EVERYDAY RACISM & RACIALIZED EX-INMATES

EVERYDAY RACISM & RACIALIZED EX-INMATES: OBSTACLES TO
ACHIEVING ANTI-RACIST CORRECTIONAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

By

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Abstract

Racism within the criminal justice system is a serious concern. Yet, despite the unfortunate circumstances and injustice confronting racialized inmates, there are very few studies, which critically examine the rampant racial discrimination that they experience on a daily basis in Ontario's jails and detention centres.

This exploratory study describes a qualitative investigation of racism from the perspective of racialized ex-inmates who have been through the Ontario criminal justice system. Based on semi-structured, qualitative interviews, the purpose of this project is to open up the debate about what is missing when we examine racism in institutions. In bringing this new knowledge forward, the analysis is based on major themes such as: everyday racism, racial profiling, dual and intersecting oppressions, whiteness, and solutions and barriers.

The results exemplify the subtle yet deliberate attempt to subdue any discussion of everyday racism and to downplay incidents of racist behaviour. This study emphasizes that efforts to contribute to the elimination of racial injustice in correctional social work practice must not be on conflated notions of cultural differences or on theoretically driven anti-oppression models but rather on the everyday reality of racism.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction:

Research Problem, Research Questions & the Researcher

The study of racism in the criminal justice system is in urgent need of re-conceptualization. Racism within the criminal justice system has been a long-standing issue, however it has not been reduced nor can it be easily eliminated (Baker, 1994, p. 8). Rather, the experience of racism is complex, as it includes a myriad of situations, attitudes and customs, which create racial inequality in daily life (Essed, 1990, p. 33). Historically, studies have focused on race relations and crime, which impedes research on racism and criminal justice (Baker, 1994, p. 6). Today, racialized groups continue to be portrayed as criminals and treated as such by the criminal justice system (Baker, 1994, p. 7). Yet, despite the unfortunate circumstances and injustice confronting racialized groups, there are very few studies, which focus on the everyday racism, which they experience within institutions such as the Ontario criminal justice system.

This exploratory study describes a qualitative investigation of racism from the perspective of racialized ex-inmates in Ontario, Canada. Given the constraints of time and space, it is not possible here to provide a comprehensive account of all forms of oppression within the Ontario criminal justice system. This study is not an attempt to contribute to current statistics on racialized groups in our jails and detention centres; nor will it discuss issues of racism amongst employees of the Ontario criminal justice system. Rather, the purpose of this project is to

1

exemplify the rampant racial discrimination that is experienced by racialized

inmates on a daily basis and to critically examine how everyday racism operates

in Ontario's jails and detention centres. In particular, the subtle yet deliberate

attempt to subdue any discussion of everyday racism and to downplay incidents of

racist behaviour will be put to fore.

This chapter, in particular describes the intent, expectations and

background for the thesis study. As such, I provide a description of the research

problem, the research questions and the researcher. The organization of the thesis

study will also be depicted below.

The Research Problem

Racism, as experienced by racialized inmates is an important area of

inquiry, especially since competing theoretical perspectives do not allow for a

thorough examination of racism from the margins. In addition, studies in the area

of racism and criminal justice from the perspective of racialized ex-inmates are

lacking. While several studies have been completed concerning social work, the

criminal justice system and racism, this study in particular explores firsthand

experiences of everyday racism within Ontario's jails and detention centres.

The aim of the research was to provide insight into the personal

experiences of racialized ex-inmates and the impact of various forms of racism on

them. As such, I believe that obtaining knowledge about racism in the Ontario

criminal justice system is best accomplished by seeking out the perspectives of

racialized ex-inmates themselves. In order to provide insight into the thoughts and experiences of racialized ex-inmates, I focus on adults, belonging to a racialized group, who have spent time in an Ontario correctional facility or detention centre as a result of a criminal charge or conviction. In bringing this new knowledge forward, my hope is to open up the debate about what is missing when we examine racism in institutions.

Racism takes on a different form when it is analyzed in relation to other sites of oppression (Wilmot, 2005, p. 64). For example, the racialized ex-inmates in this study are dually oppressed. By virtue of their skin colour, they hold a marginal place in society, which is further entrenched by being labeled as an undeserving criminal and a social deviant. Therefore, racial discrimination deepens the oppression of racialized ex-inmates. However, this study is also an attempt to foreground the human agency of the oppressed. The underlying belief is that despite being in the location of powerlessness these individuals are in a position to make the invisible, visible. By reflecting on the time they spent in jail and on the nature of their thoughts, experiences and behaviours, they are providing what would otherwise be unknown to many on the "outside." Racism in the criminal justice system is a confusing and complex issue. However, it becomes more easily understood and is given clarity, when the voices of the racialized can finally be heard from behind steel bars.

The Researcher

I approach this research as a white social worker working with racialized inmates within the Ontario criminal justice system. I have been working in the social services field for several years, five years of which have been full-time at a maximum-security detention centre in Ontario. My career has allowed me to work with many different client populations. I have provided social work services pertaining to abuse, sexual assault, substance abuse, mental health issues, developmental disorders, poverty, homelessness and of course, criminal behaviour. I have worked to educate the community by organizing and delivering presentations to area elementary schools about social problems such as homelessness and I have had the opportunity to supervise social work student placements. My participation in committee meetings with other community professionals (i.e. police officers, health professionals, social planners and teachers) has allowed me to assist in the planning, development and delivery of new programs and research initiatives for the prevention and elimination of homelessness, dating violence and substance abuse.

Over these years of social work practice, I have witnessed many injustices and fought hard to ensure that clients' needs were met. I have come to understand that social work is as much about achieving resounding triumphs as it is about experiencing devastating failures. Despite this fact, I am still intrigued by the uniqueness of this dynamic helping profession. I intend to continue my work with disadvantaged groups such as racialized inmates because I enjoy the challenges,

frustrations and rewards of my job. I have found that the involuntary clients whom I work with are most often the individuals who want help the most but who sadly do not have access to needed services. Falling through the cracks of the systems of society, these individuals often receive little attention from the public. Our society ignorantly creates the oppressive situations that have allowed for bad choices and resulted in the tragic consequences of some crimes.

Through my work experience as a correctional social worker, I have discovered that the application of narrow approaches within the Ontario criminal justice system creates social injustice because systemic inequalities are not recognized. As such, inmates are blamed for their "misfortune." Rather than search for a deeper understanding of the problem of crime and violence, society has become content with individualizing the problem through punishment and other reactive measures. Yet, all problems are not one-dimensional. Rather, the issues, which people face, have a myriad of causes based in systemic inequalities. There are several forms of oppression that have shaped the attitudes of our society and reinforced a vicious cycle of deviant behaviour amongst inmates. Racial slurs, stereotyping, exclusion, negative myths and assumptions about racialized groups allow oppression to operate within our society, which in turn, spills over into our jails and detention centres.

My practice insight and experiences have led me to believe that it is imperative for the social work profession to recognize that a critical understanding of the concept everyday racism should be an integral piece of current social work

training and education. Given that individuals from racialized backgrounds are often the recipients of social work services and have been for decades, I think that it is not only disappointing but also unacceptable that white social workers still struggle to provide adequate and appropriate services to their racialized clients.

My interest in the topic of anti-racist research in the criminal justice system began with an examination of a recent incident, involving threats of racial violence amongst employees at the Toronto West Detention Centre. During the Christmas season of 2007, nine black jail guards received anonymous letters in their mail slots at the Toronto West Detention Centre (The Toronto Sun, 2008, p. 2). The letters contained racial slurs and threats of rape, torture, violence, abduction and death. Some contained reference to the Klu Klux Klan and others threatened that inmates would be paid to assault them (The Toronto Sun, 2008, p. 3). The letters were delivered not by inmates but rather by fellow employees. Several guards who were targeted stated that while they knew they had to work with criminals, they never thought that the real danger would come from their co-workers (The Toronto Sun, 2008, p. 3).

This was not the first incident of this nature. Similar hate mail was sent to staff members in other jails as well and incidents of this nature date back to 1995 (The Toronto Sun, 2008, p. 2). Following this particular incident, over thirty jail guards staged a walkout in January 2008, contributing to a lock down situation at the Toronto West Detention Centre, which resulted in intense media attention (The Toronto Sun, 2008, p. 2). However, the Ontario Ministry of Labour rejected

the workers claim that their work environment had become unsafe as a result of the hate mail (The Toronto Sun, 2008, p. 2). While other incidents have also received media attention, this was the first to create a flurry of media responses and to warrant a comprehensive investigation on the behalf of Ontario criminal justice administration.

The case was well documented in the media. It brought to light the fact that the refusal of the Ontario criminal justice establishment to acknowledge and to adequately address institutional racism, had allowed for threats of racialized violence within correctional facilities and detention centres to persist. Despite the fact that overt and blatant acts of racism had been extremely prevalent amongst correctional staff as well as inmates for several decades, these incidents remained largely ignored by the Ontario criminal justice administration.

Thus far, the responses of the Ontario criminal justice administration have been based on managing the anger that has erupted as a result of racial violence and on eliminating interpersonal acts of racism. An examination of the historical structures and systemic aspects that serve to perpetuate racist beliefs has been completely disregarded by the administration, which has allowed for more subtle forms of racism to be overlooked. As Williams (2001) states, "The exclusion of structural issues from the race relations discourse creates superficial solutions that fail to undermine the forces that originate and sustain ethno-racial disadvantage" (p. 233). It is clear that the reactions of the Ontario criminal justice

administration reflect not only a fear of offending powerful individuals and groups but also an attempt to maintain white privilege and silence the racialized.

The recent media attention regarding race and anti-racism initiatives at my workplace, forced me to explore my own position as white correctional social worker. I began to examine racism as a systemic problem, which is rooted in institutions and practices, rather than as an individual act. My interest in how other members of society talk and think about racism also prompted me to examine real cases of everyday racial discrimination. I realized that a gap existed in the literature concerning racism, criminal justice and social work practice, particularly in the jail system. What the literature also lacked was an account of the experience of racism from the perspective of racialized ex-inmates. This study allows me to put my conviction to practice and contribute to the elimination of racial injustice.

The Organization of the Thesis

The following chapters will describe in detail, a qualitative investigation of the subtle, yet persistent form of racism within the Ontario criminal justice system, which occurs in the everyday lives of racialized inmates. I begin with a review of what previous researchers have offered on the topic. What follows is a description of the methodological process, which guided the research, including some of the challenges, which arose. The findings of the research are then provided, analyzed and discussed according to common themes. Based on these

chapters, I develop a number of critical comments and recommendations for

further research, which are concluded in the final chapter

racialized groups according to cultural characteristics (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 100).

Historically, models of cultural diversity were developed by the dominant (white/ Euro-North American) group, as a response to the influx of culturally and racially diverse populations in North America in the 1950's and 1960's (Yee, 2005, p. 97). Conflict amongst racialized groups and the white majority spurred the development of approaches, which focused on assimilation, bias and race relations (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 106). These models blamed individual prejudice, minimal ethno-racial contact and even racialized groups themselves for racial tensions (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 107). Identifying, scrutinizing and objectifying racialized groups by focusing on their adaptation and acculturation skills became paramount rather than on the dominant group and their whiteness (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 107).

