"PEOPLE LIKE ME": RACIALIZED TEACHERS AND THE CALL FOR COMMUNITY

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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Abstract

The city of Toronto is one of most racially diverse places in the world, with almost half of its population identifying as being a “visible minority” (Statistics Canada, 2010). As a result, the field of education faces the question of how to meet the needs of their transforming student demographics. Numerous researchers and institutional policies have responded to these changes by endorsing the hiring of a teaching staff that is reflective of the racially diversifying student population (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003). The assumption, however, that racialized educators will automatically be effective teachers or role models for racialized students homogenizes their social differences and reduces the multiplicity of their identities to the colour of their skin (Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). What is urgently lacking from these dominant discourses are the voices of racialized individuals, whose inside perspectives and lived experiences can provide valuable insights about the roles of equity and race in education.

Using an anti-racist theoretical framework to guide my research methodology, this study examines how racialized teachers understand their classroom practices, school relationships, and institutional policies with respect to race, equity, and the expectations that are cast to them as
“visible minority” educators. A document analysis of educational statements that discuss race, equity, and anti-racism reveals that while policy has progressed, the presentation of these issues remains largely superficial and does not provide enough information or transparency to adequately communicate their importance. Nevertheless, the power of these dominant discourses has been vastly significant in shaping the lived experiences and feelings of racialized teachers, 21 of whom were individually interviewed using a qualitative, semi-structured method.

The inside perspectives of these teachers demonstrate the complexity of race and its inadvertent impact on their roles as educators; their feelings and reactions illustrate the ongoing gap between policy and practice, the ignorance that is embedded in notions of racial matching between teachers-students, and the persevering call for a professional community where individual differences are viewed as opportunities to learn rather than obstacles that need to be overcome.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

“Hey Miss, what’s your background?”
“Hey Miss, where are you from?”
“Hey Miss, what are you?”

From the moment that I first stepped into a classroom in the role of a teacher, these are the questions that I have been faced with. These are the questions that have intertwined, embedded, and engaged my experiences as an educator in Canada’s most racially diverse province. Growing up in communities that were always composed of individuals from all different racial and cultural backgrounds, my skin colour was never raised as a topic of discussion, never mind a point of contention. While I am certain that my status as a “visible minority” has shaped the way I have been perceived, treated, and judged my entire life, my race was never salient to me until I became a teacher. All of a sudden, queries about my skin colour, ethnicity, culture, nationality, and language were suddenly routine. By working in the same diverse communities that I had grown up in, I noticed that these questions were always asked by racialized students. These same students were also the ones that would come early to class or hang around afterwards for no other reason than to chat.

As I continued my journey in the field of education working in the capacities of an elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educator, my race continued to intersect with my role as a teacher. The questions did not stop, nor did the racialized students who would make efforts to learn more about me and “where I come from”. This topic is personally meaningful because I have struggled to come to terms with how the non-visible aspects of my identity have been completely foreshadowed and challenged by visible markers such as the colour of my skin. Throughout these experiences, I have reflected at length on what teacher race means to
education, how it affects classroom instruction as well as school relationships, and lastly, how it is addressed in existing dominant discourses. In this doctoral study, I explore how racialized teachers understand their work in schools that are racially diverse, how they make sense of the expectations that are cast to them, and what kind of meaning their statuses as non-white, “visible minorities” hold for them in the field of education.

1.1. Context

Ontario is Canada’s most racially diverse province with an estimated 2.7 million individuals who identified themselves as a “visible minority” in the most recent census, and of which approximately 1.2 million live in Toronto (City of Toronto, 2006). The most current Toronto Census reveals that their population consists of over 200 different races with the five most commonly reported being South Asian (12%), Chinese (11.4%), Black (8.4%), Filipino (4.1%), and Latin American (2.6%) (City of Toronto, 2006). A similar racial demographic breakdown can be seen in the city’s student demographics. A census conducted by the Toronto District School Board with students from grades 7 to 12 revealed that while white students account for approximately one third of the student demographics, the remaining two thirds are split up between East Asian (20%), South Asian (19%), Black (12%), Middle Eastern (5%), mixed race (5%), Latin American (3%), and Aboriginal (0.3%) students (Toronto District School Board, 2006). My research topic emerged in part from this increasing racial diversity in my surrounding communities and schools.

According to recent demographic projections, approximately 3 in every 5 persons will belong to a “visible minority” group in Toronto by the year 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2010). “Canadian immigration levels have tripled over the past decade, and the result has been that many schools have a large number of students who present a challenge to the school system.
Current population trends demand that schools and faculties of education re-imagine the mainstream as intercultural and multilingual in make-up” (Dlamini, 2002, p.52). These demographical changes have significant implications for educational institutions where changes in the student demographic should be considered in the design and implementation of school practices, community support services, and the professional development of teachers and administration. Schools play a central role in ensuring equity and fostering inclusion as we work towards a society that will realize the potential of all its different members.

The term “visible minority” is federally used to describe “persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Department of Justice Canada, 2011). While this definition of “visible minority” accurately describes the individuals who are the focus of my study, I have made the conscious decision to instead to use the term “racialized” in this research project. This decision was made primarily as a testament to my study’s adherence to the theory of anti-racism, which emphasizes the centrality of race and refutes its widespread reputation as a taboo subject (Dei, 2007; Lee, 1985; Schick, 2010; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). Racialization is understood as being the act of assigning specific meanings to groups on the basis of people’s physical differences even though “race” has been proved to be “a purely imaginary social fabrication” (Ng, 2003, p.210). Referring to these individuals as “racialized” persons aims to underscore the act of how we choose to see, perceive, and conceptualize race in one another and throughout our society. It is the process of objectifying individuals based on characteristics of race (Chan, 2007).

The establishment of the term “visible minority” can be viewed as an example of how the topic of race, as well as the word “race” itself, can cause feelings of discomfort and uneasiness in our society (Dei, 2007; Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2005). The complete omission of the word
“race” from the term “visible minority” may explain why this alternative phrasing, along with many others such as "racial minority", "minority group", "persons of colour", "marginalized", "minoritized", and "nondominant" can be found throughout dominant discourses (Dei, 2005; Faltis, & Abedi, 2013; Gunaratnam, 2003). The wide array of terms that have been forged to, in a sense, "name" racialized individuals can be interpreted as evidence of the difficulties and sensitivity that is often experienced while examining these issues. Therefore in my study the only mention of terms aside from "racialized" is in direct reference to government documents, institutional statements, and literary citations. All individuals aside from aboriginal peoples who are non-white in skin colour and non-Caucasian in racial background will be referred to as “racialized” in this project.

To address the inclusion and achievement of the growing number of racially diverse students in the classroom, numerous scholars have proposed the hiring of teachers who visibly represent the racially diverse student population (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2011; Asher, 2007; Carr, & Klassen, 1996; Carr, & Klassen, 1997; Carrington, & Skelton, 2003; Dlamini, 2002; Ghosh, & Abdi, 2004; Jacquet, 2008; James, 2001; Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Solomon, 1997; Nieto, 2002; Quiocho, & Rios, 2000; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Villegas, & Irvine, 2010). Some of these studies have investigated the role of these teachers beyond their physical representation and found that they can be effective in maintaining high expectations of minority students, using culturally informed pedagogy, developing trusting teacher-student relationships, confronting topics dealing with racism, and serving as cultural brokers (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2011; Quiocho, & Rios, 2000; Ramanathan, 2006; Villegas, & Irvine, 2010). Establishing a list of potential contributions from racialized teachers, however, must be done with caution.
Hall (1996) states that to assume that teachers will perform in a certain manner simply due to their race is “a naive and reductionist form of homogenization of community groups” (cited in Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.211). By speaking with both teachers and students, Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) found that the complexity and multifaceted nature of constructing meaningful and productive relationships in the classroom could not be simply reduced to a racialized affiliation between teacher and student. Other researchers have even found that racialized teachers face more challenges when working with students from similar cultural backgrounds (Carrington, & Skelton, 2003; Quiocio, & Rios, 2000). To further this idea that good teaching stretches far beyond the constraints of race, James and Taylor (2010) found that the most important quality that students want in their teachers is for them to be understanding, which they explicitly indicated is not the same as sharing the same racialized background.

Researchers in education, however, are not the only ones to advocate for the presence of racialized teachers in schools. Current dominant discourses also endorse a diversification of the teaching force (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009; Toronto District School Board, 2000). Before reviewing these policies, it is important to explain the notion of discourse. In its traditional sense, discourse refers to the spoken or written word between individuals; however, in this study, the Foucauldian definition of discourse as a way of structuring knowledge and social practice is emphasized (Henry et al., 2005; James-Wilson, 2007). Discourse can be understood as operating on two levels: individual and societal (Goldberg, 2007). Mill (2003) makes the clarification that discourse “does not simply translate reality into language”, but it is also “a system that structures the way we perceive reality” (p.55). This said system constructs ideologies and can be masked as explanations, rationalizations, justifications, and hidden codes of meaning, which ultimately contain power that is used to defend or strengthen its discursive community.
The references to “dominant discourses” in my study refer to sets of statements produced by the institutions that possess the power, position, and authority to create policy. While these documents are commonly referred to as the “official” discourses, my decision to address them as “dominant” discourses calls to attention the individuals and groups who are positioned to influence and develop policy. The dominant discourse is often what is accepted as the natural order, even by those who are marginalized by it (James-Wilson, 2007). In this regard, dominant discourses can be deceptive and oppressive; they are the same coercive relations of power that shape social practices and in turn, influence individual identity (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011). In this project, the dominant discourses addressing matters of equity and diversity in Canada, and more specifically, in Ontario's educational context are imperative to examine.

In the 1960s, changes in Canadian immigration laws to a points system based on criteria such as education and occupation rather than the category of race, rendered the terms for immigrant entry into the country more equitable. This revision of immigration laws led to the increase of racial diversity amongst newcomers to Canada, facilitating the arrival of immigrants from Asian, African, and Latin American countries (Ghosh, & Abdi, 2004). During this same period, rising nationalist feelings amongst the population of Quebec prompted the government to create the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-1969), which allowed non-anglophones and non-francophones to express their concerns about being marginalized in Canada's "bicultural and bilingual" framework (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008). In response to these concerns, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau created the Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework Policy, which was then followed by the Multiculturalism Act of 1988. The latter document expanded on the features of the former, with more of an emphasis on equity and multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society (Li, 1999). When the
original Multiculturalism Policy was released in Canada in 1971, the term specifically addressed the growing presence of immigrants; however, as time passed and attention to matters of diversity increased, this definition was further developed. “In Canada... multiculturalism is being interpreted broadly, moving from the narrow focus on ethnicity to an inclusion of multiple diversities...redefined so as not to exclude many groups in society who were not initially included in that rubric” (Nilsen, 2001, p. 98). How federal policy on multiculturalism was translated into provinces varied.

Ontario's provincial government endorsed multiculturalism as a policy in 1977 and its Ministry of Education has since encouraged the accommodation of English Language Learners as well as changing the curriculum to incorporate more diverse perspectives (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). In the 1980s, the concept of anti-racist education emerged partly in critique of how multiculturalism approached notions of culture. At this time, multicultural education was limited to the celebration of our different racial backgrounds, languages, religions, and cultures; its methods were often tokenistic in nature and involved having special days where students would wear clothes and eat food from cultures around the world (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008). Anti-racism, on the other hand, advocated the need to go beyond recognizing diversity and discuss the imbalanced power relations and dominant structures that embedded throughout our society (Ryan, 1999). Up until this point, educational policy initiatives striving towards the inclusion of diversity in our schools mostly took the form of school board statements, the formation of race relations committees, or the rephrasing of curriculum documents and materials. One of the very first attempts at providing a hands-on, practical resource for how anti-racism and equity would actually look like in a classroom was Enid Lee's book, Letters to Marcia, which provides step-by-step instructions for activities that would help foster an anti-racist education (Lee, 1985).
These criticisms of multicultural education led to the creation of a report in 1987 called "The Development of a Policy on Race and Ethno-Cultural Equity" by a provincial advisory committee. This report paved the way for the development of guidelines for ethnocultural equity and anti-racism in school boards in 1993, which was facilitated by the governance of the newly elected New Democratic Party (Anderson, & Jaafar, 2006; Ghosh, & Abdi, 2004).

Only two years after the act requiring school boards to develop policies on anti-racism was passed, however, the Conservative Party entered office and made colossal structural changes to education, including the closing of the Anti-Racism Secretariat and the removal of equity initiatives in curriculum documents and policy (McCaskell, 2005). It was only after the Liberal government was elected in 2002, that the Ontario Ministry in Education released in 2009 its most current guidelines explicitly addressing the government’s stance on issues of equity, titled the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, which describes a four-year implementation plan that aims to “help the education community identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers in order to support the achievement and well-being of all students” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p.18). The inconsistent leadership and fluctuating guidelines have plagued the Ontario government for the past two decades and these changes in provincial governance have had a deep impact on the progress and development of educational initiatives. Past studies have found that not only have these educational initiatives received little teacher and administrative support in schools, but at times they have even been met with resistance (Dlamini, 2002). The fact, however, that the topics of equity and race keep reappearing on the government’s agenda carries two implications for the individuals who work in the domain of education, and in particular, teachers.
The first implication is clear and it is that the acknowledgement and removal of institutional barriers to hiring and promotion for all individuals are necessary to support equity and inclusion amongst educational staff. On the other hand, the second implication is problematic because it presumes that this racial diversity will contribute to said initiatives beyond representation, such as improved classroom instruction that will subsequently improve the achievement and well-being of all students. Surely, jobs in education should be made accessible to all individuals, but once they are accessed, how does the visible representation of racialized individuals contribute to upholding equity and inclusion within schools? “[R]ecent policy measures to address the under representation of ethnic minority groups in teaching have been predicated upon largely unexamined assumptions about the salience of such teachers as ‘role models’ for minority children” (Carrington, 2002, p.47). A problem, however, lies in the fact that the term “role model” is frequently used, yet rarely explained (Carrington, & Skelton, 2003). Provided that this discourse is so widespread, it is imperative to examine the limitations of the expectations placed on racialized teachers and how they personally understand this popular notion.

1.2 Rationale

While there is a significant amount of evidence that race plays an important role in student-teacher relations, there is a lack of research as to why exactly this social construct matters in the classroom (Downey, & Pribesh, 2004). Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) discuss in depth the politics of representation and how “[i]t is taken for granted that racialized minority teachers are better able to respond and necessarily more sensitive to the diversity of the student population and their communities” (p.210). Studies on the racial diversity of teachers have not kept up with the rapid growth of our racially diverse populations (Ryan, et al., 2009; Solomon, &
Levine-Rasky, 2003) and often they are grounded in the notion that teachers’ racialized representation automatically implies effective classroom instruction for diverse student populations (Asher, 2007; Carrington, & Skelton, 2003). This assumption, however, homogenizes the social and political differences that exist between racialized teachers (Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Quiocho, & Rios, 2000). The success of a student-teacher relationship simply cannot be reduced to racial affiliation.

The research that has been conducted with racialized educators reveals a mixture of positive as well as negative experiences from teaching minority students. Carrington (2002) suggests that the problem of racialized teachers as role models lies more in the expectations than in the reality. Henceforth it is vital to speak to these teachers about how they understand their work as educators in diverse communities with respect to the expectations that are cast to them in dominant discourses. In an effort to underscore the saliency of race and the significance of power relations in education, anti-racism is used as this project’s theoretical framework to explore how these educators understand their lived experiences in the classroom. “Anti-racist research places the minoritized at the center of analysis by focusing on their lived experiences and the simultaneity of their oppressions” (Dei, 2005, p. 2).

Using the two qualitative research methods of individual interviewing and document analysis, my study examines how this popular discourse of the visibility and representation of racialized teachers has influenced the very same educators who are made subject of these expectations. A critical approach to institutional documents and statements is used to conduct a policy analysis on existing educational policies related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism with respect to both racialized students and teachers. These two methods are both integral to the objectives of this study because "...social discourses and lived experiences are co-constituted—they intermingle and inhabit one another" (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.7). How these racialized individuals understand their work as teachers is inseparable from the dominant discourses that are responsible for the widespread notions and expectations surrounding their
roles in education. The role of these teachers should not be limited to representation, or inexorably assumed to satisfy the criteria for inclusive and equitable schools. There is more to be heard and to be learned from the voices of these teachers if we are to better our understandings of what teacher race means in education.

1.3 Objectives

My study investigates the perspectives of racialized teachers in racially diverse schools as well as how they understand the dominant discourses that address their roles as “visible minority” teachers. Moreau et al. (2007) state that there is an “urgent need to explore the particular factors that hinder their access to teaching and to school management positions” (cited in Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.16). Using qualitative research methods such as document analysis as well as semi-structured individual interviews with 21 racialized teachers in Toronto, I explored the perspectives of these educators on the relevance of race in their school relationships, classroom practices, and the expectations that are cast to them in existing dominant discourses. My choice to include all individuals who identify as a non-white racialized instead of focussing on one specific racial background is rooted in the belief that these individuals share experiences of a racialized identity and feelings of being an outsider (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

“Racialization signifies the ways in which racial meanings become embedded in groups, relationships, and social practices that are not formerly racially classified” (Omi, & Winant, 1994 as cited in Coloma, 2006). The expectation that racialized teachers will be more effective with racialized students is in and of itself a form of racialization; how these educators choose to perceive and make sense of their lived realities in relevance to the popular discourse is imperative to examine. The inside perspectives of this minority group within the teaching profession may be able to provide relevant insights for the future development of institutional
policies, relevant curriculum, and inclusive practices in education. It is possible that an increased exposure to stories of racialized educators may reveal biases and obstacles that dominant groups are not aware of.

The more stories we collect and share, the more voices have a seat at the table, the more students we reach in the classroom, the more fundamental the power of voice becomes in the face of received notions thought to be neutral, the more obvious the racist system of society becomes. (Laughter, Baker, Williams, Cearley, & Milner, 2006, p. 161)

Listening to participants’ lived experiences can lead to developing better understandings of how race may influence the work of racialized teachers and, as a result, how dominant discourses and the current educational system have worked, or failed to work, for individuals whose voices are not as often heard. Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) discuss at length the poor translation from statements on equity and diversity education to the actual improvement of academic outcomes from all groups of students; they continue by stating that, “[m]ost studies concerned with why this may be so are speculative and have neglected to solicit teachers’ perspectives directly” (p.10). Therefore, it is with these ideas in mind that my study gives voice to the stories, opinions, and lived experiences of racialized teachers. The following objectives were used to formulate the research questions that structured my study.

1.4 Research Questions

My project was guided by the following research questions:

- How do racialized teachers understand their work with respect to the racialized role expectations that are cast to them as “visible minority” educators?
  - How do racialized teachers understand the role their racial identity plays in their classroom practices and school relationships?
  - How do racialized teachers understand the dominant discourses of equity, diversity, and anti-racism, and how do these understandings shape the way they approach their work?
Chapter 2
RACIALIZED TEACHERS: WHAT'S BEEN SAID AND DONE

A study done on teacher diversity in Canada between 2001 and 2006 in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia discovered that the number of racialized teachers in elementary and secondary schools has not kept up with the growth of our racially diverse populations (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009). While there has been an increase in the number of racialized educators during this timeframe, the ratio of racialized teachers to racialized Canadians is actually decreasing. In 2001, approximately 10% of teachers in Ontario identified themselves as being a “visible minority”, which rose only 2% from the census done one decade prior in 1991 (Blais, & Ouedraogo, 2008). There is a significant imbalance between the slow growth of racialized teachers relative to the rapid increase of racial diversity in the Ontario population, which results in the racial diversity that is becoming increasingly characteristic of student demographics in public schools. For example, in the Toronto District School board, over two thirds of their student population identify as being a “visible minority” (TDSB, 2006).

This strong presence of racialized persons make it crucial to address how these individuals are being welcomed into the school, a social institution that confronts the diversity of these demographics every day. At the front of these interactions is a classroom environment largely created by teachers, whose racial identities can be the cause for expectations that they’ll fulfil the tasks of a role model, community messenger, as well as a cultural ambassador in schools with a racially diverse student population (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2011; Bonnett, & Carrington, 2004; Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Quirocho, & Rios, 2000). There exists the assumption that teachers who share similar racial or cultural backgrounds to their students are more likely to be effective in the classroom; however, how does race as a social construct
actually contribute to a teacher’s ability to be an effective educator? And on what grounds are these expectations being formed?

This chapter reviews the existing literature on racialized teachers by starting with a section exploring the history of race as a concept and how it is connected to racism and consequently, the act of racialization. Provided that this project focuses on individual understandings and lived experiences, it is then vital to explore notions of racial and professional identities amongst educators, which in turn shape their teacher roles in the classroom. The popular discourse of liberal multiculturalism is dissected by looking back to its origin in Canada and its gradual integration into the Ontario school curriculum. Part of this liberal multicultural discourse can be credited for the widely accepted notion that racialized teachers will be role models for racialized students, which is explored in the following section. Subsequently, an overview of past research studies completed on racialized educators and what they have faced in school communities is provided. These various pieces of the puzzle each demonstrate strong cases for why anti-racism was chosen as this project's theoretical framework; "...it moves us beyond the comfortable aspect of each other's culture, the food and the festivals, to examining the more controversial dimensions of cultural which have led to change, and can lead to change” (Lee, 1985, p. 8-9). An anti-racist approach emphasizes the salience of race, the importance of challenging the governing structures that we inhabit, and above all, the value of listening to the voices of those who have been made subjects of difference and marginalization.

2.1 Debunking Race, Racism, and Racialization

A detailed review of my study’s key terms is presented in this section with the purpose of clarifying my intentions as a researcher. After all, “[w]ords have power. Their meaning is entirely socially constructed, the result of a history of repeated inscription of dominant ideas –
ideas that can change only slowly because language is such a powerful vehicle for social norms” (Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007, p.6). The terminology used in my study has been thoughtfully selected due to the belief that words are powerful and are always implicating meaning through their everyday use. First and foremost, the term "diversity" must be addressed due to its extensive use in all domains of society as a general reference to the presence of differences in groups. While these differences can technically encompass anything from the physical to social to meta-physical, it is commonly used in reference to an assortment of races and cultures (Ahmed, 2007). Diversity is touted as a "product" in the discourse of multiculturalism, which has been criticized for making limited modifications to their institution organizations without re-examining its foundational structure (Henry et al., 2005). The fact that "diversity" is often used to implicate issues of race without explicitly naming race illustrates the recurring theme of this social construct as a societal taboo. And "[b]y overtly disallowing any reference to race, this seemingly neutral language also promotes an agenda where race becomes invisible" (Goldberg, 2007, p.211). As a result, this project employs the term diversity whilst specifying the type of difference, in part to recognize the infinite possibility of differences between individuals as well as the overall generality of the term. "Diversity can be defined in ways that reproduce rather than challenge social privilege" (Ahmed, 2007, p.240).

When the concept of race first emerged in the nineteenth century, it was understood as a biological classification of human beings that supported the division of groups on the basis of physical appearance, which at the time was believed to be correlated with intellectual, psychological, social, and moral differences. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that scientists came to the consensus that this racial grouping could not be attributed to biological differences because all human beings belong to one species and therefore, the same race (Henry
et al., 2005; Satzewich, 2011; Taylor, James, & Saul, 2007). Therefore it is due to these evolving understandings of race throughout history, from a biological category to a social construct, that Bulmer and Solomos (2004) highlight the need to situate the terms “race” and “racism” in a social context because they “constitute moments where community and identity is defined” (p.9). Despite this critical development in our biological understanding of the human population, the notion of race persists to the present day and societies continue to subscribe it. Race, however, is not a static category, but rather something that is socially constructed and assigned by dominant groups (Wotherspoon, 2009). Giroux (2003) echoes this sentiment that while there has been progress in our understandings of race over the years, it has not been sustained and as a result, race is one of the most powerful determinants influencing American society. “It is a fact of life that our race has an impact on nearly every facet of our lives...” (Jamal, 2009, p.228). It is important to understand the distinctions made between race, culture, and ethnicity in the context of this research.

In this project, culture is understood as the sum of values, lifestyle, beliefs, and ideas shared by people who have a common background that can range from being geographical, linguistic, historical, racial, religious, ethnic, or anything social. Culture is all-encompassing and fluid; it can be transmitted, adopted, created, and transformed (Henry et al., 2005). Jansen (2005) describes culture as being everything we think, everything we do, and everything we own; it is the “ultimate construction of social reality in any group” (p.22). On the other hand, ethnicity involves a common sense of belonging, heritage, customs, language, or shared national origin. While ethnicity entails the social conditions of groups, race emphasizes the supposed biological status of groups and the social construction of racism (Gunaratnam, 2003; Henry et al., 2005). Many Canadians view ethnicity simply as the way in which people choose to identify
themselves, but this individual perception is undeniably based on what society defines for them as different and how they do or do not fit into this description (Jamal, 2009). Ethnicity has also been criticized for its recognition of the role of language, history, and culture in the development of all individuals, but its failure to take into account the impact of racism in this process (Bonnett, 2000; Darder, & Torres, 2003; Hall, 2003). While the terms race, culture, and ethnicity have been clearly distinguished from one another and are used accordingly in my study, it is important to acknowledge that they are often used interchangeably in dominant discourses. This overlap of meanings was taken into consideration throughout my research so as to take into account the differences between analytic categories versus subjective, social references (Gunaratnam, 2003).

My use of the term “race” in this study is rooted in the belief that the ideology of race as a salient marker of difference has had a deep and lasting impact on our social reality long past the discovery of its unscientific foundation. Subsequently, race is recognized in this project as a social construct that is a discursive and not a biological category (Darder, & Torres, 2003; Hall, 2006; McCaskell, 2005; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). Race shapes group experiences, life opportunities, and economic conditions in very clear and inequitable ways; it is a social force that is capable of harnessing a lot of power (Cross, 2010; Darder, & Torres, 2003; Omi, & Winant, 2005; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). For the context of my research, this notion of power is approached from a sociological perspective that recognizes how power can be exercised on a macro-level by dominant institutions as well as how it can be generated and negotiated between individuals on a micro-level (Ng, 2003). There is not a fixed amount of power that is to be distributed or fought over, but instead power is something that can be created through relationships and collaboration (Cummins, 2003). For example, it is possible to give power to
individuals through interactions that provide them with support, encouragement, or knowledge; however these possibilities do not discount the reality of power on a macro-level nor the fact that some individuals are born with more power and privilege than others due to personal attributes such as socioeconomic status, gender, and race.

Race is implicated through the process of racialization, which has been defined as the act of assigning specific meanings to groups on the basis of people’s physical differences even though race has been proved to be nothing more than a social construct (McCaskell, 2005; Ng, 2003; Wotherspoon, 2009). It is possible that the conversion of the noun “race” to the verb form “racialize” serves to emphasize how the process of dividing and categorizing groups of people is actively undertaken by human beings. Provided that there is no biological justification for the existence of races, it is an ideology that survives and persists solely due to the activity of its subscribers, who adopt certain beliefs and attitudes to help them understand their lived realities. Racialization occurs when the discourse surrounding a set of notions or principles becomes instilled with racial dimensions; for example, the debate in Canada about immigration has been racialized due to the growing number of immigrants who are racialized minorities (Henry et al., 2005; Wotherspoon, 2009). “Racialization is embodied in ongoing discourses in education through institutional policies, practices, and norms. Structures and policies work within the demarcation of specific racial or ethnic groups” (Chan, 2007, p.132). Central to my study is how the widespread discourse of role models in teaching has become racialized with respect to how to respond to the rapidly increasing diversity of our students. When racialization leads to the unequal treatment of non-white groups based on supposed biological differences, these acts become characteristic of racism (Darder, & Torres, 2003; Dei, 2007; Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007).
Racism can be understood then as both a cause and a result of racialization (Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007). It is an ideology, encompassing the attitudes and beliefs of individuals, that supports the superiority of one group over others based on racial classification; it is the practice of domination and subordination, power and powerlessness (Henry et al., 2005; Ng, 2003). Possibly the most challenging obstacle to addressing issues of racism is first being able to acknowledge that they exist (Dei, 2005). “Moreover, the problem is not just racism, but the fact that racism is an everyday problem. Everyday racism adapts to cultural arrangements, norms, and values while operating through the structures of power in society” (Essed, 2007, p.235). While racism can exist in many forms, two overarching types are individual racism and systemic racism: the first being a conscious prejudicing at a personal level and the latter occurring more on the large-scale, where policies and practices of structures and institutions inhibit the advancement of racialized groups (Henry et al., 2005).

Tatum (2000) stresses the distinction between racism and prejudice, explaining that while racism can include prejudice on the basis of race at an individual level, it also extends past the individual to a societal system that is inclusive of institutional practices. A common definition used by anti-racist educators to explain racism is that it is “prejudice plus power”, meaning that when racial prejudice is combined with the social power to access resources and make influential decisions, the institutionalization of racist policies is made possible (p.80). Thus “[w]hen we personalize the meaning of racism, we reduce complex social issues to a matter of subjective belief, so that those who do not believe the same can simply dismiss it” (Essed, 2007, p.236). In these situations, racism is disguised as a personal opinion. Insisting on the right to have an opinion is directly connected to the conflicting notions of democracy and racism.
Democratic racism is an ideology composed of two opposing values: on one hand, racism and on the other, societal beliefs in equality, fairness, and justice (Henry, & Tator, 1999; Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007). Democratic racism takes place when racialized ideas are reinforced through a discourse that is generally viewed as acceptable and within reason by the general masses despite contributing to the unequal relations of power and dominance. For example, the phrase “people of colour” is arguably an example of democratic racism because it reinforces the notion of otherness by normalizing whiteness, implicating that white is not a colour, and placing white individuals at the center; it is a dominant term born from a position of power and white privilege (Daniel, 2009b; Wahab, 2009). Another example is the widespread discourse of denial, which is the claim that one does not see race and thus, treats everyone the same; this is called a “colour-blind” approach (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Sleeter, 2004; Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003; McLaren, 2000; Satzewich, 2011; Wotherspoon, 2009). The refusal to acknowledge the salience of race is extremely problematic. While some view this approach as a step towards equality, it fails to address the issue of equity. In this study, equity refers to the belief that an individual’s situation in society precludes equal treatment, that in order to treat everyone equally, some must be treated differently to account for their varying personal circumstances (Brayboy et al., 2007; Henry et al., 2005).

Race has an effect on everyone, but it first and foremost affects racialized minorities because it influences how they are treated by members of the dominant group. “The denial of race difference only serves to justify the status quo and its inherent systemic bias and disadvantage to non-dominant groups” (Dei, 2007, p.195). Statements that deny the salience of race such as, “I don’t see colour” can be indicative of a privileged position that fails to recognize the effects of race and racialization that deeply impact minorities. In fact, many people believe
that Canada is a "non-racial" country where everyone enjoys the same privileges (Dlamini, 2002). While the intentions behind said statements may be good, they do not recognize that the denial of colour actually serves to perpetuate the status quo (Banks, 2001). Issues of race cannot be addressed without first being accepted as a reality for everyone, not just racialized minorities. These points highlight the fact that the social construct of “race” is typically ascribed to minorities and not to members of the dominant group. In the Canadian context, the process of racialization involves the establishment of whiteness as the norm against which difference is constructed (Coloma, 2006). “[T]he fact that ‘race’ is ascribed to others and not to members of the dominant groups demonstrates how it is used in society to name others and construct boundaries around groups” (Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003, p.84). Despite having very little connection to the actual skin tones of human beings, colour remains at the center of race classification (Henry et al., 2005). Hence it is important to clarify the distinction between skin colour and race.

Skin colour is a physical characteristic that is unchanging, while race is a social construct grounded in an individual’s understanding of skin that is mobile and continually changing (Scheurich, & Young, 2001). Satzewich (2011) distinguishes between the two concepts by explaining the sociological difference between achieved characteristics and ascribed characteristics. Achieved characteristics are aspects of one’s identity that can change over time, such as education or socioeconomic class. On the other hand, ascribed characteristics, such as eye colour or height, do not change. Because skin colour is an ascribed characteristic, Satzewich (2011) underscores the arbitrariness in attributing meaning to physical attributes. Moreover, skin colour is a continuum rather than clear cut categories; for example, at what point does black
become brown? This example stresses the fact that race is but a socially conceived construct: an achieved characteristic born from historical, political, and social contexts.

A tension exists between the physical permanence of skin colour and our fluid understandings of race. Skin colour and race are distinct, but intertwined; both factors influence one’s interactions with the world, but in ways that are varied and inconsistent depending on the individuals who are involved. Emphasizing the physical permanence of skin colour and how it contributes to the social division of human beings into races (Dei, 2007; DuBois, 2003; Henry et al., 2005) is essential to my study on how racialized teachers understand their work in racially diverse schools. While individuals do not choose their skin tone, they are capable of choosing how they understand its role in their lived realities. “Skin colour has an important relationship to status and position in Canadian society” (Henry et al., 2005, p.4). When whiteness is fixed as the norm against which all others are compared, the ideology that defines white individuals as superior renders people of different skin colours to be perceived as inferior becomes normalized. This attitude can be seen in the practice of referring to non-white groups, who represent four fifths of the world’s population, as minorities (Henry, et al., 2005).

While the majority and minority labels originated as a numerically based concept where one group was quantitatively larger than the rest (Abdelal, Herrara, Johnston, & McDermott, 2009), these labels are still upheld in “minority-majority” contexts, wherein there is a greater population of non-white persons than white persons (Cummins, 2001; Jacquet, 2008). Therefore, the usage of the term “racialized” in this project refers to people who are subjected to differential and unequal treatment in Canada due to their skin colour. The minority status of these individuals is “the result of a lack of access to power, privilege, and prestige in relation to the white majority group” (Henry, et al., 2005, p.5). The standing usage of these terms serves as a
constant reminder of the unequal power distribution that exists between races (Dei, 2007; Du Bois, 2003; Kumashiro, 2002; Leonardo, 2009).

The ways in which an Asian, a Latino/a, and a Black individual interact with the world will vary due to the different histories and associations of each racialized group as well as the many possible differences between each individual, such as gender and class. Heterogeneity exists not only between, but also within racial categories. At the same time, what these racialized minorities do have in common is the experience of an identity that has been forced by the dominant ideology of Eurocentric epistemology into an “essentialized and totalized unit that is perceived to have little or no internal variation” (Ladson-Billings, 2002, p.262). Here the concept of identity arises as being fundamental to the study of how racialized teachers understand the role of race in their work.

2.2 Teacher Identity as both Racial and Professional

Malesevic (2006) discusses the notion of how every person is not only expected, but required to have an identity, naming it, “an indispensible ingredient of every human being” (p. 13). This essentialist perspective calls to mind a notion of identity from the Enlightenment period, where identity was viewed as being the core that an individual is born with and possesses throughout their entire lives (Hall, 2006). The rigidity of this definition, however, does not allow enough room for the changes, movements, and shifts that identity is always undergoing according to postmodernism (Sarup, 1996). “The fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy” (Hall, 2006, p.251). Accepting the idea that our identities are static hinders us from fostering clearer understandings of ourselves as evolving and fluctuating beings. This
study adheres to a postmodern understanding of identity being the result of interactions between people, institutions, and practices as opposed to a predetermined, inherent quality of a person.

“Identity is fabricated, constructed, in process...” (Sarup, 1996, p.14). This process of identity can be thought of as something one “does” rather that something one “has” (McLaren, 2000). It is a social process during which individuals make sense of who they are with respect to their surrounding communities and society (Brayboy et al., 2007). Moreover, due to this study’s focus on minority individuals, it is vital to recognize that identity changes with respect to the power relations in which social practices take place, which is why identity is not as often a concern for persons belonging to the majority group (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011). Identity is constituted by a vast range of traits including but not limited to race, gender, socioeconomic class, and language; these aspects will dictate individual consciousness of identity. Giroux (2003) poignantly articulates the complexity and fluidity of identity:

> Identities are neither fixed nor unified but are about an ongoing process of becoming. Identities are constructed through the differences and exclusions, mediated within disparate and often unequal relations of power, which largely determine the range of resources—histories, values, and experiences—available through which individuals and groups experience their relationship to themselves and others. (p.100)

This perspective underscores the individual as an active agent in the development of his or her identity and additionally, the belief that it is something that can change and evolve over time. Hall (2006) highlights the fleeting multiplicity and constant shifting of our identities. Not only do they exist in multiples, but they intersect with one another to inform the way that individuals understand and act in their lived experiences (Brayboy et al., 2007). It is remarkable how complex this process can be; the extent to which individuals engage in various aspects of their identities will determine the nature of their social interactions, which in return, constitute identity. Therefore identity as an ongoing process that continues to evolve through our lived
experiences. Each individual understands race differently and these various understandings will influence identities in different ways and to varying degrees.

Daniel (2009b) outlines the critical distinction between naming oneself versus positioning oneself. Whereas naming oneself can be as simple as a statement made by virtue of belonging to a certain group, positioning oneself involves a conscious effort to understand “the material and social consequences or rewards that accompany the particular location or space that one occupies” (p. 69). Daniel (2009b) provides the example of a Jewish woman who names herself a minority, but benefits from the position of being white and middle class. How might the ability of individuals to name and to position themselves affect their understandings of race and equity? What is important to be aware of then, is that while a social construct such as race can influence identity, it is only one component of and not a comprehensive representation of one’s individual identity. A firm grasp of this distinction may help counter existing stereotypes and generalizing tendencies about people with shared attributes.

Although individuals may share experiences or aspects of identity, they should not be automatically categorized together, or assumed to be the same in any regard. An emphasis on an individual’s racial identity fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity among groups and serve to reinforce racialization (Essed, 2007). The possibility, however, that people have similar experiences of power or powerlessness due to their skin colour is nevertheless significant (Dei, 2007; Du Bois, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000). It is imperative to make the distinction between similarity and sameness. Similar, shared experiences do not undermine individual identity. And so, while homogeneity cannot be presupposed for members of similar backgrounds, it is still important to consider the implications of the similarities that do exist amongst the racialized teachers who are the focus of this study.
The belief in identity as an ongoing process is useful for teachers in becoming aware of the fact that their individual experiences are not only continually moulding who they are as individuals, but what kind of teachers they are, and moreover, have the potential of being in the classroom. “No teacher enters the classroom without a historical grounding that has informed his or her particular ideological base and particular worldview” (Daniel, 2007, p.40). What is important for teachers is gaining an awareness of these dynamics and acknowledging that how they practice is a direct result of how they understand their profession with respect to themselves as individuals. Murrell (2001) asserts that teachers must have “a clear sense of identity and the way in which their identity relates to the students in the community within which they work” in order for them to effectively contribute to their students’ development (cited in Daniel, 2007, p.40). Concepts of identity are crucial to this study in developing an understanding for how racialized teachers view their race in addition to their experiences of difference with respect to their work as educators.

Teacher identity is understood as being inclusive of both an individual’s racial and professional identities. Quiocho and Rios (2000) endorse the notion that the personal identities of minority teachers’ are connected to their professional identities, which consist of individual attitudes towards education, schooling, and teaching as a profession with respect to their own social and cultural experiences with diversity. This approach supports the idea that identity can be understood as both an influencing factor as well as a sum of one’s social interactions. An overview of the literature on teacher identity within the field of education reaffirms its nature as being something dynamic as well as “an organizing element in teachers’ professional lives” (Beauchamp, & Thomas, 2009, p.175). Accepting the notion that identities are constantly in flux in order to accommodate individual growth explains how they can help people manage and make
sense of their lives. It is remarkable how such an intangible, ethereal concept is used by so many as a way of assembling the elements that define them to form this unique construct that accounts for every detail of who they are. Before examining how a postmodern conception of identity can correspond to teacher practice, it is imperative that we pause to reflect on teaching as a profession.

Talbert and McLaughin (1996) make some valuable distinctions between an occupation and a profession, of which three professional characteristics are as follows: “a specialized knowledge base and shared standards of practice, a commitment to meeting clients’ needs, and strong personal identity with the occupation” (p.129). Provided that there has been a lot of difficulty in trying to clearly define the teacher role and practice in the past, teaching as a profession is not something that been established for a long time. For example, the Ontario College of Teachers, which is an organization intended to assist teachers in regulating their profession, was created fairly recently in 1997 (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011). The journey of teachers towards being recognized as professionals has not been smooth or easy, and it is possible that the challenges that have arisen along the way continue to affect how teachers presently view themselves as well as their personal feelings about their roles and practices in education.

Despite surrounding ambiguities about what constitutes the teaching profession, there have been some consistent components identified amongst teachers, which could suggest that there are factors external to the school and the profession itself that are shaping teacher practice (Talbert, & McLaughin, 1996). The concept of professional identity itself can be understood as a role with specific behavioural expectations. Biddle (1979) asserts that all roles are associated with social positions that entail certain expected characteristics. These commonly held
expectations may help explain the lack of regularity that has emerged from the teacher profession. In other words, some teachers act the way they think they are expected to act. This prescriptive approach to teaching is problematic because it fails to critically think about the external forces that create these expectations, and moreover it ignores other important social aspects of identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, as an integral part of professional identity. It is then very concerning that the little regularity emerging is being determined by external forces such as media, policy, or institutions, while arguably the most important elements of teaching, such as academic instruction or student relationships, vary immensely between classrooms. It is important to consider how an increased awareness of one’s own identity might be able to ameliorate this situation.

Returning to the distinctions made earlier between an occupation and a profession, it is vital to emphasize the significance of “having a strong personal identity with the occupation” (Talbert, & McLaughin, 1996, p.129). This notion connects to the idea that a teacher’s identity as a professional can depend on his or her personal identity; it is a combination of personal and professional, as well as internal and external (Beauchamp, & Thomas, 2009). This amalgamation, however, does not imply that identity is uniform, nor consistent. In fact, while life experiences and beliefs can certainly transfer from one identity to the other, they can simultaneously be a cause for tensions and contradictions (Hall, 2006). What is important for the teacher is gaining a consciousness of these dynamics and acknowledging that how they practice is a direct effect of how they understand their profession with respect to themselves as individuals. It is crucial that the individual is not overlooked in the formation of the professional.

“Teacher professional identity...provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society”
This framework for professional identity, however, should not be restrictive or limiting to the point where there is no room for the other multiple social aspects of one’s identity to be incorporated into teacher practice. “Teachers must implicate themselves in their teaching and understand the ways they are intimately connected to the environment in which they work” (Daniel, 2007, p.41). After all, how a person constructs his or her identity outside of the workplace will be a significant contributing factor to how he or she develops a teacher identity. Studies with racialized teachers have found that how they perceive themselves as people and as members of cultural groups frequently defines how they see themselves as professionals.

Ted Williams et al. (2005) found that the experiences one has and the identity one develops, especially around issues of race and diversity in the context of family, community, and schools, has a great influence on how one comes to regard issues of race and diversity, as well as social justice, as a teacher. Equally important, these identities are not static but exist in continual development and revision. (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000, p.517).

Taking on a professional identity is not the same process for everyone; it varies depending on how precisely an individual does or does not fit into the expectations of that particular role (Alsup, 2006). “If a new teacher is not a member of the middle class, white, female, and heterosexual, the difficulty of the transition is exaggerated” (p.7). An exaggerated transition is likely due to the fact that an individual is different from what has been socially constructed for that specific role. For example, it is probable that a racialized male will face more challenges in a journey towards teaching than a white female normally would. These different experiences should not be disregarded; they shape social interactions, which constitute identity, and in turn, influence how teachers carry out their classroom practices. Differences are also not limited to race, they extend to characteristics inclusive but not limited to gender, socioeconomic class, religion, language, sexual orientation, and ability.
Another theory proposes that identities can actually be negotiated in the interactions between students and teachers, and that these “micro-interactions” are the most immediate determinants of student success or failure in school (Cummins, 2003). How teachers understand their social, racial, and professional identities will surely affect whether or not the identity negotiations that they undergo with their students will “reinforce coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power” (p.53). This notion of power relations will be explained further in my study’s adoption of an anti-racist theoretical framework. Before delving into anti-racism in education, the history of multiculturalism in Canada as a response to diversity must first be addressed.

