RACIALIZED BACHELOR OF EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF PERFORMATIVE ALLYSHIP IN THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

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Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented as work for a previous course or towards a degree in any other University.

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Signature *Date*

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Abstract

Performative allyship, also referred to as performative activism, is a non-genuine form of allyship or activism rooted in growing one's social capital rather than raising awareness for the stated human rights issue. Individuals are performing activism to increase social capital and appease their sense of morality. This trend has been prevalent online throughout the height of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, where social media influencers use BLM-centred demonstrations as an accessory to promote an image of social conscience and activism. The purpose of this research seeks to understand racialized students' distinct perspectives of allyship (both performative and genuine) during the BLM movement using an epistemology of inter-subjective knowledge construction. Structured interviews were conducted with four participants, all of whom were current Lakehead University pre-service teachers. Participants showed a distinct understanding of and definitions of genuine allyship and performative activism, offering characteristics and examples of an ideal ally. The pre-service teachers interviewed depicted a complex and nuanced understanding of the relationship between genuine and performative action, unpacking how even authentically intended and informed allyship can still elicit performative actions. From an understanding of privilege, willingness to accept potential opportunities and the emotional labour of being continuously confronted with inequities and resistance, all pre-service teachers (PSTs) believe race has a significant role in allyship.

Keywords: allyship, allyship education, pre-service teachers, racialized perspectives

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem and Rationale

1.1 Purpose

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has brought attention to racially motivated violence, systematic inequalities, and Anti-Black rhetoric embedded in various social sectors. Since its 2013 inception, born from the murder of Trayvon Martin, the movement has created "an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (Turan, 2020; Black Lives Matter, 2019). Created to celebrate and affirm the life and contributions of the Black community, it was met with a mix of support and resistance (Turan, 2020, Black Lives Matter, 2019). With the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died after police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck, Black Lives Matter has catapulted into mainstream media, with support growing exponentially during the summer of 2020 (Turan, 2020). However, with its rise in global marches and cyber-protests, a phenomenon of performative activism and allyship has emerged, which raises the question of whether optical allyship does more harm than good for communities of Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) communities.

Performative activism is activism rooted in growing one's social capital rather than raising awareness for human rights issues. Fake wokeness is a colloquial term that describes an individual's shallow and superficial commitment to a social justice issue. In both cases, individuals perform activism to increase social capital and appease their sense of morality. This trend has been prevalent online, where social media influencers use BLM-centred demonstrations as an accessory to promote an image of social conscience and activism. A recent example of this trend was the fad '#BlackoutTuesday,' where influencers posted a Black screen

with the #BLM hashtag in solidarity with Black citizens (Lerman, 2020). This protest ended up overriding the Instagram #BLM algorithm, burying useful and necessary information used by Black Lives Matter protestors to mobilize and evade police (Lerman, 2020). Additionally, many social media influencers have been under fire for their use of marches as a photo opportunity to gain content for their social media brand. The objective of this research seeks to understand racialized students' distinct perceptions of allyship (both performative and genuine) during the BLM movement.

1.2 Research Questions

Placed against the purpose of this study, the following research questions emerged:

1. How do racialized students understand and define genuine allyship?
2. How do racialized students view and understand optical or performative allyship? (i.e., What sentiments do instances of performative activism elicit in racialized students?)
3. What is the relationship between genuine and performative allyship?
4. What is the role of race in allyship and ally behaviour?
5. What are the participants' opinions on optical allyship and whether it works for or against the objectives of the BLM movement?

1.3 Assumptions

The following assumptions are guiding this research:

1. The first assumption surrounds the notion that while non-racialized students may show external solidarity with Black Lives Matter and other marginalized group movements, they may still be resistant to Black equity issues.

2. Secondly, this study is guided by the assumption that some students participated in social media activism as a means of belonging and following a social media trend rather than out of a commitment to the cause.
3. Thirdly, BIPOC students are more open to critical race theories or initiatives condemning current institutional racism and barriers.
4. Additionally, we assume that mention of Black Lives Matter and initiatives that uplift Black individuals can breed resentment and resistance from other groups.
5. Finally, we believe that certain non-racialized individuals participate in group resistance due to their potential loss of status or feeling left behind in the current global movements (Heafner et al., 2021).

1.4 Definition of terms

BIPOC: An umbrella term used to define individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of colour. The use of BIPOC rather than the more conventional POC (people of colour) is essential as it underlines the intersectionality and extent of marginalization felt by different members of marginalized communities who face varying levels of subjugation and oppression.

Genuine Allyship: a type of activism that focuses on the authentic needs of Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) and other marginalized communities (Ira, 2020). True allies engage in activism purely because of their desire to see progressive and equitable change; while they are on the frontlines, they ensure that their presence and work do not take away from the social justice issue they are supporting. They are purely there for support and community uplifting, not for social capital or recognition. Their voices are not to be heard or outshine the voices of those directly involved in the cause. Bourke (2020) discusses the characteristics of an

ally as “an amalgamation of dominant group identities (e.g. White, cisgender, heterosexual), who expresses an ally identity” (pp. 180).

Active Allyship: functions under the philosophical underpinnings that privilege is a very prevalent facet of our society and should be used as a means of enacting change. The Building Allyship Organization, “an educational and training organization that focuses on turning privilege into change,” created an active allyship model grounded in three distinct phases: awareness, action and integration (Building Allyship Organization, 2021; Sawyer, 2021). Active allyship powerfully aligns with genuine allyship; however, it differs in its highlighting and use of power as a tool for enacting change in distinct spheres, whereas individuals utilize their privilege to contribute to effective change in spaces that may be difficult to access.

Performative Allyship: The opposite of genuine allyship. Someone who is performing optical allyship uses one’s involvement in a social justice issue to gain social capital and or personal profit rather than genuinely supporting the issue at hand (Ira, 2020). It is often a one-and-done type of activism that may involve a quick post on social media or hashtag that absolves the user of any moral guilt and allows him or her to move on with his or her day feeling ethically and morally content. These individuals are allies and activists when it is most advantageous and is often done to avoid judgement from society (Ira, 2020). Commonly, these individuals do not fully understand how their optical allyship discredits the movements they are performing their support for and will loudly and visibly overshadow the voices of the marginalized group closest to the issue.

Deviance: Sociologists understand it as categorizing behaviour as undesirable due to its deviation from a socially accepted norm (Deutschmann, 2007). In the past, deviance studies centred on “outsiders” and those deemed on the outskirts of productive society, i.e., sex workers,

homeless populations, addicts and those suffering from mental health and developmental issues (Deutschmann, 2007). Critical sociologists work to uncover which individuals and groups hold power and authority to define an activity or behaviour as deviant, as these understandings change over time as society progresses (Deutschmann, 2007). For example, in the past homosexual men were arrested and charged for engaging in same-sex relationships, which at the time were deemed deviant (Field, 2018).

Fake Wokeness: A colloquial term that describes an individual's shallow and superficial commitment to a social justice issue. Commitment is usually superficial and does not align with inner morals or values, and is traditionally used to gain social capital or keep up external appearances.

Racialized: The official Merriam Webster (2021) definition defines racialize as "to give a racial character to categorize, marginalize, or regard according to race." However, the term racialized is alienating and subjugating on its own as it works to ostracize other non-White individuals. Classifying society as racialized versus non-racialized further solidifies the White Supremacist idea that the world consists of White people versus Others. Unfortunately, academia and journals are still a highly inequitable and oppressive sphere that often can work to uphold and continue White Supremacist ideals and language. In this sphere, racialized is a term often used and noted.

Social Capital: This research follows Putnam's (2001) concept of social capital, which states "that networks and the associated norms of reciprocity have value. They have value for the people who are in them, and they have, at least in some instances, demonstrable externalities, so that there are both public and private faces of social capital" (pp. 1). Putnam (2001) focuses predominantly on the extent to which individuals receive external or public returns from these associations and also acknowledges the possibility of private returns; however, for this research,

the understanding of social capital focuses predominantly on the external, public returns garnered. It is important to note that social capital is not uniform and can vary greatly, from rigidly formal like an organization or labour union to the informal nature of a local group of underground concertgoers who usually congregate at the same shows as understood by Putnam (1993).

White Resistance: White resistance is used and understood as the very direct and purposeful resistance to integration and all races' social, economic, and institutional equality. This theory emerged following the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s that saw White populations engaging in resistance through community resistance, political resistance, organized intimidation, terror tactics, and police violence (PBS, 2021).

White Supremacy: Refers to the political and ideological belief that White individuals, structures and systems are superior to all other races and systems of knowledge. It involves the preservation and protection of White privilege and White social and institutional power. Many of our contemporary institutions and policies are embedded with White supremacist beliefs.

1.5 Theoretical Framework and Conceptions: Critical Consciousness, Social Justice, and Critical Race Theory

This study is grounded in three distinct but intersecting frameworks: social justice, critical race, and critical consciousness.

Critical Consciousness

Friere (1970) ascertained the use of education to empower citizens to identify and question the structural and systemic inequality embedded in the fabric of our society. He acknowledged our social reality in which certain institutions and their players contribute to and maintain oppressive structures in which they hold power (Freire, 1970). Without confrontation

and action against these inequitable structures, a perpetual cycle of inequality will continue (Jemal, 2017). In this way, a critical consciousness framework and its confrontation of "multi-systemic oppression" becomes an integral tool that holds "scholarly, practice and policy implications" (Freire, 1970; Jemal, 2017, pp. 602, 605). This framework identifies the significant connections between systematic and institutional inequity and social and individual dysfunction that contributes to and maintains the cycle of inequality. "Like a virus, social injustice infects the host system from individuals to families to institutions. The under-recognized role of systemic inequity in individual and social problems, that is, the lack of [critical consciousness], creates the necessary environment for oppression to rampantly spread through systems from the individual to the macro levels, causing massive, widespread system failure" (Jemal, 2017, pp. 605). Friere's (1970) ideas of critical consciousness directly relate to the topic of allyship and activism because it underscores the importance of mobilizing individuals and groups to rise above oppressive systems or threaten to bear the brunt of continued oppression and social injustices. This critical framework of uncovering, naming and disrupting current inequalities is a vital tool in ridding the virus of inequality from our institutions, organizations and social systems (Jemal, 2017). As Freire (1970) stated, oppression is part of the system of dehumanization. By embracing a critical consciousness methodology, this research takes the approach of uncovering understanding into "underlying major social (e.g., racial disparities in the criminal justice system) and health (HIV epidemic in communities of colour) crises (Capone and Petrillo 2013; Fawcett et al. 2010; Peterson 2014)" (cited in Jemal, 2017, par. 7), challenging inequality and changing larger previously known narratives and understandings or allyship and race.

Social Justice

Cochran-Smith (2004), a pivotal voice in the social justice school of thought, defines the social justice approach as "standpoints and scholarly traditions that actively address the dynamics of oppression, privilege, and 'isms', recognizing that society is the product of historically rooted, institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009, pp. 350). In essence, this framework serves to provide a perspective where researchers critically examine, unpack and disrupt inequality and inequitable policies and practices by focusing on the ways that society, organizations, institutions, and the individual within can work toward dismantling oppressive structures and barriers (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). By centring this research on distinctly racialized students' understandings and beliefs surrounding performative allyship, we are amplifying the important opinions on the subject matter by highlighting the opinions of those closest to the issue and producing actual proof that a certain practice is eliciting positive or negative results, working to actively address and pinpoint a hypothesized dynamic of alienation, privilege and oppression.

Critical Race Theory

This research is grounded in a critical race theory (CRT) framework guided by the assumption that this theory is grounded in three integral ideas, "that racism is pervasive; that racism is permanent; and that racism must be challenged" (Bell 1992; Tate 1997 cited in Vaught & Castagno, 2008, pp. 96). This theoretical framework centres around the idea that racism is a systemic and lasting facet of our society while moving the conceptualization of racism away from the individual, where it has previously been understood as an individual belief or value system and reframes it as a societal condition that is facilitated and reproduced systemically (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). In this way, racism is finally seen and understood as a sophisticated

system strongly embedded into the fabric of our society and the organizations and individuals within (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Additionally, an important idea in CRT is the assertion that even as socio-cultural ideas and notions change, racism never fully vanishes; instead, it is reconstructed into a more hidden and implicit way that appears to adhere to the current socio-cultural climate (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). "Finally, critical race theorists hold that scholarship that challenges social inequities must take into account systemic racism and must counter positivist notions of neutral, colorblind inquiry" (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, pp. 96). This final idea of CRT is especially relevant to this research as this scholarship aims to challenge the popular trend of performative activism and shed light on how it contributes to and upholds racist structures and ideals.

1.6 Socio-Political History and Context

There has been a pattern of disrespect and inappropriate behaviour regarding Canada and the United States' relationship with Black and marginalized communities. Of course, if we deconstructed and named all the ways that Canadian and United States governments and populations have worked to alienate and subjugate Black individuals, this research would span tens if not hundreds of thousands of pages. However, for this research, we will focus on the history of Canada with a mention of the relevant United States contexts as a means to further contextualize what has brought us to this current socio-political climate.

Canada has exhibited a history of downplaying Black and Indigenous oppression (Kihika, 2013). Until the most recent findings of the thousands of Indigenous children buried in unmarked graves under multiple residential schools and churches, "state violence against Black [and Indigenous] persons in Canada has, by and large, remained insulated by a wall of silence and gone largely unrecognized by much of the public, outside of brief media flashpoints" (Maynard,

2017, pp. 3). Frequently, anti-Black racism, both institutional and societal, is implicit and buried into systematic barriers only seen and felt by BIPOC and other marginalized communities. To the White and non-marginalized eye, Canada is an equitable and progressive state, almost to a fault, and those saying otherwise are lying or trying to get ahead unfairly. Many Canadians who have been keeping up with the racial dynamics of our sibling to the South is the first to acknowledge the devaluation of Black life and condemn the murders of household names like Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, and George Floyd yet could not identify the stories of "Andrew Loku, Jermaine Carby or Quilem Registre" (Maynard, 2017, pp. 3). Maynard (2017) attributed this societal absence of consciousness to a myriad of factors, including the lack of inclusion of Black Canadian history in the Canadian curriculum, the collective ignorance of racial inequalities and the lack of gathering of race-based data by large institutions; all of which have contributed to a complete erasure of 200 years of slavery and segregation.

