about your experiences of health and social services?

10. How do you cope or deal with social discrimination in your life? (note to interviewer to consider key words of isolation, substance use, social engagement, sporting or other activities, …)

11. Do you have any ideas or recommendations that can be used by health and social services to improve programs in general or those specifically targeting English-speaking BMSM?

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your perspectives will be very helpful to better understanding the experiences of social discrimination on the health of BMSM. Can I get back to you to check in if I have any questions about your responses or need additional information? Would you like a copy of the final report?