2.3 The Shortcomings of Liberal Multiculturalism

Despite its widespread use in dominant discourses, there are important distinctions to make between how different groups interpret the term “multiculturalism”; it is frequently understood as being a country’s ethnocultural diversity produced through immigration (Winter, 2011). On the other hand, through this descriptive meaning, it has also evolved to be the name of an ideology about recognizing and celebrating different cultures, a particular concept that will be henceforth referred to as "liberal multiculturalism" (May, & Sleeter, 2010). The evolution of multiculturalism as a concept began when changes to immigration policies since the Second World War such as the allowance of more non-European newcomers initiated a steadily growing presence of racialized minorities in predominantly white communities across North America (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). To address the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity that emerged from these changes in the population, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau led Canada in becoming the first country in the world to have a federal policy on multiculturalism in 1971.
The Multiculturalism Policy of Canada recognized value of each and every citizen regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or language; it later on became enacted as a law, Bill C-93, the Canadian Multicultural Act in 1988 (Gérin-Lajoie, 2012). Since then Canada has been popularly portrayed as a cultural mosaic where minority groups are embraced and participate fully as equal members in society (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Jacquet, 2008; Jansen, 2005; Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007; Nicholls, 2010; Winter, 2011). Although the Multiculturalism Act included the notion of equity over equality, it still failed to address systemic racism or power relations (Bannerji, 2000; Jacquet, 2008; James, 2001; May, & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2004; Rezai-Rashti, 2005; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005; Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 1996). This oversight is significant because existing policies, procedures, and structures need to be critically reviewed for discriminatory or exclusionary characteristics. The privilege and power that accompany white individuals must be acknowledged because celebrating all differences equally does not recognize that some differences are more readily accepted than others. While some individuals are likely to experience institutional discrimination due to their differences, others have not (Boler, & Zemblyas, 2003).

Although these aforementioned differences can include an extensive range of individual characteristics such as religion, language, and socioeconomic class, this study focuses primarily on race as a salient marker of difference. Instead of recognizing the issues of power imbalances and systemic inequity, liberal multiculturalism suggests that obstacles stem instead from individual prejudice as well as a lack of communication and knowledge (Daniel, 2009b; Dei, 2005). This attitude is problematic because it fails to acknowledge that discrimination is embedded into structural practices and is not limited to an individual case-by-case basis. Liberal multiculturalism has been criticized for propagating a model of tolerance where the dominant white “core culture” has the power to organize, permit, and consume “others” (Bannerji, 2000).
Moreover, difference is presented as something these "others" can contribute to the nation depending on the discretion of the dominant group; "if difference is something ‘they are’, then it is something we ‘can have’. (Ahmed 2007, p.235). Skeptics of liberal multiculturalism have asserted that within this ideology, diversity is merely a product to boast for political gain, and its discourses have been reproached for being merely a lip service to cover up the reality of racism (Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007; Winter, 2011). Especially in the United States, liberal multiculturalism has been scrutinized for its failure to address issues of equity; today it is still accepted as a way to describe a culturally diverse society, but it has been refuted in the domain of policy and academia and has been widely critiqued by anti-racist scholars and activists (Bannerji, 2000). In response to this criticism, May & Sleeter (2010) propose "critical multiculturalism" as an alternative, which similar to antiracism, emphasizes unequal power relationships and acknowledging institutional inequities regarding all forms of difference, including but not limited to race. Different versions of multiculturalism aside from the aforementioned descriptive, liberal, and critical forms do exist; however in this project, these are the three types that will be discussed.

The notion of “others” in and of itself is characteristic of a dominant discourse that is born from a dominant point of view where being white is fixated as the norm against which all else is compared to and constructed against. These attitudes posit the problem of difference as being rooted in a lack of representation and a general "lack" in capacity of racialized bodies to meet the norms of the dominant group without a redistribution of power (Blackmore, 2010). Gunaratnam (2003) points out that often race becomes the defining property and experience of non-white groups since whiteness tends to be naturalized and viewed as a de-racialized norm. In this sense, discourses of liberal multiculturalism can actually work to maintain existing power imbalances (Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). This unequal power distribution is further demonstrated
in the dominant culture’s capacity to “make limited modifications in the organization of institution but not to alter its fundamental structure, mission, and culture” (p.377). A perfect example of these limited modifications is the development of a multicultural curriculum, which focuses on providing positive stories and information about Canada’s diverse populations to increase understandings between individuals (Daniel, 2009b).

Before discussing the challenges of multiculturalism in education, it is essential, to acknowledge the context for proponents of the Canadian Multicultural Act to be transmitted to the domain of education. While the Multicultural Act is a federal legislation, education is a provincial responsibility. Each of the 10 provinces and three territories in Canada has their own ministry or department of education; therefore, educational policies and programs can vary considerably between the 13 regions (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Joshee et al., 2010). Further variation also occurs between the school boards that operate within each of these jurisdictions, making the task of implementing any consistent educational policy arduous and complex. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that, "Although federal policy has no explicit jurisdiction over education, it may suggest directions in provincial policy" (Chan, 2007, p.138). This influence is depicted by the addition of "multiculturalism" and "global perspectives" to Ontario's curriculum over the years despite existing educational policies on anti-racism (Jacquet, 2008; Rezai-Rashti, 2005). My study’s examination of the history of government and institutional discourses on diversity and anti-racism in education takes into consideration this discrepancy between federal and provincial jurisdictions.

According to Diaz (2001), a multicultural curriculum incorporates information about different cultures throughout all subjects and levels. Students could be expected to learn about famous individuals or traditions from various cultures; however, this method is commonly referred to as the “foods and festivals” approach or the “heroes and holidays” method, which are
heavily criticized for being unable to transcend a decorative and superficial knowledge of other cultures and echo the tenets of liberal multiculturalism (Gérin-Lajoie, 2012; Harper, 1997; Korn, 2002; McCaskell, 2005; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). After all, how much can a multicultural curriculum rely on trends and generalizations before adhering to the same stereotypical attitudes that it initially set out to prevent? This approach to multiculturalism in education often includes textbooks with pictures of racially diverse individuals and chapter subsections that feature global perspectives; however, these modifications are simply added to the curriculum, leaving the pre-existing content unexamined for prejudice or Eurocentric perspectives (James, 2007; Korn, 2002; Rezai-Rashti, 2005, Sleeter, 2011). This additive approach to content about different cultures reinforces the ideology of whiteness as the norm and everything else as an “other”.

Schick and St. Denis (2005) explain that, “To varying degrees, students and teachers learn to dis/identify with the history, images, and language of schooling. These discourses inform them of the extent to which they do or do not belong...” (p.297). This reasoning is precisely why it is so important to include different cultures in education in a more meaningful way; otherwise, its absence sends the message that the unique backgrounds and experiences of diverse students are neither respected nor relevant (Mejia, & Gordon, 2006). In a review of ethnic studies curricula, Sleeter (2011) found a positive relationship between culturally relevant school material and students belonging to that background. For example, three separate studies with middle school students revealed higher levels of student engagement when literature by authors from similar ethnic backgrounds as the students was used. Despite the success of some multicultural school activities, it is still necessary yet challenging at times to discern between meaningful versus superficial cultural resources. Additionally, the role of the educator in presenting this material is of utmost importance; it must not only be well-designed, but well-taught.
Other criticisms of multicultural education are similar to those of liberal multiculturalism and highlight its failure to acknowledge institutional racism and the existence of power relations. These similarities provide reason to believe that attempts at a multicultural education and curriculum have been founded for the most part on the components of liberal multiculturalism as opposed to its critical successor. This approach to curriculum has been widely reproached for valuing diversity as nothing more than a product to maintain the image of a multicultural and harmonious Canada (Bannerji, 2000; Henry et al., 2005). Along these lines lies the endorsement of racialized teachers as role models for minority students, regardless of their individual, social, cultural, religious, or political differences. The blanket assumption that all racialized teachers are culturally sensitive and better equipped to teach diverse students contributes to a reductionist view of racialized individuals and constitutes what researchers have named “the politics of representation” (Gunaratnam, 2003; Hall, 2003; Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). It is time to move past superficial and tokenship notions of diversity and work to deepen our understanding of how education can evolve to become more meaningful and supportive for an increasingly diverse community. The dominant discourses of role modeling and representation surrounding racialized teachers are widely present in society, but what merit do they have for the reality of racially diverse schools?

2.4 Role Modeling and Representation

In education, the hiring of teachers and staff who visibly represent our racially diverse student population as a way of promoting inclusion has been consistently endorsed (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Mujawamariya, Boudreau, & Saussez, 2002; Nieto, 2002; Ryan et al., 2009; Solomon, 1997). Arguably the most common reason provided for this strategy
is that minority students need role models. Carrington and Skelton (2003) discuss how the
dominant discourse of racial and gender role modeling in education is actually surprising since it
is an old concept of arguably far less significance today in sociological and psychological
literature. The role model concept emerged from a role theory in the 1960s and its initial function
in educational literature was to describe how teachers adopted the role of the teacher into their
self-identity in the sense of being “representative of society” (p.255). However, by the end of
1980s, this dependence on role models started being criticized for "its tendency to individualize
solutions to problems that are systemic" (Pierson, 1995, p.170). This perspective depicts the role
model discourse as a way of masking the root of issues surrounding marginalized groups, opting
to reinforce dominant notions of what is model-worthy rather than explore the structures that
may caused the initial discrepancies in behaviours or achievements.

Another interpretation of the role model ideology arose when Allen (2000) reflected on
her experiences as a black female teacher and organized the role modeling of teachers into three
divisions: ethical templates, symbols, and nurturers. The categories of being ethical templates
and nurturers can be viewed as active positions, wherein teachers would be expected to model
responsible, moral behaviours as well as support and encourage student learning through the
daily practices of an effective, compassionate educator. On the other hand, the category of being
a symbol is inoperative, superficial, and reminiscent of the tokenship approach that is often
criticized in a multicultural curriculum. Being a “symbol” is problematic because it essentializes
the function of a minority teacher to mere physical representation. Any racialized person can be a
symbol, but not any racialized person can be a role model.
Carrington (2002) discusses the limitations of the argument that racialized teachers are role models. While past studies have not demonstrated a significant impact of teacher-student racial matching on students’ academic achievement, it has been shown to have an effect on student attitudes towards school. In an extensive review of research on racialized teachers, their potential to challenge the status quo in schools and empathize with minority students has been highlighted (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000). At the same time, racialized educators have also reported having a lot of difficulty with students of the same racial background. In these cases, teachers have felt as though their authority was undermined by the fact that students viewed them as an uncle or auntie, and that their approachability in this regard enabled students to treat them with less respect or formality (Carrington, 2002; Carrington, & Skelton, 2003). Achienstein and Aguirre (2008) also studied this concept of "cultural matching" and one of their findings was that racialized teachers often described how their students would find them "culturally suspect", meaning that instead of being automatically inspired by the presence of bodies who physically reflected them, students would call their identities using "origins questions" that would interrogate the backgrounds of racialized educators. Instead of preconceived notions about how student-teacher bonds would be formed through racial matches, these racialized educators faced additional challenges from working with racialized students.

In a study specifically with African American teachers, Cabello and Burstein (1995) found that while racialized teachers may possess specific cultural knowledge that helps them empathize with minority students, it does not necessarily mean that it also helps them teach students effectively (cited in Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.41). In this project, it is important
to consider how matching teachers to students on the basis of race might add to the strains and uncertainties of classroom life for these racialized educators who may feel increased pressures to be a role model for minority youth. The reality, however, is that “having the same or a similar background to the children is not a sufficient condition for winning their respect or gaining recognition as a ‘role model’” (Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, p.43). Past studies with racialized teachers have revealed feelings of disappointment and frustration when relationships with minority students did not develop as well as expected, demonstrating that racial matching does not necessarily lead to good behaviour management or a working consensus in the classroom (Carrington, & Skelton, 2003).

Martino, & Rezai-Rashti (2012) describe this situation in stating that: “The call for minority educators for minority students is best understood as a politics of representation” (p.21). Keep in mind that representation does not simply refer to an objective reflection of people, events, or things; the first step in understanding these politics of representation is to recognize the complex interrelationships that exist between discourse, knowledge, and power (James-Wilson, 2007). In other words, representation is socially constructed in a world where dominant discourses, power relations, and knowledge production are all interconnected. Who has the power to generate discourses on “visible minority” teachers? How are knowledge and discourse powerful in shaping the way that issues of race and racialized teachers are perceived? How do power and discourse give rise to knowledge? These are some of the questions that may be raised when considering the politics of representation.

The problem is not that the race or representation of minority teachers in schools does not matter, but that the tendency to essentialize racial affiliations between individuals continues to
misinform dominant notions about role modeling. These dominant ideas include propagating myths of stable identities and homogeneity amongst groups; “they have the tendency to “eliminate the noise” of multidimensionality, historical variability and subjectivity” (Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.244). What can be frustrating is that advocates of minority representation often believe that they are supporting principles of diversity and equity; however, they fail to realize that condoning this dominant discourse has reductionist and homogenizing implications for these racialized individuals. What is essential to remark then is that these dominant beliefs tend to be accepted as the natural order, including those who are oppressed and marginalized by it (James-Wilson, 2007). For example, when child adoption agencies started to racially match foster children with adoptive parents, this led to the hiring of racialized social workers with the assumption that they would have the necessary “cultural knowledge” to facilitate these matches. Gunaratnam (2003) conducted a study with Black and Asian females from this group of social workers, looking to understand how they negotiate their racialized positions in their work. She found that while some participants challenged the generalizing effects of racial categories, others used and readily adopted reductionist attitudes about different races. This example demonstrates how powerful the dominant discourse really is; the individuals who subscribe to it can be the same as those marginalized by it. How might this trend be translated into the field of education? How do racialized teachers understand their work with respect to the expectations that are held for them in dominant discourses?

Martino and Rezai-Rashti, (2012) found that recent research suggests that the racial matching of teachers and students is founded on a flawed theoretical position rooted in role modeling. These essentializing attitudes can be especially detrimental for the development and
implementation of equity policies that are often misunderstood as campaigns for visible representation. Take for example a recent article that was published in *The Toronto Star*, titled: “The face of education: is it too white?” This feature story highlighted a racialized teacher who claimed that the colour of his skin had prevented him from receiving a promotion on four separate occasions in his educational career. The reporter, Brown (2011), used this teacher’s case as a launch pad for a discussion about the push to hire more educators who represent the racial diversity of current student populations. Within five days of its publication, this article received hundreds of emotional responses, many of which expressed anger and frustration over what they believed was reverse discrimination, which is the belief that equity ignores the merit principle (Henry et al., 2005). This newspaper report failed to articulate that traditional qualifications for teaching are not compromised in favour of racialized minorities and thus, the impression was given that the drive for visible representation supersedes the search for qualified and effective teachers. For these reasons, it is crucial that the labelling of racialized teachers as “role models” and the push for them to “represent diversity” be done with a deeper understanding of what these assertions actually mean and how this popular discourse can threaten the development of equity policies as well as increase the pressure on these educators to “make a difference” in the lives of minority youth (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000).

A similar example of how the politics of representation has been misunderstood and given fuel to supporters of meritocracy is when Ontario’s Employment Equity Act was rescinded by the Conservative government in 1995 and replaced by the “Act to Repeal Job Quotas and to Restore Merit-Based Employment Practices” (Joshee, 2008). The choice of phrasing in this revised act significantly worsened public misunderstandings of equity practices as actually being a call to employers to hire based on criteria as a way to fill quotas and not by basis of merit
Equitable hiring does not substitute standards of merit with factors of criteria; it does, however, remove discriminatory barriers and take into consideration the various privileges and power relations that each individual may have profited from or been hindered by as a result of their differences. Bonnett and Carrington (2004) criticize the collection and publication of racial statistics that have become increasingly common for institutions due to the suspicion that this data collection is for the most part a symbolic act that does not necessarily indicate that inclusionary and equitable practices are being employed. While these concerns are valid, the gathering of said statistics is nevertheless a necessary step towards fostering diversity; although these numbers of representation alone do not equate equity, they should not be entirely admonished.

Asher (2007) responds to these politics of role modeling and representation by distinguishing between the abilities of a good teacher and the fostering of diversity in Canadian society. She asserts that effective teaching is a question of character and skill, not of characteristics such as race or gender. While racialized educators do not ensure effective teaching, what they can do is improve the representation of diversity in our society, which is important in challenging stereotypes and establishing equity in the workforce. While this approach adequately differentiates between the characteristic of race and the quality of being a good teacher, its endorsement for racialized teachers to represent diversity must be done with caution. The presence of minority individuals in all sectors of our society needs to go beyond symbolism and quotas; it should be meaningful in fostering deeper understandings of equity and inclusion in what is becoming an increasingly diverse society every day.
The expectations cast to racialized teachers to be role models for minority students must be examined further, specifically from the point of view of these same educators. Solomon (1997) conducted a case study with racialized preservice teacher candidates in the Greater Toronto Area and found a strong theme of commitment to role modeling consistent throughout the results. Participants viewed a role model as being someone who actively participates in another person’s life through encouragement, or modeling of desired behaviours. It is noteworthy that this widespread notion has had a significant influence on the decision of these racialized individuals in choosing teaching as profession. Amidst dominant discourses that are preoccupied with increasing the number of racialized teachers in education, there exists a correlation between the arguably unsubstantiated promotion of these educators as role models and the push for their recruitment. More perspectives must be shared from these minority individuals if we are to better grasp the reality of their work in education.

Past studies have shown a mixture of feelings from these teachers. In their study with racialized teachers, Bonnet and Carrington (2004) found that their pool of participants did not view themselves as role models and are in fact frustrated with reductionist notions of race that overlook factors such as religion, nationality, and culture. On the other hand, another study showed that minority teachers have found that students who share similar racial backgrounds tend to be drawn to them in a positive way. For example, a Black female teacher talked about how her supervision of an extracurricular club sparked the participation of racially similar students who were not previously involved (Laughter, et al., 2006). While it may not be surprising that people from similar backgrounds are able to relate to one another, it has been remarked that racialized minorities feel connected regardless of their specific race, so as long as
both parties belong to the larger, overarching category of being a racialized person. Solomon (1997) also found that teachers who were viewed as being role models in schools also did not necessarily share the same race as the student, although they were still considered a racialized individual. This finding carries some weight in response to the argument that just about any teacher with the right attitude and training can be a role model for minority students (Dei, 1995).

There needs to be the conscious recognition that the experience of being different carries weight when dealing with everyday social interactions. Harper (1997) stated that: “The assumption that difference is only “skin deep” may diminish the significance of positive and deeply held qualities and experiences of difference that individuals and groups may wish to value and acknowledge in educational contexts” (p.198). When racialized teachers are cast as ornaments of diversity, the value that inherently exists in experiences of difference as well as the fundamental skills required of an effective educator, are completely undermined. Dlamini & Martinovic (2007) recognize the tension that exists between recognizing the potential contributions of racialized teachers versus the danger of casting reductionist expectations on these individual. "Although the diversity of a teacher does not mean that the teacher is effective and successful in teaching diverse students, some factors are certainly beneficial: such teachers are more likely to be able to empathize with the students; they serve as role models; and in most cases, they reside in the community and know the realities of students’ lives" (p.159). The material presented in this section on the challenges of role modeling and representation demonstrates the complex role of racialized teachers. While the recognition of race as a difference can be an important point of departure for new partnerships, it should not be “the terminal stations for depositing our agency and identities” (McCarthy, cited in Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.145). While race is meaningful, it must not be conclusive.
2.5 Lived Experiences of Racialized Teachers

To provide a background for the potential responses that will be gathered from this study’s participants, this section explores previously completely studies on the experiences of racialized teachers and how their professional and racial identities have worked to shape their understandings of their roles in education. Identity plays a critical role in how teachers are able to relate to students and it is understood as being the sum of an individual’s interactions with people, institutions, and practices (Sarup, 1996). It can be deduced then that personal experiences of being different, minoritized, or marginalized work to shape an individual’s identity as well as what kind of teacher he or she is, or has the potential of being in the classroom. The distinction between the type of teacher someone is versus the type that they can be is explained by understanding that difference, such as race, can influence identity but not prescribe it. Individuals understand their lived realities in various ways. Mejia and Gordon (2006) elaborate:

[Knowledge is situated within past experiences and a certain frame of reference. For this reason, the act of teaching requires that educators recognize the importance of the context in which students and teachers live or have lived their lives, the meanings that those life experiences have had on them, and ways in which it has shaped their behaviour. (p.57-58)]

The notion of difference can be interpreted to describe gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, faith, ability, as well as many other characteristics. While having experienced what it’s like to identify with any markers of difference is significant, this study focuses specifically on individual experiences as a non-white educator in racially diverse school settings. The notion of teachers and students relating to one another on the basis of their experiences as racialized minorities and not specifically as members of the same exact race helps to explain the versatility of these teachers in connecting to students of many different backgrounds and not necessarily the same exact one as the teacher. “Students of colour in general were affirmed by the presence of
teachers who shared the experience of difference, of being a part of the non-dominant group” (Solomon, 1997, p. 402). The ability for individuals to relate beyond sharing specific racial backgrounds holds strong implications for how meaningful experiences of difference and marginalization may be.

In British Columbia, a study done about Chinese teachers found that racialized teachers felt as though they were viewed as being more credible to students in lessons about racism. Students were perceived as being more inclined to talk openly about racism when they feel as though there is a possibility that the teacher has had a shared experienced (Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001, p.145). When Au & Blake (2011) examined influence of culture, class, and community membership on how preservice teachers understood their classroom interactions, they found that educators who grew up in the same or neighbouring communities as their students tended to have deeper understandings of the social justice issues faced by their pupils. In other words, there was a value to sharing similar experiences, such as growing up in the same atmosphere and not necessarily limited to experiences with race, though that has also been found to be the case. Other studies with racialized teachers have found that results in that the topic of racism could be more readily approached with a minority educator (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000). At the same time, the homogenization as well as the overemphasis of racialized teachers as all being experts in the field of race must be averted.

In a study done with African American teachers, Cabello and Burstein (1995) concluded that while racialized teachers may possess specific cultural knowledge that helps them empathize with minority students, it does not necessarily mean that it also helps them teach students effectively (cited in Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.41). Moreover, Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) interviewed racialized students specifically about their perspectives on the significance of
teacher race and gender and found that most minority students do not believe that racial matching matters. In fact, some students expressed negative feelings about having a teacher with a similar racial background because they felt that these teachers would have more rigid behavioral expectations of them. Other studies have even revealed that “most young people do not identify with, wish to emulate, or see their teachers as ‘role models’” (Carrington, & Skelton, 2003, p.255). These examples highlight the complexity of building constructive relationships in the classroom. Although in some cases, the shared experiences of minoritization and marginalization can be a promising foundation for teacher practices, it is not an instantaneous recipe for success and inclusion in the classroom. In spite of the value of experiences of difference, the role of teacher race is complex and cannot be reduced to a racial affiliation between a teacher and a student.

Past studies have found that racialized teachers used the metaphor of a bridge to describe their role in the school environment (Hirji, & Beynon, 2000; Ramanathan, 2006). This imagery provides a starting point to begin an examination of the different ways, aside from visible representation, in which minority teachers are able to connect to the surrounding community. An important example is the undeniable power of language. While it is important that minority teachers are not pegged as glorified translators, the part that language plays in helping to build community is undeniable. Research on Chinese teachers in a Canadian community with a high population of East Asians has provided examples of how being able to speak Cantonese has been a resource in the careers of some racialized teachers. Language has been used to calm emotional students, to phone home, and to communicate messages to families. Some participants even admitted to using Cantonese to explain curriculum content when students were having a hard time (Beynon et al., 2001).
Jacquet (2008) also discusses language as a way of encouraging minority students to “open up a space where different norms—not just those of the dominant group—are included in the culture and social structure of the school” (p. 74). More explicitly, the role of language has been salient when racialized teachers are hired to teach their respective language courses in schools, or when they take on responsibilities such as extra-curricular clubs that celebrate a specific culture (Ramanathan, 2006). Although language is certainly an integral part of culture that helps to create this notion of a bridge between individuals, its application is limited to people belonging to the same linguistic community. Hence, communicating in another language with some students but not others can be exclusionary. Additionally, this behaviour can lead to the reinforcement of racialized teachers as mere linguistic translators. Some teachers have found that their additional language qualifications have led to added expectations in their work environment for them to act as translators on top of their teaching workload without compensation or recognition (Beynon, et al., 2001). Knowing how to speak different languages can be a valuable skill for teachers, but it must be used with a heightened sensitivity to the implications of its usage.

Another area reported to have potential for racialized teachers is the rapport that they can build with the surrounding community. Constructive relationships can be formed between racialized teachers and the families of minority students. Solomon (1997) discovered that many parents recognized the importance of racialized teachers, regardless of their specific race because these teachers are often perceived as being more sensitive to matters of difference and culture than white teachers. Teachers felt that sharing a minority identity allowed parents to be more inclined to communicate with them and even include them in their family life, which can be a very positive experience. “[F]or some minority families, teacher representation signifies the
prospect of upward mobility and economic advancement” (Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.136). Similar to the case of language, relationships with students’ families is an area to tread with caution. The dissolution of professional boundaries into social networking and rapport can be complicated; however, being able to strengthen pathways between parents and the school is an asset that when exercised appropriately, can have great benefits for the school community as a whole.

Racialized teachers may also be able to provide insight for their schools about culture-specific issues. A participant in Hirji and Beynon’s (2000) study talked about an instance when the father of two Punjabi Sikh students passed away, and the school staff was unsure if flowers and a card would be a culturally appropriate way of offering their condolences. As a member of the same cultural and religious groups, this teacher was able to provide advice to his colleagues. The knowledge and experiences that racialized teachers bring to the school environment should be viewed as an asset; however, this notion must be careful not to perpetuate stereotyping. If the label of cultural advocate is one of the expectations of a racialized teacher, it draws attention to the difference or otherness of that individual (Carrington, & Skelton, 2003). Is it then practical to recognize the cultural knowledge that these educators can bring to our schools without casting it as an expectation for all minority teachers? The aforementioned risks of homogenizing individuals based on their race come to mind. Is it reasonable to value these educators’ culture-related contributions after the fact rather than to assume that they’ll occur simply on the basis of race?

Provided that our social interactions are such an integral factor in how we understand our identities and lived realities, it is significant to discuss how the school relationships formed by racialized teachers in the past have contributed to their perspectives on race in education.
Workplace environments are often complex and they play a critical role in people’s careers. Regardless of whether someone was a new or veteran teacher, all participants in a study on the influence of teacher race reported that discussing race, language, and culture with co-workers was not easy (Beynon et al., 2001). Carr and Klassen (1997) spoke with racialized teachers who felt as though they were assumed by their colleagues to be “experts” in race relations or anti-racist education simply because of their skin colour (p. 73). While some racialized teachers have found it both personally and professionally validating to fill this role as a resource for diversity, there are others who do not feel comfortable answering to these assumptions and expectations (Solomon, 1997). This discrepancy could be due to such instances where racialized teachers have attested to feeling as though initiatives toward an anti-racist education were met differently depending on the educator; while white teachers were applauded for supporting equity issues, racialized teachers striving for the same goals were made to feel that they were “obsessed” with race, or that they did not have anything to offer aside from it (Carr, & Klassen, 1997, p. 77). This double standard is rooted in the notion of race as a taboo and is demonstrative of the unequal distribution of power. When individuals from the dominant group overcome their reluctance or discomfort to promote anti-racism initiatives, they are commended; however, when racialized teachers pursue the identical cause, they are viewed as extremists who need to tone it down.

In spite of challenges such as the above, it is in fact common for the anti-racism activities at the school to be led by minority teachers. If the value in experiences of difference is so fervently advocated, then it is possible that racialized minorities will be expected to be wells of knowledge on matters of race. This homogenizing assumption is troublesome for numerous reasons. For example, white teachers may interpret minority teacher involvement in diversity issues as being an excuse for their own lack of involvement or understandings of anti-racism
(Solomon, 1997). Topics of inclusion, equity, and race should not be automatically designated to racialized minorities, who can also be propagates of racism, and must be called to expand their knowledge on matters of race and racism (Gay, & Jackson, 2011). It has also been found that some teachers believe that race should not be classroom topic because they think that education is completely separate from politics (Carr & Klassen, 1997). Apple (1990) would strongly disagree with this notion because he asserts that educators are political beings. After all, “knowledge production and dissemination are value-laden and political,” and by denying the political reality of education and claiming to be neutral in an inequitable society is already a political stance in favour of the dominant group (Okolie, 2009, p.247). These examples illustrate the possible issues when racialized teachers are adamantly and stereotypically portrayed as being experts on race and culture.

The fact that same kind of exclusion that teachers strive to eliminate in classroom can be pertinent amongst staff is difficult to accept. Racialized teachers have indicated feeling isolated from their colleagues and that their skills, such as language and personal experiences of difference, were either overlooked or overemphasized. These teachers have reported finding support by connecting with other minority teachers (Hirji, & Beynon, 2000), a behaviour which is ironic to the dilemma that educators are trying to respond to amongst their racially diverse student groups. Reading hopeful notions such as the following excerpt stir up feelings of frustration because the same obstacles with race are happening amongst both students and teachers alike.

Perhaps when there are more teachers of minority ancestry to support one another, and more mainstream teachers aware of the dynamics of unequal power embedded in their profession, discussions of racism and discrimination in the staff room may become as open as this discussion is in some classrooms (Beynon et al., 2001, p. 149).
How can educators collectively promote inclusion and support equity when they themselves are still working to grasp, acknowledge, and understand the salience of race? Many people are still uncomfortable with the topic of race; however, acknowledging the salience of race is a critical step in helping transform educators’ understanding of equity and diversity (Sleeter, 2004). Banks and Cochran-Smith (2005) acknowledge the advantages of having a diverse group of people who can act as resources for one another in the same community. There is much that can be gained from being part of a collaborative learning environment. All educators must be regarded as facilitators of inclusion who critically consider the assumptions that underlie educational practices and to explore the inconsistencies, contradictions, and silences that surround discussions of multiculturalism and anti-racism (Korn, 2002). While much of this change can begin in the classroom, it should extend to the school as a whole, inclusive of administration.

In a study done by Laughter et al. (2006), a black female teacher explained that after three years of working in education, her departure from the teaching profession was attributed to how she felt her race and gender affected the way she was treated by the administration. The thought of administrators, the people expected to lead and support their staff, as being the motivating factor for racialized teachers to leave the profession is a difficult one to accept. How can we expect students to feel welcomed and included when teachers do not even feel this way? This example really underscores the influential role of administrators in promoting inclusive practices. While administrative support would be helpful, some racialized teachers have expressed that they do not think it is vital because of how much of the change depends on what goes on in their individual classrooms (Carr & Klassen, 1997). On the other hand, other respondents have indicated that they do look to the administration for help with planning and implementing their teaching responsibilities in addition to matters on student discipline
The role of principals cannot be overlooked. Despite testimonies that the classroom is the very hub for initializing change, this change must be upheld beyond classroom walls to the school atmosphere as a whole. To achieve this, the participation of principals is key in creating a collective space where cross-cultural competencies are very clearly encouraged.

Due to the authority structure in the school, administrative support does make a difference in shifting the ways in which teachers approach initiatives that are explicitly encouraged by their supervising staff members. For example, principals have the capacity to endorse professional development on the subjects of diversity and anti-racism. When Gérin-Lajoie (2008) conducted a study in Metropolitan Toronto interviewing 100 teachers and principals about their discourses on diversity, numerous educators spoke about the lack of training they received about how to work with diverse classrooms in their preservice programs. If it is common for teachers to feel unprepared to respond to the diversity of their students upon entering the profession, then the need for a re-evaluation of teacher education programs as well as professional development offerings on these issues becomes absolutely crucial. Nevertheless, when issues of race, equity, and anti-racism have been taken up using methods of preservice training and PD sessions, they have been heavily criticized for being superficial and ineffective (Sleeter, 2004; Villegas, & Lucas, 2002). The question of how to teach individuals to be conscious of race is a difficult one. Young (2007) reported on her efforts to teach a multicultural education course to preservice teachers in the elementary division at an American state university. Working with a predominantly white student population, teacher candidate responses to the open-ended question of “What does it mean to think outside the box?” were examined on the first, and again on the last day of class. In the first set of responses, most students wrote in third person, and this was understood to be a sign that they distanced themselves from the topic.
Preservice teachers demonstrated the need to develop their critical consciousness and knowledge of culturally diverse people. The second set of responses can best be described as transformative. The frequent occurrence of phrases such as “I realize”, “I felt”, “I now understand”, and “I was unaware” demonstrate awakened perspectives of individuals who seemed to have truly developed a deeper understanding of what it means to be a compassionate, critical educator in an increasingly racially and culturally diverse world.

Similar efforts have been made in the domain of in-service professional development workshops (Sleeter, 2004), but they have not been reported to the extent of those in preservice education. While the preparation of our future teachers is undeniably important, so is the continued development of our current educators. "When it comes to classroom discourse, teachers are the dominant force” (Gay, 2001, p. 29). Educators must be regarded as facilitators of anti-racism who consider the conditions upon which difference is produced, and who are “not merely performers of enthusiastic promoters of difference, but critical, self-reflective scholars of difference” (Harper, 1997, p.200). By listening to the different perspectives of educators who are working in these diverse school environments, it may be possible to collect ideas about what is required of teachers in order to promote inclusion in education.

As a testament to the meaning that is inherent to experiences of difference, racialized teachers are continuously met with challenges on their journeys in the field of education. Perhaps exposure to more stories of minority educators will help dismiss negative attitudes toward the drive to more equitable candidate selections at the preservice, school, and administrative levels. Laughter et al. (2006) emphasize “the power of story” in a chapter about the experiences of racialized teachers. A young, black, male teacher discusses his feelings of shock upon learning that parents of both his white and black students had demonstrated doubts and concerns about his content knowledge despite the academic progress that has been made by his students. He
describes how his blackness had become a liability as well as his decision to leave the teaching profession shortly thereafter. It is staggering to hear stories of how racism is so deeply embedded in all social interactions, but this story in particular highlights how racism extends past the dominant group to intra-racial interactions. Race may be a human construct, but it is one that governs all social relations (Dei, 2007). This teacher’s reference to his skin colour as a “liability” is so powerful because it captures the significance of race, and in this case, the adversity that it can entail. Such disheartening encounters with racism are disturbing and must be shared.

Narratives of minority experiences provide such compelling cases to educate students, our future generations, to achieve better understandings of race so that the world can work towards being a more compassionate and inclusive place. “The role of the instructor is pivotal for facilitating the inclusion of diversity in the classroom” (Daniel, 2009a, p. 182). Provided that instructors are so influential in this process, it is important to study teacher perspectives. In particular, the journeys of racialized educators have the potential to reveal biases and obstacles that dominant groups are not aware of. “As minorities these teachers have a personal stake in ensuring racial equity. They have been shaped and affected by their own experiences of racism and work to ensure that their students' life chances are not hindered by racism” (Hirji et al., 2000, p.260).

The studies explored in this literature review demonstrate how the voices of racialized individuals can provide valuable insight to helping us better understand their lived realities with respect to the expectations that are placed on them throughout dominant discourses. Seemingly harmless notions of role modeling, diversity representation, linguistic translators, or cultural ambassadors are deeply embedded in how these educators work to understand what their profession and identities in racially diverse schools. Their opinions can pose heavy implications for the development of equity and diversity policies as well as the role of race in education and.
To gather data for my study, I decided that qualitative research methods would be the most suitable due to the complexity of teaching, race, in addition to the lived personal realities of each individual. My study’s anti-racist theoretical framework goes in depth about how racism is pervasive throughout all sectors of society; it is not a matter of looking for its existence, but fostering the understanding that it exists everywhere (Dei, 2007).

### 2.6 Anti-racist Theoretical Framework

Henry et al. (2005) explain the development of anti-racism as an ideology that arose in opposition to the notion that human beings could be biologically and inherently differentiated on the basis of race. Anti-racism emphasizes power relations, institutional policies and practices as the root of the problem of racism in our society. My decision to focus on the lived experiences of racialized teachers stems from what Dei (2007) refers to as the “saliency of race” (p.192). This phrase represents the anti-racist notion that not only does race matter in our lives, but it also plays a critical role in shaping all of our social interactions. Moreover, different races do exist and they are not all treated equally (Dei, 2007; Du Bois, 2003; Leonardo, 2009). Listening to racialized teachers discuss their understandings and experiences of race garnered different perspectives from a group that is marginalized within its profession about matters that are becoming increasingly urgent to address in our diversifying communities. Anti-racism is well-suited to facilitate this project because its commitment to disrupting dominant discourses and to giving voice to individuals who have been marginalized by difference helped answer the research question of how racialized teachers understand their work with respect to the racialized role expectations that are cast to them as "visible minority" teachers.

The term “anti-racism” is a twentieth century creation that did not really enter common discourse until the 1960s (Bonnett, 2000). Anti-racism, akin to many other theories, is not
universal or static in its constituents; it must be located within the conditions of its usage. For my study, anti-racism will be used mainly with respect to its history and origins in Canada, since that is the country where my research took place. To be “anti” anything, a conscious effort must be involved in acting against something (Bonnett, 2000). In the case of Canada, being anti-racist can be viewed as a critique to the national discourse of multiculturalism, which has “blossomed and come to represent one of the definite, and hence integrating, aspects of Canadian life and values” (p. 63).

Anti-racism differentiates itself from liberal multiculturalism in that they have very different conceptions of racism: while the former sees it as a system of ideas that continues to benefit the dominant group, the latter viewed it as originating in cultural misunderstandings and unexamined stereotypes (McCaskell, 2010). Anti-racism emphasizes the need to acknowledge the existence of racism as being intertwined and embedded in all aspects of social experience, from the individual to the institution (Dei, 2007; Tatum, 2000). This recognition, however, is different from research about racism, which does not seek to prove or disprove its existence, but tries to understand its nature, extent and consequences (Dei, 2005). Additionally, this theory's main critique of liberal multiculturalism is that it fails to address systemic racism and power relations (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Jacquet, 2008; Knight, 2008; Rezai-Rashti, 2005; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005).

The issue of power relations is an essential component in anti-racist theory. The power imbalances that exist between races are most important to acknowledge between white and non-white individuals. Waters (2006) points out that for all the ways race does not matter for persons who are white, it matters for non-whites because they are on the disadvantaged side of the power imbalance between majority and minority groups. White individuals have the privilege and
power of being in the dominant group (Dei, 2007; Du Bois, 2004, Schick, 2010). This privileged position, however, does not mean that race is less salient for white individuals, only they have most often experienced it in a way that has benefited them. On the other hand, for members of the minority group, their race has been a disadvantaging factor in their lives. Anti-racism acknowledges that race is a powerful currency in Euro-American society that inequitably distributes access to resources and opportunities (Cross 2010; Dei, 2007; Omi, & Winant, 2005). Examples of this inequity are evident in the domain of education, where schools and teachers have the potential to promote inclusion and understandings about race.

Anti-racism translates into education primarily by acknowledging that “school discourses are not neutral but are embedded in and reproduced through social and institutional settings that normalize white racism and other forms of marginalization” (Schick, 2010, p.48). In other words, the curriculum content and materials being presented to all students are predominantly Eurocentric in nature and born from a white perspective (Kumashiro, 2002; Schick, & St. Denis, 2005). In a study conducted by Blackmore (2010), it was found that Black, Asian, and Indigenous students are very conscious of how curriculum and pedagogy are exclusive, and how teachers through their whiteness retain a cultural dominance that is immediately accepted as unproblematic (p.52). Recognizing this inequity is the first step of working towards an anti-racist education, which is an integrative framework that can be understood as activist scholarship and moreover, a tool for change (Dei, & Simmons, 2010; Henry et al., 2005; McCaskell, 2005).

Anti-racist education places power relations at the center of all school practices and approaches all knowledge with the awareness that power dynamics influence every level of our social interactions (Dlamini, 2002). This philosophy of education calls for teachers not to simply do anti-racist work in their classrooms, but to understand why it is worth doing at all. This
understanding can be facilitated through open discussions about race and racism, how inequity takes place in each of our lives, and why it’s important and acceptable to talk about these issues (McCaskell, 2005). Unfortunately it has been found that practical classroom applications of anti-racism education are in short supply (Dlamini, 2002). It is possible that the lived experiences of racialized educators will garner unique perceptions about anti-racist initiatives in education and whether or not it has factored in to their practices as educators is a large part of what my study aims to explore. After all, “the narratives of people who experience disadvantage are central to understanding and addressing the issues that affect their lives” (Schick, 2010, p.48).

Anti-racism theory is closely aligned with other critical approaches as they all aim to give power to marginalized circumstances that result in fundamental social inequalities (Wotherspoon, 2009). It is important to ask how racialized teachers understand anti-racism as an ideology that tries to combat the systemic racism to which they are personally susceptible. The theory of anti-racism complements my study’s approach to research methodology because it links the issue of identity to knowledge production, and understands that personal histories and experiences shape how individuals make sense and interpret their social realities (Dei, 2005). These connections will be further elaborated in my research methodology.
Chapter 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To examine how racialized teachers understand their work with respect to the racialized role expectations that are cast to them as “visible minority” educators, my project used a qualitative approach to research methodology within an anti-racist theoretical framework. Locke (1989) once stated that: “The adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions being asked (cited in Seidman, 2006, p.11). Qualitative methods emphasize the socially constructed nature of reality and they are largely grounded in the world of lived experiences (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2011). A qualitative method is described as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3), which can be explained as an approach that takes into consideration multiple subjectivities and how they relate to both what is being studied and who is studying it. The focus of qualitative research is to gain insights uniquely from the perspectives of those being studied (Merriam, 1988), which is what my study accomplished with a sample of racialized teachers. “[T]his methodology invites a fuller understanding of human thoughts, feelings and actions, and is better able to capture the subtleties of racism in institutional settings” (Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 1996, p. 330). The multifaceted nature of teaching and race must be emphasized. Personal, lived experiences are not quantifiable; they cannot be counted or measured, but it is crucial that efforts are still made to understand them if we are to learn from one another on our journey towards equity and inclusion.

The sharing and analysis of personal narratives can be powerful in this field of work to combat misunderstandings and a lack of consciousness about the politics of race and the extent to which racialized persons are impacted. “Fighting racism on an individual, act-by-act basis treats only the symptoms and does not attack the disease. The telling of individual stories,
however, elaborates the connections hidden by society” (Laughter et al., 2006, p.162). It is time that we go beyond superficial constituents of multiculturalism such as symbolic representation and tokenship curriculum to dig deeper into understanding the salience of race in individual experiences. Stories of race must continue to be told, shared, and heard. Sharing through personal narrative has the potential to convey feelings, hardships, and experiences about the social construct of race and its impact in our lives. “The narratives of people who experience disadvantage are central to understanding and addressing the issues that affect their lives.” (Schick, 2010, p.48). After all, the increasing diversity of social differences in our communities is a reality for many other places across this world and there is a great potential gain from leaning on and learning from individuals who have different lived experiences.

Ladson-Billings (2000) writes: “Scholars must be challenged to ask not only about whom is the research, but also for whom is the research. The question of for whom is not merely about advocacy, but rather about who is capable to act and demonstrate agency” (p.267). In the past, research has been dominated by white people and thus, possibly failed to be free of racism or inadequately reflected the multi-racial nature of our society (Boushel, 2000). The beneficiaries of research are rarely the objects being studied, but rather the researchers doing the studying (Ladson-Billings, 2000). “[S]ubordinated groups have always had their experiences constructed and given meaning by the dominant group” (Amin, 2009, p. 194). Provided that my initial contact with participants took place over e-mail or the phone, this absence of face-to-face contact prompted a few participants to inquire about my race before agreeing to meet in person. These experiences give me reason to believe that my presence as a non-white researcher contributed to a more authentic and comprehensive data collection. On multiple occasions during the individual interviews, my capacity to sympathize and relate to participants through our firsthand
experiences as racialized teachers fostered feelings of community and support. Some examples of connections we made were feelings about being raised in an immigrant family, facing discrimination and racism in our past encounters, and teaching in a school where we visibly reflect the student population. These occurrences of a researcher-participant connection does not, however, overlook the heterogeneity within groups as an undermining factor of the interviewer-participant relationship, such as race, religion, socioeconomic class, and sexual orientation (Naples, 2003; Warren, 2001; Harding, 1990). After all, any characteristic of difference that may connect two individuals does not have to undermine the multiplicity of other differences that exist within these categories (Code, 1995; Kruks, 2001). Provided that race is central to my study on racialized teachers, anti-racism was mainly used to structure my qualitative methodology of interviews and document analysis.

