# Non-White Social Workers and Their Expectations in Social Work Practice with Multicultural Populations in Winnipeg

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

## ABSTRACT

Racialized people comprised 16.3% of Winnipeg's population in 2006. Only 5% of all social workers in Winnipeg are racialized social workers. The literature indicates that non-White social workers do not experience social work practice the same as their White cohorts. The goal of this research is to understand the experiences of non-White social workers in Winnipeg and their perceptions of social work practice with multicultural populations. Using qualitative research methods, interviews were conducted with eight non-White social workers in Winnipeg, Manitoba that have worked with non-White and White clients. The analysis of the data indicates that non-White social workers feel that by virtue of being 'visible minorities', they are perceived differently by employers, co-workers, and the clients they work with. The participants feel the colour of their skin is often more of a factor in being perceived as competent, than their actual professional skills, training, and abilities.

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# CHAPTER ONE Introduction

## Introduction

Cultural competence, equity, sensitivity, and racial relatedness are among the many terms that recur in reference to working with racialized populations. What does it really mean, and who is really considered 'racialized'? Lum (1999) defines racialized as people of a minority racial or ethnic group that are numerically minority and are disadvantaged receiving unequal treatment in society. The Government of Manitoba posts the following statement on their advertised Employment Opportunities: "Employment Equity is a factor in selection. Applicants are requested to indicate in their covering letter or résumé if they are from any of the following groups: women, Aboriginal people, visible minorities and persons with disabilities" (Government of Manitoba, 2009).

For the purpose the research I limit and define the terms 'visible minority', 'minority' and 'racialized' to include persons who are not of the majority in terms of culture as well as being visible minorities. This definition is not meant to exclude certain minority groups (e.g., immigrant groups from Europe) but rather to narrow the sample population for the scope of this small scale study to non-White participants. This was important because the criteria for this study needed to have clear and defined guidelines with respects to how the participants viewed their personal and professional locations.

## 1.1. Research Questions

The primary goal of this research was to determine if non-White social workers in Winnipeg feel their visible minority appearance affects how others see them as professionals. I was curious to see if non-White social workers perceived that clients, co-workers and employers viewed them as culturally competent compared to White social workers with similar or equal training, education and experience.

The research questions for this study were:

i. What are non-White social workers' perceptions of how they are viewed in relation to cross-cultural competence with colleagues and clients? Does it make them approach their practice differently?

ii. How do non-White social workers perceive the expectations and assumptions of their supervisors and work environments towards them in agencies and organizations that are not designated specifically for servicing ethno-cultural minority populations?

iii. How are non-White social workers categorized in relation to their ethno-cultural, language, and non-dominant appearance at work?

## 1.2. My Social Location

I am a racialized female. As a Canadian born citizen I have been fortunate in experiencing life as what my social work education has labelled as being 'bi-cultural' in terms of integration (Saloojee, 2005). I am equally as comfortable in my minority status community as I am being Canadian.

As a social worker I have worked in a number of positions in various fields including advocacy, child welfare, crisis stabilization, disabilities, education, employment, youth justice, and acute care. In my personal experience I feel that I have not always been viewed first and foremost as a social worker. My assignments have not always been based my skills, expertise, and ability to work with diverse clientele, or other desirable professional attributes that has shaped my caseloads. It has also been partly due to my status as a female, visible minority, cultural minority, and racial minority.

At the beginning of my social work career I began to notice that I seemed to frequently have caseloads that appeared 'different' than those of my dominantly located counterparts. I would frequently be assigned cases of clients with compound issues that appeared to be much more than what was indicative of my agency's mandates.

My moment of epiphany was in December 2000 when I was working in child welfare. At a team meeting my supervisor read down a list of new cases assigned to our office. Looking around the room I was surrounded by co-workers who were mainly dominantly located with the exception of three other workers. As the files were assigned I noticed that the Aboriginal social worker was assigned the Aboriginal family. The landed immigrant social worker was assigned the refugee family, and I was assigned the Asian family. The rest of the files were dispersed among the team with labels of 'addictions', 'neglect', 'physical abuse', and 'reunification'. At the time I thought nothing of it. Truthfully I thought the logic behind it was to match the clients with workers that would best understand their situation. Was this not the 'best fit' or cultural sameness that we were taught during our social work education in action? Was

it not in the client's best interest to have a worker that would be from a similar background as so many of our social science books would have us believe?

Moments after the meeting dispersed I went in to the common area and saw my co-worker sitting at the table with a look of displeasure. I engaged in conversation only to find that he was upset about his case assignment to the 'fresh off the boat' family. He was deeply offended and commented on how he always seemed to be assigned client cases of immigrants, refugees, and newcomers before anybody else. He then asked why I was not offended that I was always assigned the files with 'Brown people...other than Aboriginal because those seemed to be reserved' for our Aboriginal co-worker.

I was not sure what I was feeling, or what to think of my co-worker's theory of pre-meditated case assignments. I went back to my office to read my new file. As I read further into my file I realized that the main issue with the family was addictions. I was not an expert on addictions, whereas my office partner had worked as an addictions counsellor for 8 years in a non-voluntary treatment program. I began to think that there was something to my co-worker's theory. I discreetly asked my supervisor if there was a specific direction or idea the agency had in mind for assigning me to the file. The supervisor's response was that the parents did not speak English well so I could talk to them better in their language. Was it assumed that all Asians spoke the same language? Was I mistakenly believed to be from a different background? Was my well educated, highly respected, authority figure of a supervisor ignorant about my cultural background or just making uninformed decisions?

As I moved on to other positions and regions across Canada, the list of questions that lingered in the back of my mind began to get longer. I began thinking of them more, and I began to question and become more suspicious of the motives of supervisors, co-workers, and clients. I noticed that no matter what field in which I was employed there seemed to be a theme: racialized workers appeared to be assigned racialized clients more often than their dominantly located co-workers if there appeared to be a perceived cultural, racial or language commonality. I observed this to be the case with race and culture as well as where there were issues such as gender identity, religion, and philosophical beliefs. I questioned how many of my skills were being recognized as opposed to perceived 'skills' attributed to me by virtue of being a racialized person. I questioned the issues of tokenism, employment equity, access to information, and level of education. After all of my hard work, professional experience, education, struggles and efforts, I began to wonder whether it was worth it if I was never seen primarily as a social worker with skills rather than identified only for the colour of my skin, and perceived attributes of being Asian-Canadian. If indeed I am an authority on culture and social work practice just by virtue of being racialized, do I have the right, the responsibility or the authority to teach others? Do I have more expertise than learned scholars, professionals, and colleagues who are dominantly located? Is this something that I can list as 'special skills' on my résumé and be paid more for?

Now after more than a decade as a practicing social worker, and over 15 years in social services, I feel the need to find out if these experiences are unique to me or a part of a bigger social dynamic that social work needs to address, given our increasingly diverse ethno-cultural population in Winnipeg. We need to accurately educate and

prepare all of our future social workers and current colleagues to recognize that there is a more diverse professional pool of social workers than ever before. It needs to be questioned whether clients are best served by social workers who are assigned to them primarily because of assumed ethno-cultural similarities.

### 1.3. Overview and Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore non-White social workers' perceptions of how clients, co-workers, supervisors and management view their professional work, cultural sensitivity and intervention with multicultural populations and whether and how stereotyping may play roles.

This research is done from an emic perspective whereas I, the researcher and all the participants are non-White social workers in Winnipeg. As such, the research was approached from an insider perspective. The perspectives of the respondents in this study are those of professional racialized social workers working with multicultural clients.

The goal of this study was to learn whether non-White social workers feel they are perceived as having a different level of skill or ability than their dominantly located counterparts due to their racialized status. I was interested in knowing whether these social workers perceived that they had experienced stereotyping in their workplaces and in work with clients due to their ethno-culture, race or minority background. Are they viewed as having inherent skills due to having a different skin colour which can better

suite them to deal with other cultures and races out of kinship, presumed cultural likeness, or assumed historical sameness?

This is important to social work and social services in general because of the greater number of newcomers and problem situations that are apparent in the current health care systems. For example, I have heard pleas for assistance from the general public to help with language translations for newcomer clients. Announcements are heard over the general intercom saying, "If there is any person in the building able to speak _____ (Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Punjabi, etc.), and willing to lend assistance in translation?") From a professional standpoint, is this now an acceptable practice? How can clients be assured confidentiality and privacy? Being part of smaller cultural communities often leaves individuals much more recognizable and the protection of a client's personal information and affairs may be shared without recourse, even if it is out of good intentions or concern.

The increase of racialized social workers in the field has great significance to social work as we are currently experiencing a crisis in jails, child welfare, and health services in Manitoba where increasing need of newcomers and appropriate services are not always available (Government of Manitoba, 2011). Some of the needs of the population are not being met and there has been an increase in immigration into a system that is not prepared or able to accommodate for language translation or cultural difference. This is not compatible with the multiculturalism that Canada is known for and proud of (Cameron, 2007).

The following chapters review the literature on racialized social workers and cross-cultural competency. In this research I approach the problem as a racialized social worker. In the literature review, I explore whether there are differences in how people perceive service to be delivered based on a social workers' visible minority status. In my research I investigate what comprised the difference from the perspective of other non-White social workers willing to share their experiences.

In this study the research participants reported that what they perceive as racism towards them is not always blatant or actual racism. It is often the way they interpret interactions from their personal experiences and location as racialized social workers. Actual racism and perceived racism can greatly affect the way a person interprets and understands their relationships and interactions with others. The goal of the research is to examine how racialized social workers feel about how they are perceived by colleagues and clients when working with ethno-cultural minority populations. The research will examine whether racialized social workers feel they are stereotyped, or feel that there are different expectations or assumptions by others in terms of delivering cross-culturally competent service. It will explore whether these views affect the way these social workers approach their practice.

**Summary**

Winnipeg is very culturally diverse population. As a practising racialized social worker I have had many experiences that have shaped the way I practice with both racialized and marginalized populations. As such, I wondered if other racialized social workers had similar experiences in their workplaces and practice in general.

This study provides an opportunity for all social workers to gain insight in to how our racialized colleagues perceive their locations as social workers, the barriers and advantages of their non-dominant locations at their work, and how they perceive they are viewed as professionals.

# CHAPTER TWO Literature Review

## Introduction

In response to the changing demographics of North American population, literature on cultural diversity has grown in the area of racial and cultural diversity (Este, 1999; Yee, 2005). Many social workers do not feel comfortable in working with cultures different from their own. Most social workers often come from dominantly located backgrounds and have little knowledge and experience working with difference (Yee, 2005).

Most social work literature until the 1980s on ethno-racial minority communities carried prejudicial values of the times (Yee, 2005). Minority communities were largely viewed from the perspective of writers who were dominantly located. As such, the dominant group's ability to shape, define and determine the knowledge base about minority cultures documents their power to speak on behalf of those who are marginalized in society. It also reiterates how society itself normalizes the inferior position of minority cultures (Yee, 2005).

Many practicing social workers want to acquire cultural information about ethno-racial minority groups in order to feel comfortable in working with difference. This attitude is prevalent in broader socio-political contexts where ethno-racial minority people are stereotypically labelled as the "other," that is, as foreign and exotic to the dominant cultural norm. Many of these practices reflected the norms and values of the dominant and/or majority group and therefore failed to respond to the "different" cultural and linguistic needs of various ethno-racial minority communities (Yee, 2005).

Stereotyping of cultures is commonly found in social work practice (Saloojee, 2005). Social work practitioners did not need to internalize their cultural backgrounds, and focused more on knowing the culture of their clients. Often when asked about working with cultural difference, White social workers would comment that they would like a brochure or book that would inform them of "different" cultural practices so that they can have a guideline or reassurance that they are not being offensive (Saloojee, 2005; Yee, 2005).

With changing national demographic, Canadian social workers are likely to work and interact with clients and professionals from different cultural backgrounds and experiences. Thus, there are increasing demands from diverse populations of service providers to be more sensitive and responsive to issues and needs of different groups. There is also a demand for enhanced opportunities for clients to become involved in planning and delivery of services by these different groups (Este, 1999; Saloojee, 2005, Yon, 2006).

Canadian society is becoming increasingly complex along cultural, linguistic, and racial lines. One in five of all Canadian children under the age of 15 is a new immigrant or a refugee. An increasingly significant youth sub-population in Canada, immigrant and refugee youth are culturally diverse, with backgrounds reflecting any of 247 diverse ethno-cultural origins as well as various world regions in Asia, the Caribbean, South and Central America, the Middle East, and Africa (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

Almost three quarters (73 percent) of immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 are members of diverse racialized populations (Statistics Canada, 2008). These new migrants join longer established racialized populations that include our African and Asian Canadian communities as well as our Aboriginal peoples (Vanharten, 2005). It is estimated that by 2016 Canada's visible minority population will account for one fifth of the total population – and one quarter of all of Canada's children. These figures are already much higher in larger urban centres; it is estimated that close to half of all elementary and secondary school students living in Toronto are from racialized populations. The majority are first- and second-generation immigrants and refugees from Asia, the Caribbean, South and Central America, and Africa (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

Cross-cultural competency in social work practice has attracted significant attention in Canada as we are a multicultural nation and need to develop skills to respond to the health and social service needs of Canadians from diverse backgrounds. As such, this research project uncovers information that contributes to skill development and education for all social workers. We are often educated on the importance of recognizing, respecting and adjusting our practice to different cultures. Very rarely is there mention of how a person of a non-dominant culture should work with people of cultures other than their own, or even with those who are dominantly located. This research gave racialized social workers in Winnipeg the opportunity to speak about their experiences, needs, and recommendations in cross-cultural work. It gave them a voice and vehicle to uncover the struggles that they faced as workers in a unique situation.

Practitioners are being urged to utilize skills and knowledge that help them become culturally competent in order to prevent the underutilization and premature termination of services by minority individuals (Leeca, Quervalu, Nunes & Gonzales 1998; Fong, 2005).

Exact cultural sameness of a client and worker is not always a possibility. Nor is it necessarily desired. We must explore how this kind of similarity is perceived by employers, workers, and clients. There are no guidelines for how racialized workers should work with other minorities, clients or professionals. Most workers are trained from dominantly located perspectives (Rashid, 1982, Lum, 2004). Cross-cultural sensitivity training and education are given mostly by assuming that the worker is dominantly located and the client is racialized. In an older work, Rashid (1982, p.233) explains, "When I decided to consider it seriously I feared that I would automatically be expected to work with Asian clients and communities. The response of fear seems surprising, for superficially it would seem sensible…I would have advantages of language, custom, and acceptability…I feared that employers would assume that an Asian worker would wish to work only or perhaps be fit to work only with Asian clients").

Based on research conducted by Rashid (1982), Wright, Saleeby, Watts & Leeca, (1983), Chau (1990), Henderson (1994), Devore & Schlesinger (1999), Lie (1999) and newer studies by Potocky-Tripodi (2002) and Fong (2005), it was found that racialized people are treated differently due to their race and culture. These studies which have been conducted outside of Canada show that there is no consensus on how dominantly located and racialized social workers and clients are matched for social

workers to deliver cross-culturally competent services. For this reason, it is important to distinguish what culturally competent social work skills are, compared with generic 'skills' or 'knowledge'.

Rashid (1982) believes that social workers from dominant cultures have much to learn from their racialized colleagues and clients about 'cultural conflict', the impact of racial discrimination and hostility, and the strengths and shortcomings of the host community. Many racialized workers, like Rashid, face issues attached to race and culture in social work practice. "My colour and racial origin merely provided a difficult client with a convenient peg upon which to hang his hostility" (Rashid, 1982, p. 235). There is a tendency to pathologize experiences and behaviours that deviate or are different from the norm (Lie, 1999). Race and oppression are major factors in how racialized people function in society. The culture of Whiteness and cultural awareness in conjunction with social inclusion and social exclusion, also have an effect on how racialized social workers interact and deliver cross-culturally competent practice (Yee, 2005).

## 2.1 Multiculturalism in Canada

Canada prides itself in being known for having a multicultural society that 'works'. Individuals in countries like Canada and the United States that have pluralistic cultures often participate within their ethnically distinctive milieu and the mainstream socio-cultural setting (Draguns, 2008). Canadians celebrate difference and value the human rights that define the quality of democratic norms and practice.

The Government of Canada is committed to reaching out to Canadians and newcomers and is developing lasting relationships with ethnic and religious communities in Canada. It encourages these communities to participate fully in society by enhancing their level of economic, social, and cultural integration. CIC's Multiculturalism Program draws its mandate from the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*.

(Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

At best, multiculturalism in Canada is inclusive, rather than exclusionary (Mullaly, 2007). Canadians generally respect difference, dislike any kind of stereotyping and make a conscious effort to avoid giving gratuitous offence. Canadians continue to overwhelmingly support immigration and are proud to be multicultural. Multiculturalism has become part of Canadian identity (Stein, 2007).

Multiculturalism is a term used to describe the ethno-cultural diversity arising out of immigration together with the long-term cultural diversity public policies designed to accommodate it (Cameron, 2007). In Canada, the first phase of multiculturalism was a response to the recommendations of the 1970 final report of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (Saloojee, 2005).

In 1971 an official policy of multiculturalism was enacted. The Multiculturalism Act followed in 1985, and Section 27 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. The relationship between individuals and collective rights continues to be a work in progress as Canada adapts to the *Charter* (Stein, 2007). The discourse of multiculturalism in the 1980s recognised that the plurality of cultures created a demand for practitioners to seek knowledge about the cultural characteristics

of clients so they could provide services more appropriately (Yee, 2005). Multicultural discourse is very different from the Multicultural Act. By 1987 the parliamentary Standing Committee on Multiculturalism stated that the old policy was "floundering" and needed "clear direction" (Saloojee, 2005). This was because the needs of the population were not being met by existing policy. It needed to be revamped to reflect the changing population (Yee, 2005). Multiculturalism encourages racial minorities to maintain their cultures and in effect assumes that all cultures are equal. The approach effectively denies the occurrence of racism and stands above issues of inequality (Yee, 2005). It does not recognise that different cultures are treated differently in society or acknowledge the good stereotypes versus bad ones. Stereotypes are not always true, but need to be considered when examining racism and social injustice.

For over hundreds of years, immigrants have come from across the world to settle and live in Manitoba. As such, the Government of Canada developed a series of policies in the hopes of nurturing and promoting the multicultural character of Canada (Government of Manitoba, 2011). Below is a summary of the multiculturalism policies and legislation that the Government of Canada has passed over the past few decades (Government of Manitoba, 2011):

1947: Canadian Citizenship Act - Canadians to begin considering a national identity for themselves, independent of its British ties. After World War II there was an influx of European immigrants to Canada, which caused policy makers to rethink the role and status of other ethnicities within Canadian society.

1960: Canadian Bill of Rights - Federal agencies were prohibited to discriminate on the grounds of race, origin, colour, religion or sex.

1962 & 1967: Changes to Canada's Immigration Act and Introduction of "Points System" - This permitted immigration from a greater number of source countries including Asia, Southern Europe and the West Indies.

1971: Canada's Multicultural Policy - This policy was developed to assist cultural groups retain and foster their identity, assist cultural groups to overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society, promote creative exchanges among groups and assist immigrants in acquiring at least one official language.

1982: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms - Located multiculturalism within the wider framework of Canadian society by ensuring that its provisions were "interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage".

1988: Canadian Multiculturalism Act - This act further acknowledged multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society.

1993: Multiculturalism Program - This program was created within the Department of Canadian Heritage.

2005: Canada's Action Plan Against Racism - The plan promotes social cohesion, Canada's human rights framework and the Welcoming Communities Initiative which

promotes the increased participation of new immigrants in Canada's economic, social and civic spheres

Historically, the social welfare of minorities in Canada has been ignored and neglected. Historical accounts of Canadian social welfare, social services and social work almost invariably fail to mention the presence and plights of Aboriginal people, immigrants and minorities altogether, which indicates the extent to which these groups were marginalized and excluded (Christensen, 1999). Only recently have racialized people originating from the Third World, been part of the Canadian mosaic. These newer immigrants were not accompanied by greater awareness about newcomers' cultures and thus, they were not well integrated into Canadian society (Christensen, 1999). Questions such as, "where are you from?" are common in environments such as social institutions, including education. Racialized Canadians are often asked where they are from, even if they have been in Canada for many years or were even born in Canada (Christensen, 1999; Mullaly, 2007). In many cultural communities asking a person where they are from is insulting because there is often a perception that a person is not seen as an equal, particularly for people not born in Canada.

Racialized people have become a much more significant phenomenon, given cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic distance between new communities and the existing Canadian population and shifts in the earlier migration of people to Canada who were originally primarily from Europe and the United States (Cameron, 2007). Christensen (1999, p. 303), raises the issue of stereotyping and its effects in social work:

> ...visible differences in skin colour are still used as the basis on which to impute that certain individuals and groups hold deviant values that determine deviant behaviours. Such expectations held by social workers often create a myth of deviance for those whose values and lifestyles are neither known nor understood. Instead social workers need to be mindful that many racialized people viewed as immigrants have a history of several generations or several centuries in Canada.

If the intent is to enhance cultural pluralism in Canada, this means at minimum that ethnic, religious and linguistic differentiation of some kind is seen as a positive benefit (Cameron, 2007). If our multicultural mosaic is meant to be a structural feature in Canadian society it needs to be reflected in greater diversity among those wielding power and on the core cultural character of society that needs to alter the national identity (Valpy, 2007).

Recent immigrants to Canada are not doing as well as previous generations in terms of employment and income earning (Stein, 2007). The failure to create opportunities for new immigrants is especially worrying as Canada's population begins to age and new immigrants become more important to its economic growth and productivity (Stein, 2007). Newcomers strongly identify with their homelands rather than Canada and insist that they face consistent patterns of social and economic exclusion (Stein, 2007).

Stein (2007) maintains, "Canadians are uncertain about what limits, if any, are to embedding diverse religious and cultural traditions within the Canadian context. We know pretty well what the "multi" in multicultural means, but are much less confident

about the "culture" (p. 4). It is human nature to be suspicious of people that are different from us. Robert Putnam (cited in Valpy, 2007) says, The effect of diversity is worse than had been imagined. And it's not just that we don't trust people who are not like us. In diverse communities, we don't trust people who don't look like us.

### 2.1.1. Barriers in Multiculturalism

In Canada the opportunity to upgrade education and training means better jobs for immigrants. Access may be difficult due to high costs, no English-language assistance, and lack of other resources. Educational equity and affirmative action are two ways used to level the playing field for people who may otherwise not have access or be able to participate at the same level as dominantly located peers (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006). Some social workers do not feel comfortable in working with cultures different from their own. They often come from dominantly located backgrounds and have little knowledge and experience working with difference (Stein, 2007). In social work, practitioners are trained to encourage clients to express their thoughts and feelings freely. It is not appropriate in some cultural groups to be expressive or open to strangers, particularly authority figures. This deters some cultural groups from seeking help or developing trusting relationships with social service agencies and workers (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006).

Mullaly (2007) maintains that multiculturalism is mainly equated with ethno-cultural festivals and little attention is paid to the obstacles and difficulties that exist in Canada such as gaining access to resources and finding gainful employment. For

immigrants, upgrading and opportunities for training and education are avenues to acquiring better jobs and securing their futures as productive people living in Canada. These actions are not always effective due to the numerous barriers and problems with recognizing foreign degrees and credentials in many professions (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006). This is significant to the research due to the fact that some of the participants have had professional education and professional experience from other countries and experienced difficulties as professionals integrating into professional social work positions in Canada.