"African Canadians have always been in a relationship of social subordination in dealing with the state. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is with the government, the judicial system, the education or social-welfare systems, or any other state-influenced institution" (Carty 1999: 197 cited in Maynard, 2017, p.1). Historically, Canadians' ownership and subjugation of Black and Indigenous communities were celebrated and exemplified (Maynard, 2017). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police was initially created to tackle Indigenous rebellion and protect the economic interests of White settlers (Maynard, 2017). Canada, which now hides its slave-owning past, had a common practice of allowing slave owners to place ads in papers to broadcast their escapees and even acted as a haven for the Klu Klux Klan (Maynard, 2017). However, through the calculated and exact reconfiguration of our collective history, shining a beacon on our racist and anti-Black sibling to the South, we have carefully constructed a record that not

only erases any presence of Black Canadians historically but also rewrites the years of Black death and subjugation perpetrated by the Canadian government and its people. A history of enslavement has been rewritten to portray Canada as an end stop of the Underground Railroad, a refuge for Black populations (Maynard, 2017). This rewriting of the collective Black experience continues today, done strategically by police institutions like Ottawa's Police Association spokesperson, who in 2016 cited the killing of Abdirahman Abdi as regrettable yet voiced that they were more concerned that "Canadians would assume race could play a factor in Canadian policing, arguing that those issues were only pertinent in the United States" (Nease 2016 cited in Maynard 2017, pp. 4). This type of collective gaslighting and undermining of tangible experiences work to continue to bury, erase and undermine a very real reality for Black Canadians.

Not only has Canada hidden the historical subjugation of Black communities, but it has also buried the premeditated and intentional image of Black as inherently dangerous and deviant (Maynard, 2017). The societal associations between Blackness and crime are a colonial practice in itself. Birthed from the local advertisements outing runaway slaves, the framing of self-liberated and autonomous BIPOC individuals became inherently tied with criminality and thievery. In this way, "[a]ll free and enslaved people were subject to the surveillance of a larger White community and law enforcement officials, who together scrutinized the presence of Black bodies in public areas as possible criminal runaways" (Kitossa 2005; Nelson 2016a, 2016c cited in Manuel, 2017, p.85). The criminal justice system and its extensions (law officials, prisons, courts, and parole boards) are the primary institutions for 'managing' Black populations. They make it hard to exist in public spaces while Black through various systematic and personal decisions rooted in bias and prejudice, including but not limited to invasive police searches,

carding practices that ensure Black individuals have a higher likelihood of being stopped, are more likely to be charged, given more severe sentencing and have less chance of being granted parole (Maynard, 2017).

In her book, *Policing Black Lives*, Maynard (2017) outlines the extent that "Black life has been so effectively stigmatized that even highly spectacular forms of state violence are largely unrecognized as such, and go uncontested by much of [our contemporary] mainstream society" (Maynard, 2017, p. 82). In this way, to be Black means to be "proximate to death" (Sharpe 2016:16 cited in Maynard, 2017, p. 84). This can be understood through the attribution of danger to Black bodies and the policing of Black bodies through the use of force and a higher perceived threat of danger. Take the contemporary tragedy of Breonna Taylor. Taylor's killing sparked a cultural shift. Already tense from the countless police brutality killings and only 16 days after George Floyd's death, Breonna Taylor died laying in her bed after a botched no-knock arrest was being carried out at her home. The police, confused and unprepared, kicked down the door to Taylor's apartment, searching for someone else. Her partner, a legal gun owner fearing a potential break-in, started shooting at the assailants. This particular case of police brutality sparked global outrage due to Taylor's sheer distance from crime, as she had no criminal history and was working as a frontline medic. Her only mistake was dating an ex-boyfriend who had a history of drug dealing and was already in custody at the time of the attack. Some critics blamed Breonna for her past relationship, citing this as the precursor to her death, emphasizing society's underlying hostility and suspicion of Black women (Maynard, 2017, p. 119). This is a complete contradiction to society's habit of victimizing White women and portraying them as fragile and needing patriarchal protection and guidance. Suppose Breonna was White; her story would read as a vulnerable, misguided young woman who finally left her drug dealer boyfriend to make a

better life for herself. Somehow both fragile and strong, she would be celebrated for rising above her past. However, a Black woman in that same position has all the blame put upon her. She should have known better; she should never have dated him and other arbitrary excuses. This is because "Black femininity itself has always been outside, both rhetorically and practically, of those requiring protection" (Maynard, 2017, p. 117). Society has ascribed this pecking order on who deserves protection, and policing and criminal justice institutions continue to protect and enforce this “racial and gendered social order" (Maynard, 2017, p. 118).

1.7 New Media During the BLM Marche of June 2020s: Influencers and #BlackoutTuesday

Social media trends are important tools because they allow nuanced issues to gain traction and virality, reaching audiences and groups who may not have been aware of the current issues. They can both inform and introduce individuals to ideas and phenomena outside of their own lived experiences. However, people can become self-satisfied with their social media activism while not engaging in meaningful change. Interestingly, with the BLM movement occurring during numerous COVID-19 lockdowns, the campaign has become fundamentally tied to social media, like Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram have become crucial sources for data, updated information, resources and communication groups (Evans, 2020).

Influencers, Performative Activism and the BLM Movement

Influencers have had a significant role in the viral spread of performative allyship. During the BLM marches, influencers were accused of using the marches for racial justice as a photo opportunity, drawing collective disapproval and ire from multiple social media users. The following three examples illustrate viral social media influencers who received public backlash for their non-genuine allyship.

The first viral TikTok video posted by user @InfluencersInTheWildOne shows Russian influencer Kris Schatzel posing for a photo (Froelich, 2020). Kris is seen maskless and clad in a floor-length black gown and formal hair and makeup. She stands in the road, moving her hair to expose a peek of her black bra underneath. She poses carefully with the BLM sign, and her equally well-dressed peer takes her image. Throughout this video, we see the other protestors in stark contrast to Schatzel and her colleague, dressed casually and sporting face masks, having to physically change their path and move out of the way to avoid the pair. Not only is the young Russian Influencer using this protest for racial equity as an opportunity for more content, but she is obstructing the movement of the crowd, physically symbolizing her hypothetical disruption to the protest.

The second viral moment from the BLM protests viral video posted by Twitter user @ewufortheloss showing influencer Fiona Moriarty-McLaughlin engaging in performative allyship (Dellatto, 2020). In the video, Fiona is seen stopping a worker boarding up a shop during the Santa Monica protests to ask if she could pose for a picture. She is then seen trading her phone for the man's power drill and posing, pretending to board up the shop as the worker takes her photo. Once the picture is taken, the man hands back her phone in exchange for the drill, and the girl is seen jumping into the passenger side of a parked Mercedes and driving off. As many Twitter users point out, the issue with Morioiarty-McLaughlin's actions is that she's using a serious and disturbing situation of a protest and riots that stem from the unjust murder of a black man to promote herself. Regardless of whether one supported the response of businesses boarding up their windows to deter looting, the young influencer purposefully took credit for the actions of the man actually doing the work. Additionally, Morioiarty-McLaughlin is also accused of being insensitive and dismissive of the current racial and class tensions. Rather than using her

platform for good, she is instead utilizing it for the perception of good - to gain her own social capital without engaging in genuine work.

Finally, the last viral video of performative allyship in this short case study was also posted to the @InfluencersInTheWild TikTok account and depicts a passenger capturing the video while stopped in traffic. As the video begins, you can hear the recorder exclaim, “this girl is making her boyfriend take a picture of her in front of a smashed T-Mobile (Froelick, 2020).” As the video pans, it shows the young women posing, staring longingly at the store, back to the camera. Once the photo is taken, she spins around, quickly looks at some pedestrians further down, and continues walking with her male peer. This woman was accused of using the setting of the riots to show off her butt, based on her chosen pose. Other Twitter users accused her of ‘faking empathy’ and posing in a manner to appear sad or sentimental at the broken store. No one knows what exactly this user's intention as her identity was never revealed. However, it is not farfetched to assume that her strategically solemn and back-highlighting pose on the broken glass in front of the looted T-Mobile store was a calculated attempt at a perfectly curated photo and the capital that comes with it. Undoubtedly, this photoshoot would have produced engagement and click-worthy social media content. All three instances show three different social media users who used the BLM protests as an opportunity for photos. The problem was not the vapid photo-op; instead, it was the capital gained from these seemingly innocent moments. By performing for their followers, these influencers gained a higher amount of social capital while not intentionally engaging in the work required.

Blackout Tuesday

It is important to note that performative activism is not reserved for influencers alone and that many unaware people engage. Starting on June 2nd, 2020, Instagram was filled with vacant

black squares and the hashtag #BlackoutTuesday. Both mysterious and exciting, these black squares filled news feeds, showing a large-scale buy-in from various demographic groups. The hashtag was initially created to show solidarity and support for the BLM Movement and the need to 'pause the show' and reflect on the current institutional and systemic barriers that plague the Black community (Lerman, 2020). The trend quickly spread like wildfire and by noon that same day, more than 14.6 million posts on Instagram included the hashtag (Bursztynsky and Whitten, 2020). While these posts were well-intentioned, they contributed to a lot of damage to the BLM movement.

By filling the #BlackLivesMatter algorithm with images of blank squares, important BLM information was being drowned out and pushed down during a critical moment in the protests. Activists and protesters had previously been using the hashtag to communicate, gather and share information (Lerman, 2020). Not only did it overshadow actual BLM information and censor black voices, but it also provided the opportunity for individuals to 'cop out' and show support for the movement if they previously had not, removing the accountability required for genuine allyship and activism. By reposting the black square and hashtags, users who had previously been silent could do the bare minimum to show support, avoiding judgement from their peers and reaping social capital from doing the bare minimum. Finally, engaging in inauthentic allyship and reaping the benefits is inherently nefarious and dishonest. Social media provides us with the ability to show a tailored version of ourselves. Posts and tweets can indicate that individuals may be more forward-thinking and enlightened than they are. They may be engaging in actively racist labour behind closed doors, once again gaining capital that has not been earned.

Chapter 2: Personal Narrative

2.1 Family, Ethnic and Cultural Socialisation

When I first decided to do a thesis, I knew that I wanted to investigate topics of race, White supremacy and specific knowledge production. Before the summer of 2020, I was highly intrigued by Canada's sociocultural values, restrictive policies and instances of police brutality and excessive use of force. Through this personal narrative, I hope that I am able to provide a snapshot of my own upbringing and contextualize my relationship to this topic.

Family Socialisation

I was born to Eastern European first and second-generation immigrants in Toronto, Ontario. My mother, with whom I share my name, immigrated from Slovakia in 1990, shortly following the Velvet Revolution. My father, a second-generation Slovak-Ukrainian immigrant, grew up in the predominantly Ukrainian Bloor village of Toronto. Even though I was born to two Eastern-European immigrants, my parents raised my brother and me distinctly Canadian in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood in the Greater Toronto Area. We spoke only English at home, engaged in 'Canadian extracurriculars' like speed skating and curling rather than the usual Ukrainian-type activities of Saturday school and Ukrainian dancing lessons, never attended church and were taught about the beauty of multiculturalism. While my father was more religious and morally conservative because of his close upbringing in the Ukrainian-Canadian community, my mother was our breath of life and diversity. Due to her childhood in a communist-ruled state, she was not indoctrinated and bombarded with the homophobic and nationalistic rhetoric that is often internalized in the Eastern-European Catholic community. While my father, who received this Ukrainian-Christian upbringing and education, would scold me and my brother for not praying at night, believing in God or blindly following the advice of

our elders, my mother would tell us stories about travelling to Germany and working in factories with other migrants, her father's experiences in Iraq and how kind the people were, or the importance of abortion and a woman's right to choose. When I was called a lesbian by my brother's friends at age ten, my father and uncle refused to tell me what the word meant, citing that it was something I should not know or learn about. My mother was the one to sit me down and explain that sometimes women love other women, and that's okay. While my father was spouting the morals and values he was taught by the Ukrainian-Canadian community, my mother was our family's progressive voice. I credit her with much of my own character and beliefs.

Ethnic Socialisation

According to Shoshana (2011), "Ethnicity is a complex social and cultural phenomenon, a part of the "cultural code" that constitutes "a component of individuals' identity" (cited in Makaroma & Hudyma, 2015, pp.1). Ethnicity studies are present in multiple disciplines and therefore have varying definitions across fields; however, it is widely understood that definitions of ethnicity follow five characteristics.

1) That ethnicity is socially constructed and understood.
2) That ethnicity is not based on fixed standards.
3) Ethnicity exists "within the context of other social variables."
4) Ethnicity is enacted and understood through both interiors; Self-identification is done by the individual and exterior perceptions of other individuals in society.
5) Ethnicity is closely related to language (Fought 2006, 3-6 and 19-20 cited in Makaroma & Hudyma, 2015).

Interestingly, the last characteristic of language plays a pivotal role in my own ethnic identity formation as groups that define themselves based on their ethnicity have been found to

utilize, highlight and reproduce “distinctive language, language variety, or some distinctive linguistic features associated with their ethnic identity" (Holmes 2001, pp. 175 cited in Makaroma & Hudyma, 2015, pp.1). “The Ukrainian diaspora in North America has always displayed a strong ethnic identity. Forming, preserving and negotiating ethnic consciousness has been central to the organized life of the diaspora” (Mokrushyna, 2013, pp. 804). This has manifested itself through cultural hubs such as dedicated Ukrainian-Catholic Schools with Ukrainian as the second language, Ukrainian churches which result in predominantly Ukrainian neighbourhoods, Ukrainian cultural clubs, Ukrainian Saturday Schools, a distinct Ukrainian-Ontario soccer league, and the infamous Hawkstone, a large portion of land on Lake Simcoe in Oro-Medonte, Ontario purchased by the Ukrainian National Federation in 1959 and converted into a Children’s camp, Recreation area, Ukrainian Church and 100 cottage lots exclusively for Ukrainian National Federation members (Ukrainian National Federation, 2021).