Since social workers were predominantly white and did not have much knowledge and experience in working with racialized populations, traditional models of social work practice had to be replaced by literature, which focused on the cultural needs of racialized populations (Yee, 2005, p. 97). As a result, racialized groups were pathologized by racist and prejudiced understandings about difference (Yee, 2005, p. 98). Thus, these understandings allowed society to avoid acknowledging the historical presence of racism (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 107).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

<u>Introduction</u>

This chapter will provide a review of current literature and existing

research on racism, which has been conducted both within the Ontario criminal

justice system and with racialized groups. By combining the literature on racism,

criminal justice and social work practice with racialized groups, I will continue

with a focus on what is missing from the current analyses.

Existing Frameworks on Race Relations

Studies of race relations in our society present three different frameworks,

which attempt to explain and deal with the "race problem:" cultural

competence/diversity; anti-oppressive practice (AOP); and anti-racism. Primm et

al. (2005) define cultural competence as, "a set of behaviours, attitudes, and

policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professionals to

work effectively in cross cultural situations" (p. 566). Likewise, celebrating

cultural diversity and/or difference, is based on the premise of multiculturalism,

however this pluralistic concept fails to acknowledge the context of power, which

produces differences (Dei, 1999, p. 18). In addition, multiculturalism does not

recognize the importance of unearthing these power relations (Dei, 1999, p. 18).

Likewise, the tenets of multicultural social work focus on characterizing

The literature on cultural diversity was altered and changed over time, especially as discourses about colour-blindness and multiculturalism emerged in the 1980's (Yee, 2005, p. 98). However, while these discourses focused on equality, understanding and maintaining cultures, they still failed to address the systemic barriers, which have allowed racism to continue (Yee, 2005, p. 99).

Unfortunately, even with the recent adoption of anti-oppressive practice, cultural diversity models of practice are still prevalent within the field of social work today (Yee, 2005, p. 99). For example, in their article about the need for treatment services for racialized inmates, Primm et al. (2005) stress that a system-wide approach, which addresses cultural competence must be implemented in the criminal justice system (p. 567). The authors appear to believe that this particular strategy would bring about much needed change and improvement, especially with regards to the overrepresentation of racialized inmates in the criminal justice system (Primm et al., 2005, p. 567). However, when the discourse is focused on ideals of cultural sensitivity, cross cultural awareness, diversity, multi-cultural social work and even anti-oppressive practice, language and practices related to anti-racism are erased (Jeffrey & Razak, 2002, p. 258). Thus, as Yee & Dumbrill (2003) state, "The problem of dominance cannot be dismantled in society unless an emphasis and focus on ethno-racial communities shifts to the invisibility of the privileged in shaping the experiences of the oppressed" (p. 100). By focusing on identity and culture, rather than on the more sensitive issues surrounding racism

and inequality, social workers do not have to address the concept of whiteness (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 100).

Along with cultural diversity, the idea of anti-oppressive practice has gained growing popularity both in academia and in the field. The term, "anti-oppressive practice" has become a politically correct phrase, which assumes equality, equity and social justice in social work practice (Yee, 2005, p. 90). Mainstream practices, which reinforce a focus on racialized communities rather than on the dominant group, have adopted such terms (Yee, 2005, p. 91). Therefore, this causes one to question whether or not anti-oppressive practice is truly occurring (Yee, 2005, p. 91).

Anti-racism work developed through "consciousness-raising" and "awareness training" (Yee, 2005, p. 89). These approaches were also implemented by and for whites to give them the tools to discuss racism (Yee, 2005, p. 89). Yet, rather than focusing attention on cultural prejudice, current anti-racism practice examines the structural forces, which maintain inequality (Yee, 2005, p. 90). Anti-racism practice asserts that racism stems from the belief that individuals are biologically and culturally defined (Yee, 2005, p. 89). Anti-racism practice in social work requires an emphasis on exclusionary institutional practices and on a critical understanding of social location and identity (Yee, 2005, p. 90). Rather than focusing on the cultural knowledge of racialized groups, anti-racism work addresses the ways in which the dominant group maintains its

power through marking, marginalizing and excluding racialized individuals and communities (Yee, 2005, p. 89).

Wilmot (2005) argues that the understanding and practice of anti-racism is often lacking a fundamental focus (i.e. whiteness and a renewed notion of responsibility) (p. 11). All white citizens benefit from white supremacy, which forms the basis for the capitalist political economy of our society (Wilmot, 2005, p.11-12). Therefore, we all have a responsibility to challenge the racism that results from white supremacy (Wilmot, 2005, p.11-12). However, Wilmot (2005) notes that this responsibility is often misunderstood as remorse-based anti-racism, which is paralyzing for white activists, who are often unable to get past their guilt (p. 11). Yet, moving past guilt and taking action does not necessarily mean that anti-racism work will be effective. As Wilmot (2005) further explains:

> When we do take action, given the nature of the superiority complex we are taught as part of white racism, we white activists often seem to interpret "taking responsibility" as "taking over." This is often combined with remorse so that we feel we have just got to "power through" and get the things done that we believe will fix racism (p. 12).

It is evident that there is a key element missing from the anti-racism framework. That is, taking responsibility as well as seeking out, encouraging and following the leadership of racialized people (Wilmot, 2005, p. 12). Sharing this objective, this study is set to give voice to racialized ex-inmates and to learn from their experiences and suggestions.

Racism in the Criminal Justice System

To prepare for this study, I also reviewed existing literature on racism within the criminal justice systems in North America and Europe. While there have been numerous studies conducted on racism within criminal justice, the majority of these accounts have focused on proving that racism exists by way of quantitative, statistical evidence concerning the overrepresentation of racialized groups in jails and detention centres. For example, Crow (1994) notes the disproportionately high number of racialized people in correctional facilities in the U.K. (p. 198). Likewise, in Ontario, the publication of the Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System in 1995 documented the high numbers of racialized inmates within correctional facilities in Ontario and made recommendations for further research. The report also exposed cases of intentional prejudice and blatant racism in Ontario prisons and courts (Williams, 1999, p. 208).

More recent research efforts have begun to focus on the experiences of racialized inmates within the Ontario criminal justice system. For example, Bynum & Paternoster (1994) assert that racialized inmates are more likely to be subjected to harsh treatment because they lack the resources and power to resist criminal definition and enforcement at all levels of the criminal justice system (p. 174). In addition, Primm et al. (2005) comment on the lack of attention being paid to the needs of racialized inmates in the criminal justice system (p. 567).

Other authors have noted that the views of racialized groups about the criminal justice system have historically been overlooked (Chakraborti & Garland, 2003).

There is no evidence that racialized groups are more likely than whites to commit crime or that the amount of crime in a geographical area is related to the size of the racialized population that resides there (Crow, 1994, p. 193). However, current research conducted on the criminal justice system points to rampant racial discrimination (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277). For example, Primm et al. (2005) document statistics showing that Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to be suspected of committing a crime (p. 559). Various studies have also shown that longer prison terms are given to criminals with Afro-centric features (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277). Likewise, another study found that racialized offenders believed that they were labelled as violent or as drug dealers based on their racial identity (Primm et al., 2005, p. 559). In addition, laboratory experiments have found that law enforcement officers will fire their weapons more often at Black suspects of crime than at white ones (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277). What is even more striking is that the criminal justice professionals in these studies were not even remotely conscious of the fact that their responses differed on the basis of race (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277).

Although the Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism provides accounts of overt racism, it claims that more subtle forms of racism are the main source of the unjust treatment of racialized groups (William, 1999, p. 208). In a

study conducted by Denney et al. (2006) concerning perceptions of race and diversity, the authors found that overt racial bias was absent in the pre-sentence reports authored by probation officers (p. 11). However, the reports depicted the subtle and pernicious nature of racism by linking race, ethnicity, culture, immigration status and nationality to the understanding of offending behaviour (Denney et al., 2006, p. 8). As Denney et al. (2006) states, "In all three [pre-sentence reports], a clear relationship was inferred between cultural norms, values and offending" (p. 8). Unfortunately, an analysis of the imbalanced power relations, which lead to socio-economic disadvantages, was absent in the reports (Denney et al., 2006, p. 8). In this study, I contend that a critical analysis of whiteness is needed to fully examine how power imbalance operates in our criminal justice system; and that the most direct avenue is to talk to racialized ex-inmates themselves.

As the case example described in the previous chapter depicts, the most common responses of social institutions are based on fighting and/or eliminating racism rather than on an examination of the historical structures and systemic organizations that serve to perpetuate racist beliefs (Whitmore, 2001, p. 85). Therefore, there is a need for the government to revisit the recommendations for anti-racist training, education and research made by the Commission. To critically assess the effectiveness of existing theoretical frameworks, policies and

practices, this study seeks the first hand experiences of racialized individuals who have been through the Ontario criminal justice system in recent years.

Conception of Everyday Racism & Its Relation to Whiteness

Everyday racism is defined as a process, which is created and reinforced by routine, everyday practices (Essed, 2002, p. 177). As Yee (2005) states, "racism must be recognized as a process because structures and ideologies do not exist outside the everyday practices through which they are created and confirmed" (p. 101). As such, this more subtle form of racism makes the connection between everyday situations and structural dimensions of racism (Essed, 2002, p. 177). The concept of everyday racism has also been labelled as: modern racism, symbolic racism, aversive racism and racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007, p. 272). These definitions of everyday racism argue that racism has evolved from the traditional form, which was comprised of conscious and easily recognizable racial hatred and bigotry (Sue et al, 2007, p. 272). Therefore, the concept of everyday racism goes beyond traditional definitions of institutional and individual racism by focusing on the socialized attitudes, behaviours and practices, which are interwoven into social systems (Essed, 2002, p. 178-9).

According to Sue et al. (2007) microaggressions are, "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of colour because they belong to a racial minority group" (p. 273). Due to the fact that microaggressions are

often conveyed through simple gestures, tones and looks, it is easy to dismiss their existence (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Therefore, everyday racism is often disguised in ambiguity and is difficult to identify, describe, quantify and rectify (Sue et al, 2007, p. 272).

In addition, current literature on contemporary racism in mental health, health care and other social settings recognizes that this type of racism poses even greater negative consequences for the wellbeing, self-esteem and standard of living of racialized individuals than does overt racism (Sue et al., 2007, p. 272). For example, in a study of microaggressions and African Americans, the researchers found that the victims experienced feelings of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation as a result of their continued exposure to microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279). Therefore, in order to understand the detrimental effects of microaggressions, one must recognize that exposure to this form of racism is constant and its effects are cumulative (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279).

Acknowledging and researching microaggressions is paramount (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279). As Sue et al. (2007) states:

> There is an urgent need to bring greater awareness and understanding of how microaggressions operate, their numerous manifestations in society, the type of impact they have on people of colour, the dynamic interaction between perpetrator and target, and the educational strategies needed to eliminate them (p. 273).

Therefore, it is imperative that documentation and analysis focus on providing a better understanding of microaggressions and the dramatic impact of their effects

(Sue et al., 2007, p. 279). Without such recognition, everyday racism will continue to be downplayed, ignored and silenced (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279). While current research displays the fact that society is not colour blind, many citizens believe that equality exists (Sue, 2004, p. 763). By minimizing the racism and discrimination, which occurs daily in the lives of racialized individuals, the impact of whiteness is denied (Sue, 2004, p. 763).