### 2.1.2. Canadian Climate for Ethno-Cultural Diversity

Canada is a "statistical outlier" among western democracies in the breadth of our ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Canada has a proactive immigration policy and is becoming more multicultural by the day (Laczko, 1994; Kymlicka, 2007). As Canada's diversity has changed, so has the implementation of Canada's Multiculturalism Policy. It is evolving to respond to emerging needs and challenges (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

In 2009, the Multiculturalism Program introduced new policy objectives that focus on building an integrated, socially cohesive society; making institutions more responsive to the needs of Canada's diverse population; and engaging in international discussions on multiculturalism and diversity (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). The Multiculturalism Program supports the Citizenship and Immigration Canada's mandate and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* by assisting the socio-

economic integration of individuals and communities and their contributions to building an integrated and socially cohesive society. The Program promotes intercultural understanding through public education and outreach initiatives, Historical Recognition Programs and Canada's Action Plan Against Racism, and by supporting civil society organizations through the Grants and Contributions Program. Activities range from reaching out to the community through diversity education programs, such as the Mathieu Da Costa Challenge, to recognizing the contributions of individual Canadians through the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

A key goal of the Multiculturalism Act is to ensure that the government is sensitive and responsive to Canada's multicultural reality. The Multiculturalism Program assists federal and public institutions in their efforts to integrate multiculturalism into the development of their policies, programs and services through networks, partnerships and joint activities. The Program also coordinates the production of results-based reports submitted by federal institutions on the operation of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and produces and disseminates multiculturalism research and other products (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

In Canada, we have adopted a policy of recognizing and accommodating ethno-cultural diversity within our public institutions and celebrating it as an important dimension of our collective life and collective identity. There have been a number of specific programs that are supported under this policy including anti-racism campaign pilot programs on how to improve ethnic representation and cultural sensitivity in the

schools, the health care system, police, and museums, academic studies of the history of ethnic groups in Canada and their contemporary circumstances and funding for multi-ethnic festivals (Kymlicka, 2007).

Growing ethnic diversity has generated two intersecting policy agendas throughout the western democracies; one celebrates diversity and the other focuses on social cohesion and social integration (Shriver, 2003; Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 2006; Valpy, 2007). Children of immigrants acquire their education and work experience in Canada. Thus they can expect to do better than their parents in educational attainment and in the labour market (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). The second generation faces obstacles unique to them (Kymlicka, 2007). Even though they do well in terms of education and income, second-generation racialized Canadians often have less sense of belonging to Canada than other Canadians, largely due to the perception that they are discriminated against (Kymlicka, 2007; Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). Reitz and Banerjee (2007) state, "It is striking that indications of lack of integration into Canadian society are so significant for second-generation minorities, since they are regarded as the harbinger of the future." Racialized people rate themselves as less integrated than Whites. Among all ethno-cultural groups in Canada, racial minorities clearly have the lowest relative household income and the highest poverty rates (Valpy, 2007).

Canada has opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of people whose home cultures are far removed from the mainstream culture of Canada. Many newcomers view themselves as victims of discrimination and alienation. Despite high levels of education and training they are faring worse in the labour market that earlier migrants to

Canada (Mullaly, 2007). They are living more in segregated residential areas (Mullaly, 2007; City of Winnipeg, 2009). Their children, the second generation either born in Canada or raised in Canada from childhoods are of the greatest concern. Canada is the only country this new generation knows and calls home. Yet an alarmingly significant percentage of them feel even less welcome and more alienated that their parents, less able than their parents in dealing with acculturation into mainstream Canada (Valpy, 2007). They do not feel accepted in Canada, do not understand its values, and do not feel Canadian. Research shows that this is a generation raised in the rhetorical milieu of both multiculturalism and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, young people who expect to be treated as equals in Canadian society and who are discovering angrily that they are not. Their dissatisfaction has gone largely unnoticed in academic research until now because the numbers of racialized second generation people are statistically small but growing (Valpy, 2007). For example, some of the participants in this study are born Canadian. One participant reported they felt,

> …encouraged to be proud of my heritage, but not too proud. For example, people at work knew that I celebrated certain religious holidays. They seemed genuinely interested, but also made comments on how 'it makes no sense' in some ways. I felt like my beliefs were being tolerated, not accepted.

Our racialized youth, both newcomer and Canadian-born, grapple with negative societal messages and stereotypes, negative school climates that alienate racialized students, negative student-administrator relationships, unfair, arbitrary, or ineffective discipline systems, inequitable school structures and systems, as well as a school curriculum that does not reflect their lived realities and experiences (Dei & Rummens,

2011). These racialized students are furthermore over-represented in families from the lower socio-economic bracket; sixty-three percent versus thirty-eight percent for "non-visible" populations (Cheng & Yau 1999). They also need to cope with the attendant risks and challenges associated with access to fewer resources, poverty, and social-stigmatization (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

### 2.1.3. Acculturation

Atkinson (2004) defines acculturation as the process of cultural change that takes place when two or more cultures come into contact with each other. It involves acquiring the cultural values, norms, language, and behaviour of the dominant society. "Acculturation has to do with the extent and nature of conforming to the dominant culture and incorporating it into actions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and feelings. Identity determines the degree of retention of the threads of one's ancestral, ethnic, or racial background and their absorption into one's self-concept" (Draguns, 2008, p. 23).

Acculturation is a powerful process with many potential effects on individuals and families. It is a powerful process because it defines a personal location and how a person perceives the world (Phinney, 2003; Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007). The third and later generations of immigrants grow up in North America and experience acculturation in terms of culture and identity. However, they may find that no matter how much they feel they fit into mainstream culture, they continue to face discrimination based on their ethnicity. It is at this point that many descendents of immigrants rediscover their grandparents' culture, perhaps developing an interest in

what is now a “foreign” language, taking ethnic studies classes, and finding other ways of learning about their history and cultural roots. This phenomenon of the third generation trying to recapture what the second generation has lost has been called the *Hansen effect*, yet less than 5% of third generation will acquire a new heritage language (Kitano, 1989).

Researchers are recognizing more that immigrants can retain values and behaviour from their cultures of origin while simultaneously adopting values and behaviours from a new culture (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007). Static and exclusively Eurocentric views of normality are problematic (Milner, 2010). To assess the degree of acculturation of a client, a worker needs to inquire about language preference, primary language spoken in the home, place of birth, community and social relationships and food and clothing preferences (Dana, 1993; Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

Measures of acculturation try to assess the extent to which clients retain their ethnic group behaviours but also adapt to dominant culture, whereas measures of ethnic identity development assess the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to be part of their ethnic group and how positively their group membership is experienced (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

The degree of acculturative stress experienced by an individual depends on several factors. One important factor for stress has to do with the level of tolerance for ethnic diversity present in the dominant society. The level of acculturation for immigrants is greatly affected by policy makers and health professionals because they

make decisions that shape how much access and support are available. The quantity of bilingual education policies and bilingual mental health services can help to reduce acculturative stress (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

In addition to assessing a person's level of acculturation, it is important to utilize other assessment procedures that take an emic perspective. The emic approach demands that the assessor must be particularly knowledgeable about cultural factors (Dana, 1993; Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

Acculturation affects not only current immigrants, but also the descendents of immigrants in future generations as well. The generational effects of growing up in Canada may mean that immigrants speak a language other than English at home and in their communities. Their English language proficiency is often far superior than that of their parents as they learn it in school and are often equipped with the knowledge that Canadian employment opportunities are contingent on learning in school. Many are in the position of translators for their families. They may be embarrassed at their parents' lack of ability to communicate and negotiate institutions and procedures. As such, they often lose respect for parental authority and are privy to information that may not otherwise be shared with them (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007). Intergenerational conflict and erosion of the family structure is a major problem for some newcomers (Lefley, 1989; Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

## 2.2 Race

Race is mostly associated with physical traits that distinguish the various groups comprising the human species, such as skin colour. The concept of race is a social construct that has no empirical grounding and no scientific merit. It is based on physical appearance and not on functional, rational, measureable differences on a scientific scale (Saloojee, 2003). Race is used to categorize people even though it lacks scientific validity and evidence from biology. It is a powerful and pervasive social construction that makes sense of the world by dividing people into assumed biological categories (Thompson, 1998; Mullaly, 2007). Race also has a powerful and distinct political meaning. It is used to structure society and to distribute social and economic rewards and punishments (Thompson & Carter, 1997). "Race is a structure of oppression at least as basic as class or gender" (Young, 1990, p.62). Race is often seen not only as social and political features but also as a cultural or biological property of a non-White population (Jeffrey, 2009).

Race is defined primarily on the basis of visible markers related to biological features that are primary distinct markers for race. It is difficult to alter or hide and "should not be seen as something tangible that exists in the outside world which has to be discovered, described, and defined....[It is] a cultural creation, a product of human invention" (Smedley, 1993, p.6). As a socially constructed category, race is often used to "classify humankind according to common ancestry and is reliant on differentiation by such physical characteristics as colour of skin, hair texture, stature and facial characteristics" (Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 2000, p. 409). It is usually associated with skin colour and type of hair, yet there are no anthropological standards as to the

physical definition of one race versus another (Ho, 1990; Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007). Race still carries meaning within political and popular discourse and often creates generalizations and stereotypes about people based on common sense (Mason, 2000; Yee, 2005). Recognizing how the definition and meaning of race has changed over time demonstrates the problematic nature of discussing the concept of it (Yee, 2005).

The construct of race invokes to a group of people who share biological characteristics that come to signify group membership and the social meaning such membership has in the society at large. It becomes the basis for expectations regarding social roles, performance levels, values, and norms and morals for group and non-group members and in-group members alike. Since there is a compelling tendency to categorize individuals into groups, and since the phenotypes of racial factors are easily detected, race is one of the most salient grounds for social categorization regardless of world location (Jones, 1991; Saloojee, 2005).

The concept of race was developed by racial theorists as a means to classify humankind in a way that established hierarchies based on appearance and moral quality (Smedley, 1993; Saloojee, 2005). It is a social construction that is "...wielded by White European and Americans to establish social demarcations, elevate the White race, and justify oppression and exploitation of certain ethnic groups who were presumed to be inferior in intelligence, physicality, morality, and culture" (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p.3).

Race is conventionally associated with visible features that are linked with certain moral, intellectual and cognitive dispositions (Thompson & Carter, 1997). It is a combination of physical characteristics with generic origins, which distinguish one group from other groups of human beings, even though there may be ethnic variations among racial groups and racial variations among ethnic groups (Helms, 1995).

Despite its scientific discreditation, Smedley (1993) maintains that race provides unspoken guidelines for daily interaction among persons defined as different races. The standards and rules of conduct for minority races exist even if individuals are not conscious of it. These guidelines apply to intra and interracial interactions. However, race can also be the basis for immediate camaraderie and lasting unions (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Race is often confused with culture and ethnicity. Culture is defined as a learned pattern or system of meaning passed down through generations. "A culture can be defined as a highly specific pool of collective representations, and ways of knowing, understanding and interpreting stimuli, as a result of common history" (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996, p. 37). Ethnic identification generally is lost after three generations in order for a person to blend into the mainstream, whereas race lasts across generations (Helms, 1995). There is some overlap between culture and race due to the fact that the determination of race by theorists was based somewhat on cultural characteristics and some overlap with ethnicity (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

There is considerable confusion surrounding the meaning of race making it a highly misunderstood and poorly studied construct. Such confusion contributes to

uncertainties about the impact of race on psychological development and functioning (Thompson & Carter, 1997, Helms, 1994; Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993). The effects of these problems on the professional development of mental health workers also apply to the professions, including social work (Saloojee, 2005; Thompson & Carter, 1997; Fernando, 1988, Jacobs & Bowles, 1988).

Mass media, education and institutions are socializing forces that are vehicles for continuing racial stratification (Gaines & Reed, 1995). We are socialized to believe that some races are inherently inferior and this pattern of rigid racial stratification has become accepted and often remain unchallenged (Frederickson, 1988; Fong 2005). Social racial dynamics have the potential to constrain individual self-expression for some racial groups while falsely inflating feelings of self-worth in others (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Thompson & Carter (1997) maintain that race is inadequately addressed in training and practice of social service workers because there is a fear of what conscientious scrutiny of its social meaning would reveal. Addressing race means that we have to magnify and inspect it in a way that we forcefully dismantle it and can examine and face the reality of racism.

## 2.3. Racism and Discrimination

Racism is the belief that human abilities are determined by race and genetics. The assumption that racial classifications can be made on the basis of biological differences underpins racism (Mullaly, 2007). Racial categories are not value-neutral.

They constitute a hierarchy of racial groups in which White people as a group are dominant because of their socially constructed superiority (Ahmad, 1990; Mullaly, 2007). It is both an ideology and a set of practices. As an ideology, racism seeks to both legitimatize and create inequality faced by racialized groups and proclaim the superiority of the racial group that constitutes the status quo. It consists of a set of mechanisms to ensure socio-political domination over minority racial groups (Saloojee, 2005).

There are three major responses to race and racism in the literature: assimilation, multiculturalism, and anti-racism (or the politics of difference). Cultural differences should be celebrated but cultural equality must also be pursued (Mullaly, 2007). Combined with class and gender there is a race-specific form of exploitation. It is perpetuated in the social organization of our society by members of racialized groups performing menial tasks for White people (Mullaly, 2007). Whenever racism exists in a predominantly White society there is an expectation that members of racialized groups will be the servants, unskilled labourers, and minimum wage and low-status workers for the dominant White group (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 2007).

The stereotypes, practices and belief systems applied to those who are culturally imperialized brand them as deviant and inferior, and are so pervasive in society that they are seldom questioned (Mullaly, 2007). This negative view of one's specific culture and experience makes it increasingly difficult for the dominant group to parade its values and norms as universal and neutral (Mullaly, 2007). Racism is constantly evolving with the times. Even though the new form builds on the old, it is also

importantly connected to present-day social, economic and political factors (Bagihole, 2009).

There are two ways to discriminate: treat those who are the same as if they were different or treat those who are different as if they were the same. Treating alike as unalike, and treating sameness differently, is the basis for most discrimination cases (Bagihole, 2009)

When dealing with the topics of cultural diversity, ethnicity, and race it is impossible to ignore racism and the effect it has on how social systems are shaped physically, structurally, and psychologically within the general population. The failure of some professionals to address racism reinforces their clients' distorted outlook on reality and minimizes the existence of racial stratification and its adverse consequences. It allows racism to thrive without opposition while perpetuating the cycle of oppression (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Hamilton (2001) defines racism as the belief that objective or alleged differences between racial groups are justification for asserting superiority of one racial group over another. There are two ways of doing this. Firstly, at an individual level, actions are performed by one person or a group that produces racial abuse. Secondly, at an institutional level, the system of structural arrangements that allow access to social resources based on beliefs about the superiority of one racial group and inferiority of the other. It is not a direct action like individual racism, but part of a racist behaviour pattern resulting from erroneous dominant cultural assumptions. It involves discrimination based on racial practices built into such prominent structures as the

political, economic, and education systems and other social institutions. It is distinctly sociological and emphasizes social structures that establish norms guiding people's behaviours. Institutional racism is the prime factor in maintaining racism (Fong, 2005).

According to Fong (2005), racism is developed and maintained by more complex human systems rather than exclusively by individuals. We refer to organizational and institutional racism when the structures and processes that establish and perpetuate racism develop a life of their own that exists apart from individuals who may fulfill roles and responsibilities in the higher-order systems. Racism at the level of institutions is often indirect and may be subtle. However, its impact can be profoundly effective. Institutional and cultural racism arose when Europeans founded colonies in many parts of the world, subjugating their lands and people and created social systems of subordination, exploiting people who were culturally different from them. In North America racial supremacy began at first contact with Europeans with indigenous people (Thompson & Carter, 1997; Fong, 2005).

Cultural racism occurs when one cultural group believes that another group is inferior in some way and possesses the power to impose its standards on the other groups. This broadens the definition of racism to include not only ethnicity, but all of the 'isms' that cultural groups share. Some people experience discrimination based on an aspect of their culture that they themselves cannot change. The failure to acknowledge cultural differences of a group carries with it implicit failure to acknowledge discrimination that the group may experience. It may be difficult for someone who is part of the cultural majority in power to acknowledge their cultural racism (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

There is often little dialogue about it because racism is seen as negative and undesired in Canadian society. Racism is often not discussed nor approached in the workplace or classrooms where changes to address institutional racism may be necessary. Human needs for acceptance, affiliation, and approval make conformity to the social order more appealing than creating discomfort. The denial of racism entails introspection and a close examination of social norms and admitting ownership over feelings that may not be right, but seem to be popular (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Cultural norms, values, and assumptions such as stereotypes and structural relationships across different social categories are highly significant factors in social exclusion (Thompson & Carter, 1997). Discrimination can often be unintentional in so far as someone acting in a discriminatory fashion may be doing so in ways that reflect wider cultural and structural factors without intentions of being oppressive or unfair. Unintentional discrimination has the potential to be highly oppressive and is therefore unacceptable (Thompson, 2009).

Discrimination is not a matter of chance or random distribution. Patterns of discrimination are embedded in society in which our arrangements are structured and organized (Payne 2005, Thompson, 2009). There are complex social, political and historical reasons for this development. Racism is a matter predominantly affecting people from ethnic minorities. It is naive not to recognize that such matters are firmly ensconced in the social fabric and not simply matters of individual prejudice (Thompson, 2009). Discrimination undermines citizenship and erodes a person's ability to develop their talents and capacities (Saloojee, 2005).

### 2.3.1. Racism and Social Work in Winnipeg

The number of foreign-born residents in Canada will grow four times faster than the rest of the population due to dropping fertility rates among the Canadian-born population (Rabson, 2010). In 2006, 101,900 people or 16.3% of Winnipeg's population were racialized people (City of Winnipeg, 2009). It is projected that by 2031 that 27% of Winnipeg's population will be visible minority (City of Winnipeg, 2009; Rabson, 2010).

Rabson (2010), maintains that Canadians will have to start thinking about races in a different way, not just racialized people vis à vis the Caucasian population. It is expected that by 2031 the fundamental demographic change in Canada's complexion will be reflected in the workplace or in government. Winnipeg is experiencing a 'crisis' in social services. There are more clients in need of culturally appropriate services and many social services agencies are now adding "language" to the list of qualifications they are seeking in candidates (Manitoba Job Futures, 2010). The influx of immigrants and inadequate services being provided has prompted agencies such as Immigrant Centre and the Needs Centre to respond by offering resources to assist newcomers in accessing resources necessary for successfully adjusting to Canadian living.

Recently, a colleague of mine interviewed for a social work position that was clearly advertised as "Cultural Worker". During the interview the social worker was asked, "Have you ever worked in a cross-cultural capacity or with a different race?" The social worker responded by telling them most of the work she or he has done has been with races different from their own, and that they were multicultural as they were

from immigrant families consisting of several minority ethno-cultural groups. Their response was, "We are interested in knowing if you can work with people from Africa and others that have limited capacity to communicate in English." In conversation with another colleague that interviewed for the same position, it was discovered that the experience was not unique. The second colleague's response was, "Don't worry, I was also basically told I was also the wrong colour brown. I didn't bother to tell them I lived in Freetown for 8 years. They should have advertised more explicitly if they were aiming for a certain population." Were these two social workers dismissed for being the wrong minority? Both social workers said they felt uneasy, discriminated towards, humiliated, and angry. Were neither of them qualified enough or was this experience racism in action? Was it perceived or actual racism? Racism is not always obvious and can often be mistaken or misunderstood in lieu of other social dynamics. Perceived racism can cause as much distress as actual racism (Skillings & Dobbins, 1991).

In social work practice the goal is to provide services that are culturally appropriate and relevant to various ethno-racial minority communities. The culture and ethnicity of various communities often becomes synonymous with the concept of race (Yee, 2005).

The lack of quality care for culturally different clients is likely to result in human service professionals feeling incompetent or inadequate when treating racialized people; optimum care delivery is not impossible without cultural understanding (Henderson, 1994). Practitioners must be aware of their own cultural attitudes and values in order to optimally help clients in other cultures. One way is for educational institutions and human service organizations need to recruit and train more racialized

people who comprise less than 10% of all college-trained human serve practitioners (Henderson, 1994). It is often assumed that because a racialized social worker is a professional, he or she is assumed to be immune from the prejudice that other minorities have to face. They may be seen as a 'superior coloured' or 'exceptional' visible minority person (Liverpool, 1982).

All social workers need to accept that they are racists to varying degrees and/or in different situations and that trying to work through these attitudes, cannot possibly get rid of them completely due to the fact that they are so much part of a person's constitution and are constantly reinforced by the predominant society (Fong, 2005). Some members of racialized groups believe that more effective relationships can be had with 'one's own kind' and with more racialized social workers employed in the profession, matching is increasingly possible. Thus social workers need to be well aware of both their own culture and the client's so they can appreciate the significance of the differences and importance of leaving the client free to make the most appropriate adaptations. Social workers need to be comfortable with their own racial identity so they can help their multiracial clients. Geographically based identity may not be an important issue to a multiracial person, but the White social worker needs to have some sense of understanding of his or her own ethnic identity to be empathetic in working with a multiracial client (Fong, 2005).

Denial of racism is a key construct in North American society. It is a strategy used to minimize the role of race in structurally imposing inferior characteristics on minorities and positive, superior characteristics on Caucasians (Skillings & Dobbins, 1991). A by-product of denial is dismissive strategy. The present climate is one where

race has become a sensitive topic because people are silenced. Another dismissive by-product is the belief that racism no longer exists (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

### 2.3.2. Racial Socialization & Segregation

People are racially socialized. We are constantly bombarded with evidence of individual, institutional, and cultural racism. Media and institutional policies and practices exact influence by permitting dominantly located systems to avoid or suppress their unresolved dilemmas and by encouraging their beliefs of deserved White entitlement and the inferiority of minorities. Stereotyping of cultures is commonly found in social work practice work (Yee, 2005).

Racial socialization refers to the process individuals experience in constructing appraisals of themselves and other racial beings (Thompson & Carter, 1997). The racial composition of a person's community can offer clues about their social class and, by implication, the quality of their educational experiences. Knowledge of a person's social class often conveys images of the racial composition of their community. Race and social class factors are inextricably linked (Bishop, 2005).

Racial separation in residential living for newcomers was established by force and legal statutes with prohibited interracial contacts, housing covenants restricting particular people on the basis of race and religion, and unfair lending practices. What's especially powerful about racial images and messages is that they are not always communicated directly (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Separate or racially homogenous communities exist across the world. The city of Winnipeg is not exempt from this phenomenon. When examining communities such as the Maples, North End, and St. Boniface, we can see larger concentrations of certain ethno-cultural and racial groups within the city limits (City of Winnipeg, 2009). Ethno-cultural segregation is a norm and as communities and families serve as powerful socializing factors, race is an integral component of our socialization experience (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Racial segregation in Winnipeg is directly proportional to socio-economic class divisions. The most poverty stricken areas are typically home to racialized groups that have been historically disenfranchised and have little access to resources. The most impoverished groups include racialized people, recent immigrants, and Aboriginal peoples concentrated around the downtown area where housing is cheaper and crime rates are higher (City of Winnipeg, 2009).