### 3.1 Interviews

Anti-racist research cautions against the homogenization of communities or the portrayal of these groups as being static (Dei, 2005). After all, the focus of this research is to give “saliency and centrality to minoritized peoples’ perspectives on the issues of race, social justice, and oppression” (p.13). Anti-racism underscores the significance of the interviewer and participant relationship that acknowledges power relations, mutual trust, and meaningful dialogue (Alvesson, 2002; Fontana, 2001; Dei, 2005). This reasoning is what led to my methodology’s decision to reference the individuals being studied as ‘participants’ to highlight their role as an active one that is seen equitably in the research process (Burt, & Code, 1995; Gubrium, & Holstein, 2003b; Seidman, 2006). “Construed as active, the subject behind the respondent not only holds the details of a life’s experience but, in the very process of offering them up to the interviewer, constructively shapes the information” (Gubrium, & Holstein, 2003b,
Anti-racism supports the notion that researchers must be transparent about their locations and investments in the study because their personal characteristics influence the partnerships with their participants in the process of knowledge production (Amin, 2009; Dei, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2002). During all my interactions with the participants as a researcher, I remained open-minded to answering personal questions about my lived experiences both as an educator as well as a racialized female. Many participants expressed an interest in knowing about my background and my motivations for pursuing this study and I found that being honest and sharing this information with them helped them feel comfortable with me as a researcher, largely because they were able to position me as a peer. “Anti-racist research links the issue of identity to knowledge production. This suggests that who we are, our educational and personal histories and experiences, all shape how we make sense of our world and interpret social reality” (Dei, 2005, p.11).

Individual interviews were conducted with the aim of highlighting common patterns and themes that may arise between participants who fulfil a particular set of criteria (Warren, 2001). Interviewing embodies the interest of understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meanings they ascribe to these realities (Seidman, 2006). “If the researcher’s goal...is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experiences, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry” (p.11). My study conducted individual interviews with 21 participants and they varied immensely in length, lasting from as little as 45 minutes up to 120 minutes in length in order to provide individuals with enough time to “reconstruct their experience, put it into the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning” (p.20). This significant range of interview lengths could be attributed to numerous factors such as what day and time the meetings took place and how much
time was available to participants as well as the researcher. Additionally, the participants who spoke for longer periods also explicitly discussed having reflected on these topics of race, equity, and racialized teachers as "role models" on their own, either through continuing education courses or simply due to their lived experiences.

I chose to use individual interviews since talking about one’s own lived experiences is recognized as being a deeply personal and private activity that needs to be thoroughly contextualized by different meanings, as well as reserved to the confidential exchange between the researcher and the participant. Equity was also integral to the methodological choice to use interviews because it means that:

“[T]he interviewer’s going out of his or her way to get the stories of people whose voices are not usually heard... It means being explicit about the purposes and processes of the research... valuing the words of the participant because those words are deeply connected to that participant’s sense of worth.” (Seidman, 2006, p.109-110)

Therefore the concept of equity was considered throughout every decision that is made in the design of my research methodology in order to uphold the integrity of my study and its adherence to the aforementioned critical theories. For example, one participant requested to look through my interview schedule and notes at the end of our meeting, to which I obliged because I believe that transparency is important to the nature of my study. The next decision was choosing to meet with each participant only once and this can be explained by the parameters of my research questions. Provided that the topic of how racialized teachers understand their work in racially diverse populations is a defined subject, I believe that the themes of race in role expectations, school relationships, classroom instruction, and dominant discourses can be justly explored over the span of one meeting. While I remained open to questions, clarifications, and/or additions from my participants, I have not been approached by them for reasons pertaining to this
research study. Themes that developed from these interviews were how participants understood concepts of race, equity, anti-racism, and the expectations cast to them as racialized teachers.

My approach to interviewing was developed within an anti-racist conceptual framework; however I recognize the influences of feminist and postmodern trends in this type of interviewing, such as blurring the distinction between interviewer and participant in addition to the futility in establishing fixed understandings because ideas are continually being constructed and reconstructed in different situations (Alvesson, 2002; Fontana, 2001). Feminist theory echoes the belief that power should be shared between the researcher and the researched (Olesen, 2011). The interview process is not an authoritative interrogation, but rather an interactional dialogue and sharing of ideas. This approach is well aligned with an anti-racist framework that recognizes the unequal power distribution between different individuals and it can be traced back to the idea of female researchers interviewing female participants to alter the social interactions between the interviewer and interviewee from being authoritative to being more egalitarian (Warren, 2001). These attitudes are important to maintain in my study as the lived experiences of racialized teachers are explored rather than categorized and examined instead of generalized.

Dei (2005) underscores the fact that the power of the researcher is never lost on those being researched, which is why over time more and more minorities have become their own researchers. He adds: “The racial identity of the researcher and the subjects of study are important considerations in the process of knowledge production” (p.11). Related to this notion is Gunaratnam’s (2003) discussion of the term “Race of Interviewer Effects (RIE)” (p.54). She asserts that the social construct of race does matter in an interview, but is quick to acknowledge that it is not as simple as matching and warns against the reductionist approach of overlooking intersubjective differences simply because two individuals share one trait. “Matching strategies
often fail to take account of power relations” (p.83). The opinion that two people are equally positioned is always subjective and relative to the specific social context. The researcher’s shared experiences, social equality, and natural involvement with the issue are crucial to take into consideration (Amin, 2009). Once again, I believe that my presence as a racialized teacher in the role of the researcher who was able to share, positively contributed to the interview process.

Song and Parker (1995) have discussed extensively the salience of commonalities and differences between interviewers and participants. These researchers found that commonalities such as being non-white and having experiences with racism consistently had a positive effect in establishing a sense of trust and understanding with their participants, in addition to helping them feel safer about sharing their thoughts and feelings than with an interviewer who they perceived as also being different. Song and Parker (1995) remarked that participants are often the ones to point out these commonalities and differences and how these similar or dissimilar traits would dictate the flow of the interview, calling to mind the critical notion of our identities being constructs that are mobile and fluid. While I was able to share with my participants the characteristics of being a teacher as well as a racialized person, these mutual traits did not guarantee any sort of researcher-participant relationship; it does, however, provide an advantage.

Olesen (2011) discusses this notion of whether an insider, meaning a person sharing at least one quality of difference, can garner inside knowledge due to blurred boundaries between the researcher and the researched. Although an individual does not necessarily need to share the same race to “understand the nuances of difference that exist among different cultures”, doing so can nevertheless work to one’s advantage (Dunbar et al., 2001, p.292). “How one views the world is influenced by what knowledge one possesses, and what knowledge one is capable of possessing is influenced deeply by one’s worldview” (Ladson-Billings, 2002, p. 258). My study
acknowledges the challenging task of examining how different individuals understand their lived realities. Although insider knowledge cannot be presumed, it can be made possible by allowing the researcher to share perspectives with the participant. The researcher cannot be viewed as an objective presence. “[S]ubject position and voice must also be considered in relation to the perceived voice of the interviewer” (Gubrium, & Holstein, 2003b, p.40).

Both interviewer and interviewee were participants in this qualitative method, and therefore the complexity and viewpoint of the former was taken into account as with the latter. Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Parker (2001) describe how many of their own participants looked to one of the researchers to share his own perceptions because they viewed him as a former teacher as well as a researcher: “My providing this information opens opportunities for meaningful dialogue. Educators want to know if others in like positions face similar situations. They look to me not only as a researcher but a resource” (p.293). This trend was certainly evident in this study, where participants frequently asked me about my thoughts on the topics that they were being asked to talk about. Especially after sharing their opinions and/or experiences, participants would often reciprocate the question, eager to see how we could relate to one another and curious to know if there was something that they could learn from my research. For example, participants commonly asked if I could tell them about the data I had collected up until that point, and they also felt comfortable in asking me to explain terms that they were not familiar with, such as “anti-racism”. The idea of the interviewer as being a resource for the participant to be able to draw on was significant to this study and echoes the methodological belief that shared perspectives between these two individuals can contribute to the richness of the information that is gathered.
3.2 Policy Analysis

The examination of dominant discourses surrounding race, equity, and diversity in education, on the other hand, was carried out in Chapter 4 using a policy analysis technique. This qualitative method can be understood as the process of finding out what institutions do, why they do it, and what difference it makes (Dye, cited in Ozga, 2000, p.39). This strategy includes the acceptance of policy as a process of negotiation between different groups rather than a fixed product (Ozga, 2000). In this study, educational policy is understood as being produced by the state, the economy, or various institutions of civil society, such as school boards. Moreover, this type of policy contains ideas about how the educational system works, what is desirable for them to achieve, and how to achieve it (Ozga, 2000). While dominant discourses and policies are most often interpreted as taking on the form of physical documentation, it is important to acknowledge that a document can be something that is actively manufactured, variably consumed, and that has different effects depending on the social setting (Prior, 2003). Documents can be viewed as being an umbrella term that includes visual, digital, physical as well as written material (DeVault, & McCoy, 2004; Hodder, 2002; Merriam, 2009). While only the latter was used in this specific study, it is important to acknowledge that this type of data is not limited to text on paper.

Documents are unique from other qualitative methods such as interviews and observation because they are, as Merriam (2009) calls, a “ready-made source of data easily accessible” (p. 139). Unlike collection strategies where a researcher’s direct involvement can alter the data, documents pre-date the research study; they already exist and remain unaffected by researcher action. Aside from stability, other advantages that documents have are that they are typically
easier to access, free of costs, unobtrusive, relatively objective, and contain information that would otherwise take a lot of time to gather (Esterberg, 2002; Hodder, 2002). On the downside, they may not come in a useful form due to their pre-study existence and their authenticity may at times be challenging to determine. These advantages and disadvantages were kept in mind during this study.

The two most common types of documents are public records and personal documents. Due to the objectives of this project, only the former was used. Merriam (2009) describes public records as “the official, ongoing records of a society’s activities” (p. 140). Drawing from a critical theory standpoint, the choice of the word “official” is questionable and might be more accurately replaced by “dominant” here because it is important to recognize the underlying power relations of our society and which individuals are positioned in such a way that they can influence public records. These public documents can include a variety of forms such as mass media publications to court transcripts to government statements (Esterberg, 2002).

In Chapter 4, the documents that were examined and analyzed included policies from the Ontario Ministry of Education as well as from four public school boards in the Greater Toronto area that address the topics of race, diversity, equity, and anti-racism in education with regard to racialized teachers and school communities. These four school boards were specifically chosen because they are where the 21 participants in this study currently teach. An analysis of these policies was relevant to my study because it provided a context in which to situate the participants’ lived experiences as teachers working in these educational institutions. "Policies that take up the concept of race as a category to regular behaviour are race-based and provide a
racialized consciousness because they legitimate ways of thinking about race” (Chan, 2007, p.131). It was worthwhile to examine whether the documents from an educator’s corresponding school board had any bearing on his or her understanding of equity, diversity, or anti-racism.

3.3 Empirical Study

The recruitment of participants was carried out using a snowball process with criteria requisites, where contacts from the researcher’s social and professional networks used each of their own social or professional networks to recommend individuals who fit the desired participant profile (Seidman, 2006; Warren, 2001). Potential participants were first contacted by being sent the Participant Recruitment Letter (See Appendix A) and if they expressed interest in the form of an email reply, they were sent the Invitation to Participate in a Research Project (See Appendix B), which included a copy of the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix C). The criteria that participants were required to meet was that they be full-time teachers who self-identify as being a non-white racialized individual, and have at least two years experience teaching in a publicly-funded school board with a racially diverse student population. My initial methodological design required that participants be born in Canada with the intention of acknowledging how the perspectives and journeys of immigrants are notably distinct from those of individuals who have lived in Canada their entire lives. After a few weeks of recruiting participants, however, this criterion proved to be too restrictive and not integral to maintain for the objectives of this study, thus it was removed from the required participant profile and replaced with the criterion of having completed a post-secondary education in Canada, which broadened the range for potential participants while still maintaining a certain degree of experiences relative to where this study is taking place. From the final pool of 21 participants, 11
were born in Canada and 10 of them immigrated to Canada between the ages of 2 to 16. All participants completed their post-secondary education in Ontario, of which 19 also attended teacher’s college in Ontario while two participants did their preservice training in the United States.

Moving on to the criterion of having a minimum of two years teaching in racially diverse school community is explained by allowing for a greater likelihood of a richer data collection; the longer the period for which participants have worked, the more experiences they are likely to have to draw on. Next, the criterion of teaching at a school with racially diverse student demographics was deemed necessary for the focus of this study to explore teachers’ understandings of how their lived experiences compare to expectations that their racialized bodies will be significant to racialized students. As it turns out, all participants worked at schools where racialized students often composed the majority of the student population, revealing the incredible diversification that is currently taking place in GTA communities.

The predetermined participant criteria was used to determine which teachers were eligible to participate in the study and from this qualified group, I tried to maintain a balance between participants with various differences in race, gender, religion, years of experience in education, etc. My study strived to recruit participants with a range of self-identified differences within the selected criteria so as to hear from individuals with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. These guidelines were designed to “reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it” (Seidman, 2006, p.55). Subsequently, the data was collected from a total of 21 teachers, 9 males and 12 females, who all self-identified as being non-white racialized individuals from a range of racial backgrounds: Jamaican, Trinidadian, Filipino, Korean,
Guyanese, Chinese, and Indian. It was difficult to find participants from a Latin American or Middle Eastern background. Ultimately, only one participant identified as being Latin American, while one other participant identified as being half Pakistani and half Palestinian. In this group, there are four elementary school teachers and 17 secondary school teachers. The imbalance between secondary and elementary school teachers was not intended; efforts were made to recruit teachers from all divisions. It is possible that the researcher's own social positioning as a secondary school teacher caused for the professional and collegial networks used for recruiting to be composed of more educators in the secondary sector. Subsequently, while the two groupings of teachers were coded for, there were no salient themes in the analysis of that data that differentiated between them. Their years of experience ranged from 2 to 15 years with a mean of 7.7 years. The decision to purposively select participants to maintain a balance of viewpoints hopefully allowed for enough variety in the data so that different individuals are able to draw on and relate to the information gathered.

The location and time of the interviews was scheduled with respect to the preferences of the participant. Efforts were made to be equitable by accommodating the needs and preferences of participants during my study. The primary mode of contact in the recruitment process was conducted through e-mail, but on occasion participants preferred to make arrangements for the in-person interview over the phone. Interviews often took place in a public location, such as libraries, schools, and coffee shops. At the beginning of each interview, participants were presented with a hard copy of the Invitation to Participate in a Research Project and two copies of the Consent Form (Appendix B), which had been sent to them electronically beforehand. They were asked to sign both copies of the Consent form, one to keep for their own records and one for the researcher to keep. Before beginning the interview, participants were given the
opportunity to ask any questions about the research study. Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that its dialogue resembled a conversation, during which the researcher allowed participants to reflect and develop their responses (Warren, 2001).

The interview schedule consisted of 12 open-ended questions that guided the course of the interview and allowed the participants to respond in a way they felt would best reproduce their thoughts, feelings, and memories. These questions fluctuated between interviews; they were altered depending on the individual participants and the nature of the responses that they decided to share. For example, if an individual was not familiar with any school board policy on equity and inclusion, then the question of how these policies were carried out in the classroom was subsequently omitted. The open nature of these interviews was conducive to dialogue and encourage non-hierarchal relationships between the researcher and participant (Amin, 2009).

After all, “we must leave our research efforts open to respondents’ stories if we are to understand respondents’ experiences in, and on, their own terms...” (Gubrium, & Holstein, 2003b, p.36).

DeVault and McCoy (2004) echo the approach that in interviewing, there must be a balance between leading the dialogue towards the research goals and allowing participants to talk in a way that reflects their individual experiences.

Despite the presence of an interview schedule, the interviews should be perceived more as “an interactional accomplishment” and less as a “stimulus and response” (p. 34). My study was not in search of an all-encompassing objective truth or definite answers, but rather sought to listen to the voices of its participants and in doing so, gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of how these teachers have perceived and experienced their work as racialized educators. “[I]nterviews communicatively re-present who we are; increasingly, its varied formats are the way we know about ourselves, our lives, and about others” (Gubrium, & Holstein, 2003a,
The decision to use interviews as a way to collect data from these participants is explained by the desire to better understand how these individuals make sense of themselves, their unique life experiences, the people around them, and to gather interpretations rather than facts (DeVault, & McCoy, 2004; Patton, 2002; Warren, 2001).

While policy documents are distinctive from interviews, there are still parallels that exist between their collection processes. Document collection does come with its own steps, the first being to locate relevant materials. The researcher must keep an open-mind when deciding where to look and what might be useful. In this study, I explored documents issued by the Ontario Ministry of Education, specifically the development of a program called “Anti-racism and ethnocultural equity in school boards: Guidelines for policy development and implementation” that was first released in 1993 and later evolved into the “Equity and inclusive education strategy” in 2009. Federal policies on Employment Equity were also examined alongside those from large public school boards in the Greater Toronto Area. Existing school board mandates that address the topics of diversity were considered such as the “Equity Foundation Statement and Commitments to Equity Policy Implementation” published by the Toronto District School Board. My study remained receptive to any other relevant documents that may have been highlighted during the data collection; however the only one that emerged as being relevant was a copy of the most recent application form for a teacher education program at a post-secondary institution in Toronto, from which an excerpt was examined in Chapter 7.

3.4 Data Analysis

Gunaratnam (2003) poses the question: “How might we develop forms of analysis that offer sensitive and flexible ways of capturing very different forms of identification, experience
and social circumstances?” (p. 114). The analysis was performed by the coding of institutional documents as well as interview transcripts. After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed as a way towards better knowing the data (Seidman, 2006). I was responsible for transcribing all the interviews. I am of the firm belief that the act of transcribing the interviews, while arduous and time-consuming, allows researchers to further engage with the data, possibly revealing new insights about the research being done (Gray, 2003). This process allowed me to indirectly re-live the interviews and reflect on participant voices, providing my analysis with more insights than if I were to have outsourced this work to a third party. The transcripts were typed out verbatim and non-verbal signals such as laughter or pauses were noted in the text to reflect the interview as closely as possible, since it is understood that “a transcript can be only a partial representation of the interview” (Mishler, cited in Seidman, 2006, p.116). This notion speaks to the many intricacies that are involved in interviewing a participant, such as body language, rapport between individuals, and tone of voice. Once the transcriptions were completed, the next step in the data analysis was to code the transcribed interviews for connecting themes and concepts.

“One of the most critical outcomes of qualitative data analysis is to interpret how the individual components of the study weave together” (Saldana, 2006, p.36). This interpretation began with coding, which comprises the “identification of key themes and patterns” (Coffey, & Atkinson, 1996, p.26). I used a mixed model approach to coding, wherein which multiple revisions of the literature and transcripts prompted me to develop a short list of codes keeping in mind the intents of the research questions; however, as the analysis progressed and the data was viewed in different ways, new codes did in fact arise. The codes created prior to analysis were teaching experiences, racialized expectations, anti-racism, multiculturalism, role model, school
demographics, equity, identity, race, classroom practices, policy. Others codes, however, emerged throughout the analytical process such as the following: teacher education, childhood/growing up, “people like me”, and professional development. “[C]oding is much more than simply giving categories to data; it is also about conceptualizing the data, raising questions, providing provisional answers about the relationships among and within the data, and discovering the data” (Strauss, cited in Coffey, & Atkinson, 1996). The introduction of new codes served to enrich understandings of the data. Delamount (2002) emphasizes the importance of coding “whatever you are interested in” even if that results in numerous different codes; after all, it is much easier to group codes together at a later stage in the analysis than it is to separate them (p. 126). In this sense, coding as a qualitative analysis method is viewed as both the reduction and complication of data; while the material is grouped together by overarching codes, it is simultaneously being interpreted and drawn out (Coffey, & Atkinson, 1996).

After the coding was complete, it suggested various relationships within and between the data collected as well as the existing literature. These three major components were considered and connected to one another in the last part of the qualitative data analysis in my study. Direct excerpts from the transcripts were frequently used as participants will be quoted under their pseudonyms. Throughout this analysis, it is imperative to recognize the pivotal role of the researcher in making sense of the collected data. Drawing from anti-racism research methodology, we must be acutely conscious that our interpretations may or may not be an accurate representation of what our subjects intended. Researchers need to take account for the fact that our personal experiences and education strongly influence our interpretations. As a result, it’s important to be open to renegotiating meanings with our participants (Dei, 2005). Asking for clarifications in addition to rephrasing and repeating back our interpretations of
participant responses are examples of how meanings can be more accurately fostered and articulated by both participant and researcher. DeVault and McCoy (2004) discuss how crucial it is not to generalize about the participants, but rather, locate and describe the social processes that have generalizing effects. This critical approach helped to form a clearer idea of the messages that were communicated in the interviews.

The analysis of policy documents is called document analysis and it is a method that has been used in the past to examine historical texts and literary works. While it initially started off as mainly being a quantitative measurement of the frequency and variety of textual components, document analysis has evolved to also include an assessment of the data’s qualitative nature and its relationship with the researcher. The researcher is recognized as being central to the analysis (Merriam, 2009). Careful attention was given to details such as the choice of language used in the document as well as the context in which it was created and used. For example, people in an institutional setting will be inclined to use a type of professional discourse when talking about work-related topics. The challenge that presents itself here is to the researcher who needs to be able to identify when this type of discourse is being employed and whether its usage is strictly descriptive or if it actually signifies the participant’s feelings. Similar to the interview analysis, coding was used to analyze documents. The codes that were used for the document analysis included: “equity”, “race”, “racialized teachers”, “hiring practices”, “inclusion”, “multiculturalism”, and “anti-racism”. The researcher must go through a process of creating meaning from the text (DeVault, & McCoy, 2004; Esterberg, 2002). Jacques Derrida emphasizes that “meaning does not reside in a text but in the writing and reading of it” (cited in Hodder, 2002, p. 704). Hodder (2002) stresses the fact that once words are translated into a written text, the distance between author and reader will only grow over time, allowing room for more and
more interpretations depending on the context. This possibility for new meaning to emerge stems from the fact that the written document cannot talk back or respond; it can only be consumed by the reader, the interpreter, and the researcher.

Each component of my research methodology was constructed and selected with the objectives of adequately addressing my research questions in adherence to the values and theoretical framework of my study. Seeking to learn more about how racialized teachers understand their work in racially diverse populations was a complex task that I believe was most effectively explored through individual semi-structured interviews. The conduction of these interviews was led by anti-racist theory, which supported the initiative to develop an equitable relationship between the interview participants and established an atmosphere where individuals felt comfortable and safe enough to share their perspectives on race in relation to education and the surrounding dominant discourses. The social interactions that occur in our lives are multi-faceted and multi-layered, and thus cannot be captured within the parameters of quantitative measures. The use of policy analysis to examine the existing dominant discourses surrounding the themes of equity, inclusion, and the expectations cast to “visible minority” educators provided valuable insights about the ways in which policy compared with the lived realities of teachers. The collective sum of these research methods was able to reveal more about the realities of racially diverse schools, how educators make sense of their work as racialized individuals in this environment, and lastly, what governing institutions are doing, or failing to do, to support the rapidly growing social differences in its surrounding communities.
Chapter 4
EXAMINING DOMINANT DISCOURSES

In Ontario, the first provincial statement on anti-racism and equity in education appeared in July of 1993, under the leadership of the first New Democratic Party Premier, Bob Rae. It was at this point in time that the Ontario Ministry of Education released the Program Memorandum No. 119, titled, “Development and Implementation of School Board Policies on Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity” (July 13, 1993). The development of this document was largely fueled by a report written one year earlier in June 1992 to Bob Rae from Stephen Lewis, who was acting as the advisor on race relations at the time. This report underscored a call to Police Forces to review their policies on race relations, the need for more equitable employment practices, and the staggering lack of progress for racial minorities in education (Lewis, 1992). This initial version of Memorandum No. 119 summoned all school boards to implement policies to create inclusive learning environments that are respectful of the diverse cultures of all students. These guidelines claimed to go beyond multiculturalism by using an anti-racist perspective that required an examination of existing practices that may be discriminatory or racist in nature. The difference between the two theories is that while an anti-racist education aims to address race and racial discrimination within institutions and structures, multiculturalism focuses more on promoting cultural pluralism and democracy (Chan, 2007). While the establishment of Memorandum No. 119 as well as the Employment Equity Act* put Ontario at the forefront of Canada’s progress in diversity, lasting changes were thwarted by the change from a New Democratic Party to a Conservative government in 1995.

* Ontario’s Employment Equity Act, created in 1993, requires employers to work towards eliminating discriminatory barriers in employment to increase the opportunity of all individuals, especially persons with disabilities, women, racialized individuals, and Aboriginals (Government of Ontario, 2013).
It was at this point in time that the newly elected Premier Mike Harris rescinded Ontario’s Employment Equity Act and replaced it with the Job Quotas Repeal Act in 1995, which required all public agencies working to acquire equity-related data about their workforces to not only cease collection, but destroy any gathered data that such an initiative ever existed (Bakan, & Kobayashi, 2007). Quotas are defined as "a requirement to hire or promote a fixed and arbitrary number of persons during a given period" and their enforcement on any employer was prohibited by this Act in 1995 (Agocs, 2005, p.172). In addition, the Anti-racism Secretariat of the Ministry of Citizenship, which was a government mandated body in the Ministry of Citizenship that is responsible for the development of policy on anti-racism initiatives in Ontario, was disbanded. These changes are just a few examples of how the newly elected Conservative government changed the face of education in Ontario. What somehow managed to escape termination, however, was the Ministry of Education’s Policy No. 119. Aside from initiating the development of a few equity statements from public school boards in the Greater Toronto Area, this policy on anti-racism and equity has been unable to elicit any widespread changes, possibly due to a lack of policy reinforcement (Dei, 2003; Dei, 2005; Joshee, 2008).

In 2009, during the term of Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, the Ontario Ministry of Education officially amended Policy No.119 to be called “Developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario schools”, and expanded its scope to recognize, “that such factors as race, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, gender, and class can intersect to create additional barriers for some students” (OME, 2009). While this revised strategy states that the new changes do not reflect a reduced commitment to anti-racism, the removal of the word “anti-racism” suggests otherwise by propagating notions of anti-racism as a negative approach and the word “race” as taboo. Goldberg (2007) states, "By overtly disallowing
any reference to race, this seemingly neutral language also promotes an agenda where race becomes invisible” (p.211). Moreover, the lack of substantial, effective changes made in this revision represents the government’s tendency to push out more documentation instead of first determining how to put existing ones into effect (Agyepong, 2010; McCaskell, 2010; Schick, 2010). Putting anti-racism into practice is a difficult task. It requires going against the grain and disrupting the way that things are “normally” done (Ng, 2003). Bonnett (2000) concisely describes this ideology, calling it a “discourse of change” (p. 89). Anti-racism has three main concerns: first, racism needs to be exposed as a contributor to unequal opportunity and oppression; second, its impact must then be examined; third, strategies must be developed to counter this racially based oppression. In addition, “[s]chooling is a primary focal point in anti-racism theory because educators and the educational contexts they work in have a significant impact on issues and practices associated with racial difference and inequality” (Wotherspoon, 2009, p. 47). Though most school boards in Ontario have developed a policy to address these initiatives (McCaskell, 2010), it remains difficult to discern how effectively they are carried out and sustained in practice. One of the main criticisms of equity initiatives has been that they are ineffective because there is no regulated enforcement on their implementation. "A policy that is not enforced is unlikely to be implemented. A policy that is not implemented cannot be fairly evaluated, and it cannot be expected to get results" (Agocs, 2007, p.176).

Currently in 2013, Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy remains in place under the leadership of the Liberal Party as the guidelines for equity policy development and implementation specifically with regards to the domain of education. The most significant change in this document from the preceding Policy No. 119 is its rephrasing of initiatives. The
words "anti-racism" and "ethnocultural" are replaced by broader terms such as "diversity" and "inclusive education". Diversity is defined very broadly as follows:

The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

The aforementioned definition calls to mind the argument that "being diverse" does not necessarily translate into "doing diversity" (Ahmed, 2007). The distinction between the two phrases is important because the physical presence of difference does not automatically imply that these differences are being accepted or accounted for in terms of power and privilege. In addition to the term diversity, this Strategy emphasizes "inclusive education", which is presented as, "Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p.90). The removal of the terms "anti-racism" and "equity" could be explained by how they were defined within the 1993 document.

"Antiracism and ethnocultural equity" refers to equitable treatment of members of all racial and ethnocultural groups and the elimination of institutional and individual barriers to equity. “Race” is a social category into which societies have divided people according to such characteristics as skin colour, shape of eyes, texture of hair, and facial features. “Ethnocultural” refers to a person’s cultural heritage in the broadest sense. It can include national affiliation, language, and religious background. There may also be ethnocultural groups within racial groups. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993, p.5)

While anti-racist theory speaks to all forms of social difference such as class, gender, sexuality, and ability (Dei, 2003), it is often portrayed as being limited to issues of race. The above definition exacerbates this misconception by reducing "anti-racism" to a simplified definition of the word "race". The presentation of these terms in educational documents was a very progressive shift at the time of its creation, however, it is not made clear that race is a social
construction created by dominant, privileged groups; instead it is simply presented as a category that societies use to divide individuals without calling attention to its contentious nature nor the groups who have endorsed its construction. Furthermore, the term "ethnocultural" inherently fails to take into account the existence of other forms of social difference aside from ethnicity and culture, which they do mention is also comprised of religion, nationality, and language; however with an incomprehensive description of anti-racism, it is understandable why this policy was revised to promote a broader sense of inclusion. On the other hand, while the term "ethnocultural" fails to address the scope of social differences, anti-racism theory does possess that ability; why then, was it also removed from the new document? This observation comes back to earlier mentioned notions of making issues of race invisible.

In the most recent strategy, the only mention of "anti-racism" is found in the opening message from Kathleen Wynne, the Ministry of Education at the time of publication. The singular mention of anti-racism is with regard to the work of academic scholar George Dei, who is quoted for a short excerpt about inclusion. The origins and beliefs of anti-racism theory are completely absent from the 2009 Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. The removal of this term might be attributed to past research that has found that it is common for practicing as well as prospective teachers to perceive anti-racism as a negative approach to a multicultural education in the sense that it focuses too much on racism and discrimination instead of the harmonious social relations suggested by multiculturalism (Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 1996). These findings raise the question of what is more desirable: keeping the term "anti-racism" and improving people's understandings of the theory or a complete omission of the word? Provided that the latter option is certainly simpler, the term "anti-racism" was in fact abandoned in the revision of the 2009 educational equity guidelines. What is interesting to note
is that in reviewing Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, they do include initiatives that bear a strong resemblance to the values of anti-racism.

The strategy recognizes our province’s growing diversity as a strength. It aims to promote inclusive education, as well as to understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit our students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society. Systemic barriers may also impede fair practice with respect to hiring, mentoring, promotion, and succession planning. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p.11)

Not only do the newly emphasized terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion account for the wide range of social differences, but the revised document recognizes the existence of systemic barriers for some individuals as well as the role of power relations in determining who faces challenges. Perhaps the only aspect of anti-racism that this strategy does not cover is its application to education, which can be argued, is appropriately left open-ended for individual school boards to tailor when they create their respective equity policies. If then, the spirit of anti-racism is still largely present in the new document, but the specific term itself is absent, then to what extent is this theory still relevant? After all, a large part of anti-racism deals with the power to name privilege and race (Dei, 2003). How then, if at all, is anti-racism compromised when the name of the theory itself is exchanged for more neutral, positive terms?

If the majority of values are still retained in the new strategy and perhaps even communicated to a clearer degree in part due to the absence of the "negative" tone imparted by anti-racism, then at what point do the benefits of the big picture outweigh the downfalls of being distanced from its founding theory? This predicament calls to mind the idea of policy studies as a social performance that reaffirms public perceptions of what is desired behaviour, but does not actually work to improve the situation at hand (Scheurich, 2001). The new strategy parallels numerous values advocated by anti-racism, but its failure to make an explicit connection to the theory is arguably symptomatic of policy as a normalizing tool that upholds ideas of what is
acceptable. While these are important questions to reflect on for the future development of provincial equity policy, it would be useful to examine how four publicly-funded school boards in the Greater Toronto Area interpreted these current guidelines from the Ministry of Education. These are the four school boards that the participants in my study worked in at the time of the data collection.

4.1 School Board A

School Board A manages about 600 publicly-funded schools in the Greater Toronto Area and has a student population of approximately 250,000 students in an average year. They have three documents regarding equity: Equity Foundation Policy, Employment Equity, and Equity Foundation Statement and Commitments to Equity Policy Implementation. While the presence of these three documents alludes to there being significant progress for the journey towards inclusion, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the discourses of these documents. The majority of teachers from this study, 11 participants work for School Board A.

The Equity Foundation Policy is a two-page statement that begins with the brief acknowledgment of numerous biases existing in our society and the assurance that contributions from each and every community member are, in fact, valued. Although an extensive range of prejudiced groups and promising ideals are included in this document, it is noteworthy to examine hints of racialized discourse present on the first page:

The Board further recognizes that such inequitable treatment leads to educational, social and career outcomes that do not accurately reflect the abilities, experiences and contributions of our students, our employees, and our parent and community partners. This inequitable treatment limits their future success and prevents them from making a full contribution to society.[Original document excludes the bolded emphasis.]

Racialization occurs when groups of individuals are objectified on the basis of race (Chan, 2007). Furthermore, when this process is present in discourse such as the aforementioned, it
defines racialized bodies as being "different and as requiring some form of treatment to correct this differentiation" (p.131). The transition from first person plural to third person plural in the preceding excerpt could qualify as an example of racialized discourse, where efforts to promote equity are undermined by traditional notions of two distinct, separate groups: the “us” being the voice of the dominant group and the “them” being the minority (Henry, & Tator, 1999; Ghosh, & Abdi, 2004). The writers’ efforts to express concern about the members of their community are destabilized by the differentiation between the members of the Board and the marginalized groups, where the representation of the former seems to be emphasized over the outcomes of the latter. The statement understands its commitment to its collective members; however, it alludes to the belief that inequitable behaviour would solely limit the future success of the marginalized groups, as opposed to the success of the community as a whole. Moreover, it frames the potential inability of racialized individuals to contribute to society in a manner that suggests this possibility as a pre-existing as well as preconceived fear. There is the attitude of helping because it will, in return, benefit the helper instead of helping for the sake of promoting inclusion in its purest sense: to provide everyone with a sense of belonging, which entails fair access to opportunities in society.

The remainder of the Equity Foundation Statement focuses on seven commitments that School Board A aims to focus on: curriculum, student success, hiring practices, community involvement, resolution procedures, support systems and maintenance of implemented practices in accordance with Board policies. Provided that these divisions are all significant areas of concern and together form a good starting point of inquiry, the brevity and vagueness of some criteria are duly evident. For example, point (a) states that the Board will ensure that: “The curriculum of our schools accurately reflects and uses the variety of knowledge of all peoples as
the basis of instruction”. It is important to question the source and accuracy of said “knowledge of all peoples”. Where is this knowledge being obtained from and from whose perspective is it being reported? To achieve a truly inclusive curriculum, different perspectives must be taken into account so that we can try and understand one another through the lens of the marginalized, and not strictly from the majority’s point of view. Nieto (2011) states, “Teaching does not become more honest and critical simply by becoming more inclusive, but this is an important first step in ensuring that our students have access to wide variety of viewpoints” (p. 31). One way this could be achieved is the involvement of marginalized groups in the creation of curriculum. It was discovered in a study by Solomon (1997) on teacher candidates in Toronto that:

One way that teachers of colour became role models to their professional colleagues was through the enrichment of curriculum content...They made sure that curriculum materials reflected a multicultural and antiracist perspective, searched for learning materials with diverse representation, and screened them for stereotypes and bias. (p.403)

The acknowledgement of curriculum as a point of progress for equity in schools is a promising start, however, the development of a proposed curriculum is an enormous task and one that must be done sensitively and collaboratively to justly serve such diverse communities.

Dei (2007) writes: “[A]ny successful strategy for educational change will have to be accountable to, and empowering for, the specific groups whose knowledges, experiences and histories have been marginalized in educational systems in the Euro-American context” (p.196). To hire staff from marginalized groups only to monitor that what they offer falls in accordance with what is deemed acceptable by the dominant group is to undercut the supposed aims of the Equity Foundation Policy. One possibility could be in stating instead that: “their skills and knowledge are valued and used to enrich understandings of multiple perspectives”. In this way the discourse becomes conscious of what different voices can contribute to the fortification of an
equity foundation and above all, rid itself of the long instilled assumption that diversity is welcomed so as long as it fits within what is judged “appropriate” by the majority.

While most of the points articulated in this policy promote equity so as to be pro-active about injustice, point (E) addresses the course of reaction once this unfair treatment has already occurred. It is stated that, “Students, employees, parents and community partners are provided with effective procedures for resolving concerns and complaints” (p.83). What is meant by “effective procedures” is difficult to discern here, and could be better articulated by stating that the voices of these groups will be heard and considered by all pertinent parties; that the course of action taken to mediate the issues will involve the marginalized groups instead of simply being a prescribed solution, donned by the dominant group to the minority. “Only a framework based on a critical examination of power relations in the society can provide insight into how to address issues of diversity in society” (Naseem, 2011, p.11). It is vital to withdraw from the customary structure of one group being seen as helping the other because this reproduces power imbalances. Alternatively, progress should be made towards a model where groups are viewed as working together, alongside one another, towards inclusion. Similar feedback could be garnered for point (G), which asserts that procedures will be implemented at all levels to review and develop policies that promote equity. Once again, who will spearhead these procedures? Will the revision team include a diversity of members? In order to achieve equity, it must first be embodied and exemplified in the system that promotes it.

Most recently reviewed in Spring 2006, School Board A’s Employment Equity Policy is a concise two-page document divided into six sections: Objective, Definitions, Responsibility, Policy, Specific Directives and Reference Documents. Given that the issue of equitable hiring practices is commonly recommended as being remedial to problems of bias in the system, it is
valuable, and in this case, necessary to create a policy that provides more detail on organizational goals in this area. The objective precisely summarizes the Board’s commitment to procedures that will lead to a staff that includes a diverse community. On the other hand, the definitions, which are central to a clear understanding of the issue at hand, are not well communicated. Affirmative action is defined as “the development and implementation of positive measures with regard to all aspects of the employment of members of designated groups” (p.1). This explanation is vague and its reference to positive measures is difficult to decipher. What will these measures strive to achieve and what will classify them as being positive? Perhaps simply expressing that diverse background knowledge of the disadvantages faced by marginalized groups will be considered in all hiring practices might have been more succinct. The shortcomings of this definition are further revealed when the term “designated groups” is made the next point of clarification in this policy. If it been expressed into words, there would have been no need to formulate this as its own separate term and instead refer to the biases described in the Equity Foundation Policy. Not only is it repeated, but fails to include groups marginalized on the basis of language, sexual orientation, faith, religion and age. Since the term “designated groups” is repeated throughout this policy, it interferes with a streamlined understanding in the School Board A’s discourse of who exactly is included as a marginalized group.

One successful aspect of the Definitions section is the much needed elaboration on the word “equity” as being a principle that takes note of systemic discrimination, both in the past and present. This part resonates with the concept that “there is an unbroken chain of thought which to this day forms the fabric of the liberal democratic state. It is systematically interwoven into the structure of societal institutions...” (Dei, 2007, p.191). The theme of recognizing the existing barriers to equal opportunity in our society is apparent in the Equity Foundation and
Employment Equity documents, albeit their limitations. The next section entitled “Responsibility” is simply followed by the job title, “Executive Superintendent, Employee Services”, which is hardly indicative of what exactly this individual will be responsible for. This is worrisome not only from a membership point of view where it will be challenging to form expectations of this policy, but also from the Executive Superintendent’s perspective where he or she may not know what to be accountable for. "This discourse is effectively empty, because it is so vague that it cannot be enforced" (Goldberg, 2007, p.207). The lack of details makes implementation difficult because it is unclear what should be enforced or expected, undermining the effectiveness of this policy. A similar quandary is found again in the fifth section of this policy where the Specific Directives minimally read, “The Director is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this policy (p.2)”, meaning that procedures are dependent on the current individual in that position, nor does not specify which director it means, seeing as how there are numerous directors, one for each major division of the Board. These are all viable questions that should not have to be formulated post reading of a well conceived policy. More emphasis should be placed on the consistency and compliance of the terms statement in the document and less on the changing individuals who will occupy roles of authority. Employees should abide by the policy and not the policy to the employee. It could be reasoned that the details of the procedures are not important if the same policies are being upheld, but a case could also be made for variance in the frequency and rigour with which these procedures are put into practice. The ambiguity found in designating responsibilities in the Employment Equity Policy is detrimental to its in implementation, and leaves much to be desired in a future revision.

The third document is titled "Equity Foundation Statement and Commitments to Equity Policy Implementation" and while it is not categorized as being a policy on the website of School
Board A, it is worth briefly discussing due to the fact that despite being last updated over one decade ago in 2000, it remains prominently displayed on their website, maybe because unlike this Board's equity policies examined above, it discusses regulations with respect to five general groups of social difference: "Antiracism and Ethnocultural equity, Antisexism and Gender equity, Antihomophobia, Sexual Orientation, and equity, Anticlassism and Socio-economic equity, and equity for Persons with Disabilities". By merely reading these section titles, it is evident that this document is outdated and perhaps more aligned with the Ontario Ministry's now extinct Policy 119. Moreover, the decision to try and categorize the majority of these social differences as being "anti" whichever applicable "-ism" really undermines the theory of anti-racism as being more than a belief system that is literally "against racism", but that also entails numerous complex beliefs on power, activism, and all social differences. The failure to explain this theory in addition to the synchronization of these terms as all beginning with the prefix "anti" completely undermines the communication of a comprehensive understanding anti-racism; furthermore, this choice of terminology condones its literal and limited interpretation. Provided that the Ministry of Education has significantly altered its equity guidelines over the past 12 years, School Board A needs to thoroughly review and restructure its Equity Foundation Statement and Commitments to Equity Policy Implementation.

### 4.2 School Board B

School Board B governs 200 publicly-funded schools in the Greater Toronto Area and employs approximately 10,000 teachers to serve more than 93,000 students. Six teacher participants from this study currently work here. This Board has three documents regarding equity: a statement of their Origins of Equity and Inclusive Education, an Employment Equity policy, and a Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy. Due to this Board's religious
affiliation with the Catholic Church, their origins do not only stem from the provincial guidelines, but from the initiatives of the regional Archdiocese to address the changing population. This two-page document summarizes the changes that have occurred in equity policy development over the past three decades, specifically with regard to how this particular Board has worked to follow the instructions of the provincial government, which has undergone a number of leadership changes in recent years, though no specific political parties are explicitly referenced in this statement. Instead, this review simply provides a straightforward record of how School Board B has worked diligently over the past three decades to follow the guidelines that have been set before them and that have been modified on several occasions, including the immense amalgamation of schools boards in 1998. While this statement of Origins of Equity and Inclusive Education with School Board B appears to exist primarily for liability purposes, it contains language that puts its complete understanding of equity issues into question. On multiple occasions, this document addresses diversity only with respect to ethnicity and culture, using terms such as "multiracial", "multiethnic", and "global village" to describe the individuals that will be addressed in equity initiatives, failing to account for social differences such as language, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic class just to name a few examples. It is ironic that this statement from School Board B outlines the priorities of the 2009 Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, which pushes to broaden the scope of inclusion, yet in of itself, does not utilize language that is reflective of said progress.

