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Social Justice and Equity: Exploring the Perspectives of Senior Administrators on
Whiteness and Racism in Postsecondary Education

Krista Pearson

Faculty of Education

Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario

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Abstract

This study explored senior administrators' perspectives on Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. The study focused on Canadian senior administrators at postsecondary institutions located in 2 provinces and in 2 communities with populations of less than 100,000. Using critical ethnography and narrative inquiry methodologies, this study's participants acknowledged that Whiteness and racism exist in postsecondary institutions. It found that senior administrators are in a position to influence the postsecondary institutional climate, and that they perceive their role as being accountable to the organization including responses to Whiteness and racism. This study asserts that as a well-educated and predominantly White culture-sharing group, the senior administrators' conscientiousness of White privilege is required to address racism. Most of this study's senior administrator participants acknowledge having been exposed to specific acts of racism in higher education. The findings suggest specific actions to challenge racism within postsecondary institutions, such as senior administrators' role-modeling actions against racism; adopting a critical pedagogical approach toward institutional antiracist education; the enforcement of institutional antidiscrimination and harassment policies; and hiring procedures informed by nondominant perspectives to promote employee diversity. This research also revealed prejudices disproportionately focused on Aboriginal students and communities, which implies a role for further research and government response.

Keywords

racism, Whiteness, social justice, equity, higher education, postsecondary administration, leadership, antiracism, critical race theory, antiracist education, critical pedagogy

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Macalpine and Marsh (2005) confirm in their exploration of Whiteness and racism within organizations that while institutions experience overt, social issues of racism, these institutions also experience the impact of systemic racism. Kobayashi and Fuji Johnson (2007) describe the pervasiveness of systemic racism and the subtlety of its existence by explaining that “racism remains deeply embedded in our interconnected systems of society and government” (p. 7). McLaren (2007) describes the relevance of racism within education by stating that “educational researchers should understand racism as a plurality of racialized social and cultural practices” (p. 258). As Back (2005), Calliste (2000), and Henry and Tator (2009a) support, Canadian universities and colleges are no exception; they have environments established on White cultural norms and are infused with a structure that relies on these established White norms. Systemic racism and proliferation of White-as-norm is reflected in the day-to-day administration, scheduling, assessment practices, teaching styles, and, oftentimes, social and cultural activities within postsecondary institutions.

Central to this discussion of racism in postsecondary education is evidence of Whiteness. Whiteness enables silent racism to exist and, as Dei (2007) identified, “what is notable is that Whiteness is often rendered invisible through a process of normalization” (p. 57). That is to say, Whiteness is a part of the everyday experience in Canada and it is embedded in our daily lives. In their research on raising college students’ awareness of racism, Chesler, Peet, and Sevig (2003) explored how systemic racism is perpetuated by Whiteness especially through the prevalence of colourblindness. In this

context, colourblindness refers to the dominant culture's approach toward "not seeing" race as indicative of acceptance and tolerance of difference. Desai (2001) built upon this notion of colourblindness through her personal essay on "otherness," reflecting that her White friend's failure to "see" colour undermines Desai's experiences associated with her nondominant culture membership. Failing to acknowledge difference fosters a denial of the experiences associated with being different from the dominant culture. In the book, *Race, Racialization and Antiracism in Canada and Beyond* (2007), Kobayashi and Fuji Johnson articulate the complexity of colourblindness and that it perpetuates inequality.

Fundamental to conceptions of liberal democratic rights and freedoms—which have been increasingly definitive of Canadian values—is the idea that everyone is morally equal regardless of skin colour. This is a profoundly intuitive idea, yet it can have the effect of reinforcing racial inequalities. (p. 5)

Silent, systemic racism may be elusive, but it *does* exist (Calliste, 2000; Wise, 2008) due to the perseverance of White dominant culture including within postsecondary education.

Postsecondary education provides White students with access to non-White student colleagues and, in some instances, creates the first opportunities for White students who have grown up in monocultural settings to reflect on their own racial identity (Chesler, Lewis & Crowfoot, 2005). Chaisson (2004) suggested that acknowledging Whiteness is the start of social change, and that "Whites becoming conscious of their participation in Whiteness is the first step in achieving racial justice and equity" (p. 248). However, achieving consciousness of Whiteness and White privilege is not always comfortable. Tilley and Powick (2007) observed this in their research on graduate students participating in a curriculum studies course with emphasis

on Whiteness and identity. Tilley and Powick noted that “White students often struggled with the idea that their group membership grants them unearned privileges not available to ‘others’” (p. 110). The denial of White privilege was evident in Tilley and Powick’s (2007) experience as they indicated “White privilege is difficult to disrupt because it is so deeply embedded in the workings of school and university institutions where the expectation continues to be to find ways to shape difference to reflect White norms” (p. 115). Quaye (2012) arrived at a similar conclusion in his study of White educators facilitating White students’ learning of racial realities; he identified that White students encountered struggles and resisted becoming conscious of Whiteness (p. 109). Recognizing the discomfort associated with the dominant culture’s realization of unearned privilege, McLaren (2007) notes that “to challenge exploitation is no easy task” (p. 258).

In the context of this study, the steps to acknowledge Whiteness in the institution and the need for antiracism education have to be endorsed by the institutional power structures, such as the board of governors and senior administration, in order to achieve systemic change. The initial step of acknowledging and understanding Whiteness as the source of racism enables the dominant culture to consider how power and privilege are a part of their everyday experience. However, the challenge is that the postsecondary environment does not naturally create opportunities for Whiteness to be investigated.

Kezar, Eckel, Contreras-McGavin, and Quaye (2007) found that connecting postsecondary leaders to antiracist or diversity mandates is critical to change and influence the institutional culture (p. 72). In her research on the persistence of racism in schools, Evelyn Young (2011) found that one of the greatest challenges amongst

educators was not the acknowledgement of racism but that they regarded racism as “individual perpetration rather than a system of privilege” (p. 1445). Through participant interviews, this study found that senior administrators are positioned and situated to influence change in the student experiences as well as the understanding of racism within and outside of the postsecondary institution.

Recognizing that Whiteness exists in postsecondary education in Canada (Monture, 2009), it was suggested by Kivel (2002) that the only way to reveal racism is to first make Whiteness visible. This means that until there is awareness of Whiteness and how it frames and permits systemic and unconscious racism, there is little hope of eliminating it. The challenge, of course, is how do you convince the dominant society to abandon its hegemonic privilege, and how does a more equitable society *for all* appeal to those who do not experience the negative impact of inequality? Following John Rawls’s (1971) theory of justice, a just society should strive for equitable distribution of privilege as it is the “first virtue of social institutions” (p. 3) including educational institutions. Rawls’s concept of equitable distribution may be challenging to achieve, but Rawls’s theory of justice obligates an effort to strive for equity as a moral and humane value. Miller (2003) elaborates on Rawls’s theory by pointing out that “one good reason for not treating people in the same way is that they have different needs” (chap. 5, location 1252). Miller and Rawls address the ethical and social justice framework that should compel dominant culture to acknowledge hegemony and Whiteness; Aal (2001) took a more pragmatic yet compelling approach to address this resistance:

When White people understand how much energy they expend to create the kind of amnesia that is a necessary part of Whiteness, they can begin to see Whiteness

as a crippling condition that makes it very hard to imagine what a racially just society could be about. (p. 306)

Raising consciousness, by Whites and non-Whites, to the existence of Whiteness begins to make it visible. Therefore, the intentional social education of Whiteness as perpetuating racism is required before change will take place.

Tilley and Powick's (2007) research suggested that postsecondary settings may be a space for antiracist efforts if there is institutional engagement and awareness of White privilege. Furthermore, postsecondary education has a social and political accountability to the public and the interests of all stakeholders. Canada is a country that purports to value multiculturalism (Ghosh, 1996) and has a diverse population comprised of 39% who identify as either first and second generation and 11% who primarily speak a language other than French or English at home (Statistics Canada, 2011); therefore, with this diversity and multiculturalism Canada has a responsibility to equally strive for shifting away from a White-as-norm society.

Research Problem

Whiteness, the socially constructed norm by which the nondominant culture is measured (Iverson, 2007; McLaren, 2007; Wise 2008), perpetuates systemic racism, and postsecondary education has an opportunity to raise consciousness about Whiteness. This study will show results that postsecondary leaders (senior administrators) are positioned to establish an environment that acknowledges and addresses racism actively through intentional raising of awareness of Whiteness. In order for this to happen, senior administrators have to be aware of Whiteness and how, through the taken-for-granted, white-as-norm social structures (Wise, 2013) Whiteness perpetuates systemic racism

particularly in the postsecondary context (Chesler et al., 2005). The research problem that emerged, and which was the focus of this study, is the readiness, understanding, and responsiveness of senior administration to address Whiteness and, subsequently, racism. This study sought to better understand the senior administrators' perspectives, experiences, and exposures to Whiteness and racism as well as their understanding of Whiteness as a source of hegemony and systemic racism.

The present study is important because, without an understanding of senior administrators' experiences, it is difficult to suggest holistic institutional approaches for the postsecondary environment to address racism. If these administrative leadership perspectives are not understood and the senior administration does not connect Whiteness with systemic racism, or if the senior leaders do not acknowledge the existence of racism then antiracist efforts could be overlooked or minimized. Leadership significantly influences organizational climate, which implies that an understanding of senior administrator perspectives may positively address antiracism approaches within postsecondary education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the awareness and perspectives of postsecondary administrators regarding the impact of Whiteness and the reality of racism, particularly systemic racism, in the postsecondary environment. The goal of the study was to contribute toward the antiracist research in an effort to dismantle racism and work toward social justice and equity. This study was structured within a social justice framework informed by Rawls's (1971) principles of justice and a belief in a "social ideal" (p. 9) that strives for equity and social cooperation for the greater social good. This

study assumed that racism exists, in and out of postsecondary education, and that Whiteness perpetuates it. This assumption was informed by a is draws on a significant amount of academic research (Aal, 2001; Andersen, 2003; Banks, 2004; Calliste, 2000; Chaisson, 2004; Chesler et al., 2005; Chesler et al., 2003; Dei, 1997, 2000, 2007; Dei & Calliste, 2000; Dua, 2009; Essad, 2013; Giroux, 1997; Harper et al., 2011; Henry & Tator, 2009b; Kivel, 2002; Leonardo, 2004; McKinney, 2002; McLaren, 2007; Patton, Shahjahan & Osei-Kofi, 2010; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Theoharis & Haddix, 2001; Trowsse, 2007; Werkmeister, Rozas & Miller, 2009; Wildman & Davis, 2000; I. M. Young, 2013), personal and academic narratives (Back, 2005; Chavannes, 2012; Desai, 2001; Eisenkraft, 2010; Mazzei, 2008; McIntosh, 1988; Monture, 2009; Sonn, 2008; Stewart, 2009; Tilley & Powick, 2007; Trepagnier, 2006; Wellman, 1993; Wise, 2008, 2013; Yancy, 2008; E. Young, 2011), and theoretical perspectives connected to racism and whiteness and explored through many of the works noted above such as critical race theory, social justice, critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism. The attitudes, understandings, perspectives, and approaches of senior administration toward racism and Whiteness are valuable to antiracist educators in the postsecondary landscape. The objective of this exploration was to better understand the perceived challenges and opportunities identified by the senior administrators who participated in this study. The intent was to provide a context for critical pedagogy and for antiracist educators to approach change in the postsecondary education sector informed by student (Chaisson, 2004; Sonn, 2008), faculty (Cooper, Massey, & Graham, 2006; Dua, 2009; McKinney, 2002; Monture, 2009; Trowsse, 2007) and administration experiences (Kezar et al., 2007; Quaye, 2012) as well as institutional practice (Back, 2005; Iverson, 2007).

Assumptions of the Study

In this study, the research questions and methods are based on certain assumptions: (a) Whiteness perpetuates racism; (b) antiracism requires education; (c) postsecondary institutions are positioned to engage learners to think about racism, power, privilege, and, therefore, Whiteness; (d) senior administrators could help to expose Whiteness including the power and privilege of the dominant culture; (e) examining Whiteness, rather than racism, may keep the focus on White privilege rather than bringing an end to Whiteness; (f) this study attempted to break down Whiteness and not reinforce it; and (g) this study encouraged research participants (senior administrators) to approach systemic racism with a critical pedagogy and an increased sensitivity of how Whiteness contributes to an institutional environment.

Research Questions

The essential research questions that evolved for this study are:

- (1) What is the prevalence of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education?
- (2) What is the role of senior administration within postsecondary institutions?
- (3) Do senior administrators acknowledge the existence of racism in their institutions? and
- (4) What is the understanding of Whiteness and racism and what is the role of the senior administrators to address racism in postsecondary education?

For the purposes of this study, the research questions have been organized with related theoretical themes: (a) White privilege; (b) hegemony; (c) social justice and equity in Canadian higher education; (d) critical pedagogy; and (e) antiracist education.

For this study's interviews to reflect the essential research questions, the participants were asked the following questions: (a) What is the role of senior administration within postsecondary institutions? (b) Are Whiteness and racism prevalent in postsecondary education? (c) What are senior administrator perceptions of racism, including whether or not it exists? and (d) What is the accountability of senior administrators to take on Whiteness and racism on postsecondary campuses (in Canada), and how?

In contemporary Canadian society there is a fear of being called racist (Kivel, 2002). The fear of being called racist often prevents discussion around racism at all (Kivel, 2002; Wildman & Davis, 2000). The denial of racism and the desire to remain detached from any circumstance perceived as racist impairs the ability to be authentically reflective about individual involvement with racism (Wildman & Davis, 2000). It is complicated and intimidating to ask, *am I racist?* However, this question informs the foundation of the whole discussion around Whiteness, racism, and individual perspectives. It requires the ability to reflect on individual identity, experience, and a knapsack of privileges (McIntosh, 1988). Even "race-conscious educators" (E. Young, 2011) often struggle to acknowledge that they could be a part of the systemic problem of racism. This hegemonic avoidance of acknowledging and addressing racism also occurs in postsecondary education (Calliste, 2000; Iverson, 2007). Avoidance of racism can be identified through the classroom experience, as McKinney (2002) discusses in her teaching experience, or through systemic or administrative mandate and structure as Chesler et al. (2005) identified in their framework for challenging racism in higher education. To address this avoidance, this study suggests that engaging the postsecondary

senior administration is a crucial step to gain deeper institutional awareness and to influence leadership for change.

It is also important to ask why the perspectives of senior administrators on racism and Whiteness are important to study. The truth is that there are many important attitudes toward racism, particularly from students, faculty, and staff—especially those who have felt the impact of racism whether or not they are White. External perspectives on the tolerance of the postsecondary environment are, arguably, also important to the public perspective on the existence of systemic racism. However, for this study, the focus on senior administrators was of value since they affect the institutional climate, strategic direction, and institutional approach toward racism. This study's student researcher is also a senior administrator and, therefore, a member of the study's culture-sharing group, which facilitated access to the participant group.

As qualitative research study, it is important to acknowledge the biases and context of this study. For example, studying "the other," that is, exploring the perspectives of minority students within the postsecondary system may have perpetuated the dominant-White interpretation of the experience, which was not the objective of this study. Instead, the present study was approached as a critical pedagogical exercise of antiracist education working toward the abolition of Whiteness and its privileges. The research method was influenced by an acknowledgement of the student researcher's White postsecondary leader point-of-view as well as the related "knapsack" of White privilege and experiences (McIntosh, 1988) with the intent of adding a depth and dimension to the study that might otherwise be lost.

Personal and Cultural Introduction

I have lived in three Canadian provinces and three countries. Since 1991, I have studied at five predominantly White universities in Canada and have worked at four predominantly White institutions in Canada and one in the United Kingdom. My personal, professional, and scholarly interest in Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education is deeply rooted within my childhood, academic influences, and career.

From the time I was young, I have sought to understand discrimination and have felt discomfort with my own White privilege—long before I had words or confidence to admit it. I have been uncomfortably exposed to White, racist attitudes and behaviours and acknowledge that my membership in Whiteness has afforded me access to others' White perspectives that are not always as “colourblind” as they are publicly positioned.

Locating my experiences, privileges, biases, and power has been a lifelong, mostly unconscious, journey. I acknowledge that being White has afforded me a path by which my journey has been made easier and smoother; I benefit from my middle-class, White privilege.

This study provided the opportunity to explore and challenge the White-as-norm hierarchy within postsecondary education. There have been studies (Calliste, 2000; Harper et al., 2011; McKinney, 2002) on the negative impact of racism in higher education, but this study differed because it focused on an influential yet less researched source in postsecondary education; that is, the senior administration. As a senior administrator and this study's researcher, I had access to the formal and informal nuances within that space of the organization; this includes an inside perspective on the administrative focus on the institution's well-being, issues of liability, and care for a safe

and healthy learning environment for students. This study recognizes that group membership also influences the study's perspective on the role of administration.

The senior administrator/student researcher role is important to note because it informs this study in a specific academic-administrative way. The way the college and university communities are perceived is a direct reflection of the student researcher's experience as a senior administrator in college and university environments. For example, access to information that may not be available to everyone, such as strategic planning, institutional records, data, and senior administrative membership. As student-researcher I brought a social-professional advantage of institutional information but a lack of informal data; the day-to-day administrative duties rarely include one-on-one student advising or classroom visits. Senior administrators often lack a grassroots understanding of what racism looks and feels like and how/if/when it is experienced by students and others from day-to-day. This White privilege further insulates senior administrative access to the impact of institutional racism. This distance from the day-to-day realities is a shared experience for this study's senior administrator participants, and for one of the interview participants it was specifically raised as influencing the degree to which racism, and other issues, are on the institution's radar.

Through the student researcher's senior administrative role and interest in antiracism education and Whiteness, there was the opportunity to connect with senior administrators and to engage in this complex, sensitive, and difficult subject in a way that was safe. As a White woman, administrator and researcher, I brought a White-informed position, which facilitated the safety of the study for the (White) participants. For this study, "safety" is used in the context of participant vulnerability with the sensitive nature

of racism and discrimination; this study was to create a space where participants were open and honest about their experiences and perceptions. Being “one of them,” that is a White senior administrator, facilitated trust. As Patti Lather (Bowers, Lather, & Handel, 2008; Lather, 2004) explains, having the voice and vocabulary of the culture-sharing group may facilitate unlearning privilege.

One element of concern with this study is that focusing on Whiteness will recentre Whiteness rather than disassemble Whiteness (Andersen, 2003). As Warren (1999) noted, it is risky to study Whiteness (p.187) because “I worry that efforts in Whiteness may only serve to strengthen the solid [White] privilege base” (p. 199). The quandary becomes a balance of examining Whiteness to understand its responsibility for racism while also actively committing to its end. So, while this study explored understandings of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education, it remains committed to the challenge of breaking Whiteness down and not reinforcing it. Dei’s research is a reminder that antiracism work truly starts with an individual acknowledging his or her position of power and privilege and then taking responsibility to use his or her position(s) appropriately toward change (2000, p. 25).

Definition of Terms

Racism

Racism is a socially constructed response to privileges asserted through Whiteness and racialization, such as attributing characteristics based on cultural differences (Kobayashi & Fuji Johnson, 2007). Race, the defining of a person by physical characteristics, is biological but it is also a construct for White power purposes (Lopez, 2000). Identifying people by race leads to racism as nonphysical characteristics begin to

become associated with race and evolves into perceptions, comparisons, assumptions and generalizations, which is racism. Giroux (1997) acknowledged this association when he explained culture and race as having socially constructed aspects, as when he stated “a set of attitudes, values, lived experiences, and affective identifications” (p. 294). When a person’s race shifts from physical attributes to comparisons with people of other races, it manifests into an opportunity for racism.

Dei (2007) reminds us that race and racism are not the same, but equally important to understand; he advocated that “race is about difference . . . when race is ignored, however, racism is further reproduced” (pp. 56—57). Acknowledging that race and cultural experiences exist creates opportunities to talk openly about racism. Kivel (2002) defined racism as “the institutionalization of social injustice based on skin color, other physical characteristics, and cultural and religious difference” (p. 2). Racism enables White power and privilege to persist; therefore, in society, there is at least an unconscious tendency to be racist. Since racism exists because of Whiteness, it is critical to infuse this study with careful analysis of the source of Whiteness and the response to racism.

Racism is also a result of White-informed deficit thinking (Wellman, 1993). Deficit thinking is the White approach to thinking that the “other” is responsible for any difference from the (White) norm. Whiteness attaches a more positive value on White ways of being and a less positive value on non-White ways of being. The notion of White as good suggests that the other (non-White) is not good; Whiteness perpetuates this negative association with that which is not White (Kivel, 2002; Peake & Ray, 2001).

Whiteness, as a normative social construct, ought to be upset and acknowledged in order to achieve an environment of equity.

Antiracist Education

Antiracist education focuses on the need for education about racism. It requires an acknowledgement of the relevance of race and the presence of racism; that is, for antiracist education to begin, acknowledgement of the existence of racism needs to be understood and agreed upon. George J. Sefa Dei (2000), a leading Canadian researcher on antiracism education, articulated that “antiracism advocates for social change whereby race is acknowledged as a central axis of power and racist inequities are ameliorated” (p. 30). Antiracism education has the potential to revolutionize racial and social inequities and realize social justice, which in this context refers to “a society of justice in which one’s skin color or continental ancestry is of no consequence in determining one’s station in life” (Wise, 2008, p. 5). Along the theme of achieving social justice through antiracist education, Trepagnier (2006) referred to antiracism education as a call-to-action and identifies that “antiracism refers to taking a committed stand against racism, a stand that translates into action that interrupts racism in all its forms, whether personal or institutional, blatant routine, intended or unintended” (p. 104). Antiracist education boldly identifies racism as a reality and calls for action and advocacy from educators.

Systemic Racism

In the Canadian context of this study, institutional or systemic racism exists because of Whiteness (Back, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Systemic racism is an invisible system of privilege based on membership in the dominant (White) culture. Systemic or silent racism is deeply embedded and informed by social rules, symbols, and

expectations; everyday racist acts become normalized within the system to the point that they become unconscious or invisible. To describe the broader impact of it, Dei (2005) explains that “racism is a pernicious and vicious social problem” (p. 138). Awakening White awareness of systemic racism and its societal impact is challenging because it requires a disruption of a constructed identity and aligns that identity with an undesirable racist system.