Everyday racism and whiteness work hand in hand and need to be critically examined together as the former constitutes the institutional and ideological context for the later to be justified and silenced. Therefore, achieving social justice in social work practice with racialized groups cannot be fully accomplished without first understanding whiteness and the role it plays in maintaining oppression (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 106). Yee & Dumbrill (2003) state that; "Whiteness transcends race to represent the multiple sites of advantage and privilege of being white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied" (p. 105). In addition, Yee (2005) defines the concept of whiteness as, "a complex social process that perpetuates and maintains the dominant and/or majority group's power within social service organizations and is the primary mechanism that prevents anti-racist workers from changing today's societal and institutional arrangements" (p.89). Whiteness also refers to unmarked cultural practices and can be characterized as a standpoint from which whites see themselves, others and the world around us (Yee, 2005, p. 97).

Discriminatory actions and attitudes are often unintentional and racial inequality is further entrenched in society, making it invisible and thus, more powerful (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271-2). Therefore, acknowledging whiteness is crucial because of the invisibility, which maintains its dominance (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 106). By ignoring how whiteness organizes the social service system, the service needs and individual identities of racialized clients become stereotyped and discriminatory practices are allowed to continue (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 100).

Hall (2002) reiterates the importance of skin colour and demonstrates that the social work profession must recognize skin colour as being a significant issue (p. 141). Thus, naming whiteness is imperative if social workers are to create real change in the area of diversity (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 100). Without a critique of the question of whiteness, the study of racism is limited (Rodriguez, 2000, p. 3). Therefore, instead of abolishing whiteness, the interrogation of it must be integrated into anti-racism work. As Yee (2005) states, "…a key component of anti-racism work is to understand how strategies of whiteness work" (p. 88). Yee (2005) notes three mechanisms through which whiteness operates: exnomination, naturalization and universalization (p. 89). Exnomination is the process by which everyday language represents an understanding of whites, which is unnamed (Yee, 2005, p. 89). Naturalization refers to the fact that white people do not have to define themselves because they

21

are normatively positioned (Yee, 2005, p. 89). Lastly, universalization points to how the knowledge of the world is structured by whites and thus, never questioned (Yee, 2005, p. 89).

Macalpine & Marsh (2005) note that whiteness is taken for granted and normalized and therefore, goes unrecognized (p. 443). Likewise, Yee (2005) notes the failure of white social workers to see themselves as implicated in a system of whiteness, which perpetuates racism (p. 90). Often used unintentionally by social workers, strategies of whiteness maintain power over racialized groups (Yee, 2005, p. 90). Therefore, white social workers cannot engage in anti-racist work without first examining themselves as the group, which defines racialized communities (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 101).

In contrast, on the rare occasion that whiteness and the discourse of neutrality is acknowledged, it is often considered rude, unnecessary and transgressive (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 443). Thus, the fear of transgression may be the reason for feelings of discomfort (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 443). Likewise, a study conducted by Macalpine & Marsh (2005), displayed the fact that white professionals not only lacked the appropriate language to discuss race but that they also resisted the discussion overall (p. 442). Furthermore, the authors found that white professionals were silenced due to guilt, embarrassment and fear of offending or of looking like a racist (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 440). Discomfort is also derived from the belief that matters of race should be

repressed not unlike those of sex and scandal (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 437). Therefore, silence restricts any conversation about ethnicity and constructs white identity by using embarrassment and fear to conceal the obvious (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 443). As a result, silence has become a powerful discourse in and of itself (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 443).

Jeffrey (2005) notes that the concept of whiteness mirrors social work practice and education (p. 410). Unfortunately, the altruistic, helping professional is characterized by the ideology of whiteness, which is tied to innocence, goodness, acting appropriately and adapting as necessary to maintain dominance (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 411). In addition, the goals of social work education have historically been to produce a self-aware, competent worker who is knowledgeable about, "the other" (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 411). Therefore, certain tensions persist in social work education, especially when the performance of whiteness in the helping relationship is uncovered as the ability to control situations and perform competence (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 425).

By focusing on everyday racism and how it affects social work practice with racialized inmates, issues of power differences between whites and racialized groups can be adequately addressed. However, as Yee & Dumbrill (2003) state, "the production of social work knowledge and the delivery of services remain primarily a white, European enterprise" (p. 101). Therefore, acknowledging the role of white race is challenging because white domination as experienced by

racialized individuals is often absent from organization research (Macalpine &

Marsh, 2005, p. 437). Likewise, information about the impact of white race on

social work practice is practically non-existent in social work textbooks (Yee &

Dumbrill, 2003, p. 101). In addition, Hall (2002) notes that skin colour been

completely ignored by leading social work journals, which contributes to its'

trivialization (p. 111). Discussions about race and ethnicity are also lacking in

social work literature and research on organizations (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005,

p. 430). Therefore, it is not surprising that a lack of clarity and understanding

about whiteness and everyday racism exists within the social work profession.

In order to resolve these tensions, it is imperative that the notion of self-

awareness in social work education includes an examination of privilege by virtue

of being white (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 417). As Jeffrey (2005) states, "Being a more

aware social work student requires an understanding of oneself as 'situated' or

located in particular ways in society" (p. 417). Unfortunately, integrating the

concept of privilege into the social work curriculum is not an easy task because it

involves the exposure of whiteness and thus, the painful recognition that social

work can be extremely harmful to people (Jeffrey, 2005, p. 417).

Many white professionals are completely ignorant of the economic, social

and political advantages, which are afforded to them by virtue of their white skin

(Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). As a result, there exists an ongoing failure on the behalf

of white activists to fully understand racism and to take effective action against it

(Wilmot, 2005, p. 8). It is this lack of understanding, which continues to contribute to the overrepresentation and increased oppression of the racialized inmates who reside in our jails and detention centres. As a white, middle class professional myself, I took on this critical whiteness approach to make use of my research, not only as a reflective practice but also as a direct way to take responsibility for promoting change.

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the literature on criminal justice, racism and social work practice with racialized groups is extensive. However, a large gap still exists with regards to everyday racism and whiteness, which is entrenched in the criminal justice system. In addition, while there is a wealth of information consisting of statistics, which prove that racism exists within the criminal justice system, there are few studies, which include racialized inmates as victims of racism. More importantly, there are even fewer conducted from the point of view of racialized ex-inmates themselves. Thus, the literature points to an urgent need for new research, which will increase our current understanding of racism from the perspective of racialized groups who have come into contact with the Ontario criminal justice system.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Objectives, Method and Limitations & Significance of the Research

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a critical review of the research questions, recruitment strategies and analytical procedures, which I believe are integral to anti-racist research with racialized ex-inmates. I also explain some of the methodological challenges, including my main concerns about conducting research on racial discrimination as it affects racialized inmates. The "how to" of obtaining legitimate knowledge about everyday racism while ensuring that the voices of racialized groups can be heard will also be discussed.

Research Objectives

The study of racism is a complicated and challenging one (Essed, 2002, p. 176). Rather than analyze racialized perceptions and knowledge about racism, the majority of current literature has instead, identified how racism operates at a societal level (Essed, 2002, p. 176). In fact, Essed (2002) notes that few studies have focused on racialized groups and their daily experiences of racism (p. 176). Limited studies, which have commented on attitudes and beliefs about racism, show that racialized perceptions differ from those of whites (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277). White citizens rarely see themselves as racist and tend to believe that

racism is no longer an issue in the day-to-day lives of racialized individuals (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277). However, in their daily interactions, racialized groups perceive whites as insensitive, controlling and unwilling to share their position of wealth and power (Sue et al., 2007, p. 277).

In an article by Razack (1994), a racialized individual uses the metaphor of a prison to describe the impact of everyday racism:

> ...I'm not allowed in the prison of racism to notice his attempts at intimidation or to respond in any way. He's one of the guards of the system, a regulator. This is a familiar stare, one quite common, the 'mildest' form of racism. Usually if you pretend 'not to notice it,' nothing escalates.

How the racialized respond to everyday racism, which includes ignoring it, denying it and/or doing nothing, are an important focus in the study of the everyday operation of racism. An analysis of these types of reactions can result in the increased awareness and responsibility of whites, which is an area that is currently lacking in the literature (Sue et al., 2007, p. 279).

The perceptions that racialized groups have about racism are not only socially relevant but they also make for an interesting topic of academic research (Essed, 2002, p. 176). As Essed (2002) states, "With their sense of history, through communication about racism within the Black community, and by testing their own experiences with daily life, Black people can develop profound and often sophisticated knowledge about the reproduction of racism" (p. 176). However, racialized individuals are often forced to talk about their experiences within the context of white supremacy (Razack, 1994, p. 59). As a result, racism

and how it intersects with other forms of oppression, is denied (Razack, 1994, p. 59). Therefore, it is imperative that research does not legitimate or re-evaluate racist practices and/or language.

Essed (2002) notes that racialized experiences are an important aspect of the study of racism because verbal accounts of both personal and vicarious experiences of racism are included (p. 178). As such, the purpose of my research is to analyze the language of everyday racism within correctional facilities and detention centres in Ontario, while ensuring that the experiences of racialized ex-inmates are shared. It is to give voice to those who have been jailed in Ontario for a criminal offence and to re-center their views about the obstacles to rearticulating racism in the criminal justice system and to achieving true anti-racist social work practice in correctional settings.

Obviously, there exist several interrelated challenges with regards to drawing language about racism forward. In an attempt to analyze and to respond to the overrepresentation of racialized groups in Ontario jails and detention centres and to discuss the rampant racial discrimination that is experienced by racialized inmates on a daily basis, this research focuses on the discursive measures surrounding skin colour, cultural markers and covert racist expression as they are perceived by racialized ex-inmates.

Major research questions to be answered in this study examined the everyday language of racism, which articulates underlying assumptions and

beliefs about discrimination based on race in the Ontario criminal justice system. The questions theorize about adult inmates' experiences of everyday racism in the Ontario criminal justice system. Research questions included:

1. How everyday racism operates within the Ontario criminal justice system;

2. How whiteness as the institutionalized power and normality through which everyday racism is perpetuated, impacts on racialized inmates;

3. How everyday racism is perceived by racialized ex-inmates;

4. How personal experiences of everyday racism affect racialized ex-inmates' perceptions of the policies, procedures and practices in the Ontario criminal justice system and the belief regarding whether or not change can occur.

Research Method

By asking racialized ex-inmates to share their own personal experiences of racism within the Ontario criminal justice system, the voices of the research participants could be brought forward. Therefore, it was imperative for me to find a suitable methodological approach, which would accurately represent the participants' views and lived experiences of racism. Unfortunately, the methodological supports available to researchers who wish to include racialized

populations and anti-racist perspectives are extremely limited (Boushel, 2000, p. 71). According to Boushel (2000), incorporating race and ethnicity in social work research remains a challenge because the question of whether or not to utilize alternate methods where racial and cultural issues exist is often not considered (Boushel, 2000, p. 75). In fact, many social work research texts tend to overlook race, rather than to recognize it as an important issue for discussion (Boushel, 2000, p. 75). As a result, the majority of the literature on race and ethnicity issues in research has been derived from other disciplines and unrecognized journals, which are not easily accessible (Boushel, 2000, p. 75).