The Employment Equity policy was approved by School Board B in early 2010 and is a one-page article that concisely states its commitment to hiring practices that are equitable to "racialized persons, women, First Nation, Métis, Inuit (aboriginal persons), and persons with disabilities, and other groups protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code". This list of
groups is used repeatedly in this document, which entails six brief regulations on how School Board B upholds employment equity. Most of this policy document is occupied by a list of definitions that explain terms such as diversity, equality, equity, inclusive education, and racialized group. Although there are many promising aspects of this policy such as its differentiation between equality and equity, its recognition of race as a social construct, and its usage of the term "racialized", these progressive components are undermined by certain inconsistencies. For example, the definition for "designated groups" fails to acknowledge persons with social differences aside from gender, race, and ability who have been denied equal access to employment, education, social services, housing, etc. Henceforth any further mention of the term renders the regulation complete, such as "ensuring appropriate representation of designated groups". Is representation only valued for groups who are visibly different? It is possible that this discrepancy was thought to be sufficiently amended by the addition of Regulation #6 that states: "Designated groups shall be the focus of these principles, but not to the exclusion of other groups." Choosing not to elaborate on who these "other groups" include may allow more flexibility on behalf of the policy, but the vagueness also suggests a lack of awareness or prioritization of these individuals. More importantly, this policy’s support for said representation exemplifies a dominant discourse that endorses the reductionist idea that minority individuals will all perform in a certain way simply based on their social differences. Blackmore (2010) asserts that this discourse of needing more representation implies the failure of individuals from racialized groups to achieve the same status as members from the dominant group. In other words, it suggests that the absence of racialized bodies in leadership positions is due to their inability to meet the required norms instead of acknowledging the imbalanced power relations between groups.
School Board B's third document is its "Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy" that was recently approved in August 2011. It opens by quoting a passage from the Bible to illustrate that they are a publicly-funded Catholic Board that respects that every individual was made equal and in the image of God. Henceforth, the principles of inclusion and equity fit well into their beliefs. While anti-racism is named in this particular policy, it is not clear whether it is being used with reference to the theoretical model or literally as meaning to be against racism.

Regulation # 2 states:

The Board recognizes the importance of anti-racism and anti-harassment policies in promoting and maintaining a Catholic learning and working environment that fosters racial and ethnocultural understanding.

The fact that anti-racism is mentioned alongside the terms "anti-harassment", "racial", and "ethnocultural", implies not only a literal interpretation of the words "anti-racism" as meaning "against racism", but also reveals a limited perspective on the different types of diversity that are important to understand. This document also exemplifies a dominant discourse that endorses the diversification of the teaching force. Under its definition for inclusive education, it states: "Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected."

Catholic values are strongly embedded into this policy in addition to the adherence to the denominational rights possessed by all publicly-funded Catholic school boards in Ontario. In this document, School Board B makes it clear that their religious beliefs will always take precedence over all other rights. It reads, "Where there is an apparent conflict between denominational rights and other rights the board will favour the protection of the denominational rights." While all of the examined equity policies from School Board B recognize the guidelines put forth in Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, they consistently refuse to make explicit the
importance of accepting and understanding social differences other than from race and culture. The only mention of social factors aside from these is made only in reference to provincial policy such as the Ontario Human Rights Code. In other words, the equity policies from School Board B do not make any efforts to promote the inclusion of a wide range of individual differences beyond the minimal referencing of provincial documents.

4.3 School Board C

School Board C is one of the largest school boards in Ontario with over 200 schools, employing over 11,000 employees, and serving more than 120,000 students. Two teacher participants in this study are employees at this Board. They currently have a policy called "Equity and Inclusive Education" that has been labelled a "working document", meaning that as of February 2013, it is a work in progress with potential upcoming modifications. At this moment in time, it is a 23 page document that begins with a clear explanation of its application of Ontario's Equity and Inclusion Education Strategy, the stakeholders affected by this policy, its connection to the priorities of Board C, and a timeline of its implementation. The most recent draft of this policy was approved in July 2012.

The first thing that is noticeably different from this equity policy compared to ones from School Boards A, B, and D is the amount of detail and transparency that is provided about the parties involved and the stages of development that the document is undergoing. The "Equity and Inclusive Education" policy from School Board C takes the time to outline how the initiatives of the provincial guidelines are well-aligned with their own main eight initiatives, which are as follows: Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines and Practices, Shared and Committed Leadership, School Community Relationships, Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices, School and Workplace Climate and Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment, Professional Learning,
Accountability and Transparency, and Religious Accommodation. Moreover, in each of these eight sections it explains the responsibilities of every individual's role in helping to carry out this policy, from the Director of Education to superintendents to principals to teachers to students and even to parents as well. In other words, this policy speaks to people at all levels about the specific expectations of the position that they are in helping to promote equity and inclusion and how these responsibilities may vary within the Board's eight initiatives.

A list of definitions is found early in the document and takes the time to list, on several occasions, the range of social differences that are outlined by the Ontario Human Rights Code. This policy does not simply make one reference to the provincial policy, but explicitly and repeatedly states how discrimination, diversity, equity, and harassment speak to persons regardless of "race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability". Consistent with Ontario's Equity and Inclusion Education Strategy, there is no mention of anti-racism in this policy. Nevertheless, School Board C maintains a very inclusive perspective in all of its components, never limiting its statements to just racial or cultural groups as other Board policies have; this promising characteristic certainly reflects the fact that this document is up-to-date. Moreover, this Board has separate documents that contain guidelines on Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices and Observances and even how to approach Scheduling Events on Faith Days. These Board instructions are impressive in scope, using 56 pages to cover specific accommodations that can be made with a section each for 12 different religions.

Despite a number of positive components in the Equity and Inclusive Education documents administered by School Board C, they still serve as a source of the dominant discourse that educational staff needs to physically represent its surrounding populations. On
page 5, it states: "Superintendents are responsible for providing leadership opportunities and support for district, school, classroom and facilities staff who are reflective of the broader community." Once again, the politics of representation are highlighted in a discourse that oversimplifies the needs of diverse students in addition to their individual experiences and identities to mere physical bodies (Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). This notion of diversification has become so automatic in educational policy and it is essential to be critical of the reasons why this is happening and how effectively its implementation is being carried out.

4.4 School Board D

School Board D is a publicly-funded Catholic Board; they have just over 100 schools that serve 55,000 students in the Greater Toronto Area and they employ about 5,000 educational workers. Two teacher participants in this study are employees at this Board. They currently have a policy that has evolved over three decades from being the "Multiculturalism and Race Relations" policy to the "Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity" policy to what it currently stands as the "Equity and Inclusive Education" policy, which was last reviewed in July 2010 and whose next review is scheduled for June 2015. This document is 22 pages long. These changes have undoubtedly been a result of the shifting provincial guidelines. Similar to School Board B, School Board D also begins their equity policy with the same Bible passage from Genesis 1:27, which recognizes that all individuals are made equally in the image of God.

While this policy of School Board D states that pre-eminence will be given to the tenets of Catholicism, it does not explicitly state the protection of its denominational rights over all other rights as does School Board B. It is also different from the other publicly-funded Catholic School Board examined in this chapter in that the Equity and Inclusive Education policy from School Board D makes explicit references to the range of social differences instead of a merely
mentioning the Ontario Human Rights Code. By explicitly acknowledging individuals or groups on the basis of "individuals or groups on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, or disability", this policy provides its readers greater accessibility to this information instead of pointing to another source for more details. This convenience is especially important when considering that one of the regulations in this policy states that it is the responsibility of all Board employees "to be aware of and comply with this policy and guidelines". It is easy for policymakers to place the accountability on their employees, but it is important to ask what services they put into place to help dissipate this knowledge amongst their staff. Regulation 6.11 states that, "Schools will ensure that all information about the new or revised procedures involving equity and inclusive education is communicated to all pupils, staff, families, and others in the school community." No further details are provided on how they will "ensure" that this information is communicated, which sets the stage for the discussion in following chapters where participant responses about their Board policies will be examined.

Similar to School Board C, this policy also provides a list of responsibilities for different individuals involved in the Board such as parents, students, teachers, and administration. Present in this document is once again the widespread notion of representation. Without further explanation on why the presence of these particular individuals might be beneficial, readers are left to make assumptions about how these representatives will be recruited and moreover, what will be expected of them once they are present. Another regulation, 4.4.6., states that the Board will, "provide opportunities for pupils to experience people of different races, genders, and ages in non-stereotypical settings, occupations, and activities". This statement is difficult to interpret because not only is its scope limited to race, gender, and age, but it is ambiguous regarding how
students will "experience" these individuals and why this is important. For example, is a racialized individual in the position of a teacher non-stereotypical? And if so, exactly what kind of experience is this expected to provide pupils? This policy from School Board D provides more examples of the dominant discourses that condone the racialization of non-white teachers.

What is also interesting to note is that the term "anti-racism" is entirely absent in this Board's Equity and Inclusive Education; however, a quick search on their Board website turned up another document that did in fact contain this term. A policy in their Human Resources department titled, "Appointments to Academic Administrative Positions: Supervisory officers, Principals and Vice principals" briefly states its regulation 3.10:

Training related to anti-racism and bias-free interview practices shall be provided on an ongoing basis to any new appointees to Senior Management positions at the Board or to newly elected Trustees who are involved in interviews for positions of responsibility at the Board, and a short refresher be provided every two years for continuing Senior Management members and Trustees who are involved in interviews for positions of responsibility at the Board.

Although there is no further explanation on what anti-racism means or how this training will be delivered, it is surprising that this term still exists in one of their employment policies, but is completely lacking in their Equity and Inclusive Education policy. This discrepancy suggests a lack of commitment to anti-racism, much of which can be attributed to its omission from the provincial equity strategy and this school board's decision not to include this term consistently throughout its institutional statements. In fact, it is possible that this isolated reference to anti-racism is a residual component of the policy that existed before in correspondence to the Ontario Ministry's Policy 119, which was the Development and Implementation of School Board Policies on Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity.

Lastly, the Equity and Inclusive Education policy belonging to School Board D includes an Appendix A titled, "Religious Accommodation Guideline" that makes up eight pages of the
22 page policy. This component provides details on how freedom of religion is respected in this denominational School Board. Procedures on how to accommodate individuals in areas such as food, prayer, dress, and holiday are carefully outlined alongside a chart of some popular significant holy days celebrated by other faiths. The Religious Accommodation Guideline is a good start on how thorough equity and inclusion policies ought to be. Instead of making blanket statements about "the proactive steps that will facilitate existing committees to represent the diversity of the wider community" from the previously cited regulation 3.3, Appendix A contains much more explicit guidelines. For example, regulation 4.2 states the following:

Members of other faith traditions should not be using the chapel as their own place of prayer. The Catholic school should provide another space for other faith traditions. A meeting room in the school library or an unused classroom would be appropriate for this purpose.

Instead of simply stating that individuals of different faiths or creeds will be accommodated, the regulations in Appendix A provide concrete examples to direct all members of the school community. The Religious Accommodation Guideline from School Board D has the potential to serve as a policy model to other school boards on how to provide guidelines that are more precise and accessible.

4.5 Analysis Conclusions

An overview of statements from four publicly-funded school boards in the Greater Toronto Area reveals that Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy has been successful in prompting Boards of Education to develop their own guidelines towards the promotion of equity and inclusion in school communities. The extent to which these respective institutional policies have been conceptualized, however, is questionable. The gradual omission of the term "anti-racism" and subsequently, the word "race" is unmistakable and can be interpreted in
different ways. One reaction is that as long as the values of anti-racism are maintained, it does not matter if precise terms are slightly modified; however, another perspective might argue that language is powerful and that "discourse is the series of rules that enable and constrain material relations of power. As the rules develop, they have the tendency to privilege some people and disadvantage other" (Goldberg, 2007, p. 206). In a similar vein, the omission of certain words propagates race as an unapproachable topic and an issue that no longer needs addressing, notions which completely undermine the goals of anti-racism. The question then becomes whether or not the values of anti-racist theory can be upheld at the expense of its terminology, to which my analysis would respond that it cannot; to compromise its tenets would simply be yet another testament to the imbalanced power relations that are embedded in our governing structures.

The issue of terminology arises in the majority of documents from these four school boards. Although they all have a designated section for defining key terms, these same terms are used inconsistently throughout their actual policies, which implies an insufficient or superficial understanding of what these initiatives are trying to achieve. Additionally, vague statements or descriptions were found in several documents, which make implementation and enforcement of these initiatives problematic when minimal detail is provided. Agocs (2007) finds that, "The analysis of stakeholders' perspectives reinforces the observation that having a well-crafted policy is not enough: effectiveness depends upon the context of power relations and how they are enacted both in the workplace and in the federal political arena" (p.168).

The results of this policy analysis deliver a similar message. While the existence of these equity documents is significant, they are only the beginning to effective equity practices. These documents acknowledge that opportunities are not equally accessible by our diverse community, but there is much more work required to amend the problematic elements in numerous of these
statements, often found in either the ambiguity or inconsistency of discourse. These issues must first be resolved before researching how the enforcement of equity policies can be carried out. After all, it is one thing to advocate for change, but another to march for it, otherwise we always run the risk of policy becoming symbolic. The important role played by policy is undeniable, but there needs to change beyond words etched in institutional discourses. Lastly, the analysis in this section reveals that the most recent documents issued by both provincial and regional organizations in education still embody the discourse of representation, which is foundational to the scope of this study on how racialized teachers understand and, as will be discussed in following chapters, are shaped by these dominant notions.
Chapter 5
PARTICIPANT PROFILES

5.1 Alex

“When I make references to various sports or various dishes or various cultures and I can bring upon the cultural ethnicity of the students and make the content relative to them by building in a lot of things that they were raised with or that they’ve seen.”

Alex has been teaching at the same high school in School Board A for six years. He was born and raised in Toronto and identifies as being first and foremost Canadian with a heritage that is West Indian and East African; additionally, he identifies as being Muslim. He switched schools several times during his K-12 education due to his family moving and in doing so, experienced being around students of diverse backgrounds as well as schools that had a predominantly white population. In high school, he found that his peers tended to hang around people of a similar race, including himself. He never had a racialized teacher when he was a student and this had never really occurred to him before. He attended a university in Toronto for his undergraduate program. While volunteering at a religious school during the weekends, Alex realized how much he enjoyed teaching and the fulfilment of giving back. He started volunteering at School Board A and then received the opportunity to work as an emergency supply teacher before entering teacher’s college the following year.

Alex found that the preservice program that he completed in Toronto to be very easy work, but that it was valuable in giving him a foundation for a career in education. He currently holds a Position of Responsibility and the student demographics at his current school are mostly South Asian, white, and black. About one quarter of the staff is composed of racialized teachers. One of the primary extracurricular activities that Alex runs at his school is a volunteer club that helps students get involved in fundraising events around the city. He views his personal and professional identities as being more similar in the classroom with his students than with some of his colleagues, who are not as informed about different cultures.
5.2 Arianna

"Sometimes it doesn't even matter what it is that you're going to do in that classroom, that 75 minutes that activity, or whatever. The fact that you have that presence there already speaks volumes."

Arianna is a new teacher who is in her third year of working at a high school in School Board B. She was born in the Philippines and moved to Canada with her family when she was two years old. While she attended elementary and high school in a very culturally diverse neighbourhood, most of her friends growing up were Italian and she remembers using the expression "white-washed" to describe herself during her teenage years. Thinking back to her schooling experiences, Arianna recalls that all of her teachers were white, though this never occurred to her at the time. She never really felt like a minority until she moved to a town outside of Toronto for university where she felt that she stood out since most of her peers were white and belonged to a different socioeconomic status.

Arianna's first career aspiration was to go into journalism, but her teachers and family encouraged her to apply to the concurrent education program. She completed this preservice program at a university in Ontario outside of Toronto and found that it was a lot of “busy work”; additionally, the coursework was too theoretical. While she enjoyed her practicum experiences, it wasn’t until she traveled abroad for her final internship that her love of being in the classroom was reaffirmed. After graduation, she taught internationally for half a year before starting a position the same high school where she did one of her teaching placements. The student demographics at her school are largely Filipino, Caribbean, and South Asian. Her colleagues are mostly Italian, which she says is typical of a Catholic school. She notes that approximately one fifth of the school staff is racialized. Some extracurricular activities that she’s been involved with are peer tutoring and student council. Arianna does not think her personal and professional identities are the same thing, but she does believe that they are related because her personal experiences shape the decisions she has made in her professional life.
5.3 Caitlyn

“I got mad because they don’t know the potential challenges that race would put in somebody’s life, so how are you to speak that you’re the best or that the best should be accepted? Well maybe you’re the best because of the way that society has structured itself.”

Caitlyn is a secondary school teacher who has been working at the same single-sex high school in School Board B for all four years of her career. She was born in Trinidad and moved to Canada with her family when she was five years old. She identifies primarily as being black, but she is also one quarter Chinese. Her parents, who are also teachers, decided to immigrate to give their children a better education. She went to elementary and secondary school in Toronto and remembers her classmates to be a cross-section of society with people from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Throughout her schooling experiences, she noticed always being one of only a few black students in her classes, but she never really felt like a minority until teacher’s college where discussions about race and equity caused her feelings of frustration and anger. Caitlyn's parents played a big role in leading her to teaching as a career because she was always exposed to their jobs. Working with kids in a summer camp helped to reaffirm her interest in education.

Caitlyn completed her undergraduate program as well as preservice training in Toronto, the latter of which she found painted an overly simplistic picture of teaching as a career. The student demographics at her current school are mostly East Asian and white with a teaching staff that is predominantly Italian; while there are a few racialized educators, she is the only black teacher. She is very involved with a variety of extracurricular activities, including the creation of the Afri-Carib club at her school. She completed a Master's in Education through a correspondence program with a Canadian university outside of Ontario. Having married a white man, Caitlyn has reflected on what the role of race will be for their future kids. She believes that her personal and professional identities are very much related because her personality translates into how she teaches and manages her classroom.
5.4 Chloe

“I think that there is something within all visible minorities living in North America where at a certain point in your life you have to contend or confront issues of racism or of yourself and what you've gone through. I believe that the majority of visible minorities will have experienced some form of discrimination and in having those experiences would make you more sensitive.”

Chloe has been an elementary school teacher in School Board A for the past 13 years. She was born in Korea, but immigrated to Canada with her family when she was one year old. She grew up in an inner-city neighbourhood that was home to a lot of immigrant families from all over the world. She remembers being very gregarious as a child and her friends were representative of the diversity around her. Her faith plays a significant role in her life and her friends in this part of her life have usually been Korean as well. Growing up, Chloe's teachers were predominantly white. Near the end of her undergraduate program in Toronto, she was interested in becoming a social worker, but when those plans did not work out, she started working at an afterschool program where she realized her passion for working with kids. She then took a job teaching secondary students at an independent high school; during this time, she applied to a Bachelor of Education program.

Her preservice training was completed at a university in Toronto and she found that it was a “waste of time” because the course material simply wasn’t practical. The practicum, however, was a very powerful and positive experience for Chloe. She has been at her current school for the past seven years and the student demographics are largely Pakistani and Indian with some Vietnamese, Somali, and Jamaican presences too. About half of the staff is made up of racialized teachers, though she finds that cliques do exist amongst her colleagues. Chloe has always had very positive relationships with her students and their parents; she attributes this success to creating a safe environment in her classroom where kids know that their teacher genuinely cares about them. She thinks that her professional identity is consistent with her personal identity because her personality traits do come out in the classroom as a teacher.
5.5 Edwin

"A teacher that has a different way of teaching who’s from a different society where they might value different things more it's good for a kid to be exposed. You don’t want them to just be exposed to one way of doing things."

Edwin is a secondary teacher who has been working for School Board A for the past six years. He was born in Barbados and moved to Canada with his mom and siblings when he was 14 years old. The high school that he attended had a predominantly white student and teacher population, but he didn't really reflect on the potential significance of this until the topics of race and representation came up in teacher's college. After completing a Bachelor of Arts at a university in Toronto, Edwin decided to complete a college diploma specializing in a field unrelated to education. He worked in this industry for about four years before deciding that he wanted to pursue a Bachelor of Education. What helped him realize his passion for teaching was his part-time job as a martial arts instructor where he really enjoyed helping kids learn and felt rewarded every time his students would make progress.

The preservice program at a university in Toronto was a positive experience for Edwin; he met a lot of interesting people and it provided him with a few tips for teaching. Most of all, he enjoyed his practicum placements where he felt like he was able to develop his classroom management skills. His current school is primarily composed of South Asian students with the second largest group being Afro-Caribbean students. While the staff is still mostly white, Edwin thinks that the gap between white and racialized teachers is not as big as it normally is in other schools. Edwin is heavily involved in the athletics programs at his school. Although he does not think his personal and professional identities are the same, he does view them as overlapping because some aspects of his personality can trickle into his role as a teacher, which he feels requires him to be more serious and strict.
Elizabeth has been teaching at a high school in School Board D for her entire 10 year career. She identifies as being Latin American and was born in Toronto. For most of childhood years, she grew up in a single-parent home with her mom. In elementary school, Elizabeth remembers feeling different from her classmates who were predominantly Italian and Portuguese. She attended an arts-focused high school where she found many of her friends were black because they shared common interests in music and fashion. Throughout her schooling experiences, all except two of Elizabeth's teachers were white. She did not become interested in teaching until it was suggested by one of her university professors. Coincidentally, not only was her partner at the time also interested in becoming a teacher, but her partner's father was a veteran teacher, so they both encouraged her to pursue a career in education. She completed her Bachelor of Education in Toronto and found that the two elective courses she took on inclusivity were the most helpful parts of her program as opposed to the theory.

Elizabeth was recently promoted to a position of responsibility and over the past decade, she has witnessed the student population at her school change dramatically from being predominantly white to it now being mostly East Asian and Tamil. Elizabeth is the only Latin American teacher at her school on a staff that is predominantly white. She is the teacher supervisor for an extra-curricular student club that addresses topics of racism and inclusion; for example, this group is responsible for Black History Month and a Multicultural night. Elizabeth brings her interest in aboriginal studies and passion for international travel to her students. She does not think that her personal and professional identities can be separated from one another because for her, teachers cannot help but bring their own life experiences and knowledge to the classroom; the way that they respond to students is a reflection of who they are as individuals.


5.7 Eric

"I think that we’re putting too much emphasis on if a person’s a minority. I think we’re putting too much emphasis on the differences rather than a person’s similarities."

Eric is a new secondary teacher who is in his third year of working at School Board A. He was born in Canada and grew up in Richmond Hill, which is a suburb just north of Toronto. His parents were born in Kenya and he identifies first as being Canadian, but that his ancestry is Indian, and his religion is Islam. The neighbourhood that he grew up in was predominantly white, including his classmates and teachers at school, but he never found it was an issue because he got along well with his peers. He does not recall ever noticing that his teachers were mostly white until the topic of diversity and representation came up in teacher’s college. He completed his undergraduate degree at a university in Toronto; for one of his senior courses, he was placed in a high school and really enjoyed the experience, which led him to pursue his Bachelor of Education at a different institution in the same city.

For Eric, the preservice program wasn't tremendously memorable; while he thinks that some parts of it were useful, he can't pinpoint exactly what skills they provided him with. At his current school, the student demographics are largely East Asian with the second largest population being South Asian; he finds that the students tend to stick to others who are from similar racial backgrounds. While more than half the staff is white, there are a significant number of racialized teachers, which he thinks is quite diverse compared to other schools. Some extracurricular activities that he has been involved with are student council and sports; he was also the teacher supervisor for the first ever cricket team at his school. He is currently completing his Master's in Education on a part-time basis. For the most part he views his personal and professional identities as being the same thing because his character comes out as a teacher in the classroom.
5.8 Ethan

"I don’t want to undermine what I’ve done as a person and kind of promote the fact that I share the same ethnicity as them because it doesn’t mean as much as people would think."

Ethan has been teaching for three years at the same high school in School Board B that he attended as a student. Born in Toronto, he identifies as being Caribbean and he grew up in a single parent home with two siblings. Throughout his education, he noticed that his teachers did not look like him and did at times wonder how things might be different if they did; however, he is unsure if it would have made a difference. Becoming a teacher first crossed his mind during a high school course with a teacher whose methods he really enjoyed. Ethan initially entered teacher’s college with the intent to become an elementary educator, but realized soon after his first practicum that he was better suited for secondary students. Ethan is one of only two participants who completed his teacher education in the United States and he found that, aside from one or two courses on substance and child abuse, the program was not very practical in preparing him for the classroom.

After graduation, Ethan taught for one semester at an elementary school in an affluent neighbourhood where he was the only racialized teacher on staff. The student demographics at his current school are largely black, East Asian, and South Asian with less than 5% being white. Approximately 25% of the staff is made up of racialized teachers. Ethan enjoys teaching students from a variety of backgrounds because he finds that it’s easier to learn when you’re surrounded by individuals who have different experiences and perspectives. He strongly recommends talking to students about how they feel about racialized teachers because he thinks that their perspectives would be valuable for this research topic. Ethan thinks his personal and professional identities are very closely related because he believes he is the same person at school that he is in every other aspect of his life.
5.9 Fred

“A bad teacher’s a bad teacher regardless of what their nationality is or whatever it is. So I guess you can’t assume that. You’d like to say that students would be able to relate to that person in that factor, having that, but no, you can’t assume that,”

Fred has been teaching at the same high school in School Board B for his entire 10 year career. He was born in Toronto to immigrant parents from India and he identifies as being Chinese. He grew up in an area with a high East Asian population but at his elementary school, the students were mainly white whereas in high school, there was a significant racialized student population. Although his teachers were all white, Fred doesn't recall noticing that fact; he explains, "A teacher was just a teacher. My friends were my friends. I didn’t really look at that kind of stuff." After spending a summer during his undergraduate program working as a camp counsellor, Fred began to consider teaching as a career because he enjoyed working with young people. He went on to complete his Bachelor of Education at a university in Ontario outside of the Greater Toronto Area; he found the practicum experiences to be significantly more helpful than the theoretical courses.

At the high school where he currently works, Fred describes the student demographics as being predominantly East Asian with a teaching staff that is mostly white. He is very involved with the athletic program at his school. He enjoys teaching in an environment with people from diverse backgrounds and he thinks that it's important to find different ways to teach because not all students learn the same way. Fred found it interesting how he changed his opinions on this topic of "visible minority" teachers as role models several times during the interview and he was surprised to learn through discussion how complex these widespread notions really are. Fred views his personal and professional identities as being the same; he believes that his core values such as being open-minded are present in who he is in all facets of his life.
5.10 Gabrielle

“You have to always know that your actions speak louder than your words. In the classroom anybody could be looking up to you, you never know. It could be because of your racial background it could be because they’re lacking a female or male role model in their own life and they look up to you as a parent.”

Gabrielle currently works as a high school teacher in School Board B and has been at the same school for nine years. She was born in Canada, grew up in Toronto, and identifies as having a mixed heritage of Guyanese and Chinese. Growing up in a diverse neighbourhood with a high East Asian population, she never felt like her race was an issue. She did, however, notice that her teachers were usually white females, though she doesn't think this racial difference made a difference for her. In her OAC year, Gabrielle took a course that gave her the opportunity to help teach grade nine classes and this helped her to realize how much she loves working with kids. Keeping this passion in mind, she entered her undergraduate program at a university in Toronto and in her second year, she successfully applied to the concurrent teacher education program. While she is qualified to teach both elementary and secondary students, she enjoys working at the high school level because it allows her to explore more advanced topics in her subject areas with the students.

The student population at her current school is predominantly East Asian and South Asian. While the teaching staff is mostly white, Gabrielle has noticed that the younger teachers on staff are more racially and culturally diverse. Her husband is Jamaican and when they had children, Gabrielle found herself reflecting on the role of race and how being biracial would play a role in her kids’ lives. She is currently completing her Master’s in Education and enjoys continuing her education with the possibility of working in administration or at a post-secondary level in the future. Gabrielle thinks that her personal identity is related to her professional identity because a lot of qualities that she needs to have as a teacher are also part of her regular life. She describes the identities as being two different things that blended together make up who she is.
5.11 Iris

“In terms of what they think about me as a teacher, sometimes I feel that they want a Caucasian teacher to teach their child French because French is a European language, right?”

Iris is in her fifth year of teaching at a French Immersion elementary school in School Board C. She was born in Montreal, but grew up in Toronto to immigrant parents, so she is first-generation Canadian. Iris identifies as being Chinese and is fluent in Cantonese; she learned French growing up in a French immersion program in School Board B. Often her colleagues and her students' parents are surprised to find out that she is the French teacher because she is Chinese. In elementary and secondary school, Iris remembers all her teachers being white and she attributes this to the fact that she attended school in the Catholic board. She decided on a career in teaching from a young age because she had French teachers who really inspired her; moreover, French was always the course that she excelled in.

Iris attended teacher's college in Toronto and found that it was a lot of busy work, but it did help her become more organized for the classroom. Out of approximately 60 teacher candidates, she was one of two racialized individuals in her class; although she got along with everyone, she said that this particular experience highlighted feelings of being a minority or not part of the dominant group. In her school, the student demographics are about half East Asian and half South Asian with a very small number of students from other racial backgrounds. The teaching staff is mostly white and female, but about one third are racialized educators. Iris has noticed the last few teachers that her principal has hired have been racialized individuals. She thinks this is a positive thing because it allows for balance and multiculturalism in the school. Iris feels that the students are very comfortable with her because they share similar cultural and racial backgrounds. She is very happy to be at her school and enjoys being able to relate to a lot of her students. Iris views her personal and professional identities as being completely separate because her job and her personal life are two different things.
5.12 Jesse

"I tell them I accept people from all walks of life, so able-bodiness versus someone who has a handicap or someone who is straight versus gay, so you’re welcome in my class, rich or poor, immigrant or Canadian, I make sure. So you know what, it only takes a few seconds or a minute or two to establish that and you’re showing them, this is what I stand for, which I think is important."

Jesse works at School Board B and has taught at the same high school throughout his 10 year career. He was born in the Philippines and immigrated to Canada when he was a teenager. Jesse identifies as being Filipino and Chinese. He attended a public high school in Toronto, which he found less rigorous than his academic experiences in an independent school in the Philippines. His high school classmates were mostly East or South Asian and his teachers were predominantly white. He found the transition to university challenging because of the bigger class sizes and the difficulty of the course materials. Jesse's mom is a teacher and she was the biggest inspiration for him to pursue a career in education. He was also drawn to the profession because he wanted to give back to his community. To prepare for teacher's college, Jesse returned to his old high school to volunteer with his former guidance counsellor and math teacher, who are both also Filipino. Together, they helped create culture-focused organizations such as a Filipino Students and Parents Association.

Jesse completed both his undergraduate studies and teacher education at the same post-secondary institution in Toronto. While he had a lot of fun meeting people at teacher's college, he did not find the program useful and feels as though he could have skipped it altogether and gone straight into teaching. The student demographics at his school are mostly Tamil, Filipino, and black. The teachers are mostly Italian with about 10% of the staff being racialized educators. He is the teacher advisor for extracurricular clubs that encourage students to volunteer and become involved with social justice issues. Jesse views his personal identity as being different from his professional identity because while his sexual orientation is a large part of his identity, he prefers to keep it separate from his career.
5.13 Maria

"I feel like teachers need to reflect student populations not only in terms of race but in terms of class and in terms of sexual identity, in terms of ability."

Maria is in her third year of teaching at an elementary school in School Board A. She was born in Toronto and is a first-generation Canadian who identifies as being South Asian and Middle Eastern. The first elementary school that she attended as a student did not have a very diverse population and it was there that she remembers most feeling discriminated against because of her race. When she moved schools to attend the French Immersion program, she found that her new classmates were from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds. Maria switched schools a few times due to her family relocating or her wanting to try a new program; nevertheless, virtually all of her teachers were white. Maria completed her undergraduate program at a university in Toronto after which she moved to Europe for two years to complete a Master's in Peace and Conflict Studies.

Upon graduation, she immediately began a doctoral program in Toronto; however after two years in the program, she realized that it was not for her. Instead of studying education, Maria longed to be in the classroom and actually teaching, so she got a position teaching junior students in School Board A. She loved the experience and decided to apply for her Bachelor of Education the following year. While the practicum experiences were useful, she didn't find that her teacher education program gave her the practical knowledge that is needed for the classroom. The elementary school that she is currently teaching at has a lot of East Asian and Middle Eastern students and very few white, Christian students. Maria views her personal identity as being more connected to her professional identity in her classroom than it is in the staffroom; she feels as though her students are a lot more comfortable with and interested in who she is outside of school than her colleagues are.
5.14 Matt

“I do see more people of colour but the question I have is I used to be “Oh a person of colour!” but I’m not fooled by that anymore because...to what extent do you have to sell yourself? To what extent do you have to give up a part of your ethnic or cultural identity to move on, to move forward?”

Matt has worked at numerous schools in School Board A, but has been at his current school for eight years. He is of Jamaican descent and was born and raised in Toronto where he completed his K-12 education. He recalls his grade three year as being particularly significant because it was during this time that a lot of students, many of which were Portuguese or black, were being asked to take intelligence tests that would determine what level courses they would be placed in. His parents did not allow him to be assessed because they were worried that it would prevent him from taking university-stream courses. Matt’s classmates were mostly Italian and Greek, but his racial consciousness didn’t really develop until his senior years in high school. His interest in teaching began in high school when he started to think about professions where he could be a role model for others, especially racialized individuals. He completed his preservice training at a university in Toronto and has been a secondary teacher for 15 years. He has his Master’s of Education and is interested in becoming an administrator.

The student demographics at Matt’s current school are black, South Asian, and Middle Eastern. While the teachers there are mostly white, about one fifth of the staff is racialized. He is very involved with equity initiatives at his school and thinks his experiences have given him an increased sensitivity in the classroom in terms of the curriculum and the relationships he tries to build with all of his students. He believes that while virtually all educators have good intentions, most of them teach according to a multicultural model as opposed to an anti-racist one. Matt understands his professional and personal identities to be intertwined because he cannot leave his life at the door when he comes to work and he believes that it is very important to balance the two.
5.15 Michael

“A role model to students as a teacher it means that you have to be able to share and have your kids learn from your own personal experiences. I think for me a big part of me is being to share that I did come from a certain history, a certain background, my journey through the regular Canadian public school system.”

Michael is a secondary teacher with 11 years of experience. He was born in the Philippines, but immigrated to Canada when he was six years old. When he arrived, the public elementary school that he attended had a large Italian population and he remembers having to learn three new languages: English, French, and Italian as part of the school’s heritage program. John remembers making a smooth transition both socially and academically. Before high school, his family moved to an area with a much higher population of East Asian and South Asian families. John found that he tended to hang around Filipino students because their families were acquainted with one another. While he was aware of the fact that most of his teachers were white, he never questioned why there were not any teachers from his racial background.

From a very early age, Michael knew that he wanted to become a teacher because he was inspired by some of his elementary teachers who were really supportive and who he still considers his mentors today. He completed his undergraduate degree in conjunction with his teaching degree at a post-secondary institute in Toronto. He found his concurrent teacher education program to be very challenging and that it helped prepare him for the profession. Upon graduation, he taught at his old high school in School Board D for five years before taking a position in School Board A, where he has remained for the past six years. The student demographics of his current school are mostly East Asian, Middle Eastern, and white. The majority of teachers are white, but there is a substantial population of racialized teachers that he estimates makes up about one quarter of the staff. Michael tries to keep his professional and personal identities separate, but he does admit that they overlap at times because he carries the same philosophies when interacting with people in both his private life and work life.
5.16 Maya

"Her name is Miss Mako and it wasn't so much like she never spoke about anything Asian or anything like that but I think it was more the fact that wow, an Asian person can teach, it's not just all Caucasians."

Maya is an elementary teacher who has worked in School Board A for five years. She was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to Canada with her family when she was six years old. Her K-12 education took place in a very culturally diverse area; however, since Maya was placed in ESL classes, she felt minoritized and tended to have friends who she could racially and linguistically identify with. Her teachers were mostly white, but this never really crossed her mind. Maya was inspired to go into teaching as early as grade three when she had a teacher who really shaped her passion for learning. This interest continued in high school where a senior-level course gave her the opportunity to help teach grade nine classes and she really enjoyed that experience. She completed a concurrent teacher education program in Toronto and found it an enjoyable experience because of the practicum experiences, but did not find it particularly helpful with regards to preparing her for the classroom.

Upon graduation, Maya did supply teaching for a few months before finding a full-time position within the same Board. She is in a unique environment because the students at her current school are virtually all East Asian, specifically Chinese, which is the same background that she identifies with. While the staff is mostly white, about one quarter of them are racialized teachers. She enjoys supervising extracurricular activities that involve sports or arts and crafts because it gives her the chance to get to know students outside of her class. Maya views her personal identity as being very immersed with her professional identity because provided that a teacher is a relatively public figure, it's important for her to try and stay consistent in all aspects of her life.
5.17 Oliver

"As a teacher I know that I’m supposed to be a role model and that all the kids look up to me already whether I’m Asian or not. I try to set that example for them of how they should be in and outside of school."

Oliver is a new educator who is in his third year of teaching in School Board C. He was born in Toronto and identifies as being Chinese. During his K-12 education, he attended two different independent schools of which one was an all boys’ school; however, he completed grade 13 in a public school since it was not offered by the independent school. Growing up, most of Oliver’s friends were East Asian, though he never gave much thought to it because he feels as though it is natural to be drawn to people of a similar racial background. The fact that his teachers were all white never really occurred to Oliver. After undergrad, he pursued another profession for one year and did not find it rewarding. Thinking back to his past experiences working in a day camp, Oliver realized that teaching might be a more suitable career for him. He is one of two participants in this study who went to the United States to complete his preservice training, where he found the courses "boring" and "useless" because it was not practical. On the other hand, he did find his practicum experiences in Ontario valuable; in fact, he currently works at the same elementary school where he completed his practice teaching.

Oliver suspects that the fact that he is a male as well as a "visible minority" helped him to get a job in what has been a very competitive job market for education. The student demographics at this school are mostly East Asian and Middle Eastern. The staff is mostly white, with a handful of racialized teachers. He is very involved with the extracurricular sports teams and enjoys teaching in the same area he grew up in because he says it feels more comfortable. Oliver views his professional and personal identities as being connected, but not the same; while every teacher brings his or her own personal style into the classroom, it is also important to keep a professional separation between one’s personal life and his or her professional career.
5.18 Sabrina

“I feel that being somebody of a visible minority, that I’m sorry, it gives me permission to deal with it head on you know and say, what about this question of identity? What about this question of race?”

Sabrina has been teaching in School Board A for 13 years. She was born in Toronto and grew up in a predominantly white and affluent neighbourhood where she was part of the French Immersion program in the public school system. The fact that she was a minority was never too much of an issue for her as a student because she was very focused on her schoolwork. Her parents are immigrants and she identifies as being Chinese. She attributes her journey towards teaching to her mom, who is also a teacher and who exposed her to the lifestyle of that profession while she was growing up. Since she knew she wanted to pursue teaching at an early age, she completed her undergraduate degree and her Bachelor of Education in a concurrent teacher education program at a university in Ontario, outside of Toronto.

Upon graduation, Sabrina went abroad and taught English for two years before coming back to complete a Master’s in French before taking a job as a French teacher in Toronto. She has worked at two high schools and has been at her current school for three years as an Assistant Curriculum Leader. She describes the student demographics as being extremely diverse with many individuals who are East African, Middle Eastern, and East Asian. The staff is mostly white and about one fifth are racialized teachers. Her husband is white and the fact that their son would be biracial played a role in where they decided to buy a house and settle down; in other words, they wanted to be in a community that would be receptive to their family composition. Sabrina believes that her personal and professional identities are very interwoven because she feels the need to act responsibly in all aspects of her life and in such a way that people will feel comfortable sending their kids to her.
5.19 Samantha

"I get it. I’ve been where they’ve been and they know that and they trust that I know where they’re coming from whereas if someone wasn’t from their culture it’s more difficult for them to explain."

Samantha is a secondary teacher who is in her sixth year of working in School Board D. She was born in the Middle East and moved to Canada with her family when she was 12 years old. She identifies herself as being East Indian because her parents are originally from India. Growing up, she distinctly remembers having two teachers who were racialized females and being very positively influenced by them. Samantha attended elementary and an all girls' secondary school in Toronto and excelled academically; however, she found the material too easy and that it did not adequately prepare her for her undergraduate program at a university in Ontario, outside of Toronto where it was predominantly white. Moving away to this new town caused her to feel like a minority for the first time and while there was a sizeable South Asian population at her school, she didn't really identify with them either.

Upon graduation, Samantha returned to Toronto where she worked for one year and reflected on what she wanted to do next. She chose a career in education because of how much she enjoyed being in high school as a student. She decided to return to the same university as her undergrad to do teacher's college, which she recalls as being a "waste of time" and filled with "busy work". She suggests that they extend the practicum segments because that it where a lot of the learning take place. The high school she currently works at is unique in the sense that the vast majority of both students and teachers are racialized minorities, identifying mostly with South Asian and East Asian backgrounds. Samantha loves the diversity at her school and commends the principal, who is a racialized female, for her efforts to create said environment. Samantha views her professional and personal identities mostly as being the same thing, with a bit of a discrepancy when it comes to being more formal when she's at work.
5.20 Tanya

“Because of the way I look I think I can pass racially in different ways, so sometimes Tamil parents will think I’m brown and West Indian parents or African Canadian parents will kind of see that in my heritage, so then they’ll kind of identify with that so it’s kind of privileged me in many ways.”

Tanya has been teaching for nine years at the same high school in School Board A. She was born in Canada and grew up in Markham, which is a suburb in the Greater Toronto Area. She identifies as being Guyanese and had very positive schooling experiences; as a student, she excelled academically. All of her teachers were white, but she does not think that this affected her at all; in fact, the two teachers that inspired her the most are both white males. Her classmates were generally from diverse backgrounds and so she was surprised when she entered university and noticed immediately that she was the only “visible minority” in many of her classes. An OAC course that gave her the opportunity to work in grade nine classrooms allowed Tanya to envision herself going into the teaching profession. She entered university with teacher’s college in mind and carefully selected her courses so that she would be qualified to apply for the intermediate/senior program. She completed her preservice training at the same institution in Toronto as her undergraduate degree, but found the program extremely meaningless and unhelpful.

The vast majority of students at her current school are South Asian and the teaching staff is predominantly white; there are about 12-15 racialized teachers, but none of which are South Asian. She feels as though she has very positive relationships with her students and their families. Tanya is currently completing her Master’s of Education on a part-time basis because she is a lifelong learner who is passionate about education. She is part of her school’s equity committee and has found it challenging to deal with issues of equity, anti-racism, and promotion amongst her colleagues. Tanya views her personal identity as being the same as her professional identity because she does not see teaching as just a job, but as her life’s purpose.
5.21 Zana

“I still find that it's challenging to know exactly what a multicultural curriculum is because it’s often looked at on a superficial level. So okay we have samosas in for this day, so we’re multicultural.”

Zana has taught at four schools in School Board A and is currently in her third year with them. She was born in England, but her parents are from India so she identifies as being South Asian. Most of her schooling experiences took place in areas that were predominantly white and she noticed being a minority from a young age because of issues such as people having difficulty pronouncing her name or making assumptions based on her skin colour. Her teachers were all white, but she doesn't think it affected her learning in any way. Zana completed her undergraduate education at a university in Ontario outside of Toronto that has a fairly culturally diverse population. However, for her preservice training, Zana attended another university in Ontario that was outside of Toronto where it was not as racially diverse; she remembers sitting in a lecture hall during the first week and noticing that her and a friend were the only two racialized bodies present. The program was okay, but she admits that she learned a lot more on the job teaching than she did as a teacher candidate.

Upon graduating, Zana taught in a Canadian curriculum school abroad for one year before coming back and teaching at an adult continuing education program. The high school that she is currently working at has a student population that is almost all East Asian, specifically Chinese. There is a significant number of East Asian teachers on staff, but the teachers are mostly white with only a handful of different racialized individuals. She has been involved with extracurricular activities such as the debate club and the cricket team. She is currently pursuing her Master's of Education on a part-time basis in Toronto. Zana thinks her personal and professional identities overlap in many ways because of how much time teachers spend preparing for their students.
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Chapter 6
LIVED EXPERIENCES AND NAIVE EXPECTATIONS

In response to the "politics of representation", a term that Martino & Rezai-Rashti (2012) use to refer to the call for minority educators for minority students, my research project explored how racialized teachers understand their work with respect to the expectations that are cast to them as “visible minority” educators. While there exists the prevalent notion that teachers who visibly represent our racially diverse school communities will promote inclusion and the success of racialized students, it is essential to hear the perspectives of these educators if we are to gain a better understanding of how this dominant discourse affects its minoritized subjects. Bascia (1996) discusses how this push for diversification "assumes that there is a positive relationship between teachers’ own race, culture, or life experiences and the quality of their interactions with students, though this relationship is not well-specified or understood" (p.157). The data I have collected will foster a clearer understanding of these relationships.

During individual, semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to share their thoughts and feelings in response to the expectations that they will fulfill certain roles or be responsible for certain duties because of their status as a "visible minority". These perspectives are central to an anti-racist methodology, which acknowledges that institutional and social power relations have emotional and embodied consequences for individuals. "[S]ocial discourses and lived experiences are co-constituted—they intermingle and inhabit one another” (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.7). Four central themes arose in response to my main research question regarding how racialized teachers feel about the expectations that are placed on them: (1) Tensions between acceptance and rejection (2) Being a role model versus role-modeling (3) Different conceptions of race and identity and (4) The multiplicity of identities. Understanding how racialized teachers
receive and process dominant discourses helps inform policy creation and practices regarding equity and inclusion in schools. These individuals provide incredible insight into how governing bodies have influenced the peoples who are made the subjects of a discursive conversation in which their voices are often absent.

6.1 How Racialized Teachers Feel about Racialized Expectations

"Even though I get what they mean, I see what they’re trying to say, I don’t like what they’re trying to say."

"A key assumption that drives a call for teachers of color is that they will have a cultural match with their students" (Achinstein, & Aguirre, 2008, p.1506). A "cultural match" asserts that students who share a racial background with their teacher will have more opportunities for learning in a classroom that is more culturally compatible; however, this theory is founded on the homogenizing belief that all racialized teachers will automatically tap into the resource that is their race and be effective with students of a similar background (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000).

Participants were asked what they thought about the discourse that as racialized teachers, they might be expected to be successful with students with whom they share a "cultural match". While the vast majority of participants admitted, to varying degrees, that it is important to have racialized teachers, many of them also stressed the danger of assuming that these individuals will perform a certain way simply because of their race. Caitlyn shares her thoughts on having a school staff that is reflective of the student population.

I think there needs to be some teachers of the same demographic because I feel like those voices need to be present on the teacher level and the administration level. But I feel like to assume that it’s going to solve all problems, that’s naïve. That teacher could be Tamil, but they identify strictly to be Canadian and they have nothing to do with the Tamil community or anything like that.

Caitlyn's dialogue illustrates the tension that exists between the importance of having racialized bodies and the naivety of always expecting specific behaviours from these individuals. Her
example of a Tamil teacher who identifies as a Canadian highlights how every person is multilayered, unique, and irreducible to skin colour. Participants often attributed a teacher's success to their personality, their ability to teach, and characteristics other than race. As she dismisses the act of generalizing, Sabrina emphasizes the entirety of a teacher.

I don’t think any assumption is necessarily a good thing. I think that a teacher presents a lot of different, a teacher is a package. Take it at a face value and reduce it to a what-does-your-face-look-like question, um...I think it has to be more than that. I think that there are a lot of people who make serious efforts to do a lot of wonderful things and I don’t know that just sticking the black person in front of the black class is a way to start the conversation. I don’t know about that because I think it dehumanizes the person as well.

Generating expectations of someone solely based on their skin colour reduces them to nothing more than race, which Sabrina powerfully points out as dehumanizing. Hall (1996) states that to assume that teachers will perform in a certain manner simply due to their race is “a naive and reductionist form of homogenization of community groups” (cited in Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2012, p.211). Consistent amongst many participants was the desire to be recognized first and foremost as a good teacher, and not as an individual who is a good teacher because of his or her racial background. Matt elaborates on how a good teacher is more than just skin colour and how it encompasses what he refers to as a core set of universal values.

If you’re a good teacher, and a good teacher is a good teacher, good leader, you can be a role model to all kids because you have a certain core set of values. And I think that those core set of values to me is universal...If you have these universal values, humility, caring, equity, justice, you can be a role model to a lot of different students.

Common throughout interviews was the theme of what makes a good teacher and how one's personality should always be valued over someone's skin colour. One participant, Jesse, has even discussed the idea of having teachers that are reflective of the students with his senior classes and he references their responses to demonstrate how superfluous a teacher's race can be. He recalls:

I ask students this, like “Do you think that you get along with a teacher who is of the same background as you?” And they’re like, “Nope, not necessarily.” So students don’t
really care. Just because you have an Asian teacher in front of you doesn’t mean, “Oh I can make a difference to Asian kids,” or “They see me as a role model.” Well no, not necessarily. I think at the end of the day it boils down to personality.

These teachers emphasize the fact that race does not automatically translate into effective instruction or meaningful relationships with students of a similar background. On the other hand, the role of race cannot be disregarded.

While Jesse's students gave him reason to doubt the significance of a teacher's racial background, Gabrielle had the opposite experience; she never thought about the role of teacher race until her students prompted her to reflect on the idea. She recalls:

There was an experience during my teaching career where we have International Night and because I look Filipino, students from the Filipino culture, they asked “Miss could you lead the Filipino Pavilion?” And I said sure, no problem. But they were under the impression that I was Filipino...they just assumed. So, after that I said “Oh, I’m not” and they were like, “But we thought you were one of the Filipino teachers at our school.” They were actually saddened. And from that moment I realized how students kind of look up to teachers from their same cultural backgrounds. It was interesting that experience, I mean they were still fine after, so it was okay. But I can see how students identify with teachers who probably are of the same ethnic background.

Gabrielle's lived experience with her students highlights what Quiocho & Rios (2000) refer to as the potential "power of their presence", which refers to the contributions that could be made by racialized teachers once they are given the opportunity to enter the profession. The choice of wording, however, in emphasizing the "presence" of these individuals, is troublesome because it simplifies the teacher to a physical being, perhaps even a symbol, and these underlying implications continue to misinform debates on equity, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. Nevertheless, it appears that there is a fine balance when it comes to the role of a teacher's race; while it can suggest certain behaviours, it does not ensure them.

Numerous participants expressed having conflicting feelings about wanting to reject the assumptions made about "visible minority" teachers yet at the same time, admitting that
relationships were in fact different with students of the same race. For example, even though Oliver talks about how being a teacher means supporting all students, he also admits to being able to connect better with students who are also Chinese.

Certain ethnicities can relate to students of the same ethnicity better because I relate to the Chinese student a lot better than the other teachers because I understand him, I speak the same language. I can communicate with them. I know how important schoolwork is to Asian parents to, like it’s always got to be piano, science, math. It’s in the genes kind of thing, so I understand that. I was pushed to play piano. I was in Kumon math. I was in tutoring, all that stuff so I understand what he’s going through, what his parents are going through.

Oliver highlights how having similar experiences related to sharing the same cultural values helps him to relate to Chinese students. Race can only suggest shared experiences, but it does not imply them; this distinction is pivotal in understanding the role of racialized teachers because of the fine line that exists between probability and generalization. When the latter occurs, participants feel uncomfortable and defensive. This is demonstrated by another participant, Alex, as he explains how he would react if someone recommended him to work at a school where there were a lot of students who reflected his racial background.

It would kind of take me a bit back because…just because I’m brown or South Asian that I fit into that place more than how I fit here, it doesn’t necessarily. I find it a misnomer or a misconception that just because of your culture you would affiliate better with the students. Any teacher has the possibility to do it; I know I said it’d be helpful for someone of that culture to teach in that school, but when someone else makes that comment it kind of feels like, “Oh you mean that what I’m doing here is not effective? Or just because of your narrow-mindedness or ignorance, you have to make that suggestion?”

In this dialogue, Alex reveals two conflicting views; while he acknowledges the importance of a teacher's culture, the same notion is considered by him to be narrow-minded or ignorant when expressed by someone else. Once again, we return to the idea of there being a thin line between recognizing how race can be relevant versus the expectation that it always will be. This precise distinction speaks to how racialized individuals can feel when they are stereotyped and viewed
only by the colour of their skin. Maria also passionately responds to the same question about how she would react. 

It's not just about racial or cultural identifiers, it's a lot more than that...I'm a package! I'm a woman, I'm a mother, like I'm all these things. I'm not just Pakistani and Palestinian; I'm a lot of other things. So it wouldn't be that I would necessarily be a right fit for that school, so that's what I would say. I would say "Why? On what basis are you telling me that? And the suggestion that I should go teach there just based on that fact is slightly racist."

Several participants talked about how they would feel uncomfortable if someone suggested that they go teach at a school that had a lot of students of a similar racial background without any grounds besides the fact that they would be visibly reflective. Maria, however, is the only participant who explicitly names the racism in this scenario. Viewing the expectation that "visible minority" teachers will be effective with racialized students as a form of democratic racism is integral to understanding the reactions of the participants. Democratic racism occurs when racialized ideas are normalized by dominant groups, masked by claims of benefitting the groups that it ultimately disempowers (Henry, & Tator, 1999; Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007). While more than half of the teachers in this study said that this situation would make them uncomfortable and went on to describe feelings symptomatic of discrimination such as vulnerability, anger, and general uneasiness, only one person named racism. It is possible that this finding supports the idea that race and racism are still very much perceived as taboo issues (Schick, & St. Denis, 2005).

Sabrina is one of these participants who describes a sense of discomfort and although she does not attribute it to racism, she does clarify why the notion of racialized teachers being important in the classroom is not well-received when it comes from other individuals. Sabrina explains, "When something is said that’s race-based, that feels like it’s taking power away from me, then I’m not okay with it." The issue of power relations is an essential component in anti-
racist theory. The power imbalances that exist between races are most important to acknowledge between white and non-white individuals because issues of race affect racialized persons more than those who are white (Waters, 2006). White individuals experience race in a way that benefits them with the privilege and power of being in the dominant group (Dei, 2007; Du Bois, 2004, Schick, 2010). On the other hand, race is often disadvantaging for racialized individuals. Sabrina's feelings portray how these power dynamics are relevant when attempting to explain how racialized individuals respond to the expectations that are placed on them as "visible minority" teachers.

One common expectation of racialized educators is that they will take on extracurricular responsibilities in the school related to issues of race and equity. About half of the participants talked about situations where they were asked or expected to be involved in certain school clubs or events for no reason that they were aware of aside from their race. One participant, Edwin, recalled an instance where a colleague approached him and asked why he wasn't a part of the Black Students Association at his school. In retrospect, Edwin thinks he was very militant in his reaction when he responded to the inquiry by asking, "Why would I be?" followed by the listing off of all the other student activities that he was already responsible for. Edwin feels that because of the way he reacted, no one else has since asked him about any black-related clubs or events. Another participant, Caitlyn, talked about how she feels responsible for Black History Month at her school where she is the only black teacher on staff.

Nobody does Black History Month in this school. They just assume I’m going to do it. It’s like, well if I sat down and didn’t do anything for Black History Month, nothing would get done...In the last couple of years I’ve thought this is my contribution to the school, but the longer I’m here, the more tempted I am not to do anything and see what happens and be like, well nobody stepped up so...I love bringing that contribution to the school but inevitably, I can’t stay here forever and I won’t stay here forever... So what legacy am I leaving? And what can I put into place that it can run without me?
The questions of sustainability and lasting change are raised in Caitlyn's dialogue. Assumptions are often made regarding racialized teachers and their supposed interest in taking responsibility for among school clubs and events that relate to race; however, this "hinders any real examination of the issues by the staff as a whole. In turn, anti-racist and multicultural work is not respected for its transformative potential for all; instead, it is seen as the responsibility of teachers of colour" (Allen, 2011, 179). To suggest that race-related initiatives are any less important without the localized presence of racialized minorities would be to undermine values of diversity. When dominant discourses insist on a teaching force that reflects the student population, it brings us to ask how things would be different if our school communities were still racially and culturally homogenous. While it is understandable how the presence of diverse individuals would serve as a prompt to learn more about one another and how to promote inclusion, what happens when this diversity is absent from our surroundings? Do our motivations for equity disappear?

In Edwin's interview, a hypothetical situation is discussed wherein two candidates are competing for the same position and while they are both equally qualified, one is white and one identifies as a "visible minority". In the following excerpt, Edwin wrestles with the question of whether the student demographics at that specific school will affect the decision of which applicant is ultimately selected.

Edwin: If we're applying that theory, we're talking about representation, then there might be a white kid who could better acquaint with that white teacher.

Interviewer: But given the current teaching force in the GTA, the chances are the rest of the staff is predominantly white. So would you switch your answer when the student population changes, switch to whatever's reflective of them?

Edwin: And you're saying the population of the school is mostly white?

Interviewer: Yes. And once again you have two candidates in front of you, one white, one a minority.
Edwin: I'm going to go with the minority again because...maybe I'm saying the opposite of what I said before, but maybe kids need to be exposed from different parts of the world, different ethnicities. They need that exposure.

Interviewer: Okay. Why do you think that exposure is important?

Edwin: I don't know, we're always talking about being global citizens and it's good to understand how other people think, how they react, what they believe in, that person might be a different religion or whatever, but we can still exist. So it's good to make new friends let's say. A teacher that has a different way of teaching, who's from a different society where they might value different things more, it's good for a kid to be exposed. You don't want them to just be exposed to one way of doing things... Exposure for the kids again to different races, different ethnicities, different religions, different cultures.

This dialogue illustrates the complexity of the politics of representation. The discourse that endorses hiring teachers to "reflect" the student population is flawed; its reasoning suggests that the diversification of the teaching force is contingent on the diversity of the students. Edwin realizes the problematic nature of this theory and describes why he thinks it's important for individuals to learn about persons of all different racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds notwithstanding of whether or not they are immersed in said diversity. This finding confirms a past study that found that racialized teachers do not think that their influence as educators is limited to students who "reflect" them, but extends to white students as well (Allen, 2011). Jesse provides his explanation on why it's important for students to learn about and be exposed to individuals from a variety of backgrounds.

It gives them a glimpse into the world outside by having that world brought to them inside. Do you know what I mean? Because high school is a microcosm of society. So it shows them, it's like these are the types of people that I can possibly deal with in the future.

Schools are social institutions that in many ways, prepare young generations to be responsible citizens of society. Perhaps part of this preparation calls for fostering deeper understandings of difference. Rather than viewing "visible minority" teachers as a prerequisite for equity or anti-
racist values, it is crucial to ask how the domain of education, from curriculum to professional development, is actively working to promote deeper understandings of diversity.

6.2 Role Model versus Role-Modeling

The term "role model" continues to emerge in the exploration of this research topic, not only throughout the existing literature, but in the voices of the participants. Since the role-modeling piece is one of the most commonly provided reasons for the diversification of the teaching force (Carrington, & Skelton, 2003), it is not surprising that this discourse is frequently reproduced by educators such as the ones in this study. First, it is worth examining how some participants understand the term. Zana describes a role model as being, "somebody who demonstrates positive behaviour that's a good influence, but also somebody who is there to guide you, to help you". This description calls to mind Allen's (2000) view of a role model as being a symbol, a nurturer, and an ethical template; Zana's explanation highlights not only the symbolic nature of being a role model, but also the active component of being a guide. This interpretation raises the question of whether a direct interaction between two individuals is necessary for role-modeling to occur. For example, can a person be a role model to someone that they have only seen, but never made contact with? "We cannot rule out the possibly empowering effect of exposure to members of one's own social group who occupy leadership positions" (Pierson, 1995, p.171). Matt echoes the significance of visibility in his interview.

If I’m Chinese, if I’m South Asian, if I’m a White, if I’m an Afghani, if I’m a Tamil person, you see it in the students’ eyes when they see someone who looks like them, it’s like, “I can do that too.” It gives them that added encouragement; it gives them the added sense of empowerment that they can do it...it’s very important...to give students a sense that they can achieve anything, that they see people who look like them in a variety of different positions.
While Matt speaks from the perspective of a teacher, it would be valuable to hear what racialized individuals think about the notion of racialized "role models" from the perspective of a student. One participant, Maya, was asked if she remembers having any racialized teachers while she was growing up in Toronto and she recalls her lived experiences as a racialized student.

Yeah I can name one in grade 5. She still teaches there, apparently. Her name is Miss Mako* and it wasn't so much, like she never spoke about anything Asian or anything like that, but I think it was more the fact that wow, an Asian person can teach, it's not just all Caucasians or whatever the case may be. So I think it was more of a comfort knowing that...

Maya's response corresponds to past studies that have found that students do identify with and are encouraged by teachers of a similar background (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2011; Allen, 2011). Though the power of visibility must be acknowledged, it must also be taken with a grain of salt. Another participant, Ethan, describes the short-lived role of race in the classroom: "It’s enough to break the ice more or less, but not enough to carry you the semester, definitely not." Even in an environment where interaction does occur, this visibility that is emphasized in role models, does not promise any sustainable change. A thorough review of the collected data prompts me to assert that a distinction be made between the act of being a "role model" versus the act of "role-modeling".

The concept of role models has been criticized in the past for its tendency to individualize solutions for problems that are systemic (Pierson, 1995). Instead of asking what structures have produced such imbalanced outcomes for different groups, the discourse of role models endorses the presence of underrepresented individuals to symbolize the possibility of uncommon outcomes without bothering to interrogate the root of these initial discrepancies. Although it is possible for an individual to serve as a role model to someone who they've never interacted with,

* Pseudonym.
this influence is arguably limited to representation. Without a personal exchange between two individuals, the degree to which a role model can influence someone cannot extend past the observation of certain qualities rather than the lived experience of said attributes. Therefore the characteristics which are being portrayed as being admirable are reduced to visible factors such as, but not restricted to, gender, able-bodiedness, occupation, and of course, race. While behaviour is something that can be visible, its nature is difficult to determine when it is only being perceived from afar rather than experienced firsthand. The discourse of racialized teachers being "role models" contributes to the problematic politics of representation, wherein the hiring of minority educators has been criticized for being superficial and tokenistic. “Matching teachers and children by ethnicity is not a sufficient condition for winning respect or getting recognition as a role model” (Bonnett, & Carrington, 2000, p.36). Furthermore, it causes racialized teachers to feel insecure about their work and their accomplishments.

Caitlyn talks about the equity initiative that was part of the admissions process for her preservice training.

Within teachers college it was difficult because I would hear people basically putting down that program, saying, "It’s not fair, it’s not fair. It should be the best to get in." Whatever. It made me angry. It made me insecure because were people looking at me assuming I only got in here because of my race and I’m not good enough? And they’ll never know. I’ll never know. But there’s that comment over me, sitting in this spot.

Many participants rejected the discourse on "role models" because they did not want their race to take the credit for their achievements. For example, Fred shares his thoughts.

It’s good I think, that students have a minority that they can relate to, especially a role model being a teacher that they can relate with, but I don’t want that to be the reason I’m picked for something. I want to be picked because I’m a good teacher. Bottom line.

Achinstein & Aguirre (2008) review past studies that have found that racialized teachers see themselves as role models especially for minority students; however, very few educators in this
study felt the same way. Arianna responds to this notion of racialized teachers for racialized students by saying, "I guess if that were the case, if they were to identify with me more, I'm okay with that but at the same time I'm just here to be a role model for everybody, regardless." Similar to Arianna, most participants were wary about being typecasted as a teacher who serves students from a similar racial background any differently than students who are not. Oliver reiterates this idea that he is first and foremost a teacher for all students irrespective of race. He says, "As a teacher I know that I’m supposed to be a role model and that all the kids look up to me already whether I’m Asian or not. I try to set that example for them of how they should be in and outside of school.” The terms "role model" and "role modeling" are used loosely throughout past studies and the lived experiences of these participants; however, establishing a difference between these two terms can help to foster a deeper understanding of how this concept contributes to the politics of representation among racialized teachers. When being a role model extends past the visible representation of a desirable outcome and involves an active engagement of values, ideas, and personalities, I assert that the act of "role-modeling", which is more encompassing than the state of being a "role model", takes place.

The key distinction between being a role model and role-modeling is that while the former contributes to the politics of representation as well as dominant discourses that reduce the presence of minoritized bodies to superficial symbols of positive change, the latter entails the ongoing formation of connections and interactions that enact positive change. Although participants used these terms interchangeably, a careful examination of their voices with respect to other research in the field form the grounds to assert that being a role model is static whereas role-modeling is dynamic. Chloe's lived experiences illustrate how role-modeling takes place in her work as a teacher.
I want to be where I can be a role model and where I can break down racial barriers – that, for me, is powerful...I believe that the colour of my skin, where I feel that it’s a tool for me is, if I know that there are racial divisions among different groups, I know that people have stereotypes, people have misapprehensions and I believe that how I’m clothed in my skin, I could be that one person who will communicate that, “Oh being a Jamaican I’ve had all these really negative experiences with Koreans, but this one teacher…” Because they’re first going to see the colour of my skin and I’m aware of that and judge me based on that and have certain presuppositions then they’ll get to know me... 10 years down the line, they’ll remember me but they’ll also remember that I was Korean and have a positive association, so if they have an encounter with an Asian that is not positive, they’ll say “It doesn’t apply to everybody because I had a positive experience with Ms. Park*”. That’s actually my hope. I think a lot about that...For me it’s about breaking down those racial stereotypes and presuppositions or assumptions.

For Chloe, not only does role-modeling require actively building positive relationships with her students, but interestingly enough, she strives to create these bonds with students who are from a different racial background. Her lived experience puts a spin on dominant discourses because instead of focusing on the students who are similar to her in race, she aspires to influence individuals from different backgrounds by defying what she thinks are negative stereotypes surrounding her own race. Chloe's interpretation of her race as a "tool" is so powerful because she construes something that is generally viewed as being disadvantageous, a non-white skin colour, and transforms it into a vehicle for improving understandings between groups. This role-modeling, however, would be impossible without the personal contact and positive relationships that she has with her students.

What is important to consider about Chloe's aspirations for her students is whether they'll be able to detach themselves from racial stereotypes or whether she'll simply be excluded from these generalizations. For example, Eric recollects an experience where he was viewed as being an exception to a negative stereotype rather than proof of its falsity.

One of the jobs I had throughout university is I worked in a rec center and it’s in Town A*. Town A right now has become a lot more multicultural, when I was there I was

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* Pseudonym.
+ A northern municipality of the Greater Toronto Area.
visibly a visible minority and with the members over there, a lot of them were a lot more conservative and not used to seeing coloured people and things like that. So we always used to converse about this stuff and they were curious and everything. Once you build that respect amongst one another there, if they want to ask questions, they can ask questions. And they’re just like, “You’re not what we expected” and things like that just because they have these stereotypes in mind. The funny thing was that there was one lady who told me, “You’re an exception to the rule.” And that really shocked me. So she still thinks that all Indian people are a certain way except, “You’re an exception to the rule”... I can’t believe this ignorance actually exists... How come I can’t be representative?

Although it is important to recognize the differences between the social positions of Chloe as a teacher with young students in a school and that of Eric as a teenage employee interacting with customers at a recreational center, the opposing messages of these two situations allows us to reflect on the extent to which stereotypes can be combated by being a positive representative of one's racial background through actions and not just visibility. The act of role-modeling encompasses more than a symbolic presence; it requires the individual to engage with others and foster supportive relationships that as a result, can lead to effective teaching and positive experiences for all students. Michael's lived experience illustrates this combination of representation and active engagement.

A role model to students as a teacher, it means that you have to be able to share and have your kids learn from your own personal experiences. I think for me, a big part of me is being to share that I did come from a certain history, a certain background, my journey through the regular Canadian public school system, I think is meaningful to a lot of kids because for me as a young boy too, I did wonder what was in store for me and I’d look around and a lot of teachers were female, right? So it was a big stretch for me to think about teaching as a possible career. So you know, now I figure I am that male teacher who now might be able to share with kids that it is possible and that sort of thing. So you know, setting up an example that way or using your life as an example. Being able to encourage kids at the level that you remember needing to be encouraged at is what role modeling is.

While Michael refers to a visible aspect of his identity, being his gender, he emphasizes how being able to share his personal experiences with students is part of his role-modeling as a teacher. Moreover, his journey as an immigrant in Canada is an example of a non-visible
characteristic that some students could certainly be able to relate to, but only if that meaningful interaction central to role-modeling occurs through his conscious decision to share that about himself. Michael's reference to the fact that he lacked meaningful exposure to a male teacher in a female-dominated profession when he was growing up raises the question of how racialized teachers, through the act of role-modeling, can fill certain gaps in students’ lives. Caitlyn describes this potential role of a teacher for a student by using an analogy of missing pieces in a puzzle.

There are certain factors that kids can have in their life and I think of it as puzzle pieces: supportive parents, mental capabilities, different things, and one of the pieces would be role models who are of the same nationality. And whatever it takes to be successful, let’s say it takes three out of those seven pieces to be successful, well for a kid who only has 2, if that 1 piece, that role model piece would have made the difference between success and not success then are students out there who are like that. So I thought of it as I was lucky. I didn’t need that puzzle piece because I had other puzzle pieces. And so, I had my three to move on. But for some students who only have two, or only have one and they need that one key piece to move on. So it didn’t impact me growing up because I had supportive parents, because I had a strong personality, because I didn’t have any other issues in my life, that wasn’t a key piece. But if I didn’t have some of those key pieces, then I might’ve needed that. And I thought that’s the reason I’m sitting here while others aren’t. Maybe culturally there’s something going on where they have less puzzle pieces, like absent fathers and things like that.

Though virtually all of the participants acknowledged the importance of racialized bodies in education, only four of them experienced relationships resembling that of a racial match with their teachers while they were growing up. Part of this infrequency, however, can be attributed to the fact that there were hardly any racialized teachers present during the schooling experiences of these participants; all of them remembered having a teaching force that was predominantly, if not entirely, white. So how do we make sense of the fact that despite lacking this racial role-modeling, these individuals all still went on to become successful teachers?

Caitlyn's puzzle analogy serves as an excellent depiction of how success is composed of multiple factors. While many participants did not have a racialized teacher while they were
growing up, it is very likely that they received the support and encouragement that they needed from other areas of their lives such as family and friends. Maria describes a similar attitude.

I had a fairly good schooling experience in School Board A, however I think it would have been even better if I had teachers I could relate to in that regard. Because one thing I couldn't do with teachers is talk to them about, "This is what's happening at home. These are some of the issues that I'm facing" and have them understand. They just didn't get it. And I was a student, like I was a fairly well-balanced person and I was a fairly well-balanced kid in the sense that I could deal independently with my problems and I was able to relate to my friends on that level and I had a fairly stable home and family life. You know, even though my parents are divorced, they've been divorced since I was 5. My mom provided me with that stability. Even my dad's family, like everyone, I just had that stability. But when you have a kid who really feels like they have no one to turn to in their personal life, it's very significant when they feel like they can turn to an educator because we see kids more than they see their families in certain cases. And if you have that personal connection with your students it can mean the difference between a kid who feels like they can succeed and move forward and someone who feels like, "That's it, there's no reason to move forward, I don't care anymore, my life sucks and I don't want to be here".

Maria expresses how there were times when she felt that having a teacher of a similar background would have been beneficial to her, but because she received support from other aspects of her life, she had enough "puzzle pieces" to succeed. Caitlyn and Maria's views suggest that racialized teachers have the potential to make the most impact on students who are lacking encouragement or struggling in other areas of their lives. All the participants in this study were obviously able to overcome any challenges they may have encountered to be where they are today; their voices are only representative of racialized individuals who have succeeded in entering the teaching profession. Past studies have found that students with low self-esteem and trust are often the ones who looked to other individuals who most resembled them in terms of language, race, gender, age, and class (Achinstein, & Aguirre, 2008). Chloe discussed how she never felt the need for a racially similar teacher, but that her friends did. She recalls, "I've heard my own friends who are Korean say, 'If I had a Korean or an Asian teacher, I think it would have made a difference for me'". Although these wishful statements also make assumptions about
racialized teachers, it is interesting to consider how their increased presence and potential role-modeling will shape the upcoming generations. What is important to remember then, is that role-modeling can occur between many different types of people who, through personal contact, find a point of connection somewhere along the way.

Gabrielle highlights how this opportunity is particularly significant in the teaching profession.

If you’re going into this type of career where you’ll be shaping the lives of young people. You have to always know that your actions speak louder than your words. In the classroom, anybody could be looking up to you, you never know. It could be because of your racial background, it could be because they’re lacking a female or male role model in their own life and they look up to you as a parent.

While role-modeling can occur just about anywhere, it is a process that is commonly associated with teaching because, "Parents, as well as the general public, expect educators to teach character and virtues that can help shape and mold young people into contributing members of society" (Lumpkin, 2008, p.47). Teachers are held to high moral standards because the school is viewed as an institution where children should be socialized to become citizens of the world. In education, role-modeling can happen in conjunction with race or independently of it; however, what is essential is a meaningful interaction between individuals who are able to find a common ground, which as Jesse describes, is not limited to race but varies from student to student.

So for example if it’s all-boys school or an all-girls school, they would benefit from having a male role model or a female role model, do you know what I mean? So it doesn’t become about race anymore. It’s about fulfilling the needs of the students in the school.

Provided that the terms "role model" and "role-modeling" will continue to appear throughout the analysis, this section establishes a distinction between the two phrases. While the discourse of being a "role model" hinges solely on physical indicators and propagates the politics of representation, the act of "role-modeling" necessitates meaningful interactions between two
individuals who are able to connect to one another based on both visible and invisible traits. Furthermore, how teachers approach these dynamics in the classroom largely depends on how they have come to understand race in addition to their identities.

6.3 Race & Identity

One of my study's objectives was to examine how racialized teachers understand the role of their race in their classroom practices and school relationships. First it is worth exploring how they understood the word, "race", in of itself. Most participants were challenged by this question and had a difficult time articulating a definition for this term. While some of them viewed race as being composed of multiple things such as culture, religion, and language, others said that it was simply your skin colour. Matt, however, was one of the few participants who explicitly recognized race as a social construction, assigned by dominant groups, and most often associated with physical traits (Henry et al., 2005; Satzewich, 2011; Wotherspoon, 2009).

Race is hard...it’s a social construction in a way. Like we construct, society turns people white, black, you know, brown. It’s something that’s socially constructed by society. And depending on...it’s hard because it’s a variable that is socially constructed, that is determined by society often based on socially constructed terms. Actually, it’s created by the dominant group I would say, white Anglo-Saxon males, that’s often based on one’s physical character traits, right? And it’s actually very limiting because certain races are attributed with certain characteristics. So something that’s socially constructed. By who? I would say by the dominant group, white males and it’s often based on physical characteristics like your eyes, your hair, your nose, your lips, what you look like. But it’s socially constructed and...it can be limiting, meaning that you can internalize things like oh I’m black, must mean I play basketball, I’m probably not good at math or I’m not good at science or it can be empowering: Africa, cradle of civilization, many of the great scientific inventions came from Africa, so it depends on how you view it.

Matt provides a thorough explanation of how race has been socially fabricated by dominant groups and though he admits that it can be limiting, he expressively advocates how it can also be empowering depending on how the individual chooses to understand it. In a similar vein, Sabrina
views it as the individual's responsibility to ultimately decide how he or she wants to "carry" personal attributes.

I think it’s for us to sort of define how we want to carry what we are, how we want to carry being a woman, how we want to carry being a person of visible minority, how do we want to carry the qualifications that we have and I think the onus is on me, like I’m going to personalize it. The onus is on me to do it with dignity, you know, and to model that for any kid of whatever background all the time. It’s like, okay this is who I am, this is what I look like, what does that mean to you and how can we define that according to what our assumptions are collectively?

While Matt and Sabrina both recognize how the salience of race can be limiting for racialized individuals, they believe that it is nonetheless possible to take control of how they are understood by others starting with how they understand themselves. Sarup (1996) asserts that, “Identities are not free-floating; they are limited by borders and boundaries” (p.3). Race can be viewed as one of these borders or boundaries that affect identity, but since race is a mobile construct, these borders and boundaries can also shift, similar to the ongoing process of identity. These dialogues quickly made it evident that individual approaches to race are intricately bound up with personal perceptions of identity. “In qualitative research on ‘race’ and ethnicity, questions of identity—how people talk about themselves as ‘I’—are central to the examination of the ways in which racial and ethnic categories are produced and have meaning in individual lives” (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.110).

How teachers interpreted the roles of race in their profession often reflects aspects of their own identities. To start, Brayboy et al. (2007) point out that "Identity has become a catchall term to discuss how individuals make sense of who they are in relation to other individuals, communities, and society" (p. 179). For example, research in the past has found time and time again that one of the most commonly experienced situations by racialized teachers in the classroom is the "origins question", which students pose questions such as "What are you?" and "Where are you from?" (Achinstein, & Aguirre, 2008; Dlamini, 2002). As mentioned at the
beginning of this dissertation, it was in fact, questions such as these that prompted my own reflection of this topic and ultimately, of my own identity. All participants revealed that students do usually ask about their origins and Alex provides an example of how these conversations take place for him.

I would say Canadian, then if the students asked me again I would say East African. If they say "Where?" I’d say Tanzania and like, “But no Sir, aren’t you Indian?” “Yeah, but that was my great-grandparents where they came from Gujarati region in India.” And “So, oh you speak Hindi?” Like “No, I speak Katchi,” and I explain that’s a local dialect within Gujarati region which is also a dialect that was passed over to East Africa. And they’re like, “Oh,” and I’m like “Yeah.” “So you’re African, sir?” “Yeah, I guess you could say that.” “You’re Indian as well?” “Yeah, you could say that as well. So that’s how I describe myself.

This line of questioning illustrates what Achinstein & Aguirre (2008) found to be motivated by curiosity or confusion about their teachers’ sociocultural identifications; "They felt that students were trying to place them by connecting them to family roots, place of origin, generation, language affiliation, or parents’ backgrounds" (p.1516). Consistent with my study, participants all described feeling very comfortable being at the receiving end of these questions and do not mind when students want to know more about their racial identities. In fact, many of them, such as Caitlyn, respond to students by inviting them to guess the answers to their questions.

No I let them guess. I have a little fun with it. I’ve gotten a couple of random things, usually they say white, like black and white. They never get it...They guess, they guess, and when they hear...“Oh!” And there’s that reaction and it’s just kind of fun. If they want to guess, they can guess.

Another participant, Oliver, talked about how he reacts when students ask him about his age. He says, "They ask the wrong question. They have to ask how young am I. And then I go, 'Pretty young!'". The good-natured manner in which these educators receive student inquiries about their identities illustrates the personal nature of teaching as well as the role of personality. A few participants pointed out that they know racialized teachers who aren't able to connect to students,
minority or not, and that this is attributed to personality differences; in other words, as Ethan discusses, race only goes so far.

If you took a poll and asked students, “Are you connecting with Mr. Cooper because he’s black?” Maybe some of them would say yes, but if you asked, “Are you connecting with Mr. Cooper because he reaches you on a different level or because you understand each other or because of personality?” Then that might be a different question. I think it might be a little easier because the kids might give you...I shouldn’t say easier time, but might initially look at you a little differently, but I think once you get into the classroom and they see what you represent, then things change. [Race] only goes so far...I think my ethnicity has played a role a little bit in my success because I have been able to speak to kids or maybe they’ve felt more comfortable around me, but I still think my personality has played a bigger role. I don’t want to undermine what I’ve done as a person and kind of promote the fact that I share the same ethnicity as them because it doesn’t mean as much as people would think.

Race is only one facet of an individual's identity and not its defining feature; mistaking it for the latter is a widespread notion propagated by problematic elements of dominant discourses. It is essentialist thinking to assume that racialized educators will be conscious and informed about race (Gunaratnam, 2003). The reality is that the role of race in a teacher's classroom practices and school relationships is limited to how, and if, that individual teacher chooses to acknowledge its salience. While educators cannot leave their race at the classroom door, neither can they be expected to make it central to their identities.

When asked to describe their personal identities, several teachers did not even make mention of their race, demonstrating how decentralized it is in their lives even in the context of an interview about their experiences as racialized educators. Instead, they defined themselves using other elements of their lives such as their familial roles and personality traits. Tanya said, "I guess one thing I could say is that I’m really hard-working. I’m very ambitious. I’m a perfectionist. I’m an overachiever." Fred's initial reaction was also to describe his characteristics: "I’d say I’m very open-minded...I’m very simple too. I don’t try to overcomplicate things. If I find something works, I’m going to go with it. If I need to take charge in something I will. If I
need to take a step back, I will too, like I’m very flexible with that, in terms of my teaching too."
The multiplicity of identities that make up an individual and the way that these identities intersect with one another must be recognized (Brayboy et al., 2007).

Gabrielle immediately thought about the different roles that she plays in her life: "I think of myself as a mother, a daughter, a sister, teacher, friend, teacher advisor. I guess there’s a whole bunch of things that make up my identity." The question of identity is difficult due to its complex and multi-faceted nature, varying from but not restricted to "racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural in-group social affiliation or the social group identification that others assign to us" (Allen, 2011, p.157). Perhaps the sheer complexity of our beings is the reason why dominant discourses that define us by only one feature inevitably become problematic. It takes more than one factor, element, trait, or role to compose a person. The fact that some participants did not even make mention of race in their explanations of identity or teaching practices reveals how presumptuous the notion of racialized teachers as cultural ambassadors or diversity experts can be. For example, Arianna talks about how her personality and upbringing in the Canadian school system has, first and foremost, shaped her classroom practices.

As a teacher, I have set up my classroom according to my personality and how I believe students like to learn. I would say that the environment is pretty laid back; students are allowed to eat, listen to music, talk to their friends...Although I identify myself as Filipino, when I'm a teacher, I'm a teacher. I'm not a "Filipino teacher". I practice my profession based on how I've been taught to teach through and in a Western educational system.

Arianna goes so far as to make a firm distinction between her race and her teacher identity, which demonstrates a certain degree of resistance to the politics of representation. Thiessen (1996), on the other hand, believes, "This separation of personal and professional lives may be psychologically and politically desirable, but difficult to achieve, especially where their experiences as racial minority immigrants helps them to relate to their students" (p.144). These
experiences can include those related to being an immigrant as well as being racialized. While it is understandable why some individuals would want to emphasize the difference between these two identities, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge our status as persons who are subject to racialization. Otherwise, it is easy to remain complicit in the systemic racism that is encapsulated in surrounding structures and institutions (Brayboy et al., 2007). Developing an awareness of the different forces at work surrounding the role of race is an arduous and complex task that can occur in a multitude of ways, though it has been contested that teacher education programs are the most suitable points of departure for these discussions (Au, & Blake, 2003; Hernandez-Sheets, 2000).

While some participants were uncertain about the role of their racial identities in their classroom practices, others felt confident about exactly how their identities factored into their teaching. Maria described how her identity is relevant in her role as a teacher.

My identity, I don't hide it from my students, they know who I am. They know about my background and a lot of them are happy about that. I'm able to channel...my religion isn't a huge part of my background, it's part of my cultural identity, I identify culturally as being Muslim, but I'm not a religious person. But having that and having students be able to identify with that has been fairly huge in my classroom. For example I have as student who just decided to take off the hijab. She came to the school in grade seven and she was wearing it the whole time and just last week she took it off. So there were students, "Oh wow", asking questions, so it was good for me to be able to say. I remember one voice saying to her, "But aren't you forced to wear it? Don't you have to wear it?" And me being able to intervene being like, "Well I'm Muslim and I chose not to wear it and it's a choice", so being able to have that conversation and in fact two years before, another female student of mine also took off the veil, so it's something that happens and that enters into the classroom quite a bit. I remember coming back and one of my new students who I hadn't taught previously being really excited that I was Lebanese because she was Lebanese and there's not that many Lebanese students in the school. So just having that and not hiding it, not downplaying it and just being very forward about my identity I think has allowed me to create very strong bonds with my students and has made it an environment where they feel comfortable talking about who they are.

Maria paints a clear picture of a teacher who is successful in using not only her racial identity, but her identities as a Muslim and as a female, to empathize with students and relate through
shared experiences, such as making the decision to not wear the hijab. Not only does her dialogue demonstrate the ways in which teacher-student interactions can highlight various elements of one's personal identity, but her feelings of excitement and gratification in response to making these connections cannot be overlooked. There is irrefutable sense of community that begins to form when individuals feel safe enough to share aspects of their social identities. Iris, who teaches at a school that is predominantly reflective of her race, reflected on her current job. "I haven’t experienced being at another school, so I don’t know how it is to be at a school with students being mostly Western. So right now, because I’m at a school that’s mostly minority, I feel like I’m fitting in too." Oliver echoes these sentiments of wanting to be in an environment that is familiar when he said, "You feel different sometimes when you’re completely surrounded by a different atmosphere than the one you grew up with." How does the role of race contribute to a sense of belonging in schools for both student and teacher? In an opposite situation is Michael, who expresses what it is like to be at school where there are virtually no students who share his racial background.

It sort of makes me out of touch with my culture a little bit, just to sort of know where Filipino kids are these days and what their generation is going through. I feel a little bit more isolated in this system just because I don't see anyone culturally the same in the environment with me so I end up not, I almost feel like I don't have a cultural background when there aren’t people around me to sort of highlight that.

The feelings of Maria, Iris, and Michael contribute to the idea that teachers, in addition to students, can benefit from having aspects of their racial identities made relevant in the school environment. Returning to earlier definitions of identity, its perpetually changing state must be also be examined.

Identities are "constructs that are forever in the process of transformation and change. Thus, people occupy different subject positions at different times in their lives and for different
purposes" (Dlamini, 2002, p.61). The fluid nature of identity means that it is constantly taking on new shapes and versions in response to all aspects of its surroundings. For example, while Maria feels that her personal identity is very closely tied to her professional identity when she is with her students, the two become disconnected when she is with her colleagues.

My identity in the classroom is one thing, but my identity amongst colleagues is something different. So at my school and I don't think it's the case at all schools, at my school my personal identity is not really, certain aspects of it are very downplayed and other colleagues are not comfortable with being so forward about their identities. I remember in one instance, one of my colleagues, we were talking about Remembrance Day ceremony. I just brought up the fact that remembering the First and Second World War for students had no meaning because their ancestors didn't experience it in the same way that if you were a white Canadian or even in certain cases a black Canadian or an Aboriginal Canadian...and that maybe we need to think about being sensitive towards the fact that a lot of these students are coming from backgrounds where their parents were escaping war or their parents were involved in some way in a conflict. You know, we need to be sensitive to that fact and we need to bring that forward and highlight that and allow them to reflect on that sort of experience. And her being really sort of "Yes, but we're Canadian and this is our history" and blah blah blah and I was just really taken aback because I didn't think she would react that way... So it's very interesting to see how my professional identity is almost forced to be separate from my personal identity in a lot of ways by different colleagues.

The way that Maria feels with her identity being "downplayed" when she is with her colleagues as opposed to when she is with her students depicts the shifting nature of her identity when any one circumstance of a situation changes. For example, when Samantha talked about how her racial identity was never highlighted as she was growing up; however, when she moved away to attend University B outside of Toronto, her environment changed and this caused her to reflect on her race.

It was very monoculture especially growing up in Toronto, in the GTA, you know it kind of hits you. You get on the bus and you’re like, “Why is everyone staring at me?” And then you realize, right? So that was different. It’s also very monoculture at this school and it was the first real time I had ever felt a minority.

Our identities are in constant interaction with our environment as well as with one another. Maria's professional identity at school can be seen as being sub-divided into her teacher identity
and her identity as a colleague; however, it is important to understand that these identities do not appear and disappear in varying scenarios so much as they fluctuate. "Within an individual’s multiple identities, those identities that come to the fore are often strategic, based on the spaces in which the identities are negotiated and enacted and the demands coming from these contexts" (Brayboy et al., 2007, p.180). It is not that who Maria is as a teacher and person in the classroom becomes absent in the staffroom, rather these personal elements of herself grow quiet and are softened by the presence of individuals who are not as receptive to certain parts of her identity. On the other hand, while her colleagues do not engage her racial identity, they do call to accent her identity as a mother. Maria reflects:

The aspects of my identity that are sort of enhanced or highlighted, interestingly enough being an elementary school teacher, are the fact that I'm a mom. So everyone is always interested in pictures of our baby and you know, so and so had a baby, let's have a baby shower for them and so motherhood is something that is very celebrated and that's actually the only aspect of my identity that's interacted with, so that's really interesting.

The fact that only certain parts of her identity are accented by her colleagues is explained by a principle of shared experiences. People are naturally comfortable with what is familiar; if they have undergone similar life events or challenges, then it will be easy for them to be understanding and accepting of this part of another person’s life. On the other hand, when someone's life experiences are unknown to another individual, it is not only difficult to relate, but it can even be a source of discomfort to interact with these unfamiliar matters. The topic of race and discrimination is a prime example of these dynamics.

Several participants discussed experiences of racism in their work as teachers and these instances are often attributed to an interaction of identities wherein the perpetrator lacks certain experiences and hence understandings of these issues. Samantha recalled an experience in the staffroom where the World Religions teacher approached her to come do a presentation on
Hinduism. She explained, "Just because I’m Indian doesn’t mean I’m Hindu!" Her colleague did not take the time to ask about her knowledge of Hinduism before making the assumption that just because of her race, meaning that she is Indian, that she would also belong to a certain religious group. A similar situation happened to Zana when discriminatory comments were made to her as a student shortly after 9/11, despite the fact that she is not Muslim, but was assumed to be because of the colour of her skin. It is important to acknowledge that, "Not only does racism admit degrees of kind and motivation....but it is also admits of intentional or unintentional actions or results of them" (Corlett, 2003, p.76). Racism can occur as a result of an individual's lack of knowledge or understanding about certain matters, which connects to the principle of shared experiences. It is possible that individuals unconsciously engage in racism due to a lack experience with persons from a diversity of backgrounds or even pre-existing prejudices about different racial groups; while this theory never serves to justify racism, it does deconstruct widespread notions of racism as always being intentional, hate-filled acts of discrimination and segregation. Essed (2007) discusses the everyday and adaptive nature of racism; it can occur in different forms and to various degrees. Ethan, for example, taught in an affluent neighbourhood at a school where there were hardly any racialized teachers on staff and he described a situation that occurred one day.

So I’m in the staff room and I’m typing up some work like a lesson plan and one of the parents walks in because I think they were catering the event and I was in street clothes and he said, “Oh sorry Sir, you have to leave.” And I'm like, “Why?” And basically he said, “This is just for teachers. You’re not supposed to be in here.” And I was like, “Okay, I work here” and he's like, “Sorry you have to leave.” It was a parent so the principal came in, I was just packing up my stuff and the principal came in and said, “Where are you going?” I’m like, “Oh somebody wants me to leave because they said I’m not supposed to be in here.” So the principal spoke to him and said, “This is one of the teachers. You should know that and he can stay.” That was the only actual experience that I had that kind of made me feel a little uncomfortable.
While it cannot be certain what the parent's motivations were for asking Ethan to leave the room, the reaction of the principal in stating that Ethan is in fact a teacher at the school and that he can stay, strongly suggests that the parent, in seeing a young, black male in the staffroom of an elementary school, quickly came to the racist conclusion that Ethan could not belong there. The parent's failure to consider the possibility that Ethan was a teacher at the school demonstrates how pre-existing prejudices and lack of exposure to diversity can be the root of racism. Discomfort was commonly cited by participants as a response to comments that contained racist undertones. Sabrina talked about how she would react if someone told her she'd be a great teacher at a school with a large Chinese student population.

I don’t think I would be comfortable with that. On the one hand, this *(gestures to her face)* is clearly part of my identity. On the other hand, we’re all just so much more than what you wear on your face. I think that when it’s about this *(gestures to her face)* more than it’s about anything else, then I’m not comfortable with it.

Sabrina's response highlights once again how race is merely one facet of identity as well as a sense of discomfort at being told otherwise. Without a commitment to developing deeper understandings about equity and diversity, dominant discourses that endorse the notion of racialized teachers for minority students are embedded with reductionist and racist implications. Not only can racist ideas be unintentional, but they are often the result of well-meaning, however misinformed, intentions such as the widespread belief that there should be teachers that visibly reflect student diversity. Ethan talked about some of his collegial interactions.

Ethan: A lot of my colleagues, I don’t know if they just say this for the sake of saying it, but a lot of them will say, “Oh it’s good that you’re here. It’s good that the kids get to see this.”...like that means something to them, or they think that. But I always say, “A shitty teacher is a shitty teacher.” If I was a shitty teacher, would you still say that? And would it mean as much to the kids?

Interviewer: Out of curiosity, are the colleagues that say that to you white?

Ethan: Obviously.
The comments made by Ethan's colleagues are evidence of how dominant discourses have informed public perspectives of what our teacher workforce should look like. They unknowingly tell him that "it's good that he's here" without considering the racist implications of their comments. In response, Ethan challenges these assumptions by presenting the possibility of him being an ineffective teacher, perhaps in hopes that it will prompt his colleagues to consider the limitations of a teacher's racial identity.

Also noteworthy is Ethan's choice of the word "obviously" as a reply to a clarifying question about the race of his colleagues, which implies a correlation between one's racial identity and individual consciousness about race. While it is possible that being a racialized individual increases the likelihood that a person will be sensitive to racism, this cannot be presumed. Similar to earlier discussions about the multiplicity of identities, simply being racialized does not involuntarily equate to an awareness of race, racism, or racialization. The role of race varies amongst the identities of racialized individuals and depends largely on their individual experiences. For some participants who grew up in predominantly white communities where they did not experience any discrimination, the theme of being "white-washed" came up during their individual interviews. For example, Eric talks about his experiences as a non-white French teacher.

People always ask me how I learned French and I’ll tell them I went to French Immersion. And they’re like, "Oh okay, makes sense". But there is this...even for one of my courses, I just asked my students, "Before you heard me speak, before you heard me say anything, before you heard anything about me, what was your perception?" So they said stuff like, "Oh you’ll have an Indian accent, you’ll smell because you’re Indian," and whatever... and then I asked, “So what do you think now?” And they’re just like, “You’re like us.” And the funniest thing that I hear is, “You’re super white-washed” and I don’t understand what that means, but that in of itself is a whole different story. And it’s just like, I grew up here and I’ve been in Canada for longer than all the kids here have, so it’s just interesting seeing that though... I don’t understand the meaning behind being “white-washed”. That’s what it is, like is this a compliment? Is this an insult?
Eric's dialogue with his students could be viewed as an example of how exposure to persons from different backgrounds can inform individual understandings about race. Students admitted that after getting to know him, they realized that the preconceived notions they had about him at the beginning of the school year were untrue. Dlamini (2002) talks about the routine of having students automatically assign an identity to her that has little to do with the one that she has presented to them and more to do with visible markers that are not empowering; she finds that colour is generally perceived to be a "category of disadvantage" (Khayatt, 1994 cited in Dlamini, 2002, p.63). Provided that students thought Eric would smell or have an accent, his story confirms this perceived disadvantaging role of race. Furthermore, his students admit that these perceptions have changed and that now they see him as being "white-washed", a term which he is critical of.

The fact that Eric's students openly tell him that they now see him as being "like them" indicates that the intention is for this comment to be complimentary; however, being "white-washed" has deep-seeded implications for one's racial identity. Not only does it depict a power imbalance between whiteness and non-whiteness, but it insinuates a loss of, or a disconnect from one's original racial identity. In the past, racialized teachers have had negative experiences with racialized students accusing them of “acting white” or “talking white” (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2011, p.152). These allegations carry this notion of forfeiting elements of one's original identity to integrate into the dominant society. Also noteworthy is that these accusatory comments are often made by individuals who are also racialized minorities, and who perhaps feel as though "white-washed” individuals have, to varying degrees, rejected the racial identity that they share. In the words of Dei, Karumanchery, and Karumanchery-Luik (2004), the racially oppressed “go along to get along.” (p. 90). Perhaps the willingness of these individuals to give up certain
aspects of their racial identities or perhaps to accept dominant ideas about race stems from an underlying desire to be accepted and included by dominant groups. These ideas about acting white are complex and call to mind the multifaceted and shifting nature of our identities. Behaviours that can give someone reason to believe that a racialized individual is “white-washed” are grounded in essentialist notions about dominant culture and merit further examination. Arianna also talked about her personal experiences with this concept of being "white-washed".

Well I got that ["white-washed"] a lot in high school and it was funny because growing up, in high school, I kind of knew about that and that's how I identified myself. And it was like, I think I was almost proud of that. And it wasn't actually until I went to University A where I actually started to appreciate multiculturalism and want to know about where I come from because even growing up, I mean my parents are both Filipino, but we're pretty Canadian. We do some things that are Filipino, like we eat some Filipino food, but the way we were raised was very assimilated into Canadian culture. So it wasn't until I actually left and went to University A and was in a smaller community where I actually had to learn more about where I came from... I think if you asked me when I was in high school, it would be somebody that associates with white people and did not listen to hip hop (laughs). What else? I don't know. Like because they always say there are typical Filipino people that just associate with Filipino people and listen to hip hop and have that kind of urban look. And I never had that. I listened to all sorts of music.

The way in which Arianna's attitude toward the notion of being "white-washed" changed while she was growing up can be attributed to the theory that our identities are always fluctuating and responding to its surroundings; we are always undergoing the process of "becoming". Although being "white-washed" was something Arianna used to take pride in, perhaps due to a positive perception of assimilation as being comfortably settled into a new country, she became critical of how that influenced her racial identity and culture when she moved to study at University A, which is located outside of Toronto. Once again, the shifting nature of identity is accentuated by the fact that Arianna's change in environment caused her to rethink her identification in addition to the role of race in her identity as a Filipino-Canadian. By changing environments and engaging
in new interactions, it is possible that Arianna realized that by being "white-washed", she had forgotten to learn more about her family's racial and cultural heritage. This situation calls to mind the assimilationist model of multiculturalism wherein which immigrants are expected to give up their cultural identity and conform to the dominant culture (Henry, & Tator, 1999). For example, when Maya was asked to describe her personal identity, she jokingly made reference to the following.

  Maya: I would say that I'm a "jook-sing" (laughs), no...

  Interviewer: You're a...?

  Maya: Have you ever heard of the term "jook-sing"?

  Interviewer: No I haven't.

  Maya: Okay..."jook-sings" are basically people who are born in Hong Kong, but they move here and they don't really retain that Asian identity.

A few other participants also referred to terminology such as "bananas" and "coconuts", which are popular culture metaphors used to describe being a certain colour on the outside, but "white" on the inside, meaning they are non-white individuals who primarily subscribe to dominant cultural and social norms. Alongside this ideology of multiculturalism is the discourse of colourblindness wherein people claim that they do not see different races in an attempt to advocate for the equality of all persons and the unimportance of race (Banks, 2001; Henry et al., 2005; Satzewich, 2011). What colourblindness really is, is the "inability or unwillingness to see or talk about race and its implications" (Brayboy et al., 2007, p.174). Nevertheless, it is still a widespread attitude that is often misunderstood alongside multiculturalism and assertions that we should embrace diversity by rendering it invisible or only highlighting it at specific times and in superficial ways. Chloe used this term to describe her experiences growing up. She said, "I think I was just colour-blind at a young age because I was just exposed to multiculturalism. I knew that
I was different, you know, all my friends were different but you just kind of forget. They're my friends and it is what it is." As a racialized individual, I can relate to Chloe's experiences in the sense that having grown up in a racially diverse environment where I did not experience any discrimination, race just didn't seem relevant. While I knew that our skin colours were different, its significance never seemed to go beyond that physical trait. How might an earlier understanding of its salience changed my journey as a racialized individual? Does recognizing the salience of race inform the work of racialized teachers?

When asked about the role of race in his classroom, Michael said, "I think things have improved to the point where teachers now, even I don't think I evaluate my students. I don't look at their skin colour as maybe people used to". Due to the overrepresentation of certain racial groups in special education or streams that limit opportunities for higher education, many teachers are under the impression that a colour-blind approach is the answer to combating racism in education (Brayboy et al., 2007). This ideology is probably what Michael meant by presenting his colour-blind attitude as an improvement from the past; however, colour-blindness in this sense is problematic because the refusal to acknowledge the role of race in students' lives can contribute to their disconnect from school and make education less relevant from their points of view. While past studies have found that “colourblindness” is common of dominant teachers, it is an approach that can nevertheless be adopted by racialized teachers as well due to misunderstandings about what the role of race should or should not be when working with diverse students. On the other hand, Sabrina reflects on the role of race in her classroom and feels as though her status as a "visible minority" has allowed her to broach race-related topics in the classroom.

I think the personal identity question, like in terms of personal identity in the classroom, it’s interesting because I sometimes do wonder... if it does, you know, give me
permission to approach subjects that I’m not sure if they might be delicate for other people who are not visible minorities. In terms of being able to address questions of social justice and things like that. Like a recent thing we did in grade 10 extended French was we were looking at different media and I had this group that we did a unit on "Occupation Double" so I showed them the photographs, the headshots of all the contestants on Occupation Double and I intentionally asked them what’s the physical profile of a contestant? What do you have to look like to be on Occupation Double? And one of the kids right away said, “They’re all white”. And another kid said, "Yeah, except for one, she looks kind of ‘Arab-ish’”. And that’s just the stuff people say to goof off. I don’t know and sometimes I wonder if kids would still feel that comfortable, approaching the race question if I were white. I don’t know. I have no idea... I do wonder, yeah. And I think that, I know, I feel that being somebody of...of a visible minority, that I’m sorry, it gives me permission to deal with it head on, you know and say, "What about this question of identity? What about this question of race"? ...I have wondered if kids would blurt it out as easily. I don’t know, but for never having been anyone else but myself in the classroom, I can’t say. I wonder if I weren’t here as a person, of visible minority, if (A) I would have guided their conversation to that in the first place ’cause I do. I do guide their conversations towards that. I mean I made a question sheet that said what’s the physical profile required, but it’s funny I put all these other stuff like age, level of beauty, haircut, but I did not put race; I did not put it as a leading point, but they just brought it up.

Sabrina's reflection on the role of her race in the classroom calls to mind dominant discourses that expect racialized teachers to deal with race-related issues in the classroom. She points out that if her racialized body does play a role, it does so by making students feel more comfortable talking about these topics and by giving her license to usher discussions in that direction. Sabrina describes this connection between her racial identity and her teacher identity as a potential explanation for certain classroom behaviours rather than a concrete fact. It is possible that her hesitation in stating this correlation as an obvious truth is due to a resistance to the generalizing tendencies of this dominant discourse. It is not fair to assume that all racialized teachers view the role of race the same way. Fred, for example, has a different experience from Sabrina. When asked about the role of his race in his teaching, he replied:

I don’t think it’s a big role. I mean students will often talk to me about my background, where I’m from, but in terms of teaching-wise, I don’t think so. Like if I’m doing a

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1 A popular Québécois reality show where contestants compete to win prizes such as money, a car, and home.
lesson, stuff like that, I don’t break out like “I’m Chinese by the way”. Yeah no, I don’t think so now that I think about it, because I’ve never really thought about it before. I think they just come to me because I’m a science teacher and if they want to learn from me… if they respond to me, then they respond to me as a good teacher or not a good teacher. I don’t think it’s reflective of my ethnicity or anything like that.

When it comes to his style of teaching or subject material, Fred views his race as being irrelevant. His response, like Sabrina's, does not support the idea that being a racialized educator has automatic implications for successful teaching; he clarifies that students respond to him based on his quality of teaching, which is independent of his ethnicity. While it is important to exercise caution in responding to dominant discourses, it is also beneficial to recognize how the role of race can help to promote more culturally-relevant or inclusive practices in class. Zana is a high school English teacher who talks about how she approaches the delivery of her course material.

And I think that, just in terms of any kind of connection, I’m talking about Streetcar Named Desire now, I’m talking about symbolism for light and Blanche trying to seek the truth, I can draw on Diwali for example, the festival of light. Small references here and there, which interest minority students, they’re like, “Oh yeah, I knew that already.” Or being able to talk about it in that light. And I’m also aware and conscious of trying to know about other cultures and include those examples in my teaching with that... So I’m deciding what to do for my 4U class, novels, Life of Pi is an option, but no one has done it. Only one teacher has done it in the past in the school, so I’m sort of thinking okay why is that? That’s interesting, right? And also, we’re talking about Handmaid’s Tale, which is a fantastic book by Margaret Atwood, but there is a lot of biblical undertones, references in the text, and when I hear colleagues talking about it, I’m sort of thinking, “Okay I don’t know what they’re talking about necessarily. I have to research on my own to get that background perspective.”

Though I do have the literary understanding, I don’t understand all the inside jokes about it or why it’s ironic completely, I’d have to do that background knowledge on my own. So if there’s a heated discussion about it amongst colleagues, I wouldn’t necessarily jump in, I would just listen (laughs). And I think that was sort of an interesting experience, realizing that if I’m teaching to a predominantly Christian group and I don’t have the same biblical understanding that they would, I don’t feel completely comfortable teaching to that because I’m aware that it’s not my background necessarily, though I would love to learn more about it...And I’m thinking I have the choice of Gatsby or Life of Pi which was just a huge film, so I would like to teach that. And definitely there’s also the interesting issue that it’s a minority writer, Yann Martel. Thinking about
bringing in more diverse perspectives into the classroom too and again, talking about writers from different backgrounds.

The way in which Zana navigates the course material she presents to her students is informed by her racial as well as cultural identities. A culturally-relevant classroom can be infused with elements as small as a reference to a non-dominant celebration such as Diwali or something more prominent like the selection of a non-Western novel. Zana's experience also highlights the Eurocentric nature of the Ontario curriculum. North American and European literature such as Handmaid's Tale and A Streetcar Named Desire, though great in their own respects, are infused with white perspectives, history, and contexts. Reading a Western novel is not in of itself the issue, but rather the fact that the vast majority of Ontario curriculum resources arise from an Eurocentric standpoint and do not provide students with enough meaningful exposure to the diverse perspectives and traditions from around the world. Alex also talked about his ideas on bringing different worldviews into the classroom.

If I did English, I’m not going to talk about Shakespeare, let’s look at Deepak Chopra. ...In my grade 10 business class, I would show videos on advertising from other parts of the world... or that are mislabelled or that get you to think. So that’s in regard to that class, my grade 12s I try to do the same thing: videos, posters, anything that can bring out the students’ aspects, but also what’s in the curriculum, not necessarily much of the curriculum, but add content to the curriculum to make it more reflective of my students.

Like Zana, Alex points out the lack of culturally-diverse content in the curriculum and gives examples of how he tries to add that to his courses. Racialized teachers who spent most of their lives in North America also have the potential to be “multicultural navigators" who have insight about the values of both dominant culture as well as the racial backgrounds that they're familiar with (Achinstein, & Aguirre, 2008). This insider perspective can help them when working with students who come from a similar background or who share cultural experiences. Samantha talks about the role of her race in her work at school.
We have a support worker who’s a licensed behavioural counseling specialist and we had one here before and she was white and she was a wonderful person, but you know, kids would come crying to her because you know, “My parents found out I have a boyfriend” and she’d be like, "Oh, no big deal." But I’m like, “You don’t understand. When you’re in a certain ethnic culture, you could get sent back to India or Pakistan and they’ll marry you off. It happens! You need to realize that.” And she had no idea, right? She sat down and talked to me forever about it, but she just never realized it was such a big deal. And she’s like, “Well I’d let my daughter date.” ...So I mean, I’d have kids come in who’d rather talk to me because I know and I get it when they say, “Please don’t tell my parents.” Because I get it. I’ve been where they’ve been and they know that and they trust that I know where they’re coming from whereas if someone wasn’t from their culture, it’s more difficult for them to explain.

Samantha's example of how a white colleague was unable to understand racialized students the same way that she could because of her personal experiences illustrates how racialized teachers can in fact be more empathetic to the situations of minority students (Dlamini, & Martinovic, 2007). Moreover, Samantha's efforts to share this knowledge with her colleague reaffirms this notion of racialized teachers as being resources to their colleagues, but at the same time risks reinforcing their reputation as “diversity experts” (Allen, 2011). How then, can racialized individuals maintain racial consciousness and the role of race in their work without submitting to the reductionist expectations that are placed on them? The recurring theme of maintaining a fine balance between recognizing the role of race versus assuming what these roles will always be is demonstrated in this section on race and identity; however, what it also crucial to examine is the multiplicity of our identities that exist in addition to race.

6.4 Identities and not Identity

What most complicates dominant discourses that endorse the diversification of the teaching force is the multidimensionality of identity. Although the role of race and one's racial identity are vital in examining the different ways in which racialized teachers understand their work, a finding that kept coming up throughout the collected data is how individuals have
multiple identities and that these varying identities also influence who they are and how they practice as educators. This theme will be explored more in depth in this section. Elizabeth talked about how teachers can only be similar to a certain degree, but after a certain point of theory and practice, who someone is as a teacher falls upon who they are as a person.

We all learn pretty much the same theory, we all have the same type of practice, obviously different experiences based on what we’ve been through, who we’ve worked with. But essentially a teacher will really understand another teacher in terms of profession and I think what is very unique is what else we bring to the profession, which is not only just our own knowledge, our personal experience and definitely our culture because we wouldn’t be unique or us without that aspect. And so I definitely think that they are one in that each person is unique because they have that added piece that they can bring and it might not show up immediately, but it might show up through maybe your interests at the school, what kind of clubs you do, what sports you do, or all of a sudden there’s a lesson plan and you’re like oh okay ‘cause you know about something in particular, a tradition or culture. You’re like that really ties in, so why not squeeze it in? So I think it comes up in different ways, not necessarily in the lessons, it could be outside of school hours, it could be with a group, like walk by a group and they’re talking in your language, you find there’s a problem and you want to help or you’re that resource person.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants could not envision their personal identity as being separate from their professional identity, largely due to the interactive and personal nature of teaching. Quiocho and Rios (2000) discussed at length the idea that teachers' personal identities and professional identities are intertwined. For Elizabeth, the fact that students commonly ask these "origin questions" to racialized teachers is evidence of how inseparable personal and professional identities are specifically in regards to teaching. She explains:

Students are human, so you’re always interested in who is this person facing me every day, like who am I? Where do I come from? How do I know this? Or they ask me their own personal questions about what my identity is or politics or economics or life or even if it’s simple like, “Oh are you married?”...For me, I couldn’t separate that. I couldn’t, no. And what I do every day, I wouldn’t be me if I were to take that away and I don’t think the kids would be drawn to me as a teacher or motivator as a teacher if they found me to be blank because I would be blank. I would just be like “This is the subject. This is what I’m teaching.”...They’re interested, so anything that I respond will obviously reflect who I am. So for me, definitely you cannot separate.
Elizabeth calls on the fact that "students are human" to illustrate the normalcy of wanting to know more about the people who you not only interact with on a regular basis, but who you form relationships with over time. Her personal identity is essential to her professional one, to the point where she describes being "blank" if the two were ever to exist independently of one another. Caitlyn also described, without hesitation, the interconnectedness of these identities. "Yes, they’re totally related. I’m outgoing and therefore it translates into the classroom. How my interactive skills, my classroom management had to do with the fact that I’m very comfortable stating my opinion, stating what my expectations are, enforcing things." While personality was commonly cited a primary determinant for teacher practices, the notion of personal identity was more complicated because of all the things that it can be composed of.

Studies have found that “there is value in recruiting teacher candidates who have shared the school experiences of their students" (Dlamini, & Martinovic, 2007, p.159). Despite sharing a similar racial background as some students, the experience of being racialized will not necessarily outweigh experiences of socioeconomic class and community. Au & Blake (2003) found that teachers who did not grow up in the same environment as their students, even though they would share the same race, had limited understandings of the challenges that were faced growing up in addition to by their families. Tanya had a similar experience at the beginning of her career at a school where the students are virtually all South Asian. She realized, "I came from a very particular socioeconomic group that I actually had a lot of privileges and actually, my life experience were more similar to white middle-class kids than a lot of my students". Tanya, however, was able to overcome these differences and develop meaningful relationships with her students, which she attributes to the fact that she is a nurturing and loving person who accepts her students for who they are.
On the other hand, Ethan is 1 of 3 participants who has gone back to teach at a school that they once attended as a student. Au & Blake (2003) found that teachers who taught in schools in the same community that they themselves grew up in would have a better understanding of social justice issues and obstacles that students may face. Minority teachers who have experienced certain obstacles or marginalizing situations usually feel a commitment to students who are going through similar situations (Allen, 2011). In teaching at his old high school, Ethan is familiar with the neighbourhood and culture of the surrounding school community.

Ethan: Maybe if I shared the same ethnicity as you, I might connect to them better, like that doesn’t hurt. I will say though, just because I’m from the exact same neighbourhood as a lot of these kids, I’m sensitive to a lot of needs. And I also think I’m way too sensitive to a lot of needs... because I was there only 10 years ago, so I really know a lot of the situations. For instance, if your family doesn’t value education much or let’s say you have to work to provide for yourself or you have to work to help your parents, I can totally connect with that because that was me. So I do kind of feel it at times.

Interviewer: And do you think that contributes to your teaching?

Ethan: One hundred percent, yeah, one hundred percent.

Interviewer: And your relationships with your students?

Ethan: Yes.

While Ethan acknowledges the possibility that his race may help him connect with his students, he expresses certainty that his shared community roots play a role in his teaching practices and student relationships. Why is there a hesitation in admitting the positive effects of the shared experience of race, but not the shared experience of neighbourhood and community? This discrepancy could be explained by dominant discourses that advocate for more racialized teachers without fostering deeper understandings as to why this could be valuable. Without this critical knowledge, the idea of having teachers visibly reflect students appears shallow, superficial, and above all, it takes the focus away from other contributors to good teaching.
While growing up in a community with specific values entails having lived experiences and insider understandings, being of a certain skin colour seems arbitrary in comparison. It is much easier to accept credit for something, in this case being the ability to relate to students, when it is attributed to dimensions of our identities that have, to a certain extent, been earned rather than assigned to us by chance. By citing her encounters with past student teachers, Tanya highlights how lived experiences rather than race can take precedence in the classroom.

I had one of my student teachers who I’m still very good friends with, she’s a white female, she’s a great teacher, but you know where she grew up? She grew up in Malvern. She said that when she was in teachers college she was at University B, she had a professor that did Peggy McIntosh’s white privilege, unpacking the backpack activity and they had to do a quiz and line up depending on where they fell and she said she didn’t fall at top, she fell at the end because her parents actually – this is where we were looking at intersections of oppression right – and her parents were not of a high socioeconomic status even though she was white. In her community, she was a minority, there was no white people. She had that great analytical skill and she said that her professor got really upset with her because, “You should be at the front of the line!” She’s like, “But I’m not privileged in my community, like there are other intersections that affect me.” ...She’s not just white, right? And because of her experiences growing up in that community, she was great with the kids! She just knows so much because all of her friends were from diverse backgrounds and she had that natural experience, that genuine experience with diversity.

And another student teacher we had last year, a white male, grew up in Parkdale. His dad’s a professor, but grew up in Parkdale, always went to diverse schools, parents always were always very focused on inculcating that equity principle in him, went to public school in an inner-city school. You know, he was such a great teacher. It didn’t matter how he looked because he really had the genuine experience. His friends were from diverse backgrounds and he just had this genuine knowledge and experience and he was relatable to the kids and the kids loved him. And it was because he was a good teacher and because of his experiences, so I think those types of experiences in some way should be considered valuable.

Ethan and Tanya have experienced first and second-hand how teachers are made up of much more than just physical appearance. While Ethan describes a bond with his students that is formed by their shared community upbringings, Tanya talks about white teachers who have been
successful in diverse classrooms without visibly reflecting the population. These examples illustrate how teaching can be informed by different parts of our identities.

“Research on race must touch on multiple subject identities and how these identities are intertwined” (Dei, 2005, p.2). An important part of examining race involves acknowledging its limitations. Although the salience of race can manifest in any aspects of our lives, the existence of other identities aside from our racial ones must always be taken into account. One participant, Maria, describes how these multiple identities are relevant in the classroom.

[I]t's not only about being visible minority, it's about a lot of other things too. Because not all visible minority teachers will have that connection with their students or will have the same relationship to their identity that I have...It's not about just being racialized. It's also about your class background. It's also gender, like if you grew up in a very upwardly mobile house, but you're of South Asian origin and you get plunked down in a school in Thorncliffe Park, you're not necessarily going to identify with those kids at all. And that's not cool either. I feel like teachers need to reflect student populations not only in terms of race but it terms of class and in terms of sexual identity, in terms of ability. You know, I think it's very important to admit teachers who have learning disabilities and who have had to struggle with that and who have overcome them because I think that's a huge thing where students can identify and relate to their teachers on that level.

Maria's discourse is demonstrative of the distinction made by Daniel (2009b) between naming oneself versus positioning oneself, wherein racialized teachers can straightforwardly name themselves "visible minorities" without necessarily understanding how that name impacts their social positioning. Furthermore, an individual's racial positioning is but one piece in the puzzle that is identity. Expecting teachers to perform a certain way due to their race is like claiming to see the big picture of a puzzle with only one jigsaw piece in hand.

Racialized teachers such as Elizabeth, resisted these assumptions and talked about how they strived to be viewed as more than just their race. She stated, "I think I’m an asset to the school in that way and that’s how I want to be seen, as a person that’s open and accepts all cultures not just stigmatized, like Latina and that’s it, we’ll call her if we need a translation. And
I think that’s the reputation, the identity that I’ve created at the school.” On the other hand, Sarup (1996) asks to what extent can individuals really choose aspects of their identities? While part of having an identity entails being conscious of its existence, it does not mean that consciousness precludes identity. In other words, the act of identifying ourselves is not exclusive to us; our identities are situated amongst power relations that exist between structures, institutions, groups, and other individuals. Thinking back to Alex's response to origin questions from his students, his first response would always be to describe himself as Canadian; however, because of his physical appearance, this answer does not usually satisfy whoever is asking and is this followed by more clarifying questions such as, "Where are your ancestors from?" Lam (1996) and Bascia (1996) both write about how the power to "be Canadian” lies in the hands of other people. Sometimes the capacity to identify ourselves is restricted to whether or not the people and structures around us will accept these identifications. The following experiences underscore how the tangible permanence of skin colour dictates social perceptions and constructions of race (Henry et al., 2005; Scheurich, & Young, 2001). Chloe expressed an awareness of these dynamics.

"[I]f someone were to ask me that question, I would say I’m Korean simply because... maybe there is that part which is an expectation when people want to know where you’re from. If I say I’m from Canada, which is true, if I were born here, I could say I’m Canadian, I’m a Canadian citizen. I’m more connected to Canada than I am to Korea; however I know that people see this (gestures to her face) first so therefore I will say I’m Korean just so I can avoid that whole conversation, “Where are you from?”

How Chloe chooses to identify herself is determined by the expectations formed by others based on the way that she looks. Her lived experience illustrates the salience of race as a disempowering aspect of identity and how our identities can be constructed through difference and mediated by unequal power relations (Giroux, 2003). Often racialized individuals are only able to define themselves if these definitions stay within the constraints of their racialization, and
any attempts to identify with aspects outside these limitations are met with resistance. Another participant, Sabrina, points out the salience of race when she was asked if she would mention her racial background as a way of defining her personal identity.

Interviewer: If asked though, about your personal identity, would that be how you define yourself?

Sabrina: It would, because let’s be honest, it’s on my face. However, I think that it’s also, part of what I work with professionally is being able to challenge perceptions all the time. So, joining here at this school for example and having my colleagues say to me, "One of the teachers here at school walked by your class and saw you and didn’t know you because you’re new and saw you speaking French so well and thought what an interesting thing that was." You know, and having your own colleague say how it’s “interesting,” so being able to work with that all the time.

Interviewer: What’s your reaction to that word “interesting” because that word is very...

Sabrina: It’s very loaded, yeah! It’s very loaded, it’s very charged and I’m like, yeah you know what, it’s been my whole life, being like this and having to have my mother sit in parent-teacher interviews and hear teachers say, "Oh she’s very noisy, she’s very talkative, which is so odd for a Chinese kid." So everything from that to being in university and having a professor, I can’t remember exactly how it was phrased, but definitely noticing my difference and challenging her assumptions. Like, it’s been a lifelong thing.

Sabrina recalls instances of how race has been an influential factor throughout her entire life; after all, it is "on her face". In her current position as a French language teacher who does not visibly resemble someone from a French-speaking culture, Sabrina describes how this unanticipated fact is received in her professional teacher identity. Unlike Chloe, however, Sabrina does not appear to mind conversations that seek to deconstruct her identity; in fact, she welcomes them as opportunities to inform the pre-existing understandings that people may have.

The notion of having to converse about our identities calls to mind postmodern perspectives on how identity is an ongoing process, resulting from social interactions (Hall, 2006). Moreover, they can be seen as a continuous negotiation (Cummins, 2003), as demonstrated by the origin questions that often take place between student and teacher as well as
the types of conversations that Chloe and Sabrina make reference to. Therefore it is possible that racialized individuals can indeed choose aspects of their identity, but that these choices are likely to be questioned if they challenge dominant understandings of a particular group. Provided that there is this resistance to the assertion of certain identities that fall outside common expectations, some racialized individuals choose to hide, to varying degrees, aspects of their identities in order to avoid these conversations of definition and clarification, particularly in regard to their professional lives. Iris is also a French teacher whose race is not typically associated with the French language and she talked about how this discrepancy with what is the expectation of her professional identity, that being a white French teacher, causes her to sometimes conceal aspects of her racial identity.

Interviewer: So then when you have to speak Cantonese during parent-teacher interviews, do you mind or are you kind of glad that you can help?

Iris: I actually pretend I don’t speak until they really need help.

Interviewer: Why?

Iris: Because I feel as a French Immersion teacher, I don’t really want them to know. I want them to know that my English is perfect, my French is good – if they know that I speak fluent Cantonese, they might think that my French isn’t as good... In terms of what they think about me as a teacher, sometimes I feel that they want a Caucasian teacher to teach their child French because French is a European language, right? And they might not think that I have the accent, which is true. I was born in Montreal, but I came to Toronto when I was one, so basically I’m Torontonian and I went through extended French, so French immersion half day and then high school I went through extended French and I continued in university, so definitely my French is good enough. When I went through the tests, I was good enough for French immersion and not just Core French. It’s just when parents come to see me at parent-teacher interviews, they’re like “Oh you’re Madame Iris!” They didn’t expect someone so young and especially Chinese.

Alsup (2006) talks about how the process of adopting a professional identity is complicated by how well an individual fits into the expectations of that role. Iris is met with insecurities as she tries to fit into the role of a French teacher, demonstrated by experience of being self-conscious
of her racial identity to avoid further challenging widespread notions about what a French
teacher should look like. Although Iris provides ample evidence of her ability to fulfil the duties
of her professional role, she still feels compelled to mute racial aspects of her identity to better fit
into a particular mould.

While Iris tried to cover up a linguistic component of her identity, two other participants
described feeling pressure to mask certain physical indicators of their racial identities, such as
their hair. Both Elizabeth and Matt describe a heightened awareness of their hair in their careers.
Matt talks about his experiences interviewing for higher-level positions.

Sometimes I think my race did play a role because it was those impressions of me that
I’ll come to an interview with dreads. And I rarely see either a principal or anybody in a
position of responsibility in student success or whatever with dreads... They’ll see
difference and won’t be able to get beyond it. When you have dreads, some people have
the stereotype that it’s the antithesis of being responsible. It’s like marijuana, it’s being
blazed, it’s being high out of your mind. So sometimes it’s like you’re trying to get a
position of responsibility, but you have dreads. We associate dreads with irresponsible
behaviour.

Matt acknowledges the stereotypes that exist surrounding certain hairstyles and recognizes the
possibility of how these preconceived notions may have influenced his career path. While the
push for more racialized teachers has started to change the face of teaching, the domain of
administration has not been as progressive in reflecting racial diversity. The face of
administration, even more so than that of teaching, is predominantly white (Blackmore, 2010;
Carr, & Klassen, 1997; Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003). The absence of racialized individuals
from management positions needs to be viewed through a critical lens that considers power
imbalances and whether access to resources has been equitable. Although Elizabeth shares a
similar struggle with her naturally curly hair, she also points out how physical attributes linked to
racial identity can also be understood as advantageous.
I always feel like it’s animalistic or I’m not composed or I’m not well put together. So I feel like how that comes off to other people so that’s why I would never go to an interview that way because I actually feel like it would limit my chances of getting the position because they might look at me, like "This girl couldn’t have even combed her hair." On the other hand, I also have the inkling that if I leave it that way, that might create a different image and they’ll be like, “Okay, it’s more evident that she’s ethnic, look at her.” But I’ve been so used to the opposite where I don’t feel well put together or presentable to a certain panel that I wouldn’t dare even take that chance and have them just look at me for…they never just look at your resume, they look at all of you, right? So I feel like my chances for that are better. Or if I do an event I would at least do my hair that way, unless for example one year it was Black History Month and another year for Latin American day, I left it completely out and I felt like that was the right moment to feel completely natural so I’m celebrating that, so more of an inspiration to other girls who might be dealing with the same issue of their identity and their hair.

For Elizabeth, her hair has become an aspect of her racial identity that she either shows or conceals depending on whether or not she feels comfortable in the given circumstances. She acknowledges that leaving her hair natural can be an "ethnic" symbol that may be a positive indicator in an interview; furthermore, it could also encourage individuals who share similar racial and physical characteristics to feel secure about how they look. Unfortunately, Elizabeth often conceals this aspect of her racial identity to stay within the boundaries of her racialization or shares it only when deemed appropriate by dominant groups, such as on certain days of celebration. While Elizabeth and Matt both acknowledged the racialization of their physical appearances, Elizabeth frequently opts to conceal her hair whereas Matt has chosen to always exhibit it. Although there are many factors involved in a career in education, it is worth mentioning that Elizabeth has been successful in interviewing for a Position of Responsibility, something which Matt is currently still striving to do despite him having five more years of teaching experience. To what degree their individual decisions to present certain attributes of their racial identities have influenced their professional journeys is impossible to discern. Nevertheless, this brings us to examine how these multiple identities connect these racialized individuals to their work as teachers.
Before moving on to a chapter focusing on how these teachers understand equity initiatives and policy, we consider for a moment a question from Allen (2011), who posits, “To what extent do teachers’ social identities help or hinder the implementation of an equity-based, diversified curriculum?” (p. 158). The responses from racialized teachers in this study suggest that the more conscious educators are of equity issues and how their social identities are influenced by race, the more equipped and motivated they will be to integrate these topics into their classrooms. In her interview, Chloe provided a hands-on example of how she broached the topic of equity with her grade five students.

Chloe: I have a student who is small; she has a certain disease…she’s significantly smaller than the rest of my class. So when we have gym and we start with volleyball, we all discussed it and we talked about equity. I discussed accommodations; I discussed what’s fair, what’s not fair. So using my student as an example I said, “We’re all going to be serving from the serving line. This student is significantly smaller, how could we accommodate so that it is equitable for her?” They all knew; let her serve from a closer distance and they understood that to be fair and she was very happy to have that accommodation. So whenever it was serving time, she knew, I didn’t have to remind her. She just knew to come up. So that’s a small example.

Interviewer: So the rest of the class, because you had explained that to the class, do you feel like they were all very supportive and encouraging of that?

Chloe: Yes.

Interviewer: No one complained, “Hey that’s not fair, she gets to…”?

Chloe: (Shakes head). And if there’s another activity that we’re doing, they’ll ask, “Shouldn’t she be given an accommodation?” So they’ll be thinking of her first. And I’ll be like, “Absolutely. What do you think the accommodation should be?” And they’ll speak out.

Interviewer: And this student is usually very happy that everyone understands?

Chloe: Yes and I think it’s the way it’s delivered too. If it was delivered in the way that she has this “issue” then no, but because it was a positive experience and then, “Okay great I get this accommodation.”

Interviewer: Because it’s presented in such a way…

Chloe: That it’s positive.
This story exemplifies how a topic that some may deem a complex issue such as equity can be taken up in an elementary school classroom in such a way that it does not require extra work, it is not time-consuming, and above all, it promotes acceptance and develops positive, supportive attitudes amongst students. Agyepong (2010) echoes this belief that educators can benefit from learning about students, their different cultures, and the diversity of lived experiences which often arises from that. Tanya is another participant whose classroom practices reflected this collaboration with students. She recalled how she approaches social justice issues and fosters inclusion with her high school students, explicitly attributing her teaching practices to her interest in social identities.

Because I have a general interest in social identities, I spend a bit of time in sociology talking about discrimination, social identity, and gender because the problem with School Board A schools is that it’s rampant with homophobia, so in order to build up to looking at LGBTQ issues, I’ll start first with a really simple but a very powerful activity where I get the kids to write a journal about a time when they were either a perpetrator or victim of discrimination and I just list on the board all the types of discrimination; it could be race, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, etc. And they have a couple of days to work on it and they’re told that they have to share it with the class and we just sit in the circle. I mean the best way to do the activity is probably two months into the course where you’ve built up a relationship...Yeah and we just read the stories. It is probably the most amazing activity. It is incredible the stuff that comes out of these stories and this is another point where I cry a bit too... so do the kids, and you know what?

It’s so empowering for them and some of the stories they share... But the point of starting that way in terms of equity is getting my students to personally identify feelings of shame or embarrassment and kind of having an emotional connection to how hurtful it could be and the responsibility in that. And then kind of once they get that, moving into some of the more difficult conversations, getting to confront the culture of homophobia in my school. So by that point we already know these comments are really hurtful, that people can take it very personally, so this year after we had built up to that point, we brought in a guest speaker who was from the LGTBQ community and they were very respectful and they listened and they were really understanding and stuff, so it’s like...yeah, I integrate it fully into my curriculum all the time.
Numerous participants discussed various ways in which they incorporate equity and inclusion into what, and more importantly, how they teach. Whether it's the selection of non-Eurocentric materials as mentioned earlier by Zana and Alex, or the classroom conduct and community-building activities carried out by Chloe and Tanya, these teachers have been successful in finding ways to shape education in a way that encourages deeper understandings of diversity amongst students while simultaneously reflecting their personal, racial, and professional identities in their work. Blackmore (2010) asserts that the development of inclusive schools is unlikely without knowing why and how people take up issues of race, gender, and class in education; however, my findings suggest that racialized individuals can be motivated by a consciousness of how their social identities are constantly being called into play throughout their lived experiences.

This desire to explore issues of equity and inclusion is then transformed into the details, both big and small, of how these educators practice: diversifying course materials, instilling values of acceptance amongst kids through community-building activities, modeling positive attitudes towards difference, and fostering an environment where students feel safe and as though they belong. As it's been reiterated throughout this chapter, the initiatives taken by this handful of educators were not present in every participant's discourse, nor can they be expected from any individual teacher simply based on one mere facet of their identities. While previous studies have determined that individual motivations are essential to developing deeper understandings of inclusive practices amongst educators (Au, & Blake, 2003), my findings assert this motivation stems from an individual consciousness of how our identities shape all social interactions, an awareness that is facilitated by lived experience and that above all, needs to be developed rather than assumed. The following chapter will take a closer look at how dominant discourses on "visible minority" teachers have perpetuated these assumptions and in doing so, influenced the journeys of racialized educators.
Chapter 7

INSIDE PERSPECTIVES OF DOMINANT STRUCTURES

While Chapter 4 examined equity and inclusion policies from the Ontario Ministry of Education as well as four public school boards in the Greater Toronto Area, this section focuses on how racialized teachers perceive and have experienced these governing structures. The inside perspectives of participants are invaluable to educational initiatives that assert equity and anti-racism, which are often created without having listened to the voices of its subjects who continue to be racialized by assumptions that a "visible minority" status will unquestionably and unfailingly address "visible minority" needs. The question of how racialized educators can be better supported by policymakers and preservice training is not new, but one that has been raised in the past (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2011; Au, & Blake, 2011; Brayboy et al., 2007; Dlamini, 2002). The voices of teachers who have practiced in the system will help to inform the improvement of current structures as well as the development of equity initiatives in the future. The following discussion is divided into five parts: (1) the notion of discourse and the power of dominant discourses in shaping individual members of society, (2) how racialized educators understand, or struggle to understand the ideology of anti-racism, (3) the implementation of equity policies, (4) an in-depth examination of one popular equity initiative, and lastly, (5) the roles of teacher education and professional development in helping both racialized and non-racialized individuals alike, become more conscious of the salience of race and the need for equity.

7.1 Power of Discourse: How the Racialized Self-Racialize

Briefly returning to earlier sections of this dissertation, the term "discourse" makes reference not only to the textual documents produced by governing societal institutions, but also
to the way that individuals structure their knowledge and perceive reality as a result of surrounding organizational bodies (Mill, 2003). What is crucial to recognize is the interconnectedness between discourse, knowledge, and power; the latter of which is highlighted by how “[t]he ways of understanding social reality held by the dominant or privileged group(s) are often accepted as part of the natural order by all—including those who are disempowered or marginalized by those views” (James-Wilson, 2007, p.23). Not only did the majority of participants agree with the need to have more racialized teachers who reflect the student body, but when asked to explain why this was important, they produced answers that demonstrated a strong adherence to what they understood as being the initiatives of the governing institutions. Michael describes his thought process.

I kind of accepted at the time that somebody felt the need to diversify and somebody felt they needed to be able to fill those spots in and I thought I wanted to be one of those teachers who could be up there to fill that spot. I wanted to be able to expose myself that way if that's what the teaching profession wanted to do. [...] The professors would say there was a need, if I can recall. They said there was need, that students were asking or Boards were asking for representation in teaching staff that would reflect the student population so the Faculties were responding to that need; they thought it was their responsibility.

The ease with which Michael agreed to what he perceived as the agenda of the Faculties of Education and the School Boards illustrates the power of dominant discourse. "Discourse organizes knowledge, produces truth, and accomplishes social relations by structuring thoughts and behaviours. Because this discursive process is largely unconscious, it makes invisible the exercise of power" (Goldberg 2007, 206). This tendency for minority subjects to subscribe to the same discursive system that propagates their marginalization was also evidenced by participants who talked about how their understandings of the role of racialized teachers have changed over the years. Tanya contrasts what she initially imagined her role would be in a racially diverse classroom to how she envisions it now.
I think the most humbling thing that I realized is... I came into teacher's college thinking that I would just be able to connect with these kids. But growing up in Markham, I came from a very particular socioeconomic group and I actually had a lot of privileges and actually, my life experiences were more similar to white middle class kids than a lot of my students. And I think one of the most important things that every teacher needs to do is to not make assumptions about their students and to check themselves when they’ve made incorrect assumptions. And in that moment, I really realized, even though all my kids are visible minorities, there’s a certain kind of kinship there, really most of my experiences are detached from them.

“No teacher enters the classroom without a historical grounding that has informed his or her particular ideological base and particular worldview” (Daniel, 2007, p.40). Tanya acknowledged her own adherence to dominant discourses endorsing the simplistic notion that racialized educators would be able to connect with students who visibly reflect them. Teachers need to have a clear sense of their identities and the way that these identities relate to their students if they are to effectively contribute to the development of students. When Tanya started teaching, she was "humbled" by her own assumptions; through her lived experiences in the classroom, she has been able to understand her identity with respect to her students, in part by realizing that race is but one aspect of an individual and how important other factors, such as socioeconomic status, are in shaping a person.

It is important to note that despite acknowledging the superficiality of race to a certain extent, Tanya still admits that there is a "certain kind of kinship" that exists between racially similar persons. However, is this kinship different from the one that would exist between two individuals who share other experiences such as, but not limited to gender, socioeconomic class, or religion? The choice of the word "kinship" raises questions about the salience of race as a physical marker that, unlike "invisible" characteristics such as sexual orientation or socioeconomic class, has the silent power to initiate connections without so much as a word of
conversation. Caitlyn talks about how influential a common racial identification was for her mom in relating to one of her elementary school teachers.

I knew my mom would reach out to her because she was West Indian as well, so I always knew that. I knew that the reason why my mom was reaching out to this teacher more than any other teacher is because she’s West Indian and I assume that she’s reaching out to my mom or she’s responding ‘cause she’s West Indian. I’m pretty sure I was conscious of that because that’s how I knew that she would look after me…because my mom trusted her. I think it’s a huge part for parents too. Parents react differently in front of somebody who is of the same background than somebody who isn’t.

The power of dominant discourse is especially evident in older generations who are arguably not as accustomed to the racial diversity that is common to many North American communities today. Being exposed to racial and cultural diversity over a long period of time has been found to foster more accepting and understanding attitudes towards individuals belonging to different backgrounds (van Geel, & Vedder, 2011). Therefore it is possible that the absence of this intergroup contact coupled with the power of dominant discourses frequently allows parents to feel comforted by the presence of teachers who are racially similar. Considering the vast benefits that have been found with parental involvement in schools (Wotherspoon, 2009), how can the capacity for racialized teachers to engage racialized families be taken into account without making the blanket assumption that these relationships will automatically develop?

Maya, who teaches in a school whose population is almost completely Chinese, said, "I feel like the parents definitely feel more comfortable towards me. And I think that when they talk about their child or perhaps what happens at home, I feel like they believe that I can identify with them more." Maya's choice of phrasing is important to note here; she clearly distinguishes between what the parents might expect of her and what she is actually capable of doing; for example, she is Cantonese-speaking Chinese, but most of her students' families are Mandarin-speaking Chinese, sometimes allowing for the misunderstanding that Maya might be fluent in their mother tongue. Differentiating between expectation and reality is a task that numerous
participants mentioned undertaking on a frequent basis due to the salience of their race. Nevertheless, Maya reaffirms Caitlyn's experience of race being an important point of connection for students' families; however, does this idea remain true between individuals belonging to a dominant group? Do all human beings have an instinctive tendency to feel more comfortable with persons who visibly reflect them? Or rather, is this feeling of comfort more associated with familiarity rather than similarity? For example, do racialized individuals adopted by white families and raised surrounded by white individuals, feel more at ease with persons who reflect themselves or rather their surroundings? It is possible that it gives them the affinity to do both or the inability to do either.

Curious about these same questions of race and parent-teacher relationships, Tanya discussed a mini-project that she and a colleague decided to conduct with the purpose of studying the role of race between educators and their students' families. While Tanya is a racialized teacher, her colleague is a white teacher and they were interested in whether or not this would affect the nature of their interactions with parents.

We decided to record our parent interviews...and do just a comparison between hers and mine and how multiculturalism and diversity plays out in it. What was really interesting is the type of conversations she had with parents and the types of conversations I had with parents were actually very different. Most of my parent interviews, after we talk about the kids, it just moves away to something else. They start asking me where I’m from, where’s my family from, and because of the way I look, I think I can pass racially in different ways, so sometimes Tamil parents will think I’m brown and West-Indian parents or African-Canadian parents will kind of see that in my heritage so then they’ll kind of identify with that, so it’s kind of privileged me in many ways...Oh yeah, [they're] totally more comfortable with me, totally willing to open up, to talk about their kids in open ways.

What is fascinating in Tanya's case is that earlier on she admitted to being surprised at how her experiences of socioeconomic class, rather than her race, influenced how she was able to relate to her students, but at the same time, she continues to recognize how race has "privileged" her as
a teacher in a school with a predominantly racialized student demographic. While Tanya's initial disconnect with her students due to different experiences of socioeconomic status did not prevent her from forming meaningful relationships with her students and their families, a few participants talked about how more recent changes to dimensions of their identities, such as socioeconomic status, may have influenced how they are viewed by students. Elizabeth, for example, talked about her initial motivation for going into education.

When I started my career because it was all about, at that point, inspiring and motivating and representing the Latinos. I’m the only person of my immediate family with a post-secondary degree and from the people that left Columbia, very few were able to get anything more than a college degree or education. So I feel like for that matter, like I’m very proud and for that, I want to motivate those who probably come from families that were poor because I came from living in a basement without a fridge. But people don’t see me like that and I guess because of the area I live in and because of the way I handle myself or the things I buy, I want to look nice, so they see me so different than they would see me if they knew where I had grown up.

Elizabeth feels that the disconnect between her experiences growing up and where she has established herself now prevents individuals who are in situations that she's familiar with from being able to relate to her. The expectations that Elizabeth had for herself as a teacher were informed by dominant discourses that endorse representation and reduce the student-teacher relationships to racial matching.

Matt is another participant who talked about his initial attitudes regarding racialized teachers during his preservice training.

When I was in teacher's college, I thought, "Yeah a black person with black students!" I was like, “Yeah, alright!” But it doesn’t always work that way...in other words, just because I’m a black person with dreads doesn’t mean I’m a role model to black students. It’s also other things like personality, interests, values, so I think it’s also equally as dangerous to say just because I’m a person of a particular colour, meaning I’m black, that I’m necessarily going to be a role model to all black students. I think that’s very myopic thinking.

Much like Tanya and Elizabeth, at the beginning of his career Matt subscribed to the notion that racial matching between teachers and students would automatically elicit educational benefits;
however, through experience, he has come to recognize the complexity and even danger, of that assumption. This danger lies in adopting the reductionist view of an individual as being primarily defined by his or her race, which has been established as a social construction. Adhering to the stereotypes commonly associated to the social construct of race is to perform the act of racialization. These participants demonstrate the power of dominant discourses in informing society of the role of race in education, because it is to the point where its subjects are can also become its subscribers. In this case, teachers are doubly subjected to racialization, which has been defined as the act of assigning specific meanings to groups on the basis of people’s physical differences even though race has been proved to be nothing more than a social construct (McCaskell, 2005; Ng, 2003; Wotherspoon, 2009). The first act of racialization is evident in the assumptions about "visible minority" teachers found in the dominant discourse. The second act occurs when these racialized educators adhere to their own racialization; in other words, they accept the expectations that are placed on them as being true and a matter of fact. The power of dominant discourses is demonstrated by how the racialized self-racialize. Furthermore, they remain unaware of the problematic nature of these assumptions until they enter the educational workforce and experience firsthand what it is like to teach in a school with a racially and culturally diverse student population amidst expectations that their race will have automatic implications for their practice.

7.2 Anti-Racist What?

"Anti-racism theory provides a vehicle for critically examining the role of both the state and societal institutions in reproducing racial, gender, and class-based inequalities... Anti-racism situates power relations at the centre of the analysis of race and social difference” (Henry et al., 2005, p. 42). The key themes of power, systemic racism, and activism are thus integral to the
implementation of anti-racist education, which posits educators as facilitators who foster critical thinking skills and openly take up topics surrounded by societal tension in their classrooms (Carr, & Klassen, 1996). Studies have found that racialized teachers are more likely to support an anti-racist education because of their own personal experiences with race (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000). This assertion prompted an examination of how participants understood the ideology of anti-racism in the field of education, and this study revealed a stark discrepancy between expectation and reality. Most participants demonstrated uncertainty and confusion about anti-racist theory, struggling to evaluate it against the widespread ideology of liberal multiculturalism. Many responses confirmed that anti-racism is still very much viewed with a negative connotation whereas multiculturalism is viewed in a more positive light (Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003). For example, Maya said, "I prefer that word [multiculturalism] over anti-racism because anti-racism sounds, it kind of, to me it sounds like it has a negative connation to it. Multicultural sounds more embracing or just opening and welcoming." Of the participants who expressed similar perspectives, some of them straightforwardly admitted to not knowing what anti-racist theory was about and therefore their responses were largely based on the words "anti" and "racist". Furthermore, many of them expressed a clear preference for the concept of multiculturalism, such as Ethan and Elizabeth.

Ethan: I like the term multiculturalism a lot more than I like anti-racism because it almost seems like a negative, like how to avoid a negative as opposed to how to promote a positive... I kind of look at anti-racism like “Okay, this is what you’re not supposed to do.” Like this is how you teach kids: “Don’t do this. Don’t do this. Don’t do this.” Whereas multiculturalism is like, “Okay, this is how things should be done. This is the perfect, ideal situation.” That’s the way I look at it.

Elizabeth: I find multicultural is more of an inclusive word. When I started at [teacher's college], it was all about inclusivity so it’s still very ingrained. It’s all about promoting and celebrating every culture and being aware and learning that we’re all different. Whenever I get a chance, I’ll bring that up in class and I’ll give different examples of different cultures and I’ll add in my own just so they can get a world perspective. So I don’t think that, like I find that’s more of a positive term. Anything “anti” for me is negative and it
just brings the focus on what not to be instead of what we should be, which is also part of teaching. Don’t tell the student what they can’t do, tell them what they can, right? So I think that kind of contradicts what they’re trying to put forth in terms of curriculum, like a lot of curriculum talk is to be positive, is to focus on what can be done, to make improvements instead of what they can’t do or what they could change. So I find the word “anti-racist” is also alarming for many people too, like “I’m not being racist!” ...And just so having the term, we’re trying to move away from racism, we’re trying to inspire people to be inclusive, so just the word itself I don’t think connects well with what they’re trying to portray or the meaning of it. I think it’s a bit more threatening and I think it takes away from the beauty of multiculturalism.

Although Solomon & Levine-Rasky (2003) previously found this discrepancy between multiculturalism and anti-racism, wherein the former is viewed as a preventative approach while the latter as a reactive one, this study demonstrates that these attitudes are also prevalent among racialized teachers.

The word "multiculturalism" has been completely integrated into the vocabulary of the general public, and moreover, consistently portrayed over time by societal structures in a very positive light. The vast majority of the population accept the term because they understand it as an ideology that promotes acceptance and harmony between individuals, which is in line with liberal multiculturalism. While terms like "equity" and "inclusion" have come to replace "multiculturalism" in Ontario's educational documents, the ideology of multiculturalism discursively bonds citizens to the nation by its promotion of a unique sense of tolerance. As a result, when the term "anti-racism" is introduced as an afterthought, it should not be surprising to see it being met with resistance and confusion. Chloe's reaction calls to mind these ideas in conjunction with the power of words to shape ideas due to capacity of language to serve as a vehicle of social norms (Kobayashi, & Johnson, 2007).

"Anti" is against and "racism" it's just antagonistic relationships based on colour or ethnicity... that is powerful... and to have everything become anti-racist, anti-racist, like it's kind of hitting you in the face. Is everything about racism? It may be just kind of the radar and it's not spoken about at times when you need to speak about it, but when it's just there and it's that word "anti-racist, anti-racism, anti-racist"...it almost makes you confront it, but not in a positive way... Right when you say “anti-racism”, there’s an
agenda; it’s a positive agenda, but it comes out in such a negative way for me. Words are powerful. Eventually over time, if it’s a generic word that doesn’t carry any meaning, once attached to something it eventually will. It could be innocuous, but just with time and its usage, people make associations and that becomes powerful. The word “multiculturalism” I think it’s because of just the past and how people have viewed it where just oh, we celebrate the special days and maybe that could be one of the reasons why people don’t like it. Maybe they want it to be more forceful. But “multi” it is many, and “cultural”, it just sounds more harmonious, but anti-racism, it just sounds like there is acrimony. It embodies certain feelings and words that are negative and almost pejorative... then it becomes whites against everyone else who is coloured, well we all have a colour, but it becomes us versus them. Because when you say anti-racist, it’s whites against those who are visible minority and I don’t like that.

Chloe does an incredible job articulating the power that is inherent in our choice of words and the language that is constantly being used around us, simultaneously and inconspicuously shaping societal norms and expectations. As she mentions, over time a word that is neutral can develop implications, connotations, and meaning depending on how it is used and by whom. Using the same logic of literally dissecting these two terms word by word, she takes apart "multiculturalism" to demonstrate why it’s been much more readily accepted. Like Chloe, several participants chose to interpret the term "anti-racism" literally, as meaning to be opposed to racial discrimination; these types of explanations are likely due to a lack of education about anti-racist theory.

Though numerous participants preferred the word "multiculturalism" over "anti-racism", few teachers acknowledged its failure to take into account the complexity of race, ethnicity, and culture (Chan, 2007). Eric said, "When we talk about multiculturalism, I find that it’s just more than a mix of races because racism is just strictly on what you see physically. Cultures have a lot more than just race. Cultures involve your ideologies. Cultures involve religion. Cultures involve, it’s like a massive subgroup of different things." Once again taking a literal interpretation of the word "culture" in the term, Eric pointed out how multiculturalism is actually
quite broad; while he does not criticize this vagueness, Tanya highlights its shortcomings in the following passage.

Well for me multiculturalism is a blanket statement that really is used to superficially celebrate cultures within a school. I think multiculturalism is something that becomes reduced to really tokenistic examples. So in our school every year, we have a multicultural show and all the kids sing and dance like their cultures, but I think that’s the way that diversity is mostly represented in schools.

Every participant in this study mentioned having a recurring event at each of their schools that had the focus of celebrating cultural diversity, however some teachers, like Tanya were critical of what these events actually achieved, if anything at all. Samantha said, "A lot of schools will say, "Oh multiculturalism, let’s have samosas and pizzas and spaghetti and it’s all about food and it’s about festivals". I think multiculturalism is more than just that. It’s about understanding traditions and why people do what they do...and not just the food and festivals." The voices of Samantha and Tanya reaffirm what Solomon & Levine-Rasky (2003) called the “finite” nature of these school celebrations, which introduce topics of different ethnicities and traditions, but do not delve deeper into more challenging topics of power relations and discrimination. Zana explained how she understands the distinction between the two approaches.

Anti-racism and multiculturalism. Well, you can have a multicultural environment that's not anti-racist necessarily, right? So you can have many different populations in one area, many different cultures in one area, but it doesn't mean you're not perpetuating stereotypes associated with different ethnicities or challenging stereotypes that exist whereas an anti-racist education tries to break down stereotypes that are in place.

Zana acknowledges that the two terms are not the same, but in doing so, she likens multiculturalism to the physical presence of racial and cultural diversity rather than an ideology that promotes acceptance and tokenism. It is useful to distinguish between multicultural as an adjective that describes the composition of a population versus multiculturalism as a framework of principles that support the coexistence of multiple cultures in a harmonious and fair society.
(Henry, et al., 2004). Michael reflects on how multiculturalism has been successfully integrated into society, but failed to solve problems of discrimination.

I think when we're talking about multiculturalism before, when it was a big push, it was about accepting and being open-minded and being aware of different cultures around you. I think anti-racism today then must be responding to certain needs that we have... I think it's a shift that we need. Again I think multiculturalism is automatic in the way people approach it. They've been permeated enough with that sort of push, that I don't think that anybody is resistant to that anymore whereas now people need to focus on "Hey, you know what? Even in a multicultural society, people are still targeting certain groups." That's what we need to deal with now, focus on now is how to sort of prevent that. I think that that's what that's become.

As Michael mentions, multiculturalism had to be "pushed" before being accepted. Is it then reasonable to believe that with enough "pushing", anti-racism will one day be met with the same positive reactions?

While anti-racism does not oppose the idea that individuals of different backgrounds can live together, it is critical of the power relations that come into effect during these interactions. Thus are perceptions of anti-racism as being "reactive" really ungrounded? Alex explains, "When you think of anti-racism, it’s like you’re trying to solve a problem or you’re trying to deal with an issue." Perhaps the combination of its reactionary nature and its focus on taboo topics is cause for the negative feelings that some participants described having in response to the term. After all, if anti-racist theory aims to disrupt and challenge hegemonic ideas that propagate systems of domination (Schick, 2010), how positive and uplifting can this reactionary, critical approach really be? The connotation that is inherent to certain terminology is important because it affects how readily individuals will accept its ideas and how much more probable a teacher will be to adopt its methods. For example, Sabrina said,"I think 'anti-racist' as a term, I think is a bit...I don’t know, I’m not comfortable with the word 'anti-racist'. I’m more comfortable with thinking about it as cultural inclusivity." It is significant to note that Sabrina is okay with the
principles of anti-racism, however the name of the theory itself is off-putting for her. She elaborates.

Once you talk about anti-racist education, I think it puts people on the defensive, which I think is not a good place to start. I think cultural inclusivity it’s like, you know, that’s a nice place for us to have a conversation about it and if it gets heated from time to time then yeah, let’s go, let’s do it okay? But at least it’s not a thing where you come to the “anti-racism” conference, that’s just, I don’t know, reductive in a way... Whereas cultural inclusive education is more about, you know, looking at issues of race and how they relate to societal actions and social justice and I think that’s a more progressive way of looking at it. And in terms of how it relates to anti-racism, I don’t know, but the term just kind of turns me off.

The discomfort instigated by the term "anti-racism" is so significant that Sabrina prefers to use another phrase altogether, "cultural inclusivity", whose description resembles proponents of an anti-racist education. It is clear that Sabrina's reservations about this ideology have more to do with its name rather than its principles, so at what point do these negative responses outweigh the importance of maintaining this name? In a similar vein, Chloe's reaction illustrates this aversion to the term rather than the theory itself.

For me, it's not like everything has to be spoken – I would rather if she [a teacher] never spoke about anti-racism, but in her actions she was very inclusive and demonstrated that it's about inclusiveness and diversity; that would speak volumes to me. That saying, I don't know who the person is, it's not what you say or do, it's how you make a person feel, so I could either feel safe and that this person isn't racist or I could feel that they carry certain presuppositions that are against me. So having that word just be in your face, I'll be honest, just the way I feel right now it's – I have to reflect more on it. I don't like it. Yeah, I don't like it.

If a lot of people do not like the sound of "anti-racism" then how open-minded will they be to learning more about it? It is possible that changing the name of anti-racism theory to something more constructive or positive contradicts the theory itself, which strives to challenge dominant ideas of what is socially constructed as acceptable or positive. Adhering to the same structures that it sets out to disrupt would be problematic, however continuing to face the resistance associated with its name has proven to be an uphill battle. The reality appears to be that anti-
racism and anti-racist education has not been widely accepted or successfully integrated in the majority of places where it has been introduced, so should its activists persevere? Or does something need to change?

The topic of anti-racism is crucial to the field of education because it is the sector of our society that is responsible for preparing young generations to be informed members of our community; what we teach them now will shape the way that they approach the future. As populations are becoming more and more diverse not only in race and culture, but in all forms of social difference, topics of equity and power are imperative to have them understand. Dei (1996) defines anti-racism education as “an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (p. 25). Although the vast majority of participants were unsure about the principles of anti-racism as well as its role in education, a small number were able to provide thorough explanations in addition to recognizing the need for it in schools. Tanya says, "I think an anti-racist framework is a more critical lens that problematizes the treatment of certain groups in schools and gets students to critically reflect on that treatment and devise students in their own regard. So I think that rather than having a multicultural policy, I think that most schools should adopt an anti-racist lens.” Another participant, Matt, provided examples of questions that need to be asked when trying to carry out an anti-racist education.

Well anti-racism is you’re looking more into the inequities that are embedded into the system. So like walking into a high school, you’re looking at a system of discrimination, what books are in the library, what are the walls looking like, what are the pictures being sent, what are the messages, what is the curriculum looking like, what is being studied in terms of anti-racist education, like who is being hired, who is being fired. Deeply embedded equities in the system. What are your policies regarding poverty and that kind of stuff? Making allowances for people who are poor in your school. Do you have special programs, breakfast, lunch for a high need area for kids who might not have that? ...Anti-racist education is more of a critical interrogation of who has power, who doesn’t have power, who is included, who isn’t included, what
role do your various identities play in terms of whether or not you’re getting ahead in society, in school. And anti-racist education is who’s achieving, who’s not achieving, whose voices are heard, whose voices are ignored. So it’s more a critical interrogation into the various inequities in the system, some of them systemic some of them could be individual where multiculturalism is just an idea of, "Oh these are different cultures," without an interrogation of things like power and privilege.

Matt's deep understanding of anti-racism takes form in his extracurricular commitments, such as leading equity and anti-racist initiatives at his school. He is one of the few teachers in this study who both acknowledges the pressing need for a re-examination of power relations and race in education in addition to participating in initiatives striving towards that change.

The findings confirm that how teachers feel about anti-racist education largely depends on how they have chosen to understand it (Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003). It is of no wonder that individuals who struggle to see past its negative connotation are not jumping to learn more about it or infuse it into their classrooms. Matt observes, “I think the vast majority of teachers are well-meaning, but mostly multicultural. Not much anti-racism, that’s a dangerous game you’re playing with in education if you don’t have a principal who supports that... you have to be careful, you have to have those allies.” His reference to the "dangerous" nature of an anti-racist education could refer to the discomfort and negativity that has been associated with this ideology in the past as well as unwelcoming collegial reactions to its implementation in schools (Beynon et al., 2001; Carr and Klassen, 1997). Furthermore, ways in which to carry out an anti-racist education are not widely disseminated; often it remains an idea on a list of things to do rather than a manual of practical classroom methods. When asked about educational policies that advocate for an equity and anti-racism in schools, Caitlyn replied, "If you really want to make an impact, then you would be doing something tangible like revisiting curriculum for opportunities where students could put in any culture into the curriculum, opportunities to do that.” Past studies have found that teachers view anti-racism as being an add-on to the large amount of
content that they already have to cover (Solomon, & Levine-Rasky, 2003). On the other hand, Maria believes that the opportunities are already there in the pre-existing curriculum.

So they think it's sufficient to say we need an anti-racist perspective because we want to teach our kids that it's not okay to say mean things about other people, but it's still very superficial because it's not just about teaching kids, "You're not supposed to say that!" It's about teaching them that this is actually what the Canadian state does. And it's there. The opportunities are there if you look at the Ontario curriculum, especially with social studies. Teachers have the opportunity to expose those things and again, human geography, perfect subject to do that with. The history program from grade seven all the way to grade 12, there are many opportunities.

Maria highlights the superficial nature in acknowledging the need for anti-racism without a clear plan on how this need will be fulfilled. The problem is not in the lack of opportunities, but in teachers' knowledge of what an anti-racist education looks like and why it's important. Johnson & Joshee (2007) concluded that "there is resistance or a lack of commitment to implementing the policy, or that teachers lack multicultural resources and a sufficient knowledge base about diversity" (p.6). If the key to integrating equity and anti-racism practices is found in the education of our educators, then what measures must be taken to improve the understandings of our teachers? As outlined in Chapter 4, provincial and district policies have tried to change to reflect these needs, however these documents are not perfect nor are they the be all and end all to this dilemma. Caitlyn explains why for her, policy is simply not enough.

I know they have lots of discussions about it and I know they have a policy and that the policy’s been debated to death about it. What it contains in the policy? I have no clue because to be honest, I don’t see the practical implications of it. I don’t see how it has practically benefitted students... Okay, this is great, having policy is great...but how does it trickle down to the students that I face every single say? ...And my colleagues, how are we being educated or is just left up to me to go read the document? And when things fly out of hand are we just going to say, “Well the policy says…”? To me, that has no bearing on my life.

This candid declaration of the disconnect between policy and the lived experiences of Caitlyn prompt the question of what exactly is the role of educational documents? The following section
explores how racialized teachers perceive existing policies surrounding equity and anti-racism in education.

### 7.3 Policy Shortcomings and Understandings of Equity

The findings in this study reaffirmed the argument that policy statements and teacher practices rarely match (Johnson, & Joshee, 2007). In fact, the majority of participants admitted to knowing very little about provincial and school board policies on equity besides the fact that these documents do exist. Although the establishment of equity initiatives was a pivotal step in recognizing the existence of systemic barriers and discrimination for individuals identifying with a range of social differences, it is equally as important to examine the outcomes of having said policies. Conversations such as the following one with Oliver, depict common attitudes towards educational policy.

**Interviewer:** Do you know what the equity policies are in the board and in the ministry? How do you think they approach diversity?

**Oliver:** I’m sure it’s very important. They probably have manuals full of information. They do send out, every week they do send out what is happening in the school and stuff as a board...but I just find, I delete a lot of my emails. I hardly read what’s going on with the board when I’m so busy with my class.

**Interviewer:** Do you think it’s good that they insert that?

**Oliver:** Yeah, I think it’s good. I’ve heard it’s pretty good that you should find what the board initiatives are, but it’s there for me to click and look at; I just don’t click.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that most teachers are the same way?

**Oliver:** I believe most teachers are the same. I have other stuff to do than to read the director’s thing on…

**Interviewer:** So why do you think it’s important, that it’s good that it’s there even though most people aren’t reading it?

**Oliver:** It’s good to say that, "We’re doing something."
This dialogue raises questions about policy as a symbol rather than a catalyst of change. Chan (2007) found that, "The pressure for policy has tended to be the result of advocacy from parents and community groups, although the actual policy implementation was often an administrative task given to a staff consultant or an advisor in race relations or antiracism" (p.140). What one participant remarked, however, was this delegation of responsibilities to an equity or anti-racism advisor is further problematized by a lack of resources and financial commitment to these initiatives. Matt said, "What’s happening right now with School Board A is with the cuts, budget shortfall. The first things to go, like I remember when I first started teaching, there were so many different anti-racist instructional leaders, now they’re reducing the department and reducing the portfolio, so there are not as many…it’s not as high priority as it used to be." Consequently, what often happens is that equity policies become goals in and of themselves, meaning that there is little to no expectation of how they will actually improve practice. If the superficiality of these documents is in fact true, then why should they even be created in the first place? It is possible that situations would be worse without policy because then there would be absolutely "no fundamental principles to guide behaviour or strategically plan for change" (Chan, 2007, p. 143).

Though policy can be seen as being symbolic, its presence is arguably necessary to landmark the intentions of governing institutions, and in doing so, provide a reference point for the development of future initiatives. Problems arise, however, when policymakers only represent the dominant perspective and propagate the ideas of those in power. Chapter 4 provided a thorough examination of how institutional documents on equity and inclusion were often unclear and as a result, difficult to execute. Also found in this study was that the subjects of these documents lack an awareness or understanding of policy and its terms. When asked about the guidelines at her school board, Iris demonstrated uncertainty.
Interviewer: Do you know anything about their initiatives for equity?

Iris: No.

Interviewer: What does mean equity to you?

Iris: Equity, it would be fairness, whether it be for race or for gender, for age, just fairness.

Interviewer: How does it compare to equality?

Iris: Equity and equality? They sound the same to me. I can’t tell the difference. Is there a difference?

Brayboy et al. (2007) make the critical distinction between the two terms, writing, “[E]quity represents what is fair; what is fair is potentially more contested than what is equal. Equity requires affirmative action in the recruitment and hiring of individuals from groups who historically have been undeserved.” Equity refers to the belief that an individual’s situation in society precludes equal treatment, that in order to treat everyone equally, some must be treated different to account for their varying personal circumstances (Henry et al., 2005). Race is just one example of a social difference that shapes one's life experiences and can determine the opportunities or obstacles that a person is faced with.

Anti-racism calls to attention these power imbalances and institutional barriers that are demonstrated by the significant discrepancies that still exist in employment rates and salaries between white males and racialized individuals (Agocs, 2007). Using the contexts of preservice admissions and the teaching profession as examples of places where equity initiatives are needed, Edwin and Michael raised the question of systemic barriers as being the reasons why.

Edwin: If minority applicants are just marginally weaker on average than non-minority applicants, then is there a systemic reason why they're like a little bit weaker? Are they not acculturated? Is it just—I don't want to say that they're not as intelligent—but maybe they just don't have as many opportunities or as much hope as someone who isn't a minority.

Michael: If we find that there are faults in the system where there is only one racial group coming out of teacher's college—that are successfully coming out—there is only
one racial group that a Board will have to pick from. I mean there must be faults in the system... Was there something that did happen along the way to make it so that only this racial group is qualified? What happened to the rest?

The problem then, comes to light as how equity policies are understood or rather, misunderstood by the general public. While a few participants acknowledged how racialized individuals may have encountered certain adversities in their lives and as a result need to be treated differently due to these past challenges, the vast majority of participants interpreted equity policies as existing primarily to promote racial diversity; it was usually taken for granted that this "diversity" or "multiculturalism" was something inherently good that we need to strive towards. This common desire to be "multicultural" can be attributed once again to the power of dominant discourses. "Notions of social justice have been supplanted by a celebratory discourse of diversity" (Blackmore, 2010, p.53). Several participants adopted what they viewed as being the agenda of the dominant discourse, sometimes to the extent that they would make references to policy terms, despite being unsure about exactly how these policies are implemented.

Phrases such "affirmative action" and "quotas" were frequently mentioned, but teachers struggled to explain exactly how these methods were applied. The ambiguity surrounding how this information is used can largely be attributed to a lack of both consistency and transparency amongst equity initiatives. Goldberg (2007) identifies this dilemma as being a result of symbolic discourse, wherein "discourse is effectively empty, because it is so vague that it cannot be enforced" (207). Nevertheless, it is then astounding to remark how successful this dominant discourse has been in convincing some people of its effective implementation, to the point where a few participants talked about how they think that equity initiatives are no longer necessary. Samantha and Elizabeth are two teachers who talked about the outdated nature of these efforts.

Elizabeth: I think maybe at one point, maybe in the 70s, prior to that when there were less minorities within Toronto in particular who were being screened because of their race and that was necessary and maybe that’s how it came about to begin with, to
protect those people or to show that yes the company or the place of employment is being equitable and fair, but at this point, there’s people from all over the world. I don’t think it matters anymore, like it should just be equal for everyone.

Samantha: I don’t know how much it would matter right now because there is such diversity in the workforce. It would have probably made a difference 20, 30 years ago for sure they would always go with the multicultural person because they were trying with the affirmative action, whatever it was.

Once again, equity policy is misunderstood as simply being the presence of racial diversity rather than the consideration of how various social differences have privileged some, but not others. In fact, to what extent can the poor implementation of equity policy cause these initiatives to become assimilationist in nature? As demonstrated by Elizabeth's voice, misunderstandings of equity inadvertently give support to the discourse of equality in addition to assimilationist policies that foster an environment where minoritized individuals are not listened to and made to feel as though they have to become more like dominant groups (Brayboy et al., 2007). In other words, the failed call for equity ends up fueling arguments for equality. People who do not understand how or why some individuals are evaluated differently end up returning to a discourse of "equal treatment for all". On the other hand, some participants did not buy into the "success" of equity initiatives. Maria, Tanya, and Caitlyn used their personal experiences of preservice training as examples of how these policies were not really being put into practice.

Maria: Teacher's college applicants don't really add up to who ends up getting into teacher's college. I don't know if you found that, but I know that a lot of people applied to teacher's college and then when you actually get there you see that once again, you're probably one of amongst a handful of people who are not white women, right? Still!

Tanya: Like I was a minority in my classes too, right? In my class there was probably five physical visible minority people and the rest were Caucasian so, I mean, do I think that only five visible minority people applied? I don’t know, like I don’t know what they’re looking for.

Caitlyn: And really, even with the policy in place, there’s only so many who even get to that point anyways, so it’s not there’s a whole rash of minorities coming and
taking over teachers college. Even to get to that point there’s only so much and it doesn’t even happen that way...So it’s not like as soon as I come to the table, “Oh she’s black, let’s take her”. You still have to prove yourself. You still have to prove yourself! And nobody takes that into consideration. Nobody does.

Maria, Tanya, and Caitlyn all completed their teacher training at a post-secondary institution in the Greater Toronto Area, meaning that the universities they attended were all situated in a region where almost half of the population identifies as being a "visible minority" (City of Toronto 2006). Nevertheless, their classmates in teacher education failed to reflect this racial diversity. Daniel (2009) also found that teacher candidates did take notice when their program instructors and students failed to reflect a diversity of individuals and what kind of implicit message that would send.

Caitlyn's dialogue responds in part to the resistance to equity initiatives from dominant groups. This discourse asserts equality and meritocracy, the belief that everyone should have the same opportunity and that whoever has the best qualifications should be selected; however, "[t]his discourse devalues minority groups by assuming that they are hired based on their membership in a designed group, not based on their qualifications…Minority groups and women are thus socially constructed as persons with deficiencies in skills, education, and work experiences – as individuals without merit" (Goldberg 2007, 208). The power of this attitude is evident in the widespread usage of its language. Take for example the following dialogue from Oliver, a racialized teacher who considers himself a beneficiary of equity policies.

So this is a term you might want to use: reverse racism. It’s a term that I heard. So because I’m Asian, I find a much better chance of landing a job than my other colleagues. And I think including that was reverse sexism, because I’m a male in an elementary school, which typically doesn’t have many males, has also helped me get a job before my colleagues.
The terms "reverse racism" and "reverse sexism" assert the belief that equity ignores the merit principle (Henry et al., 2005). While Oliver admits that he thinks equity initiatives helped him find a teaching job, he also talks about how a candidate must first and foremost be a good teacher and meet standard qualifications before being given any sort of advantage. This discourse is complex and often contains contradicting feelings. When racialized individuals reference these notions, it can perpetuate the belief that equity is unnecessary and undermine the personal characteristics and qualifications that allow them to be successful teachers.

In response to the argument that employment equity is reverse discrimination, Sleeter (2004) reframes the situation by asserting that racialized teachers have personal perspectives and experiences pertaining to race that are undeniably different from those of white teachers. On a similar train of thought, Caitlyn compares race to being a potential asset.

It’s a valid extra that you’re bringing to the school. For example, if you had someone who just had undergrad and somebody who had a teaching degree and an undergrad, wouldn’t you pick the person with the teaching degree? It’s a benefit that they could bring to the classroom, so is race and so is that perspective. I think it’s as valid as anything else, almost like a degree, like a qualification.

The challenge, however, with comparing race to a "qualification" is that qualifications do not always translate to abilities. An individual can complete preservice training, but to what extent they can be effective teachers in the classroom cannot be automatically assumed. In a similar vein, race can only suggest shared experiences, but it does not imply them; this distinction is pivotal in understanding the role of racialized teachers because of the fine line that exists between probability and generalization. How can the fine balance between acknowledging the potential significance of race and racializing individuals from a particular group possibly be maintained in a policy? A large-scale example of how policy has attempted to account for equity is the popular option to self-identify as being a "visible minority" that is found on many
applications for professional training programs and jobs. Whether or not this effort for equitable practices has been successful, however, is further explored in the following section.

7.4 "Visible Minority": To be or not to be?

Equity initiatives commonly take the form of an optional identification question on job applications and admissions forms, usually serving as evidence that governing institutions are being equitable; however, how this information is used or why it is being collected is usually not disclosed. The main reason being that the fundamental concept that equality and justice for all cannot be achieved in a school climate where students are viewed as individuals. Brayboy et al. (2007) assert that equality and justice are contradictory terms because in order to treat everyone fairly, we must treat them differently by accounting for the privileges and social differences held by members of different groups. What becomes complicated is how exactly are issues of difference taken into account and how are resources redistributed; after all, who decides what is fair? The complexity of this type of equity initiatives was discussed with racialized teachers.

All participants were asked to recall their preservice admissions process and more specifically, whether or not they remember having the option to identify as a "visible minority". Eighteen teachers remembered having this option and the three participants who did not remember being faced with this choice were all veteran teachers who each had 10-15 years of experience, suggesting that this demographical question is a development that took place within the past decade. Of the 18 teachers who remembered being faced with this option, 15 of them chose to voluntarily self-identify as being a "visible minority". The reasons that they shared for choosing to answer this question ranged from the desire to be honest about their demographical information to the belief that it would advantage them in the admissions process. For Maya, a
Chinese elementary school educator in her sixth year of teaching, the decision to self-identify was an easy one. She replies, "Well yeah because one, I am a visible minority! Like I identify with that background so yeah, I did check it off." On the other hand, Eric, an Indian secondary teacher interpreted the question as a way to increase his chances of being admitted, stating: "I feel like, from what I’ve been hearing, they’re trying to diversify the field so any advantage I can have, I took." Given the influence of dominant discourses as well as the ambiguity of past equity practices, Eric is not the only one under the impression that a "visible minority" identification advantages applicants. In fact, the majority of participants subscribed to this belief.

Numerous participants echoed the sentiment that if governing organizations were asking applicants about their demographical information, then it must mean that efforts were being made to diversify candidates and furthermore, that this diversification would be inherently positive. This automatic adherence to dominant discourse demonstrates yet again the power of these governing ideas. Zana responds to a question about equity initiatives in the application process by echoing notions resembling a multicultural discourse.

It's interesting that it would be a deciding factor in the sense that it's even asked because it shows you that there is some sort of awareness that we need more educators from diverse backgrounds. But I think as someone who is in charge of admissions, I would want more representation from different cultural groups to get different perspectives into Faculties and in schools too. I do think that that is important to have. Now with our population being so diverse, it is nice to kind of see people from different groups and offering different perspectives on issues.

The common understanding among participants was that selecting the "visible minority" option gives individuals an edge over others in the admissions process. Moreover, it is entirely possible that this was how equity policies were in fact being practiced at the time. Michael recalls his process with detail.

Actually it was called the "Access Initiative Program". I'm not sure how new it was at the time, but they made quite a big deal about it and they always made sure to let every candidate know that if you fall under any of the categories to certainly opt for it. And the
incentive apparently, as far as I understood from the application package, the incentive was that you would get preferred admission into the program or it would give you some point advantage or something.

Though some participants, such as Michael and Eric, were comfortable with the edge that membership to this group would give them, other participants were perturbed by the possibility that they would be admitted to teacher’s college based on these grounds. Zana, a South Asian secondary teacher in her third year of teaching, describes her thought process during this time.

I remember talking to my roommates about this and feeling a little conflicted on whether I should or shouldn't because I don't know, it was just sort of an interesting thing to check off. I didn't know why it was on the application first of all, then you're thinking of there must be a reason they want equal proportion, right? Or building that? And then I didn't know if this would set me apart for a reason that I didn't want.

Zana did ultimately choose to disclose a "visible minority" identity on her application, but it was a difficult decision that merited substantial reflection and even discussion with friends or family members. Interestingly enough, all the other participants who also chose to have this dialogue with individuals in their lives were part of the group that opted out of answering this question on the application form. Tanya, a West Indian secondary teacher in her tenth year of teaching, explains her reasoning. "Yeah, I really struggled with it actually. I remember having extensive conversations with my dad about it, but I think I wanted to get in based on merit, not based on the way I look." In a very similar line of thought, Gabrielle, a biracial West Indian and Chinese secondary teacher, talks about her reaction.

I wasn’t sure. It was an interesting discussion with my parents because yes, we are a racial minority, but then I didn’t want to be selected just because I was part of a racial minority. I wanted to stand because of my credentials and not for that. I’m not saying that if somebody did do that, that’s a crutch or anything or gives you an edge, but that was the decision that I made at that point.

Regardless of what decision participants made regarding this option on their applications, the majority of racialized teachers described feeling uneasy with the idea that they might be admitted based on their skin colour. Consistent throughout most participant voices was the desire to be
recognized first and foremost as an individual and not as a representative from a racial background. When racialized teachers are portrayed as ornaments of diversity, the value that inherently exists in experiences of difference as well as the fundamental skills required of an effective educator, are completely undermined. While the recognition of race as a difference can be an important point of departure for deeper understandings of social difference, it should not be “the terminal stations for depositing our agency and identities” (McCarthy, cited in Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012, 145). While race is meaningful, it should never be conclusive.

Edwin, a Caribbean secondary teacher with more than six years of experience, elaborates on his reasoning for abstaining from the question.

I just felt that I was strong enough of a candidate on my own without having to say that...Just myself personally, I didn't want to get in that way. I didn't want it to be like filling a quota. I wanted them to see I had all this teaching experience that wasn't necessarily sitting in a classroom... So when I was teaching martial arts for 10 years, I had all this stuff that I wanted to give and I wanted them to see that and not think of me as oh, it's a black man who has a black belt who has been teaching for this long...But of course I'm not ashamed of the fact that I'm black or whatever. I don't mind representing myself as being a black male, but in terms of getting into the course, teachers college, I didn't want to say this is why you should let me in. I wanted it to be my credentials and not my skin colour.

Most of the racialized teachers in this study were resistant to the notion that their individual, unique selves would be relegated to the colour of their skin. Although race has historically been the grounds for disadvantaging minorities, here in the scenario of preservice admissions, race was regarded as being advantageous to their potential candidacy in teacher education programs; however, this left some participants feeling arguably just as uncomfortable. Caitlyn is a black secondary educator who has been working for over four years. She describes how this option to identify as a "visible minority" influenced her preservice experience.

Within teachers college it was difficult because I would hear people basically putting down that program, saying it’s not fair, it’s not fair. It should be the best to get in, the best whatever. It made me angry. It made me insecure because were people looking at me assuming I only got in here because of my race and I’m not good enough? And they’ll
never know. I’ll never know. But there’s that comment over me sitting in this spot...And it came up a lot. A lot, a lot, a lot. And it’s just like, “How dare you?” and “How dare you even question this with people like me sitting at the table?” And I felt like they were questioning me, I really did. I felt like they were questioning me and no matter how good I was, there was always that, “Well, was she even good enough to be here? Was there a better candidate than her?”

Regardless of how the demographical information of applicants is actually utilized, its mere presence in the admissions process is enough to cause controversy. For racialized individuals like Zana, Tanya, Edwin, Gabrielle, and Caitlyn, this optional identification triggered feelings of uncertainty and discomfort. While the insertion of this question is a way for governing institutions to demonstrate that efforts are being made towards more equitable practices, the lack of transparency in these initiatives is grossly problematic, causing both dominant and non-dominant groups to feel uneasy about how this information is being used.

Dei (2005) emphasized that the notion of inclusion has been accepted, but that it is now time to focus on transparency and accountability. Without clear explanations on how equity initiatives actually work, it is difficult for all individuals to understand the motivations behind certain policies, and even harder to believe that they are effective in upholding equity. Arianna made a suggestion for how to improve understandings of the identification question on applicants.

There needs to be more transparency, right? And I guess maybe let's say there was the option of checking off, "Are you a visible minority?", maybe just a little explanation of how that, on paper, like what that means, why's it important, how is it significant, how it affects the hiring process. But I mean that's not just a Board thing, that's a government initiative that needs to be implemented.

Educational institutions must examine the existence of any inequitable schooling or hiring practices that limit the number of racial minorities who enter the field; however, this will require dominant groups to acknowledge the systemic nature of these issues (Ryan et al., 2009). On the website of a Faculty of Education at a post-secondary institution in Toronto, a copy of their most
recent preservice applications is available and not only did it include the optional section for applicants to identify themselves, but it also provided a concise explanation about why this information was being collected.

In this section, we invite you to tell us more about your background and identity. **Your responses are voluntary and this information will not be used in making admission decisions** [Emphasis from original text]. After the admission decisions are made, this information will help us (1) check that our admissions processes were fair to all groups of applicants, (2) develop services that are relevant for our future teacher candidates, and (3) plan our future outreach to potential applicants.

Since past versions of this application are not readily accessible online, it is unknown during which year this above statement was inserted. Given the collected data from participants, it is probable that this is a very recent modification to the application because the participants who are recent graduates of this particular Faculty of Education did not recall ever seeing this explanation. While it would be worthwhile to hear applicant reactions to this revised portion of the preservice application in future research, this is only characteristic of one application process of one teacher training program. The above explanation of the optional demographical identification provides much more detail than most application forms, but exactly what or how services or outreach will be carried out in favour of equity remains vague.

The topic of equity is complex; it is intertwined with anti-racist approaches that aim to give power to marginalized circumstances that result in fundamental social inequalities (Wotherspoon 2009). However, the call for equity policies must consider how these same initiatives often act more as symbols of progress than structures for systemic change. Tanya points out that, "It's ironic that they don’t really apply the principles that they claim to apply, that they promote. It’s just really about maintaining the status quo and the reputation rather than improving the quality of the program". The voices of these racialized teachers highlight how the ambiguity of equity policies has allowed for a wide range of interpretations and reactions. While
a lot of criticism exists surrounding these initiatives, these topics of race and equity must be more openly discussed if they are to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. Without these critical discussions, these terms start to lose meaning. When asked about her thoughts on the shift from multiculturalism to anti-racism and equity, Arianna replied, “To be honest, I'm new to teaching, but I think a lot of it is sometimes just jargon. It's a new term for the same thing. It's just rehashed or whatever." Arianna was not the only participant to comment on the superficiality of educational terminology. Sabrina remarked, "If you keep asking people to spout out these x, y, z buzz words at these rates, then doesn’t that eliminate a lot of the difference that we may be interested in tapping into?" These perspectives provide an interesting counterpoint for earlier ideas on the power of language by demonstrating how empty the key phrases in policies are capable of becoming if no efforts are made to foster deeper understandings of why these terms are important and how exactly they're implemented.

Nevertheless, the power of dominant discourse remains evident because its dissemination of these words, albeit often incomplete, contributes to how individuals understand equity. So the question becomes how do we work towards improving understandings of equity in education? Chloe remarked that, "What is unfortunate is this; I think that everything has to happen in teacher's college. I think teacher's college is just breeding ground for anything to permeate and become entrenched." Preservice programs are commonly cited as the most suitable vehicle for better preparing future teachers in topics of race, equity, and anti-racism (Au, & Blake, 2003; Dlamini, 2002). Achinstein, & Ogawa (2011) state that, “It makes little sense to employ strategies to culturally diversify the teacher workforce if new teachers of color are not provided opportunities to develop and enact the very commitments and practices for which policymakers and educators sought them out” (p.170). These opportunities for learning are assumed to be
provided in teacher education as well as professional development workshops throughout an educator's career, however the following section takes a closer look at how these programs have been experienced by racialized teachers.

7.5 The Roles of Teacher Education and Professional Development

The final section in this chapter explores the possibility of teacher education and professional development as viable methods for fostering deeper understandings of anti-racism and equity by listening to participant voices. After all, Au & Blake (2003) have postulated that "research should be directed at understanding the perspectives and experiences of teacher education candidates of diverse backgrounds, as the basis for designing teacher education programs that will prepare them to be successful in their work in schools" (p.202). Numerous studies have suggested that teacher education is the means through which significant changes can be made for the future of teaching (Brayboy et al., 2007; Dlamini, 2002), especially with regard to educating individuals about equity and anti-racism. Maria talked about how important this process is for a teacher, and how it is currently lacking.

It's just about teacher training. And teacher training right now whether it be in teacher's college or beyond does not reflect the depth of this issue and does not reflect the urgency of really validating our students' experiences and bringing them in the classroom and having everyone as a community, a school, a classroom, a board, a community reflect on those students' experiences... Are people bringing that in? No, probably because they don't know about it. So it's not necessarily the teacher's fault, it's a systemic thing where anti-racism is not enough in our education as teachers.

Findings revealed that numerous participants did not learn about anti-racism or equity in their preservice programs. In fact, for some of them, this study constituted one of their first exposures to the term "anti-racism," and dialogues such as the following were typical.

Interviewer: In teacher's college did you ever come across the term “anti-racism”? Or anti-racist education?
Caitlyn: Hmm…no. I read about the term "curriculum reflective of culture". I can’t remember what the term was, but never anti…what?

Interviewer: Racism, anti-racism.

Caitlyn: Yeah, no never.

It is worthwhile to note that Caitlyn completed her preservice training only five years ago, which is fairly recent, yet there was no mention of anti-racism in her program. On the other hand, some participants did recognize the term from teacher's college, but struggled to recall exactly what it means. Samantha described it, saying "The anti-racist stuff is more, not understanding the people, but really understanding our humanness and understanding that we are all human beings and our humanity makes us flawed." Her definition does not mention power relations or the presence of systemic racism in our society, which leads us to question how anti-racism is being taught in teacher education, if even taught at all.

There is the legitimate concern that topics relating to diversity are integrated into the preservice training curriculum in a very superficial way (Villegas, & Lucas, 2002). This suspicion was confirmed by a few participants such as Eric, who talked about why he thought anti-racism was a challenging topic to take up.

Interviewer: In teacher's college, did you guys ever touch upon anti-racism?

Eric: Yes, it was again, a very superficial topic. It was unilateral in that we weren’t allowed to discuss it much because I think there was a fear on the prof’s part that the class would just blow up with their views and opinions. So we never really got to discuss that much more than anything. It was, as far as I can remember, there was a bit of talking, but the facilitator was very…what’s the word I’m looking for? Careful, in what was being said and how he would direct the conversation.

The hesitation commonly associated with broaching topics of race resurfaces once again. Wane (2007) wrote that, "Race-based policies remain...a taboo in mainstream conversation. In multiracial spaces in both Canada and the United States, talking about race is always a difficult, emotional engagement; its entangled and inconspicuous nature entails discomfort and unresolved
issues" (p.162). These undesirable feelings are echoed by Eric's memory of class discussions during his preservice training and the pivotal role of the instructor. Calling to mind earlier discussions about a lack of practical resources for an anti-racism education, this scenario requires us to ask, how do we teach "anti-racism"?

The finding that numerous participants were unable to thoroughly explain this term despite having learned about it in the past undermines the argument for an "anti-racism" course in teacher's college. Of these racialized teachers, the vast majority of them said that the preservice courses where they talked about race and equity were electives, which is a common trait of "diversity courses" in many teacher education programs (Villegas, & Lucas, 2002). Tanya, however, explains why she thinks that the optional nature of these courses is problematic.

I think anti-racism should be a mandatory course... in teacher's college, in the B.Ed. program. The problem with the B.Ed. program right now is that a course that should incorporate that is the [Course Name] class, but this class is taught by so many different professors and as we know, professors have this sort of academic sense of privilege. They're going to teach what they think is suitable or what is of interest, so what that means is that graduates of this program do not necessarily have a solid foundation in terms of what they're supposed to learn here. So some walk away learning about issues of equity and anti-racist education and some don't! ...Yeah, the content varies overall. Some people learn something and some people learn something else like everybody learns something different.

The reality is that there is no set curriculum for the preservice program, which is what Tanya credited for the gaps in knowledge between teachers. Even if these types of courses were made mandatory, it remains unclear how anti-racism can effectively be taught in such a way that teachers not only understand why it's important to practice, but how to carry it out in their classrooms. Brayboy et al. (2007) asserted that, "Teacher training programs must prepare teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in equity-driven changes" (p.172). Furthermore, good intentions such as the ones that are arguably found in discourses of
multiculturalism and colour-blindness, can often constrain the ability of educators to transform their own practice.

Possibly the reason why preservice training is frequently touted as a solution is because it takes place at the beginning of teachers' careers and is supposed to have a lasting influence on their lifelong practices. Provided that the field of education is always changing, however, professional development and the belief in being lifelong learners, are widely endorsed components of the teaching profession. Unfortunately, similar to the case of teacher education, professional development sessions are not perfect. Gabrielle talked about how she signed up for an optional course with School Board B about anti-racist and multicultural education that she attended one evening per week for three months. Upon completion of the course, all teachers received a certificate that went into their employee files with Human Resources. Despite speaking positively of the experience, Gabrielle had a difficult time providing specific examples of what was done in these classes and above all, she was still unclear about anti-racism theory.

Gabrielle: I think the lines are blurred a lot between multiculturalism and anti-racism, so talking about inclusivity, making sure that the way things are worded in things that we teach or produce, like handouts or whatever, are inclusive and not biased towards any race or if they're ethno-centric, making sure those kinds of things are not happening. And making sure that the students are validated for whatever background that they come from.

Interviewer: This is multicultural education or anti-racist education?

Gabrielle: I think it’s both. It’s hard to define. All the policies are kind of interwoven, so that’s a difficulty that teachers face, but then again if they don’t, teachers don’t participate in opportunities like these, like if you don’t take a course then you might not even know what it’s about. So I’m sure if there was a survey to be taken, most teachers wouldn’t even know what you’re talking about.

Interviewer: So how would you differentiate the two: antiracism and multiculturalism?

Gabrielle: I would say anti-racist would be not putting down other races. Multicultural would be more celebration of cultures and making sure that everyone is included in what is displayed in the classroom or through the work or through the readings or whatever you’re doing in the classroom.
Gabrielle recognizes that there is a lack of knowledge on the part of educators about race-related initiatives and although she cites professional development, such as the course she took, as a way to address that need, she still demonstrates uncertainty about what these theories are about.

Not only was Gabrielle the only teacher at a school with almost 100 teachers on staff to sign up for this optional course, she was also the only participant in this study who completed voluntary professional development on anti-racism. Again, these findings underscore the themes of how anti-racism can be effectively taught and whether or not this professional training should be made mandatory for all teachers. Chloe shared her thoughts on why it is important that professional development remain optional.

My philosophy is nothing should be mandatory when it comes to the profession because when something is mandated, it’s almost as if you get the teachers’ backs up...My philosophy is if you have a great program, a great policy, you get the few that are interested to run it and then you get them to share it and have that wildfire spread then people start to adopt it because it becomes, “Oh. What is it that you’re doing? Oh I heard…” And then it spreads and people are more interested, but if it’s situation where it’s top-down, “You need to,” then even before it’s given a chance, they’ve already rejected it...Those teachers who feel like, you know what, everything is about anti-racism, I’m not…it seems as if they almost have to prove that. If you impose things, especially on people who are resistant, they’ll resist even more. So it’s just better not to. It’s better to present it: this is what exists here. If you’re interested, come take part.

This approach to professional development is idealistic, hinged on the belief that good methods and policy will be adopted by virtue of their effectiveness, word-of-mouth, and the individual initiatives of every educator. Unfortunately, since an anti-racist education is more a philosophy of teaching rather than a subject speciality, most participants admitted that they would prefer to attend workshops relevant to their teaching areas. When asked if he would attend a PD on anti-racism, Oliver, who is an elementary science and physical education teacher, replied, "Only if I was forced to. It would not be high on my list... I would skim over it. For the next course it’ll be science, then another one I want to do is outdoor education." Almost every teacher in this study
recalled only attending professional development that was specifically related to their specialization.

A few of them, such as Arianna and Tanya, cited time as being the reason why teachers are not able to learn more about issues of equity and racism. Arianna explained, "I think it's a lack of time because teachers are so busy with everything and trying to balance everything and manage it." These examples provide insight as to why Chloe's approach of keeping these courses optional does not work; educators are notoriously juggling several things at once and often only go out of the way to do professional development that they see as being directly related to their subject matter. Tanya thought about the role of funding in this situation.

The alternative then would be for school boards to provide more funding for professional development or more time for professional development, but the reality is that that does not exist either. And if there is professional development, people often choose professional development opportunities that are reflective of their individual areas of interest, right? So if I like technology, I’m just going to take a bunch of technology courses and never, ever have to engage in an anti-racist framework.

While the downside with keeping anti-racism courses optional becomes evident, the thought of making them mandatory is also problematic because people do not like to feel like they are being forced into anything, especially when matters involve a taboo topic such as race; these reasons were why Chloe adamantly supported the optional nature of these courses. Sabrina took a different approach and talked about how it is important to be persistent when trying to bring about any type of change. She argued, "Well I think it’s like any sort of change, you just keep offering, keep offering, keep offering. And sometimes you just have to tap people on the shoulder. And if they go, they go. Sometimes it’s a question of exposure, it’s like vocabulary. You need 12 to 15 exposures to actually start using it and absorbing it." While it is important for individuals to become acclimatized to new concepts and ideas, the widespread taboo of race-related issues as well as the negative connotation associated with anti-racism have made these
exposures infrequent, illustrated by the number of participants who had never come across the term "anti-racist education".

Alex talked about why professional development on issues of race and equity are challenging to introduce to teachers in either case of them being mandatory or voluntary.

Some of them [teachers] would even feel that it had been forced even though it’s optional, but what else would you have done? That would have probably been the only option, unless you’re going to do something else and then you’re blacklisted. Even if mandatory, some teachers would take it with a grain of salt, like I’m here I’ll just sit in and I’ll do whatever, I’ll just have a newspaper in front of me while they’re presenting in front and for some teachers, this is actually interesting stuff.

A theme that has been simmering throughout these discussions about teacher training and professional development is pointed out by Alex: an individual's consciousness about race. Is it possible that an educator's ability to adopt anti-racism into his or her classroom practices simply depends on having a consciousness about race? Is this something that can be developed among teachers? Furthermore, is it something that is easier to develop among racialized teachers?

When Gabrielle was asked why she decided to take the optional course on cultural diversity and anti-racism, she replied, "I did it partially because I know I teach in a diverse school board and I’m a racial minority as well so I kind of found that dimension and I always keep that in mind as I teach." The fact that Gabrielle references her personal identification as a racialized individual in her reasoning for pursuing professional development in the area of anti-racism supports the notion that a racialized identity can be connected to an awareness about race; however, this correlation cannot be assumed, especially provided that the vast majority of participants did not pursue this kind of professional development. "What needs to be examined is the practicality of the expectation that teachers will engage in an anti-racist discourse without proper training and with conservative ideologies on race" (Dlamini, 2002, p. 53). Additionally, asserting that racialized teachers are more disposed to knowing about issues of anti-racism
creates segregation from white teachers. Caitlyn believes that the key to any successful professional development lies in the attitudes of those in attendance.

I think offering the workshops would be great, but in the end it comes down to how open-minded are they to understanding. If it comes down to offering it or not offering it, then offer it. I’m sure that there will be people who’ll understand, but those ignorant ones? They’ll stay ignorant until they leave this profession and that’s the only thing that they’ll know how to do. It would really help for the ones who are really on board and who understand, but to force everybody to do it will force some teachers to backlash even more. And for some, it could be eye-opening. It could be good for them. It would be good for me to learn about other cultures. I know myself as a minority, but I don’t know myself as an Indian minority or a Filipino minority. But I want those PD sessions or workshops to be filled with something tangible. What can I take back to my classroom? Don’t just tell me about the culture, I can learn that on Wikipedia. What can I take back into my classroom?

This excerpt raises several important points such as the possible harm that could be caused by mandating courses for teachers, the quality of the content in these courses, and lastly, the colossal role of an educator’s ideological beliefs in shaping their classroom practice.

The first two points were further supported by Tanya, who described a negative experience at her school when an Equity Officer from the Board was invited to come speak to the entire teaching staff about School Board A’s principles of equity. When one of her white colleagues made an inappropriate joke during the presentation, the racialized guest speaker became very upset and aggressively broached the topic of white privilege by pointing out how the portraits of all the past principals at this particular school, who were all white males, should not be displayed so prominently in the school. This comment resulted in staff members storming out in the middle of the presentation and leaving a lot of residual tension between teachers. Tanya described her reaction to the entire experience.

I’m like, “You don’t first of all know anything about those white males,” right? Like “This is the school’s history!” But as a historian, do you just protect a history because it existed or do you really problematize it? ...So my assessment of the presentation was that I think her point was absolutely valid, but I think you have to know your audience...You can’t just attack white privilege right away.
The people that got up and walked out of the auditorium, like they would have never gotten up and walked out of any other presentation, but they chose to walk out of an equity presentation, which was really, really hurtful because you know, as a professional, I sit in meetings where I may not necessarily agree with what I’m hearing, but I don’t get up and storm out of a meeting and behave in such an unprofessional and disrespectful manner. And the problem was they were not penalized or they were not given a smack on the wrist by our administration, so it was kind of condoning behaviour that in a professional environment is completely unacceptable, particularly in relation to the student body and student demographic that you’re responsible for.

Tanya's lived experience of a mandatory PD on equity touches upon many of the complex challenges involved with broaching this topic: sensitivity of the subject matter, effective ways of teaching anti-racism, and the importance of educational leadership. The fact that these events were not formally addressed by the administration at Tanya's school intensifies the volatility of these issues and makes it that much more difficult to bring up in the future. If administration does not demonstrate a clear comprehension of and commitment to anti-racism, then it becomes extremely difficult for all of its sub-sectors to enact sustainable, institutional-wide change. Chloe talked about why she thinks that many teachers are not interested in pursuing professional development on equity and anti-racism. She said, "Maybe it has to do with the fact that there have been a lot of ineffective PDs, so it’s just like 'Ugh, we have to do this,' as opposed to, 'It’s a good learning opportunity'." This approach underscores the danger in offering a workshop or course that is not well-developed; not only will it fail to foster deeper understandings of race and equity among its participants, but it will influence their attitudes about future opportunities surrounding these same issues.

Returning to Tanya's disappointing experience with an equity workshop and the lack of leadership in her situation, Matt talked about how anti-racism is difficult to promote in a school where it is not valued by administration.

The vast majority of administrators are the multicultural model, so the question is, if you’re doing an anti-racist model, is it really being valued? What criteria...are we using
to determine whether someone would be a good leader or not? Is anti-racist education part of that criteria? When I’ve asked people, instructional leaders in the area of anti-racist education, is that the criterion by which you judge a good leader, unfortunately I don’t think it is. It’s part of the conversation but it’s not like, this is a deal breaker. If somebody’s obviously not anti-racist, you can still get the job depending on who you know: nepotism.

Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2012) state that the school administration plays a pivotal role in moving beyond reductionist and essentialist notions of race and multiculturalism, which brings us to reflect on how anti-racism is actually prioritized by our educational institutions. Perhaps its disappearing presence in dominant discourses, as observed in Chapter 4, has communicated the message that issues of race and equity do not need to be as urgently addressed as other matters in education. If this situation were true, then it would undermine the argument that policies are but symbols of change, and instead lend support to the importance of educational documents in determining what is regarded as a priority in schools. Maria asserted that a reconsideration of the role of policymakers in working towards institutional change.

I don't think it's in our policymakers' interests to make those shifts because right now policy is serving them quite well. It's not like they feel like they have any crisis in education. They don't care that kids are alienated. They don't care that kids aren't getting jobs. They don't care that kids are dropping out of school except when it comes to bottom lines. So for example, if you want to make a proposal for alternative school in the city, what you need to do is you need to prove that there's a clientele that's not being served by the board. It's very business-oriented. This group of kids is dropping out of school. We need to get them back to school so they can graduate and they don't need to go on to higher education, they just need to not be leeching off the system. Like how do we do that? It has nothing to do with the kids themselves and it doesn't have anything to do with people. It has to do with profit, so I don't think the policymakers actually want things to change. It's not in their interests and we need to recognize that.

Maria expressed distrust towards dominant groups and their motivations to work towards change, which is a difficult conclusion to arrive at. Where then, can we look for change, support, and leadership? The power of institutional policies and dominant discourses in shaping widespread attitudes about equity, race, and anti-racism is undeniable. And if it is not realistic to
expect policymakers to refocus their priorities onto these issues, then where do we turn for help?

A thorough examination of these findings with respect to past research establishes reasonable grounds to propose that first and foremost, teachers need to turn to one another to enact change in the field of education. Developing an awareness of anti-racism and fostering understandings about equity are achievable through explicit discussions in safe environments with individuals who are open-minded to thinking and re-thinking about the ways we that tackle these issues in our practices and roles as educators. The support for teachers to talk about race and equity is lacking; in the past, many racialized teachers have attested to feeling as though they had no one to turn to for help on challenges relating to social difference (Achinstein, & Aguirre, 2008). Matt shared, "I think that we as non-white teachers have to support each other more... Sometimes what we have to realize is that the system is getting better, but it’s still racist, it’s still sexist, it’s inequitable, but we’re not supporting each other." Opening up the lines of communication between racialized teachers could contribute to the formation of a community wherein individuals will have the opportunity to share their feelings and lived experiences. Maria suggested ways for this collaboration between educators to be facilitated.

It's really up to individual teachers to get together who have that perspective to educate each other and to find alternative forums to do that education in...I think it's about finding alternative ways to educate each other and connect with each other. And it's great we have things like facebook right now where you can find teachers who are like-minded... So there are some really exciting teacher projects right now that I think are promising where people are trying to do that stuff and hopefully they'll take off and continue to grow.

Stories such as the ones shared in this study need to be heard. If we are, as a society, to work successfully towards a future where equity and inclusion are closer to lived realities than topics of discussion, it is important that individuals who have been minoritized and racialized in the
system be given the opportunity to speak and be heard. And most importantly, we need to keep our minds open to having this discussion. We need to keep talking.

Sabrina: So that’s why when you come and you want to talk about this, it’s like yeah you know what, I’m still interested in talking about it because I don’t think we’re done talking about it. And I think that’s kind of the stance that we do take in correct, polite, Canadian society – that we’re done talking. We’re not done talking. We’re not done talking about this anymore that we are talking about women and how it’s different from being a man and sexual orientation. We’re just not done talking.
Chapter 8
CONCLUSION

This journey started in the classroom, permeating my role as a teacher and the relationships that I had forged with my students, colleagues, administrators, and the surrounding school community. My motivation to pursue this research was rooted in the belief that the salience of race and the power of dominant discourses were constantly at odds with my racial and professional identities. Whenever someone would remark that it was "good for the students" that I was there in the school, feelings of discomfort, uncertainty, and doubt would flood my perception of the "visible minority" teacher, of *me* as that "visible minority" teacher. This project has given me the opportunity to reflect on my experiences with other racialized educators, and for me it has made all the difference.

It is worth noting that the initial title of this research project was “The Racialization and Role Modeling of “Visible Minority” Teachers: Lived Experiences or Naïve Expectations?” However, as illustrated by the heading of Chapter 6, my findings have allowed me to conclude that it is not a question of one or the other (because it is in fact both), but that what is more imperative to ask is how can individuals manage the fact that this racialization is taking place? Otherwise, as depicted by numerous participants who subscribed to widespread ideas about their racialization, the power of dominant discourses is undeniable in shaping the way that we understand ourselves in this society. This tendency leads to a process of double racialization, wherein racialized individuals participate in their own racialization, a social phenomenon that is crucial to remark because it raises questions about the role of one's consciousness about race.
What does it mean to be racialized without having engaged with one's racial identity and how race as a social construct is salient in one's life?

Notions of racial and professional identities were explored with participants as it became very clear that there is a certain multiplicity to who we are as individuals and that our circumstances are constantly causing us to shift and change. The findings from this project illustrate that an individual’s consciousness and understanding of these multiple identities directly influenced his or her priorities as a teacher, the way he or she relates to students, and whether or not equity and inclusion are prioritized in the classroom. The more teachers critically reflect on these issues, the more likely they are to openly take up these topics with their students. Thus it is not a matter of already possessing a consciousness about race, but having the capacity to develop it, which all individuals arguably do, whether they are racialized or not. What then, is the significance of racialized teachers if all teachers can be anti-racist educators? Returning to this project's anti-racist framework, we are always facing the reality that race is salient. Being salient, however, is not the same as being symbolic.

Relying on symbolism falls into the trap of the politics of representation and the role model discourse, wherein superficial appearances are used to satisfy complex needs. The notion that racialized educators will automatically serve as "role models" for racialized students is a reductionist approach that simplifies the relationship between two individuals to their racial affiliation. On the other hand, the importance of having a positive individual in your life who you can aspire to be like, cannot be overlooked. The teachers in this study shared lived experiences that led to the establishment of a distinction between the symbolic, superficial state of being a "role model" and the dynamic act of "role-modeling". The former must be discarded, or its usage
re-evaluated in favour for the latter, which not only emphasizes the active engagement required to build that relationship between individuals, but also the multiplicity of our identities; individuals cannot be reduced to race and there are so many other facets of a person that can allow him or her to partake in role-modeling for others. Role-modeling is not restricted to persons who share a similar racial identity, and to sustain that belief is to fall victim to dominant discourses that we need to disrupt, and not uphold.

Furthermore, the call for "visible minority" teachers is a discourse propagated by dominant structures that, as anti-racist researchers, we must challenge and disrupt. The role of racialized teachers is fundamental to Ontario's domain of education, not because they symbolize diversity, but because their capacity to address issues of equity and race is deepened by their own lived experiences and journeys as racialized individuals. Should school systems attempt to recruit more racialized teachers? Schools systems should recruit teachers whose social differences and diverse lived experiences have fostered in them a fervent commitment to delivering an education that embodies issues of race, equity, and inclusion. In this project it was found that virtually all the teachers in this study believe in and some were even carrying out an anti-racist education in their classrooms without realizing it because of their unfamiliarity or discomfort with using the words "anti-racism". In other words, they believe in the cause, but struggle to embrace the name. What, then, is in a name?

Numerous participants in this study confirmed that “anti-racism” is still a term evocative of negative connotations. Although not a solitary individual objected to this theory’s ideological makeup, its name alone was enough to deter teachers from learning more about it, advocating its cause, or adopting it in their classroom practices. These findings pose crucial questions about
how integral the name of a theory is to the theory in and of itself. Anti-racism activists are encouraged to reflect on how often their approach is resisted or altogether rejected not because of its actual intentions, but due to its choice of terminology and the blatant fact that race remains a social taboo that few people feel comfortable talking about. An idea for future research is to present identical models of an anti-racist education to two groups with the only difference being the terminology used to present the teaching model; in one case it would be explicitly touted as an “anti-racist” approach, and in the other it would be referenced as something neutral such as “approach A”, then developing a way to gauge the likelihood of teachers to use these methods depending on what name it was introduced as.

Regarding this project's examination of institutional documents on equity and inclusion, a thorough analysis revealed that while much progress has been made in acknowledging the roles of social difference in shaping how students are able to participate in education, the theory of anti-racism has not been adequately addressed. Anti-racism theory is scarcely found throughout current policies from the Ministry of Education as well as the four public school boards studied from the Greater Toronto Area. Furthermore, its intermittent occurrence is never accompanied by an explanation of its theoretical proponents nor its educational objectives. These meagre and unsubstantiated references to anti-racism provide reason to believe that they are residual pieces of pre-existing initiatives dating back to NDP leadership in the 1990s, having survived the various changes enacted by the subsequent Conservative party and the current Liberal government. It is important to consider exactly what was achieved by the anti-racist policies of the NDP; their efforts at integrating anti-racism conjured both bouts of support as well as resistance from various parties. This resistance, in addition to a short term in political leadership,
made it difficult for anti-racist policy to be developed, implemented, or sustained by the NDP beyond the structural creation of school board departments, statements, and posters devoted to anti-racism. Today what is left of anti-racism in educational policy is tokenistic at best, perhaps signalling that it is a bridge that has already been crossed, and one that they are not eager to revisit due to lasting feelings of discomfort surrounding how to approach the topic of race. The questions that remain for educational organizations, such as the Ministry of Education and public school boards, in the domain of policy revolve around whether or not they are willing to commit to challenging the imbalanced power structures that pervade our society, and if so, how this commitment will be translated into policy that is effective, transparent, and above all, meaningful.

Findings also reaffirmed a clear gap between policy and practice, with most participants admitting their unfamiliarity with provincial as well as district educational documents on equity and inclusion. While policy is usually only intended to provide guidelines for school practices, it remains too far removed from teachers’ daily classroom lives. There needs to be an additional component to connect it to educators, who are often not given the time or reason to go reading policy manuals or legislation. More resources, in the form of lesson plans or professional development workshops, need not only to be made available to teachers, but developed in a meaningful way. Lee's (1985) *Letters to Marcia* is an exemplary hands-on classroom resource for anti-racist education; almost three decades later, it still stands as a model of how policy can be translated into a form of practice that is accessible to educators. More guides like the aforementioned need to be created and widely disseminated in schools and staffrooms, but anti-racist initiatives must not stop there. It is crucial to determine what methods will be effective in
communicating the importance of topics such as equity and anti-racism and equipping teachers with the reasons why as well as the methods how to carry out policy initiatives. It would be beneficial to study how different workshop designs are received by educators when it comes to anti-racism and talking about race in education. As some participants argued, teacher’s college could be a good starting point for these conversations.

Teacher education is relevant for this project’s recommendations for future research on areas that can be examined as potential sites for change and improvement. Numerous participants were very critical of their experience in preservice training, which they frequently blamed for the unpreparedness or lack of knowledge among certified, working teachers. The problem with pegging preservice training programs as the solution is that the teaching profession is constantly evolving and what may be viewed as the acceptable way to go about something now may not necessarily stand the test of time 20 years later in an individual’s career. This constantly changing nature of education is why professional development is such a crucial component of this field. Nonetheless, teacher’s college is an appropriate and timely period during which to start building an individual’s knowledge on issues of equity and exploring one's capacity for understanding topics of race; however this feat is easier said than done and relates back to the challenge of creating effective workshops that provide practical solutions. How do we teach people to be conscious about race and the privileges that it grants and withholds? How do we develop these individual consciousnesses about race in a way that is sustainable and sensitive to the widespread discomfort associated with topics of race? These questions are vital to examine if improvements are to be made in deepening understandings of race and equity in education.
Additionally, initiatives dealing with anti-racism and equity need to be carried out with transparency. Without clear explanations about why certain methods are being adopted, misunderstandings are prone to occur. A commonly employed equity initiative is the option to self-identify as a “visible minority” found on application forms for jobs and admission to post-secondary programs. Without providing the knowledge as to why this question exists or how exactly this collected information is used, participants discussed being made to feel confused, insecure, uncomfortable, and even undermined by the possibility that their race would be relevant in deciding whether or not they would be good teachers. Without efforts to foster understandings about race and equity, or more transparent presentations of these initiatives, efforts made to remove discriminatory barriers are often misinterpreted as the desertion of traditional standards and contribute to worsening misconceptions of equity.

I myself had conflicting feelings about how the colour of my skin shaped my classroom practices. I struggled to make sense of the expectations surrounding my role as a racialized educator, expectations which I have come to understand as being a form of democratic racism. Whatever truth can be found in assumptions of racialized teachers as cultural ambassadors, role models, or experts in anti-racism, is all naught if it contributes to the racialization of these individuals. Good intentions are not good enough without careful consideration of how they continue to maintain power imbalances between dominant and non-dominant groups. Policies that endorse a teaching force that is “reflective” of our racially diverse student population need to be revised to take into account how this initiative contributes to misunderstandings about race and equity. Personal connections to my study allowed my experiences as a researcher to be meaningful beyond belief; the opportunity to listen to 21 unique voices has left me forever
changed. Once lived experiences started being shared, they were often reciprocated, and talked about in great depth. As time progressed in each of these interviews, participants evidently became more comfortable, candid, and invested in these topics. For example, when the consent form was being filled out at the beginning of one participant's interview, she did not express any interest in being sent any future publications or findings from this study; however, after I had turned off the tape recorder and was in the midst of wrapping up her interview, she told me she had changed her mind and would like to be informed of the results of my research. The process of being interviewed and given a voice to express her feelings and lived experiences was enough to spark interest within this one teacher for the topics of race and equity in education.

Throughout the interviews, several participants used the phrase “people like me,” when they were trying to describe the challenges and feelings associated with being a racialized teacher. Hearing different individuals choose these particular words, “people like me,” evokes feelings of shared experience, solidarity, and community, which in turn inspired the revised and final title of this research project. These proposed communities would be a safe place where topics of race, equity, and anti-racism can be openly discussed without fear of judgement or admonishment; furthermore, this space will be available to any and all those interested. The idea of “people like me” emphasizes how points of connection exist between all of us, whether they are found in our racial, professional, or any other aspect of our individual identities. We are each so much more than the way we look or the jobs that we have. Teachers do not learn from each other as much as they could and this absence of sharing and communication can be contributed to a lack of community. The question for future research then becomes, how do we undertake the creation of these communities? After all, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) currently
exist as strategy that is mandated within public school boards in the GTA; perhaps this is a starting point for future research to consider as a space for change.

My conviction in the notion of community lies in my experiences as a researcher for this study. The vast majority of participants remarked at least once during the interviews that it was the first time that they had ever been asked for their opinions on these issues or that they had never thought about these topics until this study came along. The frequency of this reaction demonstrates the urgent need for more open discussions about race, anti-racism, and equity in education. It is my hope that this study serves as an example of how a collaboration of voices from the racialized teaching community can help individuals develop a consciousness about the ways that race inadvertently affects our lives and consequently, why it is so important for policies to reflect the complexity of these issues. I am convinced that the formation of communities where racialized educators can convene to share their lived experiences, questions, and concerns is one of the most positive things that can occur in the field of education if we are as a society to move closer towards the ideals of inclusion and equity.

I strongly believe that these dialogues provided so much more than a source of data, but rather a constructive mélange of ideas, mutual support, and above all, comfort for all participants in knowing that we, as racialized individuals in the field of education, are not alone. To return to my initial research questions, this study found that racialized teachers often struggle to understand their roles as “visible minority” educators; moreover, they can even be influenced by the power of dominant discourses to the point where they participate in their own racialization. All of them, however, insisted on the multiplicity of their identities and rejected the notion of being reduced to the colour of their skin. The lived experiences of these participants confirmed
several aspects of past studies such as anti-racism's negative connotation, the taboo nature of race, the fluid nature of identity, and the complexity of racially matching teachers to students. Findings also challenged the effectiveness of educational equity initiatives and problematized the widespread discourse that more racialized teachers will automatically respond to the needs of our racially diversifying communities. This project has deepened the area of research on racialized educators by contributing a work that revolves around their voices, their experiences, and their lived realities. It is a work about "people like me" written by "people like me" and by inviting these individuals to the table, their stories now provide another dimension to conversations about race, equity, anti-racism, and policy—a conversation to which they should be invited, welcomed, and made part of and not just a subject of.

The roles of educators’ race in their classroom practices and school relationships hinges largely on their capacity to learn about issues of equity and develop their consciousness of race. Future research needs to investigate effective methods to foster an awareness of anti-racism tenets amongst teachers. Educator understandings of the existing dominant discourses in education on equity, diversity, and anti-racism were found to be all over the map, possibly attributed to the lack of transparency found in policies, which paves the way for inconsistent and often counterproductive attitudes from racialized teachers. My suggestions for future research are grounded in a disruption of dominant discourses that misrepresent the role of racialized teachers, a re-examination of educational documents and their commitments to equity, the development of effective teaching methods for anti-racism, above all, an optimistic and unrelenting call for community. This journey has but ended; we are forever standing at the beginning of something better.
References


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Appendix A: Recruitment E-mail for Teacher Participants
(This letter will be printed on an OISE/University of Toronto institutional letterhead.)

Date: ______________________

Dear (Name of Collegial Contact),

I am currently a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. As one of the requirements to obtain my Doctorate of Philosophy in Education, I am conducting a research project to explore the experiences of racial minority teachers in diverse schools. My study is titled, “The Racialization and Role Modeling of “Visible Minority” Teachers: Lived Realities or Naive Expectations?” This project has been approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Office (ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273) and is under the supervision of Dr. Diane Gérin-Lajoie (diane.gerin.lajoie@utoronto.ca or 416-978-1993). I am writing to ask you if you know any professional contacts, colleagues, or friends who may be interested in participating in my study.

I am planning to interview 20 racial minority teachers who teach a level from Kindergarten to Grade 12. They must have at least two years of teaching experience at a public school board and be currently working full-time at a publicly-funded school board in the Greater Toronto Area. For this study, racial minority individuals are persons who identify themselves as being Black, South Asian, East Asian, Latin American, or Middle Eastern. The individual interview will last 60 to 90 minutes and will take place on a date and time that is most convenient for the participant. Themes such as the participant’s teacher identity, race, equity in education, and classroom practices will be discussed.

If you know of someone who may be interested in participating in this study and who fulfills the aforementioned criteria, I can e-mail an Invitation Letter to him/her that will provide them with more details about participating in my study. Please ensure that you ask his/her permission before sharing his/her e-mail address with me. If you have any questions, please contact me at 416-333-0268 or robin.hopson@mail.utoronto.ca. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin Liu Hopson
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
Appendix B: Invitation Letter to Teachers
(This letter will be printed on an OISE/University of Toronto institutional letterhead.)

Invitation to Participate in a Research Project

Date: ______________________

Dear (Name of Potential Participant),

Thank you for your interest in being a participant in my research project titled, “The Racialization and Role Modeling of “Visible Minority” Teachers: Lived Realities or Naive Expectations?” I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. This research is part of the requirements to obtain my Doctorate of Philosophy in Education; it has been approved by the University of Toronto and is under the supervision of Dr. Diane Gérin-Lajoie.

The purpose of this letter is to formally invite you to participate in the research study as well as to provide you with the information that you will need to understand the study that I am doing so that you may decide whether or not you choose to participate. Participation is completely voluntary and if you do decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. The study will take place during the period of October 2012 to December 2013.

The objective of this study is to gather information regarding the experiences and perspectives of racial minority teachers in racially diverse schools. Motivation for this study arose partly from the widespread discourse that advocates for a teaching staff that is reflective of the diversity of the student population. In particular, the research will focus on how racial minority educators understand their work with respect to the expectations that are cast to them as “visible minority” teachers. Two qualitative methods will be used to collect data: interviews with racial minority teachers and university representatives in addition to a policy analysis of documents from the Ontario Ministry of Education and public school boards in the GTA. Although a substantial amount has been written in academic literature about the need for racial minority teachers, there has been significantly less work done on understanding the experiences of these educators from their individual perspectives.

I will be conducting individual interviews with 20 racial minority teachers who teach a level from Kindergarten to Grade 12. To be a participant, you need to have at least two years of teaching experience at a public school board and be currently working full-time at a publicly-funded school board in the Greater Toronto Area. In this study, racial minority individuals will be persons who identify themselves as being Black, South Asian, East Asian, Latin American, or Middle Eastern. The interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will explore themes relating to the participant’s teacher identity, race, equity in education, and classroom practices. The interview will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the interview. You do not need to respond to any questions you do not wish to answer. A transcribed, electronic copy of the interview can be e-mailed to you for confirmation and clarification. One interview will be conducted with each participant; however, if the designated time period is insufficient to explore all the aforementioned interview themes,
an optional follow-up interview may be scheduled with your consent. This second meeting would follow the same protocol as the first interview.

The following steps will be taken to ensure your confidentiality and anonymity in this study. Your name as well as any other identifying information will be altered in the transcripts, thesis dissertation, and publications. All data, notes, transcripts, and audio-recordings will be remain locked in a filing cabinet in my residence at all times when not in use by me. All electronic files will be encrypted and stored on a remote password-protected desktop. With the exception of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Diane Gérin-Lajoie, the raw data will not be shared with any other person without your permission. Any data collected will not be used to evaluate your work as a teacher. All raw data will be kept on file for a maximum of five years following the completion of the project, and then will be destroyed. I may publish the results of the study and give talks about the study at conferences, but will not reveal identifying information about the participants in said publications or presentations.

You may benefit from reflecting on and discussing their experiences as racial minority teachers in diverse schools. I do not believe there are any considerable risks to you as a result of participating in this study. No compensation will be awarded as a result of your participation. Throughout the research process you will receive an electronic copy of your transcribed interview. You may withdraw from the interview and research study at any time without negative consequences. Upon your withdrawal, all audio-recordings and information about you related to the study will be destroyed and will not be used in any publications.

Please read this letter of invitation and consent form carefully. You will have the opportunity to ask me about the project. If you choose to participate, I will bring this Formal Invitation Letter and two copies of the attached Consent form to our meeting where you will be able to review the project details and sign the consent form. I will keep one signed copy of the consent form and you will be given the other signed copy of the consent form as well as this letter of invitation to keep for your records.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time via email at robin.hopson@mail.utoronto.ca, or by phone at 416-333-0268. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Diane Gérin-Lajoie at diane.gerin.lajoie@utoronto.ca or 416-978-1993. In addition, you may contact the University of Toronto Research Ethics Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-978-5585. Thank you for time and your consideration.

Regards,

Robin Liu Hopson  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning  
OISE/UT
Appendix C: Consent Form for Teachers
(This letter will be printed on an OISE/University of Toronto institutional letterhead.)

I, (please print name) ____________________________________, agree to participate in Robin Liu Hopson’s (robin.hopson@mail.utoronto.ca or 416-333-0268) research project entitled, “The Racialization and Role-Modeling of “Visible Minority” Teachers: Lived Realities or Naïve Expectations?” I have read the attached Formal Invitation Letter for Teachers and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in the study. I wish to participate in the study and I understand that I may withdraw from participating at any time without negative consequences.

Please sign and date this form if you agree to participate in the study. Please return one copy to me and keep one copy for yourself. Thank you.

Participant signature: ___________________________________________________________

Printed name: __________________________________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________________________________

E-mail address (optional if you are interested in receiving an electronic copy of my final dissertation):

_____________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Interview Schedule

1. Tell me about your schooling experience growing up as a “visible minority”.
2. What led you to a career in education?
3. How would you describe yourself in terms of your personal identity?
4. How would you describe your professional identity? How does one impact the other?
5. Tell me about the teacher and student diversity of the school that you’re currently teaching at (compared to past schools, if applicable).
6. What are some challenges associated with these demographics?
7. How do you think the fact that you are a “visible minority” has influenced your teaching career (e.g. your relationships with your students, co-workers, administration, and parents)?
8. What are your thoughts on the widespread discourse that supports increasing the number of racialized teachers as a response to the diversity of our students? (e.g. notions of racial matching between student-teacher, role-modeling, cultural ambassador, linguistic translator, etc.)
9. How do you understand the term “race”? How do you feel about being expected to be a role model for students of the same racial background?
10. What have your personal experiences been as a visible minority? For example, do you ever feel like you are not part of the dominant group?
11. What comes to mind when you think of a multicultural education or an anti-racist education?
12. When you think about the policies in your school board and in the province about equity and diversity, how have you seen these policies translated to the classroom?