Whiteness

Whiteness is the socially constructed norm by which other cultures are measured and assessed; it supports systemic racism fostered by unconscious White privilege (Iverson, 2007). That is, White ways are the standard or norm by which all others are measured (Yancy, 2004). Unlike race, Whiteness is not defined by physical characteristics and may be experienced by non-White people due to cultural hegemony or White culture domination (Gramsci, 1971). There is a difference between the biology and social construction of Whiteness, and Whiteness is supported by people who may or may not be White. Monture (2009) makes a distinction between Whiteness as “a system of benefits, advantages, and opportunities compared to racism, which is a system of negatives—detriments, disadvantages, and denials” (p. 78). For the purposes of this study, it is important to understand Whiteness as the privileges gained by supporting and participating in the White norms that perpetuate it. Aal (2001) reinforced this from his research and practice as an antiracist educator:

We have found in our antiracist work that the first hurdle to get around is the paralysis of guilt and defensiveness. Most White people know very well their skin

color is tied to social privileges—so they feel guilty and at the same time don't feel personally invested in change. (p. 301)

This unwillingness, particularly by Whites, to discuss Whiteness comes from an honest place of self-defense and self-preservation. Being called racist is not desirable in contemporary (Canadian) society, so denial and a self-defensive response is natural.

Through social construction Whiteness has become an invisible trait that is accepted, expected, and enjoyed by Whites. Moreover, Whiteness has become defined under the banner of good intentions; there is reluctance to question or deny how it is perpetuated. Trepagnier (2006, p.111) pointed out that White people do not think of themselves as “raced,” and Yancy (2008, p.142) described Whiteness as a world in which being White is an unconditional state of being—it just *is*.

As noted, Whiteness is not defined by being identified as a White person. At the same time, Whiteness as a term to describe dominant, mainstream culture ideologies and practice intersects with White identity. In this context, White identity, including the racialized description of being White as well as the absence of identity, is relevant. White identity is embedded within the construct of Whiteness. To further contextualize this notion of White identity being a part of Whiteness; it is a rare occasion that a White person is openly interrogated about their cultural background, place of origin, language or culture-sharing group membership. Someone who is identified as White is absorbed into the majority, white-as-norm framework regardless of whichever differences by which they may define themselves. In this way, white identity is an important component of Whiteness and white privilege.

Dominant Culture

In the Canadian context, the dominant culture is White culture. White is the dominant culture given the historical relevance of primarily White, European settlers establishing the foundation on which the community, provincial, and national values have been established. In the Canadian context, the dominant, White culture also had the greatest membership as Statistics Canada (2009) data demonstrated in the 2006 census, with only 16.22% of the population self-identified as “visible minority.” This means that more than 80% of Canadians may identify as a member of the dominant, White society. However, it is important to note that dominant culture is not exclusively the group that has the greatest membership; rather dominant culture refers to the group that has the most power and privilege. The dominance of White culture in Canada will exist as long as White culture retains power in society; however, if other cultures emerge, regardless of size, there is the opportunity for a shift in dominant culture.

Hegemony

Hegemony is the power, control, and persuasion of the dominant culture over nondominant culture and marginalized groups. Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was based on the understanding of hegemony where the oppressed become the oppressor through a process whereby dominant cultural ways of being are the socially accepted norms of society. As McLaren (2007) explains, hegemony is domination “primarily through consensual social practices, social forms and social structures” (p.182). As a result, hegemony is often an unconscious dominance and, in the context of the present study, the lack of awareness of Whiteness leads to hegemonic systemic racism and unconscious White privilege.

Critical Pedagogy

Rooted in a belief that education is political (McLaren, 2007), critical pedagogy is based upon a “socially critical reconstruction of what it means to ‘be schooled’” (p. 189). Critical pedagogy enables education to be a space for discourse that challenges the sociocultural political contexts of society (Giroux, 1989). Critical pedagogy is the essence of being thoughtfully critical about the sociocultural and political contexts of our society and institutions, and requires deconstructing perspectives and deliberately challenging accepted norms and practices. It also shapes an expectation that educators need to unlearn their educational experience in order to approach education differently; educators need to teach students to ask questions about the hegemonic systems that form society (Freire, 1970) and, as McLaren (2007) describes, “a commitment to social transformation in solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups. . .[and] elimination of those conditions that promote human suffering” (p. 189). In the context of the present study, critical pedagogy is the approach by which senior administrators and postsecondary institutions should raise consciousness of White privilege and begin antiracist education.

Social Justice

Social justice theory follows a principle of equity that is based on human rights. Henry and Tator (2009a) refer to social justice within a “human rights paradigm . . . with a commitment to social transformation . . . and human rights for all” (p. 15). Social justice also emerges from the political philosophies of Rawls (1971) and I. M. Young (2013) that conceptualize justice as a basic social structure (Rawls, 1971, p. 57). Social

justice theory also has a goal of emphasizing social connections (I. M. Young, 2013, p. 96) that “dismantle these structures of oppression” (Patton et al., 2010, p. 268). Social justice seeks to examine dominant structures and asserts that inequity will persist unless dominant ideologies are challenged. In the context of the present study, social justice is achievable through a critical pedagogical approach and the belief that inequity and systemic racism evolve from hegemonic, White privilege. The study’s participants’ recognition of Whiteness and racism as well as their acknowledgement of accountability enables meaningful dialogue and institutional antiracist education efforts.

Senior Administrator

For the purposes of this study, a senior administrator is defined as a staff member who is a member of the senior leadership of the organization. Most commonly, the senior administrators represent a composition of presidents, vice-presidents, associate vice-presidents, executive directors, directors, deans or related titles. Generally senior administrators are accountable for a major division or function of the organization. This study suggests that senior administrators influence the organizational climate and impact change based on accountability for institutional goal setting and achievements.

Postsecondary Institution

In the context of this study, focus is on postsecondary education and, more specifically, public colleges and universities in Canada. This study focused on postsecondary institutions primarily teaching at the undergraduate or first credential level. Therefore, in this study, postsecondary institutions are defined as government-

funded and publicly accountable universities and colleges (also referred to as community colleges) governed by a board of governors.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in understanding the perspectives among leaders in higher education regarding racism and its prevalence on Canadian campuses. In this study, all the postsecondary senior administrator participants acknowledged the existence of racism—individual and systemic—and agreed that postsecondary institutions have a responsibility to move from acknowledgement to taking action to address issues of racism and inequities on campus. The acknowledgement of racism was informed by participant admissions of “witnessing” racism. The participants’ acknowledgement came with an overwhelming sense of responsibility tangled in an equally overwhelming sense of helplessness on how to adequately address racism. For research on racism in higher education, this study’s findings hope to contribute to understanding the positionality of institutions in order to influence change; for instance, from an antiracist educator perspective, this acknowledgement of racism is critical, as is the understanding that leaders are not always prepared to lead campus-wide education regarding racism and its impact.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured to identify the research problem, to establish an academic context for the present study, and to outline the main research questions. The present study’s foundation begins with a comprehensive literature review that explores the research questions through significant study influences and themes including White privilege (Kivel, 2002; McIntosh, 1988; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011), the hegemony of

Whiteness (McLaren, 2007; Wise, 2013; Yancy, 2008), social justice and equity in education (Henry & Tator, 2009b; Miller, 2003; Monture, 2009; Rawls, 1971; Stewart, 2009; I. M. Young, 2013), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989; McLaren, 2007), and antiracist education (Calliste, 2000; Dei, 2000; Essad, 2013). The literature review concludes with a conceptual framework for social justice and equity, which is an embedded goal of this study.

Following the literature review, the present study's research methods, critical ethnography, and use of narrative inquiry are described and explained. The methodology section also includes the data analysis and explores the significance of the present study. The methodology leads to the results of the study. Within the results, participant interview details are categorized and shared.

The remaining sections of the dissertation include the discussion of findings, the summary, responses to the research questions, and conclusion. The discussion includes the relevance of the present study in the context of postsecondary education as well as the academic contributions of this study and implications of the findings. The limitations of this study and the recommendations for further study are included within the summary. The dissertation concludes with suggestions for senior postsecondary administrators and institutions to promote antiracist education and consciously break down systemic racism.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature review for this study on social justice and equity, specifically exploring postsecondary education senior administrator perspectives on racism and Whiteness, literature from across the spectrum of multicultural education in Canada, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, social justice, Whiteness, racism, antiracism, cultural studies, educational leadership, and higher education administration was reviewed. In forming an understanding with greater focus on this study, there were five themes that most significantly emerged from the literature to inform and shape the study's approach toward of racism, Whiteness, and equity in education while also informing the development of this study's methodology and interpretation of the results. Therefore, this literature review is organized into the five themes aligned with the essential research questions as noted in Chapter One: (a) white privilege; (b) hegemony; (c) social justice and equity in Canadian higher education; (d) critical pedagogy; and (e) antiracist education. The literature review concludes with an overview of the social justice and equity conceptual framework.

White Privilege

A leading influence in exploring White privilege and Whiteness has been Peggy McIntosh (1988) and her approach to revealing privilege. In an important piece of writing "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," McIntosh identified specific ways in which her power and privilege—her Whiteness—is a part of her everyday experience. McIntosh aligned feminism with critical race theory and through her essay on privilege she provided an accessible, ready-to-use teaching tool for antiracist educators.

McIntosh's essay eases the ability to articulate what White privilege and power looks and feels like and how it perpetuates racism.

In *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice*, Kivel (2002) approached racism and Whiteness with directness and honesty. As a White person reading his work, there is a call-to-action. From a perspective of social justice, Kivel's work is a pragmatic response to the responsibility of White people to speak out on racism—silent, systemic, and overt. He not only challenges readers to act and take responsibility but offers a contemporary context for how racism exists, such as in language and in retaining privilege. Evoking this advocacy is a vital element of antiracist education and advocacy for raising awareness of Whiteness since, without the belief that there is something “wrong” systemically, there will be no progress on the actual existence of Whiteness and racism.

In related research, Werkmeister et al. (2009) focus on the teaching environment and the dilemma of “the dissonance between the realities of racism and the way it is perceived by people of race privilege” (p. 25). Their research reiterates a recognition of the struggle to acknowledge racism, but found that if it is “grasped” by dominant culture, it can be broken down and lead to “inspired activism” (p. 26). Werkmeister et al. appreciate that “‘I’m not racist’ is a phrase uttered by well-meaning Whites when confronted by a racist comment or action” (p. 26) but that shifting the focus from individual acts of racism to the impact of systemic racism will achieve greater, long term social justice.

In their study of six White school principals, Theoharis and Haddix (2011) sought to learn “how White leaders can play an active role in undermining racism and a

Whiteness ideology” (p. 1333). For their study they deliberately recruited like-minded, race-conscious leaders striving for equity. Significant in their findings, and comparable to the findings of Werkmeister et al. (2009), was that in order for the White educational leaders to address racism they needed to deal with “their own racial identities and histories, their privilege and the presence of institutional racism” (p. 1347). Theoharis and Haddix’s research complements this present study’s assumption that acknowledging White privilege, racism and Whiteness is an essential start in breaking down institutional racism.

Zeus Leonardo (2004) differentiated between Whiteness as a “racial discourse” and being a “White person” as a socially constructed identity. This distinction coincided with the understanding of race as a sociocultural, politically constructed identity, which was described by Roediger (1994) in his book, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, and reiterated by Lopez (2000). This is an important element in the study of Whiteness and racism, in or out of postsecondary institutions, because it speaks to the possibility of race being deconstructed and racism becoming obsolete. Lopez explained that “because races are constructed, ideas about race form part of a wider social fabric into which other relations, not least of which gender and class, are also woven” (p. 570).

To fully understand white privilege it is necessary to reference the impact of colonialism as the foundation of the existing dominant culture and foundation for Whiteness. The dominant ideologies and practices including institutional organizational structures and manifestations of educational spaces are all derived from colonial settlement. The colonization of Canada even shapes the filter by which we engage in understanding white privilege and antiracist discourse. To attempt to breakdown white

privilege, the effort to decolonize is intrinsic. As Dei (2014) identified in his lecture on decolonizing the academy, destabilizing colonialism and white privilege will be met with significant resistance. Dei noted “decolonization cannot seek legitimation from the dominant; it cannot be mainstream” (2014). To dismantle white privilege we need to promote and support efforts to resist dominant, white-as-norm constructs.

Hegemony

In Peter McLaren’s (2007) book, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, the role of the dominant society’s use of hegemony to perpetuate its position is brought to the forefront. McLaren dissected the ways in which dominant society manifests its social influence and praxis, such as in schools and the community, reflecting and reinforcing dominant, White culture. McLaren emphasized that this silent acceptance of dominant, White culture is taken for granted by nondominant culture and that the social norms are accepted and go unseen in the absence of a critical pedagogical approach in education and society. Through his critical pedagogy, McLaren explored the socioeconomic value of White, unearned privilege and the related socioeconomic rewards. He posited that “critical pedagogy also challenges the assumption that schools function as major sites of social and economic mobility” (p.189) and put forward the notion of social empowerment as being “*ethically prior* to mastery of technical skills” (p. 189). McLaren expects educators and schools to do more than instruction in school—there is an ethical accountability to foster an awareness of the social impact of dominant culture. McLaren stressed that for society to realize social change, educators have to expose how dominant society has utilized hegemony to perpetuate its position. McLaren’s views and theoretical perspectives are academically

and experientially informed—he was an “inner city” teacher (in Canada and the United States) and is an educational reform researcher and professor.

In his book *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (2008), George Yancy took a personally informed approach toward the existence of Whiteness by revealing his own struggles as a Black, male academic who has been made to feel that, among his White colleagues, his value and contribution to research and academia are always conditional upon his Blackness. So, if he spoke articulately and argued persuasively, there was a subtle suggestion that his achievements are valued in the context of him being Black—speaking well *for a Black man*, making achievements *for a Black man* and so on. His experience is relevant to this study because he articulates a tangible context of Blackness related to his academic contributions being measured in a White world.

Anthony Stewart reflected Yancy’s perspective in his book *You must be a Basketball Player: Rethinking Integration in the University* (2009). Stewart talked about the significance of being Black and how that position afforded him the perspective that institutions need to change their approach toward integration (of difference). Stewart shared a story of his students expressing their gratitude that, since he is Black, his teaching of African American literature would be more relevant or authentic, to which Stewart explained that, actually, he is not African American, but he was born in Canada to Jamaican-born parents and was raised in Ottawa. According to Stewart, the fact that he is Black is more of a coincidence than anything else (p. 44). Stewart went on to share that he told his students that there is nothing “natural” about the way universities are structured; he explained that all aspects of the institution are “decisions made by

individuals who are products of their environment” (p. 45). This is a salient point because it connects with Whiteness being perpetuated by the dominant culture that benefits from Whiteness. Stewart also expressed his concern with mostly White institutions trying to effectively educate a changing Canadian student population.

Social Justice and Equity in Canadian Education

In preparing to explore social justice and equity in Canadian education, this study first needed to explore some of the foundations of social justice theory with its roots in political philosophy. As previously noted, John Rawls (1971), David Miller (2003), and Iris Marion Young (2013) have contributed significantly to accepted academic understandings of social justice. Rawls essentially believes that to achieve a “just” society, or social justice, there need to be basic liberties and opportunities for all; inequalities are justified only if they help the least advantaged members of society the most. This means that institutions, like postsecondary educational institutions, should strive for equitable learning environments and opportunities because that is what is just and virtuous. Miller builds on Rawls’s principles of justice by recognizing the “changes between societies and over time” (chap. 5, location 1377) and also includes a rationalization of unequal distribution as long as there is equal opportunity.

I. M. Young (2013) elaborates on this concept of social justice with a shift from individual to societal responsibility. Young conceives of the social connection model of responsibility, which holds all who contribute to systems of injustice to address those injustices. This notion of social connection is particularly fitting for a higher education environment where there are explicit accountabilities for outcomes; this also adapts

relevantly to the social justice and equity experience in Canadian education research, as noted below.

Patton et al. (2010), in their introduction to a special journal on emergent issues in diversity and social justice in higher education, explored social justice in higher education related to diversity. They identify the need for administrators and others to move beyond the number of racially diverse faculty and staff members as a measure of antiracist efforts; rather, they insist on the need to explore “the social structures, processes, and institutional context that produce these distributions” (p. 265). In other words, to realize social justice, Whiteness and systemic racism need to be acknowledged and addressed.

In Frances Trowsse’s (2007) Master of Education thesis, in which she explored making meaning of Whiteness from a Canadian community college faculty member perspective, she revealed the need for dialogue and action around antiracist measures and discussion around Whiteness in the classroom. Trowsse stated that “examining Whiteness is a good antiracist practice for all of Canadian society” (p. 11). This study was able to glean that the faculty role of implementing the exploration of Whiteness into the curriculum could have been reinforced by the support and direction from administration. Trowsse’s research has also assisted in identifying approaches for study participants in order to complete the research.

Agnes Calliste (2000) cited several specific examples of systemic racism within Canadian postsecondary education. Through a larger study conducted between 1997 and 1998, Calliste interviewed 30 Black and Aboriginal students, advisors, and faculty from two universities in Nova Scotia, and she also observed diversity/antiracist committee

meetings at these institutions. Calliste also reviewed human rights complaints of discrimination at two Ontario universities and was able to compare those cases with the experiences shared by her study's participants that, "White institutions... 'in a White town' that are unresponsive to [Black student] needs" (p. 151). From her research, Calliste acknowledged that the systemic, invisible nature of Whiteness in postsecondary settings perpetuates the existence of racist practices and attitudes as she noted "behaviours need not be intentional to be racist" (p. 151). From Calliste's research, administration or the institutional structure is identified as a necessary component for change. She wrote that "students, faculty and staff who are working for antiracism change must continue to focus on changing structures and policies and participating in decision-making" (p. 160). Calliste highlighted real postsecondary situations involving the persistence of Whiteness and the denial of racism as evidence that there is work to be done in the area of institutional consciousness-raising on the matter of racism. Her research supports the research approach for the present study and reinforces the relevance of studying institutional racism, which has a direct link to administrator perspectives.

In a different but relevant study, Enakshi Dua (2009) researched the effectiveness of antiracist policies in Canadian universities. For Dua's study, 14 interviews were conducted with various positions in universities that impact antiracist work such as human rights officers, grievance officers, and equity officers (p. 162). Dua's research shared insight into the effectiveness of antiracism policies in postsecondary education while also revealing the importance of senior administrators in the success of these policies and practices. In Dua's study, the interviewees revealed "the most significant limitation in implementing current [antiracist] policies and practices was located in the

forms of resistance that these policies invoked among members of senior administration,” and some of the interviewees went on to say that they felt pressure “to be silent about racism within the university” (p. 164). While this perception of the senior administration does not reflect the responses from the senior administrator participants, it does reinforce the influential role of senior leaders regarding on campus antiracist education, as suggested in this study. Dua’s concluding remarks reiterate this point: “My study suggests that support from senior administrators may be the most important factor determining effectiveness [of antiracist policies]” (p. 192).

In Canada, there have been a number of studies on Whiteness in postsecondary education, such as those of Calliste (2000), Chaisson (2004), Trowsse (2007), and Schick and St. Denis (2005). Schick and St. Denis focused largely on faculty, student, and curricular experiences and have been able to reinforce the position of the institution in terms of influencing the environment for such discourse. Their language and approach informed this study’s perspective within the Canadian postsecondary landscape.

Monture (2009) also presented her own experience as an Aboriginal female professor working in a “White institution (the university) that has little, if any, real understanding of the tenets of First Nations ways of life including . . . knowledge systems” (p. 77). Monture identified Whiteness in postsecondary institutions and represented a female Aboriginal faculty perspective on how the Whiteness of academia is isolating and challenging for nondominant cultures. As described throughout this study, she expressed how Whiteness is hard to identify because of the “invisible nature of power and White privilege” (p. 78). Not only did Monture provide an honest, reflective, first-person account of trying to conform to White postsecondary structures as a non-White

person, but she also exposed the challenges that White senior administrators will face in trying to address racism. Specifically, Monture identified the barrier of the geographic locations of postsecondary institutions, which are primarily off reserve, which results in segregating Aboriginal students from their supportive community in order to access higher education; and this community separation often results in a heightened experience of isolation when Aboriginal students experience acts of racism (p. 89). Monture also identified another barrier to overcoming systemic racism in postsecondary institutions as the sense of oppression and the feeling of “powerlessness” experienced by non-White academics (p. 89). As an Aboriginal faculty member, Monture described the challenge of the isolation and loneliness experienced by the nondominant culture as a result of “ever-pervasive Whiteness” within postsecondary institutions. These barriers and lived experiences articulated by Monture are significant and important reminders of the confounding job for White administrators in implementing antiracist education into postsecondary institutions. Monture’s articulated experiences and reflections require a reflective-practitioner approach for the White senior administrators attempting to address postsecondary institutional racism, particularly as it impacts the nondominant culture.

Monture (2009) briefly talked about the powerlessness experienced as a nondominant member of academia. Power and the balance of power is core to other contemporary opinions, such as those of Apple (1996) and Banks (2004) that relate to power in education. Whiteness is power and, therefore, is central to the balance of power in education. That is, acknowledging and understanding that power exists with Whiteness is essential to work toward social change. Henry and Tator (2009b) recognized the power in Whiteness. “Often is it not consciously experienced by its perpetrators, but it is

immediately and painfully felt by its victims” (p. 27). The conscious and unconscious power of Whiteness is that it creates an exclusionary space where only those who belong are unaware of its constructs. Having the power within structures and organizations such as postsecondary institutions in Canada makes it easy for the dominant culture to thrive and survive in these socially constructed frameworks and institutions.