Due to the fact that focusing on race in research has proven to be a difficult task, the utilization of a "scientific" approach may be tempting in that it avoids the stress and conflict that comes with addressing racial issues (Williams, 2001, p. 234). However, positivist perspectives focus entirely on creating objective knowledge with little or no attention paid to the historical and social context or to the self (Williams, 2001, p. 236). As Williams (2001) states, "The language of post-positivism advances a scientific agenda by veiling the researchers and their intentions and protecting them from social accountability for their work" (p. 236). Likewise, Essed (2002) notes that monitoring the process of racism in a systematic way by using traditional methods such as surveys or observation would be near impossible (p. 190). It is also clear that scientific perspectives do not recognize the structural issues and the complexity of the

everyday realities, which permit us to challenge hegemony (Williams, 2001, p. 234). Therefore, Essed (2002) points to the use of an experiential approach, which allows the researcher to explore how racism is manifested in various situations (p. 191).

Racism is rooted in a historical context that is shaped by socio-political factors (Wilmot, 2005, p. 45). Therefore, rather than utilize multicultural ideals, my research was better suited to an approach, which took strong a value position and was based in conflict as well as in a historical understanding of racism. As Williams (2001) states, "the race neutralized multicultural approach fails to acknowledge that we live in a society where race defines social, economic, and political possibilities, with consistent disadvantage to racialized groups" (p. 233).

In this research, I apply a Critical Social Science (CSS) perspective for its' emphasis on deconstructing racist assumptions and perspectives (Neysmith, 1991, p. 103). CSS also works to provide individuals with the necessary resources to assist them in comprehending and changing social conditions (Neuman, 1997, p. 77). The idea here is that CSS will attempt to bridge the gap between the researcher and those being researched (Neuman, 1997, p. 78).

Qualitative research often relies on CSS perspectives, in that it attempts to assist people to take charge of their own lives and to participate in social activism (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 136). This form of social work research is important because it asserts that research questions should be derived from an

insider perspective rather than from an outsider perspective (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 136). Therefore, the research attends to the dynamic nature of peoples' everyday social lives, by focusing on the standpoint of the research participants rather than on that of the researcher (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 134-5). Rather than treat research participants as objects, qualitative social work research views people as resourceful and compassionate human beings (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 136).

My target population was racialized adults (ages eighteen and over) living in the Hamilton, Ontario area. All three participants were male and had spent time as an adult due to their arrest and/or sentencing for a criminal offence within a correctional facility and/or detention centre in Ontario. The participants accessed services from either the John Howard Society or the Bridge Housing Program in the Hamilton community and were recruited with the assistance of these two social services agencies. Recruitment posters (see Appendix 3) describing the study were posted in each agency and potential participants contacted the researcher by telephone (temporary cell phone & cell phone number through Bell telephone) or in person to confirm their interests and schedule the interviews. The study was exploratory and limited by the number of interviews.

The participants were given pseudonyms in order to maintain their confidentiality. One participant was from the Black community and will be referred to throughout the research as, "Shawn." The other two participants were

from the Aboriginal community and will be referred to as, "Darren" and "Jake" respectively.

Using a qualitative approach, the research method was a semi-structured, in-depth interview, which was based on an interview guide (see Appendix 1) containing a set of open-ended questions. With the participants' informed consent, I conducted semi-structure interviews, which allowed for a conversational exchange around related issues with the guidance of a set of questions. Interviews were done face-to-face on an individual basis for sixty to ninety minutes and took place in a private room at either the John Howard Society or the Bridge Housing Program. Confidentiality was strictly warranted and consent forms (see Appendix 2) were fully explained and signed prior to interviews being conducted. Data was collected from these conversational interviews, which were recorded on audiotape cassettes. Each taped session was transcribed into verbatim.

I designed a qualitative, semi-structured research project in order to examine the issues raised in greater depth. Individuals were asked about their experiences in Ontario correctional facilities and/or detention centres, including how long ago they were incarcerated and for what length of time. Participants were also asked to comment on the relationships that they had with staff while incarcerated and on whether or not they felt that their racialized identity was a factor in these relationships.

Other questions asked participants to comment on their feelings of being judged by their racial background rather than by what they did. I also asked participants about their experiences of racism while incarcerated, including specific incidents as well as short and long-term effects of such incidents. To explore how they saw institutionalized power and privilege, research participants were finally asked to give their thoughts about whether or not they thought that the existing policies and procedures in the Ontario criminal justice system were fair, including the ways in which they thought that it should be changed. Barriers, which were currently preventing change, were also discussed.

To analyze the collected data, I drew on the methodological insight from constructivist grounded theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is produced with the input of both the researcher and the researched (Charmaz, 2003, p. 250). Grounded theory is also flexible enough to allow for diverse perspectives (Charmaz, 2003, p. 256). As Charmaz (2003) states, "a constructivist grounded theory fosters the development of qualitative traditions through the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it" (p. 270). A constructivist approach to grounded theory also encourages research participants to tell their story in their own terms by acknowledging feeling and experience (Charmaz, 2003, p. 275).

Although constructivist grounded theory typically lies within the Interpretive Social Science realm and has been criticized by more radical

approaches, such as Critical Social Science, it remains open to revision (Charmaz, 2003, p. 271). Thus, constructivist grounded theory can be refined to ensure that the researchers' agenda is not privileged over the concerns of the research participants (Charmaz, 2003, p. 272). Therefore, these aspects of constructivist grounded theory served as a good guide for the thematic analysis involved in my anti-racist research project.

Thematic analysis of the transcriptions involved the following steps. Using highlighters, I colour coded data from my transcriptions by analyzing it line-by-line and identifying common themes. Next, I developed theoretical categories by which to code my data. These categories included; everyday racism, racial profiling, dual and intersecting oppressions, whiteness, and solutions and barriers.

Following the coding of my data, I began to write memos about my codes as a way of developing my ideas, refining my categories and outlining the relationships between categories (Charmaz, 2003, p. 263). As my theoretical ideas began to take shape, so too did the story of my research participants and the final draft of my analysis. As Charmaz (2003) states, "The grounded theorist's analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations" (p. 271). However, it is the researcher that shapes the storey, in conjunction with the research participant (Charmaz, 2003, p. 271). Therefore, my analysis sought to clarify rather than to challenge the views of my research participants. By doing

so, I constantly re-examined and renewed my own understanding of the emerging issues.

Obviously, it is apparent that conventional qualitative approaches need to be re-examined and revised to include research designed to achieve political as well as scientific goals (Boushel, 2000, p. 79). Yet, despite the realities and limitations of the methodological literature on race, anti-racism is a key approach in social work research (Boushel, 2000, p. 75). Therefore, regardless of the limitations, this research project displays the fact that it is possible to develop an anti-racist approach that utilizes elements of constructivist grounded theory to analyze and share the experiences of the oppressed.

Limitations & Significance of the Research

One of the challenges to my research involved multiculturalism and its ideals concerning the celebration of diversity, cooperation and equality (Whitmore, 2001, p. 233). Due to the tendency of mainstream literature on race to utilize a neutral approach, which does not address institutional racism, it was imperative that multiculturalistic perspectives did not inform my own examination of everyday racism within the Ontario criminal justice system. Rather, my hope was that the perspectives of the participants would aid in my understanding of how whiteness as institutionalized power operates in their everyday experience.

The main goal of my research was to give racialized ex-inmates a voice by utilizing the above methodological approaches. As stated above, there are few studies, which focus on the Ontario criminal justice system from the point of view of racialized ex-inmates. Viewing findings about everyday racism also provides new insight about an area, which has historically been neglected in the literature. The lack of research being conducted within the criminal justice system about everyday racism also points to a lack of responsibility on the behalf of white researchers.

Boushel (2000) comments on the challenges facing white researchers, stating that the experiences and knowledge, which white researchers bring to their research will most likely be different from that of racialized researchers (p. 75). Therefore, the question of whether or not one needs to have experienced racism in order to conduct research with racialized communities also needs to be considered here.

It is the viewpoints of individuals from the margins, which are more complete in that they consist of the experience of racialized groups as well as that of those at the centre (Whitmore, 2001, p.85). As Whitmore (2001) states, "people at the centre of power are often unable, or unwilling, to understand the experience of those with less power" (p. 85). As such, it is crucial to ensure that the lives and experiences of racialized groups are not overlooked and/or misunderstood and that racialized individuals be given a chance to review the

research and/or to question its contribution to their lives and communities (Boushel, 2000, p. 76).

Throughout my research journey, I remained cognizant of the fact that my position as a white, middle class researcher, may not allow me to fully understand everyday racism from the perspective of racialized ex-inmates. As Whitmore (2001) states, "As social workers, we need to recognize our own locations in relation to poverty and injustice (p. 93). By denouncing white superiority and entitlement and by asserting that racialized ex-inmates are the experts on everyday racism, I have attempted to mediate the issues of power related to my social location. Likewise, bell hooks (1990) makes mention of the fact that the discourse about the margins as a site of resistance has been created, as feminists and other scholars have surrendered their power to act as colonizers (p. 2). In addition, while bell hooks (1990) cautions against annihilating the story of the oppressed by rewriting or retelling it, she recognizes that it is possible for the white researcher to relinquish his/her power as a member of the dominant group by acknowledging that racism exists everyday, often without being labelled as racism (p. 2).

While many authors believe that being an insider is essential in order to achieve a thorough understanding of oppression, Boushel (2000) points to the concept of, "experiential affinity" (p. 76). Experiential affinity states that racialized groups cannot be completely separated from whites and that the

possibility of some overlap in terms of perspective and experience may link

researcher with research participant (Boushel, 2000, p. 76). Likewise, Williams

(2001) states; "The insider and outsider roles cannot be essentialized as personal

characteristics, and social differences shift the status of different researchers in

different settings" (p. 237). Therefore, I believe that my experience working with

racialized inmates in a detention centre combined with the sexism, which I have

experienced as a woman, have helped me to understand how oppression operates

and also to take responsibility for the oppression, which I perpetuate by virtue of

being white.

Conclusion

The research questions, recruitment strategies and analytical procedures

described above, are unique to the study of everyday racism from the perspective

of racialized ex-inmates. By utilizing creative methodological approaches, I also

acknowledge here that some of the above-mentioned tensions may never be fully

resolved. As Neuman (1997) states, "the critical researcher may create problems

by intentionally raising and identifying more problems that the ruling elites in

politics and administration are unable to accommodate, much less to solve" (p.

74). Therefore, the barriers, which I confronted throughout the research process,

were many as well as impenetrable. As Boushel (2000) states, "the process is

likely to be one of 'spiral learning', constantly self-challenging and frequently

evoking feelings of confusion, avoidance, anxiety, inadequacy and irritation, as well as noble emotions" (p. 85). Rather than allow the research project to be limited by these reactions, I used them to inform my data. As such, these feelings served as a first step in taking responsibility for whiteness and for the powerful way in which it intrudes in the day-to-day lives of racialized groups who have come into contact with the Ontario criminal justice system.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter will illuminate the thematic analysis conducted in my research study and will discuss the findings of my research from the point of view of racialized ex-inmates. The research findings will attempt to answer the major research questions, noted previously and restated here:

- How everyday racism operates within the Ontario criminal justice system;

- How whiteness as the institutionalized power and normality through which everyday racism is perpetuated, impacts on racialized inmates;

- How everyday racism is perceived by racialized ex-inmates;

- How personal experiences of everyday racism affect racialized ex-inmates' perceptions of the policies, procedures and practices in the Ontario criminal justice system and the belief regarding whether or not change can occur.

Pertinent quotes from participants have been grouped into categories based on common themes and will be utilized to uncover meanings about incidents of racism as experienced by racialized ex-inmates. As noted in the previous section,

these themes were identified following a thorough analysis of raw data from the transcribed interviews.

Everyday Racism as Lived Experience

Everyday racism is ingrained into practices, procedures and behaviours and is not easily recognized. Racism is also ignored and thus reproduced through the belief that it happens very infrequently or not at all.

Racism as Part of the Daily Routine

Everyday racism is a racism, which often goes unnoticed because it becomes part of the daily routine. Respondents in the current study noted that not only did racial slurs and insults occur in the jails and detention centres but that they were also commonplace and oftentimes, occurred daily. As Shawn stated, "So, every morning for 5 months straight, that's how I was greeted. 'You're a cockroach.' 'Good morning, cockroach.' Every day." Shawn's comment about the degrading racial slurs, which he became victim to each morning while in jail, depicts how even overt acts of racism are normalized when they become a part of every day routines and greetings.

Routines are a major aspect of life within Ontario's jails and detention centres.

In fact, our correctional facilities and detention centres operate on a twenty-four hour military style schedule, which specifies the regimented rules, regulations,

policies, directives, practices, and procedures for governing the institution on a daily basis.

Likewise, when asked about his stay in jail, Jake responded, "I just went along with the daily routine... went to work everyday. Didn't cause no ruckus." Jake's comment implies that there was an unspoken rule, which was ingrained into the daily routine in jail. Inmates were expected to keep quiet, follow the schedule set out for them and to remain ambivalent when racist comments were made. If Jake had done otherwise, he would have been seen to be causing problems and would have likely faced harsh consequences. This forced compliance explains why racism is often made unspeakable in the system.

The unspeakability of racism also became obvious when some respondents had difficulty identifying and/or elaborating on personal experiences of racism. For example, when asked about his personal experience of racism, Darren dismissed it by stating, "Actually there was nothing other than that one incident. That was cleared up in less than 5 minutes. But everything was fine after that." Likewise, Jake downplayed the existence of racism in the criminal justice system: "I don't think there really was any racism...Well, there was a bit but it wasn't directed at me." Ironically, these comments contradict the fact that each of the three interviews provided ample evidence that incidents of racism are rampant in our jails and detention centres.

Dismissing and/or denying everyday racism may be partially due to the fear of violence, which is instilled in racialized inmates should they breach the

code of silence in jail. For example, when Darren decided to report an incident of racism, he feared violence. He recalled: "And then they asked me a few minutes later to come out and I thought, 'Oh, I might be getting a beating.'" While threats of violence ensure that the cycle of everyday racism in the jail system continues, the data also points to several other rationalizations, which serve to maintain the subtle and unconscious nature of this form of racism.

Racialized ex-inmates also rationalized the everyday racism, which they experienced by explaining that discriminatory behaviour often went hand-in-hand with being in a position of authority. In a discussion about whether or not correctional staff use force towards racialized inmates more than they do towards white inmates, Darren stated, "You know, they are like anyone else. They can only take so much and you know, if they are put in a position of authority sometimes it does happen." Darren's statement also points to the fact that racist behaviour is often forgiven when it is regarded as a response to being overwhelmed or overworked. In this instance, the inmate is seen as a deserving victim of the racist behaviour because they have overstepped the boundaries between correctional officers and inmates. Likewise, when asked about whether or not he believed that correctional officers were more apt to abuse their power with racialized inmates than with white inmates, Darren replied, "I don't think it really matters. It's the person."

The research data also displays the fact that everyday racism is often individualized as the behaviour of one, "bad apple." For example, when he was

asked about whether or not he thought that he had experienced racial violence because of the colour of his skin, Darren replied, "I kinda think that with this particular individual, that police officer, I believe so." In this instance, everyday racism is diminished to an individual act, which calls for solutions at the individual rather than the systemic level.

Everyday racism also comes in the form of jokes. In fact, the experiences of racism, which respondents provided usually included racial slurs and jokes. For example, Jake described an incident in jail, which consisted of a white staff member making a racist joke about a Black person. Jake noted that there was a sign right in front of the staff member, which read, "No Racism." Jake depicts his reaction to the racist joke and the staff member's reply: "And I pointed at the sign and he just laughed." Joking and laughing about racism hides the fact that acknowledging that racism exists makes us uncomfortable. By attempting to make jokes out of racist material, we are denying the seriousness of the issue and perpetuating everyday racism. It is even more concerning when this practice is taken lightly while racism is officially recognized as a wrongdoing. The "No Racism" sign reminds us of the discrepancy between what is in policy and what is actually practiced in everyday operation.

Racial Profiling as Normal Practice

Racial profiling is another way in which racism is perpetuated. Believing that racial characteristics predict behaviour and/or assuming that individuals are

more likely to commit a certain type of crime by virtue of their racial background was a common theme throughout the data. As Shawn states, "I have respect for authority but I don't have respect for the police or [correctional officers] because I feel like I'm always being racially profiled, you know?"

i. The Marked & Unmarked: The assumption that certain races display particular behaviours. But whites are free from these assumptions.

When Darren was asked about whether or not he felt judged by his racial background rather than by what he did, he responded:

> I don't think so...Not me, personally. Like, I know of other people who have acted out in some way and one of the officers, I heard them say about someone else, "Oh, they're just naturally like that. It was a person of colour...this individual was being very rude, obnoxious and very demanding...things like this. He was from one of those countries where women are second-class citizens or no class at all.

Darren's response depicts the longstanding belief that ways of being are dependent on the race, country of origin and/or ethnic background of individuals or groups. Many people do not understand that racial background does not determine individual behaviour. We cannot make generalizations and assumptions about people based on their racial background or on our interpretation of the laws, which are present in the country that their family of origin is from.

Similarly, when asked about the racism that he witnessed while in jail, Jake commented on the fact that white correctional staff felt free to make racist remarks in from of him: "Just some of the guards would say stuff about other

people. I don't know...they thought because I was Native, they could be more free to talk." Jake's comment indicates that the correctional staff may have stereotyped Jake as being the "quiet and soft-spoken Indian" and as a result, they assumed that he would not react to their racist remarks.

ii. Colour Matters: It is also commonplace to classify individuals in jail based on skin colour. This practice appears harmless yet it breeds racial violence, hatred.

Correctional facilities and detention centres routinely group inmates into separate, enclosed areas where several cells are located. These large common areas are called "ranges." Correctional officers, managers and classification counsellors make decisions about which inmates should be placed on which range. As Shawn states, inmates are routinely placed on a range with individuals who are assumed to belong to similar racial communities: "...when we go to jail, they put us all on the same range. So, if you're trying to make a change, then why are you putting us all on the same range? You're doing that to classify us as a group." Shawn depicts the fact that classification in jails and detention centres is often based on race rather than on personality traits, type of criminal offence, etc:

> There were two ranges dedicated just to Rexdale alone and they're not allowed to do that. You're not supposed to put people who are going through the same trial and stuff like that together on the same range or in the same cell. They didn't care. They figured they were just going to put us all right here. And then on the next range, there's a different group of people from a different area so you know, when cells open there's the riots right there. Automatic gang fights and stuff like that.

Shawn's reflection also displays the fact that this specific type of racial profiling is done without much consideration for racialized inmates in that it breeds racial violence and even genocide.

iii. Racial Assumptions: The assumption that certain races commit certain types of crimes. But whites are free from these assumptions.

All three respondents gave personal examples of incidents, in which they felt racially profiled by correctional staff and/or police. Shawn explained that Black inmates were often assumed to be gang members and received worse treatment than white inmates: "But say the white guy or the Mexican guy who's a rapist or something like that, they don't get that harsh punishment but because they're looking at us like a gang, they treat us different." Likewise, when Shawn was asked about whether or not he believed that his racial identity had been a factor in his relationships with correctional staff, he responded, "…they basically put us in the category of terrorists, murderers, killers, stuff like that, right?" Similarly, Jake spoke of the stereotypes that exist about Aboriginal people who have come into contact with the criminal justice system: "Yeah, it was like, if he's in here and he's Native, he must have stolen a car. You're a drunk. You were drunk and you must have stolen a car… It was stereotyping. Natives get drunk and steal cars."

In addition, when asked about whether he felt judged by his appearance following an incident of racial violence in the community, Darren replied:

> 10 o'clock at night you see a Native person coming out of a facility with an attaché case dressed somewhat like I am now with jeans, running shoes and a t-shirt. What's going on here? You know, there's something not right. Maybe something's not right.

Darren's comment depicts the ostracization of Aboriginal people. Despite a regular appearance, Aboriginal individuals do not blend in with white society and are often suspected of committing a crime by virtue of the colour of their skin.

Similarly, the research data displays the fact that Black individuals are racially profiled by the police in the community much the same as they are by correctional staff members in jail. Not only did Shawn use the terms, "police" and "correctional officers" interchangeably but he also spoke candidly of his many negative experiences with the police upon being released from jail:

> "We're not letting you go until we find out who you are." And I'm like, "You don't have to know who I am. I live here." And he's like, "Well I know everybody who lives in this neighbourhood and I don't know you. So until I find out who you are, you're not going anywhere."

> I'm like, "So why are you harassing me? This is racial profiling." He's like, "Oh, so you're going to pull that card on me?" And I'm like, "That's exactly what you're doing cause I don't see you talking to anybody else." And then I walk into Jackson Square and he's like, "Oh, you can't go into the mall. I ban you from the mall." And I'm like; "You can't ban me from the mall." And he's like, "You want to bet? Walk through these doors and see what happens."

Shawn's examples show that despite his efforts to defend himself, to question the police officers and to name their discriminatory behaviour, he was still met with ridicule, intimidation and threats. When considering whether or not Shawn was too defensive and uncooperative, white professionals must acknowledge the fact that the likelihood of finding themselves in situations such as these is highly unlikely, given the fact that whites are free from racial profiling.

Dual & Intersecting Oppressions

Inequalities in education, employment, housing and socio-economic status between whites and racialized groups are deeply embedded in society and therefore, remain hidden. When these inequities are combined with the fact that inmates are exploited, patronised and abused as a result of their criminalization, the result is the overrepresentation of racialized groups in all facets of the criminal justice system.

Sense of Powerlessness

The research also reveals that the experience of being in jail and of being racialized results in a lack of choices and/or complete powerlessness. Respondents indicated the sense of absolute powerlessness that they felt as a result of the intersecting oppressions, which they faced. When Jake spoke of his adherence to the daily routine in jail, he noted the fact that he had no choice but to follow orders: "Nothing else you can do. You can't leave." Likewise, Shawn depicts the extreme power differential between racialized inmates and white correctional staff: "You're an inmate and they are on the right side of the fence, they could talk to you how they want, treat you how they want."

Despite the racism that they experienced, racialized ex-inmates also felt that they were unable to fight back. As Shawn states:

> He would come around and wouldn't say much but then when he would come to my cell and he would be like, "Good morning, cockroach." You know, like racial slurs, racial slanders and stuff like that, you know. And I took offence to that but there's nothing I can do. I'm in jail, right... You can't say something

back cause if you say something, you're going to the hole, you know. Or get beat up.

Shawn depicted the fact that had he not been in jail, he may have been able to seek retribution for the racism that he experienced. However, Shawn notes that by virtue of being incarnated, he had no choice but to remain silent and face the bitterness and anger that he experienced as a result:

> Cause I felt like if this was on the outside he couldn't talk to me like that. I wouldn't accept someone talking to me in that fashion. But because I'm incarcerated, he can get away with it. It left me real angry and real bitter, you know? I'm a person who doesn't hold back what I have to say, right? In jail, you could still get charges while you're in jail, right? So, I'm not trying to get an extra charge or go to the hole or get beat up or lose any privileges. So it really made me angry that I had to sit there every morning.

When Racism & Sexual Orientation Intersect

Inmates who identify as gay or bisexual are frequently victimized and subjected to violence and sexual assault while in jail. Therefore, it was not surprising that the data noted the existence of slanders and slurs, which were based in heterosexism. Shawn depicts the fact that correctional officers would make jokes pertaining to his sexual orientation and would assume that he was gay: "'Oh, are you guys going to be having sex tonight?' Gay comments and stuff like that you know?" Shawn's example displayed the fact that by making assumptions about his sexual orientation, correctional staff members were attempting to increase his sense of isolation, exploitation and powerlessness.

Whiteness as Invisible Institutionalized Power

Whiteness is a key element in the study of everyday racism, racialized inmates and social work practice because it affects how we see (or don't see) everyday racism. Racialized inmates are excluded from the benefits that come with being a member of the white community. Whiteness also spills over into the jail system, where the majority of correctional staff members are white and skin colour defines the boundaries in the relationships between inmates and also between inmates and correctional staff. When asked about whether or not he believed that his racial identity was a factor in his relationships with staff and other inmates, Jake spoke about how relationships in jail were defined by skin colour. By virtue of the colour of his own skin he was able to remain in the middle and be friends with everyone. While he refrained from referring to himself as a minority, he was unable to fully inhabit a white identity, leaving him somewhere in the middle: "It seemed like people from minorities were my friends and the white people too were my friends. But then they wouldn't be friends with each other."

Likewise, Darren downplayed the racism he experienced and instead preferred to speak of his positive relationships with several white correctional staff, white police officers and other influential white people in his community: "That was just a one time incident that's never happened to me before and it hasn't happened to me since." In addition he stated, "My relationships with the staff were fantastic...I met the officers so I had a good relationship with them." Darren appeared to prefer to speak to the positive aspects of the Ontario criminal

justice system, which may have been due to the possibility that he perceived me as someone who was close to the system.

On the other hand, Shawn discussed several negative experiences with white police officers and correctional staff, noting that whiteness was such a powerful identity within the correctional system, that some Black correctional officers embraced it as well, perhaps seeing it as a way to distinguish themselves from the Black criminal identity: "Even with Black [correctional officers], they still treated Black inmates different than they would treat white inmates."

Policies and institutional settings are also racialized and in favour of whites. For example, Darren described the aftermath of an incident of racial violence wherein he was the victim. Unable to navigate the justice system on his own, he relied on the help of two white people in positions of power, who took control of the situation with ease and authority:

> I went back and I called Dr. and Mrs. Rosen. The Dr. came down and he said, "I am now the attending physician." Mrs. Rosen was working with a group of people that the mayor had on Justice...she was in policy, planning and procedures with Corrections Canada and she was also on the Board and she came down and said, "I'll be looking after this because it's my department." We went right into the police department.

Differential Treatment

Another question this study wanted to explore was whether or not white individuals are free to say and do things that racialized inmates would most likely be reprimanded for. When asked whether or not he believed that it was easier for white individuals to make comments about other cultures because it's heard so

often, Jake responded that yes, it was. Jake elaborated on the freedom of speech

granted to whites: "A lot of the white guys were more free to say things about the

other people to me." Likewise, Shawn described an incident, which depicted

differential treatment for Black inmates compared to that of white inmates:

> Someone threw away the food tray and that person got eight days in the hole and
> then when that happened on our range, that person got twenty-nine days in the
> hole for the exact same thing… For refusing the food, right? But the punishment
> was different because he was Black and the other guy was white. Just from my
> point of view.

The research also pointed to the fact that individuals with darker skin may

experience more racism and may be less likely to fight back when racism occurs.

For example, when asked about the tension between white staff and racialized

inmates on a work range in jail, Jake pointed to the fact that Black inmates were

targeted the most: "It just seemed to be mostly pointed towards Black people...A

lot of racial slurs." Shawn also spoke of the treatment he experienced from a

white staff member and his inaction: "Sometimes, I wouldn't even respond to

him. Just sit on my bed. 'Good morning cockroach.' Throw the coffee on the

floor."

Solutions & Barriers

Solutions and barriers to ending everyday racism are important aspects of

this study. Even more important is that the perspectives of racialized ex-inmates

lead this particular discussion. However, a major theme, which emerged from the

data regarding solutions and barriers to ending everyday racism, was the vast

differences, which existed between the opinions of each respondent. While some respondents had ideas for effecting change and mediating challenges with regards to everyday racism in the Ontario criminal justice system, others did not.

Understanding Racism

Shawn talked openly about his ideas for effecting change in the Ontario criminal justice system:

> Correctional officers and police officers...I think they should have to do like, a crash course on race, ethnicity and how certain races are perceived, how they...like you know, their lifestyle, their environment. Before they're allowed to enforce any kind of laws, right? They don't know what's going on in certain people's lives.

Shawn's comments display the fact that correctional staff need to be more cognizant of the prejudices and stereotypes, which exist about racialized groups before they are given the power to make decisions, which could have a detrimental impact.

Shawn also gave his opinions on what the barriers to effecting change in the Ontario criminal justice system consisted of:

> I think that the barriers are the top dogs that are in the enforcement, like the top [correctional officer] and the chief of corrections, something like that. I think that the majority of those people who have the seniority and power, they're bigots, you know? They're racist and they're, you know... That's how they are because that's just the way they were raised. Someone of an older generation is going to be harder to change than of someone of a younger generation. So, I think that's the main thing that's stopping it because the older you get, the less likely you are to change.

Shawn's comments reflect the fact that power is unevenly dispersed from the top, down. As a result of the historical power structure, which is inherent within the Ontario criminal justice system, resistance to change remains firm.

Multiculturalism and Cultural Competency

A major feature of multiculturalism is that it encourages us to celebrate and to downplay the seriousness of racism by leading us to believe that racism is not as bad as it was in the past. For example, when asked to discuss racism in the Ontario criminal justice system and solutions for change, Darren stated, "I think they've come a long way."

Popular solutions to the "racism problem," which are depicted in the media are usually based on the ideals of multiculturalism and cultural competency. Therefore, it was not surprising that some respondents cited these solutions as examples. As Darren stated:

> You know, if the officers could maybe have like a little handbook or something that would say this is what these people do, this is their religion...It might give them a little bit more insight as to why somebody is doing something as opposed to, 'Oh, they're acting up.' Or something they don't realize.

Similarly, when asked to clarify whether or not he thought that training to learn about different cultural practices would change the system, Darren responded:

> Yeah, that would be something that I think would help a little bit. Well probably more than just a little bit... quite a lot. I don't know the practices of all the cultures in the world. So, I always find that a learning experience myself.

The Inadequacy of White Guilt & Power

To racialized ex-inmates, the combination of white guilt and power is not empowering or helpful. Darren spoke of how two of his white friends used their power to try to correct a situation, in which he had experienced racial violence. However, the outcome was not what he had wanted:

> We went right into the police station. She rattled off some numbers and she said, "I want this, this and this." Eventually, the police came down and the doctor said not to sign anything until you've spoken to somebody who can handle this. "Call me." So any time they would come and ask me to sign things, I would say, "I have to call the physician." We did get a little bit of money out of it. That wasn't my aim, my goal.

Although many would regard Darren's story of retribution as a success, it is clear that he does not. By not even allowing Darren to speak for himself, his white friends showed their lack of interest in advocating and/or empowering Darren to assume control over the situation.

Silencing

Following an incident wherein he was racially profiled by the police in the community, Shawn discussed his own powerlessness to change the situation and his resolve to say nothing: "And after that I just kept it moving and I decided, I don't want to be downtown. I'm just going to go home." Therefore, when asked about the changes they would make if given the power, it was clear that the isolation, exploitation and oppression, which respondents had experienced on a day-to-day basis while in jail and in the community, did not even allow them to imagine what it would be like to be in a position of power. For example, when he

was asked if there was anything that he wanted to change about the Ontario criminal justice system, Jake replied, "I'm really not sure." In addition, when he was asked about what could be done to change the fact that people in positions of power make assumptions based on race, he replied, "I don't know."

Jakes inability to discuss solutions or barriers to change may be due to continually being told that racism doesn't exist and/or that he wouldn't be believed if he decided to report incidents of racism. These practices enforce the code of silence within institutions such as the Ontario criminal justice system.

Conclusion

Without proof of the incidence and prevalence of everyday racism, its invisibility will be maintained. Therefore, the voices of racialized ex-inmates have been depicted above as a way to necessitate knowledge about their experiences in the Ontario criminal justice system and to provide proof that the elimination of everyday racism in the Ontario criminal justice system is necessary. The results illustrate that the disparities between whites and racialized inmates are consistent, systemic and hidden from view. In fact, multiculturalic ideals and the subtle operation of everyday racism may have forced the majority of the participants to be positive and hopeful. Therefore, the results also indicate the subtle yet deliberate attempt of the Ontario criminal justice system to subdue any discussion of everyday racism and to downplay incidents of racist behaviour. The following chapter will discuss the results in greater depth.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

     As depicted in the previous chapter, several themes and sub-themes

emerged from the data. The major themes, which will be discussed in greater

detail below, include: everyday racism, racial profiling, dual and intersecting

oppressions, whiteness, and solutions and barriers.

Everyday Racism: An Undeniable Fact

     Everyday racism is a racism that is present everywhere in society (Essed,

1990, p. 33). Recurring patterns are characterized by avoidance, hostility,

aggression and other various kinds of discrimination, which may appear trivial

and meaningless (Essed, 1990, p. 34). Racialized persons are often accused of

being, "hypersensitive" by white individuals, whom either do not recognize their

own racist views or whom deny that racism even exists (Essed, 1990, p. 36). As a

result, racialized individuals often feel that there is nothing that they can say and

that they must just put up with racist incidents (Essed, 1990. p. 36). Thus,

systemic, everyday racism continues to be denied (Twine & Gallagher, 2007. p.

16).

     In line with the literature, the racialized ex-inmates who participated in the

research spoke of their powerlessness to fight back against prejudice and

discrimination. Rather than retaliate and make a complaint about racist and/or discriminatory practices, respondents had no choice but to remain silent and to go about their daily routines. If respondents did complain or react, racism was often denied and they were told that they would not be believed should they decide to make formal reports. Reactions or complaints, which followed an overt act of racism, such as racial slurs, jokes or violence were more common. However, the respondents then faced the fear of repeated incidents or additional violence.

While overt and obvious acts of racism and discrimination contribute to inequities and oppression within institutions, it is the less visible institutional policies and systems that are more detrimental (Sue, 2004, p. 766). How can racist jokes be openly made in a place where a "No Racism" sign is posted? Why are inmates classified by colour while staff are predominantly white? Twine & Gallagher (2007) point to the fact that whiteness is deeply embedded in the routine practices of life (p. 19). As Wilmot (2005) states, "An examination of the everyday, common-sense knowledge and practice of racism reveals the ascription of race to 'others' but not to the dominant group" (p. 83). Rather, white race (otherwise known as the dominant group) most often goes unnamed (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 16).

As Sue (2004) states, "Whiteness is transparent precisely because of its everyday occurrence. It represents institutional normality" (p. 764). Therefore, standardized operating procedures are a source of cultural oppression for racialized groups because they demand compliance and a way of operating, which

does not pay attention to equal opportunity and access (Sue, 2004, p, 766). Institutional bias is frequently prevalent in chain of command systems (Sue, 2004, p. 766). Likewise, the jail system is characterized by standardized procedures and a chain of command, which teach correctional workers the prejudices, biases and myths that guide the process of everyday racism.

Everyday racism frequently appears to be intangible, subtle, incidental and trivial (Essed, 1990, p. 35). In fact, everyday racism occurs so often that individuals may even suppress their awareness (Essed, 1990, p. 35). It may also be difficult to identify whether racism exists in a given situation or incident (Essed, 1990, p. 35). In addition, racialized individuals are not quick to label an incident as racism (Essed, 1990, p. 35). Similarly, research respondents were often unable to recognize systemic racism at all, dismissing it as an individual act or denying that it ever took place.

Racial Profiling: Normalized Markers & Differential Consequences

Violence in racialized communities is often seen as a cultural attribute rather than as a combination of male domination and racism (Razack, 1994, p. 57-8). Likewise, Twine & Gallagher (2007) note the utilization of "cultural deficit" rationales to trivialize racial inequality and criminalize racialized groups (p. 9). Racialized individuals are often labelled as foreigners, terrorists or outsiders (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 6). In fact, Twine & Gallagher (2007) note that while being white is synonymous with being moral, self-assured, sophisticated

and independent, being non-white signifies poor self-restraint, immaturity, low morals and low intellect (p. 12).

The belief that people from racialized communities commit more crime and more serious crime than white individuals is apparent in both popular and academic literature (Williams, 1999, p. 201). Similarly, the research found that racialized ex-inmates felt that they were often assumed to be gang members, suspected of committing crimes and that they also received harsher punishments for the same crimes committed by whites, who were thought to receive less time. Shawn also noted that Black inmates were not treated any differently than terrorists or murderers, regardless of the crime that they had been charged with committing. In addition, Darren felt that Natives were often suspected of crime, by virtue of their appearance. In fact, Darren noted an incident in which he had been suspected of doing something wrong, when in fact he had done nothing. Likewise, Jake indicated that himself as well as other Natives were routinely labelled as "drunks" and/or car thieves.

It is not uncommon for remarks to be made that racialized individuals should go back to their own country or that ones' character is defined by his/her race (Essed, 1990, p. 34). Likewise, the research participants noted that racialized inmates were assumed to be naturally rude, obnoxious and/or demanding by virtue of their culture and/or country of origin.

Essed (1990) notes that racism is often expressed verbally and that whites do not hesitate to express racist comments and opinions in front of racialized

individuals (p. 34). Similarly, the research points to the fact that correctional staff felt comfortable making racial slurs about Black inmates in front of Native inmates, perhaps assuming that all Natives were non-confrontational, neutral and hoped to align themselves with whites.

The research also found that it was commonplace to place individuals with similar skin colours or from similar communities, in the same cells or ranges. While this practice appeared to be normal within the jail system, it is hardly trivial when one considers the assumptions and judgements, which are being made. As Shawn noted, this practice was done without considering the reasons that individuals were incarcerated and as a result, it perpetuated racial violence and hatred.

Dual & Intersecting Oppressions

The reality is that racialized inmates are most often incarcerated for minor offences such as "survival" crimes due to mental health issues, substance abuse, poverty or the fact that they reside in neighbourhoods targeted for aggressive policing (Primm et al., 2005, p. 565). When these factors are combined with discriminatory criminal sanctions and institutional racial discrimination, racialized groups are at a high risk for incarceration (Primm et al., 2005, p. 565).

Many jails and detention centres in Ontario do not treat inmates as individuals or with respect and dignity (Roy, 2008, p. 1). When being a criminal offender is combined with being racialized, the result is complete powerlessness.

Racialized individuals who are already in the, "prison of racism" (Razack, 1994, p. 56) face additional discrimination and prejudice when they are admitted to our correctional facilities and detention centres. Similarly, both Shawn and Jake indicated that because they were unable to leave the situation of being in jail, correctional staff could readily talk to them in whatever way that they wanted and there was absolutely nothing that they could do about it. Shawn felt like had he faced such poor treatment while in the community, he would have quite possibly been able to do something constructive about it. However, while in jail he feared losing what few privileges he had and/or incurring additional charges and staying in jail for longer as a result.

Whiteness: The Invisible but Powerful Marker

Twine & Gallagher (2007) report that whites as a group, do not experience the world in the same way. For instance, economically disadvantaged whites have a very different reality than white individuals who occupy prestigious and powerful positions in society (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 7). Likewise not all racialized groups have the same attitudes and experiences. In fact, the residential proximity of whites and racialized groups can shape attitudes about race and group identity (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 6).

The development of white identity among labourers in 19th century America occurred when these individuals embraced membership in the dominant (white) group because it provided them with numerous social and material

privileges (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 8). By assuming racist attitudes and behaviours, these individuals were able to avoid the stigma associated with a racialized identity (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 8). The research displays the fact that whiteness operates in the Ontario criminal justice system in a similar way. In fact, as reported by Shawn, Black correctional staff engaged in discriminatory and prejudice treatment toward Black inmates, in much the same manner as their white peers.

Twine & Gallagher (2007) also report on U.S. whiteness studies, which focus on whiteness and white identities among Mexican Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Asians (p. 14). Similarly, the research shows that the development of white identity is also occurring in Ontario's jails and detention centres. For example, when Darren downplayed incidents of racial violence, which he experienced and instead focused on his ability to identify with and be accepted by whites, it is clear that he recognized that it was a more admirable identity than that of a substance abusing, Native inmate. In addition, by stating that he was friendly with everyone, Jake positioned himself in between racialized inmates and whites. By doing so, he was able to avoid being identified with the undesirable, "Black criminal." However, he was still unable to assume the whiteness of the correctional staff.

The research also points to the fact that racialized inmates could not easily navigate the legal system without the help of whites. Darren spoke of the power of the white professional and the positive attention, which he received as a result

of being friends with two white individuals in positions of power and prestige.

Likewise, Essed (1990) points to the fact that being treated fairly and with respect,

recognition and courtesy is denied to people of colour but taken for granted by

whites (p. 35).

Whereas everyone else is marked, whiteness is not a particular quality

because it is colourless (Rodriguez, 2000, p. 1). Whiteness is seen as normal and

natural (Rodriguez, 2000, p. 1). Therefore, white individuals are free to live out

their whiteness from a privileged position (Rodriguez, 2000, p. 8). For example,

the research displays the fact that white individuals have the freedom to say and

do things that racialized individuals do not. Both Jake and Shawn commented on

the fact that they felt that white inmates were more apt to make racist jokes and

comments about other races and that they were more likely to get away with

negative behaviour.

A recent article in the Toronto Star (2009) commented on a major study

about multiculturalism and society, which found that skin colour was the number

one cause of immigrants experiencing alienation in Canada (p. 1). The study also

found that Black individuals faced the most stigmatization, leading the researchers

to conclude that the darker an individual's skin, the lower his/her sense of

belonging (The Toronto Star, 2009, p. 1). In addition, Twine & Gallagher (2007)

reported on a study, in which U.S. researchers found that darker skinned

immigrants earned up to fifteen per cent less than immigrants with lighter skin (p.

10). This information is consistent with the research, since Shawn shared more

experiences of racism than both Darren and Jake combined. In addition, Darren and Jake spoke of several incidents of racism, which they witnessed as being directed at Black inmates only.

Looking Forward: Solutions & Barriers

An examination of everyday racism in the Ontario criminal justice system must also look at how the system can change and what has prevented such changes from occurring thus far. The literature notes that analyses of racism often lack feasible solutions. As Wilmot (2005) states, "Since racism operates at both everyday and structural levels, pulling apart the systems to see where we each fit in is important. The problem is, once we have pulled them apart, we often don't know what to do next" (p. 79).

The majority of the research respondents gave solutions based on multiculturalism and cultural awareness. Both Shawn and Darren suggested that correctional staff should learn about other religions, ethnicities and diverse cultural practices in order to gain insight into the possible reasons for certain behaviours. Likewise, the literature notes that many people believe that respect and acceptance for racialized groups should come naturally if one has a good understanding of behaviour, culture and ideals (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 98). In addition, popular solutions to racism in institutions often involve training initiatives, which are based on multiculturalism and learning about other cultures. However, rather than attempt to deal with racism, multiculturalism encourages us

to adapt by stating that it is differences in behaviours and attitudes, which create conflict and not institutional inequality (Wilmot, 2005, p. 70).

Some of the research respondents displayed an excellent understanding of racism and of the barriers to achieving anti-discriminatory practices and procedures. For example, Shawn stated that he believed that correctional staff should receive training about how racialized groups are perceived, about the environments that they reside in and about what is going on in their lives. The literature indicates that such training is imperative. In fact, white people often make generalizations about the behaviour of racialized groups rather than examine their experiences of racism and other intersecting oppressions such as classism, sexism, ableism and heterosexism (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003, p. 99).

Alternatively, Jake was unable to provide any solutions for and/or barriers to, change within the Ontario criminal justice system. He often answered questions, stating that he, "didn't know" or that he, "wasn't sure." Rather than blame lack of interest, insight, or attention, these statements may in part be due to silencing. It is important to recognize that the huge power differential between whites and racialized groups creates the day-to-day oppression, which may cause them to believe that their voices are useless, meaningless and/or misunderstood. In fact, the notion of silencing is consistent with the literature, which states that silencing is instilled through embarrassment and fear (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005, p. 446). In addition, by citing incidents of racism, racialized groups also risk

being perceived as over emphasizing racism and/or being viewed as traitors by their own communities (Razack, 1994, p. 59).

Shawn also commented on another factor, which he perceived to be a major barrier to change. This participant felt that the individuals who hold power and seniority within the Ontario criminal justice establishment were racist and immune to change efforts. Likewise, Williams (1999) notes that historically, allegations regarding abuses of power by the police were for the most part, ignored by the criminal justice administration (p. 203). Despite the fact that the criminal justice establishment has attempted to manage the anger of citizens following incidents of racial violence, they have done so by alluding to the fact that they are fighting racism, rather than providing a systemic response (Williams, 1999, p. 2003).

As mentioned earlier, Darren spoke about the power of two white professionals, who were friends of his. He talked about their attempt to assist him with effectively navigating the legal system and also with seeking retribution for the racial violence, which he experienced personally. Darren also spoke of how he was told not to do anything without consulting his white friends, who were assumed to be more knowledgeable and influential. He also spoke of how the outcome of the incident was not one, which took his goals, aspirations and need for self-determination into account. Likewise, the literature points to the fact that while white anti-racists may be able to recognize and discuss racism, they often neglect to see themselves as belonging to the systems, which reproduce racism

(Yee, 2005, p. 87). As a result, they end up using their power to speak for and about racialized groups, rather than to and with them (bell hooks, 1990, p. 152).

Conclusion

As we begin to familiarize ourselves with the perspectives of racialized ex-inmates, our understanding of how everyday racism operates in the Ontario criminal justice system will begin to take shape. This particular study recognizes that the emphasis in anti-racist social work practice and education should not be on conflated notions of cultural differences or on theoretically driven anti-oppression models but rather on the everyday reality of racial discrimination. By opening up the debate, and giving space for racialized ex-inmates to share their experiences and recommendations, my hope is that this research initiative will serve as a vehicle of change.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Racism in the criminal justice system is one of the most readily available examples of institutional racism (Roy, 2008, p. 1). However, as noted in the previous chapters, everyday racism is oftentimes invisible to both the perpetrator and the victim. If this is the case then how do we make the invisible, visible? How do we begin to deconstruct the dynamics of everyday racism?

Although enriching our lives by learning about other cultures is not all wrong, it is this multiculturalism that has created a unique form of Canadian racism, one that is polite, subtle, systemic and democratic (Wilmot, 2005, p. 71). While taking a social risk by denouncing white supremacy and fighting racism in our workplaces and communities is anti-racist activity, the pursuit of our own cultural identity, is not (Wilmot, 2005, p. 83). Therefore, it is imperative that whites acknowledge the importance of self-determination for racialized groups. We must surrender our power and begin to change the behaviours, which currently silence rather than empower racialized groups.

Correctional social work is a unique profession situated within a coercive and turbulent environment, which is wrought with challenges, typically not found in other social work settings. While other social work agencies may find that social work staff members own of a variety of personalities and character traits, the social workers in my workplace not only share many competencies such as the

ability to adapt and to work independently but we also have a tough exterior, a certain confidence that is not easily intimidated or broken. In order to achieve social justice, it is imperative that we begin to utilize these unique strengths. We must strategize together with racialized groups to change policies and procedures within our workplaces, the Ontario criminal justice system and beyond. We need to ensure that our rights as well as the rights of the racialized inmates, with whom we work, are respected both inside and outside the Ontario criminal justice system.

In examining the hostile environment in which we work, it is imperative for white social workers in the Ontario criminal justice system to follow the lead of racialized groups with regards to the construction of new knowledge claims, which are based in comprehensive anti-racist practices. We can begin this particular process by influencing public debates about racism and mobilizing racialized individuals to seek solutions within their own communities. By exposing the discourse of whiteness and neutrality within the Ontario criminal justice system, white social workers can attempt to educate their fellow employees, including correctional officers, managers and administrators about how everyday racism continues to constrain change in our jails and detention centres.

Previous research initiatives have displayed the fact that widespread ignorance regarding crime and the criminal justice system exists amongst the general public (Chakraborti & Garland, 2003, p. 570). Therefore, It is my hope

that this research project will increase the understanding of the Ontario criminal

justice system from the perspective of racialized groups, reconstruct the identity

of racialized inmates and improve our ability to remedy the enduring effects of

oppressive institutional power structures.

Currently, research, which focuses on increasing whites' awareness,

sensitivity and sense of responsibility for everyday racism is lacking (Sue et al.,

2007, p. 279). As Sue et al. (2007) states;

> It is important to study and acknowledge this form of racism in society because without documentation and analysis to better understand microaggressions, the threats that they pose and the assaults that they justify can be easily ignored or downplayed (p. 279).

In addition, since racialized individuals and Black people in particular, may be

more likely to be the targets of everyday racism characterized by themes of

criminality, research about whether or not different racialized groups are more

prone to certain types of everyday racism is also needed (Sue et al., 2007, p. 284).

Moreover, I think it is imperative that we, as social workers embark on more

research initiatives regarding institutional racism from the perspective of

racialized inmates. As Macalpine & Marsh (2005) note, the issue, which is most

often avoided in the study of organizations is white supremacy as experienced by

racialized groups (p. 437).

One such methodology, which incorporates the experiences of racialized

groups, is that of indigenous approaches. Indigenous epistemologies incorporate

story telling and experience in research as legitimate ways of knowing (Kovach,

2005, p. 28). Drawing from Critical Social Science, an indigenous approach recognizes the importance of language and relationships and believes that researchers must have a relationship with the communities, which are involved in their research (Kovach, 2005, p. 26). New research initiatives, which are not constrained by time limitations, should strive to utilize indigenous approaches, in order to ensure that racialized groups are given a voice.

By speaking directly to racialized service users themselves, we will develop a more thorough understanding of the implications of whiteness and the invisible advantages, which we enjoy. As a result we will become more competent practitioners and we may also become better equipped to petition the profession of social work, namely the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, to put an end to the reproduction of the ideologies surrounding race and other forms of oppression, which are inherent within social work agencies and institutions. With the social work profession behind us, we will be more capable to change traditional practices within our workplaces and to begin to work from an authentic, anti-racist perspective.

As our understanding of everyday racism begins to take shape, so too will our ability to remedy the enduring effects of organizational power structures. As white social workers, we can rearticulate our whiteness and utilize it to challenge white supremacy and domination and to break the silences. It is only through such comprehensive social action that institutional power structures will begin to crumble and the issue of racialized discrimination in Ontario's jails, detention

centres and beyond will permanently shift from a discourse of individual behaviour to one of everyday racism.

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Appendix 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Before the interview:

- Review Information/Consent form, answer potential questions, sign & provide copy
- Remind participants of their right to opt out of answering questions/withdraw from the interview
- Thank participants for their participation in the interview and explain that the main purpose is to understand their experiences of racism, while in jail.

The following sets of questions will be asked in order to provide me with insight into the thoughts and experiences of participants. Please note that the questions are general topics to be covered. Therefore, in order to allow for conversational flow, they may not remain in the order they appear.

Questions:

Background:
1. Could you tell me a bit more about your experience in the correctional facility/facilities
2. How long ago did you spend time in a correctional facility and for how long were you there?
3. Can you tell me about your relationships with staff while incarcerated?

Racial Identity:
4. Do you think that your racial identity was a factor in your relationship with correctional staff?
5. Did you feel that you were often judged by your racial background rather than by what you did?

Experience of Racism:
6. Please tell me about your experience of racism while in a jail or correctional facility.
7. Could you please give me some examples of incidents of racism that you experienced?
8. Please tell me about the effects of the above. i.) Short-term effects? ii.) Long-term or lasting effects?

Response to Racism:

9. Do you think that the existing policies and procedures in the correctional system are fair?
10. In what ways do you think that the correctional system should be changed? What are some of the barriers to change that you see?

Appendix 2

McMaster
University

July 16, 2009

Letter of Information /Consent

A Study of Everyday Racism and Racialized Ex-Inmates: Obstacles to Achieving Anti-Racist Correctional Social Work Practice

Student Investigator: Meredith Moore, MSW student
1280 Main Street W., Hamilton, Ontario L8S4L8
289-260-0603
mooreml@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Rick Sin
1280 Main St. W., Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L8
905-525-9140
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Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the research is to explore everyday racism in Canadian criminal justice system perceived by the survivors of the system. While ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are heard, the research will provide insight into the personal experiences of racialized ex-inmates, the impact of various forms of racism on them and their recommendations on positive changes in policy and practice.

Procedures involved in the Research
You are invited to participate in an individual interview that will last approximately 60-90 minutes. Interviews will take place at the John Howard Society. Questions will cover areas such as your racial identity, experiences of racism and responses to racism. For example, you will also be asked to comment on incidents of racism that you experienced. You will also be asked about the ways in which you think the correctional system should change. I would like to tape-record the interview so that I can accurately represent your thoughts and ideas, but will do so only with your permission. I would also like to produce a paper copy (transcription) of the interview if you have no objections.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts
The questions I am asking you to reflect on may bring back difficult memories and upset you. You may also worry about how others will react. Please keep in mind that you do not need to answer questions that you would prefer to skip. You are also free to take breaks or stop the

interview all together. If you feel after the interview that there are issues you want to talk over with someone, I would be happy to provide you with supportive and crisis counselling resources in the Hamilton area. The steps I am taking to protect your privacy are described below.

Potential Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you for participation in this research study. I hope that the results of the research may contribute to a better understanding of racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice system. The research may draw public attention from the media and from social policy makers, to the systemic racism in the criminal justice system as well as to the effects on individual offenders.

Payment or Reimbursement:
You will be provided with a Tim Horton's gift card with a $5.00 value.

Confidentiality:
Confidentiality will be maintained in the following ways:
- Your name and contact information will only exist on the signed consent form and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the faculty supervisor's office at the University.
- Your name will not be recorded in the transcriptions and any identifying information will be removed from the transcriptions.
- Your identifying information will not be reported as part of any presentation or report.
- Data will be kept in the faculty supervisor's office in a locked cabinet,
- Only the student researcher and the faculty supervisor will access the data.
- Audio recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.
- Transcriptions and other notes will be destroyed once the study has been completed

Participation:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time, even after signing the consent form. In cases of withdrawal, any data you provide will be will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you do no want to answer all of the questions, you do not have to.

Information About the Study Results:
I expect to complete this study by the end of August 2009. If you are interested in a brief summary of the results you can either contact me or provide me with an email or mailing address.

Information about Participating as a Study Subject:
This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

> McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat
> Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
> c/o Office of Research Services
> E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Meredith Moore, of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study, and to receive any additional details I wanted to know about the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, if I choose to do so, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant

CONSENT TO BE TAPE RECORDED

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Meredith Moore, of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study, and to receive any additional details I wanted to know about the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, if I choose to do so, and I agree to be tape recorded for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant

Appendix 3

McMaster University

Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!!

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS & EXPERIENCES ABOUT RACISM THAT YOU EXPERIENCED IN JAIL?

DO YOU THINK THAT THE EXISTING POLICIES & PROCEDURES IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM ARE FAIR?

DID YOU FEEL THAT YOU WERE OFTEN JUDGED BY YOUR RACIAL BACKGROUND RATHER THAN BY WHAT YOU DID?

ARE YOU...
- ✓ **AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE?**
- ✓ **AN ADULT MEMBER OF A MINORITY GROUP WHO HAS SPENT TIME IN A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY OR DETENTION CENTRE IN ONTARIO?**
- ✓ **INTERESTED IN TELLING YOUR STOREY ABOUT RACISM?**
- ✓ **INTERESTED IN HAVING YOUR VOICE HEARD?**

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT MEREDITH AT 289-260-0603

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR TIME WITH A TIM HORTON'S GIFT CARD VALUED AT $5.00. INTERVIEWS WILL TAKE APPROX 60-90 MINUTES & WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY. ALL INTERVIEWS ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

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