A NARRATOLOGICAL EXPLORATION: THE EXPERIENCES OF RACIALIZED WOMEN WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES OF COUNSELLING

By

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Abstract

Racial microaggressions have been labelled a "new racism" (Barker, 1981, DiAngelo, 2012), described as a more subversive form of racism (Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M., 2007) where prejudice continues to exist beneath covertly veiled actions and unconscious bias (Sue et al., 2007; Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M., 2014), even at times with little to no mal-intent or purposeful harm directed at the recipient or members of a marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007; Nadal, K. L. et al., 2014). The experiences of racialized women, whose social identities intersect multiple marginalized groups form a different and unique experience whereby intersecting identities are subjugated systemically, institutionally, and interpersonally (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 167).

The impacts of racial microaggressions, particularly as it pertains to racialized women and how it influences their perspectives on counselling, are viewpoints that are often not explored in research and guided by a qualitative, narrative analysis (Creswell, 2005), this study seeks to understand how racialized women's experiences of microaggressions impact their perspectives on counselling.

Acknowledgments

To the strength, resiliency, and courage of all women of colour and femmes: Keep resisting, keep taking space, keep pushing back, keep rising.

To my support system of family, friends, colleagues, mentors, and instructors:

I give immense gratitude to all of you for your unwavering support, compassion, humour, and caring during all of the storms and calm seas. There are no words to describe how grateful I am to my mother Phyu Win and my late father Brian Noronha, for the sacrifices they made in order to immigrate to Canada and create a better future for me. Like many immigrants, they wanted to provide a life filled with opportunities they could only ever imagine, including pursuing a profession that creates ripples of social change, one conversation at a time. My hope is to pay it forward by living my life in a way that continues to honour them.

My gratitude is extended to all of the participants in my study who trusted me with sharing many vulnerable parts of their lives. This piece of work would not be what it is without their contributions, honesty, openness, and interest in this subject matter.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the women of colour who have experienced both gendered and racialized microaggressions and still continue to find ways to resist. To all the women of colour, who have struggled with feeling like an outsider, who continue to fight and thrive, who create their own spaces of refuge and belonging, who change the world in spite of the odds stacked against them.

I. Chapter One

Introduction

"Banu"

My mother taught me to fight.

In the eleven short years I knew her

She taught me about justice.

Racism.

Love.

"You're a chocolate face."

"So what. You're a vanilla face."

I grew up in a small suburban white town.

I went to Brownies, said the Lord's Prayer,

Disliked Friday evening Gujarati classes and

Always wanted to fit in.

"Paki go home."

My mother swelled in fury

When her little girl repeated the ugly words

She had been told at school.

And so she went out to find justice.

Banu marched to Ed Broadbent's office

And spoke of her children.

And of racism and Pakis.

"And we are not from Pakistan."

And I remembered.

I remembered the name-calling

And how she got mad

And I remembered

How she went down fighting.

Did she know that on that day,

She planted a gem in her little girl's mind

Which many years after her death

Would grow

Inside my Indo-phobic

Multiculturalized

Coconut head?

Did she know that her one act

Would help create a

Woman who would love herself

If I could know her today

We would sit together

And have chai.

We would speak of our lives

Of truth

Of justice

And of "Pakis" who

Would not go home

But stayed to change the world.

Farzana Doctor (Award-winning Canadian writer, speaker, Registered Social Worker, Psychotherapist, and social justice advocate).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 2005) research study is to explore the lived experiences of racialized women from various social locations, who have experienced microaggressions throughout their lives in different settings (i.e., work, school, interpersonal, community, therapeutic) as a result of the intersections of race and gender (Collins and Bilge, 2020, Sue and Spanierman, 2020, Solorzano and Huber, 2020, Nadal, 2018). This study seeks to gain an understanding of the experiences of microaggressions among racialized women and how these experiences have influenced their perceptions of counselling. This study provides a review of the current literature on microaggressions and the different ways that microaggressions show up in our society from conversations and interpersonal interactions to how power dynamics can influence microaggressions on a societal level, termed macroaggressions (Sue and Spanierman, 2020, Berk, 2017, Nadal, 2018).

What emerges from these interviews are forms of resistance and resilience to the experience of racialized microaggressions. One of the emerging themes to this study, is how racialized women continue to find ways to resist the biases, prejudices, and bigotry they are confronted with in their day-to-day lives. The study is designed to centre the voices and perspectives of racialized women, who are often invisible in many areas of society, and in particular academic research. An important aspect of the research design is hearing directly from racialized women through in-person interviews, their perceptions of counselling, their

experiences of counselling, and what they need in a therapeutic relationship to be able to openly discuss the impacts of racialized and gendered microaggressions. The study provides a way to understand the insidious forms in which racialized microaggressions are experienced by women of colour and the pivotal role that counsellors can play when providing support for clients who are racialized to discuss their experiences in a respectful, non-judgmental, and informed way.

Significance of the Study

Situating the Author

I, the researcher, disclose that the subject of racial microaggressions is one of personal interest due to my own experiences throughout my life as well as, my professional capacity of counselling racialized clients who have shared the impacts of racial microaggressions on their mental health. Resistance and resilience takes various forms. Witnessing and experiencing the ways in which microaggressions are a source of shame, silencing, and emotional pain, I acknowledge that my research on racial microaggressions is an intentional and deliberate act to speak to and write about a subject matter that can be deeply vulnerable and seldom talked about outside of informal conversations within one's social and cultural groups. The current political and social climate of the Black Lives Matter Movement, anti-Asian Covid-19 racism, #MeToo Movement, and other social movements, has spurned discussions on the topics of anti-racism, microaggressions, systemic oppression, intersectionality, and internalized racism. And, with the ability of digital platforms to create viral content that has the propensity to be disseminated across the world, these conversations have only become more visible and commonplace. However, as the researcher, my intention is to bring the narratives of women of colour into the realm of academic discourse, which has historically created barriers for marginalized voices.

As the researcher, I acknowledge how my positionality shapes my perspectives and subsequently, these influences are inherent in the research. As a cis-woman of colour; born in Singapore to parents of Indian nationality; whose family has been part of the Burmese diaspora for three generations across various countries; as a child who immigrated to Canada, my social locations cannot be easily confined to neat categories. The authors' family background is rooted in Burma (or Myanmar). The generational patterns of migration in my family have influenced my perspectives on the nuances of identity; the counterbalance of one's sense of belonging and the disparate feelings of otherness and loss. The complexities of race, ethnicity, nationality, cultural identity, and other social locations are interwoven within families, with each person having a different perspective and understanding of identity.

These perspectives, along with personal experiences, have guided me into exploring the topic of racial microaggressions and as the author, I acknowledge that my perspectives and lived experiences have shaped my personal interests in the subject matter.

II. Chapter Two

Racial Microaggression Theory

Microaggressions. The term racial microaggressions was originally proposed by Chester Middlebrook Pierce, an African American, Harvard-trained psychiatrist whose research in the 1960's was the first to describe these covert and seemingly innocuous forms of racism. In his research, racial microaggressions were defined as ongoing impacts that are a form of "subtle, cumulative miniassault" (Pierce, 1974, p. 516). Pierce (1995) provided a connection between the experience of racism as both a "system of control and race-related stress" in his research on African American men, gendered racism, environmental stress, and health outcomes (Smith, Hung, Franklin, 2011, p. 67). Solorzano and Huber (2020), reference Pierce's foundational research into everyday racism experienced by Black Americans as "offensive mechanisms" in a book chapter titled, "Is Bigotry the Basis of the Medical Problem of the Ghetto?" (p. 31). The term "offensive mechanisms" is what Pierce used to initially describe "microaggressions" (Solarzano and Huber, 2020). Solarzano and Huber (2020), discuss that further along in his research, Pierce (1969) explicitly used the term "racial microaggressions" to describe the negative health consequences of Black Americans from the "relentless omnipresence of these noxious stimuli" (p. 251) and further states that, "offensive mechanisms" are "designed to reduce, dilute, atomize, and encase the hapless into his "place"" (p. 303) (p. 31).

While the origins of the term microaggressions was created solely to research the experience of race-based "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of colour, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 60; Sue and Spierman, 2020, p. 7), the theory has now been expanded to include microaggressions that are consciously or unconsciously expressed towards any marginalized group, and can include,

"racism, sexism, genderism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and other forms of oppression" (Sue and Spierman, 2020, p. 7; Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, & Davidoff, 2016).

Pierce (1970, 1975, 1995) described racism as a public health and mental health issue based on the false premise of an individuals' inferiority correlated with darker skin. While racism may not be as overt and obvious in our current society, Pierce's work has been adapted by Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano (2006) to define racial microaggressions as:

"Subtle verbal and non-verbal insults directed at People of Color, often automatically or unconsciously; layered insults based on one's race, race-gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; and cumulative insults that cause unnecessary stress to People of Colour" (Smith, Hung, Franklin, 2011, p. 67).

Neither "small or innocuous" the term microaggression describes how transgressions at the interpersonal level by the perpetrator influence a target, or member of a minority group thereby leading to verbal and non-verbal aggressions that can be perceived as harmful and yet, unintentional and seemingly inoffensive (Sue and Spierman, 2020, p. 7). Microaggressions are described as comments, invalidations, indignities, and verbal slights which in a singular interaction may be dismissed or result in minimal impact. However, over the course of a lifetime, the impact of microaggressions can result in harmful consequences due to their frequency and minimal recourse in addressing the effects of these transgressions.

While the origins of the theoretical foundations of "microaggressions" has focused solely on racialized microaggressions, the term microaggressions is now used to described any transgression towards marginalized groups of people that are connected to specific forms of oppression (Sue and Spierman, 2020, p. 7; Nadal, 2018). The purpose of this thesis will focus primarily on the racial microaggressions as experienced by cisgender women of colour. It is

important to also discuss that racial microaggressions are part of a wider scope of racism, which operates on various systemic levels from the individual and interpersonal, to institutional and systemic, and societal, from cultural and ideological racism. The following sub-sections will go into greater details starting with a broader context of understanding what racism is, the legal protections enshrined in Canadian law, to the constructs of race, and how everyday racism shows up in our day-to-lives. The purpose of zooming out first before zooming into the topic of my thesis research, on racialized women's experiences with microaggressions and their perspectives of counselling, is to understand that there is nothing "micro" about the concept and the impacts of racial microaggressions. That racial microaggressions are a product of greater systemic and societal oppression and racism. That these experiences of microaggressions also influence perspectives of counselling, and are issues that need to be discussed in the therapeutic process. As practitioners, we are accountable for creating a safe space for our clients. It is important for practitioners to know what is needed for clients to feel comfortable discussing these experiences and the knowledge that these subtle and often innocuous slights can impact the lives of racialized women.

What is Racism?

Before beginning to understand the concept of everyday racism, let us reflect on how racism functions as a system of oppression. Lui (2020) references Bryant-Davis & Ocampo (2005), defining racism as the internalization of beliefs of inferiority experienced by individuals due to belonging to racially marginalized groups as a result of being subject to all forms and acts of racial prejudice and discrimination. There is growing evidence that racialized people subjected to all forms of racism experience negative impacts to their mental, emotional, and physical health (Paradies et al., 2015, Lui, 2020). While racism flourishes in our everyday reality, the

construction of race is both social and political, and is one of the most powerful determinants for one's health, life course, and access to opportunities (Bryant-Davis, Ocampo, 2005. P. 577).

Protection against racial discrimination and prejudice and respect for human rights is enshrined in Canadian law. The Canadian Human Rights Act states, "that all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered." (R.S.C., 1985, c H-6). The purpose of the Canadian Human Rights Act (1985) is to extend laws that protect the principle of equal opportunity for all individuals, from discrimination. The Ontario Human Rights Commission, in the Policy and Guidelines on racism and racial discrimination, state that following the 1948 landmark Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declared by United Nations General Assembly which, "established an international standard of non-discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language, national origin…", Canada ratified these principles in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 1970 (OHRC, June 9, 2005). And even then, the Ontario Human Rights Commission acknowledges in a historical review of the legacy of racism in Canada that, "much work remains to be done" (OHRC, Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination, 2005).

However, racism is a much broader system of oppression than can be described simply as racial discrimination. As the Ontario Human Rights Commission notes in the Policy and

Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination (2005), "not every manifestation of racism can be dealt with through the current human rights complaint mechanism and process" and "racism plays a major role in the societal processes that give rise to and entrench racial discrimination" (p. 12). As I will discuss further, the everyday acts of indignities, discrimination, insults, and invalidations are not the types of behaviours and acts that meet legal definitions for racism and racial discrimination. And, often these acts and interactions are not purposefully intended to be harmful. However, these "seemingly innocuous stings" as Wang, Leu, and Shoda (2011) describe, directly impacts emotional well-being which can have long lasting consequences to mental health issues such as, increased rates of depression and anxiety amongst racialized people, and manifestations of physical health issues such as, "increased risk for cardiovascular disease, which is associated with frequent experience of externalizing emotions such as anger and scorn/contempt, resulting from appraisals of subtle discrimination as reflective of the perpetrator's racial prejudice" (p. 12).

Racism functions to uphold systems of oppression which marginalize people collectively termed, "racialized persons", "racialized groups". Although the government of Canada uses the terminology "visible minority", "racial minority", the use of the term "racialized person" address the historical social construction of racial classification, resulting in the notions of racial superiority of white/European peoples and the marginalization and oppression of other racialized peoples (OHRC, 2005, p. 11). The Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination (2005) stipulates that it is important to allow people to self-identify and when this is not possible, to use terminology and categorization in line with the Government of Canada and Canadian census (p. 12).

Therefore, for the purpose of my thesis research, I used the term "racialized women" to refer to the specific participant demographic to be interviewed. However, for the eligibility criteria for participants, I used the Government of Canada's Statistics Canada definition "visible minority" and participants self-identified as women over the age of 18 years old, as well as, self-identify as a visible minority and/or Indigenous. Statistics Canada defines "visible minority" as "persons, other than Aboriginal, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" and "Indigenous" as "First Nations, Metis, Inuit" (Statistics Canada, 2021). The eligibility criteria also included participants who have experienced any form of microaggressions. The definition of microaggressions for the purpose of this research study are verbal and non-verbal insults, and/or behaviours, stereotypical and/or discriminatory comments, and/or behaviours, verbal communications which dismiss, undermine, and/or invalidate one's lived experience as a racialized woman, at the intersections of race and gender oppression (Sue and Spierman, 2020; Nadal).

From Systems of Oppression to Microaggressions

The purpose of moving from the larger systemic frameworks to define racism to exploring in depth the concept of everyday racism, microaggressions, and particularly in the context of my research, understanding how the experience of microaggressions amongst racialized women influences their perspectives on counselling, is to create an understanding that all of these systems influence interactions interpersonally and intrapersonally. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how racialized women's experiences of microaggressions have influenced how they view the counselling relationship. It is to create a more nuanced and complex understanding of how racial microaggressions have impacted the racialized women interviewed for this study. And, how their experiences of microaggressions throughout their lives

have influenced their perspectives on counselling. It was important for me to share voices and perspectives that are often not the subjects of research in academic papers, and bring voices from the margins to the forefront.

"Microaggressions are constant, continual, cumulative, and corrosive. Consequently, they can be harmful and very painful to the victims. It is the immediate and long-term impact of the microaggressions that creates the problem, whether they were intentional or not. They have consequences that stretch far beyond the single insult that makes the victim angry and ruins his or her life on one day (Wells, 2013). They can occur every day (Rockquemore, 2016b). As the victims bottle up the toxic feelings cumulatively, psychological and physical harm can take its toll (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012; Sue, 2010b; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011; Wong et al., 2014). That impact cannot be dismissed or disregarded. There may be other aggressions, abuse, or discrimination the victim has already experienced and any new microaggressions can, "(a) compound or reopen old wounds or (b) trigger the tipping point beyond other difficulties or assaults to his or her mental/emotional health." (Burke, 2017, p. 68).

The Concept of Everyday Racism

This is a concept developed by Philomena Essed in 1991 to explore the interrelationship between racial microaggressions and macrostructures, where larger systemic issues of disparities in socioeconomic status, health, and educational levels trickle down through interactions in everyday social settings such as, classroom environments, grocery stores, workplaces, restaurants, and other community settings (Sue and Spierman, 2020). Therefore, resulting in microinteractions where social inequities and oppressions are enacted and played out in smaller scale interpersonal interactions with people from marginalized groups.

Everyday racism differs from what is commonly known as "racism" in various ways. Racism may be defined as "any attitude, action, institutional structure, or social policy that subordinates persons or groups because of their racial group membership" where a dominant group purposefully and wilfully subordinates and subjugates those who are deemed as inferior and less worthy (Sue and Spierman, 2020; Jones, 1997; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006). The concept of racism can be sub-categorized into individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism. Racism is an overt, intentional, and deliberate action that asserts power and dominance over oppressed groups and power is maintained by a dominant group through structural inequities. The assertion of power and oppression has commonly taken the form of "individual racism".

Individual Racism. Individual racism is defined as "overt, conscious, and deliberate individual acts intended to harm, place at a disadvantage, or discriminate against racial minorities" (Sue and Spierman, 2020, p. 9). Examples of individual racism take the form of telling a receptionist at a walk-in clinic that you do not want to be seen by a doctor who is a person of colour and ask for a white/Caucasian doctor, using racial slurs and stereotypes to describe persons or racialized groups, telling your child that they cannot date someone of a certain ethnic background, or as a customer service representative in an upscale department store, assuming that a patron who is Black, may be stealing, thus following them around the store. Further along this spectrum is participating in forms of overt racism such as, engaging in white supremacist group protests and perpetrating acts of violence and dehumanization against racialized people.

In this current socio-political climate, a thesis on racial microaggressions would be remiss without mentioning that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada, as well as, The United

States of America, and other countries are reporting escalating hate crimes towards citizens of Asian descent. As of July 8, 2020, Statistics Canada released a report in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which analyzed submitted responses from more than 43,000 Canadians between the dates of May 12 to May 25, 2020. The data collection was received through crowdsourcing in which respondents assessed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canadian's perceptions of safety. In particular, "one in five (21%) visible minority participants perceived harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity, or skin colour occurred sometimes or often in their neighbourhood, double the proportion among the rest of the population (10%)" and some visible minority groups such as, participants who belonged to the following visible minority groups, Black (26%), Korean (26%), Chinese (25%), and Filipino (22%), reported that "race-based incidents happened sometimes or often" (Statistics Canada, 2020). Even more alarming is the "proportion of visible minority participants (18%) who perceived an increase in the frequency of harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity or skin colour was three time larger than the proportion among the rest of the population (6%) since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This difference was most prevalent amongst participants who are Chinese (30%), Korean (27%), and Southeast Asian (19%). The report also states that Black participants perceived and experienced discrimination and harassment that was "twice as high (12%) as the proportion among those who were not designated as a visible minority" since the start of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020). This is in comparison to the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadian's Safety where, "8% of those designated as visible minorities felt that people being attacked or harassed because of their skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion was at least a small problem in their neighbourhood, compared with 6% of the rest of the population, and those

designated as visible minorities were more likely to state this was a big problem" (Statistics Canada, 2020). The Vancouver Police Department has reported in February 2021 that, hate crime incidents increased 97% from 142 incidents in 2019 to 280 in 2020 and specifically, Anti-Asian hate crime incidents rose by 717% from 2019 (12) to 2020 (98).

Institutional Racism. Institutional racism is defined as any policies, practices, procedures, or institutional bodies such as, government, education, criminal justice system, religious, business, and municipal structures which have the power to subordinate and subjugate racial groups through systemic oppression (Sue and Spierman, 2020). Systemic oppression and discrimination can take the form of curriculum in social studies and history classes in the province of British Columbia, Canada, not including the history of enslavement of Black peoples in Canada and ignoring important lessons on Black Canadians who were pivotal figures in Canadian history (Government of Canada, 2021). Following the current political climate in which the Black Lives Matter movement has given rise to discourses and protests against the systemic oppression and violence experienced by Black people across America, Canadians have also begun to wrestle with our own nation's history of racism and perpetuation of systemic injustices. Educational curriculum and the erasure of Black enslavement in Canada is one example of institutional racism.

There are also examples of hiring practices that are discriminatory with many recent studies in Canada exposing prejudicial behaviour in hiring job candidates based on how Westernized their names are. In one of the latest study from researchers at Ryerson University and University of Toronto, in Canada (Banerjee, Reitz, Oreopoulos, 2017), duplicate resumes were sent to the same job postings with the only change being either a Westernized name or an Asian name of the candidate. The study found that in an audit involving the submission of almost

13,000 computer-generated resumes to a sample of 3,225 jobs offered online in Toronto and Montreal, job applicants in Canada with Asian names were 28% less likely to get called for an interview compared to applicants with Western/Anglo names, regardless of having the same qualifications. The result showed that businesses were more likely to interview candidates with Westernized names, regardless of the fact that their credentials and experience were exactly the same.

An earlier study by Oreopoulos (2011), which further explored the reasons for skilled immigrants to fare poorly in the Canadian job market in Toronto, the researcher found substantial discrimination across various occupations directed towards individual applicants with foreign experiences and those with foreign (Indian, Pakistani, Greek, and Chinese) names compared to English names. Conclusions from the study (Oreopoulos, 2011) found that regardless of listing language fluency, international experience, education from highly selective schools, and active extracurricular activities, there was no diminishing effect on the results and recruiters could not explain their reasons for singling out language barriers, when these additional features were listed in resumes.

Cultural Racism. Cultural racism is described as the "most insidious and damaging form of racism" (Sue and Spierman, 2020, p. 11). Cultural racism encompasses both individual and institutional racism in creating beliefs that one's cultural and racial group is superior and enforcing these beliefs through institutional power (Sue and Spierman, 2020; Sue, 2004). An example of this in Canada's history is the legislated assimilation of First Nations people starting in the 1820s. British colonizers undertook systemic initiatives to "civilize" First Nations through the Indian Act of 1876, thereby ushering in the era of colonization and enforced cultural assimilation (Government of Canada website, 2017) . The Indian Act legislation restricted

traditional ways of life such as, banning hunting and fishing, instead requiring First Nations people to learn agriculture. Enforced assimilation also prohibited cultural and spiritual practices including the potlatch and sun dance, instead forcing Christianity upon Canada's First Peoples through the influence of the Christian church and the work of missionaries. To further the systemic cultural assimilation of First Nations people, from 1857 up until 1996, Indigenous children were sent to Indian Residential Schools where their "traditional languages, dress, religion, and lifestyle" were forcibly eradicated (Government of Canada website, 2017). MacDonald (2017) states that in the conclusions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) reports in 2015, Justice Murray Sinclair concludes in an excerpt:

> "Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things."

Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal and Torino (2008) state that, "POC must live through the indignities and oppression that have been omnipresent throughout the history of our country and continue to the present day" (p. 277). Sue et. al. (2008), reiterate that racial microaggressions are, "constant, continuing, and cumulative" rather than occasional and infrequent experiences.

Microaggressions are not only experienced in interpersonal transgressions but, living in a society where one's identity as a racialized person is invisible within greater systems due to a

lack of representation in media, politics, and positions of executive leadership (Sue et. al., 2008). A Teacher's College five-year long "systematic program of research" on microaggressions from students, doctoral level supervisees, and clients, resulted in supporting, "the existence of racial microaggressions", "that they are experienced on a daily basis", and "their cumulative impact is detrimental to POC" (Sue et. al., 2008).

Additionally, while empirical research supports the existence and impacts of microaggressions, Sue et. al., (2008) references Schact (2008) stating that, "individuals will construct certain inferences about people's behavior on the basis of consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus" (p. 279). Therefore, when a racialized person experiences similar responses amongst various settings, and supported by other racialized persons, there is a greater likelihood to realize microaggressions exist through attribution (Sue et. al. 2008).

During a keynote address at the Ending Violence Association of B.C. conference in 2018 in Richmond, British Columbia, Dr. Shelley Johnson, educator, researcher, and university professor in the field of Social Work stated, "when a person is taught that they are the right colour, have the right values, beliefs, live in the most tolerant country in the world, from an exceptional class of people – it is even more difficult to engage in practising decolonizing, anti-oppressive practices." This speaks to the necessity of centering and creating space for marginalized voices to speak to their own experiences.

A Taxonomy of Racial Microaggressions and their Impact

Forms of microaggressions have been conceptualized into a taxonomy or classification system of microaggressions by D. W. Sue and colleagues. While this taxonomy covers racial, gender and sexual-orientation microaggressions for the purpose of this research, the classification system will focus on racial microaggressions. The three forms of microaggressions

according to D. W. Sue and Spanierman (2020), previously discussed are, microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidation.

Further breaking down the categories we can begin to look at microassaults. Microassaults are described as, “conscious, deliberate, and either subtle or explicit”, attitudes, behaviours, comments, and perspectives that are expressed to people from marginalized groups. The intent behind microassaults is to purposefully elicit harm and denigration of a persons’ identity through acts of discrimination, name-calling, symbols, which create an environment where people from marginalized identities feel inferior. Microassaults can include verbal epithets based on someone’s race. Telling jokes about specific racial groups or stereotypical tropes that are racist, sexist, or homophobic, are also considered to be in this category. Displays of visual symbols of racism such as, Nazi swatiskas, Confederate flags, noose, racist cartoons where racial and ethnic group features are exaggerated into tropes, are ways in which microassaults influence one’s environment thus creating physical spaces of intimidation, threats to one’s safety, and amplifying a sense of not belonging to a place. We live in a time where these overt acts of racism can be identified as such, understood as discriminatory, and are condemned publicly.

According to Sue and Spanierman (2020), this type of “old-fashioned racism” is often expressed when there are conditions that allow for this behaviour to fester. For example, when the perpetrator believes that they have a degree of anonymity from which they hide behind. This type of behaviour can be seen when anti-Semitic graffiti is spray painted on synagogues. A recent example was from the City of Vancouver’s Instagram post on September 18, 2020, when the public was invited to join a virtual town hall discussion on “Anti-Black Racism in Canada” to discuss with the Black and African diaspora communities how to work towards “dismantling” anti-Black racism in our communities. Due to the lack of safety protocols in place to disable the

comments section and have comments moderated on a public Instagram post and a YouTube live virtual townhall, Black, Indigenous, and other racialized peoples were once again subjected to racist comments, trolls posting explicitly racist images in their profile photos and in the comments sections, resulting in an opportunity for dialogue descending into a platform open to the public's deeply racist views and vitriol.

The City of Vancouver's (2020) social media team responded by turning the comments sections off, blocking trolls, and reporting racist comments. They also apologized for creating an unsafe space and expressed being, "appalled and deeply disappointed by the racist, hateful comments". However, the damage was already done and as one Instagram user (@frasermcp) mentioned in the comments section, "the fact that there can't even be a forum on anti-Black racism without a bunch of Nazis and white supremacists showing up to harass and gaslight Black people is very telling of the prevalence of anti-Blackness in this city" (City of Vancouver, 2020). This type of "old-fashioned racism" which plays out in anonymity behind the guise of computer screens continues to create harmful and unsafe spaces virtually.

D. W. Sue and Spaneirman (2020) cite Burstyzn et al. (2017), in explaining that perpetrators may also engage in microassaults when they feel comfortable knowing they are in close proximity to other like-minded people or knowing that they can evade the consequences of offensive language and behaviour. According to Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio (2009) and referenced by Sue and Spanierman (2020), in research studies when people have been asked about how they would respond to biased statements or actions such as, hearing a racist comment, the majority of participants state they would take action. Sue's (2019, 2020) sub-category "microassaults" under microaggression is used to explain "old fashioned" racism yet, there is nothing "micro" about hate acts, hate crime, and the use of racial epithets.

Berk (2017) reorganizes and adds to Sue's microaggression taxonomy by including the sub-category of "macroaggressions", defined as acts and behaviours that are, "extreme overt, intentional forms of hate and prejudice", and "macromurders" (p. 66). Berk (2017) states that such acts of hate and prejudice that meet the definition of "macroassaults" includes spray-painting anti-semitic graffiti on a synagogue, burning crosses in front of a home belonging to a Black family, and any behaviour or action that makes people feel threatened, unsafe, and unwelcome. These acts are not in isolation and Berk (2017) argues that macroassaults escalate to more serious, "intentional", "conscious" and fatal hate crimes which fit under the sub-category of "macromurders" (p. 66). Therefore the category of macroassaults and macromurders is predicated upon the relationship and power dynamics between the perpetrator and victim, the intent underlying the motive to harm, and the degree of harm, "based on differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and/or age" (p. 67).

A recent example of what is considered "macromurders" in Canadian society was the intentional and pre-meditated hit-and-run in London, Ontario killing four family members and seriously injuring a nine-year-old boy, the only surviving member of his family, simply because they are Muslim (Al-Jazeera, 2021). These acts of hate do not occur in isolation but, are a product of greater systemic injustices and oppression. A Statistics Canada (2019) report by Greg Moreau identifies that police-reported hate crimes targeting the Muslim population "rose slightly" in 2019 with 181 incidents and a 9% increase from 2018. The Statistics Canada report, from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, also states that Muslim populations in Canada "continue to be the most frequent targets" and account for 30% of all hate crimes targeting religion (Moreau, 2019). Berk (2017) identifies, that "hate and prejudice are the

driving forces" from which microaggressions subtlety target and "insidiously deny" intersections of identity which involve race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexuality (p. 67).

Microinsults are defined as, "unintentional behaviours or verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's racial heritage/identity, gender identity, religion, ability, or sexual orientation identity" (Sue, D.W., Sue, D., Neville, H., Smith, L., 2019, p. 125). Microinsults are often experienced as the "subtle snubs" and "an insulting hidden message" (Sue, D.W., Sue, D., Neville, H., Smith, L., 2019, p. 125). Berk (2017) provides six sub-categorization of various forms of microinsults. Berk (2017) states that these categories include, condemnation of one's "intelligence, competence, or capabilities" and minimizing or invalidating a groups' "worthiness or importance to society" (p. 66). For example, telling a student who is South Asian they are articulate is an example of implicitly questioning one's intelligence and competence based on their race. The assumption upon entering a university classroom that a Black woman at the front of the class is the teaching assistant rather than the professor, is an example of implicitly invalidating a groups' worth or value to society.

Microinsults condemn one's cultural background or cultural ways of being as problematic and cultural difference is viewed from a negative, condescending perspective (Berk, 2017). When a person is considered threatening due to being part of a particular racial and/or ethnic group, this is considered a microinsult (Berk, 2017). The objectification of a woman and seeing women as property is a microinsult (Berk, 2017). And, perceiving someone from the 2SLGBTQ+ community as "abnormal, deviant, and pathological" is another example of a microinsult (Berk, 2017). Berk (2017) describes microinsults as the "heart of microaggressions" and the "mechanisms" from which an aggressors' implicit biases are revealed, spilling out prejudice and discrimination to unassuming victims (p. 66). Berk (2017) makes it resoundingly

clear in their paper, “we need to stop that leaking” (p. 66). As discussed throughout this thesis, regardless of whether microaggressions are intentional or accidental, the focus must be on their impact and how it was perceived.

Microinvalidations are described as comments or behaviours that result in undermining, discrediting, or negating the feelings, experiences, perspectives and thoughts, of people from marginalized groups (Sue and Spanierman, 2020; Nadal, 2018). According to Sue and Spanierman (2020), microinvalidations are considered “the most damaging” compared to microassaults and microinsults because they deny the reality and experiences of people’s identity and personhood. Examples of microinvalidations include the experiences of feeling like a “perpetual foreigner” in one’s own country, denying the existence of differences based on one’s racial, gendered, and sexual-orientation, negating personal accountability when a transgression has occurred and refuting that as individuals, we all have implicit biases (Sue and Spanierman, 2020, p. 54).

In a Canadian study that focused on the experiences of microaggressions amongst South Asian Canadian undergraduate students’, one of the themes that emerged was being perceived as being “fresh off the boat”, an assumption that the South Asian Canadian participants, were not part of the fabric of Canadian society and did not “belong in mainstream culture” (Poolokasingham, G., Spanierman, L. B., Kleiman, S., & Houshmand, S., 2014, p. 200). The South Asian Canadian participants in this study also described that these experiences are never overt but, subtle, indirect, challenging to be subjected to, and results in an additional burden to carry (Poolokasingham, G., et al., 2014).

Litam (2020) reports that following the outbreak of COVID-19, an increase in discrimination and violence towards the Asian and Pacific Islander community in the U.S.

resulted in a significant proliferation of racial slurs such as, “kung-flu” towards Asians and Asian Americans on the social media platform Twitter from November 1, 2019, to March 22, 2020. Litam (2020) references Schild et al. (2020) who notes that the use of anti-Chinese slurs intensified after Donald Trump called the COVID-19 virus, “the Chinese virus” (p. 145).

III. Methodology

Narratology

Using a narrative inquiry requires that the researcher goes beyond the context of IRB ethics and requirements, and begin to reflect on ethical issues that arise throughout narrative research in order to honour participant's personhood. Therefore, to engage in narrative ethics, researchers consider a process of *phronesis*, which is the "moral, ethical judgement to act wisely and prudently" based on the moral belief that acknowledges we all have the human capacity to act from a place of good intention and deep respect (Kim, J. H., 2016, p. 105). Narrative inquiry also requires that the researcher consider reflexivity in their approach to understanding and improving upon the validity and quality of the research (Kim, J. H, 2016, p. 105). The purpose of reflexivity in qualitative research is to critically analyze their research process and how ethical implications may impact the research findings, the development of knowledge in a subject matter, and how the researcher may unknowingly, influence the outcome of their study. Kim, J. H. (2016) states that a researcher who engages in reflexivity and phronesis integrates a foundation of ethical practice and integrity to their research, as well as, fosters care to the relationships with participants.

Kim, J. H. (2016) discusses "aesthetic play" in the development of narrative writing and describes how the use of language in narrative inquiry interweaves both art and technique in engaging the reader and capturing their attention (p. 108). This perspective of narrative inquiry has influenced my research in terms of honouring each participant's own voice.

Aesthetic play in narrative writing explores how I have interacted with the research material throughout the process of transcription, listening to the recorded interviews several times, and engaging with how each participant used tone, inflection, and emphasis, to share their stories. The importance of capturing the nuances and complexities of each participant beyond the confines

of thematic findings, was an important part of capturing the ethical practices of phronesis, reflexivity, and ethical care for honouring the participants' voice in this research.

Introduction: Qualitative Narratological Research

Narrative research is a qualitative research methodology in the narrative inquiry tradition. Narrative inquiries elicit and analyze stories in order to understand people, cultures, and societies. Narrative inquiry emerged from social constructionism and the narrative turn, which attuned narrative researchers to the importance of story and the belief that people's lives are forged through stories. Narrative inquiries can be categorized as narratives of the self, narratives and society, and narratives for/of social justice. They are distinguished by their focus on the author's story, composition and analysis of narrative within broader cultural and social discourses, and use of critical theories to tell counter-stories of oppressed and marginalized groups. Future influences on narrative inquiry and research include new materialist and post-humanist theories, large and small scale political and social activism, and mass production of narratives via social media (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005), describe qualitative research as a process of situating the researcher as an "observer in the world" (p. 3) piecing together and constructing meaning from a variety of interpersonal, intrapersonal, historical and current information, to interpret the subject matter within "specific storytelling paradigms" (p. 6). However, the observers' "gaze" is seldom objective as the complexities of an individuals' social locations, historical contexts, and identities, influence how one views the world around them, including the interpretation of stories and the study of research subjects (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). To endeavour into the study of human subjects, the researcher must be aware of the historical ethical and political

issues surrounding research thus acknowledging that "value-free inquiry" is not possible in representing the intrapersonal experiences of an individual (p. 12).

Narrative psychology views the "structure, content, and function" of the stories we share as a means of understanding ourselves, the world around us, and interpreting the meaning of other people's actions and behaviours (Murray, 2003, pg. 95). Narrative inquiry can be defined by containing specific elements in the analyzing and understanding the stories told from individuals about their personal experiences (Creswell, 2013). The stories that emerge from interviews are "co-constructed" between the researcher and participant and there is an emphasis on how collaboration and interaction in the co-construction of discourse shapes meaning (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). Individual experiences are shared through the telling of stories and what often emerges are the various "identities of individuals and how they see themselves" (Creswell, 2013, p. 71).

The purpose of narrative interviews is to centre the participants' story and personal accounts thereby allowing for the research participants to determine and shape the outcome of themes emerging from the study (Murray, 2003). In a narrative approach to research, the researcher is encouraged to build rapport with the research participant in order to develop trust as well as, safeguard the vulnerability that may be experienced when disclosing personal narratives (Murray, 2003). This collaborative approach to research, engages the interviewee with respect, humility, and "reflexivity" allows for each narrative to be handled with care and recognition of the significance in the telling of one's story (Murray, 2003, p. 102). It is important to ascertain the role of the researcher within the interview by bringing awareness to one's own social locations and positionality. The researcher brings their own constellation of personal experiences, biases, and expectations to the interviews which may nurture certain narratives and

inadvertently silence others. The use of *episodic interviews* provides a set of structured topics and themes that the researcher presents to participants with the intention to delve into deeper personal accounts of the participant's lived experiences of these topics (Murray, 2003). By expanding on personal narratives of a topic, the researcher is able to glean information on the meaning of these experiences and the potential to contextualize them within greater social, personal, and cultural constructs (Murray, 2003).

Narrative Inquiry

A narrative inquiry was chosen for my research method and provided the conceptual framework for my interview questions and qualitative analysis because it provides an effective way to gather information about an individuals' feelings and experiences, thoughts and reflections. Narrative inquiry provides a depth to the information gathered, which was particularly important for the thesis topic, which may not be divulged through other forms of data gathering methods (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Polkinghorne describes that in narrative inquiry, "the goal of analysis is to uncover common themes or plots in the data. Analysis is carried out by the hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories" (1995, p. 177).

The process of narrative inquiry also provides a framework to understand the complexities of human behaviours in order to gain deeper insights into themes that emerge (Maple and Edwards, 2010). It was important for me, as the author, to ground the research in a methodology that did not minimize the nuances of participant's stories about their lived experiences. It was crucial in my research to understand each participant's story as part of the collective story represented in this thesis.

The subject matter of my research is sensitive, deeply personal, and can be vulnerable to discuss. This research study required that I find a methodology that would hold space for honouring these stories with deep respect, as each participant shared parts of their lived experiences in lengthy, in-person interviews. Narrative inquiry provides the space for the individual to explore their self-identity through the process of sharing their lived experiences.

Rhizomatic Thinking and Narrative Inquiry

Kim (2016) references Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in understanding how the concept of the rhizome offers a way to "dismantle" the dichotomous thinking that influences many subjects, including psychoanalysis, linguistics, information science, and forms of storytelling (P. 72). The conceptual framework of the rhizome can be used to explore how selfhood is constructed through narratology so, there is no single beginning and end.

Therefore, there is not a concept of a static, predetermined self and that narrative inquiry presents a multitude of starting points and a non-linearity to the construct of self. This dynamic perspective influences my research on racialized women's experiences of microaggressions and their perspectives on counselling, as it provides the space to think about the ways in which one can conceptualize multiple possibilities, experiences, and perspectives from which there may be offshoots, unexpected diversions, connections to different parts of self, others, and the experience of the systems that one has to navigate in this world.

Like the rhizome, each participant's narrative is connected in some ways to other participants, and yet there is divergence and difference. The heterogeneity of rhizomatic thinking posits that, there can be a connection between two things and also differences. For example, while participants' narratives may share common themes around the experience of

microaggressions, there may also be differences; along with their experiences as racialized women and their intersections of oppression.

This leads to the concept of multiplicity, a qualitative difference, about how connections can continuously change and be interrelated, rather than hierarchical and binary. Rhizome thinking provides a conceptual framework to map out a process with no central route which consists of a beginning and ending but, a way to think about the emergent themes outside of the categories of "this or that" and allow for an exploratory continuation with the conjunction "and"; a part of speech used to link or connect parts of sentence together (Kim, 2016, p 73).

Narrative inquiry is based in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology and is grounded in the perspective that through the process of storytelling, human beings elicit meaning, purpose, and gain a deeper understanding of our lives (Andrews, Squire and Tambouko, 2008). As a type of qualitative research method, a narratological approach achieves this by gathering and collecting stories through various means (i.e., written word, expressive art forms, interviews, etc.) and analysis of the data focuses on the meanings and insights individuals ascribe to their lived experiences. What is valuable about the process of narrative research is it is used as a pathway to capture an individual's story, thereby engaging the reader to experience another individual's story and responses from their perspective, at a particular moment in time (Webster and Mertova, 2007).

Research Study Design

Participants

The participants in this research study consisted of five racialized women who have had experiences with microaggressions. The eligibility criteria to participate in this study is to self-identify as a woman over the age of 18 years old, self-identify as from a racialized group. There

were no restrictions based on education or work experience. All participants resided in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland, in British Columbia, Canada.

Particularly for the purpose of this research, "racialized" was defined as 'persons, other than Aboriginals who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour' and/or Indigenous, defined as, "First Nations, Mètis, Inuit", according to Statistics Canada (2021, p. xx). Additionally, participants eligible to participate also had experiences of any form of microaggressions. For the purpose of this study, microaggressions are defined as, verbal and non-verbal insults and/or behaviours, stereotypical and/or discriminatory comments and/or behaviours, verbal communications which dismiss, undermine, and/or invalidate one's lived experience as a racialized woman (Sue and Spanierman, 2020; Bryant-Davis and Ocampo, 2005; Nadal, 2018). Participants were not asked questions about their sexual orientation or whether they had children.

Five participants were selected through a process of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is important in a qualitative, narrative research study design where individuals' lived experiences can provide nuance and insight to the themes emerging from the study of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; O'Leary, 2014). This sampling method was used to identify and select participants who met the eligibility criteria for recruitment to this study, in order to understand the themes of gendered racialized microaggressions and perspectives on counselling. Participants who met this criteria were identified through word of mouth and social media posts via the social media platform, Instagram. Eligible participants were contacted by the researcher by telephone and email to inquire about their interest in participating. Information was provided to participants on the purpose of the study, the research problem, research question, and how the study would take place. I, the researcher, provided descriptions of the informed consent and data

collection process, as well as, security measures in place to provide confidentiality and privacy. If a participant expressed interest in participating in the study, I sent an email that included the information I provided through verbal communication, an attached copy of the informed consent for the participant to read, and a copy of the interview questions in order to provide transparency and an opportunity for participants to understand the nature of the interview. The participants were informed throughout the course of this study, from recruitment, interview, and after, that participation was voluntary and at any time they could withdraw consent from the study without any penalty. Participants received a $25.00 gift card following participation in the interview. Participants were informed that they did not have to return the gift card, if they chose to withdraw their consent to participate in the study, at any time. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants relevant to the study findings and discussion.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant	**Profession**	**Age**	**Ethnicity**	**Birthplace**	**Languages Spoken**
Participant 1	Coordinator and Counsellor	37	Mixed; First Nations/ Panamanian	Prince George, B.C., Canada	English
Participant 2	Legal Assistant	31	Latina/Brazilian	Brazil	Portuguese, English
Participant 3	Manager	45	South Asian/Middle Eastern/Persian	Afghanistan	Farsi, English, Hindi
Participant 4	Social Worker	29	South Asian	Vancouver, B.C., Canada	English
Participant 5	Program Supervisor	38	African	Lusaka, Zambia	English

Note: This table demonstrates the relevant demographic information of the de-identified participating therapists.

It was important for me to allow participants to read the interview questions prior to our scheduled interview so, each person could decide if there were questions they did not feel comfortable answering. I am aware that discussing personal experiences of microaggressions throughout ones' lifetime can bring up uncomfortable feelings or disturbing memories. Therefore a trauma-informed approach was implemented to create transparency around the nature of the interview, to assist participants in making informed decisions about how they chose to respond to questions, and which questions participants wanted to refrain from answering, if any (Day, 2018, SAMHSA, 2014). Day (2018) states that in trauma-informed research methods, "the connections between race and trauma are widely documented" by researchers in cultural and social work literature and that the impacts of racism result in multiple forms of trauma from chronic stress, a threat to personal safety, and other forms of violence and displacement, particularly for people whose identities intersect across systems of marginalization (p. xx). As the researcher, studying and understanding racialized women's experiences with microaggressions, it was imperative that I acknowledged the unique ways that bringing light to this topic through the form of participant interviews could also inadvertently result in perpetuating systems of trauma with this particular participant population (Day, 2018).

Non-randomized sampling in qualitative research can be credible in representing populations if, the goal of selection criteria is focused on representation and samples are similar to population characteristics (O'Leary, 2014). However, it is noted that non-random sampling is the "best option" for qualitative research that seeks to identify and understand emergent themes and particular phenomenon from populations that are underrepresented, marginalized, unfamiliar, and generally, unheard from (O'Leary, 2014, p. 189). A key element in this type of

research design is acknowledging and being aware of the researcher's biases and assumptions throughout the study. These biases are discussed in a previous section "Situating the Author".

Semi-Structured Interviews

Prior to the start of the interviews, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which asked questions related to the participant's ethnic and cultural background, family, and experiences in counselling. The in-person, one-on-one interviews of all five participants were designed to have a semi-structured, one to two hour format consisting of fourteen open-ended questions, with prompts. For narratological inquiry, Creswell (2013) references Czarniawska (2004), who states that one of the ways in which researchers can collect data is to elicit storytelling through interviews (p. 161). A semi-structured interview format provides an opportunity for flexibility, allowing dialogue to flow in order for participants to give a detailed account of their experiences and perspectives. The questions were created to explore "how" microaggressions have impacted the participants, "when" some of those experiences took place in various parts of their lives, "what" their perspectives of counselling are, and "how" microaggressions have influenced their perspectives of counselling.

Semi-structured interview questions allowed for more flexibility in order for participant narratives of their experiences to be expressed in an authentic way and for myself, as the researcher, to gain insight into the complexities and nuances of their stories. The structure of the interview questions and how questions were guided supported the safety of participants throughout the interview and minimized potential risks or harm that can occur from an unstructured interview. The participants were informed that interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim into text format. Following transcription of the interviews, participants

were emailed the transcribed interview and asked if they would like to remove anything from the transcription.

I read the transcriptions over a number of times and also played the audio recording alongside reading the corresponding transcript, to be able to reconnect with each participant's voice and story. I immersed myself in the data, read my initial notes that were taken during the interviews, and began writing down themes, thoughts, and ideas emerging from the data set. The recurrent themes that emerged from the text data were coded into overarching superordinate themes and subordinate themes that were more specific.

To examine the research question, the experiences of racialized women with microaggressions and their perspectives of counselling, interviews were semi-structured and questions were guided from sharing their definition of microaggressions, experiences of microaggressions at various settings in their lives, their response to microaggressions, to asking about their personal, familial, and community perspectives of counselling, and how their experiences of microaggressions have shaped their perspectives of counselling. Questions were asked in a specific order and some prompts were provided, when needed. One of the questions that was asked at the beginning interviews was, "Tell me about your experiences with microaggressions throughout your life" and one of the prompts asked was, "How do you define microaggression?". Another question "Tell me about how your experiences with microaggressions have impacted you in the following areas" had four parts: (a) Relationships (b) workplace settings (c) educational settings (d) community/social settings.

Participants were also asked about their perspectives of counselling within their communities, their families, and what counselling means to them personally. The second part of the interview questions were participant perspectives on counselling. Some of the questions that

were asked included, “What would be helpful for a counsellor to know about the impacts of microaggressions?”, “Tell me what you would need a counsellor to know for you to feel comfortable discussing the impacts of microaggressions”, and “Tell me how your experience of microaggressions shapes your perspectives of counselling, if at all”.

The interviews were wrapped up with final questions that provided a natural way to close to the interview process, “Are there any comments you would like to share at this time?” and “What was it like to participate in this interview?”.

The most widely used approach to the production of qualitative data is interviews with participants. Potter (1996) has defined interviewing as a, “technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally” (p. 96). The purpose of the interview is to gain a full and detailed account from an informant of the experience under study. Kvale (1996) has written that its “purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (pp. 5–6). Assisting the participant to produce such an account is a skilled activity. There is considerable overlap between the skills involved in research interviewing and those needed by counseling psychologists in their counseling and psychotherapeutic work.

Both practices require an ability to form an accepting relationship, skilled active listening, and a focus on the other's experiential world. However, the aims of the two practices differ. The aim of the research interview is to accomplish the researcher's goal of gaining information from the participant, and the aim of the counseling interview is to aid the client in accomplishing his or her goals. To be clear about the purpose of interviews, “it is important for counselors doing a research interview to make clear to themselves and to the participants the goal that is being pursued” (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Data Analysis

I, the researcher, transcribed each interview verbatim, read over the data multiple times, and then reflected on the data to further understand the information about microaggressions and perspectives of counselling, emerging from the interviews. As the researcher, I ensured that judgement was suspended by focusing on examining the specific narratives of each participant's lived experiences. Creswell (2013) discussed the process of how to position and interpret the subject in narrative research by referencing Denzin (1989) who states that "meaning and interpretation" is the primary focus when interpreting personal stories (p. 258). The use of narrative analysis provides space for the perspective of the researcher as well as, the development of rich, descriptive literary content (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative analysis is grounded in the researcher's perspectives about the phenomenon being studied, previous understandings about the subject matter and acknowledging that the information presented is a fragment of a continuously unfolding story. Following the aspects of a "good" narrative analysis, stories from five individuals about the subject of racialized microaggressions and perspectives on counselling were collected and a chronological order of how this research study was conducted is described. and (Creswell, 2013, p. 259). Additionally, describing how the themes and stories unfold, and how I situate myself, as the author, is provided in describing my positionality and how that influences my perspectives on analysing the data (Creswell, 2013). I initially listened to the audio recording and read each transcript closely multiple times. At this stage, I began making initial notes of the context, content, and interpretations from the interviews. I then explored the connections between the emergent themes and grouped these connections together based on similarities and gave them a label of an emergent theme. Subthemes that were related to the emergent themes were documented to

further deepen and explore the emergent themes (Creswell, 2013; Creswell, 2014; O'Leary, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

To protect the rights to privacy and confidentiality of all participants, it is important that all steps were taken to protect confidentiality and limit any personal identifying information of the participants involved. In addition, one of the ethical considerations a researcher needs to consider is the concept of "reciprocity" and ways in which participants can be compensated for their "time and efforts" in participating in research, how we, as researchers, may "unintentionally exploit" underrepresented or marginalized populations, and being aware of the power imbalances innate in undertaking a research project and being privy to participants' personal disclosures and stories of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013, p. 55-56). This is the reason coffee cards were offered to all participants following the interviews.

Creswell (2013) references the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010) stating that, respecting the individual participant includes being aware as the researcher for one's own biases and continually engaging in a reflective process. Ethical considerations are made throughout the research process, and also includes transparency about who we are as researchers, being cognizant of whose voices and narratives show up in our final research paper, and mitigating the risks involved with human subjects research.

Prior to the start of this research, it was necessary for me, as the researcher, to receive ethical approval from the City University of Seattle Institutional Review Board on November 22, 2019 (see Appendix). I protected participant confidentiality by removing identifying data and asked participants to come up with a pseudonym that was used in the final research study, during the interviews, and recorded on the hard copy of each participants' interview questions. The data

set corresponding with each participant was given a number, and from there on participants were identified as, “Participant (number) - Pseudonym.” The names of participants were not included in any electronic note taking or transcriptions to protect each participant’s anonymity during the data collection and interview process. All data from the interview notes, informed consent forms, demographic information forms, interview recordings, and transcripts, were encrypted and stored electronically on a password-protected personal computer to protect participant confidentiality. All hard copies of interview notes and consent forms were stored in a locked, password protected, filing cabinet, in a personal, locked storage room.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participants

The five participants all identified as women and varied in ethnic background, place of birth, age, profession, and languages spoken. The age range was from 29-years old to 45-years old, with an average age of 36-years old. Two out of the five participants were born in Canada. Three out of the five participants were born outside of Canada and migrated to Canada in their youth (Participant #3 arrived at 13-years old) to early adulthood (Participant #2 arrived at 25-years old and Participant #5 arrived at 21-years old). Two out of the five participants spoke languages other than English, and whose primary language was not English. Of the five participants ethnicity varied. Participant #1 identified as "mixed; First Nations and Panamanian" ethnicity, participant #2 identified as "Latina/Brazilian", participant #3 identified as "South Asian", participant #4 identified as "South Asian/Middle Eastern/Persian", and participant #5 identified as "African".

Participant #1 "Madonna" is a 37-year old woman of mixed ethnicity, First Nations and Panamian, and a Coordinator and Counsellor for Indigenous Services at a non-profit agency. Madonna was born in Prince George, British Columbia and described her parents and grandparents' place of birth through First Nations practice of maternal lineage, all being born in Canada. Madonna described her primary language spoken is English and is unable to speak her ethnic language.

Madonna discussed accessing more than 25 counselling sessions on a weekly or bi-weekly basis from 1 counsellor who is male and of African descent. Madonna stated that she chose this specific counsellor from a list of counsellors through a benefits provider for First Nations Health Authority.

Participant #2 “Frida” is a 31-year old woman of Latina/Brazilian descent and works as a Legal Assistant with new immigrants. She was born in Brazil and described her parents and grandparents’ birthplace as all being born in Brazil. Frida immigrated to Canada at 25-years old and her first language is Portuguese fluently. Frida learned to speak, read, and write in English fluently after immigrating to Canada.

Frida stated that she has accessed weekly counselling session for the past two years in Canada from one counsellor who is female and of Brazilian descent. Frida stated that she chose this specific counsellor because, “I like her personality and that she understands where I came from”.

Participant #3 “Nora” is a 45-year old woman who is a Counselling Program Manager. Nora describes her ethnic background as South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Persian. Nora’s birthplace is in Afghanistan and stated that her parents and grandparents were also born in Afghanistan. Nora was 13-years old when she immigrated to Canada, with her parents who were in their thirties and forties, at the time. Her grandparents did not immigrate to Canada. Nora stated she speaks Farsi, English, and Hindi at home, and can fluently speak and understand her ancestral language of Farsi.

Nora mentioned she has accessed “many” sessions of counselling “over the years” and continues to seek counselling. Nora seeks counselling on a weekly and bi-weekly basis. She has seen a total of three counsellors, who have all been ethnically White and female. Nora stated she chose the counsellors she worked with from researching them online.

Participant #4 “Suzy” is a 29-year old woman of South Asian descent who works as a Social Worker. Suzy was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and both her parents and grandparents were born in India. Her parents immigrated to Canada when they were 10 years

and 6 years old, respectively, with her grandparents who were in their forties. Suzy speaks English at home, can understand her ancestral language but, cannot fluently speak it.

Suzy has accessed approximately ten to twenty counselling sessions, “a few times a year”. Suzy has seen a total of three counsellors, two of whom are white women, and one is a South Asian woman. Suzy mentioned that she found two of the counsellors online, and one counsellor she chose specifically.

Participant #5 “Zoe” is a 38-year old woman of African descent, who works as a Program Supervisor for a non-profit agency. Zoe was born in Lusaka, Zambia, and her parents were born in Namibia and Zambia, respectively. Zoe’s grandparents were born in Namibia, Zimbabwe, and England. Zoe immigrated to Canada at 21-years old, and her mother was 34-years old when she immigrated to Canada prior to Zoe’s migration. She speaks English at home, can understand her ethnic language but, cannot fluently speak it.

Zoe mentioned in the questionnaire that she has not accessed counselling or sought counselling. However, in the interview disclosed that she accessed pastoral counselling.

In addition to demographic information, participants were asked about their experience with counselling. Within the demographic questionnaire, a subset of five questions related to counselling experience queried how many sessions participants attended, the gender and ethnic background of the counsellors they have seen, and how participants chose the counsellor(s) they wanted to work with.

Narrative Inquiry and Findings

The use of narratology in the process of exploring the interview findings led to emergent themes of lived experiences of microaggressions and perspectives of counselling amongst the participants, who are racialized women. After several readings of the transcripts and listening to

the interviews, an analysis of emergent themes was performed to identify themes and shared narratives amongst the participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). The analysis of the five transcribed interviews resulted in four overarching themes with approximately three to four subthemes connecting the five participant stories and experiences.

Emergent Theme #1: Participant Definitions of Microaggressions

The first theme, *definition of microaggressions*, provides an anchoring for this thesis. It was important for me, as the researcher, that this framework comes from the voices of the participants in this study, who all have lived experiences with the subject matter.

Covert, Subtle, and Insidious. Participants disclosed that the most common experience with microaggressions is that, "you don't even realize it's happening" (Madonna, participant #1). During the interview, Madonna elaborated on the subtlety associated with the experience of microaggressions throughout her lifetime by stating,

"I've been thinking about this and realized that I dealt with that a lot throughout my life and you know from childhood to teenage years to adult, and you know it's all the little comments that you don't even realize it's happening and I didn't realize it at the time… It's interesting because you feel that it's just normal and, you don't even realize it at times but, you can feel it. And then you're sitting with it after and thinking*, "what was that?"* and that's a clear indication that something happened that wasn't right."

Suzy (participant #4) reaffirms the definition of racial microaggressions described by Madonna (participant #1) as she defines it as,

"I think a microaggression is something where I would have to take a long sigh. And, I find myself looking back on my life, taking a lot of long sighs. That would be a microaggression to

me. It's not blatant racism, it's not something that needs to be actioned necessarily. It pricks at you and it keeps pricking at you and it's irritating but, it's not blatant racism."

When I queried Suzy further about the experience of racial microaggressions as a source of many "long sighs" that continue to both confuse and "prick at you" she further stated,

"You trick yourself into thinking that it's not that big of a deal so then you shouldn't be upset about it. Because it's not blatant and because you know you're just chill and they probably didn't mean it that way, and why are you making such a big deal out of it."

Well-Intentioned and Harmful. Nora (participant #3) also discussed how the subtleties of racialized microaggressions result in the confusion of understanding and defining an interaction that elicits a negative experience for the recipient. Specifically, Nora mentioned that while there may not be malintent behind microaggressions, the impact of stereotypes and implicit biases from the comment, behaviour, or act is still detrimental to a person on the receiving end of the transgression. Nora mentioned,

"Microaggressions are so subtle that it's also difficult to point at. Because people don't usually mean them to do harmful things. For microaggressions, it turns out to be harmful. Maybe deep down it was some kind of judgment or racist ideologies that they are not even aware of that becomes a part of the way they see others or treat others. So, it kind of surfaces in some kind of way that it lands on you, that that was not okay."

The nuanced experience of racial microaggressions being well-intentioned and also harmful is discussed in greater context during Suzy's (participant #4) interview where she shared an interaction at work with a colleague. Suzy stated,

"A lot of them can be well-meaning but, hurtful or just kind of strange. I actually had a really nice, kind, well-meaning co-worker, I had felt comfortable in this newer job, comfortable getting

henna, and so I come to work one day in the summer with henna on and I had a new ring on that was a larger sapphire... I had worn the ring before. But, both of those things in combination, I came to work and sat down and the co-worker had asked me if I got married over the weekend. I did not know what to do with that microaggression, because there was a lot of confusion, hurt, irritation, a lot of irritation. I mean at the time I don't think I said anything and I think I made a joke about how if were to get married, I would need a much bigger ring. But it was also a bit hurtful that she thought that I would somehow, … You know we talk about each other's lives so she'd known that I wouldn't have been seriously dating someone at the time. So, for her to assume that I had been, you know, the stereotype of being tricked into having an arranged marriage over the weekend was strange, and hurtful and I feel like it didn't go with what I thought she perceived of me. And, also if it was strictly a joke, it was in poor taste so, that was just kind of irritating for me. Because I try to be sensitive and I don't know much about her cultural background either but, I would rather ask questions than to make assumptions. Or I'd try to. So, it was just kind of confusing and shocking."

Suzy (participant #4) mentioned the confusion, irritation, and disbelief from experiencing a racialized microaggression from a colleague and Frida (participant #2) also discussed her experiences with racialized microaggressions coming from university professors, people who are in positions of power. Frida shared during the interview,

"Once I submitted an assignment on Saturday at 8pm and then she [professor] made fun of me and saying, why wasn't I partying because I'm Latina, Brazilian people like to party and what was I doing submitting an assignment at 8pm on a Saturday."

I am reminded about the ways in which some of the participants have defined racialized microaggressions and particular passages from their interviews stand out for me:

"…You don't even realize it at times but, you can feel it. And then you're sitting with it after and thinking*, "what was that?"* and that's a clear indication that something happened that wasn't right…" Madonna (participant #1)

"I find myself looking back on my life, taking a lot of long sighs… It pricks at you and it keeps pricking at you and it's irritating but, it's not blatant racism." Suzy (participant #4)

"Microaggressions are so subtle that it's also difficult to point at. Because people don't usually mean them to do harmful things. For microaggressions, it turns out to be harmful." Nora (participant #3)

"Because it's a very complex issue and it goes from something that is just really considered a very passive and very, an everyday thing that we do, without acknowledging the impact of what we say to people, how we treat people, to more deeper things that are very blatantly obvious… deep to the core of interactions, every day interactions, we have with people." Zoe (participant #5)

Minimization and Invalidation. Participants also discussed how the nuances and subtleties of racialized microaggressions can lead to feeling misunderstood and having their experiences invalidated by people in their lives. As a result, these experiences of invalidation and dismissiveness negatively impacted relationships.

Nora (participant #3) described her experience of invalidation and minimization as, "People who don't understand how this can really impact people of colour have responded in a lighter way than taking in how heavy this can be for a lot of racialized people. Depending on their own willingness and understanding of the impact, that's how people have responded. Like most white people have responded in a much lighter way, like, *take it easy*, *lighten up*, *this is not*

what this person or I meant, even if they didn't mean it, it has been a bit dismissive and not taken as seriously.

Suzy (participant #4) expressed that,

"I've had experiences with friends and intimate partners and I've described microaggressions in the privacy of the moment and kind of been told it wasn't that big of a deal or expected to explain it more. So, it's like, "*Why is it such a big deal? Are you sure they said it like that?"* So, I'm justifying it now what they'd said. So, I've had these experiences and its negatively impacted that relationship."

Intersections of Privilege. In addition to describing experiences of invalidation, Nora (participant #3) discussed how an individual's positionality to privilege can provide a buffer for fully understanding the extent of the impact of racialized microaggressions. Therefore, regardless of racial and ethnic identity, an individual may not have experiences or may have limited experiences with racialized microaggressions due to their positions of power such as, gender, class, socioeconomic status, skin colour, immigration status, ability, etc.

Nora (participant #3) added,

"But, for many, not all, racialized people they would get it. But, unfortunately, even for some racialized people, they would have the same response, if they were not willing or have had a chance to understand the impact of microaggressions. I think that being in positions of privilege, be it class privilege, colour of skin privilege, language privilege, like a lot of those privileges shield people from understanding the true impact. And so, it has been different as anything would be, if you have experienced it you would know, if people haven't they would take it in a lighter way than people who have."

This point about intersections of privilege that was made by Nora (participant #3) was supported by Suzy (participant #4) during her interview who stated,

"I have a great amount of privilege in having a white passing name and looking a little more racially ambiguous than a lot of people, I don't have an accent, I was born here, my parents came here when they were quite young, I went to a fairly Caucasian school, and I had a lot of opportunities because my parents were working class but, moving to upper middle class."

Zoe (participant #5) discussed the complexities of microaggressions, defining the experience as something that is subtle, frequent, and alludes to the greater systemic roots of racial microaggressions. Zoe (participant #5) defined racial microaggressions as,

"This is definitely one topic that opens up a lot of discussion about a lot of things. Because it's a very complex issue and it goes from something that is just really considered a very passive and very, an everyday thing that we do, without acknowledging the impact of what we say to people, how we treat people, to more deeper things that are very blatantly obvious. And, not even in counselling but, deep to the core of interactions, every day interactions, we have with people".

This point leads to other sub-themes of defining racial microaggressions that arose in the process of the interviews. The sub-themes of *exclusion* and *othering* emerged as participants began to describe not only their perspectives on the definition of racialized microaggressions but, as they reflected on their lived experiences.

Exclusion. Frida (participant #3) stated specifically of racial microaggressions she experienced as an immigrant to Canada,

"In any group you feel like you never really belong. And, they say that you should be here but, they don't really show you in actions or words that they want you around."

Defining racial microaggressions was further explained by the process of *othering* as it intersected aspects of marginalization such as, being an immigrant, having an accent, and skin colour for participants Nora (participant #3), Frida (participant #2), and Zoe (participant #5).

Othering. Nora (participant #3) states,

"In one of the ways, again being asked about an accent, or where is that made from, or just in ways that not so much… I don't mind if people are curious and genuinely want to get to know me. When I feel like they are asking and it makes me feel like I am not from here or I am so different that I have to locate myself geographically for people to see me fully… Those are the experiences and the ones that have really impacted, like in some ways emotional and psychological parts of me as an employee or someone but, it has mainly happened at work." Nora (participant #3) also mentions in this passage from her interview, the additional labour that goes into having to discern when a comment about one's identity is out of genuine curiosity and an openness to learn more about someone, or if the question is asked in a way which elicits a felt sense of difference, not belonging to, and *othering*, that negatively impacts an individuals' sense of self. Frida (participant #2) vividly describes her experiences of learning to speak English in Canada, during the first six months of immigrating to North Vancouver, British Columbia. Frida recalls an incident regarding her pronunciation and its psychological impacts by stating,

"I've had people make fun of my pronunciation or would correct me in a rude way. I had this experience from a landlord, I had just moved here six months and I pronounced Lonsdale Quay as *Q-way* and he said, "*It's not Q-way! It's Q-ee, it's Q-ee!"* and I said, *"Okay I'm sorry"*. The first thing I noticed is people are very impatient and people assume that you have to know everything. If it's something I've never said before why should I know… and there's this idea that people who come here should have this perfect English. It made me doubt myself mostly,

and it made me not want to say a word again in case I made a mistake. Some words, I became obsessed and listened to Google translator. I would prepare a script if I wanted to talk to people over the phone. And people are very impatient over the phone. It made me very anxious and uncomfortable, I never spoke English with anyone before coming here. For the first eight months, I would not talk on the phone so, I would ask my husband to do that for me. I would have that script on my mind of what I wanted to say because I didn't want to be corrected or that people would think I was dumb. It made me feel incapable, incompetent, dumb."

Zoe (participant #5) describes specific questions which elicit the experience of *othering*, an example of microaggressions:

"Just with the simple question, how long have you been here? You must have left your country when you were really young. Those kind of things. I think that was day one of being here. Where did you come from? Oh, you're very eloquent."

When I, the researcher, queried Zoe (participant #5) further on how these questions made her feel *othered* she described the experience of noticing she is treated and perceived differently, "Identifying and understanding that people are quite… Your level of intelligence is measured by what class system they put you in. And really it's just because it's a lack of exposure to different cultures, different people, other influences in their life and when you don't meet that standard with what they consider intelligent or fitting in, then you really are *The Other,* you really are *The Immigrant*."

Zoe (participant #5) describes what it is like as an African woman and immigrant, to not fit neatly into people's implicit perceptions and categorizations of her based on physical appearance, accent, and how this influences her sense of belonging to community, in Canada. Zoe continued to explain her perspectives on *othering* as a category of microaggression,

"To me, I think it means when you are identified because of the colour of your skin, when you are a visible minority and you are identified as an *Other*, if you have an accent, that does not fit in with whatever environment you are in that doesn't seem local or normal to the people around you."

This led some participants to discuss the experience of feeling like a *perpetual foreigner* particularly in the work environment. Frida (participant #2) provided an example from a workplace,

"When I didn't speak English very often because my first job was working with Brazilians and I would be speaking Portuguese all the time. And, people didn't want to talk to my coworkers because their accent was very strong, and they couldn't understand what my coworkers were saying or even me. "I don't want to work with you, I want to work with an English speaker."

Zoe (participant #5) mentioned,

"I've been here for 15 years almost and I think that just the way I am treated by people I interact with reminds me that I am not part of the fabric of that society, of Canadian society. When I speak, when I'm going for interviews, when I interview over the phone, I feel like the interviews go very well because you can't really tell my ethnic background over the phone until you see me."

The experience of microaggressions through examples of othering, feeling like a perpetual foreigner, exclusion, and the seemingly innocuous nature of these transgressions can escalate along the spectrum of racial microaggressions from interactions considered microassaults to macroassaults; violent acts of racism (Berk, 2017). Madonna (participant #1) discusses her experiences of microassaults in elementary school as she reflected on the definition

of microaggressions. Madonna reflected on her experience of being First Nations and attending a school where there were few other First Nations students:

"You know, knowing when to keep quiet versus when to speak up to protect yourself. You just learn it because you know, it takes me back to being 9-years old and being surrounded by a group of boys… They started calling me, "red Indian" saying we were "drunken", "chug", I was nine at the time and it led to violence. I had a group of boys surround me one time, and tried to kick me and older kids came and I ran away… Realizing that created an unsafe environment for myself as well as, you have to continue going back to that school that continued until grade seven."

Madonna (participant #1) describes the experience of being First Nations and how racial microaggressions can quickly escalate from microassaults of uttering racial slurs to macroassaults of physical, racialized violence (Berk, 2017). It is also important to discuss how the intersections of marginalization through, gendered and racialized micro- and macroassaults, influenced race-based and gendered violence in this example.

Emergent Theme #2: Impacts of Microaggressions

This leads to the next emergent theme, *Impacts of Microaggressions*, and understanding how the experiences of racial microaggressions have affected the participants throughout their lives. Participants described the negative impacts of racialized microaggressions and how they increased feelings of self-doubt, shame, lack of trust in others, and lack of confidence. Participants described many of the impacts of microaggressions taking place in the workplace, with sub-themes of tokenization, experiences of being treated differently, and perceptions of a lack of competency in one's job. The result for many of the participants was a struggle to feel a sense of belonging in many spaces and feeling comfortable being their authentic selves.

Participants describe the emotional and psychological impacts of racialized microaggressions throughout their lives.

Not Good Enough. Madonna (participant #1) discussed how the compounding effects of racialized microaggressions resulted in a deep-seated experience of never feeling good enough. Madonna shared,

"It made me feel really shitty, I felt judged. Even as an adult I would feel like I would be quiet a lot, and I was unsure about what I said would be good enough or if it would be heard in the same way as someone else who carried a lot of privilege. And I had anxiety and I would feel shaky before having to speak publicly or in front of a lot of people. I feel a lot of nerves, nervous."

Zoe (participant #5) mentioned,

"I noticed emotionally, it weighs you down. Psychologically, it makes you feel inferior. It makes you question the core identity of who you are. Where you fit in and what you have to contribute".

Shame. Madonna (participant #1) discussed further in her interview how the impacts of microaggressions have led to a sense of not feeling good enough, resulting in her struggles with shame and self-acceptance. Madonna (participant #1) shares that she,

"Had a lot of anger growing up, and I still struggle with trusting people. I guess I carried a lot of shame. I felt a lot of the time that I was not good enough and I had to *fake it till you make it*. Instead of trusting that I was smart enough and good enough. A lot of shame with intimate partners and family, that I was not able to be my true authentic self, most of the time, until I started to accept what my own truth was."

Nora (participant #3) reflected on her early years attending school and shared,

"A couple teachers actually made up names for me because they couldn't say my name. For one class in grade 9, I was "Linda". Oh yeah, my math teacher called me "Linda". And I had to get used to that name. For a while I was like, "*Who is that? Oh shit, that's me! He's calling me!"* You can imagine how humiliating that can be for a 14-year old who just got to Canada, and is just adjusting and being told you have the weirdest name in the world so, I'll give you the whitest name in the world so I can say it… It was not a pleasant experience and it really made you feel like an outsider and it was not good."

Self-Doubt. Participants also discussed how the experience of racialized microaggressions impacted their sense of self-confidence in the workplace, when looking for a job, and perceptions of lacking competence in your job. Nora (participant #3) stated,

"All of these experiences have made me really doubt myself or never made me feel very comfortable. Especially when looking for a job that is mostly English-speaking or even writing emails or writing cover letters for resumes. It made me feel embarrassed and it's easy to feel as though you don't belong and mainly you are not welcome because you don't fit in to what everybody expects you to do to fit in."

Zoe (participant #5) continues to share her experiences as a Black woman in the workplace describing that,

"There's a stereotype, you are difficult to work with. That's the word, when you really are asserting a position or stating an opinion. So, you are really forced to really belittle yourself at times to get your point across. Or, you are not able to voice an opinion which is contradictory when with others, when it's very normal. In the community, when something happens, when you do speak out and voice an opinion you are being rowdy, you are being difficult, you are being loud. I feel like you are never really left to be yourself".

Lack of Confidence. During Madonna's interview, she shared how subtle and innocuous microaggressive acts of exclusion and being treated differently from her supervisors led to a lack of confidence. Madonna (participant #1) stated she,

"Dealt with a lack of confidence because of that feeling. You can just feel it. It's a tension in the air, and sometimes, that's even not being acknowledged when you walk into a room, not having someone make eye contact with you. But your boss is talking to everyone else at the lunch table and no one is talking to you and it created discomfort a lot of the time which led to health issues."

Tokenization. Madonna (participant #1) describes her experience of tokenization in the workplace based on her First Nations identity stating,

"Professionally, I felt tokenized and was supposed to be like that, you know, that we all provide traditional services, all are medicine carriers and you know we all don't do that because we are Indigenous. You know some people carry the rights to medicine teachings and to do ceremonies but, I don't and I felt that was expected from me".

Being Perceived as Lacking Competence in your Job. Nora (participant #3) discusses her experience with being in supervisory roles and other members of the organization questioning her ability for the roles by sharing,

"Overtime, when I have taken positions of power, there has always been a bit of a background narrative of, *does she even know what she's doing*, *should she even have that position,* so when people say things… Not directly to me, it adds to that people don't trust me and I can't trust them back. That has been one of the many microaggressions."

Nora (participant #3) discussed how perceptions of lacking competence in one's job can lead to unintended systemic inequities in the workplace. Nora states,

"There are times when not even intentionally but, unintentionally, people do things or say things that discredit me or don't show enough respect for me to know what I am doing. And, in the same position or same kind of position, having been a manager for most of the time with two white women, it was very obvious in the ways that between the three of us who was seen as more credible, who was seen as more qualified, who were given more responsibilities and acknowledged for those, and given promotions, raises. Just to see people who came years after me and got ahead way faster. And, I don't believe for a minute that they are more qualified, not for a minute. And, I would argue with anybody."

Madonna (participant #1) mentioned being treated differently in the workplace compared to other colleagues based on perceptions of lacking competence in her job. Madonna stated, "The one that stands out the most was at work with my past clinical supervisor. Just going to her for support and having to take my outlines to her to review before delivering them [for a support group]. And having her go to my manager and tell her, I said that I was incompetent. And that, I didn't think I could do the work even though this is what my education specialized in. Also placing other counsellors above myself, the white counsellors were seen as more competent to do the job. The outline was complete and it was something I delivered elsewhere and it was just for the supervisor to double check to know what I was delivering and she put words in my mouth saying, that I said, "I was not competent", and I clearly stated that was not accurate."

Zoe (participant #5) discussed racialized microaggressions at work and mentioned that, "It was stressful and it is stressful. I am very passionate about what I do with work, anything I dive into I am very motivated and passionate, I want to do it with all my heart. But I would find myself, in those situations, say it's from a co-worker, that motivation is not there anymore. I started getting anxiety and anxiety attacks. Of where when I am faced with certain situations, I

would feel I am being judged about how I'm going to handle it. I would beat myself, did I make the right decision, would I be judged according to my skills and experience or am I judged according to my gender or the colour of my skin."

Emergent Theme #3: Responses to Microaggressions

Responses to racialized microaggressions is another theme that emerged from participant interviews. A subtheme that emerged from the interviews was the experience of shame related to internalized racism. Participants shared how they responded in various ways to protect themselves by minimizing or hiding their ethnic and cultural identity as a way to gain a sense of belonging and acceptance as well as, gaining opportunities. Participants disclosed responding to shame through minimizing their cultural traditions, hiding their ethnic identity and, passing for other ethnicities.

Participants shared that their experiences of racialized microaggressions throughout their lives led them to engaging in social activism, seeking validation and support with family and other racialized people, cultivating a deeper sense of cultural, ethnic, and religious connections, and finding everyday ways to resist these transgressions.

Passing and Minimization. Some participants discussed responding to the shame around being a racialized woman by minimizing their cultural and ethnic traditions. Participants discussed passing as another racial group in order to avoid the stigma and stereotypes of their own racial and ethnic identity, to find belonging and acceptance.

Suzy (participant #4) states,

"I've spent a lot of time trying and pretending to be as white as possible to blend in, or fit in, to get the most opportunities that I can. So for me, a lot of it has been not being as racialized as possible. Because being racialized means standing out, being different, sometimes it can be a

good thing in certain situations but, it always means you are something that is maybe not like the other. Being in high school, and having things pointed out. I wasn't familiar with certain kinds of white food like, casserole, I hadn't had casserole before when I was in high school. It could be things like being asked, "Does your family celebrate Christmas?" when I used to work at the grocery store by strangers I didn't know. It can mean having to prove myself. Prove that I know English, that I'm from here, and can fully understand the jobs that I apply for."

Madonna (participant #1) stated,

"At 13, I started a new school and at that time I was able to change my identity and be who I wanted to be, so I lied about who I was and what I was. And omit I was First Nations because I could pass as something else and I would say that I was Black and Spanish, which later on, last year I found out I actually am so I am not truly lying! I was ashamed to bring friends over to the home because I didn't want them to see my mom and my family."

Nora (participant #3) mentioned,

"In so many ways when I was younger, it was easier to just pass because you didn't have to deal with the aggressions and the ways in which you were isolated."

Working Harder and Proving Oneself. In response to the experience of racialized microaggressions, implicit and biased perceptions of lacking competence, and internalized shame, some participants stated that they have to not only minimize aspects of cultural and ethnic heritage but, also work harder to prove they are capable. Suzy (participant #4) stated,

"I feel like there's been a lot of needing to prove myself… Or maybe kind of overcompensate in some ways to prove that I am fully westernized. In … Workplaces not bringing South Asian food to work like everyone else, making sure I was dressing like everyone else. When there was a wedding or function where people had henna I wouldn't partake in it even though I really wanted

to and liked it because people would always comment on it. It lasts for a couple of days and it's pretty noticeable and I just didn't want to stick out."

Frida (participant #2) mentioned how she has responded to racial microaggressions by wanting to prove herself, with the result that the additional labour takes a mental and emotional toll. Frida stated,

"When you move here you want to succeed, you want to do well, you want to show you're capable, you're intelligent and all these things, suck off your energy and your positivity and your desire to be around people."

Zoe (participant #5) mentioned her experiences in university and stated,

"I think that one thing that was visible going back to school especially when you are a mature student, and you find yourself in classrooms at times where you are the only person of African descent... And, I would feel that at times you are judged. And, you do have to work harder than everybody else. I have had experiences of where I've had some lecturers who really didn't expect you to do very well unless you've either aced the exam or you wrote the paper very well and then they took an interest in you, who are you, get to know you, because it's just something they did not expect."

A quote from Madonna's (participant #2) interview stood out for me in the process of analyzing the data because Madonna addressed the intersections of identity which makes the experience of being both racialized and a woman, result in specific and unique experiences of microaggressions. And, these experiences of gendered, racialized microaggressions over a lifetime result in the additional labour required simply to be seen in society. From Madonna's quote and interview, she also speaks to how racialized women, often silenced by the intersections

of marginalization, have to find ways to continually push back on systemic structures in order to attain equity in society.

"We always have to, especially being a woman and racialized, unfortunately, we have to work harder and stand up for our rights and stand up for people to respect us and see us as equals in this world."

Speaking Up, Social Activism, and Creating Social Change. As a response to experiencing racialized microaggressions, some participants discussed ways in which they participated in social activism, used their voice, and have created social change through the career choices they have made. Madonna (participant #1) stated,

"When I finally started to accept and love my culture, I remember standing up to a group of kids, and they weren't kids. They were probably 19 and I was 16, they were all white guys and they all had shaved heads and you know, I remember standing up and saying, that's not cool, I'm a person of colour and here you are speaking openly about others. Which led to going with my mom to marches, and she was big on standing up for Indigenous women's rights and I followed in her footsteps when I grew up. And I try to use my voice as much as I can whether it's personally, or on social media or just calling out what I can in my own life."

Frida (participant #2) also mentioned during her interview that,

"Until I had those experiences of being an immigrant, I didn't experience being a non-white person so when I first came I had this idea that Canada was actually doing something, for giving me something, for allowing me to come to this country. And for everything I've read about Indigenous rights and Brazilian Indigenous people and understanding more of the global north and south and getting involved in politics, I better understand my position… And if I don't say anything, everything would stay the way it is. I don't think being politically correct is boring, I

think it is right. If I don't stand up, other people won't do the same. By reading and following other women on social media, their books, speeches, has broadened my experience."

Zoe (participant #5) stated,

"Initially, it is something that did not bother me and overtime, it set in and it became a mission to point it out and make people aware of it."

Frida (participant #2) continued to discuss how racialized microaggressions have also influenced her career path in creating social change,

"It made me angry so I wanted to do something about it. I understood that I am doing the right thing for me, working with immigrants and then it made me realize I want to work closely to immigrants whose situations are more delicate than mine. It made me want to make people even more aware of these things that we face every day and we don't notice. I want people to respond to these things."

Zoe (participant #5) also discussed how her experiences have shaped career choices in her life and the importance of being one of the few Black women in a managerial role, working with men in the Canadian criminal justice system; most of whom are predominantly Black or First Nations. Zoe shared,

"I would say it has made me really think about career choices. Because it's made me realize I don't have the same opportunities as everyone else. It really influenced my decision with going back to school and what type of major I would choose. I took Criminology because I realized I was in a society where people of colour are not represented, particularly working in the criminal justice system. And I think if I wasn't in this society I wouldn't have chosen Criminology because I'm more of an artistic person. When I actually identified that I am definitely racially marginalized, I wanted to make a difference."

Seeking Support. Participants discussed turning to friends and family members who are also People of Colour as a way to validate their experiences and find safe spaces for support. Participants also discussed seeking connection through turning to their religious and cultural beliefs as a place of refuge.

Suzy (participant #4) mentioned,

"Being friends with a lot more people of colour right now, and obviously having family members of colour, there is a lot of sharing stories and there is something cathartic about that. Having someone to share the stories with. And also hearing, for every story I share, I hear a story back. And I'm sure it goes back and forth. So, it's kind of nice to have people listen and hear how wrong something is."

Nora (participant #3) discussed turning to family as a place of safety and support. Nora stated,

"What has always been, from day one until now, has been family. I've always had a safe home and really, really, caring and good parents and I'm also one of five siblings. And knowing that you are never alone. Even though they may not know what's going on with you, that you will always have someone around you and they will go out to bat for you, I think this sense of security and safety to fall back on even if the world was unsafe, like home was good."

Zoe (participant #5) mentioned,

"I think, the most important thing for us is the faith aspect, that there are bigger things than this. So, better tools to deal with certain things before you become resentful."

Nora (participant #3) stated,

"What support looks like, is validation, that the impact is real. Acknowledgement that these comments affect and impact and the understanding of the different ways that we are impacted."

Suzy (participant #4) describes how support and validation help her understand how the complexities of experiencing racialized microaggressions do cause harm. Suzy stated, "Usually a big problem that I have is, am I overthinking this? Did this really happen? Am I being too sensitive? So a lot of it is reassurance that I wasn't.

Cultural Connection and Knowledge. Frida (participant #2) speaks of increased cultural and ethnic pride as a result of experiencing racialized microaggressions. She states, "Having this experience made me prouder of my heritage, prouder of being a Latina woman, being from Brazil, and made me reconnect even more with other Latin countries."

Madonna (participant #1) mentioned,

"This has taught me to educate myself on what happened to my people, why we were stereotyped in these ways, to unlearn internalized racism which I took upon myself"

and how,

"Education helped me understand the history of colonization and that helped me to understand why we experienced what we experienced. And I guess it's trying to unlearn what I grew up experiencing and what I was taught."

Emergent Theme #4: Perspectives on Counselling

Participants were asked about their community's perspectives of counselling, their personal perspectives of counselling, and what counsellors need to know when sitting with a client who wants to discuss the impacts of racial microaggressions. Subthemes included: The importance of finding a counsellor who understands the complexities of racial microaggressions, how one's lifelong experiences with microaggressions shape their identity and perspectives, how the intersections of gender and race influence power dynamics in counselling, and the

importance of increasing counsellor knowledge and awareness about identifying and addressing transgressions, stereotypes, generalizations in the counselling room.

Participants first discussed perspectives of counselling from their community and their personal perspectives. These are some excerpts from their interviews:

Madonna (participant #1) stated,

"That it's not safe. And it's interesting because being a counsellor and having clients who are from the same community as me, and I see so many Indigenous folks coming in for counselling… Which is part of my own growth because I'm seeing so many trusting the experience and trying to seek different types of support."

Zoe (participant #5) stated,

"I personally have not gone for professional counselling. I have sought counselling from church. I can say in general, its' not something that people do and I can say that in our community, that people in our community are open to… I feel that it's something that people want to do with someone who feel can identify with them."

Frida (participant #2) stated,

"I think everybody wants to go to a Brazilian counsellor. Mostly because a Brazilian counselor can relate to what you are going through. And language is another barrier."

Suzy (participant #4) stated,

"I think it's still pretty taboo within my community, my ethnic community. People don't usually go to counselling unless there is something really wrong with them."

And,

"It's certainly not sold as something everyday people do all the time. Kind of made fun of. People love making fun of it. The word *crazy* being thrown around a lot, counselling is for crazy people."

Nora (participant #3) stated,

"There is no such thing as counselling. Talking about this the other day, about doing counselling in your own language. I am not too academically fluent in my language, it's just conversational, but the word counselling, psychology, and psychiatry are one word. So, all of them are all one word and the literal translation is someone who knows the psyche. Really the whole field is covered by two words in my language but, it covers all those professions generally… I think the stigma of seeing a counsellor or having emotional struggles or mental health struggles is still pretty big in many racialized communities."

All participants also shared their personal experiences and perspectives of counselling in the interviews before discussing what counsellors need to know in order to provide support for clients who are experiencing racial microaggressions. These are excerpts from interviews with some of the participants on their perspectives of counselling:

Zoe (participant #5) stated,

"I think for me, it's important that if I am going to seek advice from somebody they can understand where I am coming from. They don't necessarily have to share my experience but, I feel they should be knowledgeable about who I am, what I identify with, and I feel it's helpful to have some background and history and be knowledgeable in that. I feel it's very difficult to advise someone when you cannot understand this persons' journey."

Madonna (participant #1) stated,

"What I really like is having someone listen to you unfiltered. And not all the time trying to find a meaning around everything I say. I don't need suggestions, like being told I need to go to yoga. Sometimes I just want to blab and I feel lighter. And that person is trying to make me understand better how I behave, how I treat myself. It changed a lot of things for me in terms of health and I changed a lot and treating myself better."

Nora (participant #3) shares her personal perspectives of being a racialized woman who has experienced microaggressions, and how it has influenced her role as a counsellor. Nora stated,

"As a racialized person, it has taught me the language through experience that has a little more complex and layered understandings of people's experiences. That being racialized is not just a universal experience of all people the same way. That we have differences and even if I don't understand exactly what that means, I can try to understand because I've been through something of my own so, it has offered me credibility. That's the word, it has offered me credibility to say I hear you."

Experiences of Racialized Microaggressions and Perspectives of Counselling. One of the subthemes that emerged is that participants discussed how their experiences of racialized microaggressions have shaped their perspectives of counselling. Participants discussed the importance of creating a trusting and culturally sensitive space for racialized clients to explore their experiences with microaggressions. Participants also shared the importance of understanding the impacts of microaggressions, having culturally and historically informed perspectives of the clients they are working with, and the systemic barriers for many racialized people to accessing mental health services. In particular, participants shared the importance of

looking for a counsellor who is of similar racial and/or ethnic background and being able to identify with or see themselves in the counsellor sitting across from them.

Madonna (participant #1) discussed how the historical trauma of colonization of First Nations people continued to influence her motivation to seek counselling and the apprehension in seeing a counsellor for the first time. Madonna shared,

"That one was a big one and goes back to trusting. I wanted to see a counsellor and, I only saw one counsellor in my life time. And that's because I was scared to share too much. I was scared of, and again, what was I scared of? I was scared of my kids being taken away if I said something wrong, even though there is nothing to be afraid of. Except this is something that has been ingrained in me from childhood because again, Indigenous children are the highest represented children in foster care. So going to a counsellor, the anxiety is huge. The counsellor asked me what I was feeling in my body and I said my knees are shaking. I just wanted to run out of there and it took me a while to finally feel safe and to finally feel like I could share things about myself and my family and know it's confidential and they're there to help me. It also helped that this person was a person of colour as well. That was really warming."

Suzy (participant #4) also discussed how her previous experiences with counselling resulted in a lack of trust. Suzy mentioned,

"Before, what counselling did mean to me, that I would entrapped in the system and I wasn't able to trust it. I had a bad experience with a counsellor where I disclosed some things about my family and it was perceived not well so, instead of going to talk about what I wanted to talk about she wanted to call a Social Worker and then I just never went back and it was just not a good experience to have when I was younger. So, I was very lucky that the Social Worker didn't pick up at the time and I was able to leave and not come back."

Nora (participant #3) discussed the systemic barriers facing many racialized people in accessing mental health services. Nora stated,

"It is really important for all people but, especially for people who are isolated and marginalized, to have support and definitely support of other people who understand marginalization and isolation. It's very important for those supports to be accessible and affordable. I think that racism can impact racialized communities and people who are experiencing it first hand at a mental health level. And, for mental health and emotional health services, to make that part of MSP [Medical Services Plan] coverage… As a racialized person, I believe that has to be acknowledged as impacting people's physical, emotional, and mental health and for it to be accessible. It's not accessible at all."

Zoe (participant #5) shared,

"… Being an observer of people who have sought out counselling in terms of, and I'm talking about at the workplace with clients who are from different ethnicities, experiences, and diverse backgrounds. What I have been able to see is the detachment that they have when they get counselling from people that they cannot identify with. When they are in a setting of where they are required to fit into society, where they have to model behaviour with someone they cannot identify with. What I have seen in my experience, is it ends up being something negative, instead of you being a positive influence, it becomes more rebellious such as, I am not going to conform to you because you cannot identify with me. So for me, in that setting, I've always found that working with people with different diversities… If they are put in situations where they have to seek counselling, it would beneficial that, they could visibly identify with the person, that's a big thing. And, just looking at somebody who looks like you, automatically puts you in a position where you feel comfortable.

Suzy (participant #3) shared the importance of finding a counsellor who is from the same cultural background as she is. Suzy stated,

"The counsellor that I did end up finding and liking is the same culture as me… I remember when I was looking online and seeing the counsellor that looked like me a little bit. And I remember, not wanting to see a white counsellor again when I was looking. Them not being able to understand the family dynamics, why I would make certain decisions so, that probably does tie into it… I don't necessarily need to know the counsellors' whole cultural background but, simply that she can have an open mind and understand or try to understand where I'm coming from and not try to make overlying assumptions that because I live in Canadian culture that I can live my life that way.

Frida (participant #2) stated that the importance of cultural connection informs her decision in finding a counsellor. Frida stated,

"Other people from my background also look for Brazilian counsellors so, I think that this is something that would make me look for that."

What is Helpful for Counsellors to Know About Microaggressions. Participants discussed what counsellors need to know about microaggressions when working with racialized women. Participants shared how a lifetime of experiences with racialized microaggressions can shape one's identity, world view, and can result in trauma for the individual who has been impacted. Participants also discussed how challenging it is for counsellors to identify how microaggressions shape experiences and behaviours, as well the difficulty with finding a counsellor who has this specific area of knowledge and expertise.

Complexities and Nuances to the Experience of Racialized Microaggressions.

Madonna (participant #1) shared,

"I think that it's lifelong. It's just like healing. You're never going to find a point where you're healed now. It's a journey. It's very internalized a lot of time you don't even realize it's there and you may think It's something else. It's really unpacking the backpack and understanding yourself in a different way."

Nora (participant #3) stated,

"Finding a counsellor who understands racism and racialized microaggressions, can be helpful. It's really hard to find. And, even when you do, that doesn't necessarily mean that your counsellor, who is a person of colour, would understand racialization… If they haven't experienced it or they don't identify as having experienced racism."

Suzy (participant #4) mentioned,

"I think that there's so many levels, what the microaggression was, who perpetuated it, the situation and it's not just the microaggression, it's about their childhood and it might be the fifteenth time in your life this has happened to you and that, that's it, and that's the final straw. So, I think there is a whole background of things other than the microaggression to think about. Sometimes it's the immediate and for me personally, it's the history. I think that sometimes certain microaggressions can shape a lot of your identity and it can be really hard to realize that so, being careful around that. It's not a great feeling to think about how much you've planned your life around a certain thing like this. I think before, about just trying to fit in more so as not to be singled out and that's been a lifelong thing that you know, is a big deal."

Learn About History and Culture of Clients You are Working With. Some participants mentioned that the importance of counsellors being knowledgeable of the historical and cultural contexts of clients, particularly as it relates to their experiences of microaggressions.

Zoe (participant #5) mentioned,

"We don't have the luxury of encountering people from different backgrounds, different cultures, different races but, we do have the luxury of educating ourselves. Get to experience what it is like for that person, and you can only do that... read about these people, their culture, read something! Don't make assumptions! I feel that's a mistake a lot of people do, not just counsellors. Understanding as well, when you are dealing with people who have accents, language barriers, understanding that the mode of communication that you have, especially in North America, is the one language which is English. English is a language, not a level of intelligence. It's a language just the same way you speak it and someone else speaks a different language. Once you can wrap your head around that concept, you are able to meet people anywhere where they are at."

Madonna (participant #1) stated,

"Definitely the history of colonization, residential school. That's why for me it's so important for me to find an Indigenous counsellor, whether male or female, I don't care. But, it's just understanding that history and how that affects our people and how it affects me."

Being Curious and Having Awareness of Tokenization, Generalizations, and Stereotypes.

Suzy (participant #4) stated,

"It's about being a good fit. It would look like not making assumptions and that they don't tokenize me. Like, generalized statements about my culture or ethnic background and you know saying, *well, yes, you're all like this*. Instead of asking. I've had a counsellor make generalizations and then ask if that fits for me and it does. It was very helpful."

On a similar note, Frida (participant #2) mentioned,

"Not fitting me into a category, and challenging me, asking me why I say some things or behave in some ways."

Microaggressions can be Traumatic. Participants discussed the importance of building rapport and gaining trust with clients in order for individuals to feel safe enough to explore their experiences of racialized microaggressions in session.

Zoe (participant #5) mentioned the nuances of looking at the intersections of microaggressions as well as, creating safety and containment in sessions so, clients are psychologically and emotional safe when exploring what can be, traumatic feelings and memories related to their experiences of racialized microaggressions (Nadal, 2018). Zoe stated,

"You have to approach it from a place of care and sensitivity. Being very careful and sensitive knowing sometimes that it reactivates that trauma. As much as it is good to talk about things, also being very much aware that they are now revisiting a very traumatic event and sometimes that traumatic event is not what was said to them, and that it happened before that, and what was said to them activated that event. So it is very important for them to be aware of that, when a person is sharing. Being able to identify when to put a stop to it and being able to know when to say, "Okay now you don't have to go here because you are physically reacting to this". Being able to know how to work with people who have experienced trauma. Because you don't want to leave a session heavier than when you went in… Are they even aware of microaggressions, first of all. Our interpretations could be different. I could be looking at it from a racialized aspect of it, are they aware of the gender aspect, so looking at the intersections."

Counsellors Can Perpetuate Microaggressions. Nora (participant #3) discussed the importance of creating safety and building trust in the therapeutic relationship in order for clients to address when transgressions occur in session from the counsellor.

Nora (participant #3) stated,

"I think of course, trust. Some degree of trust has been established and there is enough safety in the relationship to disclose. And if I am able to let the counsellor know that they have because they can too be doing something or saying something that can feel like one of those experiences that that would be ideal. That there is enough trust and safety to bring to their attention their own microaggressions, that's ideal."

V. Conclusion

Summary

The research conducted with racialized women who have experienced microaggressions and shared how it influenced their perspective of counselling, is an essential area of exploration to support counsellors with gaining an understanding of the nuances and complexities of the experience of microaggressions. Participants shared their personal experiences and insights with the purpose of understanding that there is nothing "micro" about microaggressions, and the impacts over a lifetime have far reaching implications on racialized women's views of themselves, connections to others, their world view, and their perspectives on counselling. This qualitative study adds to the existing literature on microaggressions; how the interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences of these everyday transgressions impact racialized women, what counsellors need to know when addressing the topic of microaggressions, and gaining insights into how complex and insidious the experiences of microaggressions are through one's lifetime. The research question of the study was to explore racialized women's experiences of microaggressions and their perspectives of counselling. A narrative inquiry examined themes from the five semi-structured interviews.

The participants reported extensive experiences with racialized microaggressions throughout their lives in various areas such as, school, work, and interpersonal relationships. Participants experienced racialized microaggressions from peers, colleagues, university professors, supervisors and other authority figures, as well as, strangers. Participants described the experiences of racialized microaggressions as insidious, well-meaning and also harmful, and difficult to identify in the moment. The subtle and insidious nature of racialized microaggressions led participants to question their feelings and emotions towards the experience,

lose trust with others, increased feelings of shame, and increased lack of confidence in themselves.

Participants shared during their interviews that the experiences of racialized microaggressions throughout their lives often left them experiencing perceptions of lacking competence in their jobs, increased feelings of self-doubt, and feeling like they are not good enough. Participants share they responded to racialized microaggressions by seeking validation and support from other People of Colour, turning to their faith, and cultivating their cultural connections. Participants also shared that their responses to racialized microaggressions included engaging in social activism, choosing career paths where they are able to create social change, and finding ways to speak up and speak out about their experiences. They discussed how their experiences of racialized microaggressions influenced their perspectives on counselling as well as, sharing perspectives of counselling from their community. Many participants discussed experiencing a lack of trust and safety with seeking counselling, fear of being caught in the system, systemic barriers to accessing counselling services for many racially marginalized groups, and a lack of diversity and representation in the counselling profession.

Participants also stated the importance for counsellors to understand how complex and nuanced the experience of racialized microaggressions is. Additionally, participants stated that it is important for counsellors to learn about the history and culture of the clients they choose to work with, to realize that speaking about racialized microaggressions can be a traumatic experience, to be aware they can also transgress and perpetuate microaggressions in sessions, and to be aware of their own perceived stereotypes, generalizations, and biases.

Strengths and Limitations

Limitations to qualitative research design include the retrospective and subjective nature of interviewing in order to gain deeper insights into a person's lived experiences. Critiques of qualitative research design involve the ability to replicate the retrospective accounts of participants and the possibility for subjectivity biases. As the goal for narrative inquiry is not that it is able to be replicated but, is utilized to create "meaning-making" from the dynamic, storied experiences of individuals, this critique for replicability does not apply for this study (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.16).

In the process of narrative analysis, the researcher interprets emergent themes in the data, and these interpretations are influenced by personal experiences that the researcher brings to their reflections and insights on the material collected (Wolgemuth and Agosto, 2019, Polkinghorne, 2005). The data is then re-storied and re-narrated based on the researcher's perspectives, in the process of bringing individual's memories, experiences, and perspectives to light (Wolgemuth and Agosto, 2019). The process and interactions within the dyadic researcher-participant relationship during the interview also has to be considered. As the researcher, I also identify with being a racialized woman who has personally experienced microaggressions throughout my lifetime.

I am aware of the closeness to the research subject, which may influence my perspectives throughout the interview and data analysis process (O'Leary, 2014). I, the researcher, also noted during the interview process that participants would often respond with comments alluding to the fact that as another racialized woman sitting before them, there was an unspoken familiarity which resulted in the use of the collective "we" to explain some of their experiences as racialized women. Or, in their response to questions, some participants added comments such as, "well, you know…" in assuming I may have a shared or familiar experience with the subject matter. In

exploring such a personal and sensitive topic as racial microaggressions, I query whether my positionality as a racialized woman may also have some benefits in the depth of participant disclosures and details of their lived experiences.

In qualitative research, it is important to indicate how the researcher locates themselves in relation to the subject matter being studied to address biases that may be personal, cultural, or historical (Creswell, 2014). And, as a general limitation, of qualitative research and narrative inquiry, it involves a small sample size which limits generalizability. Particularly in this research study, this affects generalizability of applying the experiences of racialized women with microaggressions and their perspectives on counselling to the greater population.

While there are limitations to this study, there are also strengths that are important to note. The strengths of narrative research design are in the depth and richness of participant experiences, the ability to explore personal narratives in such a way that abstract research topics such as, racialized microaggressions, are grounded in the stories, memories, and recollections of real people, who have personal experiences with the subject matter (O'Leary, 2014).

For the reader who may be unfamiliar with the subject matter and may not be able to relate to these experiences, personal narratives may be able to draw the reader into another person's world. Therefore, it can provide a different perspective in understanding how these issues can impact people, particularly someone who may be sitting before them in the counselling room. The intimate and personal nature of interviews allows for robust discussions, time to explore and reflect on experiences through one's life, and where an exploratory process can flourish.

Future Research and Applications to Clinical Practice

"It means beauty, strength, and power" (Madonna, participant #1's response to the experience of being a racialized woman).

This thesis explores racialized women's experiences with microaggressions and recounts many painful and challenging narratives of everyday racism throughout their lives. At the same time, it also documents their stories of resistance, empowerment, resilience, community, and joy. I assert that women of colour have always found ways to resist and respond to racialized microaggressions by transforming pain in evocative and powerful ways, creating change in their communities and in society at large.

Racialized women who have experienced microaggressions have unique experiences based on their gender, cultural, and racial identities. When racialized microaggressions have been a result of these intersections of identity, their perspectives, attitudes, and experiences with counselling services are also influenced. And, it shapes their perspectives on utilizing and accessing counselling services. Systemically, there are also barriers for racialized women in accessing counselling including, lack of culturally-sensitive services, financial barriers, and a lack of diversity in the counselling profession in general.

Solórzano and Huber (2020) discuss the concept of racial microaffirmations as a response to racialized microaggressions. Racial microaffirmations describe the small acts both verbal and nonverbal expressed amongst People of Colour to affirm and validate each other's shared humanity, being, and authentic self (Solórzano and Huber, 2020, p. 85). This shared witnessing and presence of fully seeing someone through nods, smiles, language, and shared cultural intimacy create spaces of safety, trust, and humanity. These acts of self-affirmation create genuine human connection which buffers against the everyday onslaughts of microaggressions (Sherman and Cohen, 2006).

It is important to cultivate all of these practices of creating spaces for racialized women to feel valued, seen, appreciated, respected, and feel at ease (Williams, 2016). Future research to further explore how therapists can develop these spaces for microaffirmations, creating cultural intimacy, and trust in the counselling room would benefit racialized women who are seeking safe spaces to discuss their experiences of microaggressions.

Exploration into supporting therapists who are working with racialized women who have experienced microaggressions, would benefit from using more expansive approaches. Some examples are, a diverse array of methodologies, longitudinal studies, increased population samples, and mixed-method approaches to continue to fill the gaps in our understandings of the subject matter and all of the complexities that people experience.

The development of training and educational materials for graduate counselling students, university and college professors teaching counselling psychology, and therapists working in the field, is needed to be able to not only create awareness that this is an necessary and pertinent issue to address but, to develop real changes in the ways that counselling is taught and practiced.

Another direction of research is developing ways to support therapists who are racialized women and have experienced microaggressions, in providing spaces for support, connection, and healing. It is necessary for therapists who often work with diverse groups to understand how complex the issue of racialized microaggressions are, particularly when an individual has experienced these transgressions throughout the course of their lives, and witnessed microaggressions being perpetuated by others.

To better serve diverse populations, it is important for therapists to integrate holistic approaches and interventions that are culturally sensitive, including diversity and multicultural perspectives, decolonizing practices, and intersectional approaches. Beyond cultural competency

and knowledge of cultural contexts, the field of counselling psychology needs to continue to reflect upon how to integrate and uphold practices that are rooted in multiculturalism and diversity.

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