The relevance of the impact of Whiteness on postsecondary education is a timely topic. In the November 2010 issue of *University Affairs*, there was an article by Eisenkraft, “Racism in the Academy.” Eisenkraft outlined some of the experiences and challenges that non-White professors have had in their workplace. The professors in the article specifically cited feelings of exclusion and subtle, structural racism such as questions around English language abilities based on scholar’s Chinese last name. She also noted a Canadian association, Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equality (RACE) that aims to address some of the struggles noted by the professors. This reinforces the relevance of discussing the impact of Whiteness in postsecondary education.

Vidal Chavannes (2012), a doctoral student and Black activist, talked about the role of administrators to create learning experiences that are free from discrimination. In the fall 2012 issue of *College Administrator*, Chavannes was particularly passionate about breaking down social manifestations of stereotypes and the sociocultural impact of silent and systemic racism, especially on Canadian Black youth, as he argued in his 2010 book, *Detox*, specifically citing the role of “bold” educational leadership to create the space in higher education that is antiracist and free from discriminatory barriers (p. 9). Chavannes’s lived experience and academic background provide an insight that is

relevant to our current state of postsecondary education and that acknowledges that racism is alive and well.

From the experiences articulated by Eisenkraft (2010), Stewart (2009), Monture (2009), and Yancy (2008), for example, they are very real faculty voices saying that racism exists in our postsecondary institutions and throughout higher education in Canada. The present study adds the postsecondary senior administrator voice to the conversation.

Critical Pedagogy

Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has had a significant academic impact on the approach to education—not only to avoid the banking analogy of education whereby the teacher deposits information to the student in a transmission approach to pedagogy—but also to approach education as the key to liberation. The concept of the oppressed becoming the oppressors is important to understand in relation to the dissemination of Whiteness and racism too. For instance, the normalization of Whiteness and values informed by Whiteness are socially acceptable and, in an effort to be received as socially acceptable, non-Whites may try to oppress other non-Whites as a means of leveraging their own social value. Freire led the way toward antioppression and antiracist education by focusing on how systems support oppressive practice.

In her research on the role of critical pedagogy to achieve social justice in higher education, Jan McArthur (2010) emphasized that “critical pedagogy . . . involves a strong agenda for change, within education, through education and throughout society” (p. 493). McArthur desires critical pedagogy to be understood as “more than an educational approach; to see it as a movement” (p. 494). Within this movement, McArthur suggests

that there needs to be diversity of perspectives and tolerance of these perspectives and that failure to tolerate difference will “impair critical pedagogy” (p. 497) and disable critical pedagogy, as a movement, to achieve social justice.

To achieve social justice and equity within education, according to Giroux (1989) and McLaren (1989), a critical pedagogy is essential for change. In his article “Schooling as a form of cultural politics: Toward a pedagogy of and for difference,” Giroux (1989) identified the need for a critical pedagogical approach to teaching and learning in order to realize social change. Specifically, Giroux recognized that schools, which are spaces of teaching and learning, can exemplify the “critical interrogation of the silences and tensions that exist between the master narratives and hegemonic discourses” (p.142); that is, schools can intersect the dominant cultural influences with teaching approaches that challenge and question the silent privileges that have become the socially accepted norms. To achieve social change and equity, Giroux asserted that we need to teach educators and students how to question the world around them. Furthermore, Giroux described the education system as being representative of the dominant society and that a critical approach to teaching, in and out of the classroom, is required to raise awareness of hegemony or the dominant culture’s social impact. From Giroux, it is established that social change cannot be accomplished without a new perspective on dominant social norms. Giroux also noted that “central to recognizing the insight that schools are agencies of moral and political regulation is the notion that power is productive of knowledge, meaning and values” (p. 142). Schools, including postsecondary institutions, reproduce the knowledge that the dominant culture desires, and interrupting this cycle of reproduction requires a critical, thoughtful, reflective approach, or praxis, by educators.

Giroux affirms that social change and equity require this critical pedagogical approach in education.

Also in the context of developing critical pedagogy, McLaren (1989) warned that it is imperative that the “politics of resistance” (p. 174) not be ignored. As he clarified:

Resistance occurs as a part of the very process of Hegemony: *not* in reaction to it.

Resistance is a part of the process of negotiation, which works through the ideology-shaping characteristics of the school, and is often the means by which hegemony is secured. (p. 199)

McLaren provided an important context for resistance—that it is a natural, learned response particularly for members of the dominant culture. McLaren articulated that educators need to develop a critical pedagogical approach in order to address hegemony and cannot be faulted for not recognizing it while within the dominant cultural space; until there is a recognition of the dominant cultural influence, it is difficult to achieve meaningful social justice.

Antiracist Education

To better understand systemic racism and responses to racism, the McKinney and Feagin (2003) model is worthy of exploring; it was the result of an antiracist study involving young adults. From their work, they surmised that “giving up racism means not only abandoning racist attitudes, but also relinquishing power and privilege” (p. 251).

This is a powerful statement for anyone, including postsecondary administration. It requires a process of acknowledgment, letting go of privilege, and rebuilding identity. It is a significant task for the system too, since, as McKinney and Feagin outline, there are five categories of systemic racism to be explored: attitude, emotions, ideology, practices,

and institutions. Systemic racism is complex and challenging to overcome including for postsecondary institutions.

In “Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible,” Wildman and Davis (2000) explore concern over the label “racist” and the potential of focusing on naming an individual racist rather than exploring the social environment that enables racism to exist. They were more concerned with how to change systemic racism than in naming racists. Further, Wildman and Davis pointed out that, in fact, the racist label “conceals that racism can only occur where it is culturally, socially, and legally supported” (p. 657). This is a profound approach because it suggested that individual actions and attitudes, while important, can exist only in an environment that perpetuates the attitudes and that can hinder our ability to acknowledge and address the systemic existence of racism. This has particular meaning for me in the postsecondary environment, where often response is centred on individual acts of racism (Calliste, 2000) and does not always translate into how the institution can approach racism and racist behaviours system-wide.

In any discussion of antiracism education in Canada, it is necessary to identify George J. S. Dei’s work in advocating for antiracist education. In addition to editing *Power, Knowledge and Antiracism Education* (2000), Dei specifically identified the challenges of shifting the discussion of antiracism from theoretical to the political (or active). He cited concern over the denial and silencing of racism as the impetus for a more direct, discursive approach, particularly with the prevalence of Whiteness (p. 29). Dei called for politics to focus on how to think through Whiteness as a “system of dominance” (p. 29). He created a sense of urgency for the reader that, despite a lack of

attention to issues of race and racism, the need for antiracism education is prevalent and important; that is, antiracism is about social change. Dei also advocated that antiracism discourse extend beyond race and racism and reflect upon education around difference (1996). Challenging Whiteness and the rationality for the dominance of White privilege is what Dei wished for his readers; he advocated that race and racism cannot be theoretically discussed for change; rather, he provided a context for taking on the challenge to question White privilege and advocate for change.

In the introduction to their book *Power, Knowledge and Antiracism Education: A Critical Reader*, Dei and Calliste (2000) identified postsecondary institutions as an important space for ant-racist education because of the actual and potential social impact of colleges and universities. Dei and Calliste identified the potential for “producing societal change and transformation” (p. 11) through postsecondary institutions and that indicated they “continue to be powerful discursive sites through which race knowledge is produced, organized, and regulated” (p. 11). Identifying postsecondary institutions as places where antiracist education can proliferate aligns well with this study’s assumption that postsecondary institutions, through leadership, may be instrumental in advocating for antiracist practice.

Taking a slightly varied perspective on antiracism through the lens of a female scholar and in a more global context, Philomena Essad (2013) describes antiracism scholars as fulfilling a need beyond scholarship and into social responsibility. In her research on women social justice scholars committing to antiracism, Essad focuses on the role of female scholars striving for antiracism; while this is not the exact setting of this current study, some of Essad’s observations shaped and informed this study’s antiracist

educator perspective in meaningful ways. For example, Essad explains that “antiracism is a form of leadership. [Antiracism] emerges from the need or desire to influence others while seeking to create a more just, humane world” (p. 1395). This insistence of antiracist education as leadership, beyond an education approach, evolves the prospective role of senior administrators to the role of antiracist leader-advocate. This perspective tacitly implores a greater responsibility of social justice and equity for the senior administrators.

Conceptual Framework: Social Justice and Equity

In the spirit of political philosophers John Rawls (1971) and Iris Marion Young (2013), social justice and equity framework shaped this study with emphasis on social cooperation with critical theory approach. Rawls’s theory of justice as a “theory of rational choice” (p. 15) is grounded in the position that to achieve justice for *all*, the focus is on social cooperation so that inequalities are “arranged so that they are . . . reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage” (p. 60). This framework is compatible with this study’s summary that institutional change toward systemic racism is possible through administrative leadership commitment and antiracist education. The fundamental change to the postsecondary education environment requires, as Rawls describes, the “difference principle” (p. 75), where equal distribution (of opportunity, power, etc.) is preferred, but, where inequality exists, such as in dominant, White culture settings, it should be addressed by those with the higher advantage relinquishing power and opportunity first.

Iris Young’s theory of social cooperation addresses this study’s concern of Whiteness and hegemony within postsecondary education; Young explains that “structural injustice, then, exists when social processes put large groups of persons under

systemic threat of domination or deprivation . . . at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate” (p. 52). Just as this study identifies senior postsecondary administrators as accountable for breaking down systemic racism, Young identifies that a “social connection model of responsibility says that individuals bear responsibility for structural injustice because they contribute by their actions to the processes that produce unjust outcomes” (p. 105). That is, in the context of racism and Whiteness in postsecondary education, being conscious of systemic racism and acknowledging that Whiteness exists should necessitate action.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a methodological context for the study, which includes the research design, procedures used to gather data for the study, and an analysis for the data collected during the study. The personal and cultural introduction, briefly outlined in Chapter One, is relevant to this study because as a White, middle-class, educated Canadian senior administrator, the student researcher has direct experience as a member of the senior administrative culture-sharing group studied as well as the experience of unearned privilege. This background provides a context for the interpretations of the literature and study results.

Research Methodology

For this study, the methodology was qualitative research with critical ethnography and narrative inquiry methods. The use of critical ethnography allowed for the use of study culture-sharing groups, that is, senior administrators in postsecondary education. This study was interested in this group's collective and individual experiences and perspectives of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. This qualitative study benefitted from the researcher senior administrator membership (and Whiteness) to engage in the research as both observer and participant. Critical ethnographic method also requires the researcher awareness of subjectivity and that the analysis and interpretation of this study takes into consideration all the particularities and specifics of the culture-sharing group during a specific time frame, in a given context, with particular influential factors. The uniqueness and success of the study rested in the very method of studying a group and the ability of the researcher/participant, to establish trust and context for the research. This study's use of critical ethnography was not only to

acknowledge the researcher position within the group, but also to take a “critical” approach (Creswell, 2008, p. 478) for the purposes of social change in postsecondary education with regard to Whiteness and racism. As Madison (2005) cited in critical ethnographic research about her insider/outsider experience as an African American in Ghana, she “became the subject and object of the Other’s gaze” (p. 541) and while a different circumstance, this study also reflects the researcher’s point of view as both subject and object within the research. This insider/outsider experience complicates layers of the social-political perspective, and the ethnographic method enabled this positionality. This study is informed from a position of advocating for raised awareness of the impact of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education; it cannot feign objectivity.

Using a narrative inquiry method assisted in ensuring that the participants’ stories enriched the research (Creswell, 2008, p. 518). Through the use of narrative inquiry, with participants and self-reflection, this study reflected on questions such as, *is interest in antiracist education by a White person politically correct or socially responsible?* The use of narrative inquiry also infused the study with reflectivity on the part of participants (Fontana & Frey, 2005) and self, which helped to understand the individual perspectives on the culture-sharing group’s response and approach toward Whiteness and racism. Furthermore, Yancy (2008) explained that since Whiteness is “a relationally lived phenomenon [the use of] narrative has a powerful capacity to communicate lived” (p. 34) experiences of Whiteness. Yancy also articulated that “one’s feet must be planted firmly on the ground in order to see the ‘unseen’ of Whiteness” (p. 34). As Chase (2005) explained, “narrative discourse highlights the uniqueness of each human action and event

rather than their common properties” (p. 657). The use of narrative stories fit well with the ethnographic method because the culture-sharing participants’ experiences added depth to the interviews and provided context for the participants’ perspectives.

Research Design

Using qualitative methodology with critical ethnography and narrative inquiry methods, this study pursued exploratory, semistructured individual interviews; collection of relevant documents from the culture-sharing group; coding field notes to discern themes in the content analysis, collection of individual participant stories and restorying; and self-reflection notes through researcher reflexivity. Mazzei (2008) extensively used journaling and self-reflection as a means of informing her research on White teachers’ racial identity since she felt it was important to acknowledge her own response and reflection as a White educator.

Since study involved human subjects, the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 Certificate (Appendix A) was completed followed by approval from Lakehead University’s Research Ethics Board approval (Appendix B). Prior to interviews, prospective participants were contacted and informed consent was received for each confirmed research participant. As a member of the targeted culture-sharing group, postsecondary senior administrators, the study’s researcher participated in the study, too through the inclusion of self-reflections of the entire study process.

After research ethics approval, the first stage of the research involved recruiting participants through invitations (Appendices C, D, & E). Once the participants were recruited, the second stage of the research through semi-structured interviews took place with the consenting participants. The interviews solicited participant perspectives on the

existing challenges and opportunities regarding Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. The interviews required time and trust-building. In addition to the actual research interviews, considerable informal time was spent establishing a foundation and comfort with the participants. Borrowing from Trowsse's (2007) approach, session participants were briefed on the study subject including definitions for Whiteness and theoretical perspectives on oppression and dominant culture (hegemony). This study's original proposal had indicated that group interviews would be available, if desired by participants. This option was articulated in the initial communication with prospective participants. This study's participants did not express interest in group interviews and due to the sensitive nature of the subject, and to avoid alienating participants, group interviews were not specifically encouraged.

For the third stage of the study, the student researcher maintained a self-reflective record to qualify the experience through the research process. Following each interview, notes were transcribed and the student researcher's impressions, thoughts and reflections were recorded. The reflective practice was to contemplate the challenges, barriers, struggles, and possibilities for institutions to engage in antiracism practice in a meaningful way while also constructing a response to the research process. The researcher-participant role is an aspect of being critical and identifying subjectivity, but was intended to augment the whole study and not overshadow the participants' stories, experiences, and perspectives.

Profile of Interview Participants

This study targeted college and university senior administrators. For comparison and sampling sake, participants were recruited from two provinces and three institutions

to ensure some depth and breadth of administrator perspectives. Prospective participants were primarily identified by the location of the institution as this study sought senior administrators employed at public institutions in communities of less than 100,000 and outside of major metropolitan locations. This study's goal was to recruit a minimum of 10 participants, and the recruitment efforts resulted in 13 participants. Seventeen prospective participants were contacted to participate in the interviews (Appendices D & E). While three prospective participants declined to participate, and a fourth expressed interest but was unable to coordinate the commitment, and 13 positive responses for study participants were received; 76.4% of prospects participated in the interviews. The 13 interview participants came from three different postsecondary institutions in Canada and represented colleges and universities. Each interview participant held a senior administrative role at the time of the interview and participants represented two Canadian provinces. Each participant worked at an institution located in a community with a population of less than 100,000.

The interview questions were circulated to participants in advance of the interviews and all participants were asked the same questions. All the interviews took place in person and one-on-one. In the letter of invitation to prospective participants, the option of conducting group interviews was presented if there was an expressed interest; however, since the willing participants for the present study did not express interest in the group interviews, the study did not include group interviews. The average first interview was 120 minutes in duration. Second interviews were conducted with two participants primarily due to insufficient time to complete the full set of questions during the first

interview; in addition, the second interviews were held based on participants' interest in continuing the conversation. Additional interviews were an option for all participants.

In order to facilitate a comfortable, safe space where participants would feel comfortable to share their stories and honest reflections, interviews were not digitally or tape recorded; all recordings were collected through careful handwritten notes. The interview notes included mostly direct quotes as well as summary discussion notes. The interview approach was to balance note-taking with active listening, checking for accuracy and understanding of responses during real-time feedback, and participant engagement. Following each interview, the notes were immediately transferred to electronic format, and these were saved to an external hard drive to ensure accuracy and security of content.

Interview participants were encouraged to be candid and open and stories were encouraged. Participants were assured that their identities and institutions would remain anonymous and kept confidential. As a result, each participant was randomly assigned a pseudonym. Here, in alphabetical order by pseudonym, are the study's participants: Aubrey, Chris, Drew, Kelly, Lee, Morgan, Nat, Pat, Quinn, Robin, Sam, Terry and Wynne. It is worth noting that each participant was first coded with a unique, randomly assigned set of initials and the pseudonyms were then separately matched to the randomly assigned set of initials. This two-part assignment of a pseudonym was to ensure that there is no relationship between participants' identity and the pseudonym assignment. In addition, for the results section, the order of responses is based on the alphabetical listing of the randomly assigned initials and not by alphabetizing the pseudonym. Any reference to the participants' sex or province has been intentionally excluded and the pseudonyms

assigned were intended to not reflect any contemporary assumptions of participants' sex. References to specific institution types and names have been changed to either "institution" or "postsecondary institution." Table 1 (below, p. 47) provides a summary of the participants including senior administrative role, generally defined as either President/Vice President or Senior Director/Dean in order to avoid identifying participants; whether or not the participant had prior experience teaching at the postsecondary level, as a gauge of student engagement and classroom experience; as well as length of service in postsecondary education and specific length of experience in postsecondary administration.

Table 1

Participant Profiles: Summary of Participants' Experience in Postsecondary Education

<i>Participant (pseudonym)</i>	<i>Participant's senior administrative role</i>	<i>Participant's postsecondary teaching experience</i>	<i>Participant's years of experience in postsecondary education</i>	<i>Participant's years of experience in postsecondary administration</i>
Aubrey	senior director/dean	yes	more than 20 years	fewer than 10 years
Chris	president/vice president	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years
Drew	president/vice president		fewer than 20 years	more than 10 years
Kelly	senior director/dean	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years
Lee	senior director/dean	yes	fewer than 20 years	fewer than 10 years
Morgan	president/vice president	yes	fewer than 20 years	fewer than 10 years
Nat	president/vice president	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years
Pat	senior director/dean		fewer than 20 years	fewer than 10 years
Quinn	president/vice president	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years
Robin	senior director/dean		more than 20 years	fewer than 10 years
Sam	president/vice president	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years
Terry	senior director/dean	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years
Wynne	president/vice president	yes	more than 20 years	more than 10 years

Each participant entered into the interview with a unique lived experience and perspective on racism and Whiteness, which resulted in rich and interesting interview discussions. The participants' candor, honesty, and willingness to disclose their

experiences with racism in postsecondary education, was encouraging. For most of the interviews, the researcher's perception was that participants were forthcoming and, to some degree, vulnerable.

Interview participants were well-educated senior administrators with significant experience in postsecondary education. The majority of participants also taught in postsecondary education at some point in their career. The interview participants had a range of 2–35 years of postsecondary education work experience, with a group average of 18.5 years of work experience in postsecondary education and a group average of 8.5 years as a senior administrator. Experience requirements to be hired into senior administrative roles within postsecondary education are typically a minimum of 5–10 years; as a result, this particular subject group exceeds minimum requirements, which established the group as mature senior administrators. The participants included two Presidents, five Vice Presidents, and six other senior administrators representing all postsecondary education service divisions including corporate, finance, human resources, facilities, technology services, student services, and academics. The participants represent a broad cross-section of administration with perspectives from across institutional departments.

More than half of the participants (7/13) bring at least 5 years of private sector experience prior to their postsecondary assignments. The areas of expertise have been informed through education and teaching experience; 10 of the 13 participants had taught at the postsecondary level including 8 who held faculty positions. Nine participants hold graduate degrees and four of them had doctoral degrees, with one participant near the completion of a doctoral credential. In addition, at least three participants held

professional licenses or designations. The interview participants represented an approximate group average of 6.5 years as students in higher education. The interview participants exceeded the national average of educational attainment; from Statistics Canada (2006) census data, 49.3% of the Canadian population over the age of 15 does not have postsecondary education while only 3.38% of Canadians have a graduate degree and only 0.69% have a doctorate-level education. The educational attainment of the senior administrator participant group implies that the participant group is highly educated; therefore, based upon the educational attainment, as a participant group, this study's participants have had access to education and experience to think critically and engage in reflective practice.

All interview participants identified as part of a "White" culture-sharing group; however, four participants also self-identified as first generation Canadians. In this context, first generation refers to the first member of a family to be born in Canada. These participants who were children of immigrants indicated that experience significantly influenced their self-perception and relationship with the dominant culture. Each self-identified first generation participant shared stories of feeling outside of the dominant, White culture. For example, Terry shared that "I have traits of dominant culture—White male—[but] being outside of a 'WASP' culture has meant that I am not 'dominant' culture . . . I get that I am seen as 'that White guy,' but when it's convenient for others to do so, they'll use other characteristics, like [my] last name, to distinguish me." Terry's experience articulated the complexity of physically representing "White" culture, but emotionally identifying with nondominant culture experiences. Another participant, Morgan, talked about appearing to be "White" and a part of dominant culture,

but, due to the experience coming from an immigrant family, sometimes felt like an outsider and that “there were times, because of my background, that there were prejudices against me” (interview notes with Morgan, spring 2013). Another first generation Canadian participant, Robin, simply shared that while appearing to be White, Robin “does not [primarily] identify as dominant, White culture” because of the family’s immigrant background.

As a part of cultural membership, seven participants indicated that they had resided in larger urban cities prior to their current community with a population of less than 100,000. In the bigger cities, these participants experienced greater diversity compared to their smaller cities of residence. “[I] lived in [a large, urban, Canadian city] with different and diverse experiences. [I’m White], but have had different experiences,” Kelly shared. Three participants reflected on their personal experiences of living abroad and travelling extensively as having an impact on their ability to reflect on their own cultural position and to be more open to diversity. “I am White [but] I have lived abroad and have had cultural experiences including as a minority The cultural opportunities [are] experiences that have made me appreciate diversity,” shared Chris when reflecting on establishing a cultural point-of-view. Sam had experiences abroad and reflected on this in the context of postsecondary institutions needing to provide culturally diverse experiences for students to understand themselves as well as their cultural context; Sam’s suggestion is based on personal experiences that exposed Sam to different cultural ways of living and being, which resulted in a greater appreciation of diversity. Based on the interviews, exposure to diverse lived experiences and culture positively influenced the participants’ perspective on their own cultural belonging and acceptance of difference.

The participants reflect a mix of education, experience, and personal culture while sharing the experience of being White administrators at postsecondary institutions in small cities that are predominantly White.

Interview Questions

For each interview, questions were deliberately sent in advance; the decision to send the questions a few days in advance of the interview was to reduce participant stress given the potential sensitivity with the interviews topics of Whiteness and racism. During the interviews, the questions were used to guide the conversation. In most interviews the questions were followed, though in two interviews the conversation was less structured and more stream-of-consciousness for the interviewees. In some interviews additional questions evolved from the discussion and, at the same time, in some interviews, some questions were excluded if it was redundant based on responses already explicitly shared by the participant. The questions were divided into parts for the option of multiple interviews, depending on the preference of the participant. Please refer to Appendix F for a full list of interview questions.

The interview questions did not forcefully address the participants' personal biases and prejudices. They were not interrogated about their own racism or reflections from their own experiential knowledge. This omission was deliberate in an attempt to start the conversation on Whiteness and, subsequently, racism from an institutional and role perspective. It was deemed by the student-researcher that addressing the participant location within racism was more likely to mute the initial conversation rather than lead to further discourse about systemic racism in postsecondary institutions.

Data Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis, a content analysis was primarily used as a method for contextualizing the qualitative feedback into categories for summative purposes. This analysis is included with the results in Chapter Four. As the interviews were completed, thematic responses and categories were formulated to structure the content analysis. The interview content for each interview is represented within the content analysis structure and coded for comparison(s). (Appendix B)

To establish trustworthiness, this study's student researcher was transparent about the process and intentionally invited openness before, during, and after each interview. Participants were reminded of the researcher's ethical responsibilities, that their participation was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw at any time before, during, or after the interview(s). This study's interview technique was to actively check for the accuracy of the interview notes and comprehension of participant responses throughout each interview using a read-back, retelling, and discussion method. The accuracy of the detailed notes were verified with participants in "real time" to ensure participant recall and timely feedback; since anonymity of participants was repeatedly emphasized as a cornerstone of the data results within the present study. During the interview, this study remained open for any concerns, clarifications of responses, or questions from participants with the objective of ensuring the participants felt confident in the notes by the end of the interview. Furthermore, participants were invited to make informational or other requests at any time—before, during, or after the interviews, as desired. Perhaps it would have contributed further to the trustworthiness of the present study's data had the notes been recycled back to the participants following the interviews;

however, there were thorough and appropriate checks of real-time accuracy throughout the interviews. Throughout participant recruitment and interviews, participants were repeatedly welcomed to express any concerns or to request information and ask questions. Following the interviews, no participant made additional information or review requests, which is attributed in part to the professional relationships established prior to study participation coupled with the professional reputation of the researcher and expressed accountability for the ethical treatment of human subjects. Inaccurate depiction of findings would be in conflict with research ethics as well as professional negligence, especially with the dual role as a student researcher and senior administrator. It is worth noting that while participants did not make post interview requests most were engaged in post interview conversations with the researcher, which would have enabled participants to cite concerns regarding response accuracy had there been concerns.

The data collected and subsequent presentation of the study are positioned for researchers and educators in antiracism education as well as administrators of postsecondary education to approach systemic racism with greater insight, awareness and perspective on the postsecondary institutional climate. The data support specific action for social change in postsecondary institutions, as detailed in Chapter Four and discussed further in Chapter Five.

Significance of the Study

Whiteness in postsecondary education, through senior administrators' perspectives, was a worthwhile exploration because, as postsecondary educational institutions, colleges and universities have a leadership role beyond the campus and in the communities they serve. These postsecondary senior administrators influence the

processes that inform the institutional responses to racism to shift and evolve. There is also a dearth of research with this particular group and subject; therefore, this study contributes to closing a gap in the literature on Whiteness and racism in Canadian postsecondary education. The results of this study could influence government action as well as antiracist actions in higher education. Furthermore, the student researcher role as a White member of the culture-sharing senior administrative group assisted in “revealing” Whiteness and racism in postsecondary institutions since, as Yancy (2008) identifies, “as an act of securing Whiteness as invisible, Whites silence, segregate, and delegitimate voices that speak about Whiteness from a nonwhite location” (p. 45). Taking from Maxwell’s research approach (2006) that a study is relevant if failing to do it creates a knowledge gap, this research on Whiteness, racism, and postsecondary education, particularly in a Canadian context, is important. In addition to the organization (Iverson, 2007), faculty (McKinney, 2002; Monture, 2009; Trowsse, 2007), and student (Chaisson, 2004) perspectives, senior administration experiences and perspectives ought to be explored. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to be a part of the voice that is less concerned about being called racist than the impact of racism, systemic or individual.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FINDINGS

This chapter shares the results of the study's research interviews. The findings are organized into thematic responses related to the study and research questions (Chapter One, p. 8): (a) the perception of the role of the postsecondary senior administrators; (b) revealing Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education; and (c) senior administrators' accountability for Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. This chapter concludes with a summary of the eight major findings drawn from the three themes that emerged from the participants' responses.

The main themes that emerged are organized into the three sections indicated above. In each thematic section, there are subsections that categorize the comments and perspectives shared by participants during the interviews. The participant responses are presented by participant pseudonyms and presented in the same order for each subsection throughout the chapter. Not all subsections contain responses from all participants because, in some instances, there was no particular response related to the subsection themes. The themes are ordered with capital roman numerals, I–III, and the subsections are categorized with small roman numerals, i–iv. To refer back to a thematic subsection, the combination of the capital Roman numeral and the small subsection Roman numeral was utilized; for example, section I.i refers to section I and subsection category (i) in this chapter. The participant responses will be ordered as follows: Drew, Sam, Kelly, Lee, Morgan, Nat, Chris, Pat, Quinn, Robin, Aubrey, Wynne and Terry. The chapter's fourth and final section (IV) summarizes the study's major findings.

The results of the present study include qualitative reporting in the form of: (a) direct participant responses that were hand-recorded during the interviews; (b) these

summary discussion notes from the interviews; as well as (c) observations from the interviews. A sample transcription from the interview notes, edited to protect participant anonymity, is available in Appendix G.

Section I: Perceptions of the Institutional Role of Senior Administrators

This research asserts that senior administrators are positioned to influence racism in postsecondary education. To ascertain the degree to which participants aligned their roles with accountability for racism on campus, participants were asked to reflect on the role of postsecondary senior administrators and the senior administration in general. This question was designed to better understand how participants perceive the role and responsibility of senior administrator. The introductory question enabled familiarity with the participants and to understand the full scope of their perception of senior administration. The interview started with this question because it was the “warm-up” question to set the tone and to ease into the remainder of the interview.

Four categories of responses that evolved from the participants regarding the general role of senior administration: (i) senior administrators have a strategic, direction-setting role in the postsecondary institution; (ii) senior administrators have a high-level operational role that impacts the postsecondary institution; (iii) senior administrators are accountable for *and* to the institution; and (iv) there are challenges that senior administrators encounter and have to overcome to achieve institutional goals.

(i) Senior administrators have a strategic, direction-setting role in the postsecondary institution

In all the interviews, participants acknowledged that senior administrators have an influential role for institutional direction-setting, and most participants expressed a

responsibility to support the achievement of institutional goals. Outlining this accountability was helpful in establishing how senior administrators see their roles and determine their scope of influence. Confirming this strategic, high-level role also established a foundation for discussing senior administrator responsibilities later in the interview. Participants identified senior leaders as responsible for strategically guiding postsecondary institutions to achieve organizational goals.

The high-level responsibility for the institution was revealed by Drew.

[Senior administrators have to] steward the organization to a better place—to a “higher” calling. [It’s] easy to get bogged down in “crap” and easy answers aren’t always the right answers. We don’t have the time to think about the long term and impact because [there are] so many demands that it’s hard to take time. [I] have to pull myself away to think about the long term impact [of decisions] on the [institution]. (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Kelly took the senior administrator role quite seriously and holds senior administration accountable

to provide leadership and to be strategic. [Senior administrators have] the ability to move [the institution] forward and create balance to represent faculty and programming, too. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Lee described the senior administrator role as needing “to be a leader—to lead the organization with a beneficial plan for students and staff.” Lee continued to reveal the value of education and the weight of accountability on senior administration to create education to change lives. Lee added,

[Postsecondary] education can break cycles of poverty and [enable students to] develop the skills to live anywhere in the world and driven to do better in life [than family]. Education provides the vision of possibility and a pathway to a better life for our students. (interview with Lee, spring 2013).

Morgan indicated that senior administrators set “direction to make sure the institution’s mandate is realized. [Administrators should be] working in the same direction with the same objective with positive results (students).”

“Senior administrators provide direction-setting and facilitating,” Nat shared and also noted the external role for senior administrators. “[In my role, as a senior administrator,] I feel like I [always] represent the institution.” Nat revealed the senior administrator role as responsible for the institution and the staff, faculty, and students.

Chris pointed out that senior administrators have to be thinking about external stakeholders; senior leaders have to answer to the board and government and the senior administrative role is to “keep on the horizon and look at how things are unfolding to better prepare the institution for the future.” Also, senior “leaders create an external perspective.” Chris went on to elaborate that “senior administration has to be analytical with a focus on government and demographics. Leaders help people make the transition.”

In a separate interview, Pat confirmed that “senior administration influences change, sets strategy, and expands opportunities.”

Quinn discussed how the senior position has a broader scope with more executive-level responsibility to the corporation. “The [senior leadership] role is much more than programs.” Quinn later added that “there is a master planning piece [to the role].”

The participants placed significant accountability on their roles as senior administrators to “create the vision for the institution and take an institutional perspective [and to make] informed decisions with institutional care,” as Aubrey said.

Wynne described the role of the senior administrator to

navigate change as educational leadership is making change happen and transforming the institution as a change agent. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

In the one-on-one interview, Terry proposed that

the impact of senior administrative work is at an institutional level, and level of accountability is significant. Those who aren't in senior administrative roles can have a greater impact on our students day to day. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

(ii) Senior administrators have a high-level operational role that impacts the postsecondary institution

When asked about the general role of the senior administrator, eight of the 13 participants also identified postsecondary senior administrators as having to balance the visionary aspect of the role with the reality of high-level management of operations. This operational aspect of the role ranged from developing policies to delivering programs.

Drew perceived senior administrators as accountable for

leadership, strategic planning, and responsibility for operations to run smoothly. It's a mix of manager and leader. As a senior team we manage processes, policies, and operations, but we also lead. (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Kelly shared a personal account:

[In my position], as one of the bigger middle managers [at the institution], I am always trying to move faculty forward (they are independent) and also balance the needs of the institution and students. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Morgan connected the institution's strategic goal with the operational reality.

Morgan said that "senior administration, including my position, supports the mandate of the institution to help programming deliver its products and services to students."

Nat indirectly addressed the human resources aspect of operations as essential for strong leadership. “[Institutions] need good people in leadership. I love working with “stars” with energy,” Nat enthusiastically shared.

Chris reflected on the bridging role that leaders have in order to “work with board and government adjusting to the institutional-level to create a strategy for the institution to implement.”

Quinn explained that the role of the senior administration includes

layers of administration that are operational and strategic; more enabling than doing. [Senior administration] creates the environment and resources to allow everything else to happen. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Aubrey articulated this strategic and operational balance: “[We] balance the needs of direct reports and the institution, and align the resources and structure to achieve the vision.”

Exemplifying the intersection of operations and vision, Terry’s current senior role had

operational oversight of course and program delivery as well as staffing for programs; quality assurance practices and reviews of programs; and has worked on new program development. [I am] responsible for all academic staff. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Terry suggested that for senior administration there is a fine balance between the long-term institutional vision and the present-day realities.

(iii) Senior administrators are accountable for and to the institution

In response to the initial questions about the institutional leadership and senior administrative role, participants articulated an intense accountability for institutional success. From strategic planning to financial due diligence, the senior administrator participants perceived themselves as accountable and influential. The participants said

this, but it was also apparent from some of the participants' tone, expression, and body language. Some of the participants exposed, directly and indirectly, the stress that accompanies their leadership role.

Drew shared that "it takes courage to make hard decisions." I appreciated the vulnerability of Drew's response because it confirms that the participants feel senior administrators experience the pressure to excel for institutional prosperity and, yet, are harnessed with understandable stress in taking actions and making decisions that impact the lives of students and community. Issues like Whiteness and racism likely only add to the overall pressure felt by these leaders.

Sam reflected on the postsecondary institution, which reflects a unique environment for which the senior administrators are accountable:

The structures, such as senate and faculty, are a "loose association" of academic entrepreneurs. Faculty are neo-autonomous and it doesn't take very long for the faculty to construct their world and classroom. (interview with Sam, spring 2013)

Sam elaborated on this environment as difficult to change, resulting in greater difficulty in tackling issues such as systemic racism. "Radical change is usually only responsive to financial crisis. We need to reward desirable behavior," Sam posed.

Lee described the role "to protect and promote the [institution's] profile" and articulated the social accountability of senior administrators to "navigate through what postsecondary education means and how it's relevant [for students]. Senior administrators are all advocates for the lived experience of students and their reality."

Nat made the accountability to represent the institution a personal accountability. Nat said, "I *am* [the institution]." Nat and Robin, in separate interviews, elaborated on this responsibility by referring to the seniority of their position as directly related to their

degree of accountability. Nat said, “I feel very responsible in the organizational structure with only three positions more senior [than me].” And, Robin shared, “[I am] in fifth place for responsibility of the organization.” Knowing their “place” or rank in the institution implied the significance of their perceived accountability.

Wynne pointed out the external accountability: “[Senior administrators are also responsible] for political advocacy and lobbying. [I need to] fight for the institution with the government.”

(iv) There are challenges that senior administrators encounter and have to overcome to achieve institutional goals

During the one-on-one interviews, the participants were asked about their perception of the role of senior administrators in order to understand the degree to which participants felt responsible for institutional issues. As demonstrated through the participants’ comments above, there was some consensus that the senior administrators are expected to influence institutional goals, directions, and achieve success. The responses also elicited some of the challenges that face the senior administrative post. Some of the challenges related to work habits, the higher purpose of education, and institutional complexities.

Drew felt comfortable speaking very frankly about the pressure on senior administrators to make tough decisions amidst competing demands while still achieving institutional goals: “It takes courage to make hard decisions Sometimes administrators want to run away because they’re stretched for time” (interview with Drew, spring 2013). As Drew shared, senior administrators felt the gravity of accountability in their administrative capacity.

Sam reflected on this institutional challenge.

[Postsecondary institutions] are the most change-resistant institutions in the Western world. They are change resistant because reality has been constructed and doesn't welcome the accountability—faculty change on their own terms. (interview with Sam, spring 2013)

Lee talked about the higher purpose role of the senior administrator and the kinds of challenges that obstruct institutional goals,

Senior administrators are all advocates for the lived experience of students and their reality. Take to heart that we are far removed from the student experiences—our assumptions and experiences blind us. If we engaged people more, students may be more responsive [Decisions] can overruled for the [sake of the] business at the detriment of the student. (interview notes with Lee, spring 2013)

Quinn talked about the struggle of maneuvering institutional directions as program deliveries change and postsecondary education evolves. Quinn noted that

some of the complexities [of academic institutions] are significant; [for example] there are some specialized programs that are very entrepreneurial. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Robin referred to managing internal relationships as a senior administrative challenge; Robin claimed that

the senior admin role is complex. [We] deal with staff, faculty and students. [The role] is political with staff and faculty—you need to get them on your side. You have to have faculty support to move forward initiatives. The postsecondary education administrator is a facilitator and negotiator.

The internal processes that approve [change] are slow. It is tough when students suffer. (interview with Robin, spring 2013)

Aubrey addressed the operational aspect of the senior administrative role but also conceded that there are challenges in matching resources. Aubrey said that

senior administration balances the needs of direct reports and institution to align the resources and structure to achieve the vision. (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013)

Some of the participants also acknowledged the barriers of senior administration's sphere of influence, such as in the daily interactions with students. Terry suggested that the "impact of senior administrative work is at an institutional level and . . . those who aren't senior administration can have a greater impact on our students day to day." Senior administrators are challenged to lead postsecondary institutions while also staying connected to the daily needs of the people in the institution.

Section II: Revealing Whiteness and Racism in Postsecondary Education

An essential finding of this study was the validation and acknowledgement of Whiteness and, subsequently, racism on postsecondary campuses. In the one-on-one interviews participants were asked whether Whiteness, the socially constructed "norm" by which others are measured, and racism, the constructed response to Whiteness, exist in postsecondary education. Participants were also encouraged to share their stories or examples of racism. The responses to these questions evolved into four distinct categories of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. These subsection categories were: (i) senior administrators' recognition and experiences of overt acts and/or attitudes of racism; (ii) senior administrators' acknowledgement and recognition of Whiteness and silent or systemic racism; (iii) senior administrators' perspectives on the impact of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education; and (iv) senior administrators' thoughts on why Whiteness and racism exist on postsecondary institutions and the conditions that perpetuate Whiteness.

(i) Senior administrators' recognition and experiences of overt acts and/or attitudes of racism

The White, postsecondary senior administrators who participated in this study are not immune to the exposure of overt racism. All but one participant cited specific examples of witnessing racist attitudes and/or behaviours. Participants shared examples from the classrooms, hallways, and meeting rooms of postsecondary institutions.

When asked about Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education, Drew reflected on a marketing analogy: “Things are slowly changing. In marketing, you used to only see good-looking, White kids, but now marketing intentionally includes diverse students.” Then, Drew shared a story that touches on the need for postsecondary administrators to be aware of different perspectives and to be prepared to take action,

There was a White student in residence placed in a double room [which was shared with a non-White student]. The parents of the White student refused to have their child stay in a room with a person who wasn't White [even though the White student did not protest]. As an institution [and senior administrators], we [can] influence change and make this an educational opportunity for the student and parents [though not at the expense of the other student]. It's our responsibility not to condone that behaviour—by students or parents. (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Sam disclosed details of an example of racism in the classroom. Sam described a situation where a faculty member “distributed midterm grades [back to the students] by race.” The faculty member wanted to exemplify performance differences by race and show the students “which students (by race) were the highest performers.”

Kelly referred to overt racist attitudes toward Aboriginal people:

You hear that [we're] doing Aboriginal education because “those people” need a lot of help. This should not be the attitude. [The education we provide] should be seamless, with Aboriginal education a part of the fabric of what we do. It should not be “deficit thinking.” This is what we should strive for. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

In the interview, Kelly demonstrated a clear distaste for the comments shared and suggested that it could be overcome by delineating an “us and them” attitude toward Aboriginal people. Kelly added that,

This attitude is prevalent—“we’re helping them”; it’s an attitude of assimilation. [For example], in a meeting to build Aboriginal programming and scholarships as a retention initiative, a senior administrator made an “off-colour” remark that all students should get those benefits and that “[Aboriginal] students get so much.” It’s not uncommon to hear “why do we give [Aboriginal students] money?” (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Kelly displayed signs of discomfort with the conversation and expressed disbelief at the comments heard. Kelly elaborated on other acts of racism with this story:

A faculty member said he’d be better off with right-wing conservative people. He used racially degrading language and vulgarity. He was using inflammatory comments to generate discomfort with students, but many students were offended and the faculty member didn’t realize it. This same professor describes himself [to students] as a “reverse Oreo” (White on the outside, Black on the inside). The professor uses racial slurs to get students out of their comfort zones around the proper use of the English language; uses loaded, harassing terms and abuses position of power. And, this professor doesn’t get it; he doesn’t think his behaviour was discriminatory or harassing. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Providing insight, Lee spoke about how people used to talk of an “Indian problem” of being uneducated, and shared an example of [mainstream, dominant culture] “testing” of Aboriginal children by asking them to relate one object to another, such as “cup is to ____.” Lee said “the “correct” answer is *cup is to saucer*, which is a middle and upper class reference and, so, the Aboriginal students who answered *cup is to juice* were deemed to be less intelligent.” Lee explained that the template for the activity and test, literally and figuratively, “coloured” the experience and interpretation. Lee added compassionately, “If the child's lived experience doesn't include a saucer, how can they participate in the test? There’s an automatic disadvantage.”

Morgan noted that

externally [the institution] is seen as “White” because we have a predominantly White student population. Visible minorities do stand out because they “look different” than the majority, but they’re not different. (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

Morgan also shared a story of difference from a former place of employment:

At [a former place of work], a colleague, who was a visible minority, was perceived as not as smart by her colleagues. I made a point of treating the colleague equally by engaging her. The message internally was clear—she matters, she gets the job done, she is working. (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

Morgan reflected on the story and the impact of comments made by colleagues “when people say things to you don’t forget it—it’s a subconscious hurdle.”

Nat acknowledged the overtness of some institutional racism,

Almost every day there are indicators of racism, such as at a recent committee meeting where someone complained about a guest speaking too long. The guest was Aboriginal and had an important story that we asked be shared. I spoke out and said that if the guest was requested to speak, and then he/she can have more time. [We need] to respect the time needed. There was “surprise” at my response. It’s like saying a blonde joke is unacceptable and then being surprised when you call someone out on telling a blonde joke—they’re surprised.

There has also been a lack of sensitivity around the need for Aboriginal community consultation. I have heard complaints about projects taking too long. A manager was late on a project that needed additional community consultation; there were complaints rather than appreciating the necessary time spent on Aboriginal community and stakeholder engagement. More time was needed; [but] this was about giving space more than time. (interview with Nat, spring 2013)

Nat’s story revealed the unconscious ways in which Whiteness enables overt attitudes of racism to persist, particularly toward Aboriginal people.

Chris spoke frankly that “some people still refer to ‘Indian time’” within our institutions. Chris then shared that the “[other examples of racism] are mostly only conflicts between individuals in the classroom.” However, similar to Kelly’s experience,

Chris shared a story about the unintentional use of overtly racist attitudes and, specifically in this example, the marginalizing use of language.

[My institution has created a government-funded, Aboriginal] transition program with a cultural component to prepare Aboriginal students for postsecondary education. A government representative actually requested that we keep track and “segregate” out the learning for these students. Our group [especially the Aboriginal Manager] was taken aback by this comment. If the government makes an unconscious comment like this, then systemic racism exists. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

The use of language is important and, as Chris’s story articulated, for a White government official to refer to segregating an Aboriginal population demonstrates that there is unconscious, if not conscious, oppression. Chris was not sure if it was an intentional or deliberate act of racism, but acknowledged that

administrators are a very homogenous group. I can count on my hand how many senior leaders are [not White]. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

Chris suggested that this institutional Whiteness and subsequent racism are unconscious and systemic. Chris’s observation is worth noting; in nearly every interview, participants acknowledged that most administrators with whom they are familiar are White. The dominant White culture is literally represented in senior administrative colleagues across Canada, especially in smaller communities and cities. This may reflect dominant culture, but it does not proportionately represent the student population served.

During Pat’s interview, Pat entered the conversation about Whiteness as a novice to the concept. When Pat was asked if Whiteness exists in postsecondary education, Pat requested some explanation. Whiteness was described as the social construct of society and lived experiences; additional academic explanations were provided and it was also suggested that it could be thought of this way—it is everything from the way we

construct our work day to how we teach and manage the operations of the institution.

Upon consideration, Pat responded to the question:

Yes. There are some difference with work ethics and cultural differences around prayer, preferences, and tolerance. [Understandings of] differences may be socially acceptable over time. There is racism and people could be treated differently because of race. (interview with Pat, spring 2013)

Despite the newness of the concept of Whiteness for Pat, there was no confusion about racism and whether or not it existed in postsecondary institutions. Pat readily acknowledged racism: “Yes, it exists.”

Quinn referred to the subtlety of racism, but asserts that it is still overt.

I can tell by body language who’s interested and engaged, and who’s not. In the hallway, I overheard people make comments, out loud but on the side, regarding [Aboriginal] students, saying that they get free education. [This comment] is about ignorance. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Quinn, as a first generation Canadian, also acknowledged that appearing to be White provides “access to conversations that are racist. There’s still comfort in [people having] racist conversations.” Whether discriminatory acts or racist remarks, White senior administrators are exposed to these behaviours and attitudes.

Robin confirmed that Whiteness exists and shared a story about how Whiteness is manifested in a faculty member’s attitude.

Whiteness does exist in postsecondary education. [At my institution], there are a lot of international students, and some are being unfairly profiled by faculty, mostly because [the students] struggle at first with the environmental change. Some faculty are profiling students and are really tough on these students. There are cultural shifts and there’s discrimination toward difference. A faculty member pointed at an [Asian] student and called him “international,” but the student is Canadian. (interview with Robin, spring 2013)

While calling someone “international” may not seem overtly racist, Robin implied that it is the White privileged position that enabled the faculty member to categorize the student as different.

Another example of racism as a consequence of Whiteness involving a faculty member was shared by Terry.

A faculty [member] made a comment [regarding the Aboriginal experience] that was a lightning rod that created significant acrimony and [it] was offensive. It was considered to be a racist comment. The comment created so much havoc and a wound that is deep and long-lasting. The impact is that belief systems were trivialized.

[Postsecondary institutions] are diverse places, and they should be. With diversity is conflict. Differences introduce challenges—this is not new The conflict is oftentimes exacerbated by race or ethnicity.

[As a result of this situation], there is now the opportunity to have the inclusion of diverse [perspectives] as a part of an overall curriculum review. [But] there are White faculty now reluctant to include Aboriginal content [for fear of getting it wrong]. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Terry’s story exemplified the complexity of institutional struggles when racism exists.

(ii) Senior administrators’ acknowledgement and recognition of Whiteness and silent, or systemic, racism

Intertwined with the participants’ experiences with racism in postsecondary institutions, the senior administrators also acknowledged silent and systemic racism in higher education. Every participant recognized postsecondary campuses as structures that thrive in White reality. Participant responses also exposed systemic racism as taken-for-granted and unconscious, and most participants recognized silent racism as a symptom of Whiteness.

Drew acknowledged systemic racism and articulated the challenges.

There are times when racism is blatant, like when parents of a student in residence didn't want their child to share a room with a [non-White] student, and this is easier to deal with. The more subversive racist actions are more difficult to address [because] they are not obvious; for example, a dress code cannot be preference to "uphold a standard"; it has to be equitable [or it could be a] violation of the Human Rights Code. (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Drew pointed out that "Whiteness is taken for granted [and], we don't think about it—we don't necessarily 'see' it." Drew shared a story about the challenges of operating in social reality that is systemically racist.

At [my former place of employment] we received funding for an Aboriginal [service position]. There was a diverse selection committee, including Aboriginal representation. There were two qualified candidates—one was Aboriginal and one was not. The selection committee didn't like the Aboriginal candidate, and the Aboriginal community did not think the person who wasn't Aboriginal should get the position. As a result, the position was not filled and the money was sent back.

After sharing the story, Drew shared the concern that the community lost the resource by having to return the funding. Systemic racism also contributed to the fact that there was only one qualified Aboriginal applicant; as Lee addressed separately, and noted, oppression has caused a displacement of Aboriginal people within our Canadian institutions.

Sam noted that the faculty at the institution was "quite diverse, but that diversity did not translate at the staff or senior administrative levels." Sam continued, "however, there can be racism in programs." Sam suggested that "we need to diversify students from different countries into different programs." Sam explained the creation of a new scholarship program to encourage international students to select different programs of study as one way of diversifying the programs.

Another participant, Kelly, acknowledged that "racism exists, but it's more because of a lack of awareness and unintentional rather than deliberate and hateful. It's

more systemic than individual.” Kelly also discussed the lack of self-reflection amidst some staff and faculty, which contributes to perpetuating the dominant culture, White-as-norm. “We have faculty who are not aware of their Whiteness and unaware of their actions and the impact on students.” Kelly went on to be specific about some of the ways silent racism differentiates based on the dominant culture experience:

There’s a level of intolerance with [Aboriginal] people in the region, but not for other groups [from] outside of Canada. If they are treated differently, you don’t hear about it.

I lived in [a large Canadian city with] different and diverse experiences. I’m White, but have had different experiences [In urban centres, diversity] is not about being tolerant or culturally sensitive. It’s about the fabric of the community. You become a part of it. It is what it is. Big cities are diverse everywhere. At all levels, being White in [a large city] is different from [my current city].

I never heard as racially charged comments in [former large city] as I have heard in this [smaller] city. [The city] does contribute to the problem [because] there’s unease with “others.” If there’s already cultural diversity [in your community], you may define yourself differently. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Lee postulated that “when we say ‘different’ we mean less than; we teach difference very early on and we construct learning of difference; [for example], we are always encouraging children to describe and think about what’s different.” Lee’s insight was unapologetic and expressed with certainty regarding racism and Whiteness in postsecondary education. Lee elaborated on Whiteness in education and beyond and its impact.

Just like Canada and legal systems, education systems were created by people who are White. [Education] is a systemically racist structure founded on values that are middle-class Whiteness; whatever grows out of the environment is unconscious. If you don’t have the conscious eye on [Whiteness], we do more of the same Addressing the “other” is an add-on and inconvenience. The “other” is an issue because of the White norm. (interview with Lee, spring 2013)

The notion of the “other” culture, race, or perspective as an “inconvenience” fits with Nat’s earlier example of participating in a consultation process with an Aboriginal community; the authenticity of engagement is questionable if the context and rules are not fluid and negotiable. Lee said “addressing the ‘other’ is an add-on and inconvenience. The ‘other’ is an issue because of the White norm.”

Lee attributed racism in postsecondary education as proliferating oppression,

Yes, racism is in postsecondary education. Our politeness kills us. Our politeness is oppression. We like to think our society has advanced, but racism is alive and well. For example, did you know that Black dogs have a difficult time being adopted? (interview with Lee, spring 2013)

Lee shared the example of the Black dogs to demonstrate how White norms are infused in our experiences and subconscious in all facets of our lives.

When asked about Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education, Morgan took a different approach and reflected on institutional priorities to overcome the impact of Whiteness and structural racism:

We do have a focus toward Aboriginal communities within our population. We want to grow the Aboriginal student community. We focus on supporting diverse learners; we go “above and beyond” to address their needs. This feels good. (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

Morgan observed and recognized deliberate institutional efforts to diversify the student population and also acknowledged, as a White administrator, that the effort is rewarding for the dominant culture members. Morgan’s comment that it “feels good” was arguably patronizing, though from the interview the comment was not intended in that spirit. When Aboriginal programming is in a White space, this attitude exists unconsciously.

Nat confessed that

[While my institution] doesn’t “look” diverse compared to [larger, urban cities], we embrace diversity, though it’s more theoretical than real Racism exists at

a personal level and systemically. Even those who know better, who should be “politically correct,” will say things. (interview with Nat, spring 2013)

Nat followed up stating that

Aboriginal people are struggling to hold onto their culture. There’s bias against treaties and to get beyond them. There are some attitudes that [suggest] it would be easier if they let their culture go. [There is still an] urban myth that [Aboriginal students] get free education. (interview with Nat, spring 2013)

Another senior administrator addressed racism in postsecondary education as an unconscious product of all White administrations. Chris was not sure if intentional or deliberate acts of racism exist but acknowledged that “the predominance of White culture is reflected in our leadership, [though] this is not necessarily intentional.” Chris suggested that this institutional Whiteness and subsequent racism are unconscious.

Chris identified the reality of the community operating in the ways of the dominant culture:

[In our community] we have a very homogenous environment—[this is evident in] ethnicity, race, and the way we are in the classroom. There’s a rigid approach in the classroom. We teach the way we were taught. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

Chris reinforced the reason Whiteness is perpetuated. Chris went on to share a story that required a reflection of White privilege:

[Our community has a] large Aboriginal community, and I went to school with many Aboriginal students, but it was with a White perspective. I never knew what they went through. Recently, an Aboriginal friend from high school described what he went through to [participate in sports] and to go to school. I didn’t know that my friend had to sleep on couches in the city. I didn’t know all the challenges he went through to be a part of the basketball team. Whiteness contributes to this experience. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

Chris never realized, as a teenager, the struggles the friend encountered and that White privilege prevented “seeing” the reality. Chris elaborated on the White cultural norms,

Our structure and measurement is White. Our Aboriginal student population is not reflected in our employees. This is not necessarily intentional, but we measure on White constructs. For example, in reviewing international credentials for hiring faculty, we had a candidate for a faculty position in a science program who was a recent immigrant and couldn't have his qualifications certified in Canada. Even though he exceeded the education requirement, he couldn't be hired. This was not deliberate, but our social constructs prevented that candidate from having access to the opportunity. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

Pat acknowledged the existence of Whiteness, without commenting on specific examples: "Postsecondary institutions have a preference for White norms."

Quinn picked up on the evidence of Whiteness and explains that,

Yes. Racism does exist in postsecondary institutions. They are a reflection of society—a cross-section of demographics. All people and groups have values and experiences. [Institutions] employ people and teach students. Racism exists. It reflects society in and out of institutions. [There is a] default position rooted in the values and beliefs; [there is] an assembly line of how we do things and rationalizing the Whiteness by saying that's the idea of the majority. That is, it's okay because the majority agrees. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Quinn's metaphor of Whiteness as an assembly line of beliefs is a poignant metaphor because it reflects the inherent normalization and taken-for-granted nature of Whiteness. Quinn went on to point out that all the provincial counterparts in the same position—at institutions in small *and* large communities—are also a part of the White majority. Quinn noted that "at the provincial level, [my counterparts] are all White."

Quinn provided additional insight "in [my current community], there is a greater understanding of the Aboriginal population compared to my former community." Quinn alluded to this relationship and culture make-up of community as having created greater tolerance.

Generally, now, there's more tolerance and, with encouragement, institutions are a safer place. Overt racism has diminished, and people can't get away with it. There's a desire for students to have a positive experience. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Quinn sounded hopeful in the interview that cultural tolerance creates a safe space in the postsecondary institution.

Aubrey reflected on appearance of racism and Whiteness at postsecondary institutions.

Whiteness does exist. It's the whole system. There are expectations of how we enter education and participate in postsecondary education. Administration at my [institution] is not diverse. There are not any visible minorities. It is [literally and figuratively] White. Leadership looks White and [we're] in a significant Aboriginal region, but there's still not proportionate representation. (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013)

Aubrey continued to expose the subversive nature of institutional racism,

Yes, [racism] exists in postsecondary education. It's not outwardly demonstrated, but I have heard comments over the years, especially about students, related to time, attendance, and participation. [There are] general differences in understanding cultural norms. I noticed that racism [in my community and institution] is more subtle and focused on Aboriginal people. (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013)

Similar to Kelly's observation, Aubrey noted that proximity to an Aboriginal community influenced Aubrey's perception of the degree of racism toward Aboriginal people. It is worth noting that all the participants, who are White senior administrators, reside in communities that are in close proximity to First Nation communities.

Wynne reflected on a long tenure in postsecondary education and shared that

Whiteness was completely prevalent at all of institutions [where I have worked]—with exclusively White administration and White campuses. Where “colour” existed, it was exclusively Aboriginal. Each campus had a significant “Native” student population. But, at one institution, with a 20% Aboriginal student population, there was not a single Aboriginal professor until I hired one. At another institution, there were two Aboriginal professors, and at [a third institution], there were zero Aboriginal professors. The professors did not reflect the student population. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

Acknowledging the lack of representation of diversity within postsecondary institutions,

Wynne stated that

Racism is rampant in postsecondary education. My position provides me with access to attitudes and actions that are racist; people saying things that they wouldn't say to an Aboriginal person, for example. It's covert, but it's there. I call people on it and, as I become known, people don't say those things to me.

Wynne's honesty revealed the access to White privilege that includes senior administrator exposure to conversations and attitudes that are discriminatory and racist.

Terry acknowledged that "Whiteness exists—it is socially constructed."

Sam noted that the faculty at the institution was quite diverse but that diversity did not translate at the staff or senior administrative levels. On the matter of staff representation, Kelly, Chris, and Aubrey elaborated on Sam's comment by noting that the exception at the administrative level seemed to be with Aboriginal leadership positions, which were primarily occupied by administrators who self-identify as Aboriginal.

(iii) Senior administrators' perspectives on the impact of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education

Drew discussed the need for different approaches toward addressing Whiteness and racism and the need to be aware of varying perspectives. This identified need manifested from a story about a well-intended, White administrator trying to provide internal diversity education following a racially-charged situation involving Aboriginal staff on campus, by inviting the Aboriginal staff to educate non-Aboriginal staff. The administrator thought the suggestion was inclusive of the Aboriginal perspective, but the Aboriginal staff response was that the administrator's request was like asking a rape victim to be "the rapist's therapist." For Drew, this was a very compelling metaphor and one that had not been previously considered; Drew shared that the request had not been thought of through the victims' lens. The aftermath of this scenario had two outcomes: (a) the administrator learned to consider the impact of a situation or request from multiple

perspectives; and, at the same time, (b) the administrator was slightly silenced for fear of being offensive with future requests of inclusion. This example is poignant in connecting back to the idea of being mindful of different perspectives of racism, as Drew illustrated:

Sometimes there can be good intentions to diversify, but it cannot always be the dominant culture interpretation of what diversity looks and feels like. The nondominant culture has to be engaged in the process, yet, at the same time, doesn't want to be the "rapist's therapist" so to speak. Approaches toward addressing Whiteness need to be aware of varying perspectives. (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Drew reflected further on the impact of Whiteness and racism.

Then, there's also the issue that some institutions face of having diverse staff who are then, perhaps because they are perceived as having adapted to the dominant culture, are deemed not diverse enough. This is difficult, too. (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Sam shared some lessons from experience working with international students whose skills did not align with institutional academic requirements:

We did have [international] students with poor academic preparation, but our [institution] was supportive and created programming with a more broad applicability and appeal. The programming was created by faculty with an international base.

[The institution] is "cross-cultural" and very open to the Aboriginal population, [too]. (interview with Sam, spring, 2013)

Nat provided insight on the concepts of racism and diversity for institutions and how understanding the impact of diversity means understanding that "diversity is about equity, which is not always 'equal.'"

Aubrey suggested that the impact of Whiteness could be that nondominant cultures, in an effort to belong, want to assimilate with the dominant culture.

[My institution] may be attracted to some who are diverse because of the homogenous population—some people want to assimilate and "fit in" and have an immersion experience in Canada. (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013)

Wynne provided contextual insight to illustrate the impact of Whiteness and racism within postsecondary education.

There was an Aboriginal science professor, not a cross-cultural professor, and he wanted to acknowledge his ways of knowing into science. This is good.

It has become different for Aboriginal professors to be able to climb university ladder; their form of knowledge is not recognized and they have had to learn the “White man’s” game in terms of building careers in academia. Similarly, when a female professor has a kid, they extend their tenure because they know their scholarship will suffer. This is especially true for Aboriginal tenure-track women. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

In recognizing the barriers within academic institutions, in a separate interview Wynne admitted that “there’s reluctance for Presidents and Deans to call people on [racism]. There’s an aversion for people to deal with tough issues.”

Terry discussed the practical implications of diversity and dominant cultural adaptation to diversity within postsecondary education: “[New to us are] the Muslim students using the washrooms—washing feet in the sink. [As a result], the institution has adapted by creating a prayer space with a place to wash feet.”

(iv) Senior administrators’ thoughts on why Whiteness and racism exist in postsecondary institutions and the conditions that perpetuate Whiteness

As noted in sections II.i–II.iii, every interview participant acknowledged that racism, including systemic racism and prevalence of White norms, exists in postsecondary education institutions. Participants were asked if they had any thoughts on why Whiteness and racism exist in postsecondary education. The senior administrators suggested factors that perpetuate racism, such as community composition, institutional rigidity toward change, human behaviour, misperceptions, and degree of cultural exposure.

Drew reflected on why racism exists and deemed that “there’s good and bad in everyone,” suggesting that good people can make bad decisions and vice versa.

Sam suggested that “Whiteness in the institution depends on the institution. At large, urban institutions with more than 50% non-White students, it’s different than in a smaller, mostly White community.” At Sam’s current institution,

the community is challenged with racist, generational attitudes, but [the institution] is a little different with a [significant Aboriginal influenced] history and Aboriginal student population. [The institution] is more tolerant than the community, [though] there are some faculty [members] with a fear of difference. (interview with Sam, spring 2013)

Kelly explained that “[racism] exists in how people perceive others.”

In response to why Whiteness and racism exist in postsecondary institutions, Morgan proposed that

in an environment with people, you can’t take those prejudices away. Maybe, over time, with education and exposure, those attitudes will change. (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

Pat also referred to the geographic location of the institutions as influencing the existence of racism and Whiteness:

The location of the institution also has an influence on the impact of Whiteness—larger, urban centres have more difference already. (interview with Pat, spring 2013)

While in separate, individual interviews, Quinn concurred with Pat

Yes, Whiteness exists and is prevalent in non-urban centres; Whiteness is rampant due to demographics, geography, and community profiles. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Robin approached the issue of why racism exists by signifying that it is related to perception.

The [faculty and staff] perception of international students is not necessarily reality. If your culture does something one way it’s difficult to change. Cultural

experiences influence the success of diversity. (interview with Robin, spring 2013)

Once again, reference to the location of the institution, size of the community, and exposure to cultural diversity were noted as the cause of racism by Kelly

Racism exists in [small communities and institutions] because people have not lived elsewhere and have had no experience or exposure to diversity or difference. There is discomfort with the unknown. Discomfort often manifests into actions or behaviours that are not ill intended, but are harmful. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Terry focused on human behaviour coupled with cultural assumptions to explain the reason for Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education.

We have implicit assumptions of normative behaviour. [For example] there's an implicit assumption of time that is recognized as generally agreed upon, but if you, Krista, are late, you are forgiven because it's assumed that you have a busy schedule. If you were Aboriginal, there could other assumptions [about deference for time]. Systems don't always flex themselves, such as the cultural notion of time. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Terry shared another story related to the impact of implicit assumptions:

We have many implicit assumptions with us. The [institution] has a commitment to international students. [We have a lot of] students from different countries, and some of these international students exhibit different "norms." Grades are determined by professors based on student assessment, but for some [of these international] students, there is an aggressive negotiation for grades—the perspective on the relationship between effort and outcome differs. It is socially constructed differently by different cultures. Negotiation as an undercurrent of grading is new to [our professors].

Our "norms" require adaptation. Campuses need to be prepared with systems in place to serve these new, diverse students. If we are not mindful and do not adapt, we are in trouble. Our normative practices need to adapt—[that is] evolution of humankind. If we do not adapt, there will be failure. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Terry continued by elaborating on why institutions may be reluctant to change—for example, the fear of affecting quality or standards. Terry went on to encourage

institutions to adapt implying that as adaptation occurs the reasons for racism are diminished,

New students are adapting to many variables, and [institutions] have to support this adaptation. Being adaptive is not equivalent to reducing a standard. That is, changing something is not tantamount to lowering a standard. Just because a student is coming to our country doesn't mean we don't have to adapt, in fact, we *do* have to adapt. A system needs to adapt to be successful. [An example of adapting is] the Mandarin language option at TD Bank machines in some communities. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Reference to the geographic location was also mentioned by Terry and the willingness of that location to adapt as positively impacting the permission for diversity to thrive:

If we are rigid to adaptation, the new members will leave. This adaptation is not easy. The adaptation is challenging—this is true with domestic students in classes with many international students. The willingness to be flexible has a positive response. [For example, Toronto] has adapted to the influx and needs of the growing [immigrant] population. Geographic areas adapted and enabled further immigration. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Section III. Senior Administrators' Accountability for the Existence of Whiteness and Racism in Postsecondary Education

From the interviews, the participants disclosed that (a) senior administrators have a significant accountability for setting the institution's strategic direction and achieving goals; and (b) Whiteness and racism exist in Canadian postsecondary education and in their institutions. Given these findings, the next question that asked of the participants was how do you think senior administrators can influence the existence of racism on a postsecondary campus? The participants' responses emphasized a sense of responsibility to influence the organizational climate and take action, yet they perceived it to be an overwhelming task. The responses to this question have been organized into three subsection categories: (i) senior administrators are responsible for taking action when

racism occurs including suggestions for specific actions; (ii) senior administrators have an accountability to acknowledge that racism exists; and (iii) perceptions on the complexity and challenge of addressing Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education.

(i) Senior administrators are responsible for taking action when racism occurs including suggestions for specific actions

Drew reflected on the impact of hiring as an action for change. “Staff is also more diverse now” because “hiring practices have changed, for example.” Drew also considered the importance of exposing staff, faculty, and students to difference experiences: “We need to raise awareness of others’ experiences.”

Sam presented the notion of focusing on the student rather than the faculty and staff to address institutional racism. Sam suggested that

the most important educational experience a [North American] student can have is to study abroad. For example, to go to Japan and not understand what’s going on. The “fish-out-of-water” experience will enable students to use their problem-solving and sociability skills. Presuppose that you put yourself in someone else’s place. It will give students a chance to be more likely to think of how things feel for someone in a minority experience.

You can do diversity training, but students themselves embrace diversity enthusiastically. The critical thing is to change the student body; to bring students together from different backgrounds. Faculty may ask about the “foreigners,” but the students embrace the diversity. (interview with Sam, spring 2013)

Sam took a proactive approach that focus on the next generation rather than addressing the existing generation(s).

In the one-on-one interview, Kelly echoed this idea of administrators being prepared and proactive:

Senior administrators can educate, influence policies, and champion [equity]. This is more than intercultural coordination. It needs to start with senior administrator

training on diversity issues. Senior administrators needs to encourage “speaking up” and be aware of positions of power. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Senior administrators have to create the space, literally and figuratively, for institutional dialogue on racism—perhaps it becomes a standing agenda item at strategic planning sessions or becomes a part of regular internal information and education opportunities.

Morgan identified that institutional accountability for racism can have a positive impact on the organizational climate.

Overt racism is minimized because of the culture established by the [institution’s] leadership. Our response to acts [of racism] is severe. [At my institution], we actively target a diverse student population, so that helps eliminate it. We have cross-cultural experiences and learning. We acknowledge and respect differences, and will help to support [them]. We are inviting difference and will evolve and change as a virtue of inviting difference. (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

Several of the participants said that senior administrators are responsible for raising awareness and educating about racism on campus. References to “raising consciousness” about racism, “respecting differences,” and “leading by example” were this study’s participants’ key themes regarding the senior administrator’s role in responding to racism in postsecondary education. There was little specificity on how raising consciousness would be achieved, but participants did suggest that continuing to educate staff, faculty, and students on racism and the impact of racism would be important through continued education and professional development. Nat elaborated on the idea of senior administrators leading by example saying:

Senior administrators [should be] challenging and educating others by having others think about diversity and equity. Senior leaders have to set the example. It’s learning. The more you say it, the more you mean it. It becomes what you believe. (interview with Nat, spring 2013)

Chris suggested that senior administration can address Whiteness and racism by “challeng[ing] the status quo and having a strong consideration of diversity in faculty and

staff groups.” This touches on the institutional approach toward hiring. As well, at postsecondary institutions, Chris recommended that “we use our understanding of First Nations and bring in programs that change perspectives.” With diversity in faculty, especially with a representative proportion that reflects the student population, Chris suggested that institutional programs and approaches to learning can challenge the social construct of postsecondary education.

Senior administrators can challenge the status quo and have a strong consideration of diversity in faculty and staff groups. [We can] use our expertise to educate and transfer down to students. For example, [in policing instruction], if we have a White instructor talking about diversity from a White perspective, does this break it down? If we have diverse instructors, we can challenge the White construct. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

Chris made the point that White senior administrators need to relinquish power through our hiring practices, program curriculum development, teachings, policies, and practices to enable diversity to really *be* at our institutions.

Pat referred to actions already taken as suggestions for eliminating racism: “[My institution] has done a lot to be inclusive including professional development, awareness, spiritual rooms, and extending ourselves to make others comfortable,” and continued by adding the senior administrators’ accountability to take action against racism (and other issues). “If we have a small group of people with needs, as [an institution] we have needs and have to prioritize.”

Despite separate interviews, several of the participants talked about the responsibility of the senior administration to support the students’ learning environment by addressing issues of racism directly. Quinn pointed out that

senior administration has the power to affect policy, strategy, and values to influence the existence. It’s hard to fake this stuff. Senior administrators can dramatically influence [the institution] through directions and leadership.

Administrators need to be persistent at driving out [uninviting] practices [through] professional development, training, education, and calling people on racist actions and comments. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

This statement reinforced the accountability of postsecondary institutions and senior administrators for setting up an environment for students to experience success.

Aubrey also suggested that senior administrators can role model antiracist behaviour to eliminate or minimize racism as well as influence hiring practices to enhance the diversity of employees.

Senior administration can be a role model to influence, eliminate, or minimize racism. We can model the behaviour in how we interact and hire. There is some diversity, but not representative [of student population]. We had a student with some mental health needs who felt picked on and discriminated against. I listened to her and that's what she wanted—to be heard and not dismissed. (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013)

Wynne shared a personal story to illuminate the need for senior administrators to take action against systemic racism and dominant culture ideals:

There was a [Black] female student who failed student placement twice and failed the program. The student claimed instructors were racist in their observations. I thought she was reading too much into the comments In retrospect . . . she does have an argument. The student identified that she got into the program like the Aboriginal students, but she did not have the same supports—Black counselors, for instance. She was taken as a “special” student and then stopped being special. [There were] no Black professors, no Black students, and a White teacher and placement supervisor. It bothered me a lot [and] I didn't do enough. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

Wynne noted that in another situation, with similar variables, the response was different.

I approached things differently for other Chinese students who struggled with placements in all-White environments, so I consciously did things differently and organized placements in a more urban, diverse setting. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

Taking action after acknowledging the impact of the dominant culture norms was Wynne's professional response. Wynne recognized that the lack of exposure to diversity had an impact on reactions and responses. Wynne said,

There's a lack of familiarity with differences, attitudes and community norms. Providing access to the nondominant experience is helpful. [For example,] to break through barriers, I brought grads to reserves and had people speak to the grads—from an angry Aboriginal perspective to thoughtful Elders. I had students reflect on their experience. I am unsure of the authenticity of their reflection, though they could articulate where they're coming from. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

Perhaps one visit to a First Nation is not enough and even runs the risk of putting the Aboriginal community on "display" for the dominant culture, but from the interview, it seemed that it was a starting point for talking about prejudices and misconceptions.

According to Wynne, for the majority of the students it was the first time they had ever gone to a First Nation reserve and had a conversation with members of a First Nation.

As a professor, I gave students the assignment to identify impediments for Aboriginal students to succeed. There is a lack of role models for Aboriginal students [and other students from nondominant cultures].

Sometimes you have to take an approach that is palatable—such as a general respect or caring campaign, that is acceptable by everyone, to deal with issues like systemic racism; it becomes the cloak for dealing with systemic racism. (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

Wynne acknowledged that institutions may need to take a "palatable" approach versus a radical approach in order to engage all stakeholders, but that it can be done.

Senior administrators also have to identify barriers to education for students not from the dominant culture, and they need to work diligently to eliminate those barriers, and, in doing so, Wynne suggested this will break down the impact of Whiteness.

Expecting people to travel to [our city] is an impediment. We need to bring education to the Aboriginal community. We do not understand the reserve support

structure. White professors don't necessarily want to teach in the north and Aboriginal students don't want to travel for the same reason."

Recognizing our need for overcoming Whiteness, we should have Cultural Competency Training Program. We need diverse staff and faculty. We need to expand to other cultures. We need to recruit minority students, and we need to give non-White and Aboriginal students a way to navigate [our] bureaucracy. Aboriginal students are not used to the same amount of bureaucracy and formality as White culture. Our "White" ways are different. History matters, and we need to inform positionality and cultural experience(s). (interview with Wynne, spring 2013)

With regard to specific actions to eliminate racism, Terry reflected:

[We need] greater integration of domestic with international students—engaging the community. The [institution] needs to change along with the communities. The students are spending years of their life in [postsecondary education], and the community has to engage them. We do not want to isolate our community members. If our community doesn't evolve and change, we will suffer with our homogeneity. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

(ii) Senior administrators have an accountability to acknowledge that racism exists

When discussing accountability for Whiteness and racism in postsecondary institutions, participants commented on the responsibility on the part of the senior administration. In addition to suggesting specific actions, the participants described the accountability for acknowledging racism as a part of the necessary actions.

Kelly identified the need for senior administrators to be accountable to address institutional racism and said, "you have to have the uncomfortable conversations."

Lee's response also spoke of the necessity for senior administrators to acknowledge racism.

We witness behaviours and have to take action. We cannot tolerate it. It matters. Racist language and flippant comments can have grave impacts. Words can hurt, and language matters. (interview with Lee, spring 2013)

When asked about the existence of racism, Morgan responded and discussed the role of administrators as influencing the degree of institutional racism.

Yes, racism exists everywhere that there are people. As administrators, the level of racism will be heightened or reduced based on leadership. [At my institution], there's reduced racism because of the leadership. Senior administrators can influence racism by not endorsing it and by not perpetuating it. (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

In the one-on-one interview, Nat echoed the comments of Kelly and Lee

Senior administrators [should be] challenging and educating others by having others think about diversity and equity. Senior leaders have to set the example. It's learning. The more you say it, the more you mean it. It becomes what you believe. Leading by example, in the moment, you need to address [racism] and not reinforce it. Culture is complex. (interview with Nat, spring 2013)

Throughout the interview with Chris there was a consistent message of addressing racism systemically through education and awareness of privilege. In response to acknowledging racism, Chris reiterated, "It's educating about the technical and fundamental aspects of the social constructs to be thriving members of society. We will never meet the needs of society and industry if we don't embrace others." Chris elaborated on this notion of acknowledging racism to the reality of demographic changes facing postsecondary institutions across Canada:

It's important to keep our perspective. Diversity of this institution is changing. We have more Aboriginal, immigrant, and international students. It has changed a lot. We need to keep our eye on the horizon and prepare for this change and diversity of culture, religion, and language. It's important for us to be cognizant of how we prepare our students for the changing world. (interview with Chris, spring 2013)

Pat supported the role of senior administration to raise consciousness of the dominant culture impact on racism. "Senior administrators can be inclusive and educate—raising awareness of privilege."

(iii) Perceptions on the complexity and challenge of addressing Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education.

Expanding on the accountability of senior administrators to acknowledge Whiteness and racism, the participants identified potential actions as well as challenges to addressing racism. Participants identified institutional challenges and barriers for senior administrators. These challenges also relate back to the theme on why racism exists in postsecondary education (refer to section II.iv, above); the barriers to conquering racism create the opportunity for it to persist.

The challenge in balancing perspectives was noted by Drew

There can be difficulty in sorting out the “truth” of a situation [such as] harassment. It can be hard to sort out what to believe—was there an unintentional misunderstanding or deliberate action [of racism]? (interview with Drew, spring 2013)

Sam took a bigger picture consideration of challenges that face our global positioning and its impact on higher education.

In North America, I worry that we’re in last place for internationalization. Our globalization experience is that everyone wants to come to us—that is, North Americans are the “rock stars” of the global village because our language (English) and culture is desirable. [In most other countries around the world] people are multilingual, open to diversity, and like being internationalized at an accelerated rate. There’s strength in second-language programming, too. (interview with Sam, spring 2013)

Kelly addressed the issue of balancing priorities that Drew raised regarding the general challenges facing administrators; Kelly focused on the need to make antiracist efforts an administrative priority:

Yes, postsecondary administrators can influence [racism], but they need to put in the time to educate, and that doesn’t always happen. People may think they don’t need to educate [about racism], but subversive action indicates education is needed. (interview with Kelly, spring 2013)

Lee had a clear social position throughout the interview for the need to advocate for equity and racial justice, but also acknowledged that “this is not about demonizing others. It’s about taking a conscious approach.” Lee identified the challenge of addressing racism and educating about Whiteness in postsecondary institutions without “finger-pointing” and assigning blame; Lee reinforced the need for a conscientious approach toward internal education and awareness.

Identifying the challenges that students might face, in response to being asked how a non-White student might experience Whiteness, Morgan proposed that

Until a non-White student understands [the institution] and feels included they will feel alienated, unless they have high self-esteem or confidence, until they are included in the larger student body. Students who are not White will have, at least, a period of adjustment. [My institution’s] leadership’s intolerance for racism helps with students who are “different.” (interview with Morgan, spring 2013)

In response to the challenges of racism in postsecondary education and the experience for non-White students, Nat poignantly noted the challenge of a White senior administrator breaking down the systemic privilege that is afforded. In an effort to avoid recentering the White perspective and power, Nat espoused the position that

I’m just learning to understand. I don’t understand the impact of Whiteness on a non-White student experience. I listen, but I don’t know. I provide support for change and I’m interested. I would ask the students how to fix it. (interview with Nat, spring 2013)

In terms of senior administrator accountability for racism, Chris proposed this challenge facing postsecondary institutions: “If we continue to approach racism with the constructs that we have, we can proliferate—stay White.”

Pat proposed that the challenge is for senior administrators to be proactive about antiracism education. Pat asked, “Does not talking about racism make it unimportant? We shouldn’t only be reactive.” This question followed, “Should it be on the executive

agenda? to which, Pat replied, “Maybe.” Pat made the point that institutional efforts should be deliberate and not only responsive.

Quinn referred to the challenge of racism in terms of the barrier it presented for students to be successful.

The role of the [institution] is student success for career and growth. Having racism exist doesn't help [students] achieve their goals. Our White structure is based on average, White students. (interview with Quinn, spring 2013)

Robin identified challenges for senior administrators to address racism in postsecondary education:

We need to reflect students in the curriculum. If 50% of students are diverse, you cannot teach as if it is a homogenous group. We need to educate staff and faculty. Faculty can be intolerant toward racist and discriminatory attitudes; they have to find a way to educate all students. [Also,] we need to build international perspectives into the existing curriculum to reflect the students' realities. (interview with Robin, spring 2013)

In time, refusal or reluctance to change will impact institutions, especially institutions located in areas with a decline in demographics and outside of major, urban hubs, Robin deduced.

Aubrey suggested that the challenge of addressing racism, including in hiring practices, required a willingness to step outside comfort zones:

People need the opportunity to become more familiar [with diversity]. Human resources practices and postings are based on cultural norms. How do we encourage more applications? We need more flexibility and inclusivity in [our] approach. (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013)

Wynne continued by commenting on the accountability of addressing racism in terms of the challenge facing leaders, “There is an aversion to dealing with difficult things—it's a balancing act of protecting the institution and the rights of the student.”

Administrators are legally required to abide by the Human Rights Act alongside the legal

accountability to their employer; Wynne suggested that discerning the right path is not necessarily clear, particularly with tough and sensitive issues like discrimination.

Terry outlined some key challenges for senior administrators and institutions to tackle racism and promote diversity:

[Postsecondary institutions] are diverse places, and they should be. With diversity, part and parcel is conflict. Differences introduce challenges—this is not new. With cultural differences there will be conflict and racism. The conflict is oftentimes exacerbated by race or ethnicity. We need to wake up to the change to survive, if we want to prosper with immigration.

The issue is not just identified culture—the notion of someone different [nontraditional student]—is a long-standing challenge for [postsecondary institutions]. We need to change. This is important for our economies of society. We need to reevaluate what we really value as [postsecondary institutions] or we will fail to serve the communities as we could and should and the future will be impacted. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Terry expanded on this dilemma and the challenge of racism within academia:

Academics are among the most educated—they should be the most open-minded, but they're not. Faculty teaching and all aspects of service need to reflect the values of diversity. (interview with Terry, spring 2013)

Terry asserted that students want to see institutions adapt to their changing needs from content delivery, ways of learning, and inclusion of cultural differences.

The participants identified multiple approaches and actions to eliminate racism and Whiteness, with considerable recognition of the challenges facing senior administrators.

Summary of Study Findings from the Interviews with Senior Administrators

Regarding Whiteness and Racism in Postsecondary Education

From the senior administrator participants' interview responses, eight major findings emerged from within the themes detailed above: (a) Whiteness and racism exist

in Canadian postsecondary education and, in the context of this study, it is prevalent at institutions located in populations of 100,000 and with predominantly White administrations; (b) Aboriginal populations are disproportionately targeted in the overt acts of racism noted by these study participants; (c) international students are most likely to face systemic racist attitudes within the classroom; (d) senior administrators are positioned to influence postsecondary institutional culture and are accountable for addressing institutional issues, including the prevalence of Whiteness and racism; (e) senior administrators have to confront acts of racism through policy and practice and also role-model desirable behaviour; (f) senior administrators have to communicate messages of inclusion to stakeholders through responding to overt acts of racism and by challenging White norms in educational practice such as in hiring, instruction, and service; (g) exposure to diverse cultures and experiences positively impacts tolerance and understanding while reducing overt racist acts and behaviours; and (h) the postsecondary education institutions failing to address Whiteness and racism will not be well positioned to attract a changing demographic of students.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the study. This discussion elaborates on the study's academic relevance, academic contribution, and implications for higher education, Whiteness, racism and antiracist education. The chapter is organized by following through on the research questions identified in Chapter One; a thematic discussion emerged for each research question:

(1) *What is the prevalence of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education?*

In response to the prevalence of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education, this chapter discusses the relevance of the study's findings, including recognition of Whiteness and racism, for higher education in Canada.

(2) *What is the role of senior administration within postsecondary institutions?*

The implication of the findings related to the role of senior administration and opportunities for external and governmental engagement are discussed.

(3) *Do senior administrators acknowledge the existence of racism in their institutions?* To address this question, participants' perceptions are discussed in this chapter.

(4) *What is the understanding of Whiteness and racism, and what is the role of the senior administrators to address racism in postsecondary education?* This chapter discusses the academic contributions from this study's findings for understanding Whiteness, racism and antiracist education and accountability in postsecondary education.

Research Relevance: What is the prevalence of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education?

This study is socioculturally and politically relevant to research on higher education, antiracist education, and leadership roles in postsecondary education. The findings (a) expose perceptions of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education; (b) elucidate the value in raising consciousness of the dominant, White culture to aid the change of racist perceptions; and (c) examine the intersection of geographic location and experience in perpetuating Whiteness and racism. This section elaborates on these findings and their academic relevance.

As stated in Chapter One, Whiteness and racism exist in postsecondary education in Canada. The White-as-norm is reflected individually and systemically. The findings confirm this position. The findings of the present study indicated that participants acknowledged Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. The impact of Whiteness and racism is that White privilege is sustained and has negative impacts on non-White communities. Within Canadian higher education, this also means that institutions are not addressing the needs of *all* learners—subordinate cultures are not equitably represented on the staff, faculty, administration, processes, or structures. The White, dominant population continues to define the constructs in which our postsecondary institutions operate (Dua, 2009; Monture, 2009; Wise, 2013).

For antiracist educators, the raising of the dominant culture's White consciousness is considered critical for taking action against racism (Dei, 2007). Participants in the study acknowledge that the recognition of the existence of Whiteness is a first step in addressing racism. However, as Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) note,

As Whites gain consciousness of the racialization of their identity, some feel guilty about their association with a group that has perpetuated racial oppression. Such shame can be immobilizing to the extent that it interferes with the construction of a progressive White identity that is psychologically centered and capable of acting in opposition to racist activity. (p. 10)

The dominant culture's realization of privilege manifests into a guilt that can create a systemic paralysis resulting in inaction, perpetuating Whiteness and creating a fear of association, which results in an absence of conversation around racism (Kivel, 2002). The present study's findings that there needs to be a higher order responsibility to address racism in order to "get over" the fear of being called racist suggests that senior administrators, in their direction-setting roles, could be that voice in institutions of higher learning. The indication from participants that there is the need for someone to be accountable for an institutional climate and strategy that leads to addressing racism means that senior administrators have a responsibility to prioritize issues concerning racism.

Systemic racism is prevalent. It is not going to change unless there is a concerted, deliberate effort (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). This study corroborates Kincheloe and Steinberg's (1998) research that found to break down racism, the dominant culture needs to experience the loss of social and economic benefits and that unless exposed to the loss of benefits associated with privilege, the dominant culture will actively perpetuate White privilege. Kincheloe and Steinberg's study suggests that for the dominant culture to relinquish power there has to be a tangible benefit. Is social justice and equity a sufficient reward? Perhaps not for all, but for those who are reflective and consciously aware of the

detrimental, unjust impact of their privilege, as well as the social impact, it ought to be sufficient (Quaye, 2012). At the same time, there is a recognition that the dominant culture does suffer when socio-economic and political benefits are not equitably accessible and, in fact, it potentially compromises the quality of life for all; perhaps this reality may incite the dominant culture to reconsider the injustice of unearned privilege. This present study tries to draw attention to Whiteness and exposes racial injustice in postsecondary institutions. If exposure to racial injustice is required to change dominant culture behaviour, successful antiracist efforts require the space to have these difficult conversations (Britzman, 1998) in order to bring White privilege to the surface. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) expanded on this and talked about the role of educational institutions: “they must develop creative and compelling ways of talking about racial identity, racial privilege, and racial discomforts that allow students and other individuals to name their previously unspeakable feelings and institutions” (pp. 16–17). As the present study’s findings revealed, once the conversations begin, the acknowledgement of racism soon follows.

This study’s relevance to research on White privilege and Whiteness is the recognition of the participants’ reality of Whiteness within the postsecondary structures including a lack of diverse representation at the senior administrative level and the acknowledgement that being a member of the White majority presented access to oppressive attitudes and behaviours. Throughout the interviews, there was overt and subtle evidence of Whiteness revealed. Patterson (1998) says this exposure to racist actions manifests to become normalized in conscious and unconscious ways throughout

our institutions, media, and language (p. 104). The lived experiences of the participants are relevant to the ubiquitous reality of Whiteness in contemporary Canadian institutions.

As already established in research by Calliste (2000), Dua (2009), Monture (2009), Schick and St. Denis (2005), and Stewart (2009), racism is pervasive in postsecondary education. As outlined in the literature review in Chapter Two, Canadian research on the impact of racism in higher education has primarily focused on faculty and students. This study contributes the senior administrators' perspectives and experiences regarding Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education with a focus on institutions in communities of less than 100,000 people. Adding the senior administrative voice has to be contextualized since the participants were White and in positions of institutional power. Tatum's (2000) research supports the claim in this study's findings that the participants suggested that exposure to cultural experiences, and the existence of diversity in these communities, impacts the degree of racism. From Pat Gurin's research (as cited in Tatum, 2000, pp. 22–23), Tatum shared that “students with the most diversity experiences during college had the most cross-racial friends, neighbours and work associates nine years after college entry” (p. 23). Tatum elaborated by pointing out that because people unconsciously self-segregate to be with culture-sharing members, college facilitates a space where culturally diverse students interact. Similar to Tatum's claim on the relationship between exposure to diversity and self-segregation with like cultures, participants in Harper et al.'s (2011) study on the experience of Black, male resident assistants at predominantly White universities consistently identified that a lack of experience with racial diversity in White students' “home communities of origin” (p. 188) resulted in student surprise when the Black, male resident assistants did not align

with popular and social stereotypes of Black culture; thus, experience begets understanding. This was central to the present study's findings and apparent in the richness of the participants' responses; the participants noted that the ease of acknowledging systemic racism in postsecondary education is aligned with the degree of exposure to diversity.

Responses in the present study indicate that the degree of experience with diversity has a direct relationship to the overtness of the racism witnessed in the institutions and communities. This correlation is supported by Tatum (2000) and Harper et al.'s (2011) articulation of the relationship between experience, community, and racism. In alignment with the present study's focus on participants residing in smaller cities and participant responses consistently relating the degree of racism experienced as a characteristic of the geographic reality, Peake and Ray (2001) explored the literal and metaphorical geographical locations, spaces, and communities in Canada and recognized that

the skewed and highly urban character of the distribution of people of colour in Canada results in a low probability of white Canadians encountering or being aware of everyday experiences of racism and the ways in which race is normalized in representations of people and place. (p. 181)

Peake and Ray's identification of the subconscious self-segregation in communities and how, by design, these communities perpetuate the "great, White north" (p. 180) is analogous to the commentaries by Sam, Kelly, Chris, Quinn, and Aubrey, some of the study's participants, that outside of Canada's urban centres there is less exposure to cultural diversity and, due to lack of exposure and understanding, racism is easily

detected; this present study's finding is significant from an antiracist educator perspective because it literally locates spaces that need the education. This study is a witnessed reality that these smaller communities, even within the walls of postsecondary institutions, are spaces where hegemony easily persists.

These senior administrators contribute to institutional climate and influence the institutional agendas that impact the faculty, students, and communities (Chapter Four, section I.ii). Since "in college classrooms, as in other settings, Whiteness operates on all levels" (Maher & Tetreault, 1998, p. 140), it is imperative that institutional leadership be conscious of the impact of racism in order to do the work of breaking it down (Quaye, 2012). Senior leaders are positioned to engage their institutional communities in the education and conversations about Whiteness (Kezar et al., 2007) and the privileges it affords (McIntosh, 1988).

The participants' acknowledgement that racism exists in postsecondary institutions and their ease in identifying examples of racism within postsecondary institutions implies that Canadian postsecondary education has to adapt and change as Canada's population and demographic needs evolve. Henry and Tator's (2009a) research on racism in Canadian universities supports this claim. The present study was pursued to contribute to an understanding of the opportunities and challenges within Canadian higher education. The perceptions of the senior administrators gleaned from the findings will inform antiracist education praxis in Canada.

Implications of the Study's Findings: What is the role of senior administration within postsecondary institutions?

In addition to the relevance of this study to postsecondary education, leadership, Whiteness, and racism, and the academic contributions from the study's findings, there are a few research and policy implications that emerged from the findings. These implications may be of value to government agencies, such as Ministries of Education, in the following ways: (a) leadership acknowledgment of Whiteness opens the door to meaningful discussions on the impact of Whiteness and the reality of racism in education; (b) racist attitudes toward Aboriginal people and communities disproportionately persist, reinforcing the need to create opportunities for exposure to racial diversity to foster intolerance for racism; and (c) senior administrators have an accountability to lead institutions to challenge White norms and role model antiracist practices.

One of the research participants, Lee, shared the idea that consciousness of Whiteness and its manifestation is the only way that White society (Wise, 2013), individuals (McIntosh, 1988), and postsecondary educational institutions (Chesler et al., 2003) can begin to participate in genuine cultural exchange and overcome systemic racism. Individuals are so afraid of being called racist that they are handcuffed to silence, and the same is true for higher education. Antiracist education work needs to happen within postsecondary education, and this study supports other research findings, such as those of Kezar et al. (2007) and Quaye (2012), which suggest that senior administrators are poised to lead the way. To put the antiracist education framework into action Karumanchery (2005) and Dei (2014) provide pragmatic suggestions for institutions of higher learning, but maintain that identifying the oppressive structures of Whiteness and embracing the antiracist educational philosophy is required in order to make use of the practical tools for change.

For some of the interviewees, the concept of Whiteness was unfamiliar. During these interviews, time was spent talking about Whiteness and how it has been defined in this study. Understandings of Whiteness had an impact on quantity and depth of participants' responses; an understanding of Whiteness prior to the interviews enabled a more fluid conversation and ease in participant reflection. For those who were less familiar with Whiteness, more time was spent brainstorming and forming perspectives on Whiteness. In some ways, the participants without a preconceived notion of Whiteness were able to articulate their impressions in a less formal construct, which made it spontaneous and more accessible. For example, Morgan and Pat used simple institutional constructs, such as time, as demonstrative of dominant, White norms. Familiarity with Whiteness enables a deeper understanding of dominant, White social constructs and how they manifest into racism. The research implication here is for more education and facilitated high-level discussions about White privilege, racism, and their institutional impact. As one of the participants in Dua's (2009) research shared and as Kezar et al.'s (2007) study revealed, when racism is on the executive-level agenda, it has the positive effect of eliminating silent, institutional racism.

A few participants, Sam, Lee, Chris, and Wynne from the present study demonstrated an understanding of Whiteness and racism. Lee displayed an exquisite sensitivity toward the power a White senior administration yields and actively demonstrated a consciousness of the privilege experienced as a White, senior administrator. Other interviews revealed a depth and care for the matters of diversity and racism that need the space to be explored. These informed participant responses imply a

need to discuss equity barriers and to explore ways to prevent discriminatory actions at our postsecondary institutions; this could manifest into provincial government initiatives.

A significant implication of this research is the need for antiracist education specifically targeting racism toward Aboriginal people. In this study, senior administrator participants aligned the questions about Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education to experience of racism toward Aboriginal students and communities. All of the study participants claimed to work in communities with notable Aboriginal populations and at institutions with a focus on providing access and support services for Aboriginal students, even though all the postsecondary administrator participants were White. Most of the participants also cited that the oppression of Whiteness was primarily toward Aboriginal people and students; and Chris, Aubrey, Kelly, Nat and Morgan could cite or acknowledge having witnessed specific acts of racism toward Aboriginal people. Some of the senior administrator participants also talked about racism related to the experiences of international students and nondominant Canadian cultures, but the focus of the majority of the interviews was on Aboriginal people. This finding identifies a serious implication for government and ministries of education and higher education; there is a need for all levels of education to address discrimination toward Aboriginal people and communities, which is supported by Monture's (2009) research.

The present study reveals that educational leaders have accountability for shaping the institutional culture. All the senior administrator participants acknowledged that racism exists and articulated a sense of responsibility to address this institutional racism.

The implication of this study's findings is that government agencies and/or antiracist educators can call upon senior administrations to subjugate racism.

Student Researcher Reflections: Do senior administrators acknowledge the existence of racism in their institutions?

Recognizing Whiteness and acknowledging our privilege have been central themes in this research. The interviews with senior administrators reinforced the importance of talking about racism and the systems that enable it. The affirmation of overt and subversive racism in postsecondary institutions by these well-educated, experienced, and influential senior administrators exemplifies the need for antiracist education in Canada's colleges and universities.

The presidents who participated were engaging and insightful during the interviews; they were thoughtful in their reflections and did not try to diminish the seriousness of racism in postsecondary education. They were forthcoming with examples and suggestions on counteracting Whiteness, which leads to wondering if there are more opportunities, within our institutions, to hear our leaders speak so candidly and deliberately open conversations amongst colleagues that could have a positive impact on antiracist efforts. As Dua's (2009) and Kezar et al.'s (2007) research demonstrated, and as Dei's (2000) antiracism framework supports, if leaders talk about racism and deliberately illuminate the institution to real issues of racism and barriers to diversity, it has the greatest impact for institutional change.

Participants were not asked if they ever participated in racist behaviour or actions, nor were they asked if they hold any prejudices or if they consider themselves to be racist. These questions were deliberately excluded to not incite the participants to conceal

their perspectives related to Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. Perhaps these questions could be included in further studies, but for this study the focus was on their senior administrator perspective on racism and Whiteness in postsecondary education and to not focus on their individual attitudes of racism. There was also an assumption that if any of the participants defined themselves as racist they were unlikely to reveal that in the interviews since the research assumptions and this study's goal of contributing to the abolition of racism in postsecondary education were openly disclosed to participants.

Participants did not indicate any involvement in racist conversations or actions, but most shared that they were exposed to these kinds of conversations or actions, which confirms that racist dialogue is still mainstream, even if behind closed doors, and, perhaps, more than we want to acknowledge. Arguably, there has been social progress in matters of equity, such as the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, and antiracist education, such as March 21st as the designated Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day, but postsecondary education institutions should be exemplary spaces of social justice and equity. It is incumbent upon postsecondary institutions to engage in critical pedagogy in and out of the classroom. Senior leaders seeking social justice within their institutions, particularly the White administrators, need to consciously question hegemony and facilitate antiracist efforts.

It is a challenge for White, senior administrators to meaningfully construct antiracist efforts; there is a risk that White, senior administrators' antiracist efforts could subconsciously focus on Whiteness rather than the impact of Whiteness. As a result, the intent of the antiracist efforts could be lost and, as a result, perpetuate dominant culture

ideology and racial oppression. This is the fear of critical race theorists—that the dominant culture blindness will recentre Whiteness rather than dismantle dominant culture. In this case, antiracist efforts may require senior administrators to engage critical race theorists (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005).

In the sociocultural, political context of the world in which we live, there is an inevitability of conflict and unearned White privilege. As the present study's participants shared, there are deeply painful reminders that racist attitudes, actions, and behaviours exist in our staff, faculty, students, and institutions, but senior administrators influence the degree to which Whiteness informs our institutional constructs. Institutions can start by treating racism as the serious problem that it is—even when we do not witness it. Postsecondary leaders need to address the seriousness of racism inside our institutions to influence what happens when our postsecondary members are outside of the institution; just as Gurin's findings (as cited by Tatum, 2000, pp. 22–23) proved, exposure to diversity or racism impacts students long after they graduate.

What has become more and more apparent through this study is that to create a meaningful postsecondary educational experience for students, senior administrators need to address racism and take action, with or without external or governmental incentive. As demonstrated in this present study, achieving social justice and equity requires a consciousness of White privilege and antiracist action. Senior administrators can embrace their leadership role to achieve this justice within postsecondary institutions and contribute to a meaningful, engaged educational experience for students.

Academic Contributions: What is the understanding of Whiteness and racism and what is the role of the senior administrators to address racism in postsecondary education?

The present study's results contribute new, contextual perceptions on Whiteness and racism while also affirming existing academic research on Whiteness and racism in higher education. This study's original point-of-view (culture-sharing member/student researcher interviewing Canadian senior administrators) also contributes to existing knowledge of Whiteness, racism, and leadership in postsecondary education. This section discusses the academic contributions of this study's results. The findings contribute to academic investigations of Canadian postsecondary education, Whiteness, and racism with specific support toward academic understandings: (a) of educational leadership accountability for antiracist education in postsecondary institutions; (b) that talking about racism is emotional and educational leaders need to create safe spaces to facilitate the opportunity for honest conversations about overt and silent racism and its impact; and (c) the relationship between the tolerance for racism and the degree of familiarity with cultural differences.

The present study on the perspectives and experiences of senior administrators on Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education contributes to existing academic research on racial justice and equity. This study's findings connect to research in the areas of Canadian higher education, leadership, policy development, antiracist education, White privilege and Whiteness, racism, and challenges of racial equity in postsecondary education, particularly for smaller Canadian communities with populations of less than 100,000 where there are fewer immigrants and less diversity; more specifically, for the

participants' communities the rate of immigration is between 1/5 to 1/3 of the rate of the nearest large, urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2011). The study confirmed, through the participants' responses, that racism exists in these communities and postsecondary institutions are not immune to racism; in fact, the results indicate these predominantly White communities are more likely to experience overt racism.

The findings of this study contribute to antiracist education efforts in higher education. Senior administrators are the "face" of the institutions and, as such, they represent the institution's perspective. In the present study, and in many higher education institutions, leadership is White (Calliste, 2000; Monture, 2009; Stewart, 2009), and this implies that White, senior administrators must acknowledge that racism exists in higher education to eliminate it. The understanding of senior administrators' consciousness of White privilege informs antiracist education efforts in a very specific way. That is, in order for antiracist education efforts in postsecondary education to be holistic and meaningful, White, senior administrators must take their leadership roles seriously and acknowledge Whiteness and racism in order to establish equitable institutions of higher learning.

From their research in college classrooms with White instructors and mostly Black students, Maher and Tetreault (1998) diagnose the challenge in postsecondary education as "the pervasive power of Whiteness as a feature of the intellectual dominance of the academy, wherein the universalized knower and known are always assumed to be White" (p. 155). For the present study, the institutions were predominantly White and are hegemonic by design, constructed on White ideals and norms. The people are mostly White and the culture is White, which makes it imperative that senior

administrators wishing to evoke social justice and to break down dominant culture take a critical pedagogical approach (McLaren, 2007) toward the Canadian postsecondary environment. McLaren articulates role of this dominant culture and the distinction between “Whiteness” and being “White”

Whiteness must be abolished because it is the major enabling condition for white supremacy and racialized prejudice. Of course, to say that whiteness must be abolished is not the same as saying that people who are considered white must be destroyed. (p. 258)

Harper et al. (2011) also identified that the lack of diversity in leadership perpetuates the hegemonic reality, resulting in a lack of diversity within the student population; as a participant in Harper et al.’s study said, “[the institution] says it wants more minorities, but it has no minorities higher up” (p. 190). A participant in the present study, Wynne, also talked about the need for racial diversity within the administration, faculty, and staff. A more diverse postsecondary community challenges the dominant culture constructs in a way that White senior administrators, alone, cannot access.

Diverse viewpoints need to inform educational leadership. Stewart (2009) positioned that the postsecondary system needs to shift and evolve in a way that makes his nondominant membership in academia uninteresting. Stewart alluded that having diverse faculty in postsecondary education should *not* be a novelty. Contributing to this need for students to “see themselves” in higher education, this study revealed senior administrators, such as Chris, Aubrey, and Wynne, shared that position; participants realized that hiring within postsecondary education needs to be conscious of student representation and society. “It is clear that at the level of faculty membership . . .

universities don't look a whole lot different than they did when I started my undergraduate career in September 1983, when it comes to integration along ethnocultural lines" (Stewart, 2009, p.33). Stewart and the present study's participants acknowledged that it should be incumbent upon the institution to reflect the student population and its diversity.

To be forthcoming about the intent of the research and the research assumptions, as well as the study's goals, was an important aspect of the interview preparation. Ethically, the participants needed to know the details of the research in which they were agreeing to participate, but also that the research is not objective and that the student researcher has informed perspectives and a role within the research. The exposure of the research intent is also possibly why three prospective participants declined to participate; it is possible that those prospective participants may have worried that they would be defined as racist because of their dominant culture membership and/or may have feared the nature of the questions and potential damage to their institutions or status and position at their institutions. There were two distinguishing characteristics of the prospective participants who declined to participate: (a) they did not personally or professionally know me (student researcher); and (b) they were White. The second characteristic is not particularly informative since 13 White senior administrators chose to participate. The fact that the prospective participants did not know me is likely a more significant variable in determining the willingness to participate in the interviews. Without knowing researcher, the prospective participants could not confidently discern the ability to maintain research rigour and ethics with their anonymity, and they may not have wanted to talk about a subject, like racism, that is socially and emotionally charged with someone

who is unfamiliar. These prospective participants likely did not feel comfortable talking about Whiteness and racism because they felt it would be a vulnerable conversation or they did not agree with the premise of the research.

Talking about Whiteness and racism is emotional (McKinney & Feagin, 2003). It requires a thoughtful, honest approach, and participants need to feel safe (Tatum, 2000; Tilley & Powick, 2007). In Quaye's (2012) research on White faculty teaching about Whiteness, participants documented the sensitivity of the experience, especially as the awareness of White privilege became conscious to White students. Quaye (2012) and Tatum (2000) noted that, due to the emotional and personalized nature of Whiteness and racism, it is important to facilitate discussions in an honest space and with clear rules for engaging. As a senior administrator and student researcher conducting the interviews, it is speculated that the study's interviewees were receptive to participating in this study, in part, due to an established relationship or even vague familiarity with the researcher. This implied that familiarity with the participants and senior administrative membership contributed positively to interviewee engagement. This approach informs methodological opportunities for future research with senior administrators.

The degree to which racism is perceived as deliberate equates with the degree to which the study's participants were tolerant; that is, the more unintentional the racism was perceived to be, the more forgiving the interviewees were. This builds upon McLaren's (2006) idea of social acceptance of hegemony by virtue of accepting social norms. For example, Aubrey, whose family is "bicultural," extended tolerance toward individual acts of racism; Aubrey said "people need the opportunity to become more familiar [with diversity]" (interview with Aubrey, spring 2013). In our discussion,

Aubrey seemed to accept that ignorance facilitates bad behaviour and that education is the key. It was intriguing to me that Aubrey was forgiving of racist behaviours even when those behaviours have a personal impact; Aubrey recognized that White privilege and hegemony are unconsciously learned and need to be systemically addressed.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Chapter Six summarizes the study and uses the results to respond to the research questions from Chapter One. Finally, this chapter also examines this study's research limitations and recommendations for further study.

Summary

In Chapter One, this study identified a gap in academic research on Canadian postsecondary senior administrator perspectives of, and experiences with, Whiteness and racism in higher education. Through a critical pedagogy-informed social justice framework, this study asserted that senior administrators are positioned to influence an institution's strategic planning and action to eliminate racism. It further asserted that postsecondary educational leaders set the institutional climate and are positioned to become a voice of intolerance. This study attempted to address this gap in academic research by interviewing senior administrators regarding their perspectives on Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. This study's findings demonstrated that postsecondary senior administrators acknowledge that racism, individual and systemic, exists and that the institutional leadership is well positioned to influence organization culture and attitudes toward racism.

For this study, the research questions were embedded into the interviews. The interview questions began with formulating an understanding of the participants' perspective on their institutional roles of accountability and responsibility within the organization. The questions explored the participants' understandings of Whiteness and racism and facilitated the sharing of experiences of witnessing racism especially within

postsecondary education. These questions naturally evolved into discussion around the responsibility of senior administrators for individual and systemic racism on their campuses. Through the study, participants exposed an intersection of educational leadership and institutional racism in which systemic change is possible.

The literature review in Chapter Two evolved from the research questions to identify the major theories that informed the study including: (a) white privilege; (b) hegemony; (c) social justice and equity in Canadian higher education; (d) critical pedagogy; and (e) antiracist education. The findings from the literature review positioned the present study firmly within a social justice and equity framework that exposes the incompatibility of hegemonic institutions with the higher order obligations of a just society (Rawls, 1971).

The present study's qualitative methodology and research design is detailed in Chapter Three. This was an ethnographic study using narrative inquiry and content analysis. An overview of participant recruitment and engagement as well as the process for data collection and analysis was also explained. The methodology complied with Research Ethics Board and Tri-Council requirements for research involving human subjects.

Chapter Four described the results of the present study. Excerpts from the participant interviews were shared in the following thematic groupings including: (a) the perception of the role of the postsecondary senior administrators; (b) revealing Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education; and (c) senior administrators' accountability for Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education. Following the detailed results, chapter four concluded with eight major findings from the data collected; some of the findings

included a sense of urgency for institutions to respond to systemic racism, the perception that racist attitudes and behaviours toward Aboriginal students are disproportionately greater, and the perception that senior administrators should lead antiracism education coupled with a sense there is a lack of expertise in how to lead these antiracist efforts.

Chapter Five amalgamated the insight from the literature review and the results to lead the discussion around the academic relevance, contributions and implications of the present study. The discussion reinforced that systemic racism exists and that the impact of Whiteness has to be consciously identified and understood to engage in antiracist education. The discussion also identified the need for postsecondary institutions to take a lead on antiracism efforts.

Research Question(s) and Responses

As shared in Chapter One, the key research questions guided the study and interviews. Through the literature review, conceptual framework and results of the study, the following conclusions and responses to the research questions were made:

(1) What is the prevalence of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education?

Claiming that Whiteness and racism, individual and systemic, exists in postsecondary institutions, the study's participants were able to identify their dominant, White culture as a privilege and indicated that non-White students are disadvantaged in a mostly homogeneous environment.

(2) What is the role of senior administration within postsecondary institutions?

Participants of the present study found that senior administrators have the role and accountability to change the organizational culture and climate toward racism and are positioned to navigate an institutional response to racism.

(3) What are senior administrator perceptions of racism (including whether or not it exists)?

The senior administrators unanimously confirmed that postsecondary institutions are embedded in the social construct of Whiteness and that there are overt and systemic acts of racism. Participants were able to cite specific examples of racism and the way in which Whiteness manifests and perpetuates racism. The participants concluded that the administrative role is accountable for dealing with racism on campus, albeit not always adequately equipped with antiracist tools to do so. Moreover, some participants expressed concern about their own White identity causing the focus to remain on “being White” rather than addressing Whiteness as the cause of racism.

(4) What is the understanding of Whiteness and racism and what is the role of the senior administrators to address racism in postsecondary education (in Canada)?

As contemporary society adapts, evolve, and becomes more diverse (Statistics Canada, 2011), senior administrators have a role to prepare postsecondary institutions with how to address diversity and to actively prevent discrimination. This study assumes that the leadership role in preventing discrimination is partially a requirement to prepare for the evolution of student demographics, including growth of Canada’s diverse population; the leaders also have to create a meaningful, relevant learning environment that reflects this changing society.

Participants identified that the senior leadership of postsecondary institutions were well poised to address the impact of Whiteness. Some of the specific

recommendations gleaned from the study for senior administrators to address racism included:

- (a) deliberate leadership efforts to provide education on racism and Whiteness;
- (b) antiracist policy development to create regular and ongoing opportunities for antiracist education and mechanisms to regularly assess institutional climate with regard to racism;
- (c) educational leaders, formal and informal, need to role model inclusive and antiracist behaviours, attitudes, and institutional approaches;
- (d) communicating intolerance for discrimination and using the “voice” of leadership to keep racism literally on the executive agenda;
- (e) in consultation with relevant bargaining units, employing hiring practices informed by a nondominant perspective that intentionally invites a diverse applicant pool;
- (f) raising awareness and institutional consciousness of White privilege through professional development, institutional committees, instructor-led initiatives in the classroom, community engagement, intentionally inviting antiracist education on-campus and institutional leadership engagement in the antiracist education;
- (g) creating and encouraging safe spaces for internal discussions about racism and the impact of Whiteness as well as providing internal education on racism for administration, faculty, staff, and students;
- (h) clear, relevant consequences for individual acts of racism as well as internal processes and mechanisms to address issues identified as a result of systemic

racism—processes and mechanisms informed by a nondominant, expert perspective; and

(i) actively engage as external voices for change in the community through advocacy efforts and deliberately supporting other antiracist organizations and related activities.

As an important initial step toward antiracism education, this study's participants recognized that there is a role for postsecondary institutions to clearly define expectations of behaviour and to effectively communicate institutional intolerance of discriminatory attitudes. All institutional members and stakeholders need to be advised of the organizational attitude toward racism through ongoing and multiple communication efforts and mediums.

Conclusion

Chapter Five outlined the rationale for the research, academic contributions, and the findings' implications for research on antiracist education, Whiteness, and racism as well as the implications for (potential) external or governmental response. It concluded that senior administrators should be, and could be, more influential in antiracist education efforts to realize social justice and equity in postsecondary education. The role of the senior administration was presented as one that affects institutional attitudes and culture. This study concluded that the behaviour and actions of the senior administrators impacts staff, faculty, students, and the broader community. As institutions of higher learning, Canadian colleges and universities need to break down systemic racism by deliberately acknowledging that racism exists and by relinquishing (White) power; colleges and

universities are in a position to engage critical pedagogy and lead antiracist education efforts.

As a student researcher and senior administrator, I am compelled to challenge senior administrators to have honest conversations with their campus communities about racism. We need to face the difficult conversations in order to interrupt the social amnesia that enables Whiteness to persist. It is not enough to have antidiscrimination policies and to act only when issues are brought forward. Postsecondary leaders need to acknowledge that, structurally, we have designed institutions that support and reinforce the dominant culture. For example, the policies are usually written by White administrators on how to deal with the overt, unacceptable behaviours of White students against non-White students, but we never really address the hegemony. We deal with issues of racism on a case-by-case basis rather than treating them as the symptom of a deeper wound.

Postsecondary leaders and educators need to proactively equip all students with the critical pedagogical skills that help to learn about the unearned privileges experienced every day by dominant culture. It is easy to ignore that racism is pervasive because, generally, it is not experienced by those with the power to influence change. Subconsciously, postsecondary leaders and educators insulate us from the impact of the nondominant experience by surrounding ourselves with others who benefit from dominant culture. Senior administrators are in a position to put social justice and equity on the institutional agenda in a meaningful and action-oriented way.

Once senior administrators commit to antiracist education, they will empower the institution to engage in antiracist education. The leaders will need to facilitate this change

by finding the expertise to guide the processes and be willing to relinquish power by being open to the possibility of changing the way we do things. An authentic commitment to antiracist education in our postsecondary institutions will require nondominant cultural perspectives to be present and encouraged; this means that institutions have to deliberately engage with nondominant expertise. Senior leaders also need to be prepared for the long-term commitment of antiracist education; a series of workshops and presentations to the dominant culture members will not change the institution. The commitment will require a deeply embedded, critical approach to understand and unlearn privilege. This is a significant challenge and not one that will be easily embraced by all institutional community members, but there remains a necessity “to make whiteness more visible in order to unveil its discourses, its hidden transcripts, its social practices, and the historical and material conditions that conceal its incessant and compulsive practices of domination” (McLaren, 2007, p. 258).

From the present study, we learn that the administrators recognize the scope and enormity of systemic racism, and most participants were overwhelmed by the idea of how to begin to address it, which reinforces the point that a commitment supported by gaining informed, nondominant expertise is important for meaningful social change and equity in postsecondary education.

If postsecondary education wants to remain relevant to Canadian society, a change beyond programming for the evolving labour market is required. Canada is changing. It is not changing at the same rate in every community, but the diversity of our communities is evolving—culturally, socially, politically, economically—and to remain competitive and relevant, and to fulfill our mandates, postsecondary leaders have to lead

change. Despite the competing demands for the attention of the senior administrative leadership, at the core of our postsecondary educational roles is the obligation to respond to evolving social need(s). The institutions with the best programs, but without an understanding of the students who need the programs or the employers who need the graduates, will fail to provide the best education.

Research Limitations

There are limitations to this study and research. The context of this qualitative, ethnographic research engaged 13 White administrators. The participants are from three different institutions in two provinces working in predominantly White institutions and White communities. The positionality of the knowledge acquired through this research is very specific to the White, female administrator and student researcher with this specific, homogeneous White culture-sharing group at this specific time (2013/14) and place (Canada). The study does not: (a) address a pan-Canadian geographic context; (b) include large, complex institutions of higher learning; (c) address the large, urban city experience; (d) address the nondominant (non-White) experience; (e) factor in student perceptions toward senior administrators; (f) focus on one position within the senior administrative group (i.e., Presidents); or (g) differentiate between senior administrator genders. These factors may or may not limit the findings; however, it is worth noting that exploring these variables in relation to the core study questions could glean additional insight for antiracist education efforts in postsecondary institutions.

Recommendations for Further Study

This present study is the beginning of research on understanding the socio-cultural, political contexts of postsecondary leadership on racism toward a goal of racial

justice and equity. The study could be followed up by higher education or antiracist education researchers interested in the impact of leaders on systemic racism in postsecondary institutions. As a part of further study, the development of an action research model for antiracism education in postsecondary institutions could build upon the insights gleaned from the present study. Additional research could also include exploring targeted senior administrator positions, such as postsecondary presidents as in the research conducted by Kezar et al. (2007). Another study could include more senior administrators and, possibly, represent all provinces and territories with a breakdown by (a) type of institution; (b) geographic location; (c) population; (d) cultural membership; and (e) senior administrator position. In addition, another study could explore the perspectives of educational leaders' Whiteness and racism within elementary and secondary schools to correlate with postsecondary findings.

There could be value in exploring the experiences and perspectives of nondominant senior administrators in postsecondary education by a nondominant culture-sharing member. A convergent analysis could be done between the potential study and the present study. Another study could compare the experiences of postsecondary senior administrators in populations greater than 100,000 with the experiences of the participants in this study. A comprehensive study could locate senior administrators in small, medium and large cities to determine similarities and differences in attitudes and approaches toward racism in postsecondary education.

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Appendix A: Tri-Council Policy Statement 2: Certificate of Completion



Appendix B: Research Ethics Board Approval

Lakehead

UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Services

April 05, 2013

Tel 807-343-8934
Fax 807-346-7749

Principal Investigator (Supervisor): Dr. Seth Agbo
Student Investigator: Krista Pearson
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
c/o 48 Birchland Court
Sault Ste. Marie ON P6B 5X3

Dear Dr. Agbo and Ms Pearson:

Re: REB Project #: 120 12-13 / Romeo File No: 1463111
Granting Agency: N/A
Granting Agency Project #: N/A

On behalf of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project titled, "Racial Justice and Equity: Exploring the perspectives of post-secondary education administrators on whiteness and racism".

Ethics approval is valid until April 5, 2014. Please submit a Request for Renewal form to the Office of Research Services by March 5, 2014 if your research involving human subjects will continue for longer than one year. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project. Research Ethics Board forms are available at:

http://research.lakeheadu.ca/ethics_resources.html

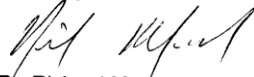
During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

Completed reports and correspondence may be directed to:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of Research Services
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1
Fax: (807) 346-7749

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,



Dr. Richard Maundrell
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/scw

Lakehead Research...CREATING THE FUTURE NOW

955 Oliver Road Thunder Bay Ontario Canada P7B 5E1 www.lakeheadu.ca

Appendix C: Sample Invitation Letter to Presidents



Krista Pearson
c/o 48 Birchland Court
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6B 5X3

April 20, 2013

Dear (Prospective Participant),

My name is Krista Pearson and I am contacting you as a Lakehead University PhD student in the socio-cultural contexts of Education stream of the Educational Studies program under the direction of thesis supervisor, Dr. Seth Agbo. I am at the beginning stages of my dissertation research and am hoping to engage you in my research. My dissertation proposal is titled *Racial justice and equity: Exploring the perspectives of postsecondary education administrators on Whiteness and racism*. I have contacted you, as President and as a senior administrator, in order to learn about your perspectives on Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education with a focus on unearned White privilege and its impacts; your participation will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in the reported research.

I will not share any of our conversations, should you wish to participate, with anyone. I would only use your feedback in summary format in my dissertation. You are under no obligation to participate. Participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, I anticipate that we will communicate up to three times for just under an hour each time. I am conducting participant interviews over a three month period with the opportunity for multiple interviews during that time. If there are more than two interested participants, a group interview may be conducted with your institutional, senior administrative cohort. The participants in my study hold senior administrative positions, as defined by their institution, though not necessarily limited to Presidents and Vice Presidents. In exchange for participating in the research, I will provide a copy of the thesis for your reference and ensure your confidentiality.

There are minimal risks associated with this study, but risks may include vulnerability and discomfort with subject and/or concerns with how responses are being perceived. However, honest participation is desired and all participant responses will be kept confidential. The benefits of this research is that it would be the first-ever research on administrator perspectives of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education in Canada and, as such, will contribute to the socio-cultural contexts of Education and

research on Whiteness and racism. It should be noted that in other research studies faculty, staff, and student perspectives have been explored.

I will follow this letter with a phone call to discuss any concerns or answer any questions you may have and to learn whether or not you are interested. You are under no obligation to participate, though your participation would be appreciated. In addition, if you have any concerns about this research, you are welcome to contact the Research Ethics office at Lakehead University—contact details are available on the attached consent form and at the end of this letter. In the meantime, please review the copy of the attached consent form for your consideration. If you wish to participate, please contact me at: kpearson@lakeheadu.ca or call 705-542-1251.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Susan Wright
Research Ethics & Administration Officer
Office of Research Services
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1
Tel.: [\(807\) 343-8283](tel:8073438283)
Fax: [\(807\) 346-7749](tel:8073467749)

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Krista Pearson
PhD student, Lakehead University

Appendix D: Sample Letter of Invitation for Research Participation



Krista Pearson
c/o 48 Birchland Court
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6B 5X3

May 5, 2013

Dear (Prospective Participant),

My name is Krista Pearson and I am contacting you as a Lakehead University PhD student in the socio-cultural, political contexts of Education stream of the Educational Studies program under the direction of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Seth Agbo. I am at the beginning stages of my dissertation research and am hoping to engage you in my research. My dissertation proposal is titled *Racial justice and equity: Exploring the perspectives of postsecondary education administrators on Whiteness and racism*. I have contacted you, as a senior administrator, in order to learn about your perspectives on Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education with a focus on unearned White privilege and its impacts; your participation will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in the reported research.

I have contacted your President to advise him of my research intent. I will not share any of our conversations, should you wish to participate, with anyone. I would only use your feedback in summary format in my dissertation. You are under no obligation to participate. Participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, I anticipate that we will communicate up to three times for just under an hour each time. I am conducting participant interviews over a three month period with the opportunity for multiple interviews during that time. If there are more than two interested participants, a group interview may be conducted with your institutional, senior administrative cohort. The participants in my study hold senior administrative positions, as defined by their institution, though not necessarily limited to Presidents and Vice Presidents. In exchange for participating in the research, I will provide a copy of the thesis for your reference and ensure your confidentiality. I have also offered, through your President, to present my findings at your institution, if desired.

There are minimal risks associated with this study, but risks may include vulnerability and discomfort with subject and/or concerns with how responses are being perceived. However, honest participation is desired and all participant responses will be kept confidential. The benefits of this research is that it would be the first-ever research on administrator perspectives of Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education in

Canada and, as such, will contribute to the socio-cultural contexts of education and research on Whiteness and racism. It should be noted that in other research studies, faculty, staff, and student perspectives have been explored.

I will follow this letter with a phone call and/or emails to discuss any concerns or answer any questions you may have and to learn whether or not you are interested. You are under no obligation to participate, though your participation would be appreciated. In addition, if you have any concerns about this research, you are welcome to contact the Research Ethics office at Lakehead University—contact details are available on the attached consent form and at the end of this letter. In the meantime, please review the copy of the attached consent form for your consideration. If you wish to participate, please contact me at: kpearson@lakeheadu.ca or call 705-542-1251.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Sue Wright
Research Ethics & Administration Officer
Office of Research Services
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1
Tel.: [\(807\) 343-8283](tel:8073438283)
Fax: [\(807\) 346-7749](tel:8073467749)

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Krista Pearson
PhD student, Lakehead University

Appendix E: Sample Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Study Title: Racial Justice and Equity: Exploring the perspectives of postsecondary education administrators on racism and Whiteness.

This research is being undertaken as a part of a doctoral dissertation study at Lakehead University by:

1. Dr. Seth Agbo, PhD Thesis Supervisor, Lakehead University
2. Krista Pearson, PhD student, Lakehead University

By signing below, I consent to my participation in this study exploring postsecondary education administrator perspectives on Whiteness and racism. I have read the letter of information. I also understand that:

- my identity and data will be kept anonymous and confidential
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time before, during or after, without reason or consequence
- I have been told the purpose of the study and am free to ask questions at any time
- I may take any complaints or concerns I may have to the Lakehead Research Ethics Board via Susan Wright, Research Ethics and Administration Officer, 807-343-8934 susan.wright@lakeheadu.ca

I have read the above statement and freely consent to participate in this research.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Interview Questions

Social justice and equity: Exploring the perspectives of senior administrators on Whiteness and racism in postsecondary education

This research is being undertaken as a part of a doctoral dissertation study at Lakehead University by:

1. Dr. Seth Agbo, PhD Thesis Supervisor, Lakehead University
2. Krista Pearson, PhD student, Lakehead University

Interview Questions

In preparation for the interview, I have included the questions. I anticipate that additional questions may evolve from the discussion and, at the same time, some questions may be excluded, if appropriate.

The questions have been divided into parts for the option of multiple interviews, depending on the preference of the participant.

PART I:

1. Please describe for me your current position and scope of responsibility.
2. How long have you worked in postsecondary education?
3. Please describe your current position in the organizational structure.
4. Are you a senior administrator? How do you describe the role of a senior administrator within a postsecondary institution?
5. In the context of this study, I make reference to Whiteness. By Whiteness, I am referring to the socially constructed norm by which other cultures are measured and assessed; that is, White ways are the standard, or norm, by which all others are measured (Yancy, 2004). Based on your understanding, in what ways do you think that Whiteness exists on postsecondary campuses?

PART II:

6. If comfortable for you, please describe for me your cultural membership and how you think you relate to the dominant or “White” culture.
7. As I have explained, the study in which you are participating is intended to explore the senior administrator perspectives on Whiteness and racism within the postsecondary environment. Do you think racism exists in postsecondary institutions?
 - o If yes, could you elaborate on why you think racism does exist?

- If yes, how would you describe racism in the postsecondary environment?
- If no, could you elaborate on why you think racism doesn't exist?

PART III:

8. How, do you think, senior administrators can influence the existence of racism on a postsecondary campus?
9. What role do you think that senior administrators have regarding the tolerance or presence of racism?
10. Do you think Whiteness has an impact on the learning environment for non-White students and, if so, how? If not, why not?

Appendix G: A Sample Interview Transcript (spring 2013)

Here is a sample of participant responses to the first interview question. Full transcripts have not been included to protect participant identification. Please note that an overview of participant profiles is outlined in Chapter Three.

1. *How do you describe the role of a senior administrator within a postsecondary institution?*

Drew: “Leadership, strategic planning, responsibility for operations to run smoothly. It’s a mix of manager and leader. As a senior team we manage processes, policies, and operations, but we also lead.”

"Stewarding the organization to a better place—to a “higher” calling. [It’s] easy to get bogged down in “crap” and easy answers aren’t always the right answers. We don’t have the time to think about the long term and impact because [there are] so many demands that it’s hard to take time. [I] have to pull myself away to think about the long-term impact [of decisions] on the [institution].”

"It takes courage to make hard decisions."

"Sometimes administrators want to run away because they're stretched for time."

Sam: In our discussion of postsecondary education and administration, the conversation evolved into reasons why postsecondary institutions are challenging spaces for change.

“[Postsecondary institutions] are the most change-resistant institutions in the Western world. They are change resistant because reality has been constructed and doesn't welcome the accountability—faculty change on their own terms.”

“The structures, such as senate and faculty, are a “loose association” of academic entrepreneurs. Faculty are neo-autonomous and it doesn’t take very long for the faculty to construct their world and classroom. Radical change is usually only responsive to financial crisis. We need to reward desirable behaviour.”

An example of a faculty member set in his/her way: “[At a campus building], the faculty member felt there were office “rights” for a window with a view. The faculty member saw the office as private property.

Kelly: “To provide leadership and to be strategic. The ability to move [the institution] forward and create balance to represent faculty and programming, too.”

[In my position], “as one of the bigger middle managers [at the institution], always trying to move faculty forward (they are independent) and also balance the needs of the institution and students.”

Postsecondary administrators have to “ensure students get a high-quality education experience and relevant curriculum. I believe an educated society is a better society.”

Lee: “To protect and promote the [institution's] profile.”

"To be a leader—to lead the organization with a beneficial plan for students and staff.”

Senior administrators have to “navigate through what postsecondary education means and how it's relevant.”

“Senior administrators are all advocates for the lived experience of students and their reality. Take to heart that we are far removed from the student experiences—our assumptions and experiences blind us. If we engaged people more, students may be more responsive.”

Decisions “can be overruled for the [sake of the] business at the detriment of the student. There would be more ‘return on investment.’”

This participant talked about the importance of postsecondary education to change lives, upon reflecting on personal experience growing up with poverty.

“[Postsecondary] education can break cycles of poverty and [enable students to] develop the skills to live anywhere in the world and driven to do better in life [than family]. Education provides the vision of possibility and a pathway to a better life for our students.

Morgan: Senior administration, including my position, “supports the mandate of the institution and to help programming deliver its products and services to students.”

"Leadership [sets the] direction to make sure the mandate of the institution is realized.”

Senior administrators need to be “working in the same direction with the same objective with positive results for students.”

Nat: “I feel very responsible in the organizational structure with only three positions more senior [than me].”

“Senior administrators provide direction-setting and facilitating.”

“[Institutions] need good people in leadership. I love working with ‘stars’ with energy.”

“[In my role] as a senior administrator, I feel like I represent the institution.”

Chris: Senior administrator is a “person that has to keep on the horizon and look at how things are unfolding to better prepare the institution for the future.” Also, senior “leaders create an external perspective.”

“Senior Administration has to be analytical with a focus on government and demographics. Leaders help people make the transition.” Leaders also “work with board and government adjusting to the institutional-level to create a strategy for the institution to implement.”

Pat: “Senior administration influences change, sets strategy for expanding opportunities and circle of influence.”

Quinn: The participant’s senior position “has a broader scope with more executive-level responsibility to the corporation.” The [senior leadership] role is much more than programs.”

“Some of the complexities are significant; there are some specialized programs that are very entrepreneurial.”

“There is a master planning piece [to the role].”

The role of the senior administration includes “layers of administration that are operational and strategic; more enabling than doing. Senior administrators create the environment and resources to allow everything else to happen.”

Robin: [My position] is “in fifth place for responsibility of the organization.”

“The role of postsecondary senior administration is complex. [We] deal with staff, faculty and students. Faculty can be self-interested. It’s political with staff and faculty –you need to get them on your side. [You] have to have faculty support to move initiatives forward. The postsecondary administrator is a facilitator and negotiator.”

“The internal processes that approve [change] are slow. It is tough when students suffer.”

Aubrey: “[My role] influences the direction of programming, finances, and operations of the institution.”

“The role is creating the vision for the institution and taking an institutional perspective; making informed decisions with institutional care.”

“Senior administration balances the needs of direct reports and institution to align the resources and structure to achieve the vision.”

Wynne: “Educational leadership is making change happen and transforming the institution as a change agent.”

“Senior administrators are also responsible [for] political advocacy and lobbying. [I need to] fight for the institution with the government.”

Terry: Current senior role has “operational oversight of course and program delivery as well as staffing for programs; quality assurance practices and reviews of programs; and has worked on new program development.”

“Responsible for all academic staff.”

“The impact of senior administrative work is at an institutional level, and level of accountability is significant. Those who aren’t in senior administrative roles can have a greater impact on our students day-to-day.”