Cultural Socialisation

Culturally, I was educated in a Ukrainian Byzantine Separate School in Mississauga from kindergarten to the eighth grade under the arm of the Dufferin-Peel District School Board. Because of the target audience of the school, the population was made up entirely of White Eastern European students, the majority of which were bussed from various Mississauga neighbourhoods. We were taught Ukrainian each day, along with the country’s history, political influence and traditional customs. Unfortunately, this resulted in a lot of our education revolving around homophobia, misogyny and ethnocentrism. We were required to attend mass regularly, take part in holy communion, pledge our allegiance to Ukraine daily and adhere to the misogynistic cultural norms that insisted the female students learn needlework while the boys played soccer outside.

It was Friere that said that politics were an integral influence in all schools, admonishing the belief that public institutions are politically neutral. One of my earliest memories is sitting through the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections and being forced to chant “Yushchenko Tak!”, which translates to “Yushchenko yes!” and wear orange, the official colour of the Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc Party in regular assemblies. It was Freire that said, “there’s no such thing as neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom,” meaning that no pedagogy is inherently neutral (Freire, 1970). My experiences at the Ukrainian-Canadian Separate school were my first taste of educational indoctrination and how the beliefs of teachers and school officials can result in a specific type of pro-nationalist knowledge being produced and reproduced at the school.

For ten years, learning and growing along with the same White cohort of students came with its own slew of discriminatory and racially intolerant practices and beliefs. Beliefs that many of my classmates internalized and carry today. We were never explicitly told that other races were bad; however implicitly, it was suggested that Black and Brown people were troublemakers and deviants. As aforementioned, the school was located in Ward 3, a lower-income area of Mississauga predominantly made up of people of colour. Because of the cheap apartment rentals and urban community hubs, many immigrants congregated in these areas. Due to the location of the local Ukrainian school and church, our area was made up of a smattering of Ukrainians and a high population of South Asian and Black communities. The school directly neighboured the local Peel District School Board elementary school with whom we shared an unfenced yard. Students from the public school often cut across our field to go out for lunch or walk home and were swiftly met with an onslaught of teachers on duty waiting in, ready to

scream at the Black and Brown bodies crossing our field that they were *definitely* not allowed there.

During this period, I noticed an interesting phenomenon within the Ukrainian-Canadian community. When discussing racism and racial prejudice, family members, teachers, and other Eastern-European adults would compare their struggles with those of Black and Indigenous groups in Canada. Whenever conversations focused on the racism faced by different marginalized groups, the conversation would be subverted to describing the perceived racism against Ukrainians and their own ostracism and subjugation faced by the rest of Europe. They would move the conversation to discuss how they were considered the 'dirty' Europeans and faced racism and prejudice by others in broader Europe and Canada in the early 1900s but gave little thought or discussion to racial nuances and the privilege that comes with being a white immigrant. However, even with this inferred similarity of racism from Canadians, there was still a prevalent belief that we [as Ukrainians] were better than people with darker complexions.

2.2 Language and "The Others"

Language played a prominent role in the dynamics of the school, which revolved so heavily around the Ukrainian language that we even received separate report cards to specifically grade our ability to learn Ukrainian history, dance and geography. However, as a student whose parents did not speak Ukrainian, I, along with a few others in similar positions, always felt alienated and othered by teachers and peers. Because most of our peers were fluent in the language, the Ukrainian teachers were not well-versed in teaching the language from scratch. They expected our parents and families to prepare us with enough grasp of the Ukrainian language that they could teach us what they deemed fit. But because I knew nothing of the language, their teachings and efforts were null. This meant that for ten years, I sat in classes I did

not understand, was chastised for not being able to memorize a poem in a language I was unfamiliar with, and was forced to stand in masses lasting multiple hours where the prayers and messages were utterly lost on me. I had to recite prayers that I had no idea of their content or purpose. On rainy days, a TV would be wheeled into our classroom for the duration of recess, where we had to watch exclusively Ukrainian cartoons. I believe that one of the reasons I survived my elementary education without internalizing much of the racist, sexist and ethnocentric hidden curriculum being produced by the school was due to my own outsider status in the Ukrainian community. Growing up, I was often resentful that my parents were not raising me as distinctly Ukrainian. While my classmates were heavily embedded in the Ukrainian community in cultural dance clubs, soccer leagues, after-school camps, and Saturday schools, I spent time alone in local parks, recreation sports teams, and non-Ukrainian extracurricular activities. While my classmates and their families congregated at church each Sunday, participated in monthly *Zabavas* (local dances) and spent weekends and summers at the Hawkstone property, I was off with my family at our cottage, spending summers alone. As one of the few students who did not speak or understand Ukrainian, I was placed in the smaller, more remote Ukrainian class with a few other non-speakers. When I did hang out with the main cohort, I would often feel out of the loop and unsure of what topics were discussed. I did not get the inside jokes, understand specific lingo or the cultural significance of their various activities or Ukrainian pop stars. Some of the cruellest students would use my lack of understanding of the language as a means to publicly ridicule me knowing I was one of the few people who did not get the joke. In this way, the language barrier acted as an obstruction to keep me and the other students who were not considered ‘true Ukrainians’ out and ensured that we never held a place in their exclusive club. It was clear that I was never part of their distinctly Ukrainian-Canadian

community and way of life, and when I finally cut ties at graduation, I left that school with few friends and a desperate need for change.

2.3 The Great Unlearning: High School and Post-Secondary Education

I left that school at 14 with a bad taste in my mouth. It was not explicitly a White supremacist school, but it sure felt like it. I was the only one in my 90-student cohort who was not graduating and heading to one of the local Catholic high schools. I was the only one who was to go to the sister school of our Peel neighbour, the local high school down the road, predominantly made up of BIPOC students. Once my elementary classmates found out where I was going, they started teasing me, trying to put me down, and saying that I would end up dating a Brown or Black boy as they sneered and made disgusted faces at me. I would also respond with indifference and act like I never got their joke, but it embarrassed and offended me that I was being picked on this way. I knew deep down that there was nothing wrong with dating cross-racially; however, it hurt to see my classmates and friends so visibly disgusted by this hypothetical idea— like it was blasphemous even to consider being with someone outside of the Ukrainian community. When I ended up proving them right and introducing my serious high-school partner, an Indian-Guyanese classmate, they further teased me, and I finally cut off that group and aspect of my life.

I went to a public high school in an ethnically diverse, low-income area. The school was culturally varied, belonging to one of Ontario's most diverse school boards, Peel District School Board, the third-largest school district in Canada, with 85% of its students identifying as non-white (The Pointer, 2020). However, even in a school board where 70% of students identify as a visible minority, 75% of the staff were white (The Pointer, 2020). Research has shown how white female educators can perpetuate white privilege in their classrooms, contributing to the

racial reproductive nature of the teaching profession (Tonemson, 2018). This teacher diversity gap has persisted throughout Ontario, where twenty-six percent of the population identifies as racialized, yet only comprised of thirteen percent of all educators (Emanuel, 2022). Research and reality have shown significant pitfalls to employing a board full of homogenous teachers; like in North America, black students are four times more likely to be suspended, three times more likely to be removed for disruptive behaviour, three times more likely to be expelled and three and a half times more likely to be arrested at school when compared to their non-black peers (Morrison, 2019). In Peel District School Board specifically, Black students are twice more likely to receive a suspension than their non-Black peers. A large conduit of racism is unconscious bias, and unfortunately, many teachers have yet to unlearn the discriminatory practices and racial prejudice ingrained in them growing up. These numbers show a very-scary relationship between our prison-industrial complex and education. In both spheres, Black and Indigenous students receive unfair and discriminatory treatment every step of the way (John Howard Society, 2017).

I saw these disparities firsthand, comparing my own experiences with administration and police with those of my peers. My perception was that, for some reason, I was given more breaks and chances than some of my classmates because of the colour of my skin. I went through a few years in high school, where I was estranged from my family and put into the foster care system. At this point, I was refusing to come to class and was at risk of flunking out. Rather than expelling me from the school and giving me the same tough love as my peers, the administration reached out to my guardians and teachers bending over backwards to come to an accommodation that would keep me enrolled in school. After multiple exceptions and spending days in the office writing missed tests and completing old essays, I was back in the classroom with the rest of my

cohort with no lost time. Other peers from my serial-skipper group in the same situation but from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds were not given the same accommodations as me. Instead, they were expelled, forced to enrol in adult school or drop out.

During this period in my life, I had a few experiences with local law enforcement, many of which included being caught on public property smoking cannabis underage (before decriminalization), trespassing on private property or drinking while underage. However, given the numerous times my White girlfriends and I were caught, we were constantly let off with a warning and, at worst, given a firm talking to but never any actual charges or fines. Often the officers would confiscate our weed or alcohol and send us off in good spirits. In one instance, in particular, my parents had called the police on me due to truancy and not coming home. After the police dropped me off at my residence, one of the officers hugged me and said that he hoped he would not have to run into me again in this situation. These instances of police interaction and involvement led me to have a positive relationship with the criminal justice system because I was always let off without any serious repercussions. However, if I compare and contrast my experiences with my Black male peers, the differences are stark. While I was let off with a warning and the confiscation of multiple grams of cannabis, my peers would be caught in a much less compromising position but given harsher punishments. One friend who identifies as both Black and Indigenous was caught smoking a joint with one of his Filipino male peers on a park bench one night. The boys combined had one joint and a gram of cannabis. The police officers ended up crushing the joint, calling for backup, interviewing each man separately and documenting and photographing each of their tattoos while asking about gang affiliations. The officers finally left after giving the men a court date where they had to go and plead guilty to possession of a controlled substance. Fortunately, the Elizabeth Fry Society, a restorative justice

program for young offenders, allowed the individuals to have their charges dropped if they were able to engage in a set amount of community service hours at Goodwill by a specific date, allowing the young men to go forward without being burdened by a criminal record.

This experience showed the extent that some adults would go to advocate for me because of the way I looked and the family I was raised in. It seemed that they considered me as an asset to fight for, while some of my peers were cast aside and labelled a lost cause.

Over the next decade, I would find myself striving to unlearn the intolerant rhetoric I was taught. I began overcompensating and tried to undo everything I learned, actively shedding the few Ukrainian-Canadian connections I did have, denouncing the community, the religion, and everything it stood for. It catapulted me into my own pit of self-hate and resistance to all-White resistance and ignited my passion for social difference and social justice. These racial nuances and tensions always confused me. I knew that this was something I had to study further, so in my senior year of high school, I applied to every local school with a credible sociology program and found myself studying socio-legal studies at the University of Toronto. Within this program, I was awoken to the cultural genocide against Black and Indigenous communities that continues today through unfair police practices such as Starlight Tours, a practice of Western Canadian police officers picking up drunk or ‘unruly’ Indigenous individuals and dropping them off on the outskirts of town in freezing temperatures without shoes or jackets, some of which resulted in their deaths; the inherently racist risk-assessment practices and the larger human rights issues of a lack of clean water access and teacher shortages on multiple Reserves. I learned about the model minority myth, colourism, and the racial hierarchy, meaning that while Ukrainian-Canadians were correct in their understanding of ethnocentrism and discrimination by other communities, they never felt it to the extent that the BIPOC community had experienced. Their

white-passing and non-visible minority status ensured a continued privilege in society, meaning that while they have experienced bigotry and prejudice - their ethnic experiences cannot equate to the degradation enacted upon the Canadian BIPOC communities.

2.4 Connecting Research to Reality

One may be thinking, how does this personal narrative connect to this research or even teacher education in general; why does this master's student's experiences as a Ukrainian-Canadian connect to education for change? To this, I assert that education in itself is inherently political and ideological. My juxtaposition of my conservative father and communist mother highlights how education and the community can act as socialization agents and shape human beings' fundamental beliefs. My experiences in Dufferin Peel's Ukrainian Catholic school show how the lack of representation and inclusion worked to create an untold story of other races and religions. My experiences with my peers show the ways in which racism and misogyny can be reproduced both at home and within the walls of the classroom. My anecdote of my peers and the student's teachers would and would not advocate for highlights the ways in which a person's internalized biases, while not outrightly spoken, can unconsciously impact the level of care or sensitivity given to students of colour. Additionally, a large part of this narrative provided an opportunity to reflect on my own upbringing and place as an anti-racist educator. Throughout the writing of both this initial section and my thesis alone, I found myself having to check my own privilege and performative allyship. How do I use activism or notions of allyship to paint myself as better than those that do not? How do I use social media posts as a means for clout, or have I retweeted a BLM post to show others how woke I am?

Throughout this paper, I may have painted the image of racism and allyship being a binary, that one is either intrinsically good or intrinsically evil and incapable of change. But this

thinking does not paint an accurate picture of reality. That we are competent in changing or learning how our ways of doing and knowing can reproduce realities that are inequitable and unjust, it is natural to make mistakes; however, your willingness to listen to others and reflect on the knowledge you have been taught both implicitly and explicitly is what matters. My goal in this personal narrative is to shed light on ways that Whiteness and white supremacy are strengthened and reproduced while providing insight into the ways that this education was countered. As teachers, we cannot be neutral; instead, we must be explicitly anti-racist by highlighting the ways white supremacy is maintained and used. In pre-service teacher education, there is often heavy importance on modelling growth mindsets and reflexivity. As educators, we must be reflexive of our actions and practices, identify our missteps or mistakes and make genuine action-oriented changes. Throughout my secondary and post-secondary education, I had great difficulty wrapping my head around the level of prejudice and anti-Black rhetoric embedded in Canada's various institutional structures. It seemed that wherever I turned, whatever organization I researched, there was a history of ingrained prejudice and institutional barriers put forth to work against specific individuals. It was Freire (1970) who ascertained the importance of 'naming the world' and "that we–teachers, students, citizens–as knowing beings in the world, have the ability to engage in the process of knowledge creation and production. Freire (1970) believed that knowledge resides in everyone and that the critical teacher brings out that knowledge and creates spaces for new knowledge to be learned, critiqued and generated" (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2010, pp. 161). Why were the Canadian education system and its Criminal Justice System sibling so inherently racist? Why was it so common for certain ethnic groups in Canada to underscore their distrust of darker-skinned and Indigenous communities? Why was

there so much contempt and distrust of Black men, Black boys, and the Black community in general in a country that prides itself on being multicultural and diverse?

Our nation's curriculum is written and taught to continue to enforce White supremacy and colonialism. The portrayal of these courageous White male explorers ensures the continuation and reinforcement of patriarchal domination, suggesting that we would be nothing without them. As students, we receive a very one-sided history of the White Hero. Manuel (2017) touches on this theme in his book *The Reconciliation Manifesto*, explaining that "in your histories, which we were all forced to learn in your schools, you paint portraits of intrepid explorers and swashbuckling privateers, men, always men, of courage and resourcefulness conquering the world for the honour and privilege of their kindly kings and queens, Beautiful fairy tales" (Manuel, 2017, pp. 58). Battiste (2017) states "... education, like the institutions and societies it derives from, is neither culturally neutral nor fair...Education has its roots in a patriarchal, Eurocentric society, complicit with multiple forms of oppression of women, sometimes men, children, minorities, and Indigenous peoples" (pp. 159). As an Ontario teacher, my Aboriginal Education course opened my eyes to how Canadian elementary history classes were Whitewashed and Eurocentric. Lessons involving Indigenous and Black histories were written to replicate bias, i.e. that Indigenous people were uncivilized, requiring saving and welcomed European knowledge with open arms, and that Black communities were inherently deviant and requiring close surveillance. There was no discussion on the loss of culture and the annihilation of multiple Indigenous languages or the forced slavery and ownership of Black populations. There was no mention of the current treatment of Indigenous communities, Starlight Tours, food deserts and lack of clean water or the terrorist attack in Africville. Any word of residential schooling was short and glossed over to a point where I did not know how contemporary these

practices were and the multitude of physical, sexual and emotional trauma practiced by these schools. Each lesson's framing seemed outdated and, long ago, unconsciously signalling to students that Indigenous people were not around today, that Black Canadians were not part of Canada's past, and that BIPOC history and Canadian history were not the same.

It was Martin Luther King Junior (2016) that underlined the importance "to resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals in order for people today to recognize their potential agency as a part of an ever-expanding community of struggle" (Davis, 2016, pp. 2). History has been written explicitly to depict great advancements in society and civil rights as the work of exemplary individuals. These individuals are painted as the driving force of the movement, minimizing the countless individuals involved. This is a strategic tool to ensure that people do not realize their potential agency. People internalize the idea that they could not collectively root for change (Davis, 2016). BLM works to dismantle these beliefs, showing the power and strength of both the collective and everyday person. So far, this narrative has worked to underscore the extent of Anti-Black and Anti-BIPOC rhetoric embedded in the Canadian government, its institutions and society as a whole. BLM Canada and many Black Canadian scholars and activists have collectively drawn attention to the severity of Anti-Black racism in Canada and its institutions. However, it is interesting to note the socio-cultural shift that occurred culturally both online and within public organizations that affront their extent of dedication to upholding Black communities and condemning anti-Black racism witnessed across North America. But, if we know from research and personal experience that Canadians are predominantly prejudiced towards Black individuals, how come so many allies and BLM supporters appeared during the height of the BLM movements? And how come, more than a year

later, support for Black Lives Matter has decreased significantly amongst White Americans (Thomas and Horowitz, 2020)?

Chapter 3: Review of Empirical and Theoretical Literature

3.1 Advantaged-group Ally Labour

Radke et al. (2020) offered critical conceptualizations of advantage groups' ally labour. They broke down the reasons and nuances behind social justice labour for disadvantaged groups' rights, explicitly noting the strain involving the motivating factors behind this anti-racist work. The researchers put forth an essential notion on the topic of allyship, citing that the push behind this engagement by advantaged groups is usually for one of four reasons "1) to improve the status of the disadvantaged group, 2) on the condition that the status of their own group is maintained, 3) to meet their own personal needs, and 4) because this behaviour aligns with their moral beliefs" (Radke et al., 2020, pp. 2). These findings provided pertinent discussion into the current literature on ally labour and the research purpose in addition to a theoretical backdrop on the motivations of White anti-racist and social justice labour and allowed for more nuanced questioning of the motivators of White students during the interview portion of the study. While Radke et al. provided concrete examples of White historical figures engaging in ally behaviour, their research centred around the American experience and neglected the experiences of Canadian allies and activists. However, their critique of contemporary literature around allyship behaviour by advantaged groups strongly related to this present study's research problem as it underlined the lack of literature surrounding advantaged group allyship outside the singular idea of improving marginalized groups' lives. This distinction combated the current ideas of White saviourship and undermined the issue of performative allyship that is investigated in this research.

Carlson et al.'s (2019) research on allyship in academic literature provided an important critique and jump-off point for research on ally labour. Using forty academic and activist papers,

the researchers uncovered eight distinct ideas surrounding the topic, including “constant action of the “everyday ally”; prioritizing a structural analysis of oppression and privilege; non-self absorbed and accountable self-reflection; amplify marginalized voices; welcome criticism and be accountable; listen+shut up+read, ally is not a self-adhesive label; and allyship: unlikely or undesirable?” (pp. 889). These central themes were pertinent to my analysis and conceptualizations of genuine and performative activism, specifically, the concept that “social justice activists with privilege often perpetuate inequalities, perhaps despite their best intentions” (pp. 889). This integral concept was further unpacked in the interview portion of the research when pre-service teachers were asked about the extent that genuine allyship resulted in performative allyship and vice versa. However, it is essential to note that while the work of these researchers offers a contemporary critique of the literature surrounding this topic, their investigation focused on men’s-specific allyship and activism in regard to gender-based violence and neglected the work and perspectives of female activists, offering a biased and one-sided view. Carlson et al.’s (2019) discussion of eight ideas of allyship brings up themes similar to McIntosh’s (2020) research on the extent to which social justice-minded education leaders can combat and curb racial injustice in American Schools. Where Carlson et al. (2019) looked at themes surrounding allyship, accountability, amplification of voices, etc., McIntosh (2020) uses Moyer’s (2001) classification of social movement participants of the citizen, the rebel, the change agent and the reformer. While the former focuses on Individual Change and responsibility, the latter highlights the need for three other discrete types of change: Institutional Change, Cultural Change and Political Change. The concept of institutional change is integral in my discussion and analysis of findings, as one racialized B.Ed student discussed her own perceptions and responses to her institution, making a shallow-Institutional Change decision that

did not elicit the responses it hoped for. The failure of her organization is influential as institutional change directly fosters Political Change (Moyer 2001, cited in McIntosh, 2020).

Clark's (2019) research titled *White folks' work: digital allyship praxis in the #BlackLivesMatter movement* offered contemporary insight into advantaged group allyship during this pivotal racial initiative. Their work was useful in conceptualizing the BLM Movement and the role of online engagement in spreading anti-racist awareness and support. At the same time, their work was similar in deconstructing the role of online activism and anti-racist labour during the BLM movement, centred around the accounts of fourteen White individuals. This meant that they give a very one-sided idea of anti-racist labour, described in this research as "White folk's work." While this thesis aimed to use Clark's (2019) perceptions and experiences of White BLM supporters as a starting point in the research, I hoped to unpack these ideas further using a lens that strictly centred on the views and perspectives of BIPOC participants and omitted the views of non-racialized students. They described the work of these anti-racist labourers as amplifying the voices of marginalized groups; however, this Master's study hoped to unpack whether marginalized voices would agree with the sentiments described in Clark's (2019) work.

Kluttz et al. 's (2020) *Unsettling allyship, unlearning and learning towards decolonizing solidarity* provided important insights into the themes of allyship, decolonizing solidarity and using transformative learning. Their research highlighted the role of social movements in providing spaces and situations for White Settlers to reflect on their role and complicity in upholding oppressive structures. While Kluttz et al. (2020) offered personal self-reflections and narratives surrounding their own experiences as White colonial allies and activists during the Trudeau-Kinder Morgan Oil Pipeline protest, their reflections painted a very one-sided

perspective of the role of White-settler allies. By omitting the Indigenous allies' views regarding their role in the movement, they are re-framing and putting their own ideas of Whiteness in movements pertaining to marginalized and non-White groups. In regards to this thesis, while Kluttz, Walk and Walker (2020) put forward a very one-sided perspective on the role of White activists, their description and use of transformative learning and decolonizing allyship were pertinent in the formation and unpacking of the methodology in this study. In this way, their narrative around incorporating decolonizing pedagogy and praxis became moot as the researchers continued to contribute to the colonial structure of White voices dominating academia and academic journal research.

3.2 Allyship in an Inequitable Society

Shefer's (2019) research on performative activism in South Africa offered a unique insight into the role of resistance and intersectional inequity in feminist, decolonizing and queer thought and activism. While their research focused on a very different nation in comparison to Canada and the United States, with its own intricate culture and national identity, the racial tensions post-Apartheid and post-segregation are similar to the institutional and societal racism embedded in American and Canadian society. Even though South Africa's post-apartheid revision occurred much after the United States abolished segregation, there was still highly embedded inequity, discrimination, bias and trauma sewn into the fabric of both countries. In this way, Shefer's (2019) paradigm did not differ much from the current issues in North America and provided nuanced insight into ways to disrupt colonial and racist thought.

3.3 Allyship and Media Influence

Orochovska and Abysova's (2017) research on mass media using a cultural studies approach highlights the extent of the role mass media plays in defining our socio-cultural milieu.

They highlighted this ‘radically new state of culture’ and drew on Gerbner’s cultivation theory to frame the extent to which mass and news media constructed a manufactured and specifically framed view of life and society, citing it as a more exaggerated and fear-based version of reality. This was integral to the unpacking of the media portrayal of BLM protests, which framed supporters as looters and criminals.

DiAngelo’s (2020) White Fragility is a contemporary take on the role of media socialization in the framing of Black individuals as deviants or as second-class citizens. They contextualized social construction and the extent that we acquired insights collectively through our shared experiences of texts, including but not limited to curriculum texts, movies, news broadcasts, articles, stories, and jokes. DiAngelo (2020) explained the extent to which these textual representations of our collective culture worked to form our group identities. This literature provided important context into the historical and socio-cultural conceptions and biases whose remnants still exist in today’s society. How have historical propaganda, prejudice and inaccurate stereotypes contributed to the phenomenon where Black Lives are being targeted and unfairly treated by police and other institutions?

DiAngelo (2020) also provided insight into White Fragility and the phenomenon of White individuals abhorrently denying the extent to which Anti-Black racism was embedded in our dominant culture and society. By using contemporary examples of common rebuttals and explanations on why different White cultural groups like Italians and Eastern Europeans lament that they too are mistreated, and second-class citizens, similarly to BIPOCs, DiAngelo (2020) provided interesting conceptualizations in these intra-racial conflicts, certain groups' proximity to Whiteness and their inevitable acceptance and integration into the White community. Previous research supported this claim showing how White individuals may be driven to participate in

white resistance due to their potential loss of status or feeling left behind in the current global movements (Heafner et al., 2021). This idea of a potential loss of status, or feeling left behind in the current social movements lent insight into the discussion on some of the counter-protests experienced by participants during the Summer of 2020 and the stark rise in the dissemination of white supremacist propaganda. According to the Anti-Defamation League (2022), there was not only a stark rise in domestic extremist activity, but the use of propaganda had reached a "historic level" in 2020 (Chavez, 2022).

3.4 The 'Naturalness of White Innocence'

Razack (2002) spoke of race, law and the spaces in which we exist. Pamela George was an Indigenous woman senselessly murdered by Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky when they brutally kidnapped, raped, beat and killed the young 28-year-old mother (Mallick, 2020). Specifically, Pamela George belonged to prostitution and Aboriginality, two spheres where violence is thought to occur naturally. Since Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky were both White and university athletes, their spaces were considered so far detached from the violence that their murder of Pamela George was not taken as seriously as it should have been. The prosecutors and Crown kept underlining that Pamela George was a prostitute, an idea that the Judge encouraged the jury to keep in mind. This further highlights the interrelationship between the sexualization and devaluation of racialized women, as they are seen so far from the Western notions of submissive, European femininity. Because they do not fit into these hegemonic categories of femininity, their very personhood is then deemed to have less cost than their European counterparts. The court hearing, the focus on George's profession and Kummerfield and the lenient sentencing highlights the personal opinions of White European society and the belief that George would have encountered a violent demise, regardless of

whether she met the two men or not. This belief of the two offender's White innocence and George's degeneracy is what "contributed to masking the violence of the two accused and thus diminishing their culpability and legal responsibility for the death of Pamela George" (Razack, 2002, p.125).

Winona Stevenson's (2011) historical outline drew on how our stereotypical representations of Indigenous women were initially created. "Colonial agencies manipulated public perceptions of First Nations women to rationalize their subjugation and describe the process by which the Victorian patriarchy was imposed on First Nations women and societies through federal legislation" (Stevenson, 2011). The perceptions of Western European women became a benchmark for what is deemed as 'civilized.' European women, whose culture revolved around domesticity, were considered 'the pinnacle of civilization' and 'a victory of self-discipline over instinct' (Cominos, 1963, p. 219 cited in Stevenson 2011, p. 46). The Western European woman's place was in the household, subordinate to whichever male figure 'owned her' (fathers, husbands, other male relatives). Their sole job was to be a housewife, manage whatever the male figure brought into the home, and raise children with the appropriate morals and values deemed suitable. "The European ideal of womanhood was projected on Aboriginal societies throughout the colonized world where it functioned as the single most important criterion for contrasting savagism with civility" (p. 46). Indigenous women then became the counter-image to what an 'ideal civilized' woman was, as they were industrious, powerful, economically independent, active in the public sphere, with immense personal autonomy - in their sexuality, marriage (had the right to divorce) and able to enjoy the results of their labour. The complete antithesis of civilized European women. Europeans created a space to classify Indigenous women using a virgin-whore dichotomy: the Indian Princess versus the Squaw Drudge. The Indigenous women

who most closely resembled the European ideals (child-like, virgin, inclined to Christian conversion) were considered the Indian Princess, while the women most opposite their ideals were considered a Squaw Drudge: "a haggard, papoose-lugging drudge [...] sexually licentious, beast of burden, and slave to men" (Stevenson, 2011, p. 47). In this way, Europeans formed the image of which Indigenous women were to be protected and accepted and which were to be attacked and disvalued.

Maynard (2017) spoke on the "erasure of the experiences of Black women at the hands of law enforcement is itself a form of violence that erases the specificity of violence against Black women and Black girls" (p. 116). She explained the underlying hostility and suspicion of Black women by law enforcement and Black women being framed as aggressive and arrogant. Much like the Western European notions of the Squaw Drudge, women who do not fit into the hegemonic colonial ideals are considered a threat to civilization. Settler colonial violence has been ingrained into our societal values and beliefs, ensuring the continuation of the racialized women as Black and Indigenous women received "none of the protections granted to White and middle-class Canadian women" (Maynard, 2017, p. 119).

Ahmed's (2009) *Embodying Diversity* deconstructed the "problems and paradoxes of embodying diversity for organizations" (pp. 41). This research was vital to my understanding of allyship and race-specific ideas of what is deemed as acceptable behaviour. It critically unpacked the stereotype of the angry Black feminist and the unfair belief that organizations' and individuals' diversity and anti-racist labour, regardless of whether the labour is genuine or performative, should always be met with joy and gratefulness. This belief works to continue to subjugate BIPOC into complicit and submissive roles where their questioning or critical analysis of human rights initiatives is seen as problematic and causing trouble (Ahmed, 2009). This

research was relevant to the present study's current research topic as it unpacked how BIPOC activists were alienated from movements surrounding their identities and expected to sit down and shut up.

3.5 Inspiring Allyship in Youth Through Reflexivity and Diverse Texts

Cultivating diverse texts is essential for fostering allyship in the classroom and at home. It allows for the collection and dissemination of diverse stories and knowledge that foster cultural appreciation, combat ethnocentrism and contextualize current global issues surrounding inequity. Picture books are the perfect text to present students' activism and global citizenship concepts (Cummins, 2020). In their discussion on integrating labour and migrant workers' stories into the classroom, Cummins (2020) discussed the duty of educators to foster meaningful lessons around the achievements of activists. They described how certain activist picture books can be incorporated into relevant units; for example, a book on the life and work of Cesar Chavez, a pivotal player in the formation of the National Farm Workers Association, could be incorporated with lessons on responsible citizenship, contributions to heritage and roles and responsibilities (Cummins, 2020).

While Cummins (2020) provided examples of activists from the United States, Canadian educators can use similar Canadian texts. For example, *The Water Walker* by Joanne Robertson (2017) tells the story of Nokomia, an Ojibwe grandmother concerned about water for the next generation. As a form of activism, she trekked around each of the Great Lakes. Educators may use this story to foster a charge to preserve our water and contribute to broader change (Canadian Children's Book Centre, 2021). Additionally, educators can incorporate these activist texts into the Social Studies Grades 1-6 curriculum using expectations A. Heritage and Identity and B. People and Environments. Since it touches on a myriad of relevant topics and themes, some of

the big ideas could include the relationship between the present and the past, diverse communities, Indigenous knowledge, responsible citizenship, and the protection of natural environments (Government of Ontario, 2018, pp.22).

In her discussion on pedagogy and its relationship to activism in the classroom, Didity Mitra (2020) reflected on her teaching method and explicitly stipulated that their intention was not to deliberately root their praxis in activism. However, they underlined how their pedagogy rooted in the cultivation of self-reflexivity in itself could nurture the necessary empathy that led to activist knowledge and education. By making various links with learning material through text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self connections, students were more likely to form their own associations between the material and the real world. Eventually, through this process of relating and reflexivity, students are more likely to make significant connections between advantages, disadvantages and structural inequalities (Mitra, 2020).

3.6 'Open' Classrooms and Allyship

Freire's idea of education in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was inherently tied with activism (Mitra, 2020). He asserted that both educators and students must learn through one another using deferential dialogue. By seeing and understanding students as equals rather than subordinates, education and learning became a process of humanization and provided an opportunity for students to think critically, learn how to assert their opinions and incorporate new ideas and weigh the validity of information gathered. They are then able to make rational and calculated choices toward the abolishment of oppression. In this way, the classroom became the third teacher in itself, as students were taught to voice their ideas, listen carefully and discuss their beliefs with those who may oppose them in a level-headed and calculated manner.

According to Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), many individuals shy away from political discussions to avoid conflict. This apathy manifested through a phenomenon that individuals may avoid any in-depth political information or discussion and instead opt to follow whatever opinion appears as the widespread consensus of the population (Campbell, 2008). This means that rather than making an informed and understood decision about the reality of a situation stacked against one's beliefs, individuals instead go along with the mass consensus and plead ignorance. This was the opposite of global citizenship, which is regularly referenced and highlighted by the Ministry of Education as a necessary competency for students' success in an increasingly complex and interconnected globalized world. They even outlined an action plan to "ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" (UNESCO, 2016, pp.287 cited in Manion and Weber, 2018, pp.5) by 2030.

An open classroom that incorporated a neutrally moderated and facilitated conversation on politics and other nuanced topics provided the opportunity for students to become more comfortable with speaking freely about their beliefs and respectfully listening to the perspectives and experiences of their classmates. Like Friere's ideas on education, students became facilitators of learning in an open classroom as teachers shied away from their traditional role of the sage on the stage to the guide on the guide (King, 1993). This completely countered previous notions of students as receptacles to be filled through teacher-narrated knowledge and is only required to regurgitate these ideas through passive thought (Friere and Ramos, 2009).

From this point forward, I will outline the methodological background of the study, followed by the chapter findings, which manifest as the following four perspectives: Understandings and Definitions of Genuine Allyship, Understandings and Experiences of Performative Allyship, Performative and Genuine Allyship: A Complex Relationship, and the Role of Race in Allyship. Next, the discussion will begin to unpack performative and genuine allyship in the context of pre-service teachers and their experiences in and outside of education. Finally, this thesis will end with the discussion and conclusion, which includes the summary of the main findings, the findings and results of the interviews in context, unexpected findings and results, shortcomings and limitations of the research, areas for future research on performative allyship and pre-service teachers, and final concluding statements.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This qualitative research utilized an interpretive paradigm to uncover *Racialized Bachelor of Education students' perspectives on performative activism, allyship, and the BLM social justice movement.* The central goal of interpretative research is to understand the world through the subjective experiences of individuals. Researchers using this lens focus on individual human beings' nuanced and unique perceptions and form knowledge based on their participants' opinions, conceptions, and meanings (Bryman et al., 2012). Research that uses this perspective takes the knowledge and account of participants at face value and writes from their point of view. In this way, the researcher becomes the medium through which their participants' ideas, experiences, and perceptions shine. This paradigm was chosen because of the nuanced nature of the topic. This study provided insight into racialized students' perspectives and perceptions of allyship and performative activism using an epistemology of inter-subjective knowledge construction (Taylor & Medina, 2013).

This study employed a constructivist worldview as the underpinning of the research. This worldview focused on how the participants constructed meaning and understanding of allyship and its relationship to anti-racist labour, which was integral in conceptualizing the distinct experiences of racialized individuals regarding true and performative allyship. This research aimed to contribute to the growing understanding of BIPOC students' intersectional perspectives and experiences of allyship. Social constructivism is grounded in the idea that each person ascribes one's own individual, subjective meanings from one's lived experiences as a means to seek an understanding of our world (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This meant that depending on our experiences and intersectionalities of identities, we each ascribed our own set of complex, subjective understandings and sentiments. "Often, these subjective meanings are negotiated

socially and historically. They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual's lives" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 8). As a White-settler researcher in this school of thought, I recognized how my history, culture, and individual experiences have moulded my understanding and analyses of the social world, as aforementioned in the Personal Narrative section.

Clark's (2019) research, *White Folk's Work: Digital Allyship Praxis in the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,* examined how antiracist labour could be done through the use of social media. Their research explored the reflective narratives of fourteen White participants who used their social media to support BLM. Clark (2019) found that White-allies' anti-racist labour resulted in the amplification of marginalized voices, contributing to digital allyship (Clark, 2019). In contrast, this research used a narrative research design to focus on BIPOC tertiary students' perspectives and perceptions of allyship and the performative activism of non-BIPOC groups concerning the BLM protests. Since this research aimed to uncover the perceptions of BIPOC students in regards to performative and genuine allyship, it rested on the stories and experiences of the participants.

The exclusion of white students from the study sample was not to suggest that their allyship is less valuable. The primary rationale for focusing on the experiences of racialized individuals was to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive and experience performative and genuine allyship within the specific context of the BLM movement. This choice allowed for a more nuanced exploration of allyship from the perspective of those who may have different lived experienxces and positions within society. Regarding the assumption of allyship, it is essential to recognize that allyship is a complex and multifaceted concept that can

vary depending on a variety of factors. While the assumption of allyship is not inherently tied to the whiteness of the ally, the study aimed to explore the specific dynamics and interactions within the BLM movement as perceived by BIPOC students. This methodological focus aimed to shed light on their unique perspectives and experiences related to allyship within this specific social justice movement.

4.1 Interview Structure

The qualitative methods approach involved semi-structured, sixty-minute, one-on-one interviews with four students Bachelor of Education students who identified as racialized. The sample size of four was due to a low turnout of research participants during the summer semester, compounded with the already small pool of students at Lakehead University Orillia who identify as racialized. I coordinated a suitable time to conduct the sixty-minute interview on a secure Zoom link with each participant. I recorded the structured interview using Zoom Premium, which automatically transcribed the interview script. On the day of the interview, I reiterated the privacy statement and reviewed the privacy considerations with each participant to ensure that they understood the terms of the study and their anonymity as participants.

I began the interview with a broad case study overview of performative activism on social media to ensure that participants understood the topic on which they were being interviewed. The presentation included the definition of performative activism and allyship; a short 1-minute parody comedy skit of YouTuber Vic RL acting as someone who is performing allyship online from behind a computer screen; a breakdown of three viral videos and photos of influencers during the BLM marches that were accused by social media users of faking allyship or activism for content production; and a brief discussion of the Blackout Tuesday viral Instagram fad. I disseminated the information through a 5-slide PowerPoint presentation, as

shown in Appendix B.

4.2 Recruitment

The sample was selected following a Lakehead-wide email blast (see Appendix D) asking for interested students. Participants signified their interest by reaching out to me through email. The research study was open to all Lakehead students from any faculty and at any level of their education with the target participant being a Lakehead student who identified as racialized. Coincidentally, only Bachelor of Education students were available. The email blast (see Appendix D) was circulated by a member of the faculty and resulted in interest from seven students, three of whom did not fit the required criteria of being a current registered Lakehead student or identifying as a racialized student.

4.3 Compensation

Because this research topic involves a lot of emotional labour and personal initiative, there was an honorarium of $50 for each student who participated. The purpose of these discussions was to gain the unique perspectives of BIPOC and racialized students. So often, research is done by White settler researchers concerning the struggles and perspectives of BIPOC students without giving proper credit or compensation for their time. Because of this idea, it was essential to compensate participants for their time and emotional labour appropriately.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

This research aimed to centre the perspectives and experiences of racialized students, taking their experiences and opinions and grounding them in relevant theoretical perspectives. Because of the research topic, the interview recruitment focused on targeting BIPOC students for their unique perspectives. In terms of data analysis, the qualitative data is coded thematically.

The interviews were automatically transcribed by Zoom Premium, and I re-read the transcripts to decipher any of the themes originating from the extensive literature review, formation of the interview questions and eventual decoding of the transcripts. Once the five themes emerged, I created a Google spreadsheet and cut and sorted sections of each transcript to correspond to the topics. The following themes emerged organically: understandings and definitions of genuine allyship; understandings and experiences of performative allyship; performative and genuine allyship: a complex relationship; and allyship and education.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Once students responded with their interest in being involved in the research, I emailed each potential participant back to set up a suitable time to hold the Zoom interview. During this correspondence, I affirmed the participant's ability to withdraw and included a privacy statement in the email outlining the use of their data (see below in Ethical Considerations and Privacy Statement). On the day of the interview, I again restated the participant's ability to pull out of the process at any point and went over the privacy statement and format of the interview.

Research on a topic of this emotional magnitude comes with its own ethical considerations. Students remained anonymous, using aliases on all transcripts and data to ensure participants' safety, privacy, and dignity. Once students reached out, signifying their willingness to participate, I responded, outlining the interview process and the ethical considerations and asked for permission to record the sessions. Once the interview began, participants were again asked to confirm that they consented to the recording on video. I stipulated again the degree to which their information was hidden and secured. Since the interviews were done on Zoom, only I was aware of the participants, and they were allowed to change their Zoom name and hide their cameras if desired. The Zoom interview was secure due to the premium licensing supplied by

Lakehead University, and the transcription and recording were only completed and seen by the primary investigator. Additionally, the information is backed up and stored on a private USB stick that will remain locked in a secure area. Given the personal and potentially traumatic nature of the topic, participants were also directed to relevant well-being and support groups and numbers.

4.7 Privacy Statement

Acting as the primary researcher, I recorded the meeting to use the data for my Master's thesis research. Once in the meeting, I reiterated that this was recorded and again asked for the participant's permission to record, which was confirmed by giving a physical thumbs up and saying 'yes.'

The data collected for this survey will remain confidential at all times, and the identities of all respondents will remain anonymous. Regarding the follow-up interview, pseudonyms were used in any findings presentations to maintain the participants' anonymity during the dissemination of this research. Explicitly, interview participants were not connected to their legal identities. As data were assembled, analyzed, and organized for final thesis approval and dissemination, summaries of the findings were made available for Lakehead faculty on the thesis committee team. The student's participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any point in the process, either before, during or after the interview. If the participants were uncomfortable with the video being recorded, they had the option to reach out to me to discuss other options.

Chapter 5: Findings

This research included four current Lakehead Orillia Bachelor of Education students who identified as racialized. Three of the four participants were female, and one was male. One identified as Asian Canadian, one identified as Black and two identified as Latinx. Throughout this research, four main perspectives surfaced: 1) Racialized pre-service teachers' understandings and definitions of genuine allyship; 2) Racialized pre-service teachers' understandings and experiences of performative allyship; 3) Performative versus genuine allyship: a nuanced relationship and 4) the role of race. The first perspective involved ideas of how the participants defined and understood allyship and provided viewpoints on. The second perspective unpacked participants' experiences of online and in-person allyship and performative activism during the BLM protests. The third perspective, performative and genuine allyship: a complex relationship unpacked the frequency of each pre-service teacher seeing the same decline in participation and engagement shows the extent to which the large-scale social media movement we saw back in the summer of 2020 was performative and a social media fad. The fourth and final perspective, the role of race in allyship, unpacks respondents' understandings and experiences with race in regards to genuine and performative ally behaviour and race-based counter-movements during the BLM Movement.

5.1 Understandings and Definitions of Genuine Allyship

When asked how the participants defined and understood allyship, there was a common underlying theme that an ally provides support and listens to the needs of the marginalized group. Each respondent highlighted the idea of action and being actionable in your support on a day-to-day basis in a way that did not overtake or distort the original message of the initiative. One's actions should contribute to the identification and breaking down of current systemic

barriers. And part of the action was understood as being uncomfortable and opening oneself up to criticism and understanding that even the best intentions can have unhelpful or negative consequences. When unpacking allyship, Tom underscored how complex the definition is as the line between genuine and performative allyship is so thin, stating:

> *And it's hard to sometimes hard to quantify because sometimes I do think that you might have the best intentions, but then it could turn out that well no, that's not actually helpful.*

Dorit echoed this sentiment of self-reflexivity and accepting denunciation when describing her willingness to hear criticism from a roommate. In this situation, Dorit describes how being called out by others drove them to become educated on issues they may have been ignorant of as a Latin Canadian. The pre-service teacher underlines the importance of taking criticism without taking focus away from the real issue, underlining the need to push one's ego aside when being an ally, stating:

> *And to me, I would say allyship means: I'm being active in a movement, especially if you're not particularly a part of said group that's being affected. I'm putting my own privilege, my own perspective to the side and being open and willing to listen to the stories of those people. To bear witness to whatever it is that they say is going on—and supporting without putting yourself first. And I think it's so important to listen… an ally has to listen, and put their ego aside and just be like "I'm just gonna absorb whatever it is, you have to say whether it hurts my ego, hurts my pride, whatever. I don't care if it's traumatic to listen to - I need to hear it so that I can make internal changes and then, you know, take that broader. So I guess mostly witnessing, listening, being there in support.*

In both cases, Tom and Dorit highlight the complexity of performative and genuine allyship, citing that one type of allyship can very quickly bleed into the other, even with the best intentions. That is why listening to and being present for the stories and experiences of BIPOC is one of the best ways an ally can help.

Allyship: Acknowledging Social Power and Privilege

According to participants, being an ally necessitates acknowledging societal power, whether it be race, complexion, sexual identity, gender or position of authority. An ally should utilize privilege as a tool to build up and support the group for which the ally is advocating. And understandably, there may be some discomfort or uncomfortable truths for the ally, as one becomes aware of some of the inequities from which one benefits or contributes. However, being an ally means confronting these uncomfortable truths and using your power and privilege to highlight and break down these longstanding societal systems. This could refer to current biases an individual may hold, inequitable organizational structures that benefit only certain groups, or one's own experience in white-dominated spaces. Tom spoke about the need to use one's own power and privilege to support and uplift the message of the marginalized group. Citing his white-passing complexion as both a tool and a hindrance, he indicated:

> *Ally, it means supporting, let's say, disempowered or marginalized individuals or groups with the power that you may possess or the privilege that you may possess based on your own privileges. For example, in my case I'm definitely white-passing, and so, it's different, I have certain privileges that are just easier for me. I can walk into a store and not worry about someone following me because they think I'm going to steal.*

While discussing his own positionality and experiences as a white-passing person of colour, Tom underlines the unspoken privilege and comfort white-passing individuals can experience in predominantly white spaces. Luxuries that their non-white passing counterparts may not have.

Allyship and Regular Self-Reflection

The need to check one's own actions and beliefs also came up multiple times. A large facet of allyship is examining your belief systems and hidden biases and changing them when necessary. It involves acknowledging one's problematic behaviours or assumptions in addition to your place or complicity in larger power structures and making the necessary, realistic changes. Allyship can become performative if one is not engaging in regular self-reflection, and without doing the critical self-work, an individual will never truly be a genuine ally. In the following statement, Tom describes his ideas of authentic allyship:

> *Allyship to me, is making sure that you're first checking your own self-cousnious, subconscious and bias so that way you're not contributing to the sort of disempowered system that already exists. And it reminds me of like when there was the protest for Black Lives Matter in a right out following right after the sort of the ignition, after the George Floyd killing and so that I remember thinking at that time to like well what's our role and how can we be supportive without taking over, I think that's a big one as well with allyship, I think so often allies feel the need to take over as opposed to using their power to help empower those around them. And I think we have to it's like taking that step back because recognizing you were already in a powered situation. And certainly reflection, and reflective behaviour because you need to be able to look inwards at your own actions and also recognize that your*

> *lived experiences are always going to be different. And so you need to keep that as a reminder, so you have to constantly reflect like, 'is this the right course of action?' you know, 'am I actually being an ally by taking this action or am I now putting myself in center stage?'. Which is now no longer an ally, I think it's more performative at that point.*

Self-reflection and the need to look into one's own critical consciousness was a common theme as evident in Tom's statement. To him, allyship is about starting with oneself, reflecting on one's own actions and taking it a step further by utilizing one's own strengths and privileges to further help other marginalized, disenfranchised or disempowered groups. To Tom, drawing any attention towards yourself as the ally, even as simply as going on record stating your support without making active change, is the actions of a performative ally.

The Characteristics of an Ally

During the discussion on an ally's characteristics, participants described the image of a caring and non-judgemental individual. They highlighted the need to be empathetic, rather than just sympathetic, to acknowledge an unfair system that negatively impacts certain groups or individuals more than others, acknowledge the inequity, and be open to supporting the abolishment or rewriting of these systems. In the following statement, Tom unpacks the importance of self-reflection and the ways seemingly genuine allyship can cross into performative territory while discussing his ideal characteristics of an ally:

> *I think there needs to be authenticity and genuineness because you have to be doing it for the right reasons [...] And so, definitely authenticity, genuineness courage. And I certainly reflection and reflective behaviour because you need to*

> *be able to look inwards at your own actions and also recognize that your lived experiences are always going to be different, and so you need to keep that as a reminder, you have to constantly reflect like: Is this the right course of action? You know? Am I actually being an ally, by taking this action or am I now putting myself in Center stage which is now no longer me an ally? I think it's now more performative at that point. And so I think those would be the main characteristics, I would say. I would say, you also have to be somewhat informed as well. You have to take the time to get informed and sort of use those critical thinking skills, because there's so much discourse. When it comes to anything that's around race or racialized and I think it's easy to convince yourself. To believe certain arguments like if you turn on Fox News there's so much crap that's on there and it's like easy to make convincing arguments and that's the problem if you don't know how to critically think.*

Another key theme was the need to be vocal and use your position or access to certain spaces to speak about issues of racism while maintaining the need not to take up space or take away attention from the marginalized group. One example provided was that a white ally might use one's voice in white-dominated spaces to draw attention to the reality of other people's experiences in a white-centred society. However, once the ally is in a space with the marginalized group, the individual should openly listen and not use this space to speak over and provide one's own opinion on the experiences of others. Tom highlighted the need to engage in allyship for genuine reasons rather than as means of looking cool or fitting in - it required genuine action, self-reflection and critical thinking.

> *I don't think you should be an ally just because it looks cool or because you don't want to look racist, so you're like, oh, I'm an ally, but what are you actually an ally and what does that even mean to your kind of thing. You are going against what is deemed sort of normative behaviour. And you have to also go against that, like bribe that bribe to fit in and just go with the status quo and, like all the sort of privileges that come with taking that bribe by not challenging the existing discourse.*

Courage also came up as a characteristic to describe an ally as one has to have the courage not only to engage in critical self-reflection but to genuinely commit to active change and oppose long-standing power structures that are deeply embedded.

5.2 Understandings and Experiences of Performative Allyship

When asked if the participants had heard of the term performative allyship, two responded yes, and two responded no. One of the respondents previously described the difference in treatment and public response to his Black female roommate when compared to his own experiences as a white-passing male. When prompted on what personal examples come to mind when thinking about performative allyship or activism, two of the four participants drew on the Blackout Tuesday hashtag and black squares, citing that they remembered seeing the entirety of their Instagram feed blacked out with the hashtag. Dorit also cited the role of social media and Instagram in perpetuating performative activism and allyship as individuals were part of the cause for social media clout, stating:

> *With people close to me, I did see a lot of posts on social media… like personal friends being like, "okay I stand with Black Lives Matter" and reposting* [some image of themselves or quote]. *You know a lot of organizations or brands would post those Instagram stories with quick facts* [about BLM] *and things like that, and*

> *people just reshare those. And I feel like, I don't know, it felt like sometimes it would be like, "okay you're trying to reshare information and educate people that you're connected to", but sometimes it just seemed like "Oh okay, if I just hit the share button I've done my part". And so it began to become like a situation where. Some people I look at it and I'd be like "did you really read this or did you just post it?" And then, when I follow back you know go back to the original poster. It was a very weak performative little information post that was like "Oh, do you know black people are sad right now, did you know bad things happened to them"? Like okay, whatever brand just posted this to like put their voice into the ring and then this person this friend of mine, or whoever didn't read it, but also just wants to throw their voice in the ring so it just became kind of like interesting to me like to just follow the trails back and see like what exactly are these posts? Did this person actually do anything?*

Dorit had difficulty marrying the idea that stating or resharing one's support for the cause was enough individual effort or support. To her, it felt shallow and lacked genuine action or progress.

Erika described how she tried to support Black Lives Matter using her skills and networks personally by using her prominence in the Toronto tattoo industry to start a fundraising campaign to support BLM Toronto. However, during our interview, she reflected that she was not entirely sure to whom or what she was donating. She explained that she wanted to support Black communities and agreed with the message of BLM Toronto; however, she just donated her campaign funds to a donation link without doing the necessary research. In the following statement, Erika describes her actions behind the donation, saying:

> *Sure, like you know who I was donating to at the time, I just kind of did it. Right? And I would say, like, that is an example of performative activism. Even though at the moment I didn't think it was, but when I really thought back to it, I was like, did I continually follow up with that? Or like, did I even research who I was donating to? To make sure it was going to the right cause and to the right people.*

As Erika reflected on her own contributions to the initiative, she realized that she acted without engaging in the proper research.

Another example of performative activism was relayed by Dorit, a Black female participant who had just graduated from the Teacher education program. She described that they had applied to a local school board and were sent an email on a job fair held by the board explicitly targeting Black, Indigenous and racialized applicants. The email stated that BIPOC potential applicants could drop by the fair and receive information on how to obtain a job with the school board. However, the participant relayed how confusing the email's wording was, as it stated job *information* fair. Hence, she emailed the coordinator to inquire how the job fair would help BIPOC teachers obtain a job. However, their response was less than satisfactory as the coordinator stated that the job fair was intended to tell attendees how the school board seeks to hire BIPOC applicants. When further questioned on what precisely the presentation would be on, the respondent was told that the applicants would receive a walk-through on how to use the job application site for education workers, Apply to Education, a topic that all is heavily covered and referenced in the teacher education program. In the following passage, Dorit unpacks her feelings towards this performative gesture stating:

> *Okay, so who does that help? You're not helping us to get a job you're putting on this fair, so I assume when you have to like present to your board's members about what*

> *you are doing to improve diversity, you can say 'Oh, we held this fair about information for getting a job [...] Okay, so you're really providing nothing but you know, you're really patting yourself on the back for this. Like, what did you do, for me? Absolutely nothing. So I just thought that was weird. It makes them really proud of themselves that they provided absolutely nothing [...] I thought it was weird.*

Dorit explained that this in itself felt performative, as if the School Board was checking a box to say they did something on the lack of BIPOC teachers on their board, rather than engaging in more meaningful and impactful change.

One participant described the BLM protests themselves as being performative. While they highlighted the positive aspect of awareness of the systemic inequities faced by Black communities, they relayed this example to the celebrity phenomenon of any press is good press, so even if someone's activism or allyship is fake or performative, there still is greater awareness for the original issue, so there still could be some advantages in performative allyship. Still, on its own, performative allyship is inherently problematic as it continues the cycle of inaction through empty words and non-action. Tom questioned how showing up for a march but not making an active change in your day-to-day life to be anti-racist or contribute to the dismantling of white supremacy could be genuine allyship, citing how the act of showing up would be a performance put on rather than an authentic act of care, stating:

> *So that part reminded me of like that performative part, and it also reminded me of all those people who are in the protest, and it's like, oh hey what [about] after the protest? What changes did you make in your life? Or, how did you actually contribute? In a way, that you could at least like obviously like did you self reflect on*

things that you could do in your workplace, did you maybe give support to. Like black-owned organizations or workplaces like shops or stuff like that.

The theme of showing up but not showing out was common, as participants discussed whether stating one's support was enough, or if larger, more deep-rooted change was needed.

One participant cited a situation of performative allyship exhibited by the Toronto Police during the BLM protests. He described how his local community organized a demonstration of which they were part. During the rally, the Toronto Police participated in large numbers to show their support for the BLM initiative. While apart from their local march, they found a white van parked on the road covered in racial slurs and a large white power sign about two blocks from their home. They had never seen this van before and assumed it must have been put there preemptively in anticipation of the community BLM march. The respondent and their company called the police on the van, saying how this discriminatory and insulting message is not welcome in this neighbourhood but were told by the police that the owner of the van was allowed to do as they pleased. They found this incredibly performative as the police were marching in the BLM protest showing solidarity for celebrating and protecting Black lives, yet in the same sense, allowing a highly offensive and discriminating act meant to hurt individuals. The respondent reflected on how upsetting this could be for BIPOC individuals crossing paths with this van while going through their day-to-day business. When he had first found the van with his Black roommate, he relayed how the discussion turned to whether they should ever walk by that house again or divert their path around the neighbourhood to avoid any potential argument or negative experience with the homeowner.

Online and in-person allyship

Erika described the hypocritical nature of Bell Canada, the organization she worked for in the summer of 2020. She explained how the downtown Toronto neighbourhood where their organization's offices were located had weekly marches supporting BLM during the Summer of 2020. Bell corporate sent some posters in support of BLM Toronto to put in the front windows of the building. Erika found this to be a form of performative activism as the company had not made internal changes to support BLM. There was no form of support from the corporation other than a physical sign in the window. Considering the large scale and pockets of the organization, the act felt optical and performative. In the following statement, Erika expands on how she felt her workplace responded to and showed support for the BLM initiative, saying:

> *Oh, also at the time when I was working at Bell. Interestingly, we sort of kind of supported it (BLM). Like, the people from corporate were like, 'put this [a poster in support of BLM] up on like, you know, your front windows. I worked at College and Dundas area, so it was a very populated and, like, every single Sunday, [the neighbourhood] would actually have a BLM march as well. So yeah, we didn't really do much more than just put a sign up on our window saying like Black Lives Matter but, I would say that's very performative activism as well. Like there wasn't really much from corporate or Bell that really showed genuine allyship.*

Erika reflects on her organization's commitment, or lack thereof, to their support of BLM, questioning whether merely placing a poster in the window signifies an allegiance to the mission of uplifting and supporting Black communities.

5.3 Performative and Genuine Allyship: A Complex Relationship

When asked about the support for BLM either online or in person, all respondents agreed that they saw multiple online postings from friends, family members, and old classmates. One respondent described how even individuals who rarely posted on social media ensured they showed some sort of online support for BLM. While the sheer number of online support versus in-person support could be attributed to the height of the COVID pandemic and a fear of being in largely populated spaces during a pandemic, however, another respondent prompted the idea that posting online was much easier than having to show up in person, providing an easier outlet to show outward support of BLM while not having to physically buy-in to the movement.

However, one respondent described that even though BLM and anti-racism initiatives have not been as loud and widespread as it was in June 2020, they still have positive results from that time. For example, during this time, one participant purged their social media friends and brands that were not supportive of the initiatives close to them, resulting in a more tailored, anti-racist and equity-based social media feed. These ideas follow the participant to the present time, impacting the brands and organizations they choose to use and associate with today.

Respondents described the sheer volume of social media posts they saw during the summer of 2020, the height of the BLM protests. Each individual saw a plethora of Blackout Tuesday posts in addition to stories and regular posts on both Instagram and Facebook, providing fast facts on racism in North America in addition to information on the experiences of Black and racialized individuals. When prompted on whether the participants still saw the same frequency of social media posts, all stated that the frequency had died down completely with both individual creators and brands alike. The frequency of each pre-service teacher seeing the same decline in participation and engagement shows the extent to which the large-scale social media

movement we saw back in the summer of 2020 was performative and a social media fad. Dorit, a female pre-service teacher, reflected on her feelings and opinions when perusing social media during this time, assessing some of their peers' engagement and level of genuineness.

> *I did see a lot of posts on social media like personal friends being like 'okay, I stand with Black Lives Matter' and reposting a lot of organizations or brands that would post those Instagram stories with quick fast facts and things like that, and people are just resharing. I feel sometimes it would be like, 'okay you're trying to reshare information and educate people that you're connected to, but sometimes it just seemed like - oh, okay, if I just hit the share button I've done my part.*

Dorit unpacks some of the thoughts she experienced when perusing social media during the summer of 2020. She explains how she would see a post and follow the threads back to see where the information was coming from. While doing this research, she explained how often her research would bring her back to very short and shallow conversations about race and racism in North America.

Blackout Tuesday and its Impact on the BLM Movement

When discussing participants' feelings about Blackout Tuesday (mentioned above), all except one participant stated that they had participated in it. The one who decided not to participate as they associated it more with the socio-political culture of the United States and chose to watch everything unfold rather than participate. The other participants all relayed that they initially had participated in the trend when it began with positive intentions of a powerful message. Initially created as a means to 'stop the show' of regular Instagram selfies to centre an important global issue, racism and inequities against Black communities, participants saw the hashtag and post as a means to spreading awareness and highlighting a serious epidemic.

When asked whether the Blackout Tuesday hashtag contributed to or worked against the initial message of the BLM movement, each participant touched on the nuance and dual nature of the initiative. All stating that the initial social media movement was positive and held a powerful message, and participated with positive and genuine intent. Unfortunately, once discovered that the viral hashtag had missed its intended mark, each participant who was involved either deleted or buried their post. None of the pre-service teachers had reposted the hashtag for social clout, fear of being labelled a racist or other performative reasons. However, because the aftermath of the initiative was negative, their initial genuine allyship became performative. In this way, #BlackoutTueday highlights the nuanced and non-static nature of allyship and anti-racist activism. In the following statement, Tom highlights the duality and contradictions of supporting the cause in a way that backfired publicly:

> *I thought it was a good thing. But I feel so guilty. Yeah, I honestly thought it was a good thing, like you know we're bringing more eyes on to like the topic and to you know what's even happening in the world and stuff like that, because, like BLM this whole thing started way back when it's not just like now right so. Yeah, it's very interesting to see like I guess the younger people nowadays they may not know that, so I thought that was a good thing, just to like have everyone posted on their social media, but maybe it wasn't that good thing.*

Tom's statement exemplifies the extent to which actions with the best intentions can still yield negative outcomes, leaving the responsibility on individuals and organizations to reflect and correct their actions.

Findings showed that racialized pre-service teachers had optimism in the outcomes of performative ally-behaviour. One respondent reflected on the duality of the Blackout Tuesday

initiative and highlighted how the hashtag reached individuals who may not have been aware of the systematic discrimination and marginalization faced by Black people in America. Seeing Instagram and other social media platforms covered in black squares with the same hashtag surely sparked interest and curiosity into the backbone of the initiative. In this way, a rather performative action like retweeting a black square could still contribute to spreading awareness of BLM and the treatment of Black communities. Like the butterfly effect, perhaps a non-genuine action like a hashtag or retweet could have a non-linear effect on a complex system.

Interestingly, one respondent described growing up in a diverse area in the Greater Toronto Area and believed that their friends of all ethnicities were aware of the privilege and systematic discrimination against certain groups of people. They hypothesized that perhaps some of their peers were not aware of how deep-seated and engrained systematic racism is in our society; however, there were still wide understandings of inequity. They attributed the high population of racialized families as to why their classmates and peers respected and tolerated different cultures and backgrounds. However, seeing instances of racism online in smaller rural towns and the United States surprised the respondent and underlined how big of a problem intolerance of others was outside of the respondent's personal bubble. It highlighted that even though things are good on a micro level, there can still be macro-structural inequities, and social media allowed these instances to be viewed globally. In this way, social media can be attributed to the quick spread of information supporting the Black Lives Matter Movement. Another respondent expressed a similar sentiment, describing that regardless of the criticism of the initiative, they still applauded the widespread reach of the social media fad. While it may not have been implemented most effectively, many individuals joined in with good intentions, and it did show a collective coming together in terms of condemning anti-black and systematic racism.

They cited their hope for future generations and their evolution toward a more socially-conscious society by providing an anecdote about the younger generations. Gen Z's brains work differently because they're a more critical and socially aware generation and are also digital natives skilled at multitasking. The youth are evaluative and intelligent; they may also enjoy TikTok dance displayed with their information. The message is still there; dressing it up with a dance or meme does not dilute the original message. If anything, it provides more incentive to spread the message. Another participant cited the ability of initiatives like Blackout Tuesday to reach a variety of individuals. They drew on how some people do not keep up with politics or current news, while viral initiatives allow for the wide dissemination of media and ideas.

One participant described their initial response to the initiative. They said that after thoroughly researching the topic, they approved of the initial idea. However, they questioned how the information could be stream-lined and pulled back to 'reduce the noise' of the hashtag trend and underline the original message and issue rather than posting and reposting 'pointless posts.' The role of grassroots organizations and initiatives was highlighted as the key to a successful online activist or ally initiative because after viewing the BlackoutTuesday posts and hashtags, many people were driven to seek out groups and individuals who were actively working towards making change. Key information was drowned out by the noise of the viral social media hype, which diluted the message; however, the base message was still there, as explained by Dorit in the following statement:

> *Even if it backfired in some ways, if it got some people to check out the hashtag, to even just Google what* BLM*, what's going on. I think it wasn't a complete failure. And even though issues come in and come out. I think, in some ways, it hopefully put a little idea into people's heads and made them more aware, and when they hear it again,*

> *hopefully, they're not going to be as surprised. You know, they won't have to be re-educated and retold again and again.*

Dorit's statement highlights tensions and blurred lines between genuine and performative activism as the relationship between performative and genuine activism is not categorical or absolute. Instead, it is nuanced as a genuine and well-intentioned action can become negative or performative in nature, and vice versa. In other words, activism and allyship actions can move back and forth between genuine and performative and may not be either/or.

How Genuine Intent can turn Performative

One participant relayed how even authentically intended and informed allyship can still elicit performative actions, highlighting the importance of allies to self-reflect and grow from their experiences and action. Tom said that he had only participated in the BlackoutTuesday initiative after seeking insight from his Black roommate, who was involved in the BLM organization. He cited how they both did their best to research the cause they supported in an effort to ensure that they were being active, genuine allies. He described how both he and his roommate's initial reaction to the initiative was positive, citing the need for awareness and change. They saw it as an opportunity to disrupt the feed of individuals who may not keep up with politics and current events. This swath of black squares was intended to force the audience to acknowledge that something is wrong, and we need to pause and work as a group to change this, that we need to get involved. Tom relayed how a few days later, this same friend came and relayed the negative ramifications of the movement, and the group deleted their posts.

> *My friend who lives with us was very involved with the movement. We also were quite involved, but also we really did go to her as a source of a lot of our information because we trusted her, right? She's a very close friend of ours, and it's not just*

> *because she's black, but also because she herself is involved and [the organization is] very important to her, so we, you know, we knew that we could ask her questions if we were uncertain about something.*

Tom and his roommate's experience with Blackout Tuesday highlights the contradictions between genuine and performative activism, as purposeful and ally-oriented action can become performative and yield negative outcomes.

My Personal Transformation From Performative to Genuine Ally

The journey of my life, as described in Chapter 2, Personal Narrative, offers insight into my own transformation from performative ally to genuine ally. It also serves as a practical example of how engaging in performative allyship served as an educational experience in progressing toward genuine allyship. Growing up in a Ukrainian-Canadian community, I was immersed in a cultural environment that emphasized and celebrated ethnic pride. However, I also witnessed exclusionary and discriminatory practices within my own community, as well as the dismissal of privilege and the marginalization or nuanced realities of other racial groups. These experiences prompted me to embark on a personal journey of unlearning and questioning the beliefs instilled in me during my formative education. As I went through high school and post-secondary education, I was exposed to a variety of perspectives and diverse environments, learning about systematic racism, social justice and the realities of marginalized communities. I began to recognize and unpack the privileges I held as a white individual. These newfound ideas challenged the previous perspectives I had been exposed to and pushed me to actively retaliate against the performative allyship perpetuated within my Ukrainian-Canadian community.

My story aligns with the experiences of the four participants highlighting the importance of critical thinking and self-reflection, unlearning deeply ingrained values and personal growth. Acknowledging, confronting and actively unlearning the deeply ingrained values and biases that had been socialized within me marked my own transition from performative to genuine ally. This transformative process was fuelled by my exposure to diverse perspectives, ongoing education and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths. Through this process, I developed an increased awareness of marginalization and broader social justice issues. This personal transformation serves as an example of how engaging in performative allyship can serve as an educational experience that facilitates the transition toward genuine allyship.

The Concept of Allyship in the School System

Amid the growing efforts by far-right conservative parents to ban education on race and gender and the concerning narrative of creating 'politics-free' spaces in public schools, allyship assumes a crucial role in the school system. The account of Tom and his roommate's involvement in the Blackout Tuesday initiative demonstrates how even well-intentioned allyship can inadvertently lead to performative actions. Initially, they sought insights from their Black roommate, engaged in research, and genuinely supported the cause. They believed that participating in the initiative would raise awareness, disrupt complacency, and foster collective action. However, after learning about the negative consequences associated with the movement, they reflected on their actions and deleted their posts. This example underscores the importance of allies engaging in self-reflection, continuously learning, and growing from their experiences to ensure their allyship remains genuine and effective in combatting systematic injustices within the school system.

In the face of attempts to suppress education on race and gender, genuine allyship in the school system requires more than performative gestures. Tom and his roommate's reliance on their Black friend as a trusted source of information exemplified the need for allies to actively seek perspectives from marginalized communities and build meaningful relationships. True allyship involves listening to and amplifying the voices of those affected by systematic discrimination, as well as challenging oppressive narratives. It requires ongoing self-education, unlearning biases, and advocating for inclusive policies and curricula that address issues of race, gender, and social justice. By promoting genuine allyship, schools can create a supportive environment that fosters dialogue, understanding, and equity for all students.

5.4 The Role of Race in Allyship

From an understanding of privilege, willingness to accept potential opportunities and the emotional labour of being continuously confronted with inequities and resistance, all PSTs believe race has a significant role in allyship. When discussing the role of race in allyship and activism, all participants vehemently agreed that race plays a pivotal role; however, the discussion with each participant was distinct and nuanced.

A pre-service teacher who identifies as an Asian Canadian described the role race has played in their pursuit of financial opportunities as an Ontario Certified Teacher, an independent contractor and a manager. They began by discussing the extent that they brushed off situations where race played an integral role in their treatment or experience. They mentioned how they worked in a large downtown corporate building and would often see posters and advertisements with models who did not reflect their or their peer's ethnicity. They also explained how the discussion and momentum around Black Lives Matter allowed them to become more empowered to comment and condemn racial jokes and microaggressions that they would normally ignore.

When asked about how they connected to the BLM initiative, they explained that as an Asian Canadian, they felt that they understood the discrimination and prejudice faced by other minority groups in Canada, while they underlined that their experiences were not the same as anti-black racism and discrimination, they still understood a part of the stigmatization. They also discussed how as an Asian-Canadian teacher candidate, they felt as though they could not take the same opportunities as their white classmates. For example, it was often suggested to one student to take a teaching job in Northern Ontario. However, they described their apprehension about relocating to a smaller, less diverse town out of fear of being labelled as the other and treated with prejudice. They also relayed a situation where they worked at a school in their home neighbourhood during the year and were approached by parents to privately tutor their children during the summer. Initially excited at the opportunity, Erika discussed this situation with her father, who brought up the more negative and nuanced aspects of the situation.

> *My dad basically said, no, you can't do that because of your skin colour. And I was like so taken back; I was like 'what do you mean' right? And it took me a second to like, kind of like, clue in what he was talking about. But he basically said, like. you're Asian, and you're not white, so if anything were to happen with your kids, you would probably get sent to jail. And I was like, that is so crazy to think, but you know like my family knows I go through this stuff like I've been an assistant manager and manager as well, and like people refuse to get helped by me just because like I'm a girl and it's yeah there's a lot.*

After this eye-opening discussion with their father, Erika decided to reject the offer and continue working in a formally managed environment.

One caveat of allyship is that the widespread dissemination and discussion of BLM and the inequities faced by Black and racialized communities amplified and angered racist individuals. This meant that while BLM protestors and allies were magnifying their calls for action and change, racist individuals were amplifying their beliefs just as loudly. Additionally, anti-vaccine and anti-mandate protestors were also using the BLM marches as an audience to voice their own opinions and dissatisfaction with the current government. Multiple pre-service teachers discussed seeing All Lives Matter counter-movements and propaganda and described the effort as derailing, unempathetic and self. When discussing the counter-movements present in the BLM initiatives in her downtown Toronto neighbourhood, Erika said:

> *And then during the Marches people are also protesting their own thing, and it was like that's not what this protest is for but people were saying you know all lives matter and, that was not the purpose of it, or people will protest the COVID vaccine during the BLM marches and it's like what are you doing? So yeah I don't know I just think that a lot of us kind of saw it online or saw it in person, but none of my friends or I actually participated in it.*

Erika's reflection on the different initiatives being broadcasted at BLM events exemplifies the extent that allies may have to go to have their voices and activism heard, especially when confronted with counter-movements created with the sole aim to undermine the initial message.

One PST described the emotional strain that can come with allyship. They described the effect of and need to take breaks when regularly seeing so much in the news about inequities against Black people (or the lack there-of depending on what channel one chooses), social media posts debating or supporting the BLM Movement and in-person activism and discussion on the

current state of race, racism and police. One counter-response to genuine allyship and activism during the BLM marches inspired counter-movements like All Lives Matter, a movement stating that Black Lives do not matter any more than White lives, and the Freedom Convoy, a protest against Canadian Vaccine Mandates.

The All Lives Matter counter-movement had a significantly negative effect on Dorit, a Black pre-service teacher. She described the emotional weight she carried around the summer of 2020 when George Floyd has recently been murdered, and everyone in the general public was giving their opinions on the death. Particularly the All Lives Matter counter-movement was a specific trigger for her, bringing stress and hopelessness. At this time, news broadcasts and especially social media sites were filled with countless different opinions, understandings and rumours on George Floyd's death, and the PST had to wade through countless insensitive and ignorant opinions and make a concerted effort to not confront the internet trolls and misinformation spreaders. Dorit described the feeling of being smothered under opinions, empty statements and endless voices.

> *Why can't you listen, why do you have to always just smother the voices of other people? That's what it felt like. It just felt like being, time and time again, just smothered a little bit, like, here's another, you know, blanket on top of your voice it's just. Like a pillow, just being smothered. [...] And so it just was so frustrating that all lives matter. It's just like, we get it, yes, all lives matter. But, we're saying these lives are the ones in danger or you know being threatened, so why, like, why is that so hard to understand?*

Dorit's candid reflections on seeing the All Lives Matter movement while advocating for the safety and humanity of her own community exemplify the emotional labour racialized PSTs

were inundated with whenever accessing media. Dorit also described a change in her own behaviour; while not being someone who usually confronts others on their opinions on the internet, she found herself having trouble holding her tongue. When discussing All Lives Matter counter-movement supporters, the PST explained her exasperation with being confronted with the obvious. She knew all lives matter, but the BLM movement was a specific response to the stark contrast in treatment of Black individuals at the hands of police and other large institutions.

Tom, a participant of Latin heritage, related their perceptions of race and racism with their experiences of homophobia and being a part of the LGBTQA+ community. Highlighting the extent to which our distinct identities and lived experiences shape our perceptions of the world around us. He used the comparison of Thomas Nagel, a philosopher who asserted that consciousness in itself is just a point of view (Nagel, 1974). Nagel wrote about how it feels to be a bat to underline the point that unless you were a bat yourself, you would not be able to understand how it felt. Using a comparison so outlandish but rooted in science made the philosophical idea make sense. Using this idea, no one can understand how it feels to be Black or racialized unless you truly were part of that identity, stating:

> *Like I don't have to worry about going to the store and it's not I'm not wearing a badge, and right, in the same way, but unlike someone who's a visible minority would, I can easily pass and so and that's going to again change the way others treat me.*

As an LGBTQA+ member, Tom highlighted that their perspective already differed because they carry that lens of what it feels like to face discrimination; however, being part of a non-visible minority group like the LGBTQA+ still means that he can enter certain spaces without their distinct orientation being broadcasted to the whole room.

When prompted on whether performative allyship can inspire genuine allyship in individuals and others, respondents vehemently agreed on the nuance of the topic but affirmed that they believe performative allyship could inspire genuine activism and allyship. One participant said that regardless of whether the individual was performing or genuinely engaging in BLM activism, the act of researching and learning even just a bit about the cause can be tied to change. They asserted that humans are innately good and possess great empathy, so even just learning about a few of the disadvantages and marginalization certain communities face or seeing videos of viral injustices, broadens their understanding and could inspire them to genuinely want to dismantle the inequitable system, or at least contribute to it. Dorit brought up a similar sentiment about Gen Z and their propensity for using social media to spread awareness, inspire change and simply educate themselves on topics of interest to them.

> *If I follow that thread that I kind of left before about Gen Z and the way things seem to work nowadays… I do feel like a lot of people are making content, some of it is very shallow or you can see right through what they're trying to do. But, I think sometimes I'm looking through the perspective of someone older who has seen the world and experienced some things. It kind of reminds me of being a teacher, sometimes I'm amazed like, 'oh you don't know those things', 'oh I forgot that your little and your brain is just beginning' or, 'oh, you've never experienced that, so in some ways, maybe it can be helpful as just like an introduction for younger people. But, I think, also, those critical thinking and media literacy skills have to be there for them to see through what is 100% performative and what's not. You know, sometimes the heart is there, but the follow-through wasn't great. So, yeah, I think [critical literacy] really needs to be promoted. Being able to read these things and understand what exactly the*

> *objective is, and in that way, maybe it can be useful, I don't want to say it's yeah performative allyship. it's totally useful and is unusable, and also. You know what it makes me think of things like the ice bucket challenge. yeah like, celebrities were dropping ice on each other and like oh it's so funny to see these celebrities dropping as I recently did a statistic that said ALS made 115 million dollars and raked in that much in donations so I'm hearing that years later I was like oh wow. The ice thing wasn't really like crazy and not necessary, but they actually you know did raise a lot of money, so that made me think so, in some ways yeah I guess if you get the clicks if you get the views: In it can bring in the money and the attention just it then needs to be spun around into something that's truly educational afterwards, once you get those eyes, I guess.*

As Dorit reflected on the strengths of Gen Z and the generations that follow, she expressed hope for the future. Also, Dorit underscored our society's heavy reliance on technology and the need for contemporary curricula to incorporate teachings on critical media literacy. She also drew on the intersections and blurred lines between genuine and performative activism, specifically the idea that the relationship between performative and genuine activism is contradictory and pliable rather than categorical or absolute. In this way, a negative or performative action, like the viral ALS ice bucket challenge, can become genuine and well-intentioned in nature. In other words, activism and allyship actions can move back and forth between genuine and performative and may not be either/or.

Another respondent related performative allyship inspiring genuine allyship to a situation of bad press. They hypothesized that even if there is bad press, negativity, or even unauthentic allyship or activism online, there is still dissemination of the information and awareness of the

initial cause. Regardless of whether the initial action was performative, fake or simply done for social clout, there still was some positive output from it, and that spreading the word out there.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Main Findings or Results

The first perspective involved ideas of how the participants defined and understood allyship and provided viewpoints on what characteristics racialized pre-service teachers associated with genuine allies. While there was a common underlying theme that an ally provided support and listened to the needs of the marginalized group, a key facet of this perspective was the role of allyship and acknowledging one's social power and privilege, regular self-reflection and the characteristics of racialized pre-service teachers associated with a genuine ally: courage, empathy, self-reflection, providing access and space. The second perspective involved racialized pre-service teachers' distinct understandings and experiences of performative allyship both in person and online during the Summer of 2020. Two of the four participants had heard of the term before, while the latter knew about the context of the issue of non-genuine allyship, but did not have a specific name for it. One respondent described how they themselves participated in a shallow form of activism when creating a fundraiser for BLM but not deeply researching the connections of the individuals she gave the donation to. Another participant described their experience of performative activism by a local school board that made a rather shallow and surface-level attempt at hiring racialized occasional teachers. The third perspective involved how racialized PSTs experienced and responded to online and in-person allyship by paring down their in-person and social media friends based on their ally-behaviour or lack thereof, highlighting the duality and double-sided nature of allyship. The final perspective found that race played a pivotal role in allyship, impacting the professional opportunities one PST took, participants' feelings towards the All Lives Matter counter-movement and its supporters, and how anti-black racism was evident even when participating in marches for BLM.

6.2 Finding or Results in Context

The research corresponded with the perspective that allyship and activism should be understood as verbs, focusing on the intricate details and nuances rather than the big picture being shown (Leigh, 2014). “The ongoing battle to be anti-racist is not just in the macro and the obvious, but in unpicking the daily micro-aggressions and racist behaviours, we may have committed and condoned in the past, even unknowingly. In the same way, many have been left upset by various behaviours of Instagrammers and Influencers that are just as bad or insidious in ways they might not have at first thought about" (Evans, 2020, para.7). A prominent aspect of this anti-racist and allyship work is reflexivity and continually reconsidering our actions and outcomes. Just like knowledge production, allyship and anti-racist labour is a continuous process that will evolve and change as society progresses (Saad, 2020). It is up to individuals to continuously learn and check themselves if they engage in inauthentic and problematic behaviours. The research highlighted the idea that true allies work to understand their privilege (Leigh, 2014). They know that they cannot engage in anti-racist work and allyship without confronting their own privilege in society. These individuals consider the privileged groups they belong to and do their own work to confront bias and racism within them. Allies are also intersectional and ensure their activism incorporates a broad spectrum of abilities, genders, sexualities, races and religions (Leigh, 2014). They engage in authentic opportunities to educate themselves and learn about the experiences of individuals different from them. If they find themselves judging or having thoughts about someone rooted in implicit bias, they make an active effort to unpack and reframe these ideas in a productive and anti-racist way. Allies do not talk over the voices of those they wish to advocate for and know that they are not saviours; instead, they are equals who are here to offer support and encouragement (Leigh, 2014). Finally,

genuine allies and activists acknowledge their mistakes with a commitment to do better (Leigh, 2014). They make a concerted effort to be reflexive and unpack why that action or behaviour was hurtful. In the end, it is critical to think of allyship as a verb (Leigh, 2014). Engage in the activity in a concerted effort, and incorporate active allyship into daily life, working to critically and constructively contribute to authentic change.

One of the most significant findings of this research was the effect that both performative and genuine allyship can have on racialized students. Some of the initial assumptions of this study were that BIPOC pre-service teachers are more supportive and receptive to critical race theories and initiatives condemning current institutional racism and barriers. However, one shortfall was that the literature did not consider the positive or negative effect allyship and activism had on racialized individuals, functioning on the assumption that since the motivation behind the BLM is positive to Black communities, it would only be met with joy. But what the researcher's positionality disallowed them to see is the myriad of emotions that BLM support initiatives can bring. Not only are Black communities targeted at higher rates than their non-Black counterparts, but their safety, innocence and existence are continuously the topics of discussion on news and social media outlets. The research and literature assumed that Black Lives initiatives uplift Black individuals and can breed negative responses from other groups, but what the research failed to anticipate is the negative effects that can occur. In this research, we found posts both in favour and against the BLM movement would trigger feelings us unease, sadness and anger as Black pre-service teachers encounter countless online media posts that are either debating the safety and personhood of Black individuals or arguing in favour of BLM, highlighting the current epidemic against Black and other marginalized communities in North

America. They likened the feeling of all these voices speaking on this issue that affects them directly as being smothered under opinions, empty statements and endless voices.

6.3. Unexpected Findings or Results

One of the most significant findings of this research was that allyship is not a clear binary as initially presented. Instead, there are intervals and processes that provide more complexity into allyship and genuinely supporting marginalized groups. Due to my own position and biases, this research began with an assumption that there were two groups: those who engage in ally behaviour with the genuine intent to help and those who deliberately participated in the ally behaviour for social clout, to follow a viral trend, or to portray themselves online in a specific light. The findings showed a more complex and nuanced relationship between performative and genuine allyship. As exemplified by the #BlackoutTuesday initiative, a genuine and well-intentioned action can become negative or performative in nature and vice versa. This research showed that racialized pre-service teachers had optimism in the outcomes of performative ally behaviour, believing that even ‘bad press’ or, in this case, performative press about BLM was still ‘good press’ because it extended the visibility and reach of the initiative.

Another significant and unexpected finding was the extent to which engaging in performative allyship can be a valuable educational tool for becoming a genuine ally. In own my personal journey, I have discovered that engaging in performative allyship has been a transformative and educational experience, propelling me toward becoming a genuine ally. Drawing from my own experiences growing up in a Ukrainian-Canadian community, I encountered cultural norms that perpetuated discrimination and exclusