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Young, Working and Black: A Study of Empowerment, Oppression, Race and Gender in Community Settings

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Young, Working and Black[1]: A Study of Empowerment, Oppression, Race and

Gender in Community Settings

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DISSERTATION

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[1] Reference to "To be young, gifted and Black" song by Nina Simone (1970).

Abstract

This purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between race, gender, and power in community settings. Taking the experiences of young Black Canadians within the workplace as an exemplar, the study sought to answer three main research questions: (a) How does oppression influence the psychological empowerment of Black youth and young adults in the workplace? (b) How do workplace characteristics promote Black youths' and young adults' psychological empowerment?, and (c) How does gender influence Black youths' and young adults' experiences of oppression and empowerment in the workplace? To answer these questions I conducted narrative interviews with 24 Black Canadian youth and young adults (aged 16-35), and critical self-reflections on my personal work experiences. Data were analyzed using a combination of narrative and grounded theory approaches. Findings are presented using the metaphor of the working game to conceptualize participants' stories of race, gender and power in the workplace. Narratives of workplace oppression suggest that young Black Canadian workers are disadvantaged by an unequal playing field comprised of stereotypes and unequal intergenerational legacies, and by racialized interpersonal gameplay. Their stories describe various moves that young Black Canadians use to negotiate oppression, as well as an oppressed subjectivity characterized by a sense of difference, uncertainty, and frustration. Narratives of workplace empowerment suggest that empowering workplace settings function as surrogate legacies that include four key characteristics (relationships, roles, opportunity, and incentives), that promote six empowered outcomes (independence, confidence, eye opening, appreciation, a desire to give back, and the ability to talk to others), through four main psychological processes (encouragement and

advice, exposure, respect, and validation). Narratives of gender suggest a common

perception that the intersection of gender and race in the working game function to

disadvantage Black males through severe stereotypes and absent male legacies. Gender

differences in valued empowering workplace characteristics were found, with Black

females emphasizing encouragement and Black males emphasizing opportunity. The

discussions highlight theoretical contributions to community psychology's understanding

of power, race, and gender in community settings, including an emphasis on social

networks, dramaturgy, and identity. Limitations and implications for future research and

practice are discussed.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for being blessed not only with the privilege of pursuing a Ph.D., but also with a wide network of people who helped me through this process. First, I would like to thank the study's participants for entrusting me and generously sharing your stories. I hope I have honoured your voices in this dissertation, and that this study will contribute, at least in some measure, toward the liberation of our communities. A special thanks to Adowa Smart, who was instrumental in providing insightful advice and feedback throughout the study.

My earnest thanks to the members of my Advisory Committee for your responsiveness and encouragement since the earliest phases of this project. Thanks to Dr. Carol Duncan for challenging me to think more deeply and broadly about issues of labour, race and gender. Thanks to Dr. Michael Pratt for helping me to understand the power of narratives. Thanks also to Dr. Mark Pancer for your ongoing feedback and enthusiasm. A special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Nelson, who has been an unwavering source of support, both personal and intellectual, throughout my Ph.D. program. You are an exemplar of excellence in our discipline, with a pedagogy that matches our values. I am grateful to have had you as an advisor.

I would also like to thank the various other academic mentors who have had a tremendous impact on my educational career, including Dr. Terry Mitchell, Dr. Colleen Loomis, Dr. Michael Goodstadt, Dr. Blake Poland, Dr. Peter Penz, and Dr. Jerry Ginsburg. Thanks also to my peers, particularly Mercy Mwangi-Kamau and Dr. Keith Adamson

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Chapter I: Introduction

Background

> To be young, gifted and black,
> Oh what a lovely precious dream
> To be young, gifted and black,
> Open your heart to what I mean
> (Irvine, 1970)

The title of this dissertation takes its inspiration from the classic song "To Be Young, Gifted and Black," written by Weldon Irvine and recorded by Nina Simone in 1970, which became an anthem of the American Civil rights and Black Power movements. The song was a source of inspiration to a generation of young Black Americans, giving voice to their hopes and self-worth, and countering oppressive societal narratives that portrayed Black youth as subhuman and expendable. The core sentiments of this song remain relevant to modern Black youth and young adults, and are echoed by many of the stories told by participants in this study.

My awareness of the collective struggle against racial oppression began at an early age. Sometime in the early '80's, when I was about six or seven years old, my father took me to my first Labour Day parade. He was an active member of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) union through his local at McDonald-Douglas aircraft – the place he worked for most of his life. For some reason that parade stands out as one of the most vivid memories of my childhood; though it plays more like a series of scattered images and impressions than a cohesive narrative – dreamlike, really. I picture us standing near a subway entrance at the corner of College Street and University Avenue in downtown Toronto. I'm sitting on my father's shoulders, high enough to see above the crowd – a vast and throbbing throng of marching, chanting, laughing, and singing. One mass within

the crowd stands out from the rest with their bright yellow placards and bright yellow buttons with a peculiar symbol in the middle: nine bold and black letters, stamped out by a thick red prohibition symbol. A big grey man with a box of buttons steps out from the crowd and gives one to me, one to my dad. A wave of pride and excitement fills my beaming face, as my dad fastens the button to my jacket – elation at my initiation into the sect of the yellow buttons. The letters spell "APARTHEID". I have no idea what APARTHEID means, but know it must be something important if it could make so many grownups go out on the streets to march and shout and wear the same button.   On the subway ride home I ask my dad what APARTHEID means. I don't quite remember what he says, and doubt I even understood it, but it left me with a profound emotional impression, of sadness, anger, and hope. Not because I was naïve about racism – by that age I already understood what it felt like to be called an "African-Bum Picker" by White kids *and* Black kids, what it felt like to be ashamed of my skin and my heritage. But something about the APARTHEID experience stirred something new in my budding race consciousness. Perhaps it was the realization - crystallized by the button on my jacket - that resistance was possible and powerful and right. From then on I served at the vanguard of the anti-apartheid movement, overseeing my family's boycott of South African produce whenever I went grocery shopping with my mother. I kept that button for a long time.

Issues of race, social justice, and labour continued to play a major role throughout adolescence and young adulthood. At age 17, I got one of my first jobs through a Black youth organization that was involved in a provincially-sponsored youth employment program called Jobs Ontario Youth (JOY). I spent my first summer in the program

working at a phytotoxicology lab for the Ministry of Environment, where most of my days were spent struggling to keep my eyes open while doing routine data entry at a computer terminal that was tucked away in the corner of a dimly lit hallway. The next summer I participated in the JOY program again, and got a job at a group home for boys. I spent most of that summer supervising two of its semi-independent residents in a community work experience program. I continued to work part-time at the group home for a couple of years.

After high school, and after completing a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies (during which I returned to work in the child welfare sector as a foster parent at a treatment foster home), I found employment with a municipal government community gardening program that ran a training and employment program for Black youth. This was a transformative experience for me, as I met a mentor who helped me to see and think in new ways about the significance of work for Black Canadians – how it lays at the centre of the empowerment and oppression of our community. It was here also that I encountered various contradictions and realpolitik of community work, which challenged my idealism about social justice. These experiences led me toward my current studies in community psychology.

Research Problem

Community psychology is a sub-discipline of psychology that is concerned with the promotion of well-being and the prevention of psychosocial problems through community research and action. Community psychologists view power as central to human life, recognizing that oppression is a root cause of psychological and social problems, and liberation as a critical path to well-being (Prilleltensky, 2008). Given this

emphasis on oppression and liberation, empowerment (the processes by which people gain greater control over their lives) (Zimmerman, 1995) and human diversity (the pluralistic, strengths-focused appreciation and analyses of human difference) (Trickett, 1996) are among the most influential theoretical concerns of the discipline. One of the defining practical challenges for the field has been the promotion of psychological empowerment and the creation of empowering community settings for oppressed groups (Maton, 2008).

Many community psychologists have worked in the creation and study of empowering settings for Black youth and young adults (e.g., Maton & Salem, 1995; Watts, Abdul-Adil & Pratt, 2002). While these efforts have enhanced our understanding of the empowerment of racialized groups within community settings such as civic organizations, schools, and self-help groups, few community psychologists appear to have examined the empowerment of racialized or Black groups within workplace settings. For example, in 2011 I conducted a literature search of PsychINFO database using the keywords "black/African + employment/workplace/job" in the *American Journal of Community Psychology*, the *Journal of Community Psychology*, and other community psychology journals. The search retrieved just 21 papers, none of which appeared to focus directly on empowerment within the workplace. There is a similar lack of research on empowering workplace experiences for Black youth and adults in other disciplines of the sciences; particularly for Black Canadians.

This apparent absence of community psychology research on Black youth and young adults' employment is a significant gap in the field for at least three major reasons, First, the issues of employment and job creation for Black youth and young adults are

fundamental to the advancement of social justice, diversity, and other community psychology values, since employment is a fundamental determinant of well-being, and visible minorities (and other oppressed groups) face considerable exclusion within the work force. Second, a more fully developed theory of empowerment for community psychology should reflect its manifestations across multiple contexts and diverse groups. Although there is a substantial body of community psychology literature on workplace empowerment, it has typically focused on mainstream populations. The absence of research on Black youth and young adults' empowerment in the workplace limits our understanding of the empowerment concept. Third, the workplace represents an important yet understudied site of oppression, resistance, and liberation (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005). Since the workplace is a setting where most youth and young adults spend most of their time (second only to time spent in schools), and since all levels of government spend several million dollars per year on various employment programs, a greater understanding of the empowering characteristics and impacts of the workplace may have significant implications for improved employment programs and policies (Frone, 1999).

Over the last few decades, a growing body of research in other disciplines has shed some light on the empowering characteristics and impacts of the workplace for youth and young adults. Studies show that the workplace can have either positive or negative impacts on young people, depending on a variety of factors such as the number of hours worked, the quality of the work, and the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual (Frone, 1999). Research on work quality, for example, suggests that young people tend to benefit most from work settings that provide opportunities for autonomy,

participation in decision-making, and interaction with positive adult role models, and that are compatible with their schooling (Mortimer, Harley, & Staff, 2002). Studies also suggest that immigrant and visible minority youth and young adults face major barriers to the workplace (Warner & Lior, 2006), and often experience little control over their employment (Blustein et al., 2005). Few of these studies, however, have explicitly empirically examined the empowering workplace characteristics for youth and young adults, and even fewer have focused on immigrant and visible minority populations. Moreover, most of the existing research on youth and young adults' employment has been informed by realist epistemological perspectives that are concerned with statistical verification of universal laws of workplace phenomena. While these studies have generated valuable knowledge about the risks and benefits of the workplace, they have contributed little to our understanding of the subjective experiences and social processes of working life for young people (Besen-Cassino, 2008). Even though statistics show that African Canadian youth and young adults have the second highest rate of unemployment (26%) (Statistics Canada, 2008), I was unable to find many studies that have examined how Black Canadians experience barriers to employment, how to overcome them, or how the workplace might play a role in Black liberation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the intersections between race, gender, and power in community settings. Using the experiences of young Black Canadians in the workplace as an exemplar, I seek to examine how young Black workers experience oppression in the workplace, how workplace settings empower young Black workers, and how their experiences of oppression and empowerment are influenced by gender. In

order to achieve this aim, I use an in-depth qualitative research methodology that involves the analysis of personal narratives of Black youth and young adults, combined with critical self-reflections on my own work experiences as a young Black male.

Importance of the Study

A better understanding of race, gender and power within the workplace can contribute to more liberating community psychology practice. The workplace has been identified as an important yet understudied setting for liberation (Blustein et al., 2005). Since various governments and social agencies spend millions of dollars annually on employment programs that target disadvantaged groups, a greater understanding of the characteristics and impacts of empowering workplaces may contribute to the improvement of such programs. The promotion of workplace empowerment could have broad impacts on well-being and social justice, since employment is a major determinant of mental health (Dooley, 2003), and Black Canadian youth and young adults face considerable exclusion from the workforce.

Conceptual Framework

The following sections outline the components of the study's overarching conceptual framework (illustrated by the conceptual model in Figure 1). Essentially, the framework suggests that empowerment is a process whereby individuals gain personal power through transactions with community settings, while oppression is a process by which individuals are deprived of power. Empowerment and oppression are viewed as distinct, though inter-related manifestations of power. Community settings can promote psychological empowerment either directly, by increasing individuals' strengths or resources, or indirectly, by mitigating the negative impacts of oppression. The

framework also suggests that the characteristics and interactions between all components

(empowerment outcomes, empowering community settings, and oppression) are

influenced by social location. In other words, social location influences the types and

degree of oppression and empowerment that individuals experience in community

settings. The numbers in the conceptual model correspond to the research questions that

stem from the model, which I describe later.
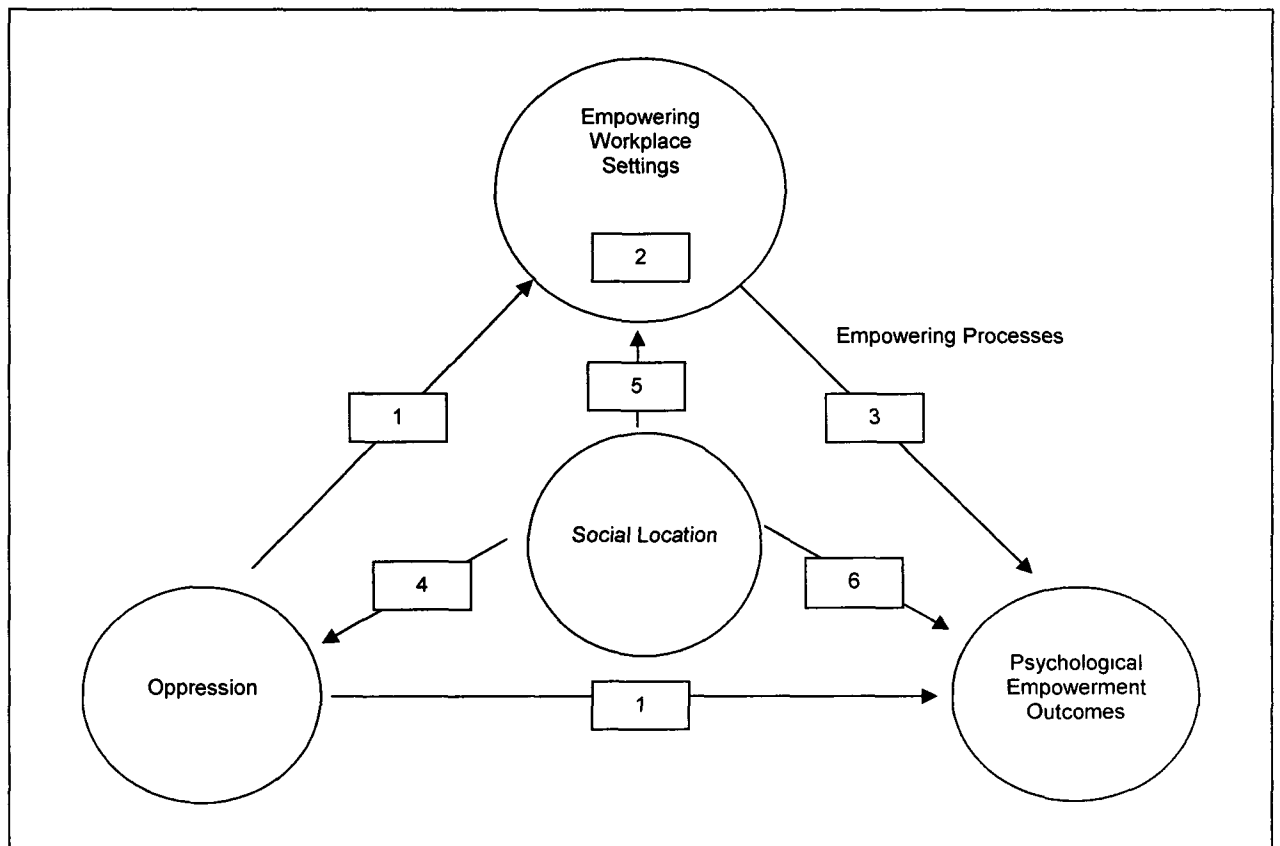
Figure 1. A Priori Conceptual Model. This model illustrates the process of

empowerment through community settings.

Psychological empowerment. Empowerment has been defined as a

"developmental process through which...oppressed individuals and groups gain greater

control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and

achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization" (Maton, 2008, p. 5).

The theoretical framework for this study is based on four key assumptions of

psychological empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 1995). First, empowerment is both a

process and an outcome – it includes the actions of agents that lead to increased power, as

well as the results of those actions. Second, empowerment is an ecological phenomenon

that involves transactional processes and outcomes at multiple levels of analysis.

Although my study is primarily focused on the transactions between individuals and

organizations, such transactions can not be isolated from the influence of other contexts

such as families, schools, and communities. A third assumption of psychological

empowerment theory is that empowerment assumes different forms in different contexts.

The specific historical, cultural, political context of any setting will influence the nature

of transactions between empowerment processes and outcomes. Therefore, we can

assume that the dynamics of empowerment in the workplace would differ from the

dynamics of empowerment in other contexts, such as youth development agencies or self-

help groups. Fourth, empowerment assumes different forms for different people –

individuals' social locations and identities determine the form and meaning of

empowerment (i.e., what is an empowering process or outcome for one group may not be

as salient or effective for another). In the present study, I thus consider how the

dynamics and meaning of empowerment are shaped by the social identities of race,

gender, and age.

In this study, I use Zimmerman's (1995) nomological network of psychological

empowerment as a sensitizing framework for conceptualizing empowerment outcomes at

the individual level. I draw on Zimmerman's model in particular because it provides a

clear and simple framework that is compatible with many other existing theories of psychological empowerment (e.g., Chinman & Linney, 1998; Ginwright & James, 2002; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Essentially, Zimmerman's model postulates three main domains of psychological empowerment: (a) intrapersonal, which refers to how individuals think about themselves (e.g., identity, self-esteem); (b) interactional, which refers to the knowledge and skills that enable individuals' to influence their environment (e.g., critical consciousness); and (c) behavioural, which refers to actions that individuals actually take to influence their environments (e.g., community involvement).

Empowering community settings. Broadly defined, a setting refers to any instance where two or more people engage in a sustained relationship in order to meet common goals (Sarason, 1972). Settings are critical in all domains of human life, and include anything from marriages, classrooms, schools, churches, or states. Given their ubiquity, settings have profound impacts on well-being, and are often fundamental to the study of individuals within context. An empowering community setting can be defined as any setting that is located in the community, which promotes empowerment among its members through its organizational processes (Maton, 2008). Empowering community settings can occur in a variety of contexts, such as self-help groups, youth development organizations, or the workplace. Individuals may become empowered within community settings by acquiring valued resources, knowledge, and skills, and also by acting collectively with others to transform (or ameliorate the impact of) oppressive social systems. However, the nature and degree of empowerment achieved often depends upon the organizational characteristics of specific settings.

I have chosen to use Maton's (2008) model of empowering community settings as a sensitizing framework for empowering organizational characteristics. Maton's model proposes that there are six key organizational characteristics that define empowering community settings: (a) group-based belief systems that inspire change, are strength-based, and are focused beyond the self; (b) core activities that are meaningful, involve active learning, and are of high quality; (c) a relational environment that provides multiple sources of support, caring relationships, and a sense of community; (d) an opportunity role structure that is pervasive, highly accessible, and multi-functional; (e) leadership that is talented, shared, and committed; and (f) organizational mechanisms that support successful maintenance and change within the setting. Maton also suggests that empowering settings promote member empowerment through various psychological mediators (psychological processes or mechanisms that facilitate empowerment), specifically awareness, motivation, self-efficacy, skill development, caring, support, belonging, meaningful roles, and engagement.

Oppression. Oppression can be defined as:

> a state of asymmetric power relations characterized by domination, subordination, and resistance, where the dominating persons or groups exercise their power by restricting access to material resources and by implanting in the subordinated persons or groups fear or self-deprecating views about themselves (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996, p. 129).

Prilleltensky and Gonick's conceptualization suggests that there are three main characteristics that define oppression. First, oppression is both a state and a process. As a state, oppression is reflected in the outcomes of domination, while as a process, it is reflected in actions and interactions through which one group gains domination over another. Second, oppression involves both psychological and political dimensions. The

psychological dimension refers to internalized views of one's self (or one's group) as being inferior to dominant groups. The political domain of oppression involves the creation of material, legal, economic, or other social barriers to self-determination.

Third, oppression can be conceptualized at multiple ecological levels: personal, relational, and collective. At the personal level, oppression is experienced through various individual behaviours and psychological states, such as the internalization of inferior identities, learned helplessness, and obedience to authority. At the relational level, individuals experience oppression through interpersonal dynamics such as the use of verbal, emotional, or physical abuse, passivity of bystanders, or the restriction of life chances. At the broader collective level, oppression occurs through community- or society-wide intergroup dynamics that produce domination, including cultural myths or stereotypes, various forms of institutional discrimination, or fragmentation of oppressed communities.

Social location. Social location refers to an individual's placement within socio-political structures according to social identities such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender (Collins, 2000). An individual's experiences of power, oppression, and empowerment are largely influenced by their social location. Black feminist scholars developed the theory of intersectionality to analyze how the individuals' experiences of oppression are shaped by the intersection of multiple social identities. The theory of intersectionality is based on at least five key assumptions that are relevant to this study. First, social location is a complex multi-level and multi-dimensional status that consists of both the subjective or psychological experience of a range of social identities, as well as the structural or political conditions that individuals experience as a consequence of such identities.

Individuals are situated within a matrix of domination wherein they experience power or oppression according to their social location. The conceptual framework for this study assumes that social location influences oppression and empowerment within community settings, as well as the nature of valued psychological empowerment outcomes. Second, the theory of intersectionality suggests that power and oppression are experienced interdependently, simultaneously, and cumulatively according to multiple social identities and specific situational contexts. In other words, individuals can simultaneously experience both oppression and empowerment in their lives, depending on the most salient identities within a particular situation. Black males, for example, may experience the power and privilege of patriarchy in the domestic domain, while simultaneously experiencing powerlessness within the workplace. While I chose to focus this study on the intersecting identities of race and gender (and, to a lesser extent, age), I recognize that the actual experiences of power, empowerment, and oppression are strongly influenced by many other identities such as class and ethnicity. A third assumption of intersectionality theory is that the experiences associated with intersecting identities may be distinct from the cumulative impacts of multiple identities. In other words, Black women may have experiences of gender and race that differ from both White women and Black men due to their dual categories of oppression. Fourth, Black feminist scholars recognize that the subjectivity and lived experience of oppressed people comprises a valid form of knowledge (Collins, 2000). Therefore, it is important that researchers privilege and preserve the voices of oppressed people. While most scholarship on intersectionality has focused on how identities structure experiences of oppression, the

theory of intersectionality has equal utility for understanding how identities structure empowerment.

Although psychologists have a long history of studying various types of social identities such as race and gender, relatively few psychologists have adopted an intersectional approach (Cole, 2009). Psychologists typically treat identities as discrete social categories, while underestimating in some instances the subtle and unique experiences produced through interactions of these social categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage. Attending to issues of intersectionality allows researchers to enhance the ecological validity of psychological studies, by taking into account the influence of social identities on psychological phenomena, as well as the interactions between them.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this dissertation, I use multiple terms (e.g., African-Canadian, African-American, Black) to refer to Black populations. I use the term Black most frequently as a blanket term for any dark-skinned people of African origin who self-identify or are socially-identified as Black. Despite the empirical and political problems inherent in using race as a social category, I have chosen to use it to define my population since racialization impacts the lived experiences of Black Canadians in a manner that transcends the influences of ethnicity. It is a term used by many Black Canadians to define their collective and personal lived experiences. Some research has shown that Black Canadians identify Black as a preferred racial label (Boatswain & Lalonde, 2000). At the same time, there are many instances where I use ethno-specific labels (e.g., African-Canadian, African-American) in referring to literature or findings that are ethno-

specific in nature. I chose to capitalize racial terms such as Black and White, in keeping with the guidelines stipulated in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2009), although I recognize that some postcolonial scholars have critiqued the capitalization of racial labels as a practice that contributes to the reification and essentialization of race (e.g., Thompson, 2004).

I use the terms youth and young adults throughout the report to refer to the study population, which includes individuals between 16 and 35 years of age. I use these terms in accordance with Erikson's (1968) notions of adolescence (ages 12-18) and young adulthood (ages 19-40) as stages of psychosocial development. I decided to include both youth and young adults in the study, since the foundations of career development occur during adolescence and young adulthood, and I believed that examining a spectrum of early career experiences would yield deeper insight into the experience of race, gender, empowerment and oppression across the lifespan. The literature on developmental perspectives on employment is briefly reviewed in the next chapter.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In the following sub-sections I review literature related to empowerment, oppression, race and gender among Black youth and young adults, particularly as they relate to the workplace. Due to the dearth of published research on empowerment and employment among young Black Canadians, the literature review encompasses scholarship on a range of populations, including African-Americans and – in some instances – non-Black populations. While accepting the limitations of inferences that can be drawn from studies of other populations, I assume that there are sufficient similarities in the experiences of oppression and empowerment to warrant their inclusion in the review.

Black Canadian Communities

I begin the literature review with a brief description of Black communities in Canada. While much of the popular discourse on race often portrays North American Blacks as a homogeneous group, there are substantial differences between Black Canadians and Black Americans, and tremendous cultural and ethnic diversity amongst Black Canadians. Blacks have a long history in Canada (Hill, 1981), comprising a series of migrations since the 18th century of former enslaved Blacks from the United States and the Caribbean, who settled primarily in Southwestern Ontario and Nova Scotia. Presently, Black Canadians are the third largest visible minority group in Canada (after South East Asians and Chinese groups), with a population of approximately 783,795 (2.5% of the total population) (Statistics, 2008). The largest urban population of Black Canadians resides in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) where they number over 486,330 (6.9% of the total population). Approximately 70% of Black Canadians in the GTA are

first or second generation immigrants, originating predominantly from Jamaica, Somalia, and Ghana (Orstein, 2006). Most Black Canadian immigrants came to Canada in the 1970s, following the liberalization of Canada's immigration policies in the 1960s and early 70s. Despite the popular rhetoric of multiculturalism that guided such policies, Black Canadians and other visible minorities continue to experience oppression in Canada.

Developmental Perspectives on Employment

In examining issues of employment, empowerment and oppression among Black youth and young adults, it is important to consider that such phenomena are integral with general processes of psychosocial and career development. As stated earlier, I have chosen to use the terms youth and young adults in accordance with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial stages of adolescence (ages 12-18) and young adulthood (ages 19-40). Erikson's basic premise was that healthy human development involves mastering several psychosocial challenges that occur through stages across the lifespan. During adolescence, the central psychosocial challenge is developing a sense of identity, by exploring and defining one's role in society. While Erickson acknowledges that identity development continues into young adulthood, he suggests that the primary psychosocial challenge at this stage is the formation of long-term intimate relationships. Recently, with changing societal trends in education, work, marriage, and other roles that define psychosocial development, scholars have identified an additional developmental stage that is distinct from adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Referred to as emerging adulthood (occurring between ages 18-25), this period is marked by the prolonged exploration of possible identities and social roles, as individuals are free from

the dependence on parents during adolescence, and yet are not bound by the normative expectations and responsibilities of young adulthood.

Many theories have been proposed to examine the development of career across the lifespan. One of the prevailing theories is Super's (1957) theory of vocational development, which proposes that over the lifespan, individuals' career development involves the accomplishment of a series of vocational tasks. The first task, crystallization, occurs during adolescence (ages 14-18) and involves individuals developing tentative career goals. The second task, specification, corresponds with emerging adulthood (ages 18-21) and involves moving from tentative to more specific vocational goals. The third task, implementation, also corresponds with emerging adulthood (ages 21-24), and occurs as individuals complete their training for employment and enter the workforce. The fourth task, stabilization, occurs during young adulthood (ages 24-35) as individuals' confirm the suitability of their career choices through actual work experiences. The fifth developmental vocational task, consolidation, occurs during middle adulthood (after age 35) and typically involves advancement in individuals' careers. Given the shifting trends in psychosocial development and the phenomena of emerging adulthood, vocational tasks are not often completed within the time frames that Super proposed in 1957. For example, many emerging adults may prolong the tasks of specification and implementation, as they increasingly undertake post-secondary and postgraduate education (Arnett, 2000). However, the tasks themselves remain a relevant aspect of career-related psychosocial development across the lifespan.

The quality of jobs and work environments tends to be poorer during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Young people tend to work in areas such as food services,

retail, customer service, and factories, doing jobs that usually involve low pay, low skill, and low job security, with few meaningful opportunities for learning or applying skills learned in school (Mortimer, Harley & Staff, 2002). While work quality may generally improve over the lifespan with greater vocational stabilization and advancement, it is important to recognize that such processes are influenced by social location (e.g., race, class, gender, ability, etc.). Many individuals from oppressed groups face barriers to obtaining any employment at all, or are often relegated to jobs that are incommensurate with their skills and education (Blustein, 2005).

Psychological Empowerment, Race, and Work among Young Black Individuals

As was noted earlier, Zimmerman (1995) postulates three main domains of psychological empowerment: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioural. Each domain encompasses a wide range of psychological outcomes and processes that promote individuals' control over their lives. In the following sub-sections, I review the literature on those empowerment outcomes that feature prominently in Black empowerment and employment scholarship.

Intrapersonal. Intrapersonal empowerment refers to how people think about themselves and their capacity to influence their environments (Zimmerman, 1995). Two important and inter-related intrapersonal factors in Black empowerment literature include identity (Collins, 2000) and self-esteem (McMahon & Watts, 2002). Taken together, the literature suggests that Black youth and young adults tend to possess a high degree of intrapersonal empowerment, but that the underlying dynamics or sources of this empowerment remain unclear.

Identity. Racial identity has been a central concern of Black empowerment

literature and experience since the earliest African anti-colonial and anti-slavery

liberation movements. Black intellectuals have examined how the subjugation of Black

identities has been a powerful tool of oppression, while the construction of positive Black

identities has been a necessary strategy for liberation (Collins, 2000; Fanon, 1967).

Scholars often trace the modern psychological conceptualization of identity to the work

of Erik Erikson (1968), who defined identity as one of eight stages of human

psychosocial development, occurring during adolescence, wherein individuals form an

understanding of who they are and their role in the adult world. Over the last half-

century, a large scholarship on identity has emerged based on research using a wide range

of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Theoretical approaches range

from those that emphasize nomothetic processes or structures of identity, to those

constructivist and critical perspectives that view identity as a dynamic construct that is

mediated through language, social interaction, culture, and power relations (Sellers,

Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). A growing number of constructivist identity

scholars have examined the way in which identities are constructed through social

processes such as narratives (McAdams, 2001) or dramatic performance (Goffman,

1959). Community psychologists have recognized that identity, constructed through

stories, is a potential resource for empowerment among oppressed peoples (Rappaport,

1995).

Racial identity involves those self understandings that are based on one's racial

and ethnic group membership and heritage (Sellers et al., 1998). Several psychological

models of racial and ethnic identity have been proposed, involving both stage (e.g.,

Vandiver, Fhagan-Smith, Cokley, Cross & Worrell, 2001) and status (e.g., Helms, 1995; Sellers et al., 1998) approaches. The concept of empowerment is embedded in many racial identity theories, which tend to incorporate the influence of racial oppression on selfhood. Quantitative studies have shown significant associations between strong ethnoracial identities and several empowerment outcomes such as self-esteem (McMahon & Watts, 2002), and various other indicators of positive mental health (Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009). Relatively few qualitative studies have examined the relationships between racial identity and workplace empowerment, particularly among young Black Canadians. A larger body of related research has focused on the racial identity and empowerment with education among Black Canadians (e.g., Codjoe, 2006; Dei & James, 1998; James, 1990). Findings from these studies suggest that a strong racial identity is critical for promoting educational success. For example, in a narrative study of education and identity among Black Canadian high school students, Dei and James (1998) found that Black students resist stereotypes and domination within the education system by constructing a politicized identity that identifies with African-centered cultures, strives for academic excellence, and calls for systems change.

One of the predominant theories of the relationship between Black identity and empowerment is Fordham's (1988) theory of racelessness, which posits that Black individuals must suppress their racial identity in order to achieve success, particularly in education. However, recent findings from empirical studies question the validity of Fordham's thesis. For example, in a quantitative study of Black Canadian students, Smith and Lalonde (2003) found that racelessness strategies were not significantly

associated with academic success, and that a stronger Black identity was actually protective.

Self-esteem. A second important aspect of intrapersonal empowerment is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the global value that individuals place on their self-worth (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). Studies of African-American youth have also shown that self-esteem is a significant protective factor against adversity (Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007). Self-esteem is also closely related to racial identity, with several quantitative studies finding strong positive associations between measures of self-esteem and racial identity among African-Americans (Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009; McMahon & Watts, 2002). Paradoxically, several empirical studies have found that African-Americans typically demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem than other ethnoracial groups, despite their social disadvantage (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Although there is no consensus on the basis of the "Black self-esteem advantage," scholars have suggested hypotheses such as cultural differences in self-concept (Twenge & Crocker, 2002), a lesser tendency of Blacks to base their self-esteem on the perceptions of others (Zeigler-Hill, 2007), or the supports of Black religion and families (Dooley & Prause, 1997).

Relatively few studies have examined Black self-esteem within the workplace context, and there is not much qualitative literature on self-esteem and race. Of the existing qualitative studies of race and self-esteem, most appear to have focused on relationships between gender and race (reviewed later in the section on gender).

Interactional. Interactional empowerment refers to those capacities (e.g., knowledge and skills) that enable individuals to influence their environments

(Zimmerman, 1995). The most salient aspect of interactional empowerment in the Black empowerment literature has focused on critical consciousness.

Critical consciousness. Critical consciousness refers to the ability to analyze forms of oppression and to take action against it (Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003). Watts et al. suggest that critical consciousness is an important feature of African-American empowerment and sociopolitical development (SPD) (i.e., the process by which individuals acquire the capacity for action in sociopolitical systems), since it provides the analytical skills required to interpret and resist oppression. Their five-stage theory of SPD suggests that critical consciousness progresses from an acritical stage (where individuals are unaware of power asymmetries and oppression) to a liberation stage (where an awareness of oppression is salient and accommodation is resisted). Critical consciousness is integral to identity development, and is reflected in many theories of racial identity (e.g., Vandiver et al., 2001; Helms, 1995; Sellers et al., 1998).

Studies have shown that critical consciousness is an important correlate of career development among urban African-American adolescents (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hseih, 2008). Diemer and Blustein, for example, found that critical consciousness can facilitate the vocational identity development of urban adolescents, while Diemer and Hseih found that SPD was related to higher vocational aspirations among urban adolescents of colour. In a qualitative study of African-American youth, O'Conner (1997) found that critical consciousness was one of the key characteristics that distinguished high-achieving resilient African-American youth from lower achieving youth. Some research also suggests that workplace experiences can facilitate the development of critical consciousness. For example, in a qualitative study of a youth

leadership and employment program, Delp, Brown, and Domenzain (2005) found that African-American participants' work experiences in social action contributed to critical consciousness-raising. Some studies have found racial group differences in critical consciousness. Peterson, Hamme, and Speer (2002), for example, examined the impacts of race on interactional empowerment, and found that African-Americans had a greater understanding of power in social relations and shaping ideology (i.e., the way in which power is exercised through influencing community ideology) than White Americans.

Behavioural. The behavioural domain of empowerment involves the actual actions that individuals take to gain power and influence their environment (Zimmerman, 1995). The most prominent type of empowering behaviour in the Black empowerment literature is civic engagement.

Civic engagement. Civic engagement refers to actions taken within the civic realm, whereby individuals voluntarily associate with others to fulfill shared interests and protect common beliefs (Youniss et al., 2002). Civic engagement may include participation in a variety of civic contexts, including politics, religion, culture, and arts. Historically, civic action has been the driving force behind Black liberation movements, particularly through churches and social movement organizations (Ginwright & James, 2002). In the modern era, young Blacks tend to respond to community problems through more diverse forms of community organizing, including poetry, volunteering, and political engagement. Studies have shown that civic engagement is associated with other empowerment outcomes such as educational achievement and self-sufficiency (Michelsen, Zaff, & Hair, 2002), and that it can reduce the likelihood of some problem behaviours (Zeldin, 2004). Few studies appear to have examined the relationship

between empowerment and civic engagement within the workplace. Such an examination may prove useful since it is conceivable that relationships or experiences within the workplace could promote civic engagement. It is also conceivable that civic engagement could facilitate workplace mobility and empowerment through networks formed or skills learned during civic action.

Oppression, Race, and Work among Young Black Individuals

Oppression is a dominant feature of workplace experiences of Black Canadians. Indeed, oppression has defined the Black experience of labour since the institution of African enslavement and colonization by Europeans. Modern capitalist economies were built upon exploitative and racialized systems of production, which have been sustained and institutionalized – though in different form – throughout history. The systemic violence, deprivation, and humiliation that was endemic in European colonies has led to the squandering and depletion of human capital in Black communities and created gross intergenerational inequities in wealth and socioeconomic structure (Gaskin, Headen Jr., & White-Means, 2005). There is a large body of evidence that Black workers face various forms of relational and institutional oppression, which have significant psychological impacts. Few community psychologists, however, have empirically studied workplace oppression – and none among Black Canadian groups.

Oppression and employment. Evidence clearly shows that racial oppression has a considerable impact on the employment experiences of visible minority and immigrant groups, limiting their access to jobs, their mobility within the workplace, and the quality of the work environment. According the to the 2006 Canadian census, recent immigrant youth and young adults (aged 15-24) of African heritage had more than twice the

unemployment rate (26.8%) of those born in Canada (11.2%) (Gilmore, 2008).

Comparatively high rates of unemployment and low incomes among Black Canadians

have been found to persist even after controlling for levels of education (Jedwab, 2008).

The barriers to mobility faced by visible minorities are reflected by their marked

underrepresentation in managerial, senior managerial, and professional positions

(Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005).

While little community psychology research has been conducted on experiences

of racial oppression within the workplace, a large body of research in other disciplines

has considered such processes at institutional and relational levels. Teelucksingh and

Galabuzi (2005) found evidence of systemic discrimination against Black Canadians

through differential hiring and promotions, reliance on informal recruitment strategies

that reinforce dominant social networks, and the devaluation of international credentials.

Agocs and Jain (2003) also found evidence for systemic racism in Canadian

organizational cultures, reflected through the creation of hostile work climates, exclusion

of individuals from work social functions, and bias in performance appraisal and

compensation. Structural features, such as racial composition of the workplace are also

an important institutional determinant of oppression (e.g., Hughes & Dodge, 1997;

Pettigrew & Martin, 1987). For example, Hughes and Dodge (1997) found that the ratio

of African-American to White American predicted levels of workplace discrimination,

whereby higher levels of discrimination were associated with larger proportions of White

American workers.

Much of the research on workplace oppression has highlighted the impact of

stereotypes on young Black workers, and has demonstrated that stereotypes have negative

impacts on hiring, job performance, and perceptions of employees' competence (Gilbert, Carr-Ruffino, Ivancevich & Lownes-Jackson, 2003; Stewart & Perlow, 2001). In a recent qualitative study, Blustein et al. (2010) found that young African-Americans possessed an acute awareness of the low expectations and stereotypes that dominant groups hold about Blacks, which produced uncertainty or ambivalence about the impact of race on their future work possibilities.

Interpersonal racism has long been a major feature of Black employment experiences. Interpersonal racism includes a variety of discriminatory behaviours that range from overt forms, such as racial slurs, to more subtle or covert forms, such as avoidance of Blacks or closed communication (Deitch et al., 2003). Interpersonal racism in the modern workplace is characterized predominantly by covert racism, which has displaced the overt racism that tended to dominate workplaces in the past. Contemporary scholars use the term microaggressions to examine these covert forms of interpersonal discrimination (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Most Canadian legal cases of workplace discrimination cite harassment as the cause (76% between 1980 and 1999), with Black Canadians historically accounting for the largest group of legal complainants (although the proportion of Black complainants is decreasing with increases in other groups) (Al-Waqfi & Jain, 2008).

Psychological impacts of workplace oppression. The experience of oppression within the workplace and labour market poses significant threats to psychological empowerment and well-being. Employment and unemployment can have negative impacts on individuals' sense of identity, producing feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Dooley, 2003). While many studies have examined the psychological

impacts of unemployment, underemployment and workplace harassment among Black populations, few have been conducted with Black Canadians. Young African-Americans who face high unemployment have been found to experience feelings of hopelessness, anger, and alienation (Gibbs & Bankhead, 2000), as well as high rates of school drop-out (Magura & Shapiro, 1987) and long-term unemployment and poverty during adulthood (Leventhal, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001). Both actual levels of unemployment and perceptions of labour market opportunities have been found to negatively impact young adults' psychological adjustment (Baron, 2008). Some of the primary underlying processes that connect unemployment and mental health include powerlessness, exclusion, and material deprivation (Fryer & Fagan, 2003).

Interpersonal racism, such as harassment and microaggression, has been shown to have severe impacts on mental health such as lowering self-esteem and reducing job satisfaction (Deitch et al., 2003). Despite the apparent innocuousness of individual acts of microaggression, their frequency and ambiguity are a major stressor in the lives of racialized groups, contributing to limited opportunities, poorer relationships, and feelings of exclusion (Sue et al., 2008). Indeed, research shows that covert discrimination has a greater negative psychological impact than overt acts of discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003).

Labour market oppression can also have an effect on the meaning of work to racialized groups. In a study of poor and working class adolescents, Chaves et al. (2004) found that urban youth and their families tend to view work instrumentally (i.e., as a means to an end) rather than as a source of personal growth or development. Similarly, Collins (2000) reports that poor African-American women have historically perceived

work in instrumental terms, rather than as a meaningful form of self-expression. Blustein et al. (2005) theorize that such findings may be related to a lack of volition or control over one's career development.

Workplace as an Empowering Community Setting for Young Black Individuals

Despite the extensive oppression faced by Black and other racialized groups, the workplace can be a potentially empowering community setting.

Empowering workplace organizational characteristics. A large body of literature has developed in the fields of organizational behaviour and management that has explored empowering workplace characteristics, most of which has focused on adult populations (Spreitzer, 1996). Characteristics such as organizational culture, work unit climate, sociopolitical support, and autonomy have been found to be key in creating empowering workplace environments for adult populations. Many of these characteristics are similar to those identified in Maton's (2008) framework for empowering community settings, supporting the hypothesis that there may be some common empowering organizational characteristics across different types of organizational settings.

Despite the possibility of universal empowering organizational characteristics, there is reason to believe that there may be diversity in the nature and salience of empowering workplace characteristics for young Black workers. Such diversity would be based, in part, on individuals' lived experiences and social location, and the subjective meanings they bring to the work environment. Little research, however, has examined empowering workplace characteristics for Black workers – particularly within community psychology. Studies of young workers show that the workplace

characteristics associated with positive outcomes include participatory democratic structures (Hamilton, Basseches, & Richards, 1985), positive adult relationships and mentorship (Hamilton et al., 2006), autonomy (Loughlin & Barling, 1999), bonding (Chinman & Linney, 1998), and school-work compatibility (Mortimer, Harely, & Staff, 2002). Existing literature on Black employment suggests that organizational processes that foster cultural identity, social networks, consciousness-raising, and activism may be necessary for empowerment (Watts, 1993; Yowell & Gordon, 1996). Bond (1999) has suggested that organizational contexts that comprise a culture of connection and recognition of multiple realities are critical for promoting empowerment among racialized, gendered, and other excluded groups.

Psychological impacts of empowering workplace characteristics. Little research has considered the empowering psychological impacts of employment experiences among Black populations. However, existing research suggests that empowering workplace experiences can provide valuable skills, resources, and relationships that enhance young peoples' ability to exert control in their lives. Many studies on the impact of employment on the development of youth and young adults have found that employment can have a positive impact on various mental health and developmental outcomes (Frone, 1999). The literature also shows that the impact of employment on mental health and developmental outcomes depends largely on the qualities and characteristics of the work environment, as well as those of the individual (Mortimer, Harley, & Staff, 2002). Unfortunately, as stated earlier, most young people obtain work in settings such as food services, retail, customer service, and factory,–

workplaces that are typically characterized by low pay, low skill, and low job security, with few opportunities for learning or for applying skills learned in school.

Gender and Race as Social Location in the Workplace

Gender can be defined as a socio-demographic category that is ascribed to individuals according to socially-constructed criteria of sex-related characteristics. According to Collins (2000), gender intersects with race and class to form a matrix of domination that assigns power and privilege according to peoples' location within the structure. The dynamics of power and empowerment within these structures are quite complex. For example, while patriarchal systems have historically been a source of women's oppression, feminine gender identities have also been a source of women's empowerment. Similarly, while men have historically benefited from the power and privilege of patriarchal systems, some men have also been simultaneously oppressed by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity (New, 2001; Watts, 2010). A small, yet growing body of research – both qualitative and quantitative – highlights the importance of intersectionality within the workplace, demonstrating how race, gender, class, and other identities function in a dynamic, interdependent, and cumulative manner to shape experiences of oppression and liberation (e.g., Abib & Guerrier, 2003). Despite the influences of these intersecting systems on young Black men and women's workplace experiences, few studies have systematically examined workplace oppression and empowerment with Black Canadians.

Gender and Black psychological empowerment. Research has shown that gender plays a significant and complex role in psychological empowerment outcomes and processes of Black populations (Gibbs & Fuery, 1994). Combined with current

demographic trends, this literature suggests – in spite of persisting inequities between Black males and females in the workplace – that Black females are typically more empowered than Black males in the domains of education and employment. Black females often show greater psychological empowerment than Black males, particularly with respect to intrapersonal empowerment. While the belief in the "Black female advantage" has become almost common sense in scholarly and popular discourse (e.g., Royster, 2007), it has also received strong criticism from some scholars as being a myth that reinforces White male patriarchy in the workplace (e.g., Sanchez-Hucles, 1997).

Numerous studies have found that Black women demonstrate a high degree of psychological strength and resilience, possessing greater autonomy, achievement motivation, and less fear of success than White women or Black men. (e.g., Gibbs & Fuery, 1994). Gibbs and Fuery (1994) suggest that psychological resilience was developed in response to oppression through which Black women were forced to develop internal sources of self-esteem in order to surmount barriers and raise families.

Scholarship on Black identity has produced a sizeable body of literature that explores how gender, race, and class shape the identity development of Black men and women. In her classic work on Black feminist thought, Collins (2000) argues that racial identity is a central theme of Black feminist thought and a critical source of Black women's empowerment. The connection between racial identity and workplace empowerment has been related to the performance of masculine and feminine gender identities. Some scholars have argued that Black women's resilience may be attributed, in part, to gender identities that do not conform to gender stereotypes of White females (e.g., docility, agreeability), nor to racial stereotypes of Black males (e.g., laziness,

hostility) (Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). The ability of Black women to flexibly utilize feminine and masculine behaviours, as strong and assertive yet not hostile, provides a source of power in the workplace. Research also shows gender differences in the types of self-conceptions between males and females, which are consistent across ethnoracial groups – including Blacks. Males have been found to possess individualistic or agentic self-conceptions, while females often possess more collectivist or communal self-conceptions (e.g., Moskowitz, Sue & Desaulniers, 1994).

Quantitative studies have found fairly consistent gender differences in the development of Black identity. For example, Parham and Helms (1985) found that young African-American males demonstrated greater tendencies toward "pre-encounter" identities (characterized by internalized Eurocentric worldviews), while young African-American females showed greater tendencies toward "internalization" identities (characterized by inner security with one's Black racial identity and political engagement for the sake of the group).

Studies of gender and self-esteem among Black populations suggest that Black females often show higher self-esteem than Black males in various domains, including work and education (e.g., Smith, Schneider, & Ruck, 2005). This lies in contrast to associations between gender and self-esteem among other ethnoracial groups (Dukes & Martinez, 1994). Gender also seems to influence the relationship between self-esteem and employment-related outcomes. For example, Dooley and Prause (1997) found that low self-esteem predicted later unemployment, and that this relationship was stronger for males than for females, and for Whites and Latinos than for Blacks. In other words, they found that self-esteem has less benefit for women and Blacks than for men and Whites

and Latinos. In an exploratory cross-sectional study of the sources of African-American

youth leadership development, Teasley, Tyson, and House (2007) found that self-esteem

was the most important source of leadership characteristics among African-American

females, but not males (for whom participation in community programs was the only

significant source of leadership development).

While few empirical studies have examined the gender dynamics of critical

consciousness among young Black males and females, findings show (perhaps

unsurpisingly) that males and females tend to integrate their gendered experiences into

their critical consciousness. Placing race, gender, and class at the center of her analysis

of Black women's experiences, Collins (2000) identified several themes of political

consciousness among Black feminists, including self-definition, activism, and sexual

politics. Similarly, in an empirical study of urban adolescents, Diemer, Kauffman,

Koenig, Trahan & Hsieh (2006) found that young women's critical consciousness tended

to place greater emphasis on an analysis of sexism than young men. In addition, studies

of consciousness raising interventions suggest that gender-focused strategies may be

appropriate. Robinson and Ward (1991) articulate a framework for consciousness-raising

with African-American girls that emphasizes resistance against self-denigration,

excessive individualism, and early pregnancies. In developing a manhood development

program for African-Americans, Watts, Abdul-Adil, and Pratt (2002) relied on warrior

metaphors and hip hop to engender critical consciousness, since they are archetypical

representations of masculinity and race with which males could readily identify.

A number of studies have examined how gender intersects with race and class to

shape behavioural empowerment outcomes. Comparative studies have shown that young

African-American females are more likely to volunteer than young African-American males (Marcelo, Lopez, & Kirby, 2007), while African-American males tend to be more engaged in political action (Alex-Assensoh & Assensoh, 2001).

Gender and workplace oppression. Young women face multiple barriers to the workplace due to factors such as gender discrimination, gender socialization toward domestic spheres, and the need to balance multiple roles during the transition into adulthood (Tam, 2005). Consequently, young women have historically tended to earn lower wages, have less authority and advancement within the workplace, and have fewer options for employment (Wright, Baxter, & Birkelund, 1995). Young women are typically employed in jobs such as babysitting, and retail service, while young men have traditionally held a wider variety of options in areas such as apprenticeships, recreation, and factory work. While Black women face similar barriers to employment as women from other ethnoracial groups (e.g., Wright et al. 1995), they also face the added barrier of race – what some have referred to as the "double jeopardy" of race and gender (Browne & Misra, 2003). Young Black Canadian males (aged 15-24) have a slightly higher unemployment rate (20.7%) than young Black Canadian females (18.6%) (in contrast to unemployment rates of 12.8% and 11.7% respectively for non-visible minority males and females) (Statistics Canada, 2011).

While recognizing the oppressive impact of patriarchy on women's employment, there remains a popular notion that Black males are in crisis, indicated particularly by their high rates of unemployment, school drop-out, and incarceration (e.g., Blake & Darling, 1994). Several theories of institutionalized racism have been proposed to explain the supposed Black male crisis, including the high degree of incarceration, the

lack of heroes and role models for Black males, stereotypes, and affirmative action policies that privilege Black women over Black men (Petrie & Roman, 2004). Royster (2007) argues that Black males are marginalized from the labour market largely through cultural practices and institutional norms that apply greater consequences than other groups for enacting masculine behaviours, such as demonstrating anger, challenging authority, speaking out of turn, or adopting modes of urban dress.

Scholarly critiques and empirical evidence challenge the simplistic dualism of suffering Black males and strong Black women (e.g., Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). Studies have shown that African-American women experience more discrimination than either Black men or White women, are the least likely to be mentored by White men (i.e., the highest status group), and have historically remained at the bottom of the pay and promotion reward structure (Browne & Misra, 2003; Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). Studies of Canadian visible minority women have found compelling evidence that systemic racism has a significant impact on women of colour in the workplace, due to familial roles that often require compromising career development, labour markets that prevent entry into high paying or prestigious jobs, and a lack of institutional supports for the domestic roles of women (Tastoglou & Miedema, 2005). The problem is more complicated for immigrant visible minority women who face the added disadvantages of cultural and language barriers (Elabor-Idemudia, 1999).

Gender also appears to influence the nature and impacts of interpersonal discrimination faced by Black males and females. In a study of African-American women, Hughes and Dodge (1997) found that interpersonal and institutional racial biases accounted for a greater proportion of job quality levels than other work-related predictors

such as task redundancy. Several studies have found that Black males typically internalize racial stigma more severely than Black females (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Within the workplace, studies suggest that Black women and men experience different types of occupational stressors. Petrie and Roman (2004), for example, found that Black females experience less autonomy in the workplace than Black males. Lambert and Hopkins (1995) reported that African-American women also tend to experience less sense of community at work than other groups, including Black men.

Gender and workplace characteristics. Although issues of power have frequently been addressed in research on Black workers' experiences, few studies that I am aware of have examined how gender influences their perceptions or experiences of empowering workplace characteristics. The absence of such work is puzzling, but may be attributed, in part, to the historical exclusion experienced by Blacks within the workplace, and the perception of employment as a primarily instrumental, rather than self-defining, activity. A notable example includes work by Tastoglou and Miedema (2005), who conducted a qualitative study of African-Canadian immigrant women and found that the strategies they used for labour force integration included obtaining Canadian qualifications, obtaining Canadian experience, working harder, making enormous personal effort, and organizing for social change. Gibbs and Fuery (1994) reviewed literature on factors that promoted the well-being of African-American women and reported that informal networks were critical to well-being. Robinson and Ward (1991) argue that in order to resist oppression, young Black women must take on resistance strategies for liberation, such as learning to trust their own voices, and learning Afrocentric ideology. While few generalizations can be drawn regarding the relationship

between gender and empowering workplaces from these studies, they do suggest that gender is nonetheless a critical social factor in determining the experience of empowerment in the workplace.

Research Questions

Given the preceding review, this study will attempt to address several gaps in the literature on race, gender, empowerment and oppression. Most notably, there is a significant lack of research on the workplace empowerment or oppression of Black youth and young adults within the Canadian context. Moreover, while some research has examined the work experiences of young African-American workers, the bulk of this work has focused on oppression, and a relatively small body of work has considered the empowering characteristics and outcomes of the workplace. In addition, despite a notable body of research that has considered gendered experiences of empowerment and oppression, little comparative research has considered how such experiences are structured within the workplace for young Black females and males. To address these gaps, my research will seek to answer the following six research questions:

Race, oppression, and the workplace.

1. How does oppression influence the psychological empowerment of Black youth and young adults in the workplace?

Race and the workplace as an empowering community setting.

2. What are the workplace organizational characteristics that Black Canadian youth and young adults find empowering?

3. How do empowering workplace settings promote Black Canadian youth and young adults' empowerment?

Gender as social location.

4. How does gender influence young Black Canadian men's and young Black Canadian women's experiences of oppression in the workplace?

5. How does gender influence young Black Canadian men's and young Black Canadian women's perceptions of empowering workplace organizational characteristics?

6. How does gender influence young Black Canadian men's and young Black Canadian women's experiences of empowerment through the workplace?

Chapter III: Methodology

Design

I used a naturalistic-qualitative research design for this study. Naturalistic

research designs are those that do not attempt to manipulate phenomena of interest, and

that study phenomena in real-world settings (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research designs

involve the collection and analysis of non-numerical data (e.g., text, photographs, video).

These designs are considered well-suited for in-depth studies of subjective phenomena

that are constructed through language and social interaction, and of complex social

phenomena that do not lend themselves to controlled experimentation. Since my study

focuses on subjective experiences of empowerment within the social context of the

workplace, a naturalistic-qualitative design was appropriate. Due to the dynamic and

uncertain nature of these phenomena, the research design was flexible and emergent – the

research questions and methods of data collection and analysis were refined during the

course of the study in response to new insights and changing conditions.

Narrative research. Qualitative researchers typically ground their research

designs in one (or more) of several methodological traditions, based on the study's

purpose and the researcher's epistemological assumptions. I chose narrative as the

primary methodological tradition for this study. Narrative research is based on the

assumption that human experience can best be understood as stories (sequenced events

with a beginning, middle, and end), and that people use stories as a frame of reference for

interpreting their experiences and acting in the world (McAdams, 2001). Narrative

research designs emphasize the collection and analysis of stories to examine subjectivity

and social processes. Community psychologists have increasingly applied narrative

designs to the study of various socio-political, multi-level phenomena, including empowerment (Rappaport, 1995), community settings (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000), and diversity (Harrell & Bond, 2006). Not only are these methods suited to community psychology's theoretical and substantive concerns, they are also consistent with community psychology's values since the process of telling and listening to stories can facilitate personal and social change (Rappaport, 1995). A large body of scholarship has emerged that uses narratives to examine issues of identity (McAdams, 2001) and of race in the workplace (Abib & Guerrier, 2003).

Narrative research shares fundamental epistemological and methodological similarities with Black intellectual traditions that use stories as a way to interpret, reframe, and challenge various forms of oppression (Collins, 2000). Horowitz and Halpern (1999) suggest that oral narratives are an effective way to explore the ecological and historical nature of work, and its relationship to perception, consciousness, and identity.

Critical self-reflexivity. Much qualitative research is based on constructivist and critical epistemologies that view knowledge as socially constructed – mediated by the language, culture, values, and social location of the researcher and of the participants, as well as by the broader socio-political context of the research (Patton, 2002). Many qualitative researchers recognize that their personal subjectivity has an influence on the research process and the research findings. In order to enhance the quality and rigor of their research, qualitative researchers engage in a process referred to as reflexivity, whereby researchers explicitly acknowledge the influence of their subjectivity and social location on the research (Patton, 2002). Reflexivity is increasingly being incorporated

into qualitative research by community psychologists (e.g., Langhout, 2006). While

many strategies are available to researchers to incorporate reflexivity into their research, I

chose to use two in the present study. First, I chose to write in the first person, a strategy

that makes the researcher's voice and subjectivity more transparent in reporting their

findings. Second, I conducted regular reflections and journaling on my own experiences

of race, gender, and power in my work life, and have incorporated some of these

reflections into my findings and discussion. This process of making my own voice

visible in the research is consistent with a Black feminist epistemic standpoint that

privileges the voices of oppressed individuals in understanding their own experiences.

As a young Black Canadian male, I have an embodied knowledge of race, gender and

power that I may share with some of the participants in this study. I recognize, however,

that my experience of power is influenced by the patriarchal system of privilege and

domination.

Collaboration. Community psychologists often stress the importance of

collaboration as a methodological and practical imperative for community research and

action. Collaborative research approaches are consistent with the discipline's values of

participation, and can enhance the credibility of research by ensuring that the study's

findings more closely reflect the lived experiences of participants. I used two

collaborative strategies in the research design by seeking participant feedback on data and

findings (a process called member-checking), and by working with a community

consultant who provided input on the design, analysis, and findings.

Participants.

Sample. I selected participants using a purposeful sampling strategy – the selection of information-rich cases that would provide in-depth information on the phenomena of interest (Patton, 2002). Inclusion criteria were therefore set to guide the recruitment of participants who could tell complex and detailed stories about their experiences of empowerment and adversity in the workplace. In order to collect stories that reflected a diverse range of young Black Canadians' employment experiences, I used a specific type of purposeful sampling referred to as maximum variation sampling, which involved selecting participants with varying socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, and economic sector/occupational class). Since gender was a key comparative factor in the study, the sample was stratified (divided into relatively homogeneous subgroups) by gender.

The total sample size was 24. I decided on this sample size in order to ensure that the gender subgroups were of sufficient size to achieve data saturation (the point at which no new findings emerge from the analysis of qualitative data). Since empirical evidence suggests that saturation typically occurs at sample sizes of 12 (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), I set a sample of 12 males and 12 females for a total of 24.

The following inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) were between the ages of 16 and 35; (b) self-identified racially as Black (or as multiracial, including partial identification as Black); (c) have at least two consecutive months of full- or part-time work experience; (d) currently reside in Southern Ontario; and (e) speak English fluently. It was important to use self-identification as a criterion for race. Despite being considered an ascribed social characteristic, individuals differ in the nature and degree of

their racial identification (Doyle & Kao, 2007). I restricted the geographic region to the

Greater Toronto Area (GTA), because local economic and social conditions often shape

individuals' (and communities') employment experiences. Restricting the geographic

area helped to ensure that I collected a rich set of stories that were grounded in similar

contexts. Participants were required to have at least two consecutive months of work

experience to ensure that they had sufficient work experience (at least the equivalent of a

typical summer job) to tell meaningful, complex stories. The requirement that

individuals speak English was primarily due to my own language limitations.

Inclusion criteria for the community consultant required that the individual (a)

self-identify as Black; (b) have at least 10 years experience in a field related to Black

youth development and employment; (c) reside in the GTA; and (d) speak English.

Sample characteristics are summarized in Table 1. Interview participants

consisted of 24 Black Canadian youth and young adults, including 12 males and 12

females. Eight participants were youth between 16 and 18 years of age, and 16

participants were young adults between 19 and 35 years of age (6 participants between 19

and 24, 10 participants between 25 and 35) (median age was 28). Approximately 70% of

the sample was of Ghanaian (33%) or Jamaican (37.5%) descent. The remaining 30%

were from other African countries (12.5%) or other Caribbean countries (16.7%). The

ethnic composition of the sample was not representative of Black Canadians in Toronto,

which consists of a much wider range of ethnic groups from Africa, the Caribbean, and

South America, and a small population of non-immigrant Black Canadians. All

participants in this study were first- or second-generation immigrants, with all except one

of the first-generation immigrants having lived in Canada for over 10 years.

The community consultant was a second-generation Ghanaian-Canadian female who had 10 years of experience as a secondary school teacher, and a longer history of involvement in various Black community activities. As a family studies teacher, she often discussed career exploration issues with her students and heard stories about their work experiences.

Recruitment. Participants and the community consultant were recruited through two major sources (organizations and personal networks) using a two-stage process. During the first stage I generated sampling frames of youth employment-related organizations in the GTA (i.e., Black and multicultural community-based agencies, community-based employment training agencies, labour organizations, and government youth employment programs), and of personal networks of Black professionals. During the second stage, I contacted the organizations and professionals about posting and distributing recruitment flyers to prospective participants (Appendix A). Participants were not offered remuneration for their participation.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	N	%
Gender		
Male	12	50
Female	12	50
Age		
16-18	8	33.3
19-29	6	25
30-35	10	41.7
Education		
High School	7	29.2
College	4	16.7
University (Undergraduate)	7	29.2
University (Graduate/ Professional)	6	25
Ethnicity		
Ghana	8	33.3
Jamaica	9	37.5
Other African	3	12.5
Other Caribbean	4	16.7
Years in Canada		
Born in Canada	16	66.6
Over 10 years	7	29.2
Under 10 years	1	4
Occupational Class		
Social Science, Education, and Government Service	4	16.7
Sales and Service	10	41.7
Business, Finance and Administration	3	12.5
Management	2	8.3
Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport	5	20.8
Lifetime Work Experience		
Less than 1 year	3	12.5
1 to 5 years	5	20.8
5 to 10 years	8	33.3
Greater than 10 years	8	33.3

Table 2

Case Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation
Diane	F	16	Jamaican-Canadian	Retail Store Sales
Andrea	F	18	Ghanaian- Canadian	Community Program Worker
Giselle	F	18	Jamaican-Canadian	Receptionist
Tamara	F	21	Zimbabwean-Canadian	Student Program Coordinator
Grace	F	22	Guyanese-Canadian	Social Worker
Cassandra	F	25	Jamaican- Canadian	Community Arts Worker
Jamila	F	30	Jamaican-Canadian	Community Program Specialist
Abena	F	31	Ghanaian-Canadian	Lawyer
Akua	F	31	Ghanaian-Canadian	Journalist
Sammia	F	33	Ghanaian-Canadian	Entrepreneur
Teja	F	34	Ghanaian-Canadian	Teacher
Kim	F	35	Canadian	Police Officer
Craig	M	16	Ghanaian-Canadian	Game Store Sales
Alex	M	17	Ghanaian-Canadian	Department Store Sales
Kofi	M	19	Ghanaian-Canadian	Pizza Shop Cook
Sebastian	M	18	Jamaican- Canadian	Fast Food Shift-Supervisor
Mark	M	19	Jamaican-Canadian	Grocery Store Clerk
Joseph	M	20	Ghanaian-Canadian	Electronics Salesperson
Mustafa	M	28	Vincentian-Canadian	Artist
Hassan	M	29	Somali-Canadian	Mortgage Broker
Kweku	M	32	Ghanaian-Canadian	Financial Advisor
Lawrence	M	33	Jamaican-Canadian	Entrepreneur
Isaiah	M	34	Jamaican-Canadian	Entrepreneur
Jones	M	35	Jamaican-Canadian	Information Technology Manager

Data Collection

Interviews. I collected narrative data through semi-structured open-ended interviews (conducted by myself). Interviews were guided by an interview protocol (Appendix B) that was designed to elicit storied accounts of participants' work experiences. The protocol was adapted, in part, from narrative interview protocols

developed by McAdams (1997) to study the psychology of life stories. McAdams'

protocol explores personal life stories, by asking participants to narrate a series of stories

on topics such as life chapters, critical events (e.g., high points, low points, turning

points), and life challenges. Participants are typically asked to narrate events in detail,

and to describe who was involved in the event, what they were thinking and feeling at the

time, and what impact it had on them. While McAdams' life story interview has been

used for research on identity, personality, and various life domains, I am not aware of any

studies that have used it to examine empowerment or the workplace. I did not use the

entire life story interview protocol, as the focus of my study was power within a specific

setting, rather than its development across the lifespan. I therefore adapted those

questions with focused on critical events.

Although I followed the interview protocol consistently across participants, I also

used probes to seek elaboration and clarification of key issues. The interview protocol

was piloted with the community consultant and refined based on her feedback related to

sequencing and wording of the questions. I continued to make minor refinements to the

interview protocol (e.g., to wording and sequencing of questions) throughout the study,

according to new insights gained from participants. Interviews were conducted at times

and locations that were convenient for participants. All interviews were audio recorded,

and ranged from 22 to 128 minutes in length, averaging approximately 62 minutes. At

the end of each interview, participants completed a demographic information sheet that

collected information on various socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, age,

race, country of birth, education level, and work experience (Appendix C). Following

each interview, I wrote brief post-interview memos (Appendix D) that documented my

initial reflections on the interview content and process. Interview audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by me and two research assistants. Pseudonyms were assigned to names and places in order to increase participant anonymity.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis generally involves the organization of qualitative data into conceptual frameworks that elucidate a particular phenomenon. Specific procedures for data analysis vary widely from study based on a number of factors, including the researcher's methodological tradition and the purpose and research questions of the study. The purpose of my analyses was to generate theory and conceptual frameworks that would answer the research questions – essentially explaining how adversity, workplace organizational characteristics, and gender influence young Black Canadians' empowerment in the workplace. I used a combination of two approaches – grounded theory (GT) and narrative analysis – as a strategy for analyzing the interview and journal data. GT is a systematic procedure for generating categories, concepts and theories through inductive analysis of qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006). Essentially, GT involves a systematic procedure (called coding) by which data are organized into categories (codes), which are synthesized into themes and connections between themes which result in a grounded theory. Coding was done using a constant comparative method, where increasingly abstract categories are developed inductively by comparing data to data and data to codes, and grouping the data according to similar content, properties, or dimensions. I chose to use GT since it provides a rigorous and systematic yet flexible approach to qualitative data analysis. Narrative analysis involves examining the content and structure of stories to understand how people make sense of their experiences

(Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000). Narrative analysis tends to be less systematized than GT, as there are various traditions and approaches to the analysis of narrative data, depending on the specific discipline and theoretical orientation of the researcher. A distinguishing feature of most narrative analysis, however, is a focus on stories as a primary unit of analysis, whereby events are considered in their entirety and there is an analytical focus on how the actors, settings, and plots in stories reflect or shape lived experiences. In the present study, I combine GT and narrative analysis by inductively analyzing participants' stories to generate theory. I describe my analytical steps in more detail below.

In order to manage the data analysis process, I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program that assists users in coding, comparing, and modeling qualitative data. Coding occurred in four broad phases: (a) codebook development, where I drafted a preliminary set of codes (including their definitions, properties and dimensions) that would be used for subsequent coding of the transcripts; (b) coding, where I used the codebook to analyze the transcripts while making modifications to the codebook as necessary; (c) theory development, where codes were refined, compared and modeled to develop and test theories that addressed the research questions; and (d) member checking, a process of seeking participant feedback on the findings to assess their validity and make refinements. Throughout the analysis procedure, I wrote memos that documented my evolving analyses of the data, and helped me to formulate definitions of categories, their dimensions and properties, and their relationship to other categories. Specific analytical phases and steps are described in the following subsections.

Analysis phase 1: Codebook development.

(1)   A preliminary codebook was developed with *a priori* codes based on sensitizing concepts from the study's conceptual framework and on my review of the literature. Codes were organized into three broad categories of adversity, empowering workplace characteristics, and empowerment outcomes.

(2)   I prepared six transcript summaries from a representative sample of six interviews. The purpose of the transcript summaries was to (a) increase my sensitivity to key themes in the data by reducing transcripts to their essential content; (b) facilitate peer debriefing with my supervisors and the community consultant, by providing concise summaries of the data; and (c) provide initial data for development of the codebook.

(3)   The case summaries were coded using the preliminary codebook, while inductive codes were also developed for themes that did not fit within the a priori framework. While coding, I grouped stories into categories according to common actors, settings, plots, and themes of participants' stories.

(4)   I then conducted peer debriefing by providing the case summaries to my supervisor, the community consultant, and one of my committee members. I met individually with each person to discuss my emerging analysis of the data. The codebook was refined based on feedback from these discussions.

Analysis phase 2: Coding.

(1)   Once the codebook was complete, I used it to code the entire data set (transcripts and journal), while being open to adding, modifying, synthesizing, or removing codes as new insights arose.

Analysis phase 3: Theory development.

Research question 1: How does oppression influence the psychological empowerment of Black youth and young adults in the workplace?

(1)   Codes and memos related to oppression were reread in order to identify core categories and relationships between them. Core categories included those oppression codes that occurred most frequently across cases, and that seemed to integrate or subsume other categories.

(2)   I wrote further memos that synthesized my thoughts on the relationship between oppression and workplace empowerment, and used NVivo's modeling function to visualize the categories and their inter-relationships.

Research question 2: What are the workplace organizational characteristics that Black Canadian youth and young adults find empowering?

(1)   Codes and memos were reviewed in order to identify empowering workplace characteristics that occurred most frequently across cases, and that seemed to integrate or subsume other categories.

(2)   I used NVivo's modeling function to create a model of empowering workplace characteristics.

Research question 3: How do empowering workplace organizational characteristics promote Black Canadian youth and young adults' empowerment?

(1)   Codes and memos related to psychological empowerment outcomes were reviewed in order to identify those outcomes that occurred most frequently across cases and that seemed to integrate or subsume other categories. Codes were reorganized, collapsed, or discarded in order to refine the analysis.

(2) I wrote further memos that synthesized my thoughts on the relationship between workplace characteristics and the empowerment outcomes. Categories were integrated into the theoretical model to illustrate the relationships.

Research question 4: How does gender influence young Black Canadian men's and young Black Canadian women's experiences of oppression?

(1) The refined set of adversity codes was compared by gender using NVivo's matrix query function to compare and contrast codes by gender. Memos were written on similarities, differences, and theoretical insights. I also reviewed adversity codes specifically related to gender, and compared them with the memos.

(2) A gender component was integrated into the theoretical model to illustrate relationships between gender and oppression.

Research question 5: How does gender influence young Black Canadian men's and young Black Canadian women's perceptions of empowering workplace organizational characteristics?

(1) The refined set of empowering workplace characteristic codes were compared by gender using a matrix query (an analytical procedure NVivo that enables comparative analysis by generating matrices that indicate the intersection or distribution of codes by a particular property, e.g., male by female). I also reviewed empowering workplace characteristic codes that related specifically to gender. Memos were written on similarities, differences, and theoretical insights.

(2) The theoretical model was refined to illustrate relationships between gender and empowering workplace characteristics.

Research question 6. How does gender influence young Black Canadian men's and young Black Canadian women's experiences of empowerment through the workplace?

(1)   The refined set of empowering outcome codes were compared by gender using a matrix query. Memos were written on similarities, differences, and theoretical insights. I also reviewed empowering workplace characteristic codes related to gender, and compared them with the memos.

(2)   The theoretical model was refined to illustrate relationships between gender and empowering processes and outcomes.

Analysis phase 4: Member checking.

(1)   I prepared a two-page summary of the findings and shared them electronically with participants, asking them to comment on whether the findings were consistent with their own experiences, and what modifications they would suggest.

(2)   I attempted to incorporate any participant feedback into analysis and reporting of findings. No participants refuted the basic findings. Most feedback involved editing selected texts of the interview, and the exchange of reflections on areas of the findings that resonated with participants' personal experiences.

Chapter IV: Overview of Findings and Discussion

This chapter provides a brief overview of the study's findings, which are described in more detail in the subsequent three chapters (Chapters 5-7). Within each chapter, narrative themes are described and I provide illustrative quotations from the interviews as evidence (using pseudonyms for each participant). I conclude each sub-section of the findings with a critical self-reflection on the consonances and dissonances between the findings and my personal work experiences. Each critical self-reflection is then followed by a discussion wherein I interpret the findings in view of existing theory and empirical findings from psychology various and other disciplines (I provide a table summarizing each discussion, Tables 3-5). Integrating the findings and discussion is a common approach to writing qualitative research reports (Patton, 2002). I chose to take an interdisciplinary approach to interpreting the findings, as theoretical and empirical work from other disciplines helped to better elucidate the complex and ecological findings. This is in keeping with calls for greater interdisciplinarity among community psychologists (e.g., Maton, Perkins, & Saegert, 2006).

The Working Game: A Metaphor for Power in the Work Settings

The overarching aim of my study was to examine the relationships between race, gender, and power in community settings. Using the experiences of young Black Canadians in the workplace as an exemplar, I focused the study through three main research questions:

1. How does oppression influence the psychological empowerment of Black youth and young adults in the workplace?

2. How do workplace settings promote Black youths' and young adults' psychological empowerment?

3. How does gender influence Black youths' and young adults' experiences of oppression and psychological empowerment in the workplace?

I used a narrative methodology to answer these questions, listening to stories about race, gender, and power in the workplace from young Black Canadians, and analyzing those stories for shared and contrasting events, actors, settings, and metaphors.

The findings from my analyses are presented and summarized as a model (Figure 2). Many participants described the workplace as a distinct world or reality (distinguished from their personal, cultural, or educational worlds), and used the metaphor of the game to describe the dynamics of social interactions in the working world. These working games were characterized by their ubiquity (all individuals within the workplace were players of the game, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously), and by competition between ethnoracial teams, where empowerment depends on one's ability to master (or break) the rules of the game. The play of the game involved action both within the beyond the actual workplace setting. Abena [female, age 31], the sole Black lawyer at a 500 lawyer firm, described the working world as follows:

> You're in a different environment, you have to learn how to conduct yourself in such an environment. It's a valuable lesson: that's how the world works and that's how you succeed...But to a certain extent you have to play – it's a *game*[2], and either you're equipped to play the game or you're not. And if you're not that's fine, but don't go try to play it. If you want to succeed...And you know all the drawbacks and negatives, [then] by all means get with the program. It's not going to change overnight. It will change eventually, but it is what it is...You just have to know what game you're playing and play it. Successfully.

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[2] *Italics* indicate participants' emphasis.
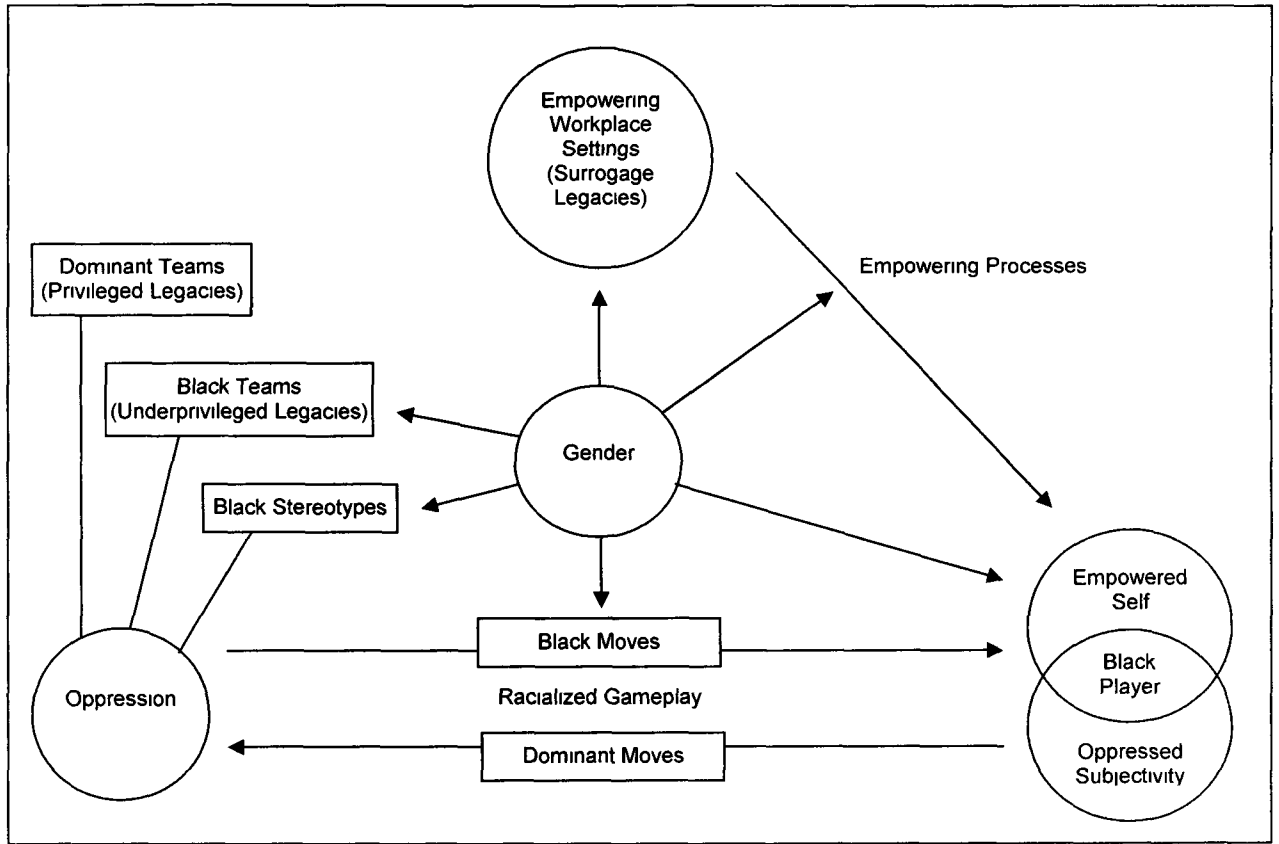
Figure 2. Grounded Theoretical Model. This model illustrates the relationships between

workplace oppression, empowerment, and gender.

Essentially, the findings suggest five main propositions about young Black

Canadians' experiences of race, gender, and power in the workplace:

1. Young Black Canadians experience the workplace as a game-like world,

   where ethnoracial teams compete for opportunities and resources. Within the

   working game, power is based primarily on a negotiation between three

   fundamental factors: (a) stereotypes (preconceived images and narratives); (b)

   intergenerational legacies (resources and opportunities accrued through social

   networks); and (c) racialized gameplay (race-related interpersonal behaviours

   that give players strategic advantage).

2. Oppression, defined as a state of asymmetric power relations characterized by domination, subordination, and resistance, is experienced in the workplace primarily through an unequal playing field that consists of unequal teams and negative racial stereotypes, and racialized interpersonal gameplay. These dynamics of oppression hinder the ability for young Black Canadians to get in, move in, or stay in the game. Resisting oppression requires that young Black Canadians use strategic moves to break stereotypes, to fit in with dominant groups, and to strengthen Black teams.

3. Empowering workplace settings for young Black workers include four organizational characteristics (empowering relationships, meaningful roles, opportunity, and incentive systems) that function primarily as surrogate legacies that promote six main psychological outcomes (independence, confidence, opened eyes, a desire to give back, appreciation, and an ability to talk to others). Empowering workplace characteristics promote these outcomes through four empowering processes (encouragement and advice, exposure, respect, and validation).

4. Gender influences young Black workers' narratives about workplace oppression, which reflect a belief that Black males are more vulnerable to oppression than young Black females, due to more severe stereotypes (i.e., fear) and underprivileged legacies of (i.e., lack of father figures) associated with Black masculinity. Gender also influences the types of valued empowering workplace characteristics and psychological processes reflected

in young Black workers' narratives, as Black females tend to emphasize encouragement, and Black males emphasize opportunity.

5. Race becomes an increasingly salient aspect of young Black workers' narratives of oppression and empowerment as they transition from adolescence to young adulthood.

Chapter V: Narratives of Workplace Oppression

This chapter addresses the first research question: How does oppression influence young Black Canadians' psychological empowerment in the workplace? I address this question in three parts that are organized according to major themes in participants' narratives. The first two parts describe the social dynamics of oppression within the working game, and the third part describes the psychological experience of oppression as a Black player.

Uneven Playing Field

Many participants' stories indicated that Black players experienced oppression in the working game through an uneven playing field, where inherent advantage is given to dominant teams by virtue of an adverse stereotyped psychological climate, and of privileged legacies of dominant teams.

Black stereotypes. One of the central sources of oppression for Black players of the working game is a psychological climate that is saturated by Black stereotypes: simplified and exaggerated images and narratives of Black players. These stereotypes were characterized by properties of psychological ubiquity (ever-present, conscious and unconscious impressions held by all players), physicality (defining physical qualities), and affectivity (defining emotional qualities). Four archetypal representations of Black players were most common in participants' narratives about stereotypes, including the "scary Black," the "angry Black," the "ignorant Black," and the "entertaining Black." Participants indicated that stereotypes were mainly perpetuated through the representation of Black players in the media. Black stereotypes often produced various forms of racialized gameplay (discriminatory interpersonal relations, see section below),

and instilled Black players with a sense of difference and discrimination – a sense of

being constantly watched and judged. Sebastian [male, age 18] described his experience

of being stereotyped as a "scary Black" while working as a shift supervisor at a major fast

food restaurant:

> Because I was Black, they assumed I was rude and would attack people. I even got a customer complain that I *scared* them. They told my manager that I scared them. I was like "What did I do to scare them?" Just my look...She said exactly "I didn't look inviting." And I was just like, this is Ultimate Fast Food. I'm not an entertainer, you came to order food, why am I supposed to look inviting? But now I understand the reasons why.... because I look like a scary Black person. That's what my manager was getting at, but didn't want to say it like that... And I wasn't the only Black person who got that.

Jones [male, age 35], a successful mid-level manager at a major IT firm, described the

unintentional ubiquity of stereotypes in the workplace:

> They're not used to no Black man walking in there with dreads who could wow an audience. They're not used to that unless he's singing. Unless his last name's Marley and he's got dreads, they're not interested. But god forbid you could stand with dreads in front of corporate executives and convince them to spend four million dollars on a product, and you do it well. That's not supposed to happen. You see it's just not in their domain. So I always say it's *racism* not because they go out there and they purposely hate Black people, it's that they've never *seen* it. They've never *seen* that in their life. They've never seen that Black woman who could run an HR department – they've never *seen* it. They've never seen the Black female executive – they've never *seen* it.

Intergenerational legacies. Participants' stories often contrasted the disparities

between dominant (often White) teams and Black teams in terms of their positioning

(occupational status within the workplace structure), their resources (sources of strategic

advantage, such as information or money), and organization (level of team cohesion and

coordination). Black players often faced organizational politics and competition that

reinforced the dominant-subordinate relationships between dominant and Black teams.

Such organizational politics were among the most disliked aspects of the workplace by

many participants. The power of ethnoracial teams appeared to be rooted in

intergenerational legacies, the resources and opportunities that players gained through

familial and ethnoracial relational networks. Dominant teams conferred strategic

advantages to younger team members by providing access to privileged positions through

opportunity, references, and referrals outside of the formal workplace setting.

Dominant teams: Privileged legacies. Dominant teams were the primary

antagonists in many participants' stories. These teams benefitted from what some

participants referred to as "old boys clubs," informal networks that shared cultural and

familial ties, who bond and exchange information through informal social rituals, such as

drinking after work. Dominant teams retained their power in the working game by

transmitting resources and opportunities from strategically positioned senior team

members, to younger junior team members. Young Black Canadians' stories often

described the privilege inherited by their co-workers and peers born into dominant teams.

While in law school, Abena's [female, age 31, lawyer] lack of the ingrained resources of

intergenerational networks cost her potential career opportunities after graduation:

> In law school there are these jobs called the Bay St. jobs which you do on-campus
> interviews for. So only if you have good marks and play the game, etc., you're
> going to get one of these jobs, because there's just not many... Now I had
> multiple offers. To me all these firms were the same... I didn't care, so I'm just
> like... wherever I felt the most comfortable and whoever showed the most interest
> in me, that's where I'm going... Other students, chose the firm that they went to
> based on what's called *guaranteed hireback*. Because after articling you're not
> guaranteed a job... but certain firms have a guaranteed hireback... I did not know
> that. Nobody friggin' told me that! Whereas other people knew that because
> somebody had told them: their uncle was a lawyer at this firm, their cousin is this
> or that, their older brother went to law school. They just have those ingrained
> resources that minorities don't have... my uncle's not a judge, my dad is not this,
> my brother's not that. I had none of that entrenched legacy positions that a lot of
> my colleagues have. I call them legacy positions... like I had a colleague where
> her uncle was the former Commissioner of a [government agency]. So... it's a
> phone call and she has a job... We don't have legacy positions, where I think our

generation we're starting them. We're the ones that are going to be the legacy for the ones coming forward. But we don't have the people who can say "Hey, come, let me tell you something." We don't have that, whereas [a lot] of my colleagues [do]...if I would have gone to a firm that had guaranteed hireback, I would have been hired back.

Mustafa [male, age 28, artist] shared an experience of hiring discrimination due to the old boys' club within municipal government:

> There is an old boys club that still exists. I don't see why I have to go out for drinks with you in order to get the same opportunity as everybody else. I guess, that's just systemic racism of course... It's like I think being a Black man, even in business and life, you've got to know *so many* things. *Especially* your rights – labour law. If you're in a union, you've got to read that collective agreement. Like you have to be so *versed*... like in the City if you don't get a job, if you ask, they have to tell you within a certain amount of time why you didn't get that job... And 90% of the time, it's bullshit. They say you're unqualified. You *know* you're qualified. They don't tell you exactly what qualifications you didn't meet. It's just "You're unqualified, sorry." Most of the time it's seniority, but when they tell you it's unqualified, you know they put somebody up that they knew. And you'll see it – you just have to look at the list of the employees with the City, and their last names, and you will see there's maybe 10 last names that you'll see over and over and over again. And they'll go from generation to generation, all the way from *entry* to *retirement age*.

Black teams: Underprivileged legacies. In contrast to the stories about highly organized and well-resourced dominant teams in the workplace, participants' stories about Black teams emphasized three major themes of disorganization: playing alone, struggling families, and troubled communities.

Playing alone: The only Black person there. Many participants described being the only Black person in their workplace, or being only one of a small minority. Working as the only Black person was generally accepted as an inevitable or normative aspect of the working game. Although some participants did not explicitly associate their minority status with experiences of oppression, it was a characteristic reflection of the poor positioning and organization of Black teams within many work settings. The experience

of working as the only Black person was consistent whether the workplace was

dominated by White or other non-Black ethnoracial groups. Joseph [male, age 20], for

example, shared his struggles while working as the only Black sales person in a major

electronics store that was dominated by Indo-Canadians:

> You sort of know who to talk to, and how to talk to them. To sort of keep your mouth shut. At the time I was the only Black person there too, so I remember it was very risky waters. Very, very risky. I remember I'd never say anything to insult anybody, or how I make jokes and stuff like that. I was very cautious 'cause obviously I want my job. So I mean, *politics*, all politics. *A lot* of politics. Now my department manager's Indian. I would say 90-95% of the people I work with are Indian. The store manager's Indian. Out of all the other department managers, two are Indian, one is White. The store manager is Indian. The district manager is Indian. His boss is *White*…You can see the chain.

Struggling Black families. In addition to their lack of positioning and organization

within the workplace, Black teams were also underprivileged by challenges outside of the

workplace. In contrast to the well-established families of dominant teams, participants'

stories about Black families often narrated their ongoing struggles with adapting as first-

generation immigrants, with workplace discrimination, and, in many cases, with single

mother family structures. Concurrently, participants' stories also stressed the resilience

of Black families, reflected in the strong work ethic, sacrifices, and focus on education of

Black parents. The struggles of Black families therefore contributed to both the

oppression and empowerment of young Black workers. Abena [female, age 31, lawyer]

described the powerful impact of her mother's sacrifice and encouragement on her and

her sisters:

> You just see this example of a woman who has four kids under the age of 8, raising them by herself. I went to ballet, I did horseback riding… I did not know I was poor…I had no idea that we lived in Metro housing… that is *amazing.* I think it's just a person who was willing to wake up in the morning, take the kids to day care on the bus, then go to work, come pick us up, cook, do this, take us to ballet, take us to this practice, do all this stuff, come to parent-teacher, do the

homework. Like you just see an example of somebody who's gonna work because she wants *you* to be successful. And she tells you "go to school, go to school, go to school." Okay. And it's just ingrained in you what is of *value*... People always ask "so, did you guys like *have* to go to university?" because all four of us went to university... And it's like, you think back and you're like, no it wasn't even a conversation that we had where they said you *have* to go to university. It's just something that's ingrained in you and it starts when you're young. They're like "education is important." All of a sudden to you education is important. Nobody tells you to go to school but it's just for me to be successful in the way that I define it, education is important. Okay I'm going to university. So it wasn't a matter of *if* I'm going, it's *which one* are you going to?

Isaiah [male, age 34, entrepreneur] told a moving story about his father's work ethic and

sacrifice in spite of hardship:

My father is the hardest working man I've ever seen. He fought to get his children to Canada and took care of *all* of them. He is very, *very* resourceful. After he came to Canada he got a job at an auto shop. He told us about one time when he was once able to finish a big job in less than *half* the time to took another body worker who had been there for years. Once that happened, the owner didn't see him as a Black man anymore, but saw him as money. But at the same time one of the other guys got jealous and called the embassy, so he lost his job since he didn't have working status yet. After that he learned a new trade in electronics... I got my very first experience of responsibility from my dad when was 16 years old. He was working multiple jobs at the time to pay the bills, because our family was at risk of losing the house. My dad would wake the family up early on the weekends to help him to sort out and deliver newspapers before 5am. After some time, he started to see that the early mornings were having an effect on us, so he started waking up even earlier to put together and deliver the newspapers on his own. When me and my brothers saw how tired my dad was getting, we decided one day to wake up even earlier, prepared all the papers and delivered the papers on the route. As we were about three quarters done the route, we noticed a car pulling up in the distance. It was my dad, who came up and told us how we were amazing children and how proud we made him. That was the first time I remember that my dad was really proud of his children.

Troubled Black communities. In addition to the struggles of Black families

contributing to an unequal playing field, participants' narratives also described several

challenges of the Black community. The most common troubles identified included a

lack of mentors, a lack of role models, and a lack of unity. The troubles limited the

ability for Black teams to transmit intergenerational legacies (opportunity and resources)

from older to younger members. Although Jamila [female, age 30, community program

specialist] benefited personally from a strong mentor, she recognized the scarcity of such

supports in Black communities:

> I've learned that the Black community is in a lot of trouble, because there are not
> 10 or 20 Macs [personal mentor] that are going to hire Black youth at this level,
> that are going to – in addition to hiring them – get to know them personally, help
> them meet their goals, and ensure that they're successful. There's not *two* Macs
> that are out there. So we're in trouble. I'm not saying Mac is the answer to all
> the Black community's problems, but he does provide a small solution.

Racialized Gameplay

Thus far, my analyses of young Black Canadians' workplace narratives have

illustrated the dynamics of oppression through the broad terrain, the uneven playing field,

of the working game. In this part I present my analyses of the narrower interpersonal

dynamics of oppression upon the field, the racialized gameplay between Black players

and players of dominant teams. For many participants, interpersonal interactions with

dominant groups were often characterized by varying forms of hostility and competition.

Their stories conveyed a variety of moves (interpersonal actions that provided strategic

advantage or power) that dominant players used to oppress young Black workers, as well

as moves of resistance by Black team players. These moves were not necessarily

intentionally strategic, but involved the exercise of power in spite of players' intentions.

The following sub-sections compare the moves of dominant and Black players.

Dominant moves. Participants' narratives of workplace oppression typically

described at least one of five interpersonal moves by players from dominant teams. Four

of these moves (shock and doubt, punishment and betrayal, nigger jokes and name

calling, and blocking) involved oppressive interpersonal interactions, while the fifth

(benevolence) involved positive interpersonal interactions. Black stereotypes were often identified as an underlying motivator of oppressive moves.

Shock and doubt. Many participants described workplace experiences in which they were treated as if they were "stupid," when members of dominant groups questioned their judgment or authority, spoke to them in a condescending manner, or expressed surprise at their competence. These shock and doubt moves often exposed underlying, apparently unintentional, stereotypes, and provoked anger or frustration among participants. While working as a cashier at a major drug store, Grace [female, age 22, social worker] experienced many instances of shock and doubt from co-workers and customers:

> A lot of people… would treat me like I'm stupid… it drove me crazy and it drove me to quit. I just wanted to yell at them because I'm not some young Black woman who's pregnant or who's working here to pay for my baby and has a baby daddy. I'm actually graduating from university, and I have a degree, and I'm doing my Master's… People just think that this is the stereotype of what you should be doing, and if you're doing something else they're like "*wow! This is a magical case!*" It's not. Actually I graduated with a lot of Black women… It's not that special of a case to succeed. "Wow! Amazing! You're doing you're Master's? Oh my God!"… And always if it's something [against] the expectation or assumption that they first make it's like "*Wow!*"

Joseph [male, age 20, electronics sales person] told a story about an experience when a customer questioned his judgment while working as an assistant manager at a small computer store:

> A customer walked in and said "I need a TV cable." And he sort of went around the description and I said, "So you need a coax cable?" He said "No, I need a cable that goes from my wall to my TV." "A coax cable." "NO, it's a regular cable, don't you *understand*, man?" and he started *yelling*! So my manager heard the yelling, comes from the back to the front, he's like "Sorry sir, what can I help you with?" And he goes "Oh I need a cable that goes from the wall to my TV."… the owner looks at me and is like "Don't you know it's called a coax cable?" And I'm like "*Yeah*, I said it's a coax cable and he keeps telling me whatever." And he goes "Sir, you need a coax cable." [The customer is] like "WHAT THE HELL

IS WRONG WITH YOU GUYS? I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU BROWN AND BLACK PEOPLE! YOU GUYS NEVER UNDERSTAND ANYTHING!"[3] And he just stormed out... oddly... another week later, he sent a letter to the store apologizing and saying that he was wrong.

Nigger jokes and name calling. Another common oppressive interpersonal move

involved racial jokes and insults that invoked stereotypes. These verbal assaults ranged

in their severity from well-intentioned racial humour that was an everyday part of the

workplace culture and employee bonding, to explicitly derogatory racial slurs. Often,

such moves occurred as an exaggerated response to innocuous situations. Sebastian

[male, age 18, fast food shift supervisor] described an experience of such verbal attacks

from a customer:

> The reason I had to leave was because of customers... it was during a fun event, and a customer said "I want a free meal." With the coupon you could only get a free burger, so I'm like "Well you can buy the fries and the drink to get the meal, but you can only get the burger for free." And he's like "You f-ing Black! You f-ing Black!" Indian guy. "You f-ing Black!... Get him to serve me." And he pointed to another Indian guy. And because, you know, there are certain things you could say to me, and then certain things you *can't* say to me... And I said something along the lines of "Do you want me to throw this cash register in your face?" So after I said that, I was just like you know what, I'm going home. I was asked to stay longer, but I was like "No." I punched out right there and then I walked out. Because some people would say I have anger problems, and I'm very quick to attack people, so I like to avoid confrontations like that. Not trying to jump down anyone's throat.

Akua [female, age 31, journalist] described an experience of name calling while training

for the military:

> I remember once... I had finished high school half a semester early, and so I was in the army. So this one guy... he was kind of a jerk... but everybody dealt with him... And we were all joking around one day, it was like some time when it was off hours, and we were all joking around, and I hit the guy... on the bum or something. He reacted negatively, he said something like "Get your Black hands off me!"... So, later on, I'm told "You can report this guy." I guess somebody had told my superior that this thing had happened... I didn't want to go through with it. I was like, "no... he's just an ass." I won't say that I regret that, but

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[3] Capitals indicate yelling

because I didn't, I guess he continued on with his life... and now he's a policeman... I wonder what would have happened if I had filed that complaint. For all I know, it might have been like a red mark against him.

Punishment and deception. Several participants described experiences in which

superiors from dominant groups administered excessive punishment for minor mistakes,

or in which they were betrayed by trusted colleagues. Both experiences involved a sense

of the unfair application of rules or penalties of the game due to stereotypical

preconceptions of dominant players. Hassan [male, age 31, mortgage broker] told a story

about one of his co-workers when he worked at a major bank:

> I had this French collector who was from Jamaica. He had a thick accent, but he was bilingual – he could speak French. He spoke...with an accent when he was on the phone...I don't think the manager felt comfortable with the accent over the phone... because the Jamaican patois the accent or the way they use the language, sounds very aggressive. It's so intimidating, it gives the impression. It sounds like they're looking to go hurt someone... but that's not the case. And I think that's what made the manager feel not comfortable... And he put him in a position where he was in the spotlight in the department. And anytime you're in the spotlight... and you put a focus on anyone's work, you can rip them apart for anything really. You can rip them apart for little mistakes day by day, and use that as an excuse to terminate them.

Andrea [female, age 18, community worker] experienced punishment while working at a

pizza shop, where the owner couldn't see past her:

> [The manager] didn't really understand where I was coming from...it felt like everything I did was wrong... we felt that she couldn't really see past me and another Black coworker – she couldn't see past our colour it seemed, because she never really yelled at any of the other staff when they made a mistake, but when we made a mistake she was down our throat, and there were times where we were actually innocent of any wrong doing. But it was like she was coming at us from a different way. And it was hard... to be calm about it and not just get defensive... It was something that I had to really adjust to, because she was just hard to cope with... One time I forgot to put the meat in the sub, and [even though] that happened to someone else as well that wasn't Black, she wasn't as hard on them as she was on me.

Blocking. Many participants' told stories about experiences in which members of

dominant groups blocked their access to job opportunities. In some instances, job

opportunities appeared to be blocked due to stereotypes about young Black workers'

incompetence or untrustworthiness. In other instances, blocking appeared to occur due to

the privileged transfer of job opportunities amongst members of dominant teams. Joseph

[male, age 20, electronics sales person] believed that he may have experienced blocking

when he interviewed for a co-op placement:

> I work co-op at a Theme Park as a technician, and... I do still see racism... Last year I applied for a job, and I have two other friends that worked in that same position, so pretty much I was guaranteed the position. We're all in the same program, we're all in the same year, and they worked there before, and basically it was my turn to get the job. The interviewer was White, he interviewed me, I knew all the answers to questions, but I didn't get the job. It was *very* weird. And I said, okay you know what, maybe there's some hidden thing behind it. And this year I applied for a different job, but still at the Theme Park, still a technical job – and I got it... *both* interviewers actually were White, and there was no problem, I got the job. And I look back... at the other department that I applied for, there was one Brown guy, but if you look at him he could pass for a Spanish type of guy. But everybody else in that department was White. And I was noticing... that everybody else in that department was White. And I was saying... I *know* there *has* to be some kind of racism...And I hear [my friend] saying, "You know what, the older White guys that I work with are racist." Think about it, if the older guys you work with are racist, what about the actual supervisors or managers that actually interview that have control over all these things?... maybe he *was* racist. I don't think too much of it, because I got this job anyways.

Mark [male, age 19, grocery store clerk] believed that he was blocked because he was

stereotyped as being unworthy and unjustly punished for an incident that wasn't his fault:

> It got to the point where these managers were just so ignorant in that sense. It's like, okay screw this, sometimes I'm just like you know, what was the point? I'm putting in so much, I was supposed to get a promotion. They fell back on the promotion due to something that the manager did, i.e., during the Christmas break she scheduled me to work by myself during a snowstorm when it was the Christmas rush. It's Christmas rush and I'm by myself... I tried to stay, but I told her I need help. And then at the same time I had to go help my uncle at 12 o'clock, and I told her, I'm like "I got to leave this time." Usually I'll stay behind, I don't mind. But I told her I can't stay, and I did my best. And then there were still a *whole bunch* of carts outside, and I'm trying to tell her "what do you want me to do in a snowstorm?" And she's outside saying "get to work! Can't you push them faster, customers are coming!" And I'm like "hello?" So

after that I was just like okay, I see you don't care about me, so, why should I care about working here? And then that's when it just changed, and I was just like okay... I felt that they didn't want to promote me in the store, because after that snow storm they told me that I was untrustworthy to get the job done. For something that was not my fault... they didn't tell me face to face. But word got to me, because another manager who liked me, she told me. She's like "they think you're untrustworthy." I'm like "what for?" "Because of the snow storm incident." ... I asked for help, but then I'm still stuck by myself. And then they told me I was untrustworthy.

Benevolence. While many participants experienced at least one type of oppressive interpersonal move in the workplace, several also described experiences of being treated with kindness, or having no experiences of discrimination. These stories of benevolence tended to be more prominent among youth participants (those under 18 years) who believed that race was not a major factor in their daily work experience. Alex [male, age 18, department store sales person], for example, stated of his first job:

> Being a Black male didn't affect me at all, honestly... When I got hired there, there was only like three black people there. That's the only thing I noticed... it didn't really matter, they didn't treat us any different or anything like that. They treated us all the same.

Similarly, Diane [female, age 16] described her experience of benevolence while working her first job as a retail store sales person:

> I felt like I was at home. I felt close with them because I was kind of in a way the new person and... these White people were really nice too, really nice, and I felt like even if I'm feeling different, I still feel comfortable.

Black moves. In addition to stories about the oppressive interpersonal moves of dominant players, participants' also emphasized various moves of resistance against oppression. Four main moves were described (playing race, showing and proving, representing and resisting, and quitting) that enabled participants to resist oppression in the working game by breaking stereotypes, accessing opportunity, or leaving the game altogether.

Playing race. A significant strategy for resisting oppression in many participants'

narratives involved dramatic performances of race.   Participants described a range of

performances that included acting White or downplaying Blackness, exploiting

stereotypes, and playing it cool. These performances enabled participants to resist

oppression by subverting negative stereotypes and reducing the fears of dominant

players, in order to fit in with dominant teams. Racial performances required the

manipulation of key signifiers of difference, including behaviour (particularly speech and

conversational strategies) and appearance (particularly hair). While participants accepted

racial performances as an inevitable aspect of oppression, they also found such

performances frustrating. Mustafa [male, age 28, artist] likened the performance of race

to being like a chameleon:

> I guess the answer is just *life* with being a Black male – you just have to know
> how to *act* in different communities. When you're with your boys, you act. When
> you're in the *man's world,* you've got to know how to act that way as well. Even
> in *school. Everywhere.* There's so many different places – it's like you have to
> be a *chameleon* just to fit. And I think that's what the youth today are lacking.
> They don't have that *chameleon* way about them. It's Black Entertainment
> Television or nothing.

Akua [female, age 31, journalist] described how she learned to adopt a White persona in

order to allay others' fears and stereotypes:

> I did think that there were maybe some clients that might have preferred it if I was
> White. They wouldn't say that, but it might have been easier for them to get
> along with me maybe… in a way it's hard for me because when you look at me, I
> am a Black woman, it's so obvious that I'm a Black woman and I've got hair
> that's different and stuff. But then I open my mouth, and my culture comes out.
> My culture is *very* Canadian. Like it can be *just like* yours as a White person, and
> so for that reason when I'm talking to you, I can talk about everything that you
> saw on TV, everything, you know, we have *very* similar experiences. And for
> that reason I can endear myself to the average Canadian White person. And so I
> knew what kind of things to say, I knew how to speak in order to allay any fears
> or whatever it was. Not that I felt that I had to do it all the time, but for some
> people I felt I did. And I was okay with it, because I've been doing it my whole

life, or I'm okay with it because I wanted to get the sale… I was fine with it, but it's not like I had to jump through hoops to be like "It's okay, I know I'm Black and I know you might be scared." Because I don't' think that of every White person.

By contrast, Jones [male, age 35, IT manager] was able to exploit Black culture and appearance to his advantage:

> Black people don't understand, how we are very direct as a people with each other, it could work for you at the highest levels of a company… I was very good at presenting in front of executives. So anytime a White executive was in trouble they called Jones to come and save the day… There was one a Brazilian executive. He's part Black, part White, and he was *mean*. He hated all dumb managers who lied to him… So they flew me down to Atlanta to present to him, and everyone was afraid of him, so they said "Jones you handle it." The problem was I was trying to grow my afro, and when I went to get my hair cut, my barber was out of town. So I said, shoot, I'm going to Atlanta with my afro. So I go down there, and our VP is presenting and he's cutting her off, saying that "You're lying, this is bullshit, this is bullshit."… So then I jump in and I explain the slide to him. And he said "Who are you?" "I'm Jones Downer." He goes "Continue."…So then I did my presentation, and he goes "I've been at WorldNet for 18 years, you're the first person not to bullshit me. Thank you." And we spent the day together talking to customers... he gave me his card and he said "You call me whenever you need me."… The point of that story is that I got a reputation with the executives in the US that you want Jones because Jones is not going to bullshit you. I played my cultural heritage as a Jamaican. Jamaican's, we don't waste no time… Your manager may like the bullshit, because they want to look good. But these guys are people who work 15 hour days. They don't have *time* for bullshit. I was thinking about my own brand too, thinking that I want these guys to think when they here Jones coming, I'm going to get to the point.

Showing and proving. A second move that participants used to resist oppression involved showing and proving – working twice as hard as co-workers from dominant teams in order to overcome stereotypes and the barriers erected by privileged legacies. By mastering their professional performances, or being "on top of your game," participants were able to prove the fallibility of stereotypes to themselves and to others (both White and Black). The importance of showing and proving was often imparted to young Black players by their parents, and became a natural assumption about success in

the workplace. While working as the only Black don in a university residence, Tamara

[female, age 21] felt the need to prove herself in order to overcome isolation and

stereotypes:

> I was the only Black female. So you kind of go in and I felt like people were kind of – not judging me, but just *watching*. I didn't fit that stereotypical viewpoint that a lot of people have – I did my schoolwork, I worked hard with my residents, so it was kind of just like I felt I always needed to prove myself so people can see me for something other than "That's the Black girl right there, that's the Black don." I didn't want to be the one person they hired just because I was Black, but because I was a minority. So I kind of had to prove myself. But it wasn't – I didn't feel a lot of it all the time, it was just something maybe at the back of my mind. At no point I can say was any racist or anyone looked at me funny, I think it was something at the back of my mind. But oddly enough it really didn't affect any of my students, or at least I didn't think.

Isaiah [male, age 34, entrepreneur] also felt compelled to work hard to overcome

discrimination while working as an IT technician at a stock exchange:

> At the Stock Exchange... I felt like a kid in high school again, being the only Black worker in a mainly White organization with more experienced workers. During one team meeting I got into a heated argument with a finance director. Basically he ended up commenting that the only reason I was hired was to fill a quota. But I didn't let it get to me. I took control by swallowing the insult, and focusing on showing how smart I was through my work. I took on *more* projects and made sure I excelled at them consistently.

> ***Representing and resisting.*** Several participants resisted oppression by

challenging it directly, advocating for themselves and other Black players, and

confronting interpersonal discrimination. This move involved speaking out to correct

offenses such as nigger jokes and name calling, or standing up against injustices to speak

for others and for self. Jones [male, age 35, IT manager] described how a sense of

responsibility to represent other Black co-workers developed after confronting

organizational politics:

> As I got more and more worried about what was happening with the Blacks and I maintained performance, I started realizing that people don't like those lines

blurred in Canada... In my second year they gave me a territory where no one is going to make their quota... I came close, and they couldn't believe it. They gave me a major award, the following year I won the sales rep of the year... But then I also joined a diversity group, because they said "You should join, because it's good to see Blacks doing well."... That was the beginning of trouble. Because they thought [I] would go in there and just be a happy go lucky negro... and then we had something called the Black WorldNet Network Group... And then when... me and another sister became co-chair... we grew membership from 16 Black WorldNeters to *500* Black WorldNeters... And we surveyed them and...found that eight of us were at average or above average level. Everyone else was at the bottom... they're stuck in jobs that are getting paid less than $32,000 a year, and they've been here for 5 years. Well how do you bring this up? So you go to one executive, you have a very civil conversation, they tell you all the right things, you believe them. Nothing happens. Another civil conversation, nothing happens... So the politics was like how do you juggle the lack of social equality, *economic* equality, with the fact that you still had to do your own job? That's a struggle that every single one of us in our Black leadership group had. Because if you don't say nothing, I believe karma will come back and get you. And there are good people who are struggling who are looking to you to ask you for your guidance... You *have* to help them. Because I know what you come here with when you start the politics – you start seeing, how come this White guy who I graduated with at York is a manager already and I'm smarter than him?... How did this other White woman who I *know* I'm smarter than, because she hasn't made her quota, how come she's a director? How come this guy here doesn't listen to me, and I'm his boss?...You start *seeing* things... you're understanding that they look after themselves. So I can't sit here and not do anything. Because... I do a lot of presentations and courses internally, many times I'm the only Black person in the room. I don't like that... When Malcolm X said in that speech... The house negro, says "Oh I live in the neighbourhood and I'm the only Black person here, I'm so happy about it." No, that's supposed to be a concern. Is it that the Blacks at WorldNet were lazy? Yes, some were. But a lot of them were good honest people who saw me as a shining star. It's my *responsibility*.

Teja [female, age 34, teacher] described how she felt a sense of responsibility to represent

Black students after encountering their exclusion in educational policy and administrative

decision-making:

> I've managed to work at the Ministry level where a lot of the curriculum decisions are made, and I was part of the writing team... I felt like the psychologists that we studied in one course... they were all of the same race. And I would always complain that if you're going to suggest examples in the Ministry documents, then at least make them varied so that we give students a wider perspective... I brought up so many issues, especially when it came to Black issues. Right when I

walked in, I wasn't surprised that I was the only Black person, so I knew my responsibility: I had to speak for all Black people, whether I liked it or not, right? And every minute I was putting up my hand "Wait a second! Wait a second!" and things got *changed*... I felt like I was always representing *everybody*. And it was tough because *we as a group* are so diverse, and so it's hard to represent everyone.

At Northern Collegiate, I think because of the high crime rate they were *really* strict when it came to certain rules... the principal decided to implement a no hat policy. And I remember I stood up and I said "Well what do you mean by hat? Do you mean a baseball cap, or is a hijab a hat, or a wrap?" Because I used to wear African wraps to school at the time... And it was a debate for countless staff meetings because we couldn't come to an agreement, right... And I kept on saying "But there has to be exceptions."... In the end they couldn't implement the policy. And I kept thinking to myself "What if I wasn't there to even bring up that whole issue?" Then there would have been a no-hat policy. But the reality is the students are diverse, they'll feel it, and then they'll be upset.

Quitting. Some participants described instances where experiences of discrimination led them to quit, or want to quit, the game. Quitting functioned as both a form of resistance and surrender. In some cases, young Black workers believed that quitting might enable them to find better opportunities elsewhere. Kofi [male, age 19, cook] stated that:

> I personally don't know anyone that I can think of who has been excluded from the workplace. I know I've had some Black friends who have quit a lot of jobs because they didn't like the work environment. But in terms of being excluded, I don't know... I have this friend at Cheap Food Grocery, who worked there for a bit and then he just quit. He had no job, he didn't find another job. He didn't like it there so he just quit... I think Black people always feel that they could do better, so they'll always try to look for better things. And it's not always better things that they look for, but it is what we do.

Black players: Oppressed subjectivity

Playing the working game, and contending with its various forms of oppression, had an acute impact on the subjectivity of participants. Racial oppression had a profound influence on their ways of seeing themselves and the workplace environment. This racialized awareness of self was characterized by four major themes: sense of difference

and discrimination; a sense of uncertainty; feelings of anger, pain, and hopelessness; and

acceptance.

Difference and discrimination. Participants described a sense of self that

involved a constant awareness of being different from others, and an expectation of

discrimination. This was often described as a subtle awareness of being watched or

judged, that stood at the back of Black players' minds. Teja [female, age 33, teacher]

described her experience of being Black in the workplace:

> It was just sort of like my whole life story really... Always feeling like sort of
> being just *different* from everyone. Just because I'm always *aware* of being
> Black. I think that's it. I'm *very aware* of being a Black female. But I know how
> to, I guess, play the game, or... I know what to do to *fit in*, and that's fine. [I:
> Does race impact your day-to-day experience with other co-workers?]. Yeah, but
> no different from how my whole life goes... I think that the whole thing is just
> being very aware, and always speaking up whenever I feel like I've been
> excluded, or Black people in general basically. And I guess that's it.

Akua [female, age 31, journalist] became more sensitive about race issues during

interactions with White people:

> Maybe [shock at my education] just stings more when it's White people, because
> of *my* own experience...I *know* that I'm sensitive to race issues. I *know* when
> there's something going on – if there's an altercation between a White person and
> a Black person – race is going to enter my mind. That's just... my experience
> you know? I grew up being different, I knew that from the beginning.

Uncertainty. While many participants were constantly aware of their difference,

and of the risk of discrimination, oppression also engendered a subjectivity that was

marked by a sense of uncertainty in racially-relevant situations. Andrea [female, age 18,

community program worker] described the uncertainty that she experienced when

looking for jobs:

> I think it was more the actual being Black I think...because I felt handing out a
> résumé that says "Andrea Mensah," I felt that sometimes that was a strike against
> me, because... it just felt like me having... an African-American background, it's

like a strike against you when you're sometimes handing out résumés… It seems like racism is more hidden. They're not going to outrightly say "oh, I'm not hiring you because of that." Sometimes it kind of *feels that way*, but you can't really say it because sometimes you don't really know. But like if you hand out a résumé and then two days later someone else gets the job, that's not of a minority, you kind of feel that there might have been something there that wasn't exactly right. But it's just something that I felt I had to adjust too.

Grace [female, age 22, social worker] expressed her uncertainty about barriers she's experienced as a Black woman in the professional world:

Yeah. Like, I guess you never know- you can estimate a lot of different things, but obviously in the professional world, you never *really know*, because they're not going to be direct about it, because it's looked down upon now. So it's kind of like, they could never really say "we didn't hire you because of this," or you never hear after. But, *you know*. Or you think someone's treating you this way because of that, and you have that gut feeling and you test that instinct, and it is true, but you don't know 100% right, because you don't hear that after.

Anger, pain, and hopelessness. Participants' stories frequently expressed the negative feelings of anger, pain, and hopelessness they felt when encountering oppression or in having to engage in racialized gameplay. Cassandra [female, age 25, community arts worker] told of an instance where a young Black male blamed racism for losing a job competition with her:

I was threatened by someone else that wanted the job and was upset that I got it. He threatened to burn down [the organization]… He was just upset that I got the position, and tried anything in his power to make me not have the job… he said he was going to be there making my days there a living hell… He actually said to me "Oh, they didn't give me the job because they're racist." And I said "I'm the same colour as you. What's wrong with you? It's not that. *You* have issues."

While racism may not have been the direct cause of this young man's inability to get the job, the situation nonetheless highlights the depth of anger that can result when facing pervasive racial discrimination. Craig [male, age 16, games store sales person] described the anger he felt while unable to find a job and being reminded of his impoverished social status:

Last year, I handed my résumé to *a lot* of workplaces and none of them called me. So you sort of feel like, you know, like, sometimes you think, you know, "these guys are making money in quick ways, these guys are making money fast" but your still struggling to get a job so you think, "should I do this or should I not do this?"... I didn't sell drugs or nothing, I'm just waiting for the right time to get the right opportunities... I was pretty angry because at those times, the recession was, well the recession came and whatever but, I was pretty angry because you see all these guys wearing nice clothes, nice shoes you know? And you want to, you want to wear that stuff too... because sometimes your mother's not working to give you that type of money.

After experiencing oppression, some young Black Canadians develop feelings of hopelessness. Kim [female, age 35, police officer] described the hopelessness she felt after a low point in which she was passed up for promotion in the police force:

Why didn't I get that spot? Well I can tell you what they *told* me. It was just that I wasn't going to fit in there. [I: What does that mean?] That I would be better suited for a different bureau... I focused a lot on getting into that [special] unit. My whole career was geared to that, and it was recognized that that's what I was good at by many of my superiors... Realizing that I wasn't going to get that full-time spot, that was probably my lowest low... I was feeling hopeless. Because in my opinion I was definitely qualified for the position, so I was feeling cheated, hopeless, disgruntled... [Ever since then] I don't have any sense of empowerment... I'm just waiting for them to tell me what my next move is. I don't feel that I can do A, B, or C to achieve D... Sad isn't it?... It's been [many] years of being told no a lot. I mean, I did get some yeses... I've had some opportunities given to me that a lot of people haven't had. But when it came down to getting a full-time spot, getting told no a lot. So instead... I go to work and don't rock the boat and see what happens.

Acceptance. Another subjective state assumed by young Black players in response to oppression is acceptance of the ubiquity of the uneven playing field and of one's disadvantaged position within it. Andrea [female, age 18, community program worker], who was unfairly punished for little mistakes while working at a pizza shop, described how she learned to accept such interpersonal discrimination:

So that was something that I had to learn to deal with. And it was really difficult, because she didn't make it easy to interact with her. But this was something that I believe in the end made me stronger, because I realized that you can't really change people, that's just how they are. You just have to be confident in who you

are as a person, and anything that's wrong, that's on *their part* and that's something that they have to work on themselves... because of that incident I've learned not to let people's comments hurt me the wrong way. So anything that anyone has said to me here or at school or whatever, I just let it slide, because I know that it's not about me – not to take it personal, it's them.

Kweku [male, age 32, financial advisor] learned to accept the risk and uncertainty of racism, by viewing the challenges of a his work a numbers game:

You'll be dealing with individuals who are from a different race who may also be from a different age as well, so there may be some barriers in terms of communication. There may be some prejudicial issues... [But] there was ways to mitigate those barriers, where you can bring out a senior manager or agent who's from a different background... and if you're really get good at what you're doing it mitigates it. But, for some of the things, no matter what you do, race is race. Prejudice is prejudice. It exists everywhere... There's been several times where individuals who required the coverage... had no real reason of not going forth with [me]. It seemed like there was an issue that no one could pin down, and that would lead me to think that there was a race issue, or an age issue... But it's kind of like a numbers game, every time you step out the door, there's going to be scenarios that are not in your favour, and it's kind of more how you *react* to the scenario. Because there's times as well where I thought that it would be a barrier and it wasn't a barrier.

Critical Self-Reflection on Workplace Oppression

Participants' stories of oppression resonated with me on many levels. The interviews often turned into dialogues where we shared similar struggles against stereotypes, the unequal playing field, and racialized gameplay. These experiences of oppression have occurred throughout my working life, and I have observed over the years how they have evolved from predominantly overt forms of interpersonal racism, to more subtle institutional forms. While playing the game in the arena of municipal government – my longest and most recent work experience – I encountered racism as a central fact of the job. After almost a decade of struggling to help build a municipal program that I believed in, one that served the Black community by creating meaningful jobs for Black youth, my status as an employee within the government remained casual and part-time

(as was that of my colleagues). This might not have been a problem if other White coworkers who had been hired and trained by my manager, at the *same time* as one of my Black colleagues, and who currently – despite working in a different unit – was performing nearly *the same* function (arguably at a lower scale), had not been given a permanent position at a rate of compensation that far exceeded our own, years ago. This might not have been a problem if I wasn't Black, my manager wasn't Black, and most other players on our team weren't Black, and if *all of us* lacked the job security and compensation that would be expected of professionals working in our field. It might even be less of a problem if, despite the long hours, the under-pay, the sarcasm, the playing it cool through eggplant jokes, the shock and doubt that I "speak *so* well," they at least respected our credentials. You can't argue with credentials, right? But when upper management was pressed on our issue, their initial defense was to question our credentials. In addition to almost 10 years of related work experience, I also had a master's degree by then, and my colleague a bachelor's. Our degrees weren't in related fields, we were told, despite this clearly not being the case to anyone with a modicum of sincerity. The previously mentioned White colleague and I had bachelor's degrees in the same discipline from the same university. Now, you never can tell for sure, but if it looks like discrimination, sounds like discrimination, and feels like discrimination…

Discussion of Workplace Oppression

Participants' stories of workplace oppression described oppressive conditions as well as their responses to oppression. Their narratives suggest that young Black Canadian workers experience the workplace as a competitive game in which Black players are disadvantaged by an uneven playing field of stereotypes and unequal teams,

and by racialized gameplay. These conditions of oppression have significant influences on the subjectivity of Black players. In the following discussion (summarized in Table 3), I draw on ecological theory from community psychology to conceptualize the stories of oppression at multiple levels: collective, relational, and personal. This ecological approach is consistent with existing community psychology theories of oppression (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). Overall, the findings are consistent with much of the existing literature related to race, employment, and oppression. Some community psychologists have argued that while the discipline has a sound understanding of the psychological impacts of oppression, there is a lack of theory that elucidates the underlying dynamics of power and oppression (Fisher, Sonn & Evans, 2007). The present study contributes to our understanding of how such dynamics are influenced by race, gender, and age. Participants' oppression stories tended to vary by age, with younger participants emphasizing benevolence or more overt forms of oppression, and older participants emphasizing the institutional and covert interpersonal forms of oppression.

The conceptualization of the workplace as a game has been pursued by some scholars (e.g., Burawoy, 1979; Clegg, 1994) who have considered the game metaphor as appropriate for understanding the processes of power, competition, and subjectivity in the workplace. Clegg (1994), for example, has considered how power in the workplace is structured by certain rules and strategies, and has suggested that subordinated groups are often unaware of the rules of the game or strategies for winning, and may not even be aware of the game itself.

Table 3

Overview of Findings and Discussion on Oppression

Narrative Findings	Major Interpretive Concepts
Uneven playing field	Collective oppression
- Stereotypes	Dominant cultural narratives
- Dominant teams: Privileged legacies	Institutional racism
- Black teams: Underprivileged legacies	Social networks / Social capital
- Playing alone	
- Struggling Black families	
- Troubled Black communities	
Racialized gameplay	Relational oppression
- Dominant moves	Microaggression
- Shock and doubt	
- Nigger jokes and name calling	
- Punishment and deception	
- Blocking	
- Benevolence	
- Black moves	Resistance
- Performing race	Dramaturgy
- Showing and proving	John Henryism
- Representing and resisting	Sociopolitical development
- Quitting	
Black players: Oppressed subjectivity	Personal oppression
- Being Black: Difference and discrimination	Postcolonial identity
- Uncertainty	Perceived discrimination
- Anger, pain, and hopelessness	Stress and coping
- Acceptance	

Collective oppression. Narratives of oppression through stereotypes and

intergenerational legacies are consistent with much of the literature on race and

workplace oppression across disciplines, and with community psychology theory of

oppression at the collective level. Participants' stories of stereotypes are consistent with

Prilleltensky and Gonick's (1996) conceptualization of the oppression comprising both

psychological and political components respectively.

Stereotypes: Dominant cultural narratives. Stereotypes were one of the central

forms of oppression experienced by participants. Their stories described the various

ways in which stereotypes (portrayed primarily through the media and in the perceptions

of dominant groups) influenced their everyday workplace experiences – contributing to

the racialization of interpersonal relations, and racialized subjectivity of participants.

These findings are consistent with a large body of psychological and social research that

has shown stereotypes to be a major source of oppression for Blacks in the workplace

through their impact on hiring and promotions (Stewart & Perlow, 2001),

microaggression (Sue et al., 2008), and job performance (Roberson, Deitch, Brief &

Block, 2003). Social psychologists have proposed numerous theories to explain the

origins of stereotyping, including social inequality models, such as realistic group

conflict theory, which proposes that stereotypes arise during group competition for scarce

resources (Jackson, 1993), and cognitive theories, such as categorization theory, which

proposes that stereotypes arise from automatic categorization processes that increase the

efficiency of social information processing (Taylor, 1981). Findings from the present

study support distinctiveness theories of stereotypes, which postulates that individuals are

more likely to be stereotyped when they are the solo minority in a group, since solo

minorities tend to attract increased attention and exaggerated perceptions of good or bad

qualities (Niemann & Davidio, 1998).

In the present study, participants' stories about stereotypes highlight the

significance of dominant cultural narratives in oppression at the collective level.

Community psychologists have increasingly turned to narrative theory as a framework

for examining oppression and empowerment, which considers how everyday life and

power relations are experienced and constructed through stories (Rappaport, 2000).

Participants' stories emphasized the ways negative stereotypes were perpetuated through

the media to influence societal perceptions of Blacks. Drawing on narrative theory,

community psychologists have conceptualized such forms of collective oppression as dominant cultural narratives, which have been defined as "overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions and social networks" (Rappaport , 2000, p. 4). While several community psychologists have examined the function of stereotypes as dominant cultural narratives among African-Americans and other racialized groups (e.g., McDonald, Keys, & Balcazar, 2007; Rappaport, 2000), few have considered its impacts or dynamics within the workplace.

Competing legacies: Institutional racism and social networks. Participants' stories told of oppression experienced through an unequal playing field that was characterized by White teams that dominated the workplace and enjoyed the advantages of intergenerational legacies (opportunities and resources inherited from family and communities' members). Black teams, by contrast, were described as being disadvantaged by a lack of familial and community resources. These findings are consistent with the political dimensions of collective oppression that have been examined by scholars of institutional racism.

A large body of literature has similarly examined the role of social networks in institutional or systemic racism (Royster, 2003). While community psychologists have considered the dynamics of institutional racism in organizations (e.g., Griffith, Childs, Eng & Jeffries, 2007; Hughes & Dodge, 1997), as well as the impacts of their own privilege (e.g., Mulvey et al., 2000), few have examined the role of social networks in collective or institutional oppression. Research and theory within sociology, however, has looked at the systemic reproduction of social inequalities in the workplace through social networks, and shown how social capital (resources gained through social networks)

contributes to inequality in the workplace (e.g., Acker, 2006; Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2006; Royster, 2003). Given the present findings and the substantial body of research within sociology, greater attention could be paid within community psychology to the dynamics and social networks – kinship in particular – in theorizing the political aspects of collective oppression.

The findings related to participants' stories about the underprivilege of Black teams through playing alone, struggling families, and lacking role models – are also consistent with a social network interpretation of collective oppression with existing literature which has found social capital deficit among Black groups (Parks-Yancy, 2006). Pettigrew and Martin (1987) reported that experiences of racism are worse in workplaces where Blacks play the "solo role" as the only Black person in the group.

Relational oppression. Most participants described experiences of oppression through daily racialized interpersonal interactions. Their stories of this racialized gameplay described the moves of White players that oppressed Black players, as well as moves of resistance by Black players. These findings are consistent with community psychology's ecological conceptualization of oppression at the relational level, and with much of the existing psychological research about racial discrimination. A notable insight, however, was the theatrical form of many resistance stories, which suggest a dramaturgical interpretation of relational power, which I discuss further below.

The forms of relational oppression (i.e., the dominant moves) described by participants are consistent with findings from other community and social psychologists who have examined interpersonal racism among Black and other racialized populations (e.g., Condor, 2006; Deitch et al., 2003; Sue et al., 2008). Taking a discursive and

dramaturgical perspective, Condor (2006), for example, describes how prejudiced talk is embedded in everyday social interactions, and may serve several strategic communicative functions including exclusion, amusement, shocking, or sociability. Her findings and analyses are similar to the various forms of oppressive talk (shock and doubt, nigger jokes and name calling) described by many participants in this study. The findings are also consistent with a larger body of work within social psychology that has focused on racial microagressions (the frequent, often automatic or unintentional, verbal and behavioural indignities) which occur in everyday interactions and function to invalidate or demean others' racial identity (Sue et al., 2008). The experiences of benevolence reported by many younger participants may reflect an emerging body of other research that suggests increasingly tolerant societal attitudes toward race (Twenge, 2006), or may also reflect the naïve perspectives on racism that characterize precritical stages of sociopolitical development (Watts et al., 2003).

The various strategies of resistance described by participants are consistent with the community psychological view that oppression encompasses both domination and resistance (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The strategies of performing race and showing and proving highlight a theatrical negotiation of power in the workplace. This is consistent with a small body of research on racism in the workplace that draws on Goffman's (1959) theory of dramaturgy (e.g., Picca & Feagin, 2007). Goffman used the metaphor of the theatre to theorize social interaction, which includes performances (actions by individual actors), audience (observers and recipients of action in the setting), teams (groups who cooperate with one another), front stage (the setting of performances), and back stage (setting or context where there are performers but no audience).

Fundamental to maintaining power in dramaturgy is impression management (the process of influencing other team members' perceptions). Participants' stories highlight the various ways in which Blacks perform to manage the impressions of White audiences in the workplace. This dramaturgical performance is of particular importance for Blacks given the strength of negative stereotypes. Several scholars have found similar forms of identity performance by Black individuals to cope with racism in the workplace (e.g., Cooper, 2005). These findings are of interest to community psychological theories of oppression, empowerment, and coping, which have not typically accounted for the importance of impression management in resisting racial oppression.

The strategy of showing and proving is consistent with findings from various disciplines that have found that Blacks and other minorities often feel the need to compensate for their disadvantage in education and the workplace through "working twice as hard" exceptional exertion (e.g., Bennett et al., 2004; Richie et al., 1997; Tastsoglou & Miedema, 2001). This form of high effort coping has been labelled by some health psychologists as John Henryism – a type of high effort coping often utilized by African-Americans to respond to oppression (Bennett et al., 2004). This strategy has both the effect of impression management (i.e., undermining stereotypes of laziness and ignorance), while maximizing the competitive advantage and probability of mobility through exceptional competence.

Personal oppression. The findings indicate that racial oppression has a significant psychological impact on the subjectivity of young Black Canadians, producing a sense of difference and discrimination, uncertainty, anger and hopelessness, and acceptance. These findings are consistent with community psychologists'

conceptualization of psychological oppression at the personal level, which often involves internalized oppression or powerlessness (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The specific themes in the stories are also consistent with much psychological theory and research on perceived discrimination and coping (Brondolo, ver Halen, Pencille, Beatty, & Contrada, 2009). The themes also reflect some aspects of racial identity explored by critical race and post-colonial theorists.

The sense of being different – as a discrete type of phenomenological or subjective experience – has received little attention within the community and social psychological literature. Much greater attention has been paid to this from postcolonial and critical social theorists (e.g., Hall, 1989; Fanon, 1967). Hall (1989), for example, suggested that through colonization Blacks have internalized the gaze of their oppressors and begun to see and experience themselves as Other. For several Black youth and young adults in this study, this sense of difference was experienced as a sense of being constantly watched or judged. This aspect of the theme bears some similarity to Foucault's (1978) notion of panopticism, which proposes that social institutions regulate human behaviour through subtle mechanisms, such as instilling people with a sense of being under surveillance or under threat of punishment. From this perspective, participants' sense of being judged might be interpreted as a consequence of being under the gaze of dominant White groups who have internalized dominant cultural narratives and stereotypes about Blacks. Surprisingly, I am not aware of any empirical studies that have explored race and panopticism or governmentality in the workplace.

The phenomenon of expectation of discrimination has been found by various scholars of perceived discrimination (e.g., Dion, 2002; Dion & Kawakami, 1996; Perrott,

1999). Dion and Kawakami (1996), for example, found that Black Canadians reported significantly higher levels of perceived discrimination in jobs, pay, and promotions than other visible minorities. Perrott (1999) similarly found high levels of perceived discrimination among Black Canadian police officers. Various theories have been proposed to explain this heightened expectation of discrimination among Blacks, including self-esteem and stress buffering (attributing ambiguous negative situations to race is self-protective) (Dion, 2002), cultural mistrust (mistrust as a rational response to a hostile environment) (Terrell, Taylor, Menzise & Barrett, 2009), and nonclinical paranoia (similar to cultural mistrust, but based on social interaction) (Combs et al., 2009). Although I am not able to make any conclusive statements about the underlying functions or motivations of participants' heightened expectations of racism from the present findings, their stories – while recognizing the uncertainty of most racially charged situations – suggest that such expectations are primarily due to an awareness of the pervasiveness and influence of Black stereotypes, and to encounters (experienced first- and second-hand) with discrimination of varying forms.

Many participants described uncertainty in various situations. Ambiguity has been recognized by many scholars as one of the defining features of modern, predominantly covert forms of racism (Dion 2002). Existing research on microaggressions suggests that this ambiguity or attributional uncertainty is a more significant stressor for Black populations than more overt and institutional forms of discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003; Sue et al., 2008).

Anger and hopelessness were common negative emotional experiences described by participants in response to oppression – particularly due to the lack of control they felt

over circumstances. These types of emotions have been commonly reported in other studies of racial discrimination in the workplace (Birzer & Smith-Mahdi, 2006; Brondolo et al., 2009; Deitch et al., 2003). In a phenomenological study of workplace racism among African-Americans, Birzer and Smith-Mahdi (2006) found that fear, frustration, depression, and anger were typical impacts of discrimination. The theme of acceptance has also been found as a form of emotional coping within psychological literature on workplace racism (Jackson & Stewart, 2003; Brondolo et al., 2009). Krieger and Sidney (1996) found that Black women who use acceptance as a coping strategy were at higher risk of hypertension than those who used active coping strategies, such as trying to do something about it.

Chapter VI: Narratives of Workplace Empowerment

This chapter addresses the second major research question: How do workplace

organizational characteristics promote Black youth and young adults' empowerment? In

answering this question, I sought to identify (a) outcomes of empowering workplaces, (b)

empowering workplace characteristics, and (c) psychological processes that may mediate

the relationship between empowering workplace characteristics and empowerment

outcomes (see Figure 3). Findings suggest that Black players experience empowering

workplace settings as surrogate legacies that provide the resources and opportunities that

are denied to Black teams in the working game. The narratives suggest that, through four

main psychological processes, Black players experience an empowered selfhood that is

characterized by six main themes. These findings are reported in detail in the following

three sections, where first I describe empowering workplace characteristics, then

empowering processes, followed by empowered outcomes.
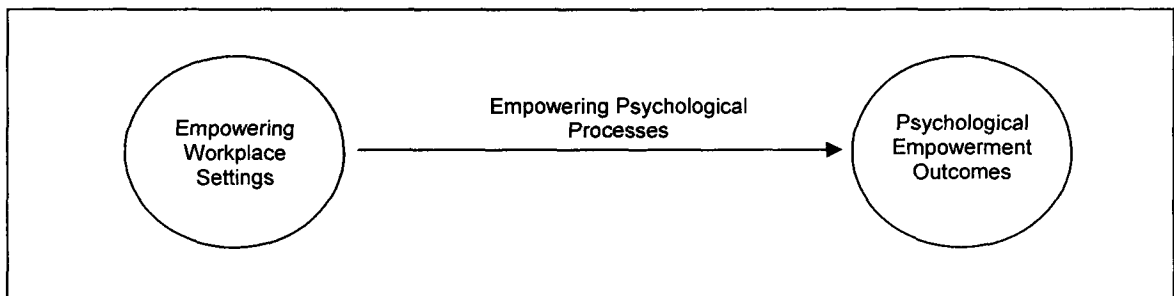
Figure 3. Empowerment Conceptual Model. This model illustrates the relationship

between empowering workplace characteristics and psychological empowerment

outcomes through mediating empowering psychological and social processes.

Empowering workplace characteristics for young Black Canadians

Analysis of participants' stories revealed four major structural characteristics of empowering workplace settings, each with varying sub-characteristics: (a) empowering relationships, (b) meaningful roles, (c) opportunity, and (d) incentives.

Empowering relationships. The nature and quality of relationships formed in the workplace was one of the strongest themes in participant's stories. Interpersonal relations within the workplace contributed to young Black Canadians' empowerment by providing exposure, encouragement and advice. Each type of relationship varied in the intensity of relationship.

Professional networks. Networking involved building beneficial relationships with successful individuals. Jones [male, age 35, IT manager] explained the importance of networks for playing the game competitively:

> So basically they're playing games, so I know the educational system says get your education no matter what – that's not true. You have to understand the game, and you have people around you who understand how to play the game, so you understand when things are happening you have a support system and you could manoeuvre.

Kweku [male, age 32, financial advisor] described how his role as a sales person enabled him to network with successful Black professionals, which helped to build his confidence:

> From all the different experience that I've been in, with regards to the role, it allowed me to meet a lot of different people within our community and build relationships with these individuals who have been successful. So placing myself in that kind of empowerment... has allowed me to feel more confident, has increased my self-esteem, and has allowed me to feel free. So that's why I would say I'm empowered. And a large amount had to do with that environment. There's different societies or groups that I became a part of, and it really was because of the role and marketing myself. To give you an example, there's Black Professionals' Group which is a group... [of] Black successful people in the financial realm, getting together talking about different educational things,

whether it be real estate, whether it be banking, whether it be insurance. Anything that impacts our community and ways to become successful, and those are one of the things I became a part of, initially because of the role I was in and wanting to network with individuals. But when I got into it, it opened up a whole set of other opportunities.

Mentors. Mentoring relationships in the workplace were key to promoting

participants' empowerment by providing strategic information, advice, exposure, and

encouragement. These relationships were characterized by reciprocity and strong

emotional bonds, and mentors often had high expectations for young people. While

influential mentors were not necessarily Black, many participants reported that bonds

were closer with mentors who were Black, or who empathized with the struggles of

Black youths' racialized experience. Jamila [female, age 30, community program

specialist] shared a story of her workplace mentor:

> I think it's a wonderful relationship because it spans beyond supervisor-employee sort of. It's almost familial... He's been my mentor, he's been like almost like a father figure. He's been like a friend, and of course a supervisor... We've known each other for a while and worked together for a long time, so he's taken person interest in my life beyond the job, to ensure that I do well, that I am successful in life, that I understand human dynamics... [I] hope I've been able to realize that a lot of the philosophies and ideas that he holds are possible and are truth, by following his suggestions on how to approach different situations in life. So for example, him encouraging me to do post-secondary education. Me having someone who genuinely cared about that, so it created a very special bond, I think. I'd say probably unbreakable.

> Every moment there's learning, so it's constant learning. Everyday you're learning something new... hearing Mac's stories, and I could hear them 20 times, like I could *still* listen to them. Hearing those stories over and over, and then learning the lessons from them through later experiences.

Joseph [male, age 20, electronics sales person] described the father figure-like mentoring

relationship with the Indian owner of a computer store in which he worked:

> My manager, the owner, was Indian... he always used to tell me stories about how he always hires a co-op, and...that I was probably the best co-op he ever had right. For someone to just stay in night in, night out and just take control of

everything and run a tight ship type of thing… He said from day one that yeah we're all coloured, so it's better that we help each other out… I'm not one to like steal and do all that kind of other stuff, but it sort of puts something in your mind. It got to a point where he was sort of like my father figure type of thing, because he was one of the people who sort of gave [me] a chance to succeed. So all that responsibility, all the merchandising, all the control over a lot of stuff, it was the trust thing. So I mean it was a very good opportunity… Friendship definitely, because we had obviously a mutual friendship… most of the time it was just me and him, so it was really close.

Sammia [female, age 33, entrepreneur], co-owner of a hair salon, described how she developed a motherly mentoring relationship with her employees, many of whom returned to the workplace after leaving, in order to thank her for her strong work ethic and mentorship:

> There are some employees that I had that have come and thanked me for the way I let them work. It helped, even though some of them didn't go into hair – they went into a different field – they tell me that it makes them stronger and it helped them in where they are. And I felt very good about. One gave me a birthday card the other day that said [gets emotional]… basically I'm like a second mother to her. I'm like "Oh my goodness, it was really touching." And like after all these years that they said I'm too much, not knowing it's helping some people. So I don't regret. I don't regret it.

Meaningful roles. The nature of participants' roles within the workplace contributed significantly to their empowerment. Roles can be defined essentially as the set of behaviours and obligations associated with a particular position or status within the workplace. Two key types of empowering roles for young Black Canadians were described by participants: responsibility and helping.

Responsibility. Responsibility involved roles that provided participants with autonomy, control, and independence in performing their function. This type of role was particularly important to young Black Canadians, who typically do not experience significant responsibility and authority in the workplace. Responsible roles enabled participants to gain valuable skills through exposure to greater challenges and tasks.

They were also often accompanied by additional stress. Grace [female, age 22, social

worker] described how strong Black mentors provided her with opportunities for

responsible roles that she may not have had access to otherwise, and how such roles

helped her develop leadership qualities:

> One of the weird things that I've connected about ArtSpace and Neighbourhood
> Resource Centre compared to my other positions, is that when I first started there
> doing my placement, the person who was in charge of me was Black... the youth
> manager of the youth services at Neighbourhood Resource Centre was Black, and
> my placement manager at ArtSpace was Black. And to me it made a *big
> difference* in... the opportunities that I was given in the workplace... The
> leadership qualities that I gained because of the responsibilities that I was given,
> the experience that I was offered, that they would talk to me more on a real level
> and sometimes break down the professional to get to the personal which helped
> me grow in different ways. And I guess because we all came from a little bit of
> the same place and we kind of have that connection, it seemed like they were kind
> of like "yeah, I know what it was like. So that's why I want to give you different
> opportunities that either I got or didn't get." So it made a big difference
> compared to the other jobs that I've had where you just aren't given the same
> opportunities. Like they believed in me more. Or if they didn't believe in me, I
> felt like they did more...Something that someone may have been like "no you're
> not really ready yet, or whatever," they would be like "you know what? Try it.
> Even if you fail, I'll pick you back up."

Giselle [female, age 18, receptionist] told of how she embraced the responsibility of her

job in order to show and prove her competency, which instilled a sense of meaning and

importance to the job:

> When I came here, I was like oh my gosh, these White people are going to be like
> "Oh there's a Black girl working here now!" Like I'm the only Black person in
> the whole entire medical building. And I was just like, you know what, I'm going
> to give these people something good to say about me. Because I'm not a type of
> person that is easily taken down, cracks under pressure. That is *not* me. It takes a
> lot – you'd have to back me in a corner and start pitching me with forks.
> Seriously. Like I worked my little butt off in there, and I don't care – at the end
> of the day, everything was done. I was happy, and I think I was successful with
> that. I was very happy. It made me feel like, ((dude)) I have to wake up and go to
> work. I felt *responsible*... That was a *responsibility* to me... *I felt
> important*...because some of my friends weren't working this summer – my
> friends would call me and be like "Oh can you come out?" I'd be like "Nope. I
> got work to attend. I can't miss out, my boss is depending on me, sorry."

> Because if I don't go to work, everything crashes and I have to hear about it the next day... [It was] a lot of responsibility just making sure that everything was going according to plan. Because you couldn't mix *anything* up. If you mix anything up, it could ruin *insurance...*

For Joseph [male, age 20, electronics sales person], being in a responsible role was empowering experience, although it was accompanied by a pressure to perform and prove oneself. His responsible role put him in a position of power, which contrasted with his mother's experience of powerlessness in the workplace:

> I look at my parents being hardworking. I hear stories of my mom all the time, with supervisors just abusing power. And now it's like you're in the position of power, so you control other workers. So as a Black person I think it was very empowering too. But then again, you sort of- it's very humbling too, because you realize that that power, because you're Black, can be taken away at any moment. The added pressure as well to perform and to continue to perform and do better. But, um, not too much the colour barrier thing. So it wasn't too big. But definitely empowering.

Mustafa [male, age 28, artist] also believed that the independence of responsible roles provided a means to prove oneself:

> Independence [was what I liked most about the workplace]... I hated when people hovered... And that was a way you could prove yourself, too. So it's like you're given a task – *boom*, you do it. And you know, you're given another task, you do it, you do it, you keep doing it, and then you get to a point where when they ask you they don't even worry about it... *That* was the best part.

Helping. Working in roles that provided an opportunity to help others, particularly those in the Black community, was empowering for participants. The helping role could involve working with Black people as clients, customers or co-workers. Cassandra [female, age 25, community arts worker] found it empowering to be in a position where she could encourage other Black youth to seek support from her organization:

> As for giving Black youth something to do and something to take pride in, that's something that I feel like I came up with. They say a step at a time. Try and

change the world a step at a time basically. I do find myself encouraging Black youth to come to [our organization] as a way to get away from everyday problems and keep themselves busy and out of trouble.

For some young adult participants, the meaning derived from helping the Black

community evolved later in their careers. For example, after switching to a community-

focused role after working for several years doing front-line police work, Kim [female,

age 35] realized the intrinsic rewards of helping and working with other Blacks:

> ... with the Black community, there's a lot of hostility towards police. So, the more minorities that are around in uniform and willing to communicate with anybody... from the uneducated to the educated, I think it helps. So I've had positions where I was sitting behind a desk for a year, and I would have people come in and eventually they would trust me and we would talk about "Why do you hate police so much, etc." I don't know if I ever got them to understand my way of thinking but it helps. So it that regard to me it's meaningful. And just helping people it's meaningful, right?... it's funny I did a shift – when I first started, I was all about getting the guns and getting the gangsters, but now I'm a little bit more community-oriented I'd have to say.

Teja [female, age 34, teacher] also learned how much power and influence she had in her

teaching role, particularly with Black students:

> I'm always thinking about helping the Black students that I get... when I first got into the profession I just saw it as I'm just going to be a teacher, teaching other people what I have to teach them. And then when I started even my practice teaching, I realized that it's more than just delivering information, I'm shaping other peoples' lives... and the whole influence and how I'm a role model, whether I like it or not. At first it was kind of troubling [because] it's almost like you have to be perfect all the time... and then I realized you don't have to be *perfect* all the time... it's almost better to make mistakes because then they'll see you as *human* and it's how you *deal* with the mistakes... And so I realized how influential I am... I've learned more about myself in that sense.

Opportunity. For many participants, empowering workplaces provided them

with opportunity, often described as a first chance to succeed in the workplace. Grace

[female, age 22, social worker] often worked with Black youth who expressed a desire

for a first chance:

I would say I guess most of the discussions that I've had that are kind of like that were in my placement classes and my social work classes. And just feeling like if you weren't a young black youth you would have got it because there weren't so many stereotypes or assumptions that exist about us, or how the media represents us and stuff like that. You feel like obviously those get instilled into everyone else's head, so you just feel like if those didn't exist, those stereotypes and prejudices and the way that the media projects you – you would be viewed completely differently, so then you would have those other opportunities because people would make space for you. You know, it's like if people thought that you - it's kind of like what they say about school. If people think that you will succeed, then you will. But if they don't believe in you, then it's harder for you to believe in yourself, right. So I guess it's just a lot of the way that a lot of the people that I come into contact with, they just wish that people would give them that one chance so that they - that they're first chance - instead of just being like "yeah, you've never done this before," it's like yeah well, someone has to give you that first chance, and then obviously you can use that experience to move on to different positions. But if no one- you know, you struggle so hard for that first chance, that's I think the hardest part about a lot of the young black people that I've talked with, is just getting that first opportunity. And that first meaningful opportunity. Not just someone who wants to give you a job, but someone who wants to give you a really good job that you can move up in... I work with a lot of young Black youth who are looking for jobs, or who are looking for this and that. [To me] they start off with even not believing in themselves, and being like "oh, nobody will hire me!" "Why don't you apply here?" "Yeah right! Like they would ever hire me!" Like you know and stuff like that, so if they have that impression, then they don't even want to reach for that. You know like "I did that." "Really?" You know what I mean? You know, being more connected so that people know what is possible, and those opportunities being more accessible.

Mark [male, age 19, grocery store clerk] recognized that a first chance was something to be earned:

Well, I've always known since back in the day, my moms told me, my grandpa taught me, they all showed me, they're like, you know what, people aren't just going to up and give you a chance, you've got to show them why they should give you a chance. So you've got to prove yourself... Hopefully I'll get my blessings for my hard effort. That's how I see it.

Incentives. Participants' stories often emphasized the importance of incentive systems as a powerful motivating aspect of their work experiences. Two major types of incentives were reported by participants: tangible rewards and awards.

Tangible rewards. Several participants reported that tangible rewards were an important source of motivation and validation in the workplace. Their stories often emphasized the empowering experience of seeing tangible proof of success and getting paid. Stories also often highlighted a preference for tangibility by contrasting the concrete benefits of showing over telling, action over theory, or doing over talking. Tangible rewards were a particularly strong motivator for younger Black workers. Jones [male, age 35, IT manager] used materialistic symbols of success to motivate Black youth:

> A lot of times we're teaching young people bullshit. I believe the education system is…stuck in a 50-year old mentality that doesn't reflect today's reality… they learn nothing in high school. Then go to this college or university. Then they still don't learn nothing… they get the diploma, but how do you use it? So the problem is not with the degree, the problem is there's nothing to teach you how to apply anything… we have all of these Black not-for-profit associations… a lot of Blacks in youth-mentoring-youth, and they get all this money, but the youth come out of that program and come to me and say "I don't know anything."… So millions dollars are spent to supposedly address the issue of youth, it seems like 10 years ago… and it's the *same shit* they're teaching the young people…The only tool we have that's actually empowering people – I'm not saying *positively*… are the drug dealers and the gangs, because they give them a sense of empowerment. You feel like you belong to something… and you do the thing and get paid…They don't look down on you when you join a gang, saying "How come you have locks, how come you got braids?"… It's just "Make sure my money comes on time, yo, and you get your cut." They're the only ones talking to young people in any way that… is positive in the sense that they can actually do something. Do this, there's a result… The drug dealer pulls up in a Mercedes S-Class. The social worker pulls up in a 1984 Honda. Sorry, but I believe the social worker's gone. It shouldn't be that way, but it *is*… Who are they going to listen to? They're going to go to the S-Class. "How do you get the S-Class?…" "I'll show you." They're not going to make that money for a long time, but the dream, the vision… We did something at the end of the school year at one of the high schools… I called BMW Canada, and I said, "Okay, I want to do some business with you, but let's try something for one day and see what it's like. I'm going to a high school that's in a bad area… and the kids they like me… how about we pull up in one of your cars and just have the kids look at your cars?" So the lady goes "We just got a M-6 in from Germany… you could take it." And I go, "Get me a good looking German woman. I'm not trying to be sexist, I'm trying to get a point across." So they got this attractive woman who

works at BMW... So then I call the school and I say "Tell the kids to be outside."... And the German lady walks out in her skirt. Now mind you, she is the director of marketing... she walks out, all the young guys are like "Whoo-hoo!" Even the girls are like "Damn!" everyone's checking out the car... And I'm watching, and I'm realizing something. Yeah they liked the car, yeah they liked the hot girl... But they liked it more because *I* was the one who pulled up. If she just pulled up on her own, okay it's some rich White woman in there... But they liked it because they connected that with me. And I told them it's not my car, I told them it's one of my dream cars. But the fact that I pulled up, they're like "*How* did you get it?... *How* did you do that? *How* do you even know how to figure that stuff out? *How* do you talk to people like that to get them to do that? *How* do you talk to a White woman at BMW who's 46 years old?" *Proof.* They connect to their materialistic nature, yes. But they ((connect the)) difference between what they know and what they like. Connect to it, they start asking you proper questions. It starts the dialogue.

Jamila [female, age 30, community program specialist] participated in many Black community programs throughout her youth, but reported that she gained the largest benefit from experiencing the practical and immediate benefits of working in a garden:

> I used to do a lot in the Black community... And going to a meeting and taking all those hours to do that is not going to change or enlighten, maybe there are some moments of enlightenment, but in the long term, no. Because look how long I was involved, and it wasn't until I came to this setting where it was any concrete thing or long-term success happened for me. And that was through gardening... gardening brings life. It's practical, it's immediate... Like this season I'm going to produce something, I'm going to affect change, and it's tangible. Knowledge sharing in any capacity, is a good thing, but when it comes with some tangible element, it's even better.

Getting paid was clearly a strong motivator for younger participants such as Giselle [female, age 18, receptionist]:

> It took like 35-40 hours out of my week. But that 35-40 hours made me *$800!* When I seen that, you don't *understand* how I felt! Like, when I called the bank on the 31st and I seen that pay check, oh my gosh, I *ran* to the bank! I didn't even take the bus. [I laughs]. I didn't take the bus. I *ran* to the bank. I ran to the bank just to see if these people were lying to me. I checked my balance, and I seen $800 I was like, "*Yes!* I'm happy! I did this!" And from that first pay check, [R kisses teeth] I kept on going to work, *on-time*, every single day. I never missed *one* day. I just made sure everything was- like, I did my best in that place man. And it all paid off. Look on Monday I'm getting another pay check again. Like, it's *insane!* I'm only 18 years old and I'm making more money than my brother

and my sister. Because I have a little job on the side too, you know what I mean.
Like, I worked my little but off – I'm *happy*. Like you don't understand, it made
me *happy*.

Awards. Many participants' workplace stories referred to the empowering

influence of various types of awards. The receipt of awards was commonly expressed as

a high point in participants' working lives. Although not connected to race in all cases,

awards clearly played a significant role in validating the self-worth and competence of

participants. For example, Abena's [female, age 31, lawyer] high point occurred while

working at the front desk of a hotel during university, when she received an award for

best performance. Receiving this award enabled her to prove to her White co-workers

that, contrary to common stereotypes, Blacks could outperform them:

> I think a lot of times people… your fellow co-workers do not have… high
> expectations, or they would not believe that you would outperform them at their
> job. They don't believe you're the one who is going to challenge them for the
> promotion, or for the spot of number one… So I think I loved the aspect of
> surprising people to the extent that not only am I as good as you, I'm probably
> *better* than you at this. And I think at this job, my customer service, I had a
> natural ability for it, but like I was number one comment getter. I was, the high
> point of that was just that I would constantly get rewarded by the guests for
> saying I went above and beyond, and people did not expect that I would be the
> one.

Kweku [male, age 32, financial advisor] recalled a high point when his team of dynamic

and successful Black salespeople won an award, which reinforced the confidence of their

team:

> When we won that award of being the best office out of all the New Day's in
> Canada, that was tremendous for us, because we knew we were the best out there.
> It raised the morale even more, so that culture of success was even *heightened.*
> Expectations, confidence, swagger, any of those kinds of words that deal with
> self-esteem basically. So individuals felt just a new air around them. So I think
> that moment when we found out that we were the best within our domain –
> tremendous feeling.

Young Black Canadians' workplace psychological empowerment

This section addresses the second part of the second research question pertaining

to empowerment: how do empowering workplace characteristics promote Black youth

and young adults' empowerment? While my main concern in the previous section was to

examine the characteristics of empowering workplace settings, the current section

explores the psychological processes and outcomes of such empowering settings. This

analytical conceptualization of psychological empowerment as a process and outcome is

consistent with Zimmerman's (1995) theory of psychological empowerment. Analyses

of participants' stories suggest that empowering workplace characteristics (empowering

relationships, meaningful roles, opportunity, and incentive systems) promote

psychological empowerment through four main processes (encouragement and advice,

exposure, respect, and validation) and six main outcomes (independence, confidence,

opened eyes, appreciation, a desire to give back, and the ability to talk to others).

Empowering psychological processes. Empowering processes are those

psychological or social processes through which empowering organizational

characteristics facilitated empowered psychological outcomes. Maton (2008) has

referred to these processes as psychological mediators of empowerment in community

settings.

Encouragement and advice. Encouragement received through the workplace was

a process that facilitated psychological empowerment. Encouragement consisted of

verbal recognition and emotional interest in participants' abilities from others.

Encouragement from co-workers and superiors was particularly valuable to participants

since non-familial encouragement was viewed as more objective than that expected and

received from their families (although familial encouragement was also identified as an

empowering process). Grace [female, age 22, social worker] defined empowerment in

terms of encouragement, and shared how she was empowered through the encouragement

she received from her workplace mentors:

> I would say that empowerment is definitely something that has to be
> constant...And also I feel that it's something that... you can kind of give people
> the tools, you can help the process, but you can't actually *empower* them. You
> can give them the tools for them to empower themselves. And I think that's
> important because if you don't have someone who fully believes in you, and who
> fully feels like you can do it, then you'll never be given the exact right tools to
> feel like you can empower yourself. And that's why I think that that's linked to
> my experience in having other people lead me, then having two Black males lead
> me, because I feel like they kind of *believed in me* a little bit more, and said "you
> *can* do it," even when I didn't think I could do it. That's how they gave me the
> tools to empower myself, versus people who maybe don't believe in you, or don't
> believe you can do it.

Diane [female, age 16, retail sales person] also defined empowerment in terms of

encouragement:

> I think that it's something that you say and if somebody commented on it, as a
> positive comment then you would feel okay well I just said this and this person
> just thought it wasn't good so I'm going to start by saying stuff like that more so I
> can feel like I can conquer anything.

Jones [male, age 35, IT manager] described the validation and confidence he gained after

he received encouraging recognition from his managers at the end his summer job with

an insurance company:

> The summer job at Manchester Insurance, the most memorable moment... was
> the last day...They brought me out for a special lunch... It was the senior VP, VP,
> director, sales manager... [and then] two of the sales managers brought me out for
> beers after work....they just kept saying "Thank you for all your efforts, thank
> you for your work. You have a bright future, you really do."... and then I
> remember I went on the TTC heading back home... and I sat down on the TTC
> and I started *crying*, because I said "I can do this." I said I'm just as good as
> *anybody* out there... there's people at Super Department Store who talk to me like
> I'm crap, they always come to talk to me like I was stupid. You know what? I'm
> just as good as *anybody*. Actually I'm *pretty damn good.* I could hold my own...

So that's the verification you need as a young person. Your mom and dad can say you're great, they're going to tell you that no matter what... But you need some kind of third party to say "Yeah." And that gave me the confidence the next summer to say no, I know what I could do now, this is the bar that I've set.

Exposure. An empowering process emphasized by participants involved exposure to successful role models or to new experiences. Exposure to successful role models was particularly empowering when such individuals were Black, but not necessarily so. Such exposure increased participants' confidence, opened their eyes, and provided access to strategic information. Isaiah [male, age 34, entrepreneur] was empowered through exposure to many successful Black professionals while working at a barbershop during his youth:

> The Barbershop gave me exposure to many different successful Black professionals. I was able to watch them interact, and learn from them and get inspired by them. I asked a lot of questions. An engineer told me it would be easy to make money. He advised me to get laid off, and to get put into a training program that guarantees a job afterward. So I followed his advise – I went to CTI, and worked at Rogers. but left after seeing there was no security and landed a job at the Exchange.

Empowering exposure need not be only to Black role models. Abena [female, age 31, lawyer] described how exposure to a broad spectrum of people was a valuable eye opening experience and networking opportunity:

> That was an important lesson as well... you're meeting all these people... we had guys coming in from Texas who worked on the pipelines up here. And you're exposed to all these different careers that you had no idea existed. So your world opens up in that you're meeting people who are doing things that are not just doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. They're doing all of these wonderful skilled trades and they're successful... you're meeting people, you're getting business cards, you're networking.

Respect. Several participants described the importance of respect an empowering aspect of their work experience. The respect varied in its meaning – for some participants it consisted of tolerance of difference, for others it consisted of recognizing

their power or worth. For Andrea [female, age 18, community program worker, respect

was a key value which included tolerance:

> ... my values would have been respect, so if I don't feel like I'm being respected
> at the workplace, then I can't work to the best of my ability... And so everyone
> knows that my value is respect. And if I don't feel respected then that's
> something that won't work out... I would say everyone respects and treats each
> other well and knows each other's cultures. I believe that each of us, we do come
> from different places and we do have different cultures, beliefs and traditions. I
> feel that everyone acknowledges that and they've learned to respect that and deal
> with that, and in a good manner.

Lawrence [male, age 33, entrepreneur] indicated that he was able to earn respect by

knowing how to effectively communicate with others:

> Everyone's opinion's valued and viewed for sure - especially if you sound
> intelligent. That's the key thing...Well essentially if you don't communicate or
> articulate yourself well enough, people aren't going to take you seriously, so there
> are different ways you can command respect based on your strong command of
> the subject matter, your articulation of any particular issue, and how you analyze
> a problem as well. So I've never had an issue with being taken seriously. At the
> hospital in fact I was very respected in that regard. Or possibly feared- not
> *feared*, but respected in a way in which that they know that they wouldn't cross
> the line with me or piss me off to some degree. Not because of me being angry,
> but more or less, that I knew the tools to retaliate if I needed that. That was
> available to my advantage. So knowledge is power.

Validation. For many participants, empowering workplace relationships with

mentors and successful networks enhanced their confidence. Validation also occurred

when young Black workers were able to occupy meaningful roles. These experiences

validated their potential as young Black Canadians by providing external confirmation of

their self-worth and of their ability to transcend racial barriers in the workplace.

Cassandra's [female, age 25, community arts worker] story explained how her successful

promotion to a responsible role in the workplace empowered her identity as a Black

person:

I don't feel like I'm stuck to stereotypes, or that I'm a statistic. I feel like I'm just as much equal and successful as any other person... I felt like I couldn't get my foot in the door on a job that I loved, and that I was just stuck with mediocre minimum wage jobs... And I feel now that there's a lot of doors opening for me.

Jamila's [female, age 30, community program specialist] sense of racial identity was also transformed through the success and mentorship she experienced in the workplace:

It's changed in the sense that I don't look at race as a barrier. Oddly enough, because we hear that a lot in this work environment... "Yeah, [you're] Black, and you've got to know." But oddly enough that's had the opposite effect... this setting has showed me that, as a Black person, Black does not mean limited, does not mean I can not do certain things. It means I can do everything, I may have to do it twice, three times as hard, but through doing that I can make that race factor invisible. If I'm performing a task so well, it will make... race not the primary thing. So rather than being that Black female that does this really well, I'm like "Oh she does this really well, and she's Black," you know what I mean? So yeah, I think it's given me confidence, and it's allowed me to focus less on the fact that I'm Black, and focus more on what I want, I'm going to get it. Ambition.

Kweku [male, age 32, financial advisor] indicated that enjoying success with a dynamic team of Black professionals increased his confidence through validation:

A lot of individuals I've spoken to felt like there was a ceiling that capped them. Within our environment, we were young, Black, and we didn't feel like there was a ceiling. It was basically what we did. Not to say that we didn't face prejudicial things, and didn't face certain things when we go out there, but there was no visual cap, so we didn't walk into a place and see that, okay this guy's office is here, that guy's office is there. We had offices where it was based on success, it wasn't really based on young, old, Black, White. So I think that environment was very impactful on me in terms of the way I thought about life. Whereas I would see other individuals who... felt restricted. They didn't feel free... We really didn't have to answer to anybody but ourselves.

Psychological outcomes. Participants described six major outcomes of empowering workplace settings. These outcomes reflected empowered psychological states that participants experienced as a result of empowering workplace characteristics and processes.

Independence. The experience of working empowered participants by

contributing to their independence – both perceived and actual. Working, getting paid,

and learning key skills and information, provided them with a sense of self-sufficiency

and an ability to function without dependence on parents (particularly among younger

participants) or on employers (particularly among older self-employed participants).

Giselle [female, age 18, receptionist] defined empowerment in terms of the independence

she felt by earning an income:

> It feels good because I'm independent...I don't have to ask anybody for anything,
> ever. Like, everything's done on my own. The only thing I need to ask anybody
> for is a ride. ... It's just like I feel *so good*, because I always have money...It's
> like milk pouring on the floor, it just doesn't stop coming ever. *Ever.* It's just
> like a river flowing like Niagara Falls. Never stops, it just keeps on coming in...
> Like, right *now*, now I can't even *go anywhere* if I have no money. I feel like it's
> like one of my arms are gone, it's just part of me now...It's just that feeling of
> being able to do stuff on my own. I pay my own bills, my cell phone. All me.

Hassan [male, age 29, mortgage broker] shared how he gained independence by seeking

out mentoring from a successful entrepreneur in his field:

> It's owned by Martin Smith, who's this Black multi-millionaire who started this
> company and who grew it... at Home Finance I learned first how to be
> *independent*... [working as an independent broker]... It's a completely different
> animal. And that's a different world that I never even encountered, that I had to
> learn. And I learned that from someone who developed a brand... And I tried to
> soak up as much information from him and learn how he did it. And from there I
> went to start my own franchise after leaving him...

In addition, by working in a responsible role as a manager in a bank, Hassan gained

exposure that promoted his later independence:

> [Working at the bank] expanded my mind, and gave me an opportunity to develop
> a lot of skills sets. And also it gave me an opportunity to have a better
> understanding of the world. A better understanding of my environment, my
> society, my culture. It gave me, it opened all of that to me. It gave me an
> opportunity to be an expert and understand what is necessary, what is
> needed...for me to be successful in this industry...I kind of had a flow chart of

what I needed to do in a way, when I was leaving. What I would have to do to make money independently, right.

Confidence. Many participants identified confidence as a major psychological outcome of empowering workplace experiences. Jamila [female, age 30, community program specialist], for example, described how the workplace gave her confidence to go into the world:

> It's been a positive experience and has a positive impact on who I am, and who I will be, and subsequently who my children will be. Hopefully. Because my philosophies have changed, my principles are clarified, I'm not afraid to go out into the world. Rather I go out into the world confidently. Because I've been tested here so much. I've had to do things at a high degree. So I go out now and I perform in the world outside of here, it's seen as wow, attention to detail, understanding human dynamics, how you'd interact with certain people. These things have all had a positive impact on me.

Kweku [male, age 32, financial advisor] indicated that he gained greater self-confidence about himself as a Black person, through exposure to successful coworkers:

> The reason why I say that, I saw several other young individuals who were Black like myself – I actually had two other individuals as friends who worked in the same company, and we had this feeling of self-confidence, because we were these young individuals with big aspirations, big dreams, and we had no one to answer to. So that environment really shaped me in a lot of areas, because I never felt like I had to work while someone was above me. And any scenario that I felt that, you know, I look back to this scenario and realize that if you're put in a right environment, nobody can tell you anything in regards to the situation you're in. So that was very lasting, and I think that was something that shaped me.

Opened eyes. Participants, especially older participants, described how empowering workplace experiences opened their eyes to reality, particularly to the dynamics of race in the working game. Through exposure to the "real world" of work and to new people and roles, participants gained a wider and deeper view of how race influenced the interplay of power and oppression in the workplace. Jamila [female, age

30, community program specialist] described how her workplace mentor's support for

education enabled her to see the world through a different lens:

> Empowerment to me means enabling. Now whether enabling is through
> supporting one to get an education, or enabling them- ... because once you're able
> to do something, you're empowered. Right now at this phase of my life,
> education is empowerment, because beyond it giving you a job, going through the
> rigor and being able to go through that process...has made me a better human
> being... It empowered me now to see the world through a different lens.

Mustafa [male, age 28, artist] described how the workplace expanded his view of reality:

> I guess to put it simply, just it makes you aware of reality. Because, really unless
> you get in the workplace, you don't know how to act, you don't know unless
> someone *shows* you. And I think just that experience of seeing how people act,
> and actually doing- *working* in the workplace, takes away that fear. I remember
> being young and watching people in suits, and being like "Could I do that?" You
> know what I mean? I don't know if it's school that's not doing a good enough job
> at bridging the gap between theory and actual *doing*, but you know, or maybe it's
> just opportunity and awareness that's there's actually interns like that out there.

Desire to give back. The importance of giving back to the community was an

important outcome of workplace empowerment that was described by many participants.

Some participants believed that empowering experiences within the workplace had

inspired or enabled them to give back; others anticipated that experiencing empowerment

in the workplace would enable them to give back to the community in the future; while

others defined empowerment in terms of their ability to give back. Lawrence [male, age

33, entrepreneur] described how giving back is an important aspect of being self-

employed:

> ... I love helping people at solving problems and getting fulfillment out of it. One
> thing I enjoy is getting families who otherwise would not have been able to own a
> home, get into a property...Not only that, but trying to be a good example for
> others in terms of running a successful business model. And also giving back to
> the community in terms of supporting different groups and charitable
> organizations. So that's what I love about this.

For Lawrence, the desire to give back was also an important characteristic of his role

models:

> ... People who are genuinely good people trying to do their very best to improve the lives of others. That's what I really look up to. I'm not interested in the guy who has a million dollars, I'm interested in what is he doing since he's acquired those things in terms of helping others around him. That's generally what I'm more interested in. And when he could impress me in terms of giving back- I'll give you an example: Oprah she's a great model in terms of a life model I would say, in terms of she's accumulated certain- I'm not so interested in her success as I am with what she's done with it to give back to different communities. And those are the things that we have to more respect and honour.

Appreciation. Participants often indicated that empowering work experiences

gave them an appreciation for the value (and stress) of hard work, as well as the value of

money. Working gave many participants an appreciation for the sacrifices that their

parents made in order to provide them with opportunity. Joseph [male, age 20,

electronics sales person] described how he learned to appreciate his parents after being

put in a responsible role, left in charge of a computer store for two weeks when the owner

went away:

> If I had never went through that two weeks, it wouldn't have prepared me for whatever I'm going through now. Like that saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. So those two weeks of just being there by myself, pretty much running everything, learning how business runs, and it sort of influenced me on how the world works, and that you work hard for your money. So I had a new respect for my parents. Because both of my parents work factory, and my dad's been working factory, often two jobs, for basically his whole life. And [before] it was like whatever, this guy's tired... times when he'd come home and just start yelling for no reason. I was like "What's wrong with you? You just go to work 8 hours, can't be that hard. You get your breaks, you get paid for it." And after I did those two weeks, it just opened my eyes to: I'm here, I'm in air conditioning – what about factory? How deadly is factory work? So it sort of was a big eye opener, a very humbling experience I would say. So you learn sort of the way the world works, and getting paid.

After getting her first full-time job, Giselle described how she too developed an

appreciation for the stress of work and her parent's struggle:

That was a real 9 to 5 full-time. Like usually I worked like 3 days a week, 4 days a week at my part-time job. But this was like a *real* job like how my mom goes to work. My mom goes to work from 6-3. I wake up 8 o'clock, hop on the bus for 9, get to work 9:30. I'm working, go work, work, work all day. 4 o'clock, I'm tired, coming home from the office, I'm tired, I'm stressed out. All I want is some food cooked. I feel like my mom, and when I come home to like a dirty house, I *understand* why my mom feels the way she does, because I'm stressed out from working hard all day. I don't want to come home and see dishes in the sink and stuff like that. I understand *completely* how my mom feels now. I understand why she yells and she gets down on my back, because she's *stressed out from work*. Who wants to be at work for 8 hours a day working *hard*? Hard working, and then come back home, cook food, you know what I mean? I *totally* understand why she's miserable after work.

Ability to talk to others. A key outcome of empowering workplaces for young Black Canadians involved learning to talk and to act in culturally diverse work settings. Empowering workplaces enables participants to talk to others by providing exposure to diverse groups. In several cases, this involved the development of a broader behavioural repertoire, such as informal conversation skills, that facilitated entry and mobility in the workplace. For example, through working her first job in a supportive and accepting environment, Diane [female, age 16, retail store person] learned how to speak properly with new people:

> It taught me a lot, to be more confident and independent, and it got me to work very comfortably with others and new people I haven't met before and how to speak to them properly.

Abena [female, age 31, lawyer] learned to talk with professionals by being exposed to the dominant culture in her job at a hotel. This enabled her to define and perform a new self:

> This is why I say this was the most significant work experience that I had… This defined that other Abena to a certain extent that I knew I would need to be successful in a professional world where you are the minority… it helped me to define that part of myself where I'm not afraid to go to cocktail parties by myself… I know how to just talk to people off the cuff. I know how to make myself comfortable in professional situations where I'm *not* comfortable, I just put on that role … It makes it so much easier for me on a day to day basis at work now, where I'm the only Black lawyer at a 500 lawyer firm. It makes it easier for

me to talk to these old partners who have never had a conversation with a Black person in their life... It sucks, and by all means... but it just makes it easier on a daily basis to be like "So, what did you do this weekend, cottage, or?"... they're not going to ask me, "So what did you do? Oh, it's Caribana weekend."... I have to just be like, "Oh yeah, it's the long weekend, did you know it's Simcoe Day?" This job just made it so natural to for me to listen and talk. Those are the things that nobody can teach you, you just have to develop them. And if you don't have the experiences to develop them, when you're trying to get into certain situations, like even when you go to an interview, you won't even know how to make small talk with the interviewer...as much as you think it's about the skills, it's not. It's about whether or not they want to spend time with you. They called you in here because they know you're qualified. It's a matter of whether they can get along with you. For the professional world I think that's the case... I just think it's understated how important social interaction is in the professional world.

Through exposure to diverse groups as a financial advisor, Kweku [male, age 32] also learned how to talk with a wider audience:

It helped me... to talk to other individuals regarding money, regarding relationships, regarding everyday situations. A large part of our business was talking to people, and... before you talk business, you usually talk about how the individual's doing, how the family's doing, just, you know, social things. So going in those kind of environments, it helped me learn a lot about different cultures, whether it's Indian people, whether it's Aboriginal – just so many different factors... So understanding who you're talking to and how to approach them, you almost could say what their major concern is. You'd have to articulate your presentation accordingly. So all those dynamics were learned being social with individuals.

Critical Self-Reflection on Workplace Empowerment

In my work experience, I have been fortunate to have encountered many of the empowering characteristics that other participants have described. This includes exceptional mentorship and a deeply meaningful role that I have experienced while working in municipal government. Indeed, to a large extent, this dissertation is an outcome of my own empowering journey in the workplace, as my interest in work emerged through work. Through encouragement, exposure, and struggle, my eyes have been opened to the frustration and promise of working life as a Black Canadian male.

But the journey hasn't been easy. My confidence has grown, though tempered by the often Sisyphusian character of community work – struggling against countervailing forces both without and within one's community. My desire to give back to the community has been tested, withered, and reinvigorated. Despite many moments of wanting to give up in search of a simpler course, I have been blessed by a web of supportive relationships that has kept me on course.

Discussion on the Workplace as an Empowering Community Setting

The second major research question sought to examine how empowering workplace characteristics promote Black young adults' empowerment. In answering this question, my analyses of participants' narratives focused on identifying (a) empowering workplace characteristics, (b) outcomes of empowering workplaces, and (c) psychological processes that mediated the relationship between empowering workplace characteristics and empowerment outcomes. Findings suggest that empowering workplaces for young Black Canadians consist of four main organizational characteristics (empowering relationships, meaningful roles, opportunity, and incentives), that promote six empowered psychological outcomes (independence, confidence, opened eyes, appreciation, a desire to give back, and the ability to talk to others), through four main empowering psychological processes (encouragement and advice, exposure, respect, and validation). Overall, these themes are consistent with much community psychology theory and evidence related to empowering community settings and psychological empowerment. At the same time, they also provide important insights on how empowerment is influenced by race and the context of the workplace. Taken together, and extending the metaphor of the theatrical game, empowering workplaces may be

viewed as surrogate legacies that empower young Black workers by providing access to

the types of opportunity, resources, and social capital that members of dominant groups

receive through their intergenerational legacies. I begin with a discussion of empowering

organizational characteristics, followed by an examination of the empowering

psychological and social processes, concluding with a discussion of empowered

outcomes (see Table 4 for summary).

Table 4

Overview of Discussion on Workplace Empowerment

Narrative Findings	Major Interpretive Concepts
Empowering workplace characteristics	
Empowering relationships	Relational environment
- Professional networks	Social networks / Social capital
- Mentors	
Meaningful roles	Sociopolitical responsibility
- Helping	Opportunity role structure
- Responsible	
Opportunity	Opportunity role structure
Incentives	Rewards
- Tangible rewards	
- Awards	
Empowering processes	
Encouragement and advice	Social support
Exposure	Social cognitive theory
Respect	Narrative identity
	Postcolonial identity
Validation	Narrative identity
	Postcolonial identity
Psychological empowerment outcomes	
Independence	Intrapersonal empowerment
Confidence	Intrapersonal empowerment
Opened eyes	Interactional empowerment
	Sociopolitical development
Appreciation	Interactional empowerment
	Generativity
Desire to give back	Interactional empowerment
	Generativity
Ability to talk to others	Interactional empowerment

Empowering workplace characteristics.   According to participants' stories, there were four main empowering organizational characteristics of the workplace: empowering relationships, meaningful roles, opportunity, and incentives. These organizational characteristics are largely consistent with existing community psychology theory that has identified the empowering function of the relational environment and opportunity role structure in empowering community settings (Maton, 2008). Organizational psychologists have also identified rewards or incentive systems as key organizational characteristics of empowering workplaces (e.g., Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Despite these broad consistencies, participants' narratives suggest that the meanings of these workplace characteristics were influenced by their racialized experiences.

Extending the metaphor of the working games suggested in the previous section, empowering settings may be considered as "surrogate" legacies that provide the social capital, psychological resources, and opportunity that enable young Black workers to play the game competitively with opposing teams. Indeed, many of the empowering processes and characteristics described by participants parallel their narratives about the empowering dynamics of White and Black teams.

Empowering relational environment: Social networks and social capital.   One of the most frequent themes in participants' narratives was the importance of workplace relationships for empowerment outcomes. These empowering relationships consisted of mentors, professional networks, and – to a lesser extent – co-workers and customers who promoted empowerment outcomes through processes of exposure and encouragement and advice. These findings are consistent with Maton's (2008) theory and empirical

findings on empowering community settings, which suggests that a relational environment that encompasses support systems and caring relationships are critical for empowerment. It is interesting to note that in the present study, participants' stories emphasized the roles of mentors and professional networks both within and beyond the workplace, as well as the collective role of mentors in community empowerment. These themes reflect the ecological nature of empowering community settings – a dynamic that is often underemphasized in the literature on empowering settings. These themes highlight the need for taking a systems perspective in the consideration of empowering community settings – including the role of families in empowerment. Social network and social capital perspectives may assist in conceptualizing how ecological relationships (i.e., relationships outside of the workplace setting) contribute to empowered outcomes (Yowell & Gordon, 1996).

The finding that mentors played an important role in the workplace and psychological empowerment of participants in consistent with much existing research that has highlighted the significant role of mentors in the careers and empowerment of Black populations. Klaw and Rhodes (2003) found that natural mentors played an influential role in the career development of African-American teen parents, while other scholars have found that mentors and professional networks promote career mobility (e.g., Hardaway & McLoy, 2009; Polodny & Baron, 1997). Findings in the present study indicated that a shared racial identity between mentors and mentees tended to enhance the quality of the bonds in their relationships. Participants also reported, however, that a more fundamental determinant of relationship quality appeared to be the ability for mentors to empathize with the experience and challenges of racialization, and their ability

to provide opportunity. These findings are consistent with existing literature that has

shown that racial identity is an important determinant of the quality of mentoring

relationships, and that race-matched mentoring dyads tend to produce better relationship

quality (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy & Sanchez, 2006) and better developmental

outcomes for young people (e.g., Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman & Lee, 2002).

Roles: Sociopolitical action and responsibility. Participants indicated that

meaningful roles were defined primarily by responsibility and helping, which promoted

psychological empowerment mainly through validation and exposure. The finding that

the natures of roles were key characteristics of empowering settings is also consistent

with existing community psychology and psychological empowerment theory (Maton,

2008; Spreitzer, 1996). Maton has highlighted the importance of voice and influence in a

setting's opportunity role structure. While much community psychology literature on

empowering roles emphasizes the participatory aspects of voice and influence within a

setting, the current findings suggest that the sociopolitical qualities of voice and influence

are important aspects of the role structure for young Black Canadians. For many older

participants the helping role reflected a sense of obligation to use their position (e.g.,

resources, skills, opportunity) to empower younger workers and family, while some

younger participants found that helping others made the job more meaningful and

provided exposure to issues facing the Black community. In other words, helping

through the professional role was a form of civic participation or community building –

strengthening the team by helping other players. The present findings are consistent with

research that has shown social responsibility is an important aspect of working narratives

in general, and particularly pronounced among African-Americans (Colby, Sippola &

Phelps, 2001). While such findings occurred with African-American rather than Black

Canadian groups, it is possible that the apparent consistent findings between the groups

reflects the prominence of collectivistic values and collective struggles within African

communities more broadly (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

Participants' narratives emphasized the importance of responsibility as an

empowering aspect of work roles. Responsibility provided validation by allowing

participants to demonstrate their competence and reframe oppressive narratives (i.e.,

stereotypes about Black ignorance). Responsibility has been identified as an important

aspect of the role structure in community psychology research. Nowell and Boyd (2010)

recently suggested that responsibility was a key part of psychological sense of

community. Maton's (2008) model describes the importance of varying demands and the

use of skills in empowering settings.

Incentive systems. Incentive systems were the third main organizational

characteristic that promoted participants' empowerment. Such systems, including

tangible rewards and awards, empowered participants primarily through validation

supporting education, and exposure to rewards of success - receiving money was critical.

Interestingly, this was conveyed as a stronger motivator during earlier career stages and

among younger participants. While similar to some types of rewards emphasized in

community psychology literature on empowering community settings, the rewards and

dynamics emphasized by participants are distinguished by their emphasis on tangible,

material rewards and awards for performance. Awards have been found to be a

significant motivator of work performance (Frey & Neckermann, 2008), but little

research has examined how awards relate to race or identity. While many social

psychologists have argued that extrinsic rewards undermine intrinsic or long-term motivation, this does not appear to be the case according to participants' stories. Rewards facilitate validation, reframing dominant narratives about the self (proving) and exposing participants to proof that success is possible – that there are alternative trajectories and possibilities in life. This may be particularly salient to individuals from racialized and lower socio-economic status groups, who have faced historical, pervasive oppression and deprivation within materialistic cultures. Researchers have suggested that materialism may be a result of social comparison processes, in which individuals define their life satisfaction through comparison of their standard of living with others (e.g., Sirgy, 1998). Accordingly, those of lower socio-economic standing may be expected to demonstrate higher levels of materialism. The narratives of participants in this study often linked materialism with experiences of racialization. Some scholars have similarly recognized and critiqued the relationship between materialism and power within Black youth popular culture (Kitwana, 2003).

Empowering workplace psychological processes. Empowering processes are those psychological and social processes that mediated the relationship between empowering workplace characteristics and outcomes.

Encouragement and advice: Social support. Many participants described the encouragement and advice they received from mentors and professional networks as a key contributor to their empowerment. This conceptualization is consistent with existing theories of social support that distinguish between instrumental and emotional types of support. The findings support some existing empirical research that has demonstrated that social support received from mentors and professional networks contributes to the

career success of African-Americans (Friedman, Kane & Cornfield, 1998). I am aware of few studies that have explicitly examined specific forms of social support received from mentors among Black youth and young adults.

Validation and respect: Reframing dominant narratives. Validation was reported as one of the most empowering psychological processes by participants, whereby empowering work experiences promoted confidence by providing external confirmation of participants' abilities and worth. The concept of validation is distinguished from confidence, insofar as confidence is a psychological state consisting of a strong belief that one has intrinsic value and ability, while validation is a process by which confidence is developed. The process of validation promoted personal confidence through the performance of responsible roles and through receipt of mentor encouragement. Validation through material incentives was also a motivational experience for participants. Although confidence (and related self constructs) is a central aspect of the intrapersonal domain of psychological empowerment, community psychologists have paid little attention to the process of external validation as a source of intrapersonal empowerment. Within cognitive and social psychology, a significant body of research has examined the dynamics of contingent self-worth (i.e., self-worth that is dependent on external sources) (Crocker & Knight, 2005). The evidence that has emerged from this research suggests that the pursuit of self-esteem through external validation can have high costs for individuals in terms of their learning, autonomy, and self-regulation. While few researchers appear to have considered the significance of validation from a race lens, there are some notable contributions. In trying to understand the "Black self-esteem advantage," Ziegler-Hill (2007) found that White and Black youth

possess different sources of self-esteem, with White youth demonstrating self-esteem that is more heavily based on approval from others than Black youth.

The findings from this study raise questions about the prevailing view that external validation may actually have a counter-productive impact on psychological empowerment – or at least invite a more considered examination of the link between race and psychological validation. In his classic text "Black Skin, White Mask," Frantz Fanon (1967) devoted a chapter to analyzing the psychological dynamics of recognition amongst Black people. Fanon argued that Black individuals experience a strong psychological need for recognition, which is rooted in a desire to compensate for historical oppression and inferiority vis-à-vis White-dominated society. As former colonized peoples who have been unable to validate their self-worth by shaping their environments, Blacks seek social recognition from other Blacks and their White former masters. Without delving into the psychodynamic assumptions underlying Fanon's analysis of the "Black inferiority complex," his emphasis on the historical basis of such psychological phenomena has some bearing on this study. Community psychologists have increasingly begun to recognize and study the influence of dominant cultural narratives on individual identities and empowerment (Rappaport, 2000). Participants' stories suggest that validation may provide the experiential or behavioural means for reframing oppressive cultural narratives in order to live more empowered identities. In other words, through lived experiences that debunk the negative dominant cultural narratives that saturate their social milieu, participants are able to create new stories about themselves and their community, thereby constructing new identities. This is consistent

with a growing body of research that examines how life stories themselves comprise

identity and how they evolve over time (McAdams, 2001).

Exposure. The process of exposure was also a major aspect of participants'

psychological empowerment that promoted confidence, a desire to give back,

appreciation, and the ability to talk to others. The types of exposure most frequently

described by participants involved exposure to positive role models, to communities

outside of their own cultures, and to tangible proof of success. Little research has been

conducted on the nature or impacts of exposure, conceptualized as the variety and quality

of life events seen or experienced, as a characteristic of the life course from a race

perspective. The theme of exposure appears to have some resemblance to the

psychological mediators of awareness and engagement that Maton (2008) has reported in

his analysis of empowering community organizations (although Maton does not provide a

formal definition of these concepts, their association with experiences in the opportunity

role structure that provide eye opening experiences suggests thematic similarity).

Research by Montuori and Fahim (2004) suggests that cross-cultural contacts provide an

opportunity for personal growth. Social cognitive theorists propose that individuals learn

through observation of social factors in the environment (Bandura, 2001), and have

applied such theory to understanding career development (e.g., Lent, Brown & Hackett,

1994). Most research in this area, however, appears to focus on individual factors such as

self-efficacy, rather than the quality of environments or situations. Given participants'

frequent reference to exposure as a meaningful aspect of their life narratives, exposure

may be a useful construct for examining the dynamics of empowerment, particularly

during the early career stages that occur over adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Empowered psychological outcomes. The major psychological outcomes of empowering workplace experiences described by participants included independence, confidence, eye opening, appreciation, a desire to give back, and an ability to talk to others. With the exception of appreciation, these outcomes are consistent with much of the psychological empowerment and Black intellectual literature. These themes suggest that intrapersonal and interactional forms of empowerment are the most significant psychological outcomes of empowering workplaces in the narratives of young Black Canadians.

Intrapersonal empowerment: Confidence and independence. A sense of confidence and independence (also referred to as self-determination) are central dimensions of intrapersonal psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996). Within Black feminist and Black psychological scholarship, confidence and self-determination have been at the core of examinations of Black experience and identities (Baldwin, 1986; Collins, 2000). The findings of the current study are consistent with previous empirical research that has found strong positive associations between self-esteem and ethnic identity (McMahon & Watts, 2002). A significant body of research has shown self-determination to be an important component of well-being for racialized groups (e.g., Baldwin, 1986). Most of these studies, however, have been conducted with African-Americans. The similarity between Black Canadian participants' stories and those of African-Americans suggest similarities in the racialized experiences of Blacks in Canadian workplaces.

In view of the existing literature, the present findings suggest that confidence is a critical component of an empowered racial identity for Black Canadians – and that the

themes of an empowered identity are reflected by their centrality in participants' narratives. It is notable that many participants indicated that their increased confidence involved a "realization" that race is not a barrier to success, which emerged through validating experiences and exposure (discussed later in this section). Optimism in personal narratives has been found to be associated with positive psychological adjustment (Scheier & Carver, 1985), including among minority groups who experience discrimination (Baldwin, Jackson, Okoh & Cannon, 2011). The present findings suggest that optimism related to racism can be learned through successful workplace experiences. I have found no previous studies that have reported similar findings. This finding is also similar to the final stage of the nigrescence Black identity model (Vandiver, Fhagan-Smith, Cokley, Cross & Worrell, 2001) which postulates that during the internalization stage Black individuals become comfortable with their Blackness and focus on issues beyond their personal Blackness. At the same time, the belief that race is not a barrier to success might also be considered an indication of a naïve identity, such as that proposed in the acritical stage of Watts et al.'s (2003) theory of sociopolitical development, during which individuals possess a belief in a just world. Participants' stories, however, generally suggest that such an orientation is an empowered stance.

Interactional empowerment: Eye opening, giving back, and appreciation.

Several participants indicated that they gained opened eyes, appreciation, and a desire to give back through empowering work experiences. These outcomes reflect interactional forms of psychological empowerment, as they involve the individual's attitude toward and understanding of his or her environment. These findings are consistent with much of the theory and research on sociopolitical development. Eye opening, for example, is

consistent with the concept of critical consciousness – a central aspect of interactional

empowerment and sociopolitical development (Zimmerman, 1995; Watts et al., 2003). A

desire to give back to one's community has also been found in studies of sociopolitical

development among Black populations (e.g., Watts, 1993). Watts (1993) found that

giving back to the community was a distinctive theme of sociopolitical development

among young African-American men. While many participants indicated that work

experiences deepened their appreciation for parental sacrifices and motivated personal

striving for success, the theme of appreciation has received little attention within

psychological empowerment literature. Some scholars within positive psychology have

begun to study gratitude, and have found significant associations between gratitude and

various outcomes of well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Black studies scholars

have suggested that gratitude or appreciation is a strong element of African spirituality

(Mazama, 2002). Very little empirical work has examined the connections between

gratitude and empowerment and race, or the developmental role of gratitude, a notable

exception being work by McAdams and Bauer (2004). Considering the role of gratitude

within empowerment could be a valuable contribution for refining our understanding

about the development and nature of empowerment across the lifespan.

Theoretical and empirical links between the desire to give back and gratitude have

been elucidated by some psychologists (e.g., Peterson & Stewart, 1996). Within

psychology, one of the leading theories related to the phenomenon of giving back is

generativity. The concept of generativity was initially developed by Erik Erikson (1968),

who proposed that it was as a mid-life stage of psychosocial development in which

individuals acquired a greater sense of care and concern for the welfare of future

generations. Research has found generativity to be an important aspect of African-American life narratives, with African Americans showing higher levels of generativity than White Americans (e.g., Hart, McAdams, Hirsch, & Bauer, 2001). Moreover, Peterson and Stewart (1996) found that generative individuals tended to show greater levels of gratitude than less generative individuals. Given the association between generativity and empowerment suggested by theories of Black identity (Vandiver et al., 2001) and sociopolitical development (Watts, 1993), the examination of gratitude and empowerment merits further exploration. Both generativity and gratitude relate conceptually to motivational aspects of interactional empowerment.

Interactional empowerment: Talking to others. Many participants described an improved ability to talk to others (i.e., people from different groups) as an outcome of empowering workplace experience. This skill was typically developed through the process of exposure that enabled interaction with diverse groups (discussed further below). Similar to the interpersonal theatrics learned and necessitated through oppression, participants developed skills in interpersonal theatrics through empowering workplace experiences. While many community psychologists have examined the interpersonal or relational aspects of power and empowerment, few appear to have examined the significance of intercultural communication as an aspect of empowerment for ethnic minorities. This gap within community psychology is somewhat surprising, given the centrality of communication to interpersonal power relations (Bennett, 1998). While some scholars of various disciplines have identified the importance of intercultural communication for Black populations (e.g., Asante & Davis, 1985), I was unable to find any empirical studies that examined the extent to which cultural communication

predicated career success or empowerment. This would be a fruitful area of further

research for empowerment scholars.

Chapter VII: Narratives of Gender, Oppression and Empowerment in the Workplace

This chapter addresses the third major research question: How does gender influence Black youths' of power in the workplace? This question was addressed by three sub-questions that sought to explore the relationships between gender and oppression, gender and empowering workplace characteristics and processes, and gender and psychological empowerment outcomes. Taken together, the findings suggest that gender has a profound influence on Black players' experiences of the working game, particularly through stereotypes, intergenerational legacies, and the nature of valued empowering setting characteristics. There is an underlying current in many participants' narratives, which suggests a perception that race and gender intersect in complex ways in the working game, to the greater disadvantage young Black male players. I present these themes in more detail in the following sections, and conclude the chapter with a critical examination and discussion of the findings.

Gender, oppression, and young Black Canadians' workplace empowerment

The first sub-question sought to explore how gender influenced Black Canadian youths' experiences of oppression in the workplace. Analyses indicated that gender influenced oppression according to four major themes: salience, stereotypes, intergenerational legacies, and playing race.

Salience of race and gender. Many female participants believed that race has had a more significant impact on their workplace oppression than gender. While they recognized the existence of gender oppression, they often believed that they had not encountered it personally, or if they had, it wasn't overt or noticeable. For example,

Abena [female, age 31, lawyer] illustrated how race was more significant for her than gender:

> For me gender hasn't played into my experience, but *race has*. I don't know if it's more from *my* perspective, but this is how it's been throughout my entire work career... and I think it's strange for me to say that. Even as I verbalize it, it sounds strange. But I've never had the gender issues that I know can exist for a lot of people. And I think maybe going forward... for example if I wanted to be a partner in this firm, I'm sure gender would play a role, because you'd want to have kids, where it'd be an impediment to your future. But I've not yet had an experience where I felt that gender was the issue that was playing a role in either impeding me from a certain goal or just complicating a certain issue. I've never had that I've consciously recognized. Perhaps it's happened and I've just been like, I don't care, I was going to do it anyway, because sometimes I just do that. But I've never had an experience at work where gender was playing a role against me or for me. Whereas race I recognize it all over the place. Maybe [for] Black women that additional layer of race just blends into the gender issue and you see it as race whereas it's more complicated than just that. But I have yet to have a gender-negative experience. You never know, my time could be coming next week!

The impact of gender appeared to be related to context, as it was a more salient aspect of the narratives of Black females who worked in male-dominated settings. Jamila [female, age 30, community program specialist], for example, stated that she normally doesn't look at things from a gender perspective, but acknowledged that gender did have an impact on her work experience. Working in a setting that consisted predominantly of Black males, race was a less salient barrier, but she nonetheless felt the need to prove herself against gender stereotypes:

> It's hard because I don't really look at things from a gender perspective. Race perspective I can deal with, but gender – I'd have to approach those from two different angles – one from the race and then the female. I don't know that I've unified the two. As a female who has not typically...done things in a traditional female way... I grew up doing sports, and having a lot of male friends, so the challenge of coming here and digging for example, the whole point was at first it was like "Digging?" But the *challenge* to get to a point from "Oh, you can't dig." I remember once someone made a comment "Oh, what kind of gardener are you?" I don't know if it was the way I was dressed, the way my hair was done, whatever. Those things are challenges to me, something in my brain goes "Ring,

uh-oh, gotta meet this challenge." So maybe going from this place of being less enthusiastic, to a place of – in my opinion, this is *my opinion,* someone else may be like "Oh she sucks, she's lazy" – to a point of wanting to go out there and prove that I can do this, and enjoying it. Wanting to dig an acre, wanting to take a shovel and just dig. Sweaty, grimy, and just out there, and so that's not typical of a young adult female... Now as a Black female in a societal context or stereotypical context, coming from a low income community, I should be focused on the bling, I should be focused on getting my hair did [sic], I should be focused on going out to clubs, hanging out with friends... So when I'm in the garden digging, possibly my peers are dating, pregnant, going out, shopping, having cars. Things like this I didn't do for a long time, so you might say that most of my twenties was spent working and going to school. So as a Black female in this setting, I feel I've been empowered actually, through these seemingly menial jobs and different things we do. So, I always reference digging, because I think that's the best thing I've ever done in my life... I love it. So I feel like it's affected me... as a Black female in this environment I've been empowered, I've been able to do more than I may have been able to do outside of this environment, because I would be seen as this is how I should be and that's probably how I'd be treated. I'm a young Black female, I should subscribe to these ways of living, going out drinking smoking, teenage, you know what I mean? In this setting I was treated as a professional, I was expected to deliver a high calibre whatever I'm doing. If I'm digging, it better be good. So it's hard for me to respond to that question, because I haven't thought of it in that way.

For some participants, gender was expressed as a salient aspect of their work oppression.

Kim [female, age 35, police officer] for example, observed that gender discrimination

became an issue only when she was competing against, and outperforming, other males

in a male-dominated setting:

> It's funny because when I was doing police work and doing as well as my male counterparts, or better, it was an issue. But now that I'm not as aggressive, and they seem to not- only when I was *competitive...* When I was competing against them and surpassing them, it seemed to be an issue. But now, when I'm just kind of, you know, quiet and doing my own thing it doesn't seem to be an issue... I find, you know, there's very few men- well the intelligent ones appreciated it and celebrated my successes, but the average, they would never give me credit for work that I had done, or they would try and take it away, so after a while you just give up and say okay.

As a bi-racial female who chose to embrace and perform her Black identity, Kim

believed that she simultaneously faced oppression due to race:

I think anyone who talks to me for anything will see that's how I identify as Black. I'm proud of it, so. I would say I'm curious if I had been more of a- I don't know what the word is, but, *not that way*, I probably would have done a little better, got a little further ahead I suspect. But I'll be patient and wait it out... I've heard bosses saying – it's gotten back to me, things my superiors have said. I mean they say it in a round about way "Oh but she's got that *attitude.*"

Black stereotypes: Hypermasculinity and femininity. Participants' narratives suggested that there is a strong perception among young Black Canadians that Black males experience greater workplace oppression than Black women due to gendered racial stereotypes. The hypermasculine, criminalized stereotype of Black males appeared to make them less palatable as potential employees. Giselle [female, age 18, receptionist] suggested that Black males get stereotyped more severely within and beyond the work setting:

> [Black females have it] easier... Easier *for me*, because honestly, like in the workplace... not to say we're not stereotyped – *everybody's* stereotyped – but I guess I have it a little bit easier than guys. Because guys get stereotyped everywhere, not just the workplace. Me and my cousin walk around and stuff like that. He's Black, I'm Black, but he'll get harassed. Why? I don't know. He's a guy. I don't get harassed. Not to say that it never happens. It probably does behind my back, but what I don't know doesn't hurt me.

Mark [male, age 19, grocery store clerk] also believed that Black males and females have different work experiences due to gender stereotypes:

> ... mainly because of the gender. So it's like... [for] a woman... it's always easier, because... people as a business, for some reason, prefer women taking your orders, [more] than they would prefer men. They prefer men to do all the strong work. So with that, I think that they'd be more kinder to a woman than they would to a man. Because it goes back to the stereotyping. Men should be tough, strong, men shouldn't cry, show no emotion, you know?

According to Joseph [male, age 20, electronics sales person]:

> Black males get that bad rep... Like my best friend is from Ghana and he goes to school at York... Very smart guy, but he lives in Jane and Finch, and I see his struggle with things... he tells me all these stories about how as soon as they see that you're a Black male from Jane and Finch, your education, your background

just goes out the window. And I hear Black females - I mean we're all still Black, at the same time though I don't think it's as much of an issue for them. I think it's more of a male thing, because... [if] you look at the statistics for high school, males are more prone to drop out of school more than females, females succeed more in classrooms than males... There's a lot of factors, but overall I would say that males get it harder than females do when it comes to employment [and] racial discrimination...

Racialized gameplay: Negotiating sex and fear. Analyses of the stories of

oppression also indicated that Black females and males emphasized different

interpersonal moves to overcome stereotypes. Both males and females can use

stereotypes to their advantage – males exploiting hypermasculinity (particularly fear),

and females exploiting femininity (particularly sexuality). According to participants'

stories, femininity offered a greater advantage in the professional workplace, since beauty

and sexuality are major assets in many professions. Notably, most of the stories about

the gendered exploitation of stereotypes were told by male participants. Lawrence [male,

age 33, entrepreneur] described the situation thus:

> In real estate... I think women have opportunity to have greater success in it. It's very image oriented... In addition to that, Black females can have equal success as Black males, so there isn't really much of a [reason]. But I think, like in any business, the more attractive the person is, the more they're able to generate. Because it is your image that you're promoting essentially, outside of your services – initially anyways – to draw people in so you can sell them on your services and ability to do your job.

> Black women can do extremely well in this business, and there are *many* that I know are doing very well in the business. Black males can also do well, but people feel a bit intimidated by them, so it's all about their approach in making people feel comfortable working with them. I'm a very blunt, direct person. I'll look out for your best interests, but I'm not the babyish kind of person who's not going to be honest and straight up front. If it's not in your best interest I'm going to let you know... It's cost me, but at the same time I feel better at the end of the day to know... that I didn't change my tactic and they in turn had a negative outcome...because I was very honest and credible in my approach...that's what's most important to me.

As a Black male, Lawrence had to downplay hypermasculinity in order to make sales to White clients, while adapting his approach to other groups:

> White people for example, I can't fit that strong, boisterous, stereotypical Black male image. It's just more even-toned and softer in my approach, depending on the culture.

Joseph [male, age 20, electronics sales person] also suggested that Black females can use femininity to their advantage:

> Females have that female persuasion thing... like retail for example. I always said if I was a female in retail, I would love it... because I look at it as a male – not even a race thing, but a male perspective – I could walk into a...high-end men's store, and if there's a female standing there and a male standing there, 9 times out of 10 I'm going to ask the female for her perspective on "Hey how does this tie look?..."... So in that position, sex sells. Fact of life... So I think of it as not necessarily a racial thing, but a gender thing, I think females just have it a lot easier than males do. But it also depends on what job you're going for too. I mean if you're going for a hostess job,... or customer service, I'd rather have a female work than a male work, because they're more persuasive, more calming – that mother figure type of thing. But, in terms of race, men get it harder.

While Black male hypermasculinity may pose challenges in sales-oriented professions, it can offer advantages in some settings. Kofi [male, age 19, pizza cook], for example, described how being feared as a Black male in a pizza shop worked to his advantage:

> A lot of the kids that come in are actually scared of me... I try to be serious when I'm at work... so if I tell them to do something, they'll do it right away, just because they're scared of me. And then when they get to know me and realize that I'm kind of a clown, it's all good... when I ask people things, people respect me a lot more than if I was just some White kid... Maybe they figure that I've got more of a confrontational attitude... like if I don't like something, maybe they'll think I'll speak on that and they don't want me speak on that, so they just make sure that they listen to me and respect me... [I: And how do you feel about that?] I feel lucky to be Black I guess...That's how you're treated anywhere you go, so you just deal with it. You learn to love what you are and how people could see you... I just *made it* into a positive. Before when I was a kid, I didn't understand why so many people would be scared of me. I *still* don't understand but I mean it's a good thing – I'd rather be feared than loved. It's kinda cool.

Intergenerational legacies: Absent fathers and resilient mothers. Gender appears to have an impact on the type of work role models that are available to Black males and females. While many participants, male and female, reported having strong and resilient mothers in their families, many also shared stories about a significant absence of father role models in the Black community. Same-gender (i.e., male-male, female-female) role models were important for Black youths' workplace empowerment, as they built confidence, work ethics, and offered access to opportunity. Interestingly, while most male participants in this study claimed to have positive father role models, the lack of positive father figures was still a strong theme in their narratives about the Black community. Black mothers, on the other hand, were consistently represented as a fixture of resilience and nurturance in the Black community. Hassan [male, age 29, mortgage broker] illustrated the problem well:

> My brother, he was a role model, and he learned from [his father, who] was a director at a bank, and ran all of those banks in East Africa. So my brother had a very strong, confident upbringing when it comes to his confidence. Once again parenting is a huge factor, you need a father figure. That's another problem with Black males is the father figures. You could still have a strong father figure and still not end up succeeding, it's just an *asset*. And for my brother, that's what helped him be very confident in anything that he aspires to be. That's what's made him very successful in life… I think that Black females are more *confident* and more together, more dynamic in every way overall in the whole working sector, because I think confidence is something that Black males are lacking. But it's very evident that they're by far outperforming the Black males. I think even students nowadays in schools. In jobs and in schools it's very evident now, so *overall*. And I think it's because there's a lot of Black mothers that are strong role models out there. There's not as many Black male fathers that are strong role models out there. I don't know if that's the reason to it, but I'm assuming that that has something to do with it…Because Black mothers are more of a *fixed* position. When I say fixed I mean in the family. In Black families, Black fathers might not even be there. The woman is always there. So of course the daughter's going to be very confident, if she's taught to be strong and do everything by herself, and if she sees her mother doing it. If they have a son, he might not be as confident.

Kim [female, age 35] observed the negative impact of absent father figures on a regular

basis through her work as a Black police officer:

> Fathers are needed because half the kids you arrest don't have fathers...You see
> the same thing over and over again: you're arresting kids with no fathers, and
> mothers with six kids with different dads, and very rarely do I arrest kids, you
> know, from stable two parent homes.

Tamara [female, age 21, student program coordinator] described how she was fortunate

to be raised by two strong female role models:

> So my younger years I grew up with my grandparent, so I would have to say my
> grandmother. She is probably like the most caring woman – she takes in a lot of
> the burdens of the family, and...she's like the foundation of our family... She
> would always keep the family together, make sure conflicts were resolved. In
> terms of me personally, when I grew up she supported and encouraged me... she
> was my backbone basically... and she showed me how I wanted to live when I
> was older – that caring person. She has all these positive attributes. She's really
> strong, and her life hasn't been easy... there were certain things that I saw her
> handle and the way she handled them, that I thought... this is why I'm proud to
> say this is my grandmother... Then when I was older my mom – she was a teen
> mom, so we really didn't get along when I was much younger... But after coming
> to Canada and realizing... the sacrifices she's made for me in terms of leaving
> Zimbabwe, in terms of how many jobs she's needed to work to keep food on the
> table, to keep me having decent things...She tried really hard to be at everything,
> or give me as much as I wanted. So she's just been a positive role model because
> she also is very strong. She doesn't have that many friends because she's always
> had to work... So I feel like she's given up a lot of her life so that I can be better
> off, which is pretty amazing.

Gender and Black Canadian experiences of empowering workplace characteristics

The main impact of gender on empowering workplace characteristics and

processes, involved differences in the narratives of Black females and males in terms of

their emphases on encouragement and opportunity. Although both genders described

empowering experiences through both, females tended to emphasize encouragement as

an empowering process, while males emphasized opportunity as an empowering setting

characteristic.

Encouragement. Many female participants emphasized the importance of encouragement as an empowering characteristic. For example, Akua [female, age 32, journalist] described the importance of encouragement received from a professional mentor:

> I've sought out mentors who are White, but I think for myself it was heavier when I was talking to someone who was Black. Because that's who I see, I see myself. Like Andrea Case, she's... an anchor on CTV, and she's been very kind to me... She invited me to CTV, she took me around and was impressed with me...somebody wanted to talk to me who wants to get into radio, and like I'm all for talking to whoever, because how else are you going to let people know it's okay, you can do it. Because for whatever reason, some people are not getting that encouragement – whether they're not getting it from their parent, or whether they feel that they're being pressed down somehow at school... It's good for them to see somebody who's happy and doing what they want...and maybe not *struggling* so much. Don't get me wrong, it *is* a struggle, and there's hustles involved, but there should be a point in our lives where we're not struggling. There should be a point in our lives where we're just doing what we want to do.

Tamara [female, age 21, student program coordinator], like some other young Black females, defined empowerment in terms of encouragement:

> Empowerment to me, it's being able to be encouraged to continue to do something. That's a personal viewpoint. If someone had to ask me "Have you ever been empowered?"... I would say I have because I've been encouraged to continue to be myself, to continue to grow, to continue to take what I have, like my foundation and build upon it.

For Jamila [female, age 30, community program specialist], a key facilitator of her own empowerment was her mentor's encouragement of education:

> I hope I've been able to realize that a lot of the philosophies and ideas that he holds are possible and are truth, by listening to following his suggestions on how to approach different situations in life. So like for example, him encouraging me to do post-secondary education. Me having someone who genuinely cared about that, so it created a very special bond, I think. I'd say probably unbreakable, no matter what it would be really hard for that to come to terms where it's, you know?

Opportunity. For many young Black Canadian males in this study, opportunity was identified as a highly salient characteristic of empowering workplace experiences. Joseph [male, age 20, electronics sales person] defined empowerment thus:

> I think it's opportunity, the chance to do something... [I can relate to] Obama's position right now, I was in that position before, when I used to work at the computer store. I can completely relate to change, and being the first Black president type of thing... starting off as a co-op student, working my way up to the management position, and taking control of everything. Big thing. So definitely empowerment to me is being given the chance. And now... he tells other Black people, or other [workers] in the store, "You know what Joseph took this and he made something of himself,"... like I went in there couple weeks ago and I was talking to another co-op student there. And he was like, "Oh, you're Joseph... You're the one that the owner keeps talking about,"... It was a good experience to know that I did something and I was empowered enough to do something, and given that chance to succeed. And that my story or my legacy passed on to other people who come after,. So that whole thing you don't want an excuse to not do anything.

Similarly, Alex [male, age 17, department store sales person] defined empowerment as opportunity:

> I feel like it's a privilege. Like somebody giving you a chance to do something.

For Mustafa [male, age 38, artist], the opportunities he experienced through youth employment programs and various life exposures were key to his personal empowerment. Unfortunately he believes such opportunities are not available to the younger generation:

> It's hard for [my brothers] to get a job if it... isn't labour. And I think that has to do again with what we were talking about earlier, and that's being a chameleon, and the difference with our generation having *some* opportunities.

Gender and young Black Canadians' psychological empowerment

Empowered Black females. There was a sense among some participants that there were gender differences in the degree of empowerment between Black females and males. Black females were perceived as being more empowered in the workplace due to the advantages presented in the section on gender and oppression (i.e., less severe

stereotypes, more positive intergenerational legacies). This greater empowerment is

reflected by greater confidence, status or mobility in the workplace. Hassan [male, age

29, mortgage broker] described the hopelessness and cynicism that he observes everyday

in the Black community, especially among Black males:

> I think one thing about Black males especially, if you talk about myself and I see it in my peers, and every Black male that I meet, is confidence. They don't talk very confident about themselves. They lack it, they're very unsure of themselves, they don't feel like they can make it in this world. They feel like they have too many… roadblocks out there that will put them in a position that they will never succeed. Because they have that roadblock in their mind, it prevents them from really going all out and trying. They already kill themselves before even trying… And I see it actually everyday that I look at any Black person. It's something that I see on a daily basis.

Mustafa [male, age 28, artist] described how he observed Black women in power

positions in various work settings:

> I used to think that pretty Black girls could get more jobs than Black men. Because I always see Black women in good jobs, you know what I'm saying. But I think – that could be a factor – but I think in retrospect, with the rates of Black males in jails and not continuing education. But I did see White men feel more comfortable with pretty Black women than they do with the Black male. They feel uncomfortable with Black male. Vice versa, White women feel more comfortable with a Black male than they do with a Black woman. From my experience, I'm sure that's not always the case. But you see the different nuances of gender in the workplace. Really, for the most part, most of my work experiences – which is pretty cool – Black women were in power positions, so that was cool. I don't think I've ever had one job where a Black woman wasn't in a power position. Like at the Black media company I worked for, she was co-owner, and she was really- like the husband was more the suave, get the party, get contacts person. She was more *business*. Degrees, and you know what I mean?… The lady that hired me at a major US radio station was a Black lady with degrees. Yeah, a lot of these jobs there were Black women in power… Those were the jobs that were influential. The rest of the jobs there was no person of colour in those positions. Even though even at the radio station all the execs were in power positions, under them it was all Black women. Men were usually more the entertainment side.

Critical Self-Reflection on Gender

The stories about gender mirrored some of my own experiences and beliefs. Race is certainly a more salient aspect of my identity (within the workplace) than gender, and opportunity has been a more valued aspect of empowerment than encouragement for me (although both, undeniably, have been received and appreciated). At the same time, my experiences challenge some of the stories. As a Black male who was raised in a supportive, intact, and middle class family, and who has had numerous positive mentors and role models, I have not personally experienced the intergenerational disadvantages faced by many other Black males. I have, however, like several participants, encountered the impacts of such disadvantages through my work. There is little question that the collective absence of Black fathers and the portrayal of Black males in the media is damaging to the identity and capacity of Black males to participate in the workforce. And although it also appears clear to me that young Black females are outperforming Black males in education and the workforce, I would not be comfortable taking the position that Black males have it harder. Young Black males and females alike are exposed to the challenges of absent fathers and negative racial stereotypes, and it is young Black women who often bear the weight of supporting broken families. The centrality and salience of racial identity can blind Black males to the privilege of patriarchy. In my working life I have experienced several instances where I have been confronted by my privilege. For example, during the U.S. democratic leadership campaign between Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton, the issues of race and gender became frequent topics of discussion with other, predominantly Black, co-workers. During one of these discussions in a large group, I (along with other Black males in the

group) took the position that we had a political and historical obligation to support

Obama, since his victory would have greater symbolic impact for Black people than the

election of Clinton. Several of the Black women at the discussion were deeply angered

and hurt by this position, as they felt that it denied or made invisible their lived

experiences of gender oppression.

Discussion on Gender, Oppression, and Empowerment in the Workplace

Participants' stories illustrate that gender has a major impact on the experiences of

young Black Canadian workers. There is a general sense that race is more salient than

gender in the daily experience, and yet a belief that Black males experience greater

disadvantage than Black females. There are also gender differences in how participants

describe empowering work characteristics, processes, and outcomes. The following

discussion considers how the participants' experiences of oppression and empowerment

reflect the intersection of race and gender, and how they relate to community psychology

research (see Table 5 for summary).

Table 5

Overview of Discussion on Gender, Oppression, and Empowerment.

Narrative Findings	Major Interpretive Concepts
Gender and Oppression	
Salience of race and gender	Collective oppression
Stereotypes: Hypermasculinity and femininity	Collective oppression Cultural narratives
Intergenerational legacies: Absent fathers and resilient mothers	Collective oppression Intersectionality
Racialized gameplay: Negotiating fear and sex	Relational oppression Dramaturgy
Gender and Empowering Workplace Characteristics	
Encouragement and opportunity	Relational environment / Opportunity role structure Communion / Agency
Gender and Psychological empowerment	
Empowered Black females	Intersectionality

Gender and workplace oppression. The narratives suggest a perception that gender has a greater impact on the workplace oppression of Black males than of Black females. Participants tell of Black males who appear to struggle more within the working game due to negative stereotypes, and disadvantages in intergenerational legacies (i.e., lack of father figures), and racialized gameplay (i.e., having to negotiate fear). From an ecological perspective, these stories suggest the importance of gender oppression for Black males at both collective and relational levels. While these findings appear to challenge prevailing assumptions about power relations within patriarchal systems, they are consistent with existing community narratives about "endangered Black men," and suggest that the intersection of race and gender within the workplace setting differs for Blacks than for other racial groups.

Collective oppression: Endangered Black male narratives and stereotypes. The notion that Black males are in crisis is also a common cultural narrative within some Black communities, the mass media, and within social science research (Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). Much of this perspective emphasizes the disruptive impact of enslavement on Black family structures, and Black males' exclusion from the labour market which prevents their ability to enact masculinity roles. While some empirical evidence appears to support the view that young Black females are outperforming males in education and employment, such narratives must be considered critically. Some feminist scholars have critiqued this "privileged victim status" of Black males, as it can undermine the recognition of patriarchal gender oppression experienced by Black females and sexual minorities (Carbado, 1998). Similarly, such narratives of the endangered Black males run the risk of perpetuating myths of the Black female advantage (Sanchez-Hucles, 1997)

and invulnerability, which may serve as rationalizations for the neglect of proactive

efforts or policies to empower Black women. These critiques do not necessarily

undermine the legitimacy of "endangered Black male" narratives or experiences, but they

demand a critical lens that considers a more thorough analysis of the underlying

patriarchal assumptions that might engender such narratives, and of the broader

contextual factors that may produce such gender dynamics within the workplace.

There was a sense among many participants that stereotypes of Black masculinity

had substantial impacts on Black male oppression – particularly those stereotypes that

characterize Black males as angry, intimidating, and/or untrustworthy. Some research in

cognitive and social psychology has found that individuals of all racial groups possess

stereotypical biases in the perception of Black faces – with Black males in particular

being associated with crime and sports (Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie & Davies, 2004).

Female participants also described experiences of stereotyping, which appeared to have

greater impacts in male-dominated settings. This is consistent with literature which

suggests that stereotyping is dependent on context, including the context of gender, roles,

and tasks being performed (Abib & Guerrier, 2003). Abib and Guerrier suggest that

work narratives of race, class, and gender are constructed by simultaneous, intersecting

identities that shift according to context.

Collective oppression: Intergenerational disadvantages and gender. With

respect to the influence of gender on intergenerational disadvantages, many participants

suggested that the lack of Black male role models and father figures was a major concern

for young Black males in particular. Participants' narratives conveyed a sense that young

men typically experience greater difficulty in adjusting to absent fathers than young

women. This is consistent with past studies on the impacts of non-resident or absent fathers, which have found that Black males are particularly vulnerable to living in female-headed single-parent families (Blau, 1981), while Black females tend to show better outcomes – particularly if mothers have higher education (Mensch & Kendal, 1988).

Relational oppression: Interpersonal theatrics and gender. Gender had a notable impact on the types of theatrical or dramatic interpersonal moves that participants used to play the game, particularly through playing race. In many cases these racial performances involved exploiting stereotypes and cultural assets, with some female participants either exploiting feminine sexuality or subverting femininity by adopting masculine behaviours or "playing the bitch role" to negotiate male dominated settings. These findings are consistent with literature suggesting that the performance of gender is context dependent (Abib & Guerrier, 2003), and that combining both masculine and feminine behaviour can be an empowering strategy for Black women in the workplace (e.g., Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). Some Black male participants described their exploitation of hyper-masculine (i.e., aggressive) stereotypes in the workplace. This finding challenges the "good Black man-bad Black man" performative dichotomy that some scholars have suggested constrains opportunity for mobility (Cooper, 2005). Cooper (2005), for example, suggested that Black men must perform as "a good Black man" in order to merit inclusion in the workplace. The present study suggests that despite their historical, cultural and economic emasculation, the paradoxical hypermasculine stereotype is an available source of power. In other words, the performance of race-gender may be used to negotiate the structural barriers of race-gender. This is a risky

performance, however, since studies have shown, and participants' stories indicate, that Black men face greater punishment for enacting masculinity norms than White males (Royster, 2007).

Gender and empowering organizational characteristics. The only notable gender difference in participants' narratives of workplace empowerment appeared to be males' emphasis on opportunity and females' emphasis on encouragement. While these findings suggest potential gender differences in the importance or meaning of opportunity role structures and relational environments for empowerment, I am not aware of any empirical studies that have looked at such differences. These findings are consistent with those of other studies that suggest gender differences in the motivations of males and females in terms of agency and communion (e.g., McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield & Day, 1996). The importance of opportunity reflects the importance of control and autonomy (agency) in motivation, while encouragement reflects the importance of emotional support and relationship (communion). Moskowitz, Suh and Desaulniers (1994) found that males and females differed with regard to communion themes in autobiographical narratives, though not agentic themes – particularly in work situations and roles. Liang, Tracy, Taylor and Williams (2002) address gender, and suggest that young women may be more likely than young men to value empathy in mentoring relationships.

Gender and psychological empowerment. There was a sense among some participants that Black females experienced greater empowerment in the workplace than Black males. For some participants this is grounded in a belief that Black women have more confidence, while according to others, Black men face greater barriers. This

finding is consistent with empirical research with African-Americans that has shown that

Black women possess a higher level of autonomy, achievement motivation, and less fear

of success than White women or Black men (e.g., Gibbs & Fuery, 1994). These findings

suggest that race and gender interact to have unique influences on intrapersonal

empowerment. To some extent, this narrative seemed grounded in "endangered Black

male" narratives (Sanchez-Hucles, 1997).

Chapter VIII: Limitations, Implications and Conclusion

This purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between race, gender, and power in community settings, by exploring three main research questions: (a) How does oppression influence the psychological empowerment of Black youth and young adults in the workplace?; (b) How do workplace characteristics promote Black youths' and young adults' psychological empowerment?; and (c) How does gender influence Black youths' and young adults' experiences of oppression and psychological empowerment in the workplace? My analyses use the metaphor of the working game to examine participants' stories, which suggest that young Black Canadians experience oppression in the workplace as an unequal playing field that is characterized by stereotypes and unequal intergenerational legacies, and by racialized interpersonal gameplay. Young Black workers resist oppression through theatrical performances that subvert stereotypes. Four empowering workplace characteristics (relationships, roles, opportunity, and incentives) are critical for the empowerment of young Black workers, functioning largely as surrogate legacies that provide the types of advantages experienced by players from dominant teams. Psychological empowerment comprises critical sociopolitical and identity outcomes, including a sense of independence, a desire to give back, and appreciation. Stories of workplace empowerment emphasize four key empowering psychological processes. Gender intersects with race in significant ways to influences young Black Canadians' experiences of oppression and empowerment. Of note is a strong belief among participants that Black males are disadvantaged by negative stereotypes of Black masculinity and the absence of Black male role models. Analyses

also suggest that gender influences young Black Canadians' experiences of empowerment, in terms of valued empowering processes and relationship quality.

Limitations

Qualitative researchers have identified four criteria for assessing the quality and rigor of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Patton, 2002). I define each of these criteria below, and use them to assess the limitations of the present study.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the extent to which findings are believable or consistent with the participants' point of view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This criterion is equivalent, in some respects, to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research. In qualitative research, credibility is enhanced by using a methodology that is appropriate for the purpose of the study, and by conducting member checking (a process through which participants provide input and feedback on the findings). In the present study, I attempted to ensure credibility by using a narrative methodology, and by conducting member checking. Using a narrative methodology enabled me to examine participants' experiences from their own perspective, based on their interpretations and constructions of personal life events. Through member checking, all participants who provided feedback indicated that the findings were credible and consistent with their experiences, while also providing elaborations or suggestions that were incorporated into the findings. This process was limited, however, insofar as only six participants provided feedback. A larger process of member checking may have altered findings and/or increased the credibility of the data and analyses. Findings may also have been limited, insofar as a

larger sample – particularly gender sub-sample – may have contributed to increased saturation or new properties of categories.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which findings are transferable to other populations or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This concept is roughly equivalent to the concept of generalizability in quantitative research. Qualitative researchers ensure transferability by using a purposeful sampling strategy (selecting participants that can provide rich data on the phenomena of interest), by ensuring the collection of rich data, and by providing a thick description (thorough description) of the research context in the report. In order to ensure transferability in the present study, my purposeful sampling strategy and recruitment involved the selection of 24 youth and young adults who self-identified as Black. The sample was limited, however, as it consisted primarily of Ghanaian- and Jamaican-Canadians (70%). Although I did not focus on ethnicity in my analyses, it is likely an influential factor in racialized workplace experiences. This over-representation of two ethnic groups in the sample poses some challenges of the findings to Black youth and young adults of other ethnicities. A larger sample or stratified sampling strategy may have helped to reduce this limitation.

I attempted to ensure the collection of rich data through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Although the stories I collected were rich and compelling, the interviews were constrained by time, and therefore I often had to focus the interview on critical events, such as high points or low points. While this methodology is generally consistent with other narrative research approaches, it limited the data to stories about recent or particularly memorable experiences. A more thorough and richer data set would include narratives of a greater number of both critical and mundane experiences,

and/or data from other sources, such as observation of workplace interactions, or interviews with family or co-workers.

In this report I have attempted to provide the reader with a thick description of the research context. Related to the preceding point, however, my ability to provide a thick description is limited by my methodology. I did not have any observational data on actual workplace settings (beyond my own), and thus can not provide the reader with a detailed report of settings that participants described.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the extent to which the study uses a rigorous and consistent research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability approximates the concept of reliability in quantitative research, but differs since the dynamic nature of qualitative research precludes replicability. Qualitative researchers can achieve dependability through the use of an inquiry audit, in which the research process and results are reviewed externally for consistency. I enhanced dependability by conducting consensus coding with my advisor and committee members, and engaging the community consultant in coding and interpreting the data. More frequent contact with the community consultant or a more engaged participatory research design that involved participants more frequently during the research could have increased dependability.

Confirmability. Confirmability is the extent to which the study could be repeated by another researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approximates the objectivity principle in quantitative research. Confirmability is typically achieved by using a systematic and clearly articulated research design and methodology, by maintaining a detailed audit trail of all aspects of the research, and by confirming findings against the data by assessing negative cases. For this study, I ensured

confirmability by describing the systematic procedures of data collection and analysis used, and by maintaining an organized audit trail through the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis software, and organized filed hand-written notes. I also debriefed with the community consultant on four occasions on emerging analyses. While I did not explicitly address the analyses of negative cases in the research report, negative cases were incorporated within my broader analyses of participants' narratives – usually treating them as properties or dimensions of individual story categories. While this approach was useful for building theory that reflected similarities among participants' experiences, the confirmability of findings may have been limited by the lack of a systematic testing of negative cases against the final proposed model. However, given the grounded nature of the theory, it is unlikely that such testing of negative cases would result in major disconfirmations of the model.

Implications for Future Research

The findings point toward at least five lines of future inquiry that could enhance our understanding and ability to promote workplace empowerment. These lines of inquiry would be grounded in an empowerment ideology, and would seek the generation of knowledge that could contribute to the liberation of oppressed groups.

The first would involve a more comprehensive research program to understand the personal, relational, and organizational determinants of workplace empowerment for Black Canadians. Findings from this study could contribute to the development of more refined, contextual, and transferable models of workplace empowerment for Black populations. Such a research program would involve a larger sample, stratified by gender, ethnicity, class, age, and occupation, would collect data on workplace oppression

and empowerment across the lifespan. The study could adopt a longitudinal or

retrospective design in order to better understand changes in work experiences over time,

and to better assess possible areas of causation. The study would also use a mixed

methodology – both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection (e.g., surveys,

interviews, ethnographies, case studies) and analysis would be conducted to triangulate

findings and develop theory. Source triangulation would be used, by collecting data from

multiple sources (e.g., workers, parents, co-workers, bosses, mentors).

A second promising area of future inquiry – possibly a component of the first –

would be an examination of empowering interpersonal strategies in the workplace. This

would involve an in-depth examination of intercultural communicative strategies

(possibly using dramaturgy as a conceptual framework) between different ethnicities,

across gender, and age. Such a line of inquiry would lead to a better understanding of

empowering interpersonal strategies for minorities, and contribute toward the

development of empirically grounded empowerment training programs.

A third line of inquiry extending from the first, would involve the examination of

workplace mentoring relationships. The present study has identified mentoring

relationships as a major empowering workplace characteristic, and the broad processes by

which mentors promote empowerment (i.e., by encouragement, advice, and access to job

opportunities). The aim of future inquiry would be to gain a more nuanced understanding

of the relational processes and characteristics of effective mentoring (including various

forms of social support) and their impacts on empowerment outcomes.

Fourth, an interesting area of inquiry would involve the development of a

narrative protocol for assessing psychological empowerment (with cross-cultural

applicability). Such a protocol would encompass guidelines for interviewing and quantitative coding of narrative data, and could potentially be used to assess various dimensions of empowerment through stories (i.e., intrapersonal, interactional, behavioural) and would confer the benefits of mixed method research such as existing narrative protocols for phenomena such as identity, meaning, generativity, or agency and communion by McAdams (2001). The protocol could also be a tool for evaluating empowerment interventions or assessing levels of empowerment within community settings. Development of the protocol would involve both phenomenological narrative research, as well as quantitative survey research to validate the protocol.

A fifth promising line of inquiry would involve intervention research to examine the implementation, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness of various employment interventions for Black youth and young adults. This could involve a comparative evaluation of multiple program designs, to determine best practice guidelines and assess the long-term cost-effectiveness of various employment interventions.

Implications for Practice

Several implications for community psychology practice emerge from the findings of this study. Most broadly, the findings underscore the importance of the workplace and labour market as a context for promoting the empowerment of racialized youth and young adults. The conceptual and practical tools of community psychologists have a great deal to contribute to addressing labour market inequities and workplace oppression. Findings from this study have implications for practice at multiple levels of analysis, that are adapted to social location (i.e., race, gender and age).

At the personal level, findings suggest that a major challenge for young Black Canadian workers involves the negotiation of stereotypes through their performance of race and their ability to work harder than other groups to prove themselves. Employment interventions for young people should therefore incorporate training that enhance intercultural communication skills and work ethic to assist individuals in acculturating to the workplace culture. Intercultural communication training should emphasize communication with dominant White populations. The promotion of a resilient work ethic would include a focus on personal discipline and fundamental employability skills, in order to assist young Black workers to cope with the barriers and negative perceptions in the workplace. Since the findings indicate that opened eyes and a desire to give back are valued empowering outcomes for many participants, interventions should thus incorporate consciousness-raising efforts that enhance participants' abilities to recognize and respond to racism, and to understand the historical, cultural, and socio-economic context of racism. Using such consciousness-raising could engender greater generativity, which in itself is a source of empowering psychological strength.

At the relational and organizational levels, employment interventions should focus on providing access to empowering workplace experiences. According to findings from this study, these include empowering relationships through mentoring and networking, meaningful roles that involve helping and responsibility, opportunity, and incentive systems that provide awards and tangible rewards. Black youth employment interventions should therefore promote supportive relationships between older and younger Black workers both within and beyond specific work settings. Such interventions should consist of paid, on-the-job work experience since findings suggest

that tangible rewards are significant motivators for young Black workers. Based on the importance of helping and responsible roles, employment interventions should be in settings that offer roles that involve helping activities (e.g., community-based organizations, helping professionals), and that provide participants with real responsibility and exposure to varied tasks, environments, and cultures. While the findings suggest that awards are important as incentives, it is important that such awards are based on real merit or performance, rather than symbolism or tokenism, as such tokenistic rewards can have counterproductive effects.

At the collective level, interventions should attempt to create networks between Black workers and professionals, and should support the success of Black professionals and Black–owned businesses or community organizations. This would extend from findings in this study that oppression was due largely to a lack of community organization and resources. Building stronger support systems at the community and collective level would create more opportunities for empowering work experiences for Black youth and young adults. Such efforts could involve both community development and consulting approaches.

Community psychologists working in employment with youth and young adults should consider gender in designing interventions. The findings from this study suggest that race- and gender-matching of mentors would be ideal, although not absolutely necessary for success. Since the centrality of race was found to mask the significance of gender, in some cases, consciousness-raising efforts should also address issues of gender, by promoting a reflective Black masculinity and femininity that is aware of the influence

of dominating narratives, as well as by promoting a critical awareness of often invisible forms of gender oppression and privilege.

Employment interventions should also consider the age of participants. In this study, I found that Black Canadian youth and young adults differed in their experiences of oppression and empowerment, with younger participants experiencing less overt forms of racialized gameplay. It was apparent, however, that Black Canadian workers become increasingly aware of the impacts of racial oppression as they progress in their careers. Interventions for youth should therefore be focused primarily on the development of fundamental employability skills, work ethic, and education, in order to maximize youths' competitiveness at an early age, which would position them for better employment in later employment. Mentors for youth should be able to provide generalized forms of support in skill development, since youth are often still exploring career possibilities and thus concrete career-specific support and opportunities may be less relevant. Young adults should be supported with exposure to responsible positions and connections with mentors who can provide career-specific support. Since Black young adults face challenges of racialized organizational politics, interventions should incorporate skills in intercultural communication and critical consciousness within the context of organizational politics.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that race and gender are both defining aspects of the lived work experience for young Black Canadians. Participants' stories illustrate how the drama of slavery and colonization continues to play out in the modern working game, and that Blacks continue to rely on perseverance and intelligence to resist oppression. As

first and second generation immigrants, their stories express an optimism that their children might have a somewhat more level playing field once they enter the game. Workplace empowerment must involve the mobilization of community resources and provision of meaningful opportunities in order to succeed.

While my findings are consistent with much existing theory and research in community psychology related to psychological empowerment, sociopolitical development, and empowering community settings, they offer several contributions to the field. This includes an understanding of the substantive ways in which power influences race and gender in the workplace for young Black Canadians, the dramaturgical nature of relational oppression and resistance, and the significant role of the workplace as a setting for empowerment of racialized and minority groups. The study also contributes to a growing body of research that is illustrating the utility of narratives as a way to study community phenomena.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment flyer

RESEARCH ON BLACK YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Are you a Black Canadian youth with experience in the workplace?

Would you be interested in sharing your experience to contribute to a greater understanding of Black youth empowerment?

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by a graduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University.

The study will involve 24 youth (12 males and 12 females). Your involvement would include participating in an audio-recorded interview (1-1.5 hours), and providing feedback on the findings of the study. The total time commitment for participating in the study is approximately 3 hours.

In order to participate, you must meet the following criteria:
- ❑ Be between 18-30 years of age
- ❑ Self-identify racially as being Black (or as multiracial, including a Black identification)
- ❑ Speak English
- ❑ Have at least two consecutive months of full- or part-time work experience
- ❑ Reside in Southern Ontario

If you are interested, please contact:

Julian Hasford, Ph.D. Candidate in Community Psychology
Department of Psychology
Wilfrid Laurier University
75 University Ave. W., Waterloo, ON, N2L 3C5
416-897-3378 or 519-884-1970 ext. 4259
hasf1688@wlu.ca

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Preparation

[*Prior to interview, check the audio recorder to ensure there is sufficient battery power and recording space. Bring two copies of informed consent form and interview guide.*]

Introduction

[*Informal warm-up conversation. Give participant copy of interview guide and informed consent form.*]

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your participation will help me to better understand how the workplace affects the empowerment of Black youth, and may lead to the development of more effective youth employment initiatives. The interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes, during which I will ask you a series of open-ended questions about your own experiences and views related to work and empowerment. I sent you a copy of the interview questions earlier – would you like to take some time to review them before we start? [*Allow participant to review interview guide.*] There are no right or wrong answers; the purpose of the interview is to learn about your experience, from your perspective, in as much detail as possible.

Before we begin, I will need to read through the consent form with you. Please let me know if you have any questions about the purpose of the study or your role as a research participant [*Review and sign Informed Consent Statement and Consent Form*].

I would like to begin recording now. First I will do a test to make sure the recorder is set up well. [*Conduct test recording by stating date, time, and participant's ID number, and asking participant to say something. Replay test recording to check functioning and quality (i.e., volume, voice clarity, background noise).*]

I am now turning on the recorder [*press record*].

Workplace as an empowering community setting for Black Canadian youth

1. Tell me about the workplace that has had the most significant impact on your life.

    Probes:
    a.   What does the organization do?
    b.   How long have you worked there? How old were you when you started?
    c.   How did you come to work there?
    d.   What were your reasons for working there (e.g., goals, motivations)?
    e.   [*if applicable*] Why did you return?

2. Can you please tell me about what it is/was like to work there?

   Probes (ask for specific instances of the following):
   a.   Tell me about a typical day that you experienced at work. Please describe the day in detail, including what happened, what you did, where you were, who was involved, and you were thinking and feeling during the day.
   b.   What types of activities do you do? Do you find them meaningful? In what ways?
   c.   What opportunities were there for you to participate in how decisions were made about the workplace?
   d.   How would you describe the values or philosophy of the workplace?
   e.   How do people treat each other? How would you describe your relationships with other workers? Supervisors?
   f.   What was the leadership like?
   g.   Tell me about an instance when the workplace was experiencing a significant change or problem? How did the workplace respond to situation?

3. What do you like most about your workplace?

   Probes:
   a.   Tell me about a memorable positive event or high point that you experienced at work. Please describe the event in detail, including what led up to the event, what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling during the event.
   i.   What impact did the event have on your life?
   ii. What does the event say about who you are as a person?

4. What do you like least about your workplace?

   Probes:
   a.   Tell me about a memorable negative event or low point that you experienced at work. Please describe the event in detail, including what led up to the event, what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling during the event.
   i.   What impact did the event have on your life?
   ii. What does the event say about who you are as a person?

5. What overall impact has your workplace had on you as an individual?

   Probes (ask for specific instances of the following):
   a.   Your identity, or who you are as a person (as a Black person? As an aspiring [career]?)
   b.   The ways in which you think about and use money?
   c.   The way you think about issues in the community or society?
   d.   Your leadership in the workplace?
   e.   Your participation in community activities?

6. Empowerment has become a popular term in society that generally refers to the many ways in which people gain a greater sense of control over their lives. However people often have their own unique ways of understanding empowerment – especially in the workplace. Can you please tell me what empowerment means to you?

   Probe:
   a.   Would you consider yourself an empowered person? In what ways are you empowered/not-empowered?

7. Overall, would you say that your workplace is an empowering workplace? What is (or isn't) empowering about it?

Employment barriers as a source of adversity for Black Canadian youth

8. Has there ever been a time in your life when you experienced difficulty getting a job? Please tell me about this.
   Probes:
   a.   What factors prevented you from getting a job?
   b.   How did this experience affect you?

9. Do you know any other Black youth who have experienced difficulty in getting a job? Please tell me about this.
   Probes:
   a.   What factors limited their ability to find employment?
   b.   How did the experience affect them?

Gender as an individual difference

10. How do you think your status as a Black male/female has affected your work experiences?
    Probes:
    a.   In what ways has your gender affected your ability to obtain jobs?
    b.   In what ways has your gender influenced your day-to-day experiences in the workplace?
    c.   In what way has your gender influenced the impact of the workplace on your life as a whole?
         i.   Your identity or who you are as a person (as a Black person? Career aspirations?)
         ii.   The ways in which you think about and use money?
         iii.   The way you think about issues in the community or society?
         iv.   Your leadership in the workplace?
         v.   Your participation in community activities?

Empowering role models

11. Every person has a significant person in their life that they view as a hero/heroine or role model, such as parents, mentors, co-workers, community leaders, or celebrities. These role models can play an important role in personal empowerment by providing valuable life lessons, inspiration, and opportunity. Please describe one of the most important role models in your life.
Probe:
a. How have they impacted your life?

Closing

Thank you for sharing your experiences. Your interview has contributed a great deal to my understanding of Black youths' work experiences and empowerment. I would like to end the interview by asking you your opinion on two issues:

10. Is there anything you would like to add or clarify?

11. What was it like for you to participate in the interview? Is there anything I could do improve the interview?

I am now shutting off the tape recorder.

12. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again for sharing your time and your experience with me. I have learned [*summarize key learnings*]. Good luck with the rest of your career.

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Wilfrid Laurier
University

Founded 1911

Julian Hasford, Ph.D. Candidate in Community Psychology
Department of Psychology
Wilfrid Laurier University
75 University Ave. W.
Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5
Phone: 416-897-3378

July 27, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a PhD candidate in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study on Black youth empowerment and the workplace that I am doing for my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Geoffrey Nelson. Essentially, the study will examine how the workplace can contribute the empowerment of Black Canadian youth, and how gender influences Black youths' experiences of empowerment in the workplace.

The study will be based on interviews with 24 Black Canadian youth, as well as personal reflections on my own work experiences. Participants will include 12 males and 12 females, between 18-30 years of age, who self-identify as Black (or as multiracial including a Black identification). Participants must also have experienced at least two consecutive months of full- or part-time employment, and must speak English.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you would be asked to participate in three major procedures that would involve a total time commitment of approximately 3 hours.
-   First, between July and August 2009, you would be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview where we would discuss your work and empowerment experiences. The interview would be recorded, and would take place at a time and place that is convenient and secure for you. It would last about 1-1.5 hours.
-   Second, one week after the interview, you would be provided with a one-page summary of the interview, and would be asked to review it in case there were anything you wanted to change or to add. It should take you between 30-60 minutes to review the interview summary.

- Third, in December 2009, after I have analyzed your interview as well as others, I would send you a brief summary of my early findings (or themes), and would ask you comment on whether the themes accurately reflect your experiences, or whether there are things I have missed or need to clarify. It should take you between 30-60 minutes to review the findings summary.

In August 2010, once I have completed my final dissertation report, I will email you a summary of the report for your information (hard copies of the report summaries will also be available for pick-up).

All efforts would be taken to ensure your confidentiality in the study. Your transcripts and interview summaries would only be seen by myself, my supervisor, and a community consultant (to be determined) that will be assisting me in the study. You can choose whether you want to receive and provide your comments on the interview and findings summaries in-person or via email. However, please be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed on emails while they are in transit. If you do choose to receive and provide comments by email, I advise that you delete the files from any email folders after returning your comments (I will do the same). Although measures will be taken to ensure your anonymity, anonymity can not be guaranteed due to the small sample size of the study. I may use quotations from your transcript when I report my findings in reports, articles, or presentations, however, I will either exclude or use pseudonyms for any potentially identifying information in the quotations.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no significant risks to you for participating in the study, since you will be asked mainly about day to day work experiences. However, you would be free to not answer any questions you choose, or to withdraw from the study at any time. You would benefit from participating in the study by learning more about your self, your strengths, and your community. You would also be contributing to scientific knowledge about empowerment and the workplace, and possibly the development of more effective employment programs for Black youth.

If you might be interested in participating in the study, please contact me and I will give you an information letter and consent form that describes the study in more detail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julian Hasford

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

<u>**Black Youth Empowerment through the Workplace:**</u>
<u>**A Study of the Organizational Characteristics and Impacts of Empowering Community**</u>
<u>**Settings**</u>

Principal Investigator: Julian Hasford
Advisor: Dr. Geoff Nelson
Department of Psychology

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is understand the workplace experiences of Black youth and to identify the workplace characterstics that contribute to the empowerment of Black youth. The study is being conducted by Julian Hasford, a Ph.D. candidate in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, for completion of his dissertation.

<u>**INFORMATION**</u>

Please keep this Informed Consent Statement for project information and future reference.

A total of 24 (12 male, 12 female) youth will be invited to participate in this study. Participants must meet the following criteria: (a) be between 18-30 years of age; (b) self-identify as being Black (or as multiracial including a Black identification); (c) speak English fluently; (d) must have at least two consecutive months of full- or part-time work experience. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview of approximately 60-90 minutes, where you will be asked questions about your workplace experiences and beliefs about empowerment. The interviews will be conducted during July and August 2009 at a time and place that is convenient and secure for you. You will be provided with a list of the interview questions in advance in order to reflect on your potential responses beforehand.

If you consent, the interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder, and the recording will be transcribed by me, Julian Hasford. Audio recording is a requirement of participating in the study, since accurately capturing your words is important for ensuring the quality of information collected. Within one week of the interview, Julian Hasford will transcribe the interview, and will send you a one-page (~500 words) summary of the interview, You will be asked to confirm whether the summary accurately reflects your experiences and whether there is anything you would like to add or change. It should take you between 30-60 minutes to review and comment on the summary of your interview.

Once all transcripts and summaries have been revised, they will be analyzed in order to identify important themes related to your experiences. During the analysis of transcripts, Julian Hasford will work with his advisor, Dr. Geoff Nelson, and a community consultant (to be determined) to decide how best to analyze and interpret the data.

Once all of the transcripts have been analyzed, in December 2009, you will be sent a short summary (~500 words) that identifies the main themes of the study, and you will be asked to comment on whether the themes are consistent with your experiences, to identify any themes that are inconsistent and to describe how they are inconsistent, and to suggest any changes or additional themes that might be missing. It should take you between 30-60 minutes to review and comment on the summary of findings.

The total time commitment for participating in the study is approximately 3 hours.

After getting your feedback on the findings, Julian Hasford will write a final report (a dissertation) and will send you a summary of the dissertation when it is completed in August 2010.

_____
Participant's initials

RISKS

There are minimal psychological or emotional risks of participating in this study, since you will be asked to talk about past and current work experiences, including possible negative experiences related to employment barriers or racial/gender discrimination. Although you may experience some discomfort when asked about specific challenging experiences, most of the questions will focus on daily work experiences and will not require that you reveal sensitive information.

In order to minimize any potential risks, you will have the right to refuse to answer any questions, or to withdraw from the study at any time. You will also have the option to exclude your data from the study findings or report.

BENEFITS

You will benefit from the opportunity to share and reflect on your workplace experiences, as it may deepen your understanding of your self, including your strengths, your career development, and your community. Findings from the study will benefit the broader research community by increasing knowledge about the nature of empowerment, and its meaning to diverse groups – especially Black Canadians. Findings may also benefit society at large by leading to the creation of empowering workplace programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All efforts will be taken to ensure your confidentiality throughout the study. Your data would only be seen by the primary investigator (Julian Hasford), his supervisor (Dr. Geoff Nelson), and a community consultant (name to be determined). Your data (i.e., transcripts, summaries, and feedback), will be assigned index numbers so that your responses can not directly be linked to you. You can choose whether you want to receive and provide your comments on the interview and findings summaries in-person or via email. However, please be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed on emails while they are in transit. If you do choose to receive and provide comments by email, I advise that you delete the files from any online email folders after comments have been sent to Julian Hasford. Please be aware that Julian Hasford may also use email to exchange data summaries with Dr. Geoffrey Nelson and the community consultant, and that confidentiality can not be guaranteed while email is in transit. Julian Hasford will ensure that all parties delete all online email documents after files have been saved to password protected computer folders.

Although efforts will be taken to ensure your anonymity in the study, your anonymity can not be guaranteed due to the small sample size. In order to enhance your anonymity, any individuals or agencies that referred you to the study will not be informed about whether or not you have agreed to participate in the study. During the interview, you are advised to use pseudonyms when describing people or places. When transcribing the interview, the principal investigator will remove any potentially identifying information or replace them with pseudonyms. If any quotations from your transcript will be used in the reporting of findings (e.g., dissertation, articles, or presentations), the primary investigator will seek your approval prior to including them. If you wish, you may choose to not have your quotes published in any study reports.

All print documents with identifying information (i.e., Completed informed consent forms, demographic information sheets, printed interview summary/feedback, and printed findings summary/feedback) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at WLU (232 King St. Rm. K201) that is only accessible to the primary investigator during the course of the study.

All electronic data (i.e., interview audio files, transcripts, interview and findings summaries/feedback, and personal information database) will be labeled with an anonymous identification number and will be stored in password protected folders on Julian Hasford's computer.

_____
Participant's initials

In keeping with the guidelines established by the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, your data will be discarded according to the following:
(1) Julian Hasford will shred and discard all signed informed consent forms by August 31, 2010
(2) Julian Hasford will shred and discard all demographic information sheets by August 31, 2010
(3) Julian Hasford will delete all digital audio files of interviews once they have been transcribed, by August 31, 2009
(4) Julian Hasford will delete all transcripts, interview summaries/feedback, and finding feedback by August 31, 2017
(6) Julian Hasford will delete the Participant Information Database by August 31, 2017

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed. You have the right to omit any question(s)/procedure(s) you choose.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION

Findings from the study will be shared through a Ph.D. dissertation write-up and oral defense in front of my advisor, committee members, and peers; academic journal articles (such as the *American Journal of Community Psychology,* or the *Journal of Community Psychology*); and presentations at academic conferences (such as the *Society for Community Research and Action, and the Society for Research on Adolescents*) and at community forums (such as *Black Youth Coalition Against Violence Annual Summit*).

The final dissertation will be completed by September 30, 2010. Julian Hasford will also prepare a summary report of the entire dissertation that will be sent to you. You may choose to receive the summary report by email, or to receive a hard copy that will be available for pick-up.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact the researcher, Julian Hasford, at 75 University Ave. W., Waterloo, ON, N2L 3C5 and 519-884-0710 extension 4259. You may also contact the supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Nelson at 519-884-0710 extension 3314. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Robert Basso Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, rm. FSW-313, (519) 884-0710, extension 5225, rbasso@wlu.ca.

_____

Participant's initials

CONSENT

I have received a copy of the **INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**. I have read it or had it read to me and understand it. It describes my involvement in the research and the information to be collected from me.

I agree to participate in an interview for this research.

Yes_____   No_____

I agree to have the interview tape-recorded.

Yes _____   No _____

I understand and agree that quotes of things that I say may appear in published reports, but only in an anonymous form, so that I cannot be identified as the source of these quotes.

Yes_____   No _____

Participant's signature_____   Date

_____

Investigator's signature_____   Date

_____

Appendix E: Demographic Information Sheet

**Black Youth Empowerment through the Workplace:
A Study of the Organizational Characteristics and Impacts of Empowering
Community Settings**

Demographic Information Sheet

1. **Name:** _____

2. **Gender:**   Male ☐   Female ☐   Other ☐

3. **Age:**   _____ (Years)

4. **Race:**   Black ☐   Multiracial ☐ (Please
   specify:_____)

5. **Ethnicity:** _____
   (Please indicate ethnic group by nationality, e g , Jamaican, Ghanaian, Mixed Jamaican/Ghanaian)

6. **Country of Birth:** _____

7. **Years in Canada** (if born Outside of Canada):   _____

8. **Highest Level of Education Completed:**
   ☐ High School (Grade:____)
   ☐ College (Year:____)
   ☐ University – Bachelor's
   ☐ University – Master's/Professional (e.g., LLB, MD)
   ☐ University – Ph.D.

9. **Estimated Lifetime Work Experience:**
   Part-time: _____ Years ☐   Months ☐
   Full-time: _____ Years ☐   Months ☐

10. **Contact Information:**
   Phone: _____
   Email: _____
   Address (Optional):   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____