Residential segregation and employment discrimination operate as institutional and cultural practices that have powerful effects on socialization and identity formation. Skin colour and physical appearance also become associated with moral, intellectual, and behavioural characteristics. Different communities live side by side but not necessarily together in Canadian cities. There is relatively little cross-cultural violence (Stein, 2007). Mass media contributes to the socialization process by reinforcing the lessons and rules that are taught in our immediate environment (Thompson & Carter, 1997; Fong 2005). Carter (1995) argues that racial-role socialization is similar to sex-role socialization. In the same way children are raised to assume the proper attitudes

and behaviours commensurate with gender, so is one raised to behave appropriately in one's own identified racial group.

Individuals are faced with messages that determine appropriateness and inappropriateness of their roles as racial beings through racial socialization (Carter, 1995; Bishop, 2005). Race socialization intersects with socializing factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, skin colour, and generational belief affected by present day racial climates (Bishop, 2005).

### 2.3.3. Social Inclusion and Exclusion

Canada's patterns of immigration and its experience with cultural pluralism may have led to somewhat less exclusion of racialized communities from the mainstream of Canadian life (Cameron, 2007). Racism is a form of social exclusion and racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations is the process by which that exclusion occurs (Saloojee, 2005). Social exclusion is a discourse that includes a structural approach that focuses on historical processes that continually reproduce oppression, discrimination and exclusion. The focus is the value of recognizing participation by people that are excluded from full participation in society and the benefits of society as a whole (Saloojee, 2003).

Youth's personal and social identities affect how our young people see themselves, how they are perceived by educators and school peers, how they engage with schooling, and how they produce knowledge about everyday experiences. Social

exclusion based on shared identities disproportionately affects youth whose "otherness" is most apparent (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

Racism consists of a set of mechanisms that ensure certain racial groups maintain social-political domination over racialized groups. It involves discriminatory practices that work to constantly marginalize, exclude and disadvantage subordinate racialized groups and reproduce the power, privilege and domination of the dominant group (Fleras and Elliot, 1992; Saloojee, 2003). It involves incomplete citizenship, undervalued rights, undervalued recognition and undervalued participation (Saloojee, 2003).

In Canadian society women, racialized individuals and communities, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples entering the labour market, educational system, and generally seeking goods and services will face social structures where opportunities that are mitigated by their race, gender, disabilities, and other features are not valued in society due to the existence of discrimination and barriers (Saloojee, 2003). All people in Canadian society, regardless of geographical origin, do not start from the same spot and do not compete on an equal footing with each other. Structural racial exclusion is (Saloojee, 2003, p. 4). "The process by which individuals from the dominant white racialized group in society are better positioned than are individuals from subordinate racialized and minority groups to secure a greater share of society's valued goods, services, rewards and privileges in society."

Institutional racism can be very subtle and difficult to detect because it can be done under the guise of customs, norms, policies, or practices that are not illegal but result in inequities. For example, service providers who only speak English can easily

contribute to a restricted ethnic diversity of clientele. It results in inevitable service provision by dominantly located workers to ethnic minority clients (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

Racial inequity and discrimination are products and confirmation of power imbalances in society. They are structural constraints that are rooted in the fabric of society manifesting at the individual, structural, and systemic levels (Saloojee, 2003). Due to fact that racism is multidimensional and has multiple manifestations of racial discrimination, it is difficult to provide precise measures and explicitly quantifying racism has been problematic (Henry et al., 1995). The indicators of racism are important as they affect how programs and policies are shaped as well as how practice is approached. Many researchers are rigidly attached to the intersection of race, gender, class and disability. The challenge of measuring racial discrimination is that it is extremely difficult to measure intentionality. Measures of racial discrimination focus on the effects of the discriminatory actions not on the intentions of the perpetrators (Saloojee, 2003).

One of the most pervasive myths about racialized groups is that since many groups are found in the workforce, there is not widespread discrimination at entry level. It is argued that racialized groups progress only up to a certain point before encountering the 'glass ceiling'. The glass ceiling theory suggests that there is an invisible barrier that prohibits upward mobility within the workplace or organizational hierarchy. Members of racialized groups cannot advance past the glass ceiling. They can see the upper echelons of the hierarchy but cannot detect the barriers preventing their attaining those positions (Saloojee, 2003).

The glass ceiling theory attributed to John Porter (Saloojee, 2003) assumes that:

i. Members of racialized groups do gain entry to the active labour force, they are hired, and they do have a foot in the door.
ii. Once hired there is movement up the hierarchy to a certain point.
iii. Their retention rate is not a significant human resource problem.

Saloojee (2003) maintains that prior to entering the workforce, prejudice and discrimination in society guarantees that members of racialized minority groups encounter the 'steel door'. The gatekeepers of the steel doors bar and facilitate entry to employment. As such racialized groups initially encounter prejudice and discrimination in the pre-employment stage before facing other forms of discrimination at the workplace itself. Thus, the discrimination is at the access level of employment, and then at the organizational level if employment is gained (Hill & Thomas, 2000; Saloojee, 2003).

At the pre-employment level, unequal access to employment disadvantage is manifested in several areas including differential unemployment and labour force participation rates compared to White able-bodied males, and occupational ghettoization. For racialized people, that secure employment, indicators of disadvantage include income levels, occupational clustering, ghettoization, poor upward mobility and promotion rates, limited distribution across the organizational employment hierarchy, low rates of retention and experiences of harassment. It is important to recognize that these disadvantages are the result of direct intentional discrimination and systemic discrimination by the gatekeepers of the steel door (Saloojee, 2003). When

people are denied access to employment opportunities or work in poisoned work environments, when their advancement within the organization is hindered due to their status as members of racialized groups, it is clear that they are excluded and disadvantaged and that discrimination has occurred (Saloojee, 2003).

Jackson (2001) maintains that racialized minorities in Canada are divided into two distinct groups; those born in Canada and those who are foreign born. He maintains that racialized persons from immigrant groups who are fully employed earn less than their Canadian born counterparts. Canada loses over $15 billion in earnings due to 'brain waste' due to the discounting and undervaluing of education, professional training and the experiences of immigrants prior to coming to Canada. White immigrants reported fewer inequities than immigrants of colour (Jackson, 2001).

Barriers to employment for racialized groups include (Saloojee, 2003):

- Blatant overt discriminatory hiring policies;
- Job requirements that have nothing to do with what's needed to perform the job;
- Unfair assessment of qualifications and work experience from abroad;
- Invisible barriers such as biases, stereotyping, and discrimination based on a person's colour, rather than an assessment of a person based on his/her actual skills and performance;
- The vicious cycle of lower expectations leading to lower achievement;
- A hostile or poisoned work environment caused by racial jokes, abusive slurs and, on occasion, physical abuse.

These barriers create unequal access to the labour market, the glass ceiling that significantly inhibits promotion to higher skilled better paying jobs and the reality of a split labour market over-determined by race. This contributes greatly to the racialization of poverty (Saloojee, 2003).

Canada has attempted to deal with racial discrimination and determine the nature of state-minority relations within a liberal tradition that encourages group social cohesion, social inclusion and equity. Multicultural policies encourage social group cohesion and support the preservation of culture and language (Saloojee, 2003).

Social inclusion involves social cohesion, citizenship, removal of barriers, anti-essentialism, rights and responsibilities, accommodating differences, and incorporating new ways of thinking about problems of injustice, inequality, and exclusion (Saloojee, 2003). The move to social inclusion is eroded when the rights of minorities are not respected and accommodated and racialized groups feel "Othered".

Jeffrey (2009) states, "Demographic changes attributable to recent Canadian immigration do not represent the profession's first encounter with understanding and intervening with the Other. "Other" is a term often used to refer to that which is foreign to us, for example, in terms of culture, race or ethnicity, that it, someone *other* than who we are and what we know" (p.48).

Walker and Walker (1997), define social inclusion as a comprehensive formulation, which refers to the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any social, economic, political or cultural systems which determine that social integration of a person in society. The minimum precondition for achieving social

inclusion is to advance the notion that equality does not mean sameness, rather it means that we have to treat differences between groups of people differently. The Supreme Court of Canada has noted that minority rights do not erode democratic citizenship, rather "the accommodation of differences is the essence of true equality" (Saloojee, 2005).

Racial exclusion results in economic, political and cultural disadvantage. Social exclusion may therefore be seen as the denial non-realization of the civil. Those who are included in society have access to valued goods and services while those are excluded do not. The disadvantaged and marginalized are seen as "other" and do not have access to valued goods and services. It is a mutually reinforcing relationship between exclusion and disadvantage that is cyclic and takes many forms such as poverty, less education, lower paying jobs, and less access to resources (Saloojee, 2003). The roots of exclusion are deep, historical and continually reproduced in both old and new way in contemporary society (Freiler, 2001; Saloojee, 2005; Henry & Tator, 2009).

## 2.4. Oppression

Oppression can have adverse effects on how people function in life. It can affect people on micro, mezzo and macro levels (Mullaly, 1997). Everything from an individual's mental health to the survival of a culture can be affected by oppression (Shera, 2003; Dei & Rummens, 2011). The two major responses that oppressed people have to their oppression are inferiorization or rejection (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997).

"Oppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group" (Young, 1990, p.57).

In traditional usage, oppression means the exercise of tyranny. It traditionally carries a strong connotation of conquest and colonial domination (Young, 1990; Mullaly 1997). In the past oppression occurred through imposition of ill-intending laws by the ruling group whereby oppressors view the oppressed as a dangerous class that must be controlled for the good of the whole society (Mullaly, 1997). Historically oppression was not a quiet dynamic. The enforcement of oppression came in many forms and by many means. Oppression has resulted in many of the world's most heinous episodes such as war, genocide, civil and political unrest. "Oppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group" (Young, 1990, p.57). "Oppression protects a kind of citizenship that is superior to that of the oppressed. It protects the oppressors' preferential access to and preferential treatment from our social institutions…In short, oppression carries out certain social functions for the dominant group by ensuring that society reproduces itself and maintains the same dominant-subordinate relationships" (Mullaly, 1997, p. 139).

Modern day oppression is structural. It occurs through systemic constraints on non-dominantly groups in the form of unquestioned norms, behaviours, and symbols and in the underlying assumptions of institutional rules (Mullaly, 1997). Often members of the dominant group do not realize that they are part of an oppressive order. "The dominant group in society probably does not really subscribe to oppressive behaviour as a means of protecting its favourable position. Most people do not consider themselves to be oppressors. In fact, most people probably believe that oppressive

behaviour should not be a part of democratic society" (Mullaly, 1997, p. 139). "The conscious actions of many individuals daily contribute to maintaining and reproducing oppression, but those people are usually simply doing their jobs or living their lives, and do not understand themselves as agents of oppression" (Young, 1990, p.56).

### 2.4.1. Forms of Oppression

Young (2004) categorizes five forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. "The presence of any of these five conditions is sufficient for calling a group oppressed. But different group oppressions exhibit different combinations of these forms, as do different individuals in the groups" (Young, 1990, pg. 69). Not all oppressed groups experience all five of these forms or oppression however they usually experience more than one (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997). Different oppressed groups exhibit different combinations of the five conditions of oppression (Young, 1990). Comparisons can be made of the ways a particular form of oppression occurs in different groups or of the combinations of oppression that group's experience. This framework has significant potential for helping social workers understand better the oppression of people with whom they work in their professional practice (Mullaly, 1997).

#### 2.4.1.1. Exploitation

Mullaly (1997) defines exploitation as the social processes whereby the dominant group is able accumulate and maintain status, power, and assets from the energy and labour of subordinate groups. Exploitation is most frequently understood on a distributive model (Young, 1990). The primary victims of exploitation are the working class, women and racialized people (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997). A person is exploited when the amount of labour embodied in any bundle of goods he could receive, in a feasible distribution of society's net product, is less than the labour expended. The injustices of exploitation cannot be eliminated by redistribution of goods, for as long as institutionalized practices and structural relations remain unaltered, the process of transfer will re-create and unequal distribution of benefits (Young, 2004).

The distribution of work is a systematic process that yields the relations of power and inequality. "Exploitation is realized through a structural relationship between the have and have-not groups" (Mullaly, 1997, p.146). Many forms of exploitation cannot be eliminated by the redistribution of material resources and cannot be altered unless the transfer of energy and labour from the exploited to the dominant group reproduce equal distribution of goods and benefits (Mullaly, 1997).

Exploitation can be race specific (Young 1990; Mullaly 1997). Racialized groups often perform menial labour tasks for White people and become sub-servant subordinates. Mullaly (1997) states, "Jobs involve a transfer of energy whereby the servers enhance the status of the served" (p. 147). This contributes to the oppressed

having little autonomy, low wages, unskilled labour, and low-status work (Young, 2004).

#### 2.4.1.2. Marginalization

Marginalization is a process of social de-valuation that serves to justify disproportional access to scarce societal resources (Dei & Rummens, 2011). Marginalization constitutes a basic feature of injustice and oppression. It is arguably one of the most dangerous forms of oppression because it excludes entire groups of people from participating in society in a useful and meaningful way and severely depriving them of materials (Young, 1990; Mullaly 1997). "Marginalization is unjust because is blocks the opportunity to exercise capacities in socially defined and recognized ways" (Young, 1990, p.62).

Marginalization primarily affects groups that constitute the underclass and are permanently confined to the margins of society because the labour markets do not accommodate them (Shera, 2003). These groups include racialized people, elderly, youth, single mothers and their children, physically and mentally disabled people, unskilled workers, and North American Aboriginals in Canada (Mullaly, 1997). Marginalization may still occur if material deprivation is not present (Mullaly, 1997). For example, racialized people that may have stable professional jobs may still be marginalized for their skin colour, perceived beliefs, or cultural background.

Welfare systems in North America have not eliminated large-scale suffering despite attempts to redistribute wealth (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997). Welfare

bureaucracies have often treated poor people, old people, and disabled individuals who rely on them for support and services with punitive, demeaning, patronizing, and arbitrary policies and regulations that interfere with their basic rights to privacy, respect, and autonomy (Mullaly, 1997). To overcome marginalization requires both a restructuring of productive activity to address a right of participation within the wage system and establishing some socially productive activity outside the wage system (Mullaly, 1997).

#### 2.4.1.3. Powerlessness

Powerlessness is oppression in addition to exploitation of non-professionals (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997). "The powerless are those who lack authority of power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them. Powerlessness also designates a position in the division of labour and the concomitant social position that allows person little opportunity to develop and exercise skills. The powerless have little or no autonomy, exercise little creative or judgment in their work, have no technical expertise or authority, express themselves awkwardly, especially in public or bureaucratic settings, and do not command respect" (Young, 1990, p. 65).

Mullaly (1997, p 148) defines powerlessness as

> …inhibitions in the development of one's capacities, a lack of decision-making power in one's working life, and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of

> the status one occupies. It affects primarily non-professional workers, but also people of colour and women to a lesser extent. It is based on the social division of labour but is more complex that the tradition between the 'middle class' and the 'working class' to be a social division of labour between professionals and non-professionals.

Most workplaces in advanced capitalistic societies are organized hierarchy. The powerless are those who do not have power or authority to reside over decision-making but exercise it as dictated. Non-professionals suffer this type of oppression more than professionals (Mullaly, 1997). The power and respectability that accompany the privileged status of being a professional also involve racist and sexist dynamics. Professional racialized people and women who are professionals must repeatedly prove their respectability whereas working-class White men are often given respect until their working-class status is discovered. Professional racialized people and women are more often not treated with respect unless it is revealed that they are 'professionals' (Mullaly, 1997). In other words, the status privilege of professionals is not automatically afforded to racialized professionals as it is to non-professional dominantly located individuals. This is significant because typically, professionals receive more respectful treatment in our society than non-professionals (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997). Injustices of powerlessness have distributional consequences that are fundamentally issue of the division of labour that bring into question the social division of those who make decisions and those who carry the decisions out (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

#### 2.4.1.4. Cultural Imperialism

Feminist and Black liberation theorists identify cultural imperialism as oppression that comes about when the dominant group universalizes its experience and culture as the 'norm' for society (Mullaly, 1997). Cultural imperialism is thereby experience in varying degrees by all oppressed and racialized groups.

Social institutions are based on the culture and experiences of the dominant group. Our education, media, entertainment industry, literature, and marketing of products reinforce the notion of a universal culture. We are thus socialized into this ethnocentric view of the world and the dominant group reinforces its position by measuring against themselves as deviant or inferior by stereotyping (Mullaly, 1997).

Culturally dominant groups tend to be defined from the outside. Their own experiences and perspectives are thus made invisible to the dominant group, and forces oppressed groups to look at themselves through the eyes of a dominant group, that views them with contempt or amusement (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997). The oppressed group's own experience and interpretation of social life finds little expression that touches dominant culture, while the same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experience and interpretation of social life.

The culturally imperialised may reject the dominant meaning and attempt to assert their own subjectivity, or the fact of their cultural difference may put the lie to the dominant culture's implicit claim to universality (Young, 1990). To overcome cultural imperialism it is necessary that culturally oppressed groups take over the definition of themselves and assert a positive sense of group difference (Mullaly, 1997).

#### 2.4.1.5. Violence

Violence includes physical attacks, harassment, ridicule or intimidation that stigmatizes group members. Almost all oppressed groups suffer systemic violence because they are members of the subordinate group. "The oppression of violence lies not only in direct victimization, but in the constant fear that violence may occur, solely on the basis of one's group identity" (Mullaly, 1997, p. 150). Violence also includes the daily knowledge shared by all members of an oppressed group that they are liable to violation, solely on the account of their group identity (Young, 1990).

Violence is systemic because it is directed at members of a group simply because they are members of a group (Young, 1990). "Violence is a social practice. It is a social given that everyone knows happens and will happen again. It is always at the horizon of social imagination, even for those who do not perpetuate it. According to the prevailing social logic, some circumstances make such violence more "called for" than others" (Young, 1990, pg. 68). Violence is a form of injustice that a distributive understanding of justice seems ill equipped to capture (Young, 1990).

Violence is structural when it is tolerated, accepted, or found unsurprising by the dominant group, or when perpetrators receive light or no punishment. It is a social practice when people from a dominant group seek out people from oppressed groups to beat up, rape or harass (Young, 2004). To reform institutions and social practices that encourage, tolerate, or enable violence against members of specific groups will require a change in cultural images, stereotypes, and the day-to-day reproduction of dominance and aversion (Mullaly, 1997).

## 2.5. The Culture of Whiteness

To clearly understand race and power dynamics of dominantly located and racialized groups, a theoretical understanding of the concept of Whiteness is required. Whiteness is the key ingredient in holding together racist structural formations as it works together with racism to create systems of domination and subordination (Yee, 2005).

Recognizing how Whiteness affects non-White workers is an important part of my research. Yee (2005) defines Whiteness as "a complex social structure that perpetuates and maintains the dominant and/or majority groups' power within a range of institutions, including social service organizations, and is the primary mechanism that prevents anti-racist social workers from changing today's societal institutional arrangements" (p.89).

Dei (2000) defines Whiteness as institutionalized privilege that perpetuates a system of dominance. Racism occurs through the process of false consciousness and is rooted in thought and the socially created structures. "Whiteness has power by remaining unnamed and unmarked in contrast to the racial 'other' who is classified, ordered and defined into cultural and ethnic categories" (Yee, 2005, p. 93).

Jeffrey (2009) refers to Whiteness an asset of locations that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and are fundamentally linked to relations of domination. "Whiteness is about being inconspicuous to the point of invisibility, and yet racially dominant" (Jeffrey, 2009, p. 54). Whiteness is not defined as a "colour," but rather as an implicit and universal norm against which "people of colour" are

defined and evaluated. The power and accompanying privileges that Whiteness discourse generates reproduces itself regardless of intention or goodwill because of the fact that it just appears to be "normal." The term normal is used to distinguish between what is good or proper and deviant or substandard in society (Jeffery, 2009).

The culture of Whiteness is reflected in social service agency practices. As Yee (2005) asserts, "underlying much of current social work practice are race ideologies or rather strategies of Whiteness that work to legitimate the hidden power of the dominant and/or majority group, which helps maintain the status quo" (pg. 96).

Examining how the dominant and/or majority group uses strategies of Whiteness to create systems of dominance can better illustrate the productive and reproductive functions of power and control. "In the Canadian context, most understand White privilege and dominance to mean those who come from the dominant and/or majority group" (Yee, 2005, p. 97).

Although race is a concrete dimension of diversity, White people are not biologically genetically, or innately superior to other groups in terms of intelligence. There is a difference reflected in the types of jobs and education held by White and racialized people, however it is not due to these factors. As such, we need to redirect our practices from an achievement gap and toward an opportunity gap (Milner, 2010).

Many academic writers and social work practitioners speak of White privilege in generic terms without making the process visible or highlighting the strategies by which Whiteness operates within social institutions, including social services. Whiteness operates by making sure that the dominant culture never defines itself while defining all

the so-called “different” cultures of society or ethnic minority communities as owing a culture. One cannot speak about Whiteness until one has a firm understanding of how race is a social construction in modern Western culture (Yee, 2005).

The acceptance of fixing culture to people’s identity fails to recognize the ideological power of how the “culture of Whiteness” is Eurocentricly valued as “the only” culture. The emphasis on various non-White cultures and ethnicities by professionals, for example, social workers, reflects the current social relations of power that exist in Western society (Yee, 2005).

In today’s society there are many cultures but one dominant culture, which reflects the norms, values, shared patterns of thinking and worldview of the dominant group (i.e., a White, male, bourgeois group). All other cultures are viewed as inferior and therefore the solution to the problems members of these groups experience could be resolved if they would assimilate into the dominant culture (Mullaly, 2007). The assimilation approach encourages people from different ethnic backgrounds to conform to the dominant and/or majority group’s norms and values, while the pluralism approach works to help people to maintain their ethnic identity, which is seen in policies such as multiculturalism (Yee, 2005).

Whites do not readily perceive themselves as members of a racial group, or as responsible for perpetuating racism (Thompson & Carter, 1997; Yee, 2005). Some White clients may openly refuse a visit from minority workers in avoidance of contact. Clients may be accustomed to seeing minorities in menial jobs, rather than as competent professionals. There is a tendency on the part of racialized groups to accept and

internalize this socially constructed and imposed identity and to act in ways that reinforce the stereotypes of White people (Liverpool, 1982; Mullaly, 2007).

Approaches such as cultural competency, multiculturalism, and ethnic sensitivity were not developed by ethno-racial minority groups. They were primarily developed by White practitioners struggling with cultural sensitivity, awareness and understanding in working with culturally diverse clients (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003). These ideas have dominated Canadian social work knowledge, and run contrary to an anti-racist perspective. They "...are heavily steeped in strategies of Whiteness" (Yee, 2005, p. 90).

Racism and Whiteness work together in creating systems of domination and subordination. Racism cannot be thoroughly discussed or understood until Whiteness is recognised as a basis of power relations (Boston, 1988;Yee, 2005; Blume & DeReus, 2009). Whites' perceptions of racialized groups reflect ambivalence and contradiction. They have been seen as inferior, but super competent or exceptional if they achieve success in the workplace. They are acceptable as nurturers and caring figures but not as equals to their White counterparts. Racialized groups are seen as angry when they appear arrogant (as Whites are not) and as frightening when they appear competent, act assertively, or demonstrate ability to cope with racism without being demoralized (Hamilton, 2001; McKinney, 2005).

The assumption of racial superiority has had substantial negative effects on racialized people within most European societies and the countries they colonized. Racialized people are subject to disparaging stereotypes and are oppressed at the personal, cultural, and structural or institutional levels of society. The effects of racism

at the personal level include the imposition of an identity by the racially dominant group that is often stereotypical, essentialist, and inferior (Mullaly, 2007). Minorities have not yet had an opportunity equal to that of Whites to experience substantial degrees of assimilation in a number of spheres of life. Most people want equality of opportunity. At the same time, many people want to maintain their ties and identity with their ethnic groups (Devore & Schlesinger, 1991; Mullaly, 2007).

The concept of being "colour blind" essentially means that the colour of someone's skin makes no difference to how social service clients should be served. As such no cultural modifications are seen as needed. In practice failure to appreciate difference can translate as disrespect for the client's cultural background and lead to inappropriate or ineffective treatment (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

## 2.6. Developing Cultural Awareness

The first step in developing cultural awareness is to acknowledge that racism exists. Denying that racism exists can be compared to the denial that exists around addictions to alcohol, illegal drugs, and gambling (Wilkins, 1995; Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007). Breaking through denial can be an emotional and cognitive process often facilitated by experiential exercises between professionals to increase self awareness. It can be a very unsettling experience because examining and deconstructing personal beliefs means putting the spotlight on feelings and opinions that may not be positive (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

The second step in developing cultural awareness is to increase appreciation of cultural differences. An increased knowledge and understanding of different cultures leads to more accurate beliefs about minority groups and reduces prejudice. Informal learning opportunities can be simple activities such as exposure to movies, community events, developing new friendships, reading novels or current media, increasing travel or experiencing meals in authentic cultural restaurants. Any means of exposure can be an opportunity to learn and embrace cultural diversity (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007).

Formal learning opportunities can be such things as seeking out professional development activities, courses, workshops with cultural focus, and consulting colleagues with different cultural backgrounds for professional stimulation. To be a culturally aware worker, one must welcome multicultural experiences as opposed to being forced through activities such as professional development workshops, or tolerating cultural activities by clients and other professionals. Professionals must accept differing worldviews as legitimate, even if they do not match your personal beliefs (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco, 2007). One must actively embrace the never-ending process of becoming aware of their own assumptions about human behaviour, values, and biases to understand contrasting world views and perspectives presented in social work practice (Abreu, 2001; Arrendondo & Arciniega, 2001). Culturally skilled workers must engage in incorporating intervention strategies that are relevant and sensitive to goals, life experiences and cultural values of their clients (Sue & Sue, 2003).

If we are to equip all learners with the requisite tools to function in contemporary society, the issue of marginality and youth resistance in education must be fully addressed. As educators, we must bring a critical understanding to youth marginality and resistance … and then *act* upon it. To do this we need to better understand, consider, and respond to the social location and life circumstances of our diverse students. We need to acknowledge both their social and personal identities, listen attentively to their voices, seek to address unique needs associated with social location, and understand the sources of their resistance or protest. Most of all we need to unfailingly recognize the inherent potential in each learner and ever strive to see this potential fully realized (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

For our newcomer immigrant and refugee students, this means understanding that mastery of the language of instruction is critical. Migration and resettlement stresses can also present daily challenges, particularly for recent newcomers. The need for both parents to work long hours, often at multiple jobs, can readily translate into less parental presence and supervision, as well as increased responsibility for care of younger siblings and household tasks; parental underemployment can in turn lead to the need for youth employment to help support the family. Teachers, principals, vice-principals, counsellors, and school staff who understand these unique challenges can more effectively support their students in their educational trajectories. Initiatives that make a real difference include: assessment and recognition of previous academic accomplishments; strong, secure, sustained English-as-an-Additional-Language programming; administrator, teacher, staff awareness training; facilitation of integration within the school; support linkages to relevant social and/or resettlement services;

outreach to parents and communities; and implementation of cultural competence within the classroom. For older students, school flexibility in terms of balancing family/work/home/school responsibilities is often key to ensuring successful educational outcomes (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

## 2.7. Culturally Competent Approach to Social Work Practice

Culturally competent or cross-culturally sensitive approach was created to confront the issues that are generated by a racially and culturally diverse population. It asks social workers to become more aware of and sensitive to the norms an nuances that are specific to a wide range of cultural and ethnic groups with the goal to recognize that some behaviours and ways of speaking and actions may be inappropriate to the cultural mores of the person or family with whom the worker engages. Developing a heightened sensitivity to these specific types of needs is seen to be beneficial to the working relationship and result in more suitable service delivery (Jeffrey, 2009). Jeffrey (2009, p. 49) states, "The cultural competence model was the orthodox means of addressing differences in professional social work contexts in the 1980s and 1990s, and it remains common in some sectors. In this approach, packaged and oversimplified forms of ethnographic knowledge were taught to social work students because these were seen to offer a way to manage the differences embodied in their clients".

The cultural competence approach to social work practice developed from the emergence of multiculturalism (McGoldrick, 1982; Quinn, 2003; Maiter, 2009). There is the belief that it is necessary to learn about cultural differences. This perspective

suggests that there is a need to understand the norms, values, and practices of a culture so as to be able to provide services within the framework of the culture (Maiter, 2009). One skill that social workers can rely upon is building relationships. The ways in which we conceptualize the qualities and impact of social differences such as race and culture, shape the ways in which we organize our practice and the expectation we have in our professional relationships (Jeffrey, 2009).

According to Potocky-Tripodi (2002) attitudes and beliefs for culturally competent practice are important for fostering positive relationships. Culturally competent social workers:

- are aware that practice cannot be neutral, value free or objective;
- are aware of and sensitive to their own cultural heritage;
- are aware of how their own cultural backgrounds and experiences, attitudes, values, and biases influence psychological processes;
- are aware that their decisions may be ethnocentric;
- are aware of their negative emotional reactions toward other racial and ethnic groups that may prove detrimental to their clients;
- are aware of stereotypes and preconceived notions that they may hold toward other racial and ethnic groups;
- are willing to make purposive changes in the feelings, thoughts, and actions toward other ethnic groups;
- value and respect differences that exist between themselves and clients in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and beliefs, and are willing to contrast

their own beliefs and attitude with those of their culturally different clients in a non-judgemental fashion;

- respect clients' religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values about physical and mental functioning;
- respect indigenous helping practices and respect ethnic community intrinsic help-giving networks;
- value bilingualism and do not view another language as an impediment to practice;
- value the social work profession's commitment to social justice; and
- recognize the limits of their competencies and expertise.

Cultural competence has grown in many directions and has emerged as a distinct concept that has moved beyond cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness. It integrates and transforms knowledge about individuals and groups into specific standards. The scope of cultural competence changes the operations of practitioners, providers, and social service organizations (Lum, 2004).

### 2.7.1. Critiques and Limitations of Cultural Competent Practice

Cultural competence or cross-culturally competent practice is seen to encourage openness to difference, expertise in the use of cultural resources and respect for cultural integrity. Many theorists have noted culture often comes to be viewed as a blueprint for human behaviour, values and beliefs. One major critique of the approach is that it is overly general, simplified depictions of non-dominant, immigrant, racialized and

Indigenous communities, reinforcing stereotypes and creating students and workers a sense for professional anxiety over obtaining and applying information correctly (Jeffrey, 2009). It is unrealistic to expect that any one person can be knowledgeable and sensitive about all cultures and be culturally specific in delivering services all the time.

It leads to problems with access and equity in social services being attributed to cultural differences, rather than the social, economic or political factors that hold systemic inequities in place. Racism then becomes defines as a matter of individual prejudice, and "cultural barriers" are positioned as the cause for unequal treatment (Jeffrey, 2009). "Social work programs in Canada have become more aware of problems with de-historicized and stereotyped approaches to conceptualizing social difference in general, and cross-cultural practice specifically" (Jeffery, 2009, p.51).

Cross-cultural approaches to service delivery and education in the West are seen to provide predominantly White social service professionals with a better capacity to communicate with non-dominant groups (Laird, 2008; Jeffery, 2009). The model has come under considerable critique from those who charge that it puts forth and applies simplistic and deeply flawed notions of ethnic and racial differences. "Social work is founded on the idea that the social world and its problems can be studied and understood, resulting in rational solutions that simply need to be followed through" (Jeffrey, 2009, p.46).

Despite the critique the persistence and evident appeal of the approach for professionals who seek to understand clients who are different from themselves in that they come from racially and culturally different backgrounds (Jeffery, 2009). "The

major problem with cultural competence, within modern Western multicultural context, is that it reproduced enduring assumptions about the Other that were not far removed from paternalism, imperialism, and racism of early social work" (Jeffrey, 2009, p.49).

Although the cultural competence model has flaws it was viewed as accepting the growth of cultural and ethnic diversity. One of the greatest flaws is that any attempt to become the expert of other cultures results in oversimplification which results in more harm than good. Further, it results in negative judgements as non-dominant groups are compared to dominant society's Western norms and values (Maiter, 2009).

Social workers are urged to practice from a social justice and anti-oppressive perspective (Lundy, 2004; Maiter, 2009). While there is a greater focus on structural approach there is a strong tendency for agencies and social workers to work from a social control perspective. Structural inequalities based on class, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability and geographic region were ignored, and intervention focused on changing the behaviour of individuals (Lefley, 1989; Fook, 1993; Hick, 2006; Maiter, 2009).

Maiter (2009) suggests that implications for practice are:

1. It is important to recognize that discussion of history, power relations, dominance and White privilege raises feelings of guilt and anxiety in white people about the deeds of our ancestors even as we continue to benefit from this unearned power and privilege.

2. We need to resist stereotypical and generalized thinking about people from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds. People from both Western and non-Western backgrounds internalize their culture in a multiplicity of ways.
3. Providing equitable resources for families from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds does not mean non-involvement, as this would leave children in harmful situations and families without needed help.
4. Despite changes in immigration policies and continued favouring from White nations, many immigrants are members of diverse ethno-racial groups.
5. In order to move forward we need to examine specific skills that will assist us to work collaboratively with clients.

**Summary**

The there are many factors that affect how culturally competent social work practice is approached by racialized social workers. Winnipeg is a culturally diverse city where multiculturalism, race and oppression are all prevalent factors in how people function in society.

Race, discrimination and oppression are major factors in how racialized people relate and function in society. The culture of Whiteness is also a factor in how people relate to each other. Understanding that Whiteness affects both White and non-White people is a major factor in developing cultural awareness and culturally competent practice.

# CHAPTER THREE Theoretical Framework

## Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss racial identity theory and oppression theory and how they relate to this study. These theories examine how racism affects people and their ability to function as individuals with racial identities, acculturation to racial groups and within institutions and systems where racism has historically shaped fundamental democratic institutions such as education and social welfare. They also address how social structure such as oppression affects individual and professional development.

## 3.1. Racial Identity Theory

Every person has multiple social identities. For people with multiple racialized identities, such as bi-racial persons, the development of self-esteem may be more difficult due to negative reactions to one of their group memberships from people in other groups. The processes and stages a person goes through in order to develop an identity are individual, involving conceptualized tasks and personal adjustments in a generally hostile environment (Appleby, 2001).

Ethnic identity and general acculturation provide descriptors of quality of life (Lieber, Chin, Nihira, & Mink, 2001). The level of acculturation a person can indicate how well she or he copes and functions as racialized people in society.

Racial identity is about how people view themselves and the world through racialized lenses (Thompson & Carter, 1997). A person's understanding of her or his social and personality identities helps to form their racial identity development (Appleby, 2001).

Social identity refers to aspects of oneself which form the basis of shared group membership. Self-categorization includes acts of self-labelling and adoption over time of normative behaviours, characteristics, and values associated with the particular group membership (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Personality identification refers to aspects of behaviours, traits, and values individuals see as characterising themselves as distinct from other individuals. We aspire to an identity in which both aspects are perceived positively resulting in higher self esteem determined primarily through social group comparison. Having a healthy and positive personality identification contributes to positive racial identity development (Appleby, 2001).

Helms (1990), focuses her racial identity development theory primarily upon race and not on ethnicity or the intersection of both. This theory was developed largely in response to practice in psychological counselling with individuals in one-on-one interpersonal settings. Racial identity theory has as its central proposition that individuals differ and may change in relation to identification with their racial group. It focuses on individual-to-racial group relations and locates change processes within the individual and between an individual and their racial groups (Alderfer, 1997).

Identity is about how people see themselves in connection with others. It is about a sense of rootedness to particular places, cultures, histories, contexts, and politics. It is also about comparisons based on perceived similarities and differences, and the concomitant demarcation through identity construction and negotiation of social boundaries that serve to either include or exclude individuals and groups from access to social resources and statuses (Dei & Rummens, 2011).

For young people, the development of their identities as unique individuals is an integral part of their identity formation across the developmental trajectory. This process occurs within societal contexts that seek to include, marginalize, or exclude both individuals and the social groups to which they are seen to belong (Dei & Rummens, 2011). Various cultural, racial, religious, linguistic, national, age, sex/gender, socio-economic class, territorial, and other identification criteria are used in these personal and social identification processes, all of which reflect various types of commonality or difference deemed socially salient at the time. The corresponding identity "markers" serve at once to affirm oneself and the relevant collectivity, while simultaneously demarcating "I – you" and "we – they" boundaries. The resulting personal and social identities may be myriad and complex; they may intersect or overlap; they are in constant flux, as they are constructed, negotiated, and sometimes even contested. They may also intersect with disadvantaged racialized statuses in ways that either intensify oppressions and marginality or empower individuals to work for social change and transformation. (Helms 1990; Alderfer, 1997; Rummens 2003; Dei & Rummens, 2011).

Helms' (1990) conceptualization of the racial identity interaction model focuses on how racial identity influences and fosters human interaction in super ordinate-subordinate relationships. For example, positions of power are mainly held by dominantly located persons and racialized groups occupy subservient positions. Racial identity is "a sense of group collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group" (Helms, 1990, p.3). It involves an individual's continual and conflicting assessments of the people who comprise their external ascribed reference group and people who comprise other racial groups (Helms, 1995).

Four conceptualizations form what is known as Helms' racial identity theory (Thompson & Carter, 1997):

1. Black identity development theory
2. People of Colour identity development theory
3. White identity development theory
4. People of Colour-White Interaction model (formerly Black-White interaction model)

According to Alderfer (1997), the stages of racial identity development are:

1. Individuals largely unaware of how racial group memberships affect their lives.
2. Individuals begin to realize how their own and others' lives are shaped by their physical racial group memberships. People respond to them and to

others in part as a function of their racial group membership. They are no longer able to deny the effects of race in their lives or in the lives of others.

3. Individuals are primarily concerned with claiming membership in their own racial groups.
4. Individuals proceed to develop more balanced relationships with their racial groups and fashion relationships that leave a place for their unique personalities as well as their group affiliations. They look outwards from the perspective of individuals who are members of their own racial groups.

Originally Helms portrayed the natural progression of stages as fluid. A person would progress but not everyone necessarily go through all the stages (Cross, 1991; Alderfer, 1997). The stages of racial identity development mature sequentially and can change as society changes. In 1995 Helms reformulated her model to include regression which means that a person can go back to previous levels that were mastered, instead of progression to the next level (Helms, 1995).

The process of determining which group to identify with, or not, entails choosing the qualities that appear most desirable to one's social and political environment (Thompson & Carter, 1997). Racial identity development involves changes or shifts in world views, experiences, self-reflections, and moral decision making. It is a lifelong process of self-actualization (Helms, 1990, 1995). It also entails continual and deliberate practices of self-examination and experiencing. In developing racial identity, people undertake careful reflection on the extent to which racial indoctrination has influenced and continues to influence their lives and the manner in

which they relate to others who are racially similar or dissimilar to themselves. These experiences are ongoing and lifelong (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

In accordance with racial identity theories, influential leaders who are able to resolve racial issues and create dynamic learning environments for other minorities are characterized as operating at the advanced stages as they can model what they have learned for others to learn from (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

The application of racial identity to groups and organizations is critical to the North American workforce because, more often than not, racial issues and conflicts exist in these settings. Racial climate plays a powerful role in influencing individual behaviours within the group. Understanding the power of perception among group members needs to be considered within the context of a society. They are marked by ambivalences, whereby organizations may claim to be concerned with certain important racial issues but will establish policies and practices that ignore or refute these concerns (Thompson & Carter, 1997). This is important because democratic societies are shaped by how the population understands and communicates their needs. With changing demographics, Canada's ethnic diversity will influence how policies and practices will best meet the needs of its citizens.

Racial identity theory fits the proposed research in that the research respondents will not likely all be from a single racial group. The way that each person experiences their social and personal identities shapes his or her racial identity in a way that is unique. The particular demographics and social conditions in Winnipeg will likely

influence how each study respondent shapes his or her personal social work frame of reference and how they function as professionals in the field.

According to Young (1990), "Groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group. Group identification arises, that it, in the encounter ant interaction between social collectivities that experience some differences in their way of life and forms of association, even if they also regard themselves as belonging to the same society" (p. 57). Also, "Social groups are not entities that exist apart from individuals, but neither are they merely arbitrary classifications of individuals according to attributes which are external to or accidental to their identities" (Young, 1990, p.59).

### 3.2. Oppression Theory

Theories that examine racial oppression emphasize the institutional nature of oppression and the intergroup dynamics that sustain it (Turner, 2011). "Oppression theory is derived from several different disciplines ant theoretical traditions and encompasses a broad array of concerns related to power, privilege, domination, stratification, structural inequality and discrimination" (Robbins, 2011, p. 343).

Young (1990) examines oppression as a structural concept. The systemic character of oppression implies that an oppressed group need not have a correlate oppressing group. While structural oppression involves relations about groups, these relations do not always fit the paradigm of conscious and intentional oppression of one

group by another (Young, 1990). Oppression occurs at the institutional, intergroup and individual levels (Turner, 2011).

Oppression can be based on a variety of factors, including social class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or other categories by which people are defined as "lesser than" (Turner, 2011). Marsiglia and Kulis (2009) have noted two basic ingredients necessary for oppression to exist, "A group that is being oppressed and an oppressor who benefits from such oppression" (p.33). "Privilege, domination, and exploitation are central features of oppression, and theorist have started to examine multiple levels of oppression and, in particular, the ways in which oppression is linked to interlocking systems of privilege or domination...oppression cannot exist in the absence of privilege as that are interdependent on one another" (Turner, 2011, p. 344).

Oppression is perpetrated and perpetuated by dominant groups and is systemic and continuous in its application. It is group-based (i.e., mainstream groups tend to be the oppressors of groups outside the mainstream), another feature of oppression is that it is not accidental nor is it usually intentional. "...it is crucial to have an understanding of the nature of oppression, its causes and sources, its production and reproduction, its dynamics, its effects on the oppressed, including its internalization, and the social functions it carries out in the interests of the dominant groups (i.e.: the oppressors) in society" (Mullaly, 1997, p. 138). The research participants in this study are all racialized individuals. As such they all experience oppression to some degree. Various forms of oppression are viewed as intersecting with each other creating a total system of oppression (Mullaly 1997).

Mullaly (1997) maintains assumptions about the nature of people enable social workers to make sense of situations. "Perceptions are never theory-free because they are based on certain fundamental assumptions about the nature of people, society, and the relationship between the two" (p.100). Social work is based on humanitarianism and egalitarian ideals but operates within a social order based on inequality in that a minority dominates controls and exploits the majority (Mullaly, 1997). Many people both inside and outside of social work subscribe to socialist values such as social justice, equity, collective care, and structured opportunities so that all classes, races, genders, cultures sexualities, ages, and abilities maintain personal and social fulfillment.

### 3.2.2. Social Work and Oppressed Groups

It is important to acknowledge personal location of individual oppression and various types of internalized oppression will enable social workers to better understand how oppressed persons may be experiencing and coping with their situation of oppression (Carniol, 1992; Mullaly, 1997). Our social institutions function in such a way that they discriminate against people along the lines of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability and so on (Mullaly, 1997).

Oppression is a social construction where dominant-subordinate relations create such notion and practices such as 'blaming the victim' (Young, 1990; Mullaly 2004; Die & Rummens, 2011; Turner, 2011). For change to occur on the structural level, deconstruction of oppressive practices and reconstruction of society characterized by true social equality must occur. All forms of oppression are not the same and will not

be experienced to the same degree by all individuals or groups. They require different responses and different actions (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997).

Social solutions may not occur without understanding that oppression is a systemic situation that is produced and reproduce in everyday social processes and practices. It carries out many important functions for the dominant group (Mullaly, 1997; Turner 2011). Oppressed people need to feel it is important mechanism for oppressed people discovering themselves, reclaiming their identity, creating community and solidarity, and developing a group specific voice and perspective. The politics of difference will also encourage social workers to advocate for policies and decision-making mechanisms that give full recognition and representation to the voices of oppressed groups (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997).

Oppression is not experienced the same by all oppressed people (Young, 1990; Turner 2011). They are different kinds of oppression that are often facilitated by institutions, and that people do not all have the same barriers or advantages in society because of therm. This is significant to this study because all of the respondents are racialized however report that their experiences are diverse due to their personal location. (Mullaly, 1997).

**Summary**

Racial identity theory and structural social work theory are theories that are suitable for this research. Both theories are based on populations in the United States

and Canada, therefore are developed from research on racialized North American groups.

Racial identity theory also recognises that all individuals do not experience identity development the same way. People develop their own identities around race and how they affiliate with racial groups dependent on various factors. A person's level of acculturation can indicate how well they cope and function as minorities in society.

Oppression theory addresses issues that all of the research participants experience as racialized social workers. As such the theory addresses many of the issues that research participants identify with, while recognizing that all people do not experience oppression the same way.

# CHAPTER 4 Methodology

## Introduction

This research is a qualitative study from an emic perspective using snowball sampling and in-depth semi-structured interactive interviews in a collective case study. Careful consideration was given ethical issues, and the sensitivity that is inherent when working with racialized people. The interviews were digitally recorded, the research participants were easily identifiable and confidentiality was extremely important due to the sensitive nature of the research topic, data management was carefully maintained and respected.

## 4.1. The Nature of Qualitative Research

Knowledge is produced from a variety of rich resources and perspectives on social reality. Qualitative research stresses the importance of interpretation as well as how individuals experience their lived reality (Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy, 2006; Padgett, 2008). As such, it is appropriate for my study because the research subjects are from diverse backgrounds and each spoke of their own experiences.

Qualitative research allows researchers to explore from the perspective of the individual. Qualitative methods have an inherent appeal to social workers and other practitioner-researchers due to the fact that they are rapport-driven inquiry. The strength and success of qualitative research lie in the researcher's ability to be flexible

rather that always trying to control the process (Mazzei, 2003; Padgett, 2008). Researchers can ground their analysis in the data collected and seek to make as few assumptions as possible. Semi-structured interview questions are used to enable comparability across interviews gained from participants. Participants share their personal views and experiences independent of the ideas of their interviewer. Researchers seek to identify what is considered important in the study topic from the viewpoints of participants (Sheppard, 2004).

Qualitative research allows the respondents the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences while emphasizing details of importance. Depth in the responses to interview questions was extremely important to the research because there is little information about the topic. It allowed the respondents the freedom to speak about what they wanted to without inhibitions (Sheppard, 2004).

Qualitative research is used to examine *how* or *what* questions and is used to explore a topic, to develop a detailed view, to take advantage of access to information, to write in expressive and persuasive language, to spend time in the field, and to reach audiences receptive to qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2004). This fit was appropriate for the research as the research questions revolved around *how* the respondents have experienced cross culturally sensitive social work practice, and *what* they thought about their experiences. Sands (1990), maintains that social work researchers and practitioners prioritize reaching discovery of the explanations behind the shaping of human nature and social phenomena through the use of qualitative methodologies.

Qualitative research is also consistent with studying oppressed people. "Oppression theories most typically rely on qualitative methods, due to their ability to

provide a rich description of the lives and realities of the oppressed" (Turner, 2011, p. 351). There are multiple truths about society, social relationships, and the nature of reality, thus, it is important to embrace research methods that accurately describe these multiple truths (Turner, 2011). As such, qualitative research is appropriate for the theoretical framework of this study.

## 4.2. Ethical Considerations

The standard University of Manitoba research ethics review process was submitted and approved. The ethical considerations closely relate to protecting their confidentiality and preserving their anonymity. This is extremely important due to the fact that there are very few visible minority social workers in Winnipeg. It would not be difficult for the participants to be identified if sensitive information that they share is not appropriately protected.

I discussed the consent forms with each participant before they signed them and gave them opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns. None of the participants identified any concerns during the course of the research that were not addressed in the consent forms.

### 4.2.1. Informed Consent and Participant's Rights

It was important to complete consent forms and be sure that the participants were aware of their rights to privacy, discontinuation of involvement, protection of privacy over personal information and sensitive topics discussed throughout the study. I

read over the consent forms with each participant to ensure that they understood their rights and had an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns. None of the participants identified concerns or issues.

To be part of the study, it was necessary for the participants to be working as social workers. This put them in a vulnerable situation as they were speaking about some of their perspectives on practices and issues that come up in their present workplaces. None of the participants expressed concerns about confidentiality or being identified by others.

Consent forms for voluntary participation were completed prior to interviewing. Each participant had the opportunity to review the form and clarify with the researcher prior to signing. Signed consent forms indicated that the participant understood the requirements of the research and was willingly participating. Each participant received a copy of their signed consent form (See: Appendix F).

Due to the fact that the Winnipeg community of racialized social workers is small, information was disguised in the transcripts with the consent of participants. Direct quotes that could have been identifiable were paraphrased and re-worded so that the source was protected. Participants were asked to review the findings to be sure they felt comfortable with the content.

### 4.2.2. Race, Culture, and Anticipated Difficulties

When dealing with culturally diverse groups it is important to consider cultural differences. During the process of data collection, analyzing and writing the researcher needs to acknowledge and consider cross-cultural communication (Marshall, 1985; Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy, 2006). As such it was important for me to be clear on my personal location, perspectives, and awareness about how they influenced the research process. It was also necessary to be aware that I may have personal biases that affected the way I interacted with respondents during interviews.

Before each interview I reviewed my interview questions and tried to put myself "in the shoes" of the respondents. I knew that I had a very diverse group of respondents and wanted to be sensitive and appropriate to all of them. I was very open with the participants about my personal location if they asked direct questions. I felt it was important to only answer questions that participants asked so the focus would stay on their stories, experiences, and sharing.

It is easy to conclude that if the interviewer and interviewee are of the same gender, class, and ethnic background, this might go a long way towards establishing an open dialogue between researchers and researched and provide a maximum opportunity for the voice of the respondent to be heard and represented (Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy, 2006). Several of the respondents and I shared characteristics such as being female, social workers, being Canadian born, and being M.S.W. students. These shared characteristics helped as topics for ice breaking conversations and rapport building prior to the interviews.

Sometimes sharing some insider characteristics with respondents is not enough to ensure the researcher can capture the lived experience of those they research and might impede it (Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy, 2006). Although I shared many of the same characteristics as some respondents it did not mean that I could empathise or relate to their experiences according to specific sameness. For example, when one of my female respondents shared her experience about being treated like a maid by her co-workers, I did not relate to her story from a gender perspective, I related to her from a minority perspective.

Few human services practitioners have fully mastered the ability to communicate with culturally different clients. Working across cultures takes skill and accumulated experience. Social workers can misread and misdiagnose client problems unless practitioners understand how to work effectively with diverse populations, they will intervene at the wrong time or with the wrong family members. Help is help only when it is perceived as such. Little good is likely to be accomplished if a helper uses unexplained jargon or ignores indigenous ways of communicating (Henderson, 1994; Fong, 2005).

Ethnicity is neither an automatic guarantee nor deterrent to establishing rapport with clients. There are many sub-cultures and dynamics in communities such as class and socio-economic status that can affect how dynamics form in interpersonal communication and interaction (Fong, 2005). Professional attitudes and human relationship skills are more important factors. Anger about their perceived low status causes some people of colour to view professional workers not of their ethnicity with deep suspicion (Henderson, 1994). This is important to the research as I am interested

in finding out whether these stereotypes affect how racialized social workers practice. Stereotypes and suspicion can shape how people perceive visible minority workers based on race (Fong, 2005).

### 4.2.3. Reflexivity

Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy (2006) define reflexivity as the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process. Researchers are products of their society and its structures and institutions. Their backgrounds and feelings are part of the process of knowledge construction. It is imperative for the researcher to be aware of their personality. The set of attributes that a researcher brings with them into the research project includes gender, ethnicity, class and any other factors that may influence the research process.

Reflexivity requires us to be mindful of the importance of difference to our research project as a whole (Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy, 2006). It was important for me to examine my personal biases, beliefs, and views prior to interviewing so that I was aware of how my biases and assumptions shaped the results of the research. Researchers have construed the interview as an active relationship occurring in a context permeated by issues of power, emotionality, and interpersonal process (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Researchers decide on their questions and topics of interest prior to interviewing (Sheppard, 2004). To prepare, I examined my beliefs and phrased questions carefully. The questions were tested in a pilot interview to ensure that they

did not inadvertently lead or influence research participants by being suggestive or supporting stereotypes.

### 4.3. Collective Case Study

Case study research is all-encompassing and covers the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis. It is not limited to being a data collection method alone or to a research design. It allows researchers to have the flexibility to use data collection techniques that help to enhance qualitative research results (Stoecker, 1991). A case study can be on any topic but it must use some empirical method and present some empirical data. The rationale for using case study is related to its compatibility with a study that examines the community and society in a multicultural city (Yin, 2009). This is a special and unique case that merits intensive investigation. This was an appropriate methodology for this study because the respondents spoke about their real life experiences in relation to the community where they live, work and socialize in (Rubin & Babbie, 2007).

A collective case study approach is used for this research. In this study about racialized social workers' experience of multicultural social work in Winnipeg, it is appropriate to use a case study methodology because there is a specific population unique to a geographic area, practicing social work at a particular period in time with a specific population. As Yin (2009) notes, case study research aims to understand contextual conditions which is compatible with research whose purpose is to uncover information about real life phenomenon in depth. In this case study, a current cohort of Winnipeg social workers who are racialized comprised the case. Their perceptions of

how their non-White, visible minority status affects how they are perceived as culturally sensitive social workers was key to the goals of this study.

The collective case study is designed with a small sample and cannot be generalized to the larger population. When selecting participants for a study, sampling of attributes was not the highest priority as balance and variety were important. The relevant characteristics were numerous so that only a few combinations were eligible to be included. Several desirable types were omitted as learning about the topic from the study participants' perspective was the primary goal (Stake, 1995; Swanborn, 2010).

Studies of "bounded systems of actions" (Snow & Anderson, 1991, p. 152) draw on the ability of the qualitative researcher to extract depth and meaning in context. Regardless of its subject matter, the case study draws on multiple perspectives and data sources to produce contextually rich and meaningful interpretation. Case study methods are not as explicitly described as other methods and leave more analytic discretion to the researcher (Padgett, 2008).

The 'case' in this research was defined as currently employed racialized social workers in Winnipeg having experience in culturally sensitive social work practice. All of the participants' experiences had occurred in Winnipeg. Yeigidis & Weinbach (2006) maintain that case study is appropriate in situations where little is known about the area being studied and when it is impossible to draw a representative sample of participants. As such it was appropriate for studying non-White social workers in Winnipeg about their experiences in cross culturally sensitive practice.

In qualitative research, interviewers must be able to interpret and observe a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal communication. Data collected consists of both unstructured and preselected questions as well as the interviewer's observations of participants (Yeigidis & Weinbach, 2006).

Case studies can be used in many situations to contribute to knowledge about individual, group, organizational, social, and political conditions. Case studies allow investigators to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industry (Yin, 2009). Due to the fact that racialized social workers working in multicultural communities have not been greatly explored from an emic approach, case study was a good fit for my research. It is preferred in examining contemporary events when relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009).

Using case study for the purposes of this research was helpful for examining the unique situation of racialized social workers in Winnipeg. A case study of this phenomenon allowed me to examine the impact of current policies and procedures that might inform policy in other regions (Rubin & Babbie, 2007).

### 4.4. Data Collection

Data was collected from in-depth semi-structured interactive interviews. The research participants were recruited by circulating an Introduction to Invitation (See: Appendix B) and a Letter of Invitation (See: Appendix C) through snowball sampling.

The interviews were digitally audio taped with consent of the participants. Immediately following each interview I made personal notes regarding topics, themes, and situational occurrences that the participant emphasized or that stood out during the interview.

In this study, the data collection was stopped after eight interviews. At this point my observations and field notes indicated that no new insights were being presented (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Qualitative researchers continue to collect data until they reach a point of data saturation. Data saturation occurs when the researcher is no longer hearing or seeing new information. Saturation is achieved when additional analyses of data bring redundancy and reveal no new information (Morse, 1995; Padgett, 2008).

Unlike quantitative researchers who wait until the end of the study to analyze their data, qualitative researchers analyze their data throughout their study (Siegle, 2002). As such, I continuously worked with the interview tapes and transcriptions while making notes and keeping track of themes throughout the entire study.

### 4.4.1. Sample Selection Criteria

In this section I describe my study sample, their demographics and the themes that were derived from the interviews. This is significant to the research in that several respondents who were not first generation immigrants were born into racialized groups in Canada. Their feelings of "belonging" significantly impacted how the research interview questions were received and answered. This group is different from other qualitative groups because it is unique to the present population of Winnipeg. The

demographics of the sample are unique to the population's present social climate and reflect the attitudes and perspectives of the time.

I advertised the study by e-mail posting that was distributed by my administrative assistant (see: Appendix B) to agencies that were know to have racialized social workers. A letter of invitation was also sent for respondents to circulate to other racialized social workers they thought would be interested in participating (See: Appendix C). Once participants called me about my study I reviewed the criteria they needed to meet to participate over the telephone (See: Appendix D).

The rationale for investigating only racialized social workers was that by virtue of being visible minorities, there is often an immediate reaction and interaction based strictly on appearance. Social prejudice, misrepresentation, and stereotypes play a primary role in how people are perceived and received by others as professionals and as human beings in general (Fong, 2005).

The target population group was racialized persons including immigrants, refugees, and multi-racial social workers. All respondents self identified as racialized, visible minorities when agreeing to be part of the study. This information was verified prior to the interviews with a verbal review of the consent form.

With respect to social work experience, it was important in this study, that the participants were comfortable in speaking about their experience as racialized social workers. They needed to be comfortable in self identifying as racialized and had to be prepared to answer questions about how their experiences made them feel as professionals, as part of minority society, and as individuals. Persons in the sample

were required to have worked as social workers in Winnipeg for a minimum of two years, with experience in social work agencies that are not designated for working with specific ethno-cultural groups. Respondents had to have experience working with racialized clients from backgrounds different from their own. They also had to have experience working with dominantly-located clients. This was necessary so that they could compare their experiences and report whether they felt there is a difference in how they are perceived in terms of skills and experience. I also wanted to compare how they approach their work and to distinguish if and in what ways the study participants thought it was shaped by their visible minority status.

It was also necessary for the respondents to be able to communicate in the interviews in English. Although the fact that respondents from different backgrounds spoke different languages, I did not have the resources or time to find interpreters, translate manuscripts or learn cultural meanings of different terms and/or slang. I conducted all of the interviews and transcribed all of the recordings myself. Therefore I wanted to be sure that there was clear and concise communication between all of the participants and myself in order to get the most accurate data possible for this study.

The pilot interview that was helpful in preparing me for the interviewing. I changed some wording in the questions, changed the order I asked some questions, and got a sense of how much time I would need to conduct an interview.

#### 4.4.1.1. Background Information, Demographics and Characteristics of the Sample

Several questions were asked of all participants in order to provide me with some information about their background (See: Appendix E).The study includes eight research participants that all generously donated their time. The research was conducted in March 2011 in Winnipeg, Manitoba at Henderson, Monroe, and Millennium branches of the Winnipeg Public Library. The interviews ranged from approximately 1 to 2 hours. The average time of the interviews was approximately 75 minutes each.

Each participant shared with me their experiences of being social workers in Winnipeg in one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured, interactive interviews. The range in years of social work experience of the participants was from 3 to 36 years in many different fields. The participants in this study were diverse in age, experience, cultural background and perspectives of cultural competence. Half of the participants were males and the other half were females.

The age of the participants ranged from mid-twenties to late-fifties. Three participants completed their social work education as mature adults while the other five were in their early to mid-twenties when they graduated. Three of the participants had Masters of social work degrees. Five participants had a bachelor of social work degree. Of those five, three of them are currently working on a Masters degree in Social Work.

### 4.4.2. Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling was appropriate for this research because the population consists of a minority and oppressed population with small numbers of potential participants and locating them was an issue. This sampling method was chosen because members of the population fitting the research criteria were difficult to locate (Yin, 2009). Snowball sampling is a commonly used technique in research on minority and oppressed populations and is often necessary in order to have successful recruitment (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). It was appropriate for the population for the purposes of my research because only 10% of the workforce in Manitoba is comprised of visible minorities and only 5% of all social workers in Manitoba are visible minorities (Manitoba Job Futures, 2010).

I provided an Introduction to Invitation (See: Appendix B) and a Letter of Invitation (See: Appendix C) to a person, via e-mail, not affiliated with the study to distribute to organizations where non-White social workers were known to be employed. They were asked to pass the letter on to others who might be interested by forwarding the e-mail. The letter also provides information about what topics and kinds of questions potential participants could expect in the interview.

One limitation of snowball sampling is that the research participants that the researcher can engage rely mainly on the previous participants already interviewed (Daly, 2007; Castillo, 2009). Representativeness of the sample cannot be guaranteed. The researcher has no idea of the true distribution of the population and of the sample. Sampling bias is also likely due to the fact that initial subjects tend to nominate people

that they know well. It is highly possible that the subjects share the same traits and characteristics, and thus, it is possible that the sample that the researcher will obtain is only a small subgroup of the entire populations (Castillo, 2009).

### 4.4.3. The In-Depth Semi-Structured Interactive Interviews

The nature of semi-structured interviewing is that it is not always possible to know what direction the interview will take. Research participants may lead the interview in completely different directions than the researcher may anticipate. Thus, it is important to have some prepared questions that focus the interview (Christensen, 1999). Interviews are now commonly understood as collaborative, communicative events that evolve their own norms and rules (Briggs, 1986; Kvale, 1996). Thus interviewers should not focus solely on the words of the interviewees but also examine the collaborative activities of the interviewees from which these outcomes are produced (Futrell & Willard 1994; Hertz, 1995; Jorgenson, 1995; Langellier & Hall 1995; Miller 1996; Suchman & Jordan 1992). Collaborative activities of the interviewees with the researcher may consist of body language that is congruent with what is being expressed in words, tone, mood, questions and similar or connected subjects raised or expressions of interest for further exploration of the subject matter.

An interactive interviewing context requires that an interviewer listens while being empathetic and attentive (Mies 1983; Stanley & Wise 1983). Many interactive researchers have heeded the call for research that gives something useful back to respondents and their communities, rather than research that is aimed primarily at academic audiences (Bochner & Ellis, 1996). Interactive interviews offer opportunities

for self-conscious reflection by researchers and well as respondents (Ellis & Berger, 2003). As such providing a research summary to participants allowed all involved to reflect on the research and experiences that they have had in the past that could help them shape their future practice and build self awareness. Participants also benefited from having their views heard, validated, and/or affirmed.

Most traditionally-oriented minorities do not readily volunteer information about their relatives or friends (Henderson, 1994). There is often uncertainty about how meanings may be misinterpreted or misrepresented by outsiders in a way that may be harmful to their loved ones and community as a whole. There are many cultural and social factors that contribute to such dynamics. For example, political backgrounds, interaction with outsiders, perception of research and experience as participants, social and economic backgrounds, cultural identity, values, beliefs, and gender roles can all affect how interviewees react to being researched. It is important to consider such factors when carrying out research with racialized people due to the fact that the needs and experiences of participants may be different from those of the researcher and require greater sensitivity on the part of the researcher (Henderson, 1994, Fong, 2005).

The success of an interview greatly depends on the ability of the interviewer to establish and maintain a good relationship with the interviewee. The interviewer must establish and maintain a functional interpersonal relationship and demonstrate warmth, sensitivity, and a genuine interest for what is being shared by research participants. Speech, appearance, movement, facial expressions, and demeanour all convey acceptance or rejection to some degree. These are important factors to consider when interviewing across cultures because they are not universal in meaning. For example,

eye contact is seen as a sign of respect in some cultures whereas it is seems a sign of disrespect in others (Henderson, 1994).

I conducted the interviews following a guideline approved by the Research Ethics Board (See: Appendix A). The interviews took place in mutually agreed upon locations that the respondents and I felt was appropriate. The locations of the interviews were private rooms at the Monroe, Henderson and Millennium branches of the Winnipeg Public Library. These private settings were necessary so that personal and/or sensitive, information about professional experiences disclosed about the research subject matter could remain confidential. Data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interactive interviews. I conducted the interviews with the research participants in face-to-face sessions. The eight separate interviews ranged from one to two hours with an average of seventy-five minutes.

### 4.5. Coding the Data

Coding the data consisted of memo taking during the interviews and analysis while placing prominent and recurring themes into separate electronic files. Open-coding helped to explore the assumptions and ideas that appear and possibly lead to new discoveries in the findings (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). In open-coding the researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information. Similar events and incidents will be labelled and grouped to form categories (Creswell, 2004).

Once the interviews were transcribed, coding was done manually on the paper using line-by-line coding. The main goal of the line-by-line coding was to break down the text and to attach and develop categories putting them into an order in the course of time (Lofland, 1995; Flick, 2006). Each interview was examined for prominent themes. Once the themes were identified in the data, they were explored for commonalties and factors.

### 4.6. Data Management

I tried to develop a rapport with each participant by interacting with them in a collaborative relationship that allowed them to define their own reality in their own words (Krysik, 1999). It was helpful to identify myself as a racialized social worker because my acknowledgement of being a minority showed the participants that I could relate to what they reported as a peer and equal. I was mindful of my tone, mannerisms, wording, and sensitive to the cultural and social context of the questions being asked (Henderson, 1994; Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leavy, 2006). I feel that I was quite successful with communication during the interviews because all of the participants answered all of my questions and appeared comfortable giving examples of personal experience. All eight participants completed their interviews and none mentioned terminating at any point.

Memo taking throughout the research process assisted in keeping track of themes and ideas that arose as I worked with the data. These assisted me in data

analysis and writing up the findings through highlighting topics and themes that were emphasized during the interviews.

Additional confidentiality was warranted due to the fact that some respondents self-identify with ethno-cultural groups that are not difficult to match with their voices on their audio recordings. For example, a respondent that self-identified as being an immigrant from South America was easy to identify on the tapes due to the spoken accent. It would have been easy to identify the social worker in the small Winnipeg social work community.

To ensure that each participant was not identifiable through the recorded transcripts, no names, contact information or other identifying information were included on transcripts. Participants remained informed about their rights about confidentiality and terminating involvement with the study at any time throughout the research process. They were encouraged to seek clarification and ask questions throughout their participation in the research.

Three of the eight participants asked how many other interviews were being conducted. I told them there were eight respondents in total. Transcripts and the summary of findings were offered to research participants if they requested them. None of the respondents requested a summary. Five of the eight respondents verbally indicated that they were confident that I would report the findings accurately.

Transcription is a form of data transformation that can enrich or detract from a study depending on how it is handled by the researcher (MacClean, Meyer, & Estable, 2004). I transcribed each interview myself immediately afterwards. Due to the fact that

I used a digital recorder to record each interview the transcription was fairly easy to complete. The sound quality of the recorded interviews was clear, concise and easily accessible for reviewing. There were several advantages such as giving me the ability to fill in unclear passages, insert explanations or clarifications, and obtain timely feedback on my interviewing techniques. I was thereby able to adjust accordingly for future interviews (Padgett, 2008).

My notes, transcriptions, and consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. I was the only person with access to the office and keys to the locked cabinet. The notes, transcriptions, and consent forms were all coded so that no identifying information of any research participant was revealed. Identifying information was shredded on July 1, 2011 when I completed writing about my findings.

**Summary**

Qualitative research was chosen for this study to allow respondents to report their experiences and express their feelings in their own words while being able to emphasize and speak freely about that is important to them.

A collective case study approach was used with snowball sampling. These were appropriate for this population due to the fact Winnipeg has a small proportion of non-White social workers.

There were several factors that affected how respondents interpreted and answered the research questions. The respondents came from diverse backgrounds.

These factors also affected how questions were posed and communicated throughout the interviews. There were several considerations taken into account regarding personal location, ethics, and data interpretation.

# CHAPTER 5 Findings and Discussions

## Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of the study and discuss how it relates to racial identity theory and the theory of oppression. I will discuss what the participants reported as important to them as non-White social workers presently practicing in Winnipeg, while examining how it relates to the development of their identity as racialized workers, and oppressed persons.

Participants had much to say on their experiences as minority social workers in Winnipeg. The findings from the study are organized by themes derived from the participants' accounts. All of the participants spoke about feeling oppressed and racialized to varying degrees based on their personal and professional backgrounds. The themes that emerged from this study consist of how the participants felt about advantages and disadvantages, perceived assumptions, defining competence, working with different populations, and racism in the workplace. The demographic background of participants also gives perspective to their responses, perspectives and personal framework for practice.

The participants in this study expressed a great deal of passion about their work as racialized social workers. They were eager to share their feelings and experiences in cross-cultural social work practice. All of the participants reported that being racialized

affected their personal development and how they worked with all clients, co-workers, supervisors, and collaterals in their fields of social work practice.

## 5.1. Location of Non-White Social Workers

All of the participants self identified as "Canadian". Four participants were born in Canada, two came as immigrants, and two arrived as refugees. Several of the participants identified as multi-racial and multicultural. This is important to note as Canadian demographics are reflecting more multiple associations by the general population characterized by generational and multi-racial unions. The respondents self identified as representing a wide range of cultural backgrounds from geographical areas including Canada, Pakistan, India, England, Ireland, Scotland, France, China, Japan, Pacific Islands, Jamaica, Portugal, Trinidad, Chile, Brazil, and the Philippines. Not all of these areas are traditionally racialized areas, however, some participants identified as multi-racial and/or coming from minority cultures and multi-cultural backgrounds.

There was a broad range of work experience represented by the participants over their social work careers. The respondents collectively specialized in many areas including youth justice, adult corrections, disabilities, child welfare, acute care, addictions, community development, newcomer services, aging, school counselling, family therapy, couples counselling, advocacy, gender transitioning, employment and income assistance, housing, crisis stabilization, mental health, and international development. These diverse backgrounds were shared throughout the interviews and

cited on several occasions as significant factors in how some of the respondents understood and interpreted workplace scenarios and personal experiences.

Although all of the participants shared that they worked with all cultures, only two participants worked specifically with populations that identified their clients as specifically designated as 'cultural', but not specific to any one background. In other words, all of the participants were expected to work with all cultures and not have any specific skills designated for any specific ethno-cultural population.

The participants in this study reflected on how they experienced oppression, and better understand how it influenced how they defined their personal locations as workers and individuals. All of the research participants reported that they felt being racialized made a difference in how they were perceived as professional social workers by both clients and other professionals. All of them reported that they did not feel it was possible to for them to be equal to their White counterparts based on their skin colour.

One participant explained,

> It's hard to put into words what I mean when I say I'm not treated the same as the White workers. I use to think that I couldn't say anything because I'm not White, so how can I know what they're feeling or what their experiences are? Then I realized, all of my cultural sensitivity workshops and classes were always taught by White instructors! Why is the reverse acceptable? I know how I feel, and I feel that I'm treated differently from my White co-workers. My Aboriginal

co-workers are treated differently, and I know that our expectations to be more culturally competent to 'our own people' is different. If a White person were to listen to me they'd way something like "that's just perception, I'm sure it's not meant that way". If a minority hears it, they'll know what I'm talking about. It doesn't matter if something is meant in malice if it makes someone feel oppressed and subordinate. That's why laws on multiculturalism are so weak. Feelings are not concrete evidence. It's just like all the grey areas that exist in mental health. If there's no medical explanation the person must just be crazy! I remember studying Bob Mullaly's structural social work practice in my B.S.W. program. I didn't quite understand how oppression got built into institutions at the time. When I had more and more of the workplace experiences where I felt like I had to keep my mouth shut, I had many 'Ah-ha!' moments. Me not sticking up for myself or others really perpetuated the poor treatment and subordination of non-White people, in my workplace at least.

According to Helms' (1990), racial identity interaction model, this participant focused on how their racial identity influenced and fostered human interaction in super ordinate-subordinate relationships. The participant reported that they felt they were treated differently due to their skin colour and that their own silence perpetuated the oppression in their own workplace. Due to the fact that racial identity development entails continual and deliberate practices of self-examination and experiencing many of the 'ah-ha' moments that this participant reported will result is lifelong process of self-actualization (Helms, 1990, 1995). This in turn will involve changes or shifts in world

views, experiences, self-reflections, and moral decision making in professional and personal arenas (Helms, 1995).

All of the respondents of this study reported that the oppressive nature of knowing that you belong to a marginalized group makes them feel closer to other racialized individuals because they have a common bond in being 'others'. Turner (2011) maintains that oppression cannot exist in the absence of privilege because they are directly proportional. If a participant is treated differently in a negative manner, another party is reaping the benefits in some way even if it is not overt. The oppressive party may not even realize that they are benefiting (Young, 1990; Mullaly 2007; Turner 2011). In the workplace this can perpetuate in instances like a racialized worker feel that they are silenced or cannot be as vocal, therefore can be seen as not having strong leadership skills or able instigate activities independently. This can later effect promotion when compared to other candidates that were not institutionally oppressed. This is important because oppression is group-based. It is not accidental nor is it usually intentional, therefore in this scenario, it would affect all racialized workers even without specific intent towards an individual (Mullaly, 1997; Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009). Arguably this can affect any worker who is part of a culturally non-assertive group. Oppressed workers may never rise to supervisory level positions due to belonging to an oppressed group that exhibits leadership in less assertive ways. One participant shared,

> I was at the same place for about 15 years and finally left when I felt that I would never be seen as 'management material'. I watched many people be promoted past me and I was never even considered for certain positions. I was

just very uncomfortable 'showing interest' in the ways that seemed to work for others. I applied, the same as everyone else. I worked longer hours than I was paid for, and volunteered to help whenever the opportunity arose. I even chaired some committees and did fundraising. I come from a very strict background where you must know your place. Usurping other's from their duties was not my style, nor something I'd ever like to evolve into as a worker. The way I was brought up was that you give your opinion when it's asked of you. Not just because you feel like one-upping someone or feel that you have to add your own flavour to the soup for the sake of being in the kitchen. I understand how some people would see that as not taking initiative, or having a lack of contribution, but in my house, we'd get severely disciplined for speaking out of turn. I can't blame the work for that. I can't blame my culture either. All I can do is recognize that I need to change things about myself attributed to my cultural background if I want to fit into the system in that kind job. It's just not an easy task or something. That's enough to deter me from even considering myself as a candidate to apply.

## 5.2. How Non-White Social Workers Feel About Being Visible Minorities

As I interviewed the racialized social workers about the areas related to my research, many themes and sub-themes emerged. Each of the themes and related sub-themes were prominent in that all the respondents had nearly identical responses.

In this study the participants unanimously reported they felt that being racialized workers is better in building trust in cross-cultural with other racialized people in working relationships. They report that there is a sense of common backgrounds, cultural respect and positioning. There is a sense of authentic empathy and they do not feel they have to explain as they feel a minority worker understands the real experience. The participants in this study all felt that minority clients are more likely to open the door to minority workers. One of the participants reported that they were much more successful than their White co-workers in being invited into the homes of racialized clients, regardless of the clients' racial or cultural background. They stated,

> Whenever I go to see a minority client it's usually a pleasant experience. Most of the time I can sense some reservations from them about having me visit their home when we speak over the phone. When I get to the house and meet them face-to-face there's usually a different reaction. I can't tell you how many times people have cracked open the door with the chain still secure to peek at me before inviting me in. I've had clients literally say that they were expecting a White person and asked for my work identification. I have been invited to stay for many family meals, community events and traditional cultural celebrations. Not many of my White co-workers have enjoyed the same hospitality.

According to the study participants, being racialized definitely makes a difference in how they are perceived as professional social workers by many clients, co-workers, and employers. All eight respondents reported they felt that racialized location

absolutely makes a difference in their work environments. One participant described his or her personal experience and explained,

> People act differently when they find out I'm not White. Over the phone when I set up initial meetings you can't tell because I don't have an accent. When we meet in person I'm usually asked about my cultural background before my skills and credentials. Clients, co-workers, collaterals and employers have changed the way they speak, body language, level of interaction and shown different levels of over or under exaggerated interest. I use to the think it was just me but I've seen this with other non-White workers too. When I talked with my friends and family about it, many of them had the same experiences.

Mullaly (1997) maintains that women and racialized people are not seen as professionals immediately. They are not immediately assumed to be professionals and often must prove time and time again that they are educated and skilled. Society is structurally oppressive to certain groups. As such, internalisation of oppression can perpetuate the cycle of subordination (Mullaly, 2007).

According to Alderfer (1997), one stage of racial identity development is that individuals begin to realize how lives are shaped by their physical racial group memberships. People respond to them and to others in part as a function of their racial group membership. Whether it is from clients, co-workers, collaterals or employers the respondents of this study are all clearly saying that they do not deny the effects of race in their lives or in the lives of others (Helms, 1995; Alderfer, 1997). They recognize that they are racialized and that it affects how they are perceived by others as

professionals regardless of what degree they experience exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, of violence (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997).

The majority of the study participants felt that it was good to be recognized for their ability to work with diverse communities. All of the participants reported that they were aware that they were not perceived the same as White co-workers. One participant asserted,

> I don't necessarily think that they think I'm better or worse than White workers, it's just different. When people act differently it is distressing and disempowering when colour is recognised more than skill. It can be isolating and alienating. It is painfully obvious that there is still racism in society despite 'professional education' and social gains. It feels like you need to be exceptional and work harder to be recognised as a competent professional. Different is not always bad, but in certain situations will make you feel more or less valued because of your background and expertise in working with diversity. There are many assumptions about the level of knowledge you have based on your colour.

One of the participants reported that in their community, the darker your skin, the poorer others treated you. They speculated that the same kind of racism existed in the larger community, and thus affected the way that clients and other professionals perceived them. They stated,

> I don't get offended when I get asked to fill out self-declaration papers for job interviews. I get offended when they tell me that they think I'm 'very skilled' but they are looking for someone that can work with a specific population. It's like telling me 'thanks for being brown, but you're the wrong colour brown'. I end up feeling like I've been penalized for not being White, and then discriminated against for not being the right kind of minority. I've asked myself many times why I even bother applying.

Feelings of marginalization and powerlessness were common for many of the participants in this study. Many reported they viewed themselves as 'undesired' by employers, 'tolerated' by co-workers, and 'undeserving' by people vying for similar positions at least once throughout their social work careers. According to Mullaly (2004), non-professionals suffer this type of oppression more than professionals, however, the researcher participants reported that they felt they had no power or authority to reside over decision-making. Some reported that they simply exercise what is dictated and hope that people will see they are hard workers and competent despite racialization.

Racism in the workplace affects whether clients and workers view you as competent regardless of culture. Racism is entrenched into our social fibre at different levels. One participant spoke about the way they tried to explain racism in the workplace to their child. "Don't fool yourself into thinking that it doesn't exist because there's a 'zero-tolerance' policy in place...wait for the first potluck and see if they ask if you're bringing 'those little things' while they bring their Costco three bean salad."

This participant showed that you with their racial identity they not only belonged to a certain race, but also located themselves as no belong to the dominantly located group. Using 'they' and acknowledging that they have internalized expectations of the 'norm' and 'other shows that this participant is conscious of their group interactions, sense of belonging and how racial identity influences and fosters human interaction in super ordinate-subordinate relationships. The demarcating "I – you" and "we – they" boundaries are markers that help people to affirm oneself (Alderfer, 1997). Personal and social identities may be complex as they are in constant flux and individuals at times may be in internal conflict over issues that they have vested interests in (Helms, 1990; Alderfer, 1997; Rummens 2003; Dei & Rummens, 2011).

One participant described internal conflict by sharing their progression through racial identity and accepting their personal location. He or she reported that they remember how their feelings, perceptions and sense of belonging were in flux, and they often felt confused and often in positions they felt they needed to assert their loyalty to being "Canadian" or "minority".

> When I was in university I took a lot of cultural courses. I have a multi-racial family and I felt it was an opportunity to learn about my history while completing some course requirements. I had never felt such sense of shame in my life as when I came face to face with some survivors of Canadian persecution. I took a Canadian history class and there were guest speakers from different racial backgrounds that were invited to speak. There were three in particular that I could not look in the eye. One was an Aboriginal man who

shared his story of surviving residential schooling. He talked about the sexual abuse, physical abuse and forced separation from his family. He told us how his grandmother told stories of children trying to run away from the school and was found in the wilderness lost and eventually dead. The second was a Japanese-Canadian woman. She shared with us her family's experience when their property was stripped from them and they were taken away to camps and accused of being spies. My heart broke for her. She was only a child. I began thinking of my own children and how they've had such a blessed life. The third was a middle aged man. He was Black and from Nova Scotia. He told us about his ancestors that came to Canada escaping from America through the Underground Railway. He shared stories about his personal experiences and things that his grandparents would tell him about being spit on, people pelting and throwing things in public, being called derogatory names, being treated as less than normal and less than a person. The stories that these speakers told made me feel truly ashamed of how Canada has treated some people. Then I realized, these were my people! I have the same roots as some of them! How could I be a proud Canadian knowing what happened to my ancestors? How could I be proud knowing that my democratic government made policies throughout history to not only discriminate but to degrade some people? How could I be proud knowing that it still happens today? How could I be a proud Canadian knowing how much institutionalized racism there is? I'm ashamed! I'm ashamed that Canadian's aren't told the real stories throughout grade school. I knew nothing of the struggles of some of our speakers. It was hidden

> from us in history textbooks. Just like racism is hidden in plain view for us now. I want my children to know the truth. They are not better and definitely not worse than anyone else. They need to learn how to fight for the respect they deserve. I know they will have to fight more because they are minorities. The very definition of 'minority' means that you are not like the majority.

Group identity and a sense of belonging was complex for many of the research participants. Several of the participants reported that they were from multi-racial and multicultural heritage. Many reported that they had many life changes, epiphanies and transitions throughout their professional and personal lives. Some reported that they had experienced confusion and "muddled through" when "learning about" their backgrounds and "navigating and choosing" what they wanted others to know about their lives and level of acculturation (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton & Klein, 2005; Mullaly, 2007; Turner 2011). As a result, many reported they felt they were both proud and ashamed of their Canadian heritage (Helms, 1995; Dei & Rummens, 2011). One participant explained,

> When was growing up I was so confused at school. In retrospect I guess I was confused at first as why I didn't have the same stuff as the other kids, then embarrassed because I realized I wasn't like everyone else. I was so embarrassed when my mom sent me to school with lunch. I would get picked on all the time. A few times the teachers called home wanting to talk to my mom about if we had enough to eat. I didn't have sandwiches, cookies, cheese strings, fruit cups or anything like that. I usually just had whatever was left over in the

> fridge. Usually rice with some sort of stir fried looking dish. I didn't even have a lunchbox. My mom gave me a plastic bag from the grocery store. I was embarrassed of my parents and their poor English. I was embarrassed that they couldn't fill out simple permission slips for school trips. I was embarrassed that I didn't know the Lord's Prayer. I was embarrassed about everything to do with not fitting in and being like the other kids that were all White except for two others. I know nothing of what struggles my family had to come to Canada. At such a young age you just don't know. You don't even care. All you know is you're not like everyone else and they're all making fun of you because you smell funny, or dress funny, or your hair is funny. All you want to do is fit in. I wasn't ashamed of my background, I was just embarrassed to be different and not didn't understand why I wasn't like all the other kids.

I remember being so embarrassed one time when my mom called the school and summoned me home. She needed me to be the translator for a guy that was there to take the water metre reading.

> When I became older and travelled more I developed a different sense of how I felt to be Canadian. Internationally I was treated so much nicer if I said I was Canadian. Canadians are really well liked in other countries and it made me feel proud. People would tell me how much they loved Canadians because we were so friendly and generous. They'd ask me about hockey and the great outdoors. It was so nice to know that I could be welcomed and respected just by being associated with such great nation.

### 5.2.1. Advantages of Being a Non-White Social Worker in Winnipeg

According to study participants, some of the advantages of being a racialized worker are that gathering information and helping to ease tensions for racialized clients comes more naturally and easily. There is an assumed shared cultural sameness and people often think that minorities are more culturally sensitive or appropriate. Stronger and quicker rapport is established when shared minority status makes clients more open. The relationships that workers can form with racialized clients are unique and leave professionals with a sense of progressive productiveness. Trust can be established in sharing stories and speaking the same language. Participants spoke of there being an assumed empathy when there is a shared background as it can help in understanding obstacles faced in professional relationships in the past.

One participant stated, "People remember you and your work. If you are working with minority clients they usually remember you because of your minority status and the difference in approach that you may have had." Another research participant stated,

> I worked with a client many years ago and ran into her at a grocery store. She approached me and told me that she remembered that I helped her in hard times. She said that she used me an example to encourage her daughter to become a working professional. She thanked me for helping her even when her English was so bad. It made me think of my parents and how they struggled. My mom always said she remembered the nurses at the hospital after I was born because she would sit and draw pictures with her for hours trying to communicate with

her. The nurse made her feel 'like a person, not a stupid immigrant' that didn't understand 'slow and loud' English.

Alderfer (1997) maintains that individuals develop more balanced relationships with their racial groups and fashion relationships that leave a place for their unique personalities as well as the groups they affiliate with. They look outwards from the perspective of individuals who are members of their own racial groups. As such, it is important to recognize that racialized social workers can maintain an emic perspective in the field. In order social work to progressively move ahead and meet the needs of clients, the needs of oppressed workers need to be addressed.

### 5.2.2. Disadvantages of Being a Non-White Social Worker

All of the participants reported feeling disadvantaged as a racialized worker at some point in their careers. Many reported that they felt "different" as soon as they began their social work education and training. According to all of the participants, one of the biggest disadvantages of being a racialized social worker is that people often see colour before skill. One of the research participants said,

> From the day that I applied at the Faculty of Social Work and was admitted as a visible minority I felt different. Other students always assumed that I only got in because of my colour. My classmates would ignorantly and unintentionally make comments about how they applied several times and wished that they could've gotten in as a minority or Aboriginal. They didn't care that admissions

were set up to equal the playing field for us. I felt ashamed and embarrassed because I never thought people thought I belonged. They would never see me as an academic peer that they would want to do group work with. They didn't think I was as smart as them. I guess it's just my perception, but it's real to me.

There are many negative stereotypes attached to racism both in the workplace and in the greater society. There are pre-conceived notions and expectations that exist whether we like it or not. One of the research participants shared,

> I always knew growing up that I was different because I never quite fit in with any group. My parents were in a bi-racial marriage that wasn't accepted by the family. When I got older, people would tell me that my grandparents refused to go to the hospital when I was born because they didn't want to see "the half-breed". One of my grandparents tried to console my mom by saying "it might be ok, 'it' might be light enough to pass as tanned". I remember my mom telling me that my dad's parents use to talk to her like she was "completely retarded". I knew exactly what she meant when she said people would speak louder and slower thinking that it would make us comprehend better. All it does is frustrates you because not only do they think you're stupid for not taking the time to learn English, they also seem to think that you're "deaf and slow".

This participant shared his or her experience of being racialized by his or her own family. They had a strong sense of resentment and disbelief of how they were treated even before she was born by family. The participant further explained that he or

she constantly felt that being "different" was something that she was born with, had to live with, but could control in her own world.

> I can accept that I'm and "other". I can even accept that it means I may never fit in. But it took me a long time to realize that I can control how I feel about it. For a long time my self worth as a minority was something I wasn't comfortable with. It was never nourished or even acknowledged when I was younger, especially since I was always around White people. I learned later in life that being "different" just means that you are just that, "different". It doesn't mean better or worse than. However you internalize it makes the difference. I'm darker skinned. Whether I like it or not, that's what people see first. But it's up to me whether I feel good about it or not. So what if my skin is darker? Don't people go to the beach to get tans and have "a little more colour"? The key is knowing and being comfortable with your self as a person. You're the only person that has to live with yourself till your dying day. If you aren't happy or confident as a person you cannot be the most effective social worker that you can be. You're too worried about yourself to help others the way that they deserve to be helped.

Although it is helpful to match a worker with a client from the same community it is not always desired by either party. Trust is hard to gain in small communities. If the community is very small, there is a high likelihood that there is some sort of social connection. One of the research participants stated,

> Being from a small community of immigrants it's hard sometimes. I've been asked by people that know my family to do favours such as trying to influence the higher powers. When I can't or won't do it I've been snubbed, criticized and my family was attacked for not supporting my 'own people'. They often say that I'm completely 'big shot...educated Canadian now...don't give a damn about us embarrassing country grammar any more'. They often fear that I'll go back and share their confidential information with others in the community. Sometimes it just isn't the best idea. It makes me physically sick at times to now know what I'll be walking into when I'm asked to work with my own community members.

Racial identity theory has as its central proposition that individuals differ and may change in relation to identification with their racial group. It focuses on individual-to-racial group relations and locates change processes within the individual and between an individual and their racial groups (Alderfer, 1997).

Another disadvantage that the research participants were all very passionate about was assumptions by others that you are bi-cultural or that you fit into the community they perceive you to belong to. It is often assumed that minority people are comfortable in groups of others with their own cultural heritage. Racial identity theory maintains that individuals may fluctuate or change their sense of belonging in relation to their racial group over time (Helms, 1995; Alderfer, 1997). The process of change is located within the individual and occurs between an individual and their racial group (Alderfer, 1997; Turner 2011). Thus an individual may alternate or go through phases

when they identify with their racial group. Helms (1995), maintains that racial identity is a process that is ever changing and non-linear in progress. As such people can go through phases when they are not comfortable in being associates with their racial groups. One research respondent said,

> White people think that we all speak other languages, can cook cultural food, know every other person of the same perceived race, and feel that complimenting us on how good our English is flatters us. I came from an English-speaking country but I have an accent. I think people would treat me differently if I had a British accent. The scary thing is that people are usually being sincere and don't even realize how their ignorance hurts my feelings.

Mullaly (1997) maintains that there are different forms of oppression. They are not the same and will not be experienced to the same degree by all individuals or groups. They require different responses and different actions. The respondents of this study reported that they feel their needs are not met as racialized social workers. Some of them reported that they understood why some people make assumptions but that it was no less insulting. Other respondents reported that preconceived ideas around language did not bother them because they were aware of their own accents. Although many of the respondents had similar experiences of being able to speak other languages they all interpreted and experienced it differently. Some felt that they were being marginalized while others reported that they were not bothered by the language assumptions but did not appreciate the "difference" in how they were treated.

Another respondent concurred, saying,

> Sometimes people just start talking to me in another language that I don't even recognise. They seem offended when I respond in English telling them I don't understand them. I've been criticised for not speaking my 'own language', but my parents never learned it neither. My children are now fourth generation visible minority Canadians. I had hoped they wouldn't have to suffer the same discriminations as my grandparents.

People from oppressed groups are often marginalized and exploited and many are isolated to their own communities with limited opportunities to increase their language skills, education or social skills with other Canadians (Cheng & Yau, 1999; Mullaly, 2007; Turner 2011).

### 5.2.3. Perceived Assumptions Reported by Non-White Social Workers

Being different is not always bad, but in certain situations it can make professionals feel more or less valued because of their background and expertise in working with diversity. There are a lot of assumptions about the level of knowledge based on a person's colour due to racism and stereotypes. All of the participants of this study reported that it is often assumed that they speak other languages, eat different foods, and celebrate 'ethnic holidays' not on the calendar or that are considered a statutory holiday. One participant elaborated in saying,

> Speaking with an accent means that people think they need to talk to slower, louder, in simple words and continuously ask 'does that make sense' or 'do you

> understand?' If I had an accent from a first world country I don't think people would react the same. People think that I am always coming from a 'cultural' perspective and do not consider that I just may not agree with how things are generally disrespectfully done. For example, strong arming or without compassion regardless of culture. Sometimes it has nothing to do with culture and it's more general oppression.

The research participants reported that it is often assumed that racialized workers have a preference to work with 'cultural' clients or other racialized people. They reported that racialized workers are often perceived as experts on ethno-cultural diversity. The participants reported they are often perceived as having the ability to bring more cultural awareness in any workplace. One participant stated,

> I feel like I don't fit in with my White co-workers at times. Sometimes I feel like they see me as Human Resource's tokenized worker. I feel like I'm the equivalent to the cultural Wikipedia at times. In my experience, clients don't really care if you don't have the same background as them as long as they're serviced well and are satisfied. It's not that I don't enjoy working with White co-workers, I just wish that I had more co-workers that actually get what it's like to be discriminated against because of the shade of my skin and are more sensitive to it without making assumptions. I'd rather people ask honest questions that may seem stupid than just make assumptions based on stereotypes or the social climate of the time. Minority workers are perceived as experts bringing more to cultural awareness in any workplace and in positions of

> "authority" that are not common for non-White workers. We're seen as exceptional and "really unusual for people like you". Sometimes people think that it's a compliment without realising how much they're actually insulting you, and your entire community.

Oppression perpetuates when there is no catalyst for change (Mullaly, 2007). The participants of this study are oppressed people that need to feel it is important to discover themselves, reclaim their identity, create community and solidarity, and develop a group specific voice and perspective (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997).

According to all of the research participants, racialized clients enjoy working with racialized social workers because clients feel that these social workers understand them better. Employers and co-workers value and recognise the advantages that racialized workers bring to social work. It is often assumed that all racialized people have a 'cultural background' that is different from the majority and that their practice centers around 'culture' before anything else. This is not always the case. One research participant explained,

> My family has been in Canada for four generations and are 'Canadianized' for the most part. I have to admit that I'm pretty much as unaware of the customs and traditions of my forefathers as White people. When I lived in Toronto and Vancouver, I didn't get as many comments on my English being good, or if I was born in Canada. Winnipeg is pretty multicultural, but to me, people are not as accepting as they are in other parts of Canada. I wouldn't say that people are meaner or more ignorant...they just seem to see it as more of an issue. In a truly

> multicultural society I think people would just be more aware. That's just how I feel from my experiences. I'm sure others may feel differently, but I'm sure that the other people in the study will say that they've felt different because of their colour for one reason or another...good or bad.

Several of the research participants reported that they often encounter people that spoke foreign languages to them assuming that they were of a particular background. They further reported that if they were not able to speak the language, they perceived a decline in their conversation and sometimes called derogatory names. Several of the participants who were born in Canada shared their experiences about being both proud and ashamed of their 'Canadian' heritage. They talked about being 'too Canadian' when they did not meet the expectations of their community, and 'not getting it' when they did not fit into mainstream ideals. This was important to the research because several of the participants had experienced this intergenerational conflict both in their work and personal lives. Participants were able to talk about the feelings that emerged when they are put in positions by workplace demands of being an interpreter. They reported that it was similar to the familial relationship they experienced as children growing up in new immigrant homes. One participant said,

> Over the course of my career I've faced many ignorant people including co-workers and employers. I've sat through interviews and been complimented on how good my English is. I've heard many comments about how I should feel really accomplished and my parents must be so proud that I have a good job coming from a third world country. I'm seen as an outlier, not as a stereotypical

brown person that came fresh off the boat and works in a factory or under the table at a restaurant.

Another participant stated,

I remember having a hard time in school with relating to me peers because of my background. My parents immigrated and had me and my sibling shortly after. They spoke our language at home. The only English that was spoken in my house was from television shows like Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers. As I got older I was embarrassed of my parents and their poor English language skills. I was anxious and try to rush them away before anyone could hear them. As a teenager my dad would yell at me and say I shouldn't act so ashamed of my family because they were good enough to get me the things I was so proud of, like my music and videogames that taught me to be disrespectful. I know it hurt my dad to know that I was embarrassed, but it hurt me too that he didn't understand where I was coming from as 'that kid' that never fit in. If I told him the kids at school said my lunch was weird and smelled funny, he'd tell me that they did not know good food and they were use to hamburgers and potatoes so anything else is a 'weird'.

Another participant shared his or her experience with intergenerational conflict and experiences with the following statements,

It was so awkward being expected to interpret for my parents. It was always assumed that I could interpret for my mom. No one ever asked me. It put me in

an awkward situation. One time my parents went came to parent-teacher interviews with me. My teacher had caught me giving answers to my friend on a test and was trying to discipline me for cheating. She started talking to me about it in front of my parents saying she didn't want me to get in trouble but wanted me to promise not to do it again. She told me to translate to my parents something to the effect that I needed to concentrate on my own work more. I got a good beating when I got home. My teacher didn't realize that just because my parents didn't speak English, didn't mean that they didn't understand it. My dad was embarrassed because he felt like my teacher though he was a moron and that she could pull the wool over his eyes with my help. Another time I went to the bank with my mom and had to translate for the teller so that my mom knew that she didn't have enough money to pay the bills. That's stuff kids should not know. It shook my confidence in my parents. From that day on I was always afraid we'd run out of money. I'd even pretend to lose my permission slips for field trips so that my parents wouldn't have to be strapped for cash.

Dei & Rummens (2011) maintain the identity is about how people see themselves in connection with others. Particular places, cultures, histories, contexts, and politics are at the root of connections. Identity is also about comparisons based on perceived similarities and differences. The perceived similarities reported by the participants indicate that there are many misconceptions based on generalizations and stereotypes due to association. Acculturation is unique to individuals and cannot be assumed to be the same among family or group members despite similar backgrounds and experiences (Atkinson 2004).

### 5.2.4. Defining Cultural Competency and Its Role in Social Work Practice

The research participants in this study were very forthcoming with their feelings about their experiences as social workers working in as multiculturally diverse a city as Winnipeg. When asked about cross-culturally competent social work practice and what it meant to them they were very open in dialogue.

One of the research participants framed their definition as follows:

> Cross-cultural social work is crucial when working with clients of any culture. It is imperative to ethical practice. It helps us to incorporate strengths and perspectives in mutually progressive and respectful ways. It helps us to embrace how culture affects how people perceive challenges and life. It's different from what they try to teach in theory. Everyone has limitations. I don't think everyone can achieve the same level of cultural competence because not everyone's experiences have been the same, positively or negatively. It's just different for those of us that have been on the receiving end. It's kind of like when people travel to other countries and have cultural shock when they don't understand why people do things differently. Now imagine having that mentality while having some authority or power over the things that happen to other people. Sometimes even if we mean well, it doesn't mean that we won't cause someone harm.

Another participant concurred,

A culturally competent social worker is one that is respectful of others and understands that culture has an effect on how people perceive the world and events. They can incorporate strengths and are cognisant of how their own cultural beliefs help to develop the best care plan.

> All of the social workers in this study felt that cross-cultural competence was important to best serve clients. All of them shared experiences to demonstrate how culture has been a part of their personal social work frame of practice, and why they felt it was important. In terms of being prepared by their education for the realities of the workplace and being cross-culturally competent, there was a difference based on when the social workers completed their education.

The participants in this study ranged from completing their social work experience from three to thirty-six years ago. Of the more experienced workers, many had completed their BSW education over twenty years ago. These more senior workers reported that they did not feel that cultural competency was addressed adequately in their education. Once participant explained,

> When I was a B.S.W. student I had already worked in social services for many years. I went back to school as a mature student. I don't remember too much about talking about culture or considering how it affected clients. Most of what I learned was later on through professional development through work or in the field. I know that the curriculum has changed with the times to be more sensitive to the needs of the clients. I hope this helps students feel more prepared than I did.

The more recent graduates reported that they felt that the education that they had on cross-cultural competency was helpful. One participant shared,

> I was glad that culture was included in our courses, but it didn't prepare me for the realities of the workplace as a visible minority worker. I was more confident in working with minority clients, not in how I ended up being received as a minority worker. In hindsight most of my instructors were White, and had good intentions, but I guess at the time I didn't give it a second thought. Now I think that it would have been really good if we got perspectives from minority workers. Maybe if some guest speakers could've shared stories of their experiences.

Mullaly (1997), maintains that oppression institutionalized and perpetuates when oppressed people continue to be treated as subordinate. The participants in this study reported that they felt they were not adequately prepared to enter the workforce as racialized social works once they graduated. Many commented on feeling that messages were received more clearly and seemed more authentic when coming from racialized presenters. All of the participants reported that their educators and trainers were predominantly White. As such, the oppressed group of racialized social workers continue to be affected by the oppressive group, being dominantly located educators. This is significant because several of the respondents reported that they were educated from a dominant perspective of how to deliver cross-culturally competent social work. It was assumed that the social was White and the clients were culturally diverse. None

of the respondents recalled receiving education or training on how to be a racialized social worker.

### 5.2.5. Working with Different Populations

All of the research participants indicated that they enjoyed working cross-culturally. Working with clients that are of the same background is important to some racialized social workers. One participant explained,

It's important to me to work with other minorities because I feel like I'm helping my community, regardless of what culture they are. Newcomer populations and acculturation face struggles regardless of ethno-cultural background. 'Canadian culture' is challenging. Racialized people bond over not being White. It's assumed that I know and understand all of the majority cultures' beliefs, values, religions, and social etiquettes.

Every research participant reported feeling that being able to work with different cultures was extremely important for social workers in Winnipeg. One of the participants explained as follows:

> Being able to work with different cultures is imperative for Winnipeg's social workers. I don't think that you can responsibly serve our population without being able to work with diverse clientele. We are so lucky to have such a multicultural community and opportunities to learn from each other. I've

learned so much from people that I've worked with. I've been so fortunate to have such authentic and genuine mentors and resources to help me be a better social worker. They've not only showed me what I was doing wrong, but reassured me on what I was doing well. I was able to re-evaluate my own values and ethics to adjust my practice. I learned more from the community about culturally competent practice than from school. With the drastically changing cultural population it should be compulsory in all practicum courses. It doesn't matter where we work, we will all have to work with the culturally diverse population in some capacity.

Another participant explained,

It's important for me to stay close to my roots. I was born in a third world country and my family immigrated to Canada when I was very young; so young that I don't remember my life before coming to Canada. As far as me or any of my family is concerned I am Canadian. But I know that because of my colour, I've been treated like an immigrant by many people all of my life. If I sit silently some people think I can't communicate in English. Or people have made assumptions about my ethnicity and started talking o me in foreign languages. I've shared these feeling with friends that have had the same kinds of experiences. I use to think it was just me, but it's not. I can't help the way I look, just like I can't help how other people see me and make assumptions. I do it too. We all do. It's human nature. I didn't have a lot of professional to look up to. Most people from my community are poor and not highly educated. My

family put all their resources into me because I was academically very good. My grandma told me that I needed to work hard and become something to show people that we were a strong and intelligent people. She escaped genocide in her homeland and always carried with her a sense of having to prove she was not undeserving of things that other people didn't have to work for. Her understanding of education was so limited that she didn't even know that there were different things you went to school for. She just thought going to university meant that you were smart and could get a great paying job as a doctor or lawyer. I think she was surprised when I went into social work because she asked why I wanted to spend time working with poor people when that's all we knew growing up. I thought about it many times and I feel like I need to be a role model for my community. I know there are stereotypes out there and assumptions made associated with my race. My people need professionals like me to show them that we too are capable. We too are smart enough! We too can work instead of standing in the welfare line. We too can send our children to school! We too can contribute as productive members of society! I think if I had more role models I would have seen my potential differently. I had so many self doubts and insecurities. Even in school I never felt like I belonged. Even if I don't work with someone from my own community I can still relate to similarities. I think it's helpful for them and for me. Working with other cultures has made me feel much less isolated as a minority worker and as a person in general. I feel it's my responsibility and duty to pay it forward.

### 5.2.6. Racism in the Workplace

Racism in workplace affects whether clients and workers view a social worker as competent regardless of culture. Racism is woven into our social fibre at different levels. One participant shared that,

> People are fine with me being visible but treat me different because I have an accent. People are fine with me over the phone but have been surprised to see me in person. Sometimes they assume that I am completely assimilated and mistrusting of me as a professional and helper. Minority clients seem more likely to open doors to me than my White co-workers. I seem to be more successful in establishing rapport. Not that they can't have a good working relationship. It seems to be different in quality too.

All of the research participants reported that they feel 'tokenised' in the workplace. They all expressed that they feel there are different standards of expectations for the quality of their 'cultural' work compared to the cross-cultural work of their White counterparts. Six participants reported that they feel like they are put under a microscope and judged more than their White colleagues All of the participants reported that they have experienced numerous occasions at work when it was assumed that they spoke other languages, understood other cultural customs, holidays, and beliefs held by other racialized people that look similar to them in race. An example given by one of the participants was that they are often asked if they celebrate Christmas at 'home'. The participant explained,

> People at work always ask me what 'traditional' things I do for Christmas because they often assume that I don't do the same things as they do. Maybe they think that Brown people can't buy turkey or ham during the season? I'm sure they don't mean to be offensive and don't realize how ignorant it is.

All of the research participants expressed that they did not feel that the cultural values of healing were addressed enough in their workplaces for clients or staff. One participant said,

> In my workplace I feel that cultural values for healing aren't considered. T here seems to be more consideration given to Aboriginal clients only because there are designated positions for Aboriginal outreach. There probably has to be designated cultural positions for other populations as well. That way there will always be an advocate in place within the system. It's not easy for people to speak up in big systems without someone to help them navigate through it.

Racialized workers report that they feel like their experiences as minorities is different from that of their White co-workers. They also report they feel there is respect for being capable of working with both minority clients and workers.

Four of the research participants shared that they felt like they were compared to previous non-White workers in their workplaces unfairly. One participant explained,

> When I started my current position and met all of the staff through training I got a good sense of how people felt about the 'cultural' work my predecessor did. They'd say things like 'she did this...but you don't have to', or 'she really liked

> to spend time in the community, but you make the job your own however you want to. Just attend the events that you think might be interesting'. Incorporating cultural events to better understand and experience what others live by was approached like an optional course. Not something that was taken seriously or valued until the topic of food is mentioned. They had no trouble in expressing how forward they looked to the lunch spread.

Racism does not only exist among White workers. Racialized workers hold their own perceptions about other racialized groups, Whites, and their own communities. One participant shared that she and her co-workers had nicknames for each other in good humour. She explained,

> Just because someone's not a minority, doesn't mean that they don't get it. When I first started on my team I was pretty horrified when I heard them referring to each other as ethnic food names. Then I wondered if it was ok for me to do it. Like if I call my kids idiots, it's ok, but if someone else says it, that's not ok!

Another participant stated,

> I don't think White people are as aware of stereotypes that we have about them as we are about the ones they have about us. I think that's why comedians like Russell Peters are so popular with our generation. He appeals to the masses of minority Canadians with his own experiences. Experiences that White people probably don't hear about often because upbringing is so different in cultures.

> For example, if a child is spanked here people get up in arms about physical abuse. If you get yelled at and people hear, people get anxious that someone's getting abused. I was hit many times by many family members growing up. In our house, if you didn't get 'a discipline' it meant that people didn't care enough to straighten you out. It is way worse to me if someone that cares about me doesn't bother to guide me. Getting ignored and having the feeling that someone gave up on me was a million times worse than getting a smack. A smack only stung fro a few seconds.

Racism in the workplace is contingent on the racial climate of the times. Tolerance for racism has lessened for some groups in time, but has increased for others. For example, the global climate towards Islamic culture following the 9/11 attacks on New York's Twin Towers has increased while tolerance for groups such as the Ku Klux Klan have decreased over time. Oppression of certain groups constantly change, as do how people identify with their race (Turner 2011). Several of the multi-racial respondents in this study reported that they were careful of how much information they shared in the workplace about their background. They explained that it does not always feel safe to divulge personal information. As such violence perpetuates even amongst professional, civilized workplaces (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 1997; Turner, 2011).

### 5.2.7. Stereotypes Affecting Social Work Practice

Many of the research participants reported that they were painfully aware of racism in society despite 'professional education' and social progress towards multiculturalism. All eight of the participants said they realized that they were seen as minorities before they were seen as professionals. They reported being recognised for their skin colour, not their social work skills.

Not only did the respondents feel that there was a difference in perception from White people, but also for other racialized people. An example that one respondent provides is that an Aboriginal client who told her that she was not qualified to work with her because her family was not the same as newcomers. She was told that she needed a different approach to understand the client's needs. She said, "I felt disempowered by my colour. My ethnicity should have nothing to do with how skilled people think I am. People assume connected with all people of the same colour despite culture."

Another participant explained,

> I feel like co-workers see me as an expert on all Asians. It's almost like a guessing game for people. More often than not people will inquire about my background the conversation starts with 'You're Filipino aren't you? Japanese? Chinese?' It's like saying that all Asians look the same. It's not only insensitive, but insulting. There are long standing political issues and attitudes between some countries that people don't always recall. It's like when people

> ask Canadians if we're Americans. Internationally we are seen very differently. I'm a proud Canadian...I don't want to be mistaken for anything else whether people mean it as a compliment or not. Whether we like it or not, racism exists. Sometimes we can't tell what the intent is behind what's being said, but it doesn't mean the words hurt less.

Perceived racism is very difficult to explain in a logical manner. Four of the study participants were familiar with the term and the other four weren't. One of the participants shared his or her feelings about perceived racism in the workplace. She stated,

> People have seen me in person, heard my accent and assumed that I was not as knowledgeable. I have changed the way I talk, body language, level of interaction, etc... I've often felt I needed to work harder to be recognized as a competent professional. I've heard people say racist things about other workers and wondered what they say about me. Things like 'looks like they're on Aboriginal time,' and 'Maybe they don't understand because they haven't been here long. They're still fresh off the boat.' Obviously these are things that are casually said. The zero tolerance workplace environment policy has one major flaw: you have to be able to prove it. It takes about a second to call someone a derogatory name, to physically intimidate them, or even just to cause some sort of discomfort. If you 'blow the whistle' does that make you look like a hero or an overly sensitive troublemaker?

Another participant stated,

I've worked in social services for a long time. Even before becoming a social worker. In my experience being a visible minority far surpasses whatever job position I've held. When I was a group home worker my dynamics were different with the minority kids. As a social worker, I've had similar experiences. There are advantages and disadvantages that I don't think people understand unless they're in our shoes. I know that just because someone is not a visible minority that it doesn't mean that they don't understand our struggles, but I don't feel that it's as authentic when a White person tries to tell me about how I struggle as a minority. It's like, how can a parrot tell you about being a pelican? It's way more believable when it comes from someone that's not the physical embodiment of your oppressor. In university sometimes it would be almost laughable that they expected me to take them seriously especially when they talked about all of their years of experience and research with minority people. I don't think they realized that minorities don't react to White people the way they relate to other minorities. The things that I tell you in this interview are probably much more honest that I would be if you were White. Not that I'd purposely be with holding, but more because I know you know what I mean. Or at least I feel like you understand it better and will report it more accurately.

According to the participants in this study, the racism that is institutionalized is not obvious, blatant or necessarily intentional. One of the study participants explained,

> I was an Educational Equity student when I did my B.S.W. program. I was hired under employment equity at my first job after I graduated. Both systems were put in place to equalize the playing field but they actually create a bigger gap between colleagues that don't meet the criteria. Many people have told me that they don't think it's fair and they wish they were a minority so they could "get in more easily too". It's like they inadvertently tell me to my face that they didn't think that I was qualified and I was actually reducing the quality of my profession.

Individuals belonging to groups that are historically marginalized and or exploited often face difficult barriers in proving that they are capable of accomplishments that are seen as 'norms' for non racialized groups (Milner 2010). In order to address this issue the participants of this study recommend that more instructors come from racialized groups. This would create more opportunity for racialized workers to ask questions, receive validation, and create networks. As such, racialized social workers could create their own support networks in lieu of "non-existent supports". This could potentially mobilize racialized social workers in Winnipeg to empower themselves towards minimizing negative feelings caused by oppression.

Many of the participants reported that they feel it is important to be role models in their communities and to show young people that goals can be achieved despite oppression. As such it is imperative that racialized social workers have the opportunity to generate awareness, advocate for social support, and show solidarity and commitment to their collective battle against the institutional oppression. Racialized social workers

are not acknowledged as "different", positively or negatively by current social work education, training or workplace policies. This invisibility can be compared to swimming in a sea of other workers, but never having had swimming lessons. Racialized workers are shown the tools but not how to use them in their own context. This puts them at a severe disadvantage as they are not on an equal playing field and the nature of institutionalized oppression perpetuates the "us versus them" dynamics. One of the participants stated,

> Not all birds can fly, not all fish can swim, but Darwinism says we either adapt or die off. Some of us will struggle more than others, but in profession that is built on ethics and advocacy, social work needs to recognize the needs of our own. If we don't take the offence we will have to practice on the defence, and that just means our work is not progressive, but reactive.

**Summary**

The research participants had diverse backgrounds in ethnicity, experiences as Canadians, and as non-White social workers. They all self-identified as Canadians and shared their personal experiences as racialized persons and social workers.

All of the participants shared their experiences about being racialized social workers in Winnipeg. They all felt that there are both advantages and disadvantages to being racialized. They gave examples of personal experience as social workers when

they felt their racialized status helped them do their job better and more effectively and contrasted negative experiences.

The research participants report they felt they were perceived differently by clients and other professionals based on their skin colour. Several participants stated that they felt they were judged for their skin colour more than for their social work skills. The participants reported they felt frustrated because they did not feel that their skills seemed obsolete no matter how much they achieved. They reported feeling isolated and unsupported by their workplace and peers. They do not feel they can safely speak openly about their experience as racialized workers without being viewed negatively when implementation of equity policies have been established in work and educational institutions.

According the participants, racism in the workplace needs to be discussed in more detail in social work education. It is also necessary to better prepare racialized social workers for the culturally diverse workplace in terms of what to expect from professionals and clients based on being visible minority. All workers need to be sensitive to how racialized workers are perceived by others if issues identified by the research participants are to be addressed.

The research participants identified many stereotypes they report as being harmful to them as professionals and as people. Racialized social workers are greatly emotionally and mentally affected by their work in ways they don't feel White social workers don't understand or appreciate. The participants report that they feel there is an

unspoken kinship between racialized people, regardless of the racial background, that they do not share with dominantly located people.

# CHAPTER 6 Recommendations and Conclusions

## Introduction

This research was done from and emic perspective of racialized social workers. The participants in this study were recruited for their experience being non-White social workers working in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The literature review done for this study showed that there was not very much writing by racialized workers from insider's perspective. As such, this research will contribute to sharing the voice, perspectives, and understand of how racialized social workers practice and the barriers that they face in the workplace. This is significant with the increasingly culturally diverse community locally in Winnipeg and nationally in Canada.

The issues identified by the research participants in their interviews can be addressed in workplaces in proactive ways to ensure that the needs of racialized workers are met while being supportive and respectful of their personal and professional boundaries. I used the suggestions from the participants in conjunction with the themes that arose from the data to make recommendations for social work education, employers and cultural sensitivity to racialized social workers.

The research participants reported that social work education and training could be improved to better meet the needs of racialized workers. The majority of the respondents reported that they did not feel their social work education prepared them adequately for working cross-culturally with racialized clients. The respondents also

reported they felt employers and White social workers could also benefit from recommendations of how to engage and effectively work more sensitively with racialized social workers.

## 6.1. Recommendations for Social Work Education Programs

Social work has always been at the forefront of addressing social need. Some of the core values of social work are to encourage advocacy, autonomy, and diversity. Meeting the needs of minority students makes sense. As such it only makes sense to advocate for social workers that are identifying needs within our profession.

Many social work access programs have developed in response to needs of disadvantaged groups such as visible minorities. Learning institutions are becoming increasingly diverse and it is more difficult for instructors to educate culturally diverse students without acknowledging that all students do not learn the same. "These diversity aspects include but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, ability, and socioeconomic background" (Milner, 2010, p. 5). Educators generally grasp that they need to understand themselves and how their experiences shape who they are in relation to others (Milner, 2010). Students often feel insulted, embarrassed, ashamed, and angered when reading and hearing negative portrayals of their ethnic groups compared to if they did not hearing anything at all (Gay, 2000).

It is the responsibility of educators to prepare students for the issues that they will be facing in the workplace environment. All students need to be more educated about how important one's social location is in practice. Social workers must be comfortable with themselves while understanding how aspects of their personal makeup affect their practice and self development.

Racialized people are considered "other" than those in the mainstream population. There are structural barriers woven into society for anyone that is 'other' than mainstream due to the nature of systems that reflect the power of majority populations. Students in predominantly White settings should have opportunities to engage in race and diversity related learning opportunities. The experiences and outcomes of White students are "the norm" by which "others" are compared, measured, assessed, and evaluated (Milner, 2010).

The participants in this study articulated that there needs to be greater acknowledgement that theories and interventions should reflect a combination of social work and cultural values. Seven of the eight participants made specific mention that many theories taught in social work education are not developed by minorities, nor are they specifically meant to be applied to racialized group populations.

Canada is multicultural and has been for generations. Visible minority or racialized status does not automatically mean different culture, beliefs, or that a person is a new immigrant or refugee. Visible minorities need to be aware that due to the nature of being 'visible' they can't hide and must deal with certain stereotypes by others, clients and professionals alike. According to the research participants, people

often see those who are visible minorities as exceptional because there are few people who are racialized that achieve the same levels in a profession and/or in a position of authority.

One of the research participants made a comparison about how they felt in relation to their education in cross-culturally competent social work practice.

> For me, I wasn't receptive to the learning from my middle aged White male instructor. It was like if you had a support group for sexually vulnerable teenage girls being facilitated by a known rapist. I did not see any authenticity or feel like he really understood what he was trying to teach only because an empathetic perspective is not the same as an actual lived perspective. It actually made me mad to think that someone somewhere felt that whatever empathy he had was equated to how I've felt when there's been blatant racism in the workplace. Some people have no idea what it's like to actually feel racism... it's more than a dirty look, a snide remark, or blatant disrespect. It's something that's hard to explain to people that have never felt and experienced it.

Educators need to focus more training on what to expect in social work jobs as minority workers, not just on working with minority clients. Racialized social workers need to feel safe and supported in their efforts to promote self determination and autonomy for themselves. Racialized social workers need to have strong voices to advocate not only for clients but for themselves as racialized workers. It is important to train with people from the community. It is just as important to train with representatives from the community that are receiving services as those that are

providing them. Let them tell you what they need instead of social workers telling them what they require.

## 6.2. Recommendations for Employers

Canada is recognised as a multicultural society on an international level. We are comparatively a young country at 144 years on July1, 2011. We are a country that, aside from First Nations people, is populated by people who are not indigenous to Canada. As a result many people in Canada have multiracial and multicultural backgrounds, reflecting their unique heritages and different ideas, beliefs, and perspectives.

Workplaces are doing some things to address cultural diversity in terms of hiring practices and workshops for sensitivity. Most are aimed at White workers being more sensitive to non-White clients. Some are supporting community partners and networking with agencies to provide services for newcomers.

Recommendations from the participants of this study include the need to recognise and support racialized social workers and to respect that they have responsibilities and limitations attached to their ethno-cultural locations, professional positions, and social service agencies.

The public generally accepts additional efforts by employers to increase the employment of racialized group members, especially when it entails broadening the

pool of applicants (Lee, Blando, Mizelle & Orozco 2007). Providing more training for racialized social workers before they enter the workforce can prepare them to be more effective with clients, peers, and employers in a way that will benefit and embrace the changing needs of our increasingly diverse population. Workplaces need to make a real effort to address cultural competency and be sure that all social workers are competent to work with a range of ethno-cultural groups. It should not be assumed that workers are culturally competent by virtue of being non-White.

Many of the research participants shared that they were often assumed to be more capable to work with minority populations due to assumptions made by employers, co-workers and collaterals. All social workers need to be educated about expectations of minorities as resources because it is not always appropriate. All social workers should be trained in cultural sensitivity and taught to be aware of the impacts of ethno-cultural ignorance and biases on others.

One of the research participants described his or her experience of working with clients from their own ethnic backgrounds. The participant was born and raised in Canada as were her parents, and spoke English as a first language. The social worker was assigned to work with a family that refused to speak English with her, even though they had gone through interviews and the intake process in English with all other professionals. The family criticized the social worker with personal attacks and unfair presumptions. The social worker was called many names such as, "traitor, White-washed and Canadian brained." The clients made personal attacks and criticized the social worker to show their displeasure. For example, they criticized the worker for not

speaking her ‘own language’, bringing trouble into the community, thinking they were better with their Canadian education, spying to bring shame to the community, and setting a poor example for younger generations.

When we deconstruct what that means on the individual level we see that we cannot all be painted with the same brush. racialized status does not automatically mean that a person has a different cultural background or beliefs. We are not all new to Canada.

Racialized social workers and community members should facilitate training that enforces cultural awareness whenever possible. According to the participants of this study, sensitivity and knowledge are the keys to all practice. A research participant explained,

Social workers can still be culturally sensitive and be respectful if they are willing to be open and flexible enough to work with the values that others have. White social workers need to be made more aware of the way their dominant location affects how others will view them, how minority co-workers will be perceived differently, and how sensitivity needs to be addressed. If White social workers show that they are open to ‘non-mainstream’ interventions without having to be forced by workshops, sensitivity training. It would help create a more open and welcoming attitude that will spread.

It is not uncommon for workplaces to provide training around cultural sensitivity. When asked about how the research participants felt about their workplaces they all answered that there needs to be a shift in focus. They said that there needs to be

more focus and more training on working with racialized professionals and not just on working with racialized clients.

Workplaces need to be more aware of the needs of all minority workers and the interactions and dynamics that occur with their co-workers, and support them through wading through their perceived notions of equality and inequality. There also needs to be recognition of the different groups of minorities, such as racialized groups and newcomers. Racialized and audible minorities face different struggles with some overlapping areas, however they have very different experiences with social interaction. People do not behave the same towards racialized people with foreign accents as they do to visible minorities speaking fluent Canadian English.

One of the research participants explained that she or he was from a multi-racial family where her or his skin tone was darker than that of her or his siblings. The participant said that even though her or his siblings worked in similar jobs, her or his experiences with racism in the workplace were very different, as captured by the statement, “the darker the skin, the harder to fit in”.

Six of the eight research participants reported that employers should recognise cultural holidays that are not recognised as traditional statutory holidays. Three of these participants indicated that they would even be happy if their employers merely recognised their holidays, and did not force them to work. As one stated, “I would even be happy if they let me take the day off without pay, but it’s not even an option. I have been mandated to work in some organizations despite communicating how important certain days are to my beliefs.”

### 6.3. Recommendations for Non-White Social Workers

All of the participants reported that they felt there is a definite difference in working with non-racialized social workers as compared to working with social workers that are racialized. Racialized social workers need to be aware that they are visible minorities and thus they cannot hide and must deal with certain stereotypes by others. According to the participants in this study, people often see them as exceptional, due to their racialized backgrounds. Often there are not a lot of racialized, non-White individuals who can achieve the same level in a profession and to a position of authority, thus they were seen as must be outstanding anomalies.

From the findings in my research, it seems imperative that racialized social workers feel every bit as valued for their skills as their White co-workers. All of the research participants indicated that it is easier to share with other racialized workers because there is often an unspoken kinship in sharing minority status. When working with other non-White professionals regardless of ethno-cultural sameness, there is often a feeling of ease that they will support the racialized social workers' efforts in advocating for cross-cultural intervention and planning.

Several of the research participants spoke about feeling tokenized in the workplace. Some strategies that the participants in this study suggested that would help to combat these negative feels are:

1. Be prepared to work with racialized groups and expect to be perceived as knowledgeable.

2. Be aware that as a racialized social worker that social location will affect service delivery and self development.
3. Reinforce that as a racialized social worker, you need to have a strong voice to advocate not only for clients but for yourself as a racialized person.
4. Train with people from the community. Training with service recipients is equally important as training with professionals. The clients are the experts in receiving services, thus are the best people to advocate for the needs of their ethno-cultural communities. They need to tell social workers what they need rather than being told what services they will be given.

## 6.4. Implications for Social Work Practice

The recommendations made by the participants for social work education programs, employers and racialized social workers have strong implications for social work practice. In terms of the potential value of the findings, this research may help by shedding light on the perspectives of racialized social workers on their experiences in cross-cultural practice. It can also point to directions that social work and other human social services should take in the immediate future to best serve the culturally diverse population of Canada.

The research findings will show how racialized social workers view their professional work and make sense of experiences in which they perceived their race and/or ethno-culture as factors in their work with clients and in social work agencies. The contributions of the study helps the social work profession understand the contributions and experiences of visible minority social workers to the profession and the way racialized social workers perceive their work environments. From these findings, it is possible to identify ways to support both racialized social workers and their more dominantly-located social work colleagues to understand and practice more effectively across cultures with both co-workers and clients. The urgency of this research is tied to Manitoba's increasing cultural diversity. It is estimated that cultural minorities will become the dominant portion of the population in larger Canadian cities by 2017 (Belanger & Malefant, 2005). It is important to recognize that the needs of the population for social services and programs and will be directly proportional to this shift.

This research helps assess according to the experiences and views of a sample of eight social workers, the current state of social work services to Manitoba's multicultural population, specifically in pointing to how client and social worker cultural diversity can be better understood and acknowledged in service delivery. This case study focused on a small sample of visible minority social workers practicing in Winnipeg at a particular time. Their accounts generated findings that offer a snapshot of current professional and workplace experiences of racialized social workers.

The findings of this study led to recommendations and suggestions for social service delivery overall. More research is necessary to determine with greater precision, the needs of culturally racialized clients, but also the needs of culturally non-dominant social workers providing services to them and to others. This research can provide insight into how social work education on minority issues can be delivered not only for the benefit of clients, but also for social workers. This has a significant bearing due to the fact that with the increasingly diverse population, it can also be expected that the student body, in general, will proportionally become more diverse. Institutions of higher learning that educate social workers have a responsibility and obligation to respond by helping current and future students to better understand diversity issues and to promote culturally sensitive services for program delivery and for supporting social workers and students in these efforts.

## 6.5. Contributions to Social Work Literature

There is very little literature on culturally competent social work practice written by racialized authors. The majority of literature on cross cultural social work practice is written with the presumption that social workers are dominantly located and will be working with racialized clients (Hamilton, 2001). The emphasis in these works is on how cultural differences should be considered by dominantly located social workers to accommodate racialized clients.

The emic perspective presented by the racialized social workers in this study gives insight into what professional and personal issues arise in work related situations. The reality that racialized social workers live is they cannot hide nor disguise their physical appearance. There are many assumptions and stereotypes that exist in society impacting on how any person relates to others regardless of work, personal or general social interactions is perceived.

The racialized social workers in this study reported feeling that White social workers do not seem to be aware that racialized communities have generated stereotypes and assumptions about them. Although there is some literature on the culture of Whiteness by White scholars (Christensen, 1999), there is little written from the perspective of racialized social workers on Whiteness (Cox and Ephross, 1998; Christensen, 1999; Hamilton, 2001).

**Summary**

There is not an abundance of literature written by White social workers on their experience in culturally competent practice. The need for such research is valuable to all social workers, not just racialized workers because of the increasingly diverse population of Winnipeg. There are more culturally diverse clients, and more culturally diverse social workers. Racialized social workers are expected to work with members of their own communities at times and are often placed in awkward situations with unrealistic expectations by clients, peers, co-workers, supervisors and management.

This research has great implications for social work practice. It helps to identify specific issues experienced by racialized workers. The respondents of this study identified specific issues they face in their work. Many of their experiences are supported by literature. These issues can be discussed and addressed so that the needs of racialized social workers can be addressed and best service delivery can be achieved regardless of a worker or client's personal location.

The research participants in this study shared many personal and professional experiences that suggest that social work education programs and workplaces need to better train and educate all social workers in working with cross-cultural competency and sensitivity not only with clients but also with racialized colleagues.

Many of the respondents in this study reported that they did not feel that they were adequately prepared as racialized social workers to enter the workplace as racialized workers. Several of the respondents in this study also reported that they did not feel that they were able to connect with White co-workers as swell as they could with racialized workers. Many had experiences in the workplace that made them feel that they were not perceived the same as their White co-workers and that they level of cross-cultural competent skills that they had were automatic.

It is recommended that racialized workers are more included in cross cultural sensitivity training and education and are supported in the workplaces more through awareness, inclusion and encouragement to share and educate others about their culture while providing opportunities to engage in cultural activities with other racialized groups.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board Approval Certificate

CIC Building
208 - 194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Fax (204) 269-7175
www.umanitoba.ca/research

UNIVERSITY of MANITOBA | Ethics
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

**March 1, 2011**

TO: **Florence See-Toh** **(Advisor T. Heironen)**
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** **Bruce Tefft, Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

**Re:** **Protocol #P2010:121**
**"An Emic Approach to Visible Minorities Experiences in Social Work Practice with Multicultural Populations In Winnipeg"**

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol, as revised, has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval has been issued based on your agreement with the change(s) to your original protocol required by the PSREB. It is the researcher's responsibility to comply with any copyright requirements. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note:**

- **If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.**

- **If you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.**

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study** (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) **in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

*Bringing Research to Life*

## Appendix B E-mail Script Introduction to Invitation

Dear Prospective Participant,

The following is a Letter of Invitation to participate in a study by Ms. Florence See-Toh. She is currently in the Masters of Social Work Program at the University of Manitoba and recruiting for research participants who would be interested in speaking about experiences as non-white social workers in Winnipeg and working within a diverse multicultural community.

All information will be kept confidential and identifying information will be deleted or altered. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact the researcher directly. You will have an opportunity to review your transcripts for correct representation and content prior to data analysis, as well as a copy of the summary of findings should you desire.

If you know of any other non-white social workers that would be interested in participating and fit the criteria, please forward this letter as their invitation. Thank you for your interest and assistance.

XXXXX, Administrative Assistant

## Appendix C Letter of Invitation

Dear Colleague:

My name is Florence See-Toh and as part of my Masters of Social Work degree, I am conducting a qualitative study to examine how visible minority social workers experience culturally sensitive practice in Winnipeg. I am hoping that you can help me in participating as an interviewee for this research.

My research is entitled: Non-White Social Workers and Their Experience in Social Work Practice with Multicultural Populations in Winnipeg. The target population group will be non-white persons including immigrants, refugees, and multi-racial social workers. All respondents will self identify as non-white visible minorities when agreeing to be part of the study.

The interviews will be conducted on a one-on-one basis with me in a private room that we will choose that is convenient and appropriately private. Some options are local public library conference rooms or pre-booked rooms at facilities at the University of Manitoba campuses.

The following are the questions I will ask at the interview:

1. How do non-white social workers perceive themselves as seen in terms of being cross culturally competent by colleagues and clients?
2. How do non-white social workers perceive the expectations and assumptions of their supervisors and work environments in agencies and

organizations that are not designated specifically for servicing ethno-cultural minority populations?

3. How are non-white social workers stereotyped according to their ethno-cultural, language, and non-dominant appearance at work? Does it make them approach their practice differently?

I am looking for about 8 participants who meet the following criteria:

i. Self identify as visible minority
ii. Have been a social worker in Winnipeg for a minimum of 2 years
iii. Have worked with both white and non-white clients living in Winnipeg
iv. Can communicate in English for interview purposes

As part of your position in the community, I understand that you may know social workers who could be interested in participating in my study. If you are interested or know anyone that would be interested in participating in the study please provide them with this letter. They may contact me directly at XXXXXXX or via e-mail me at XXXXX

If you or potential participants have any questions or concerns, they can contact me. I would like to ask that interested participants contact me before March 15, 2011. Thank you for your time and consideration in assisting me with my recruitment and M.S.W. research work.

Sincerely,

Florence See-Toh

## Appendix D Telephone Script

Thank you for calling me and showing interest in my study. Can you tell me how this topic interests you?

The letter of invitation that you may have received specified some criteria for being part of the study. These are:

1. Self identify as visible minority
2. Have been a social worker in Winnipeg for a minimum of 2 years
3. Have worked with both Caucasian Canadian (white and raised in Canada) and non-white clients
4. dominantly located and minority clients
5. Can communicate in English for interview purposes

Do you meet all them? Do you have any questions about any of them?

I'm interested in hearing about your experience as a visible minority social worker in Winnipeg. Would you be interested in spending and hour and a half to two hours in an interview with me at a place and time of your convenience? When would you be available? (Time and place will be discussed and set).

Participation in this study means that you agree to join me for one interview which will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. In this interview, I will ask you to tell me about your experiences of providing social work services to multicultural populations in places you have worked in Winnipeg. The interviews will be conducted on a one-on-one basis with me in a private room that we will choose that is convenient and

appropriately private. Some options are local public library conference rooms or pre-booked rooms at facilities at one of the University of Manitoba campuses.

All information will be kept confidential and identifying information will be deleted or altered. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact the researcher directly. You will have an opportunity to review your transcripts for correct representation and content prior to data analysis, and receive a copy of the summary of findings should you desire.

Thank you again for expressing interest in my study. I am looking forward to meeting you.

## Appendix E  Guidelines for Interview Questions

Prior to beginning the interview, the consent form will be reviewed and the voluntary nature of participation will be emphasized.  It will be stressed that participants can pass on any question and do not need to give any explanation for doing so.

### Background Information

The following questions are asked of all participants in order to provide me with some information about your background.

1. What ethno-culture or cultures do you identify with?
2. If you were not born in Canada, how did come (example: international student, refugee, immigrant, etc...)?
3. What is your current job title?
4. What is your highest level of social work education and when did you achieve it?  (Example: B.S.W., M.S.W., Ph.D.)
5. How long collectively have you been a social worker? Please do not include periods of unemployment or other work not designated as social work positions.
6. Is your current employer mandated to work with a specific ethno-cultural population?  If not, what is the main ethno-cultural background of the clientele you work with?

## Appendix F Consent Form

Research Project Title: An Emic Approach of How Visible Minorities Experience Social Work Practice with Multicultural Populations in Winnipeg

Researcher: Florence See-Toh

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Tuula Heinonen

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Participation in this study means that you agree to join me for one interview which will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. In this interview, I will ask you to tell me about your experiences of providing social work services to multicultural populations in places you have worked in Winnipeg. The interviews will be conducted on a one-on-one basis with me in a private room that we will choose that is convenient and appropriately private. Some options are local public library conference rooms or pre-booked rooms at facilities at one of the University of Manitoba campuses.

I am hoping to audio tape the interview, should you be comfortable with this. If you do not wish to be audio taped, I understand and can either take notes during or after

the interview. All materials including audiotapes, memos, and transcripts containing identifying and sensitive information will be destroyed after the thesis is written. All identifying information will be removed from transcripts and in the write up of the report. Consent forms will be shredded within 18 months of the interview or less if the thesis is submitted earlier.

All documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. I will be the only person with access to the files. Some transcripts will be shared with my thesis advisor. These will not have any names or workplaces on them.

Results of all interviews will be compared for common themes. There will be times where I will want to use specific information you have shared in order to show these themes. Any information that could identify you will be altered (without changing the meaning) to disguise your identity. Your name will not appear in the report. To ensure accuracy and your comfort with what I have written about, I can provide you a copy of the findings chapter to ensure you are comfortable with representation of your information. Interview transcriptions will be available in April 2011, and a summary of findings in July 2011. These will be mailed to you if you provide a non-work related address on the final page of this consent form.

Choosing not to answer any question is always optional. Further, you may stop your involvement at any time, including removing information that you have provided.

Sometimes talking about stressful experiences can bring up distressing emotions. If this happens during or after our interview, and you would like to speak with someone about it, you may wish to meet with your preferred counsellor or a supportive resource.

You may call Klinic crisis line at 1-888-322-3019 in the event you would like to speak to someone over the phone. The crisis line is available 24 hours a day, toll free. The WRHA also provides free counselling through the WRHA ACCESS sites. Participants may contact ACCESS River East (975 Henderson Highway, Ph: 938-5000), ACCESS Transcona (845 Regent Avenue West, Ph.: 938-5229), and ACCESS Downtown (2-640 Main Street, Ph.: 948-4048) for specific site scheduled services.

As a researcher I am obligated to contact the proper authorities if there is a disclosure of abuse during the interview. It will be reported to authorities as per legal obligations and the Child and Family Services Act of Manitoba and the Vulnerable Persons Act of Manitoba. Follow-up will be contingent upon local authorities and their assessment of the information provided.

Participants are encouraged to seek clarification or ask questions throughout participation in the research.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The principal researcher for this project is Florence See-Toh and can be contacted at XXXXXX or XXXXXX. The thesis supervisor Dr. Tuula Heinonen, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba and can be contacted at 474-9543.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Ethics Board (PSREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or Margaret Bowman, Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I may make conference presentations or write articles for journals based on this research. No names or identifying features will be included. Dissemination of this research may be useful for social service systems and policy making.

Participant's Signature_____ Date_____

Researcher's Signature_____ Date_____

In order that I can forward you your interview transcript prior to data analysis and a summary of findings section after the study's completion please provide a non-workplace mailing address below. This information will also be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

## Appendix G Interview Questions

**Research Question #1:** How do non-white social workers perceive themselves as seen in terms of being cross culturally competent by colleagues and clients?

i. How do you understand cultural competency in social work. Do you think it's important when working with clients?

ii. Using your own definition of culturally competent, what do you consider as a culturally competent social worker?

iii. How do you feel about cross culturally sensitive practice and delivery by a dominantly located worker versus a worker? In what ways do you think it is the same, different, better or worse? Do you think that your non-dominant location make a difference?

**Research Question #2:** How do non-white social workers perceive the expectations and assumptions of their supervisors and work environments in agencies and organizations that are not designated specifically for servicing ethno-cultural minority populations?

i. Can you tell me your thoughts on how social work needs to address issues of increasing cultural diversity in clientele and social workers? In what ways do you think it is currently being addressed in your workplace? How does it affect you as a non-white social worker and is it important?

ii. In what ways do you feel being a minority benefits or disadvantages you as a social worker when working with clients? Examples?

iii. Can you tell me about your experience in sharing cultural sameness with clients? In what ways is it the same or different from working with other minority located clients? Examples?

**Research Question #3:** How are non-white social workers stereotyped according to their ethno-cultural, language, and non-dominant appearance at work? Does it make them approach their practice differently?

i. Can you tell me about any personal experiences you've had as a social worker when you've felt that stereotyping has affected you as a professional? Was this by other professionals or by clients? How did it affect you?

ii. Can you tell me about how you think non-white social workers are perceived by their employer, coworkers, and clients in terms of their visible minority status and culture? In what ways does it make a difference in work relationships and ability to deliver services? Examples?

iii. Do you have any recommendations about training for non-dominantly located social workers to better prepare for social work practice? What about for dominantly located social workers working across cultures with their colleagues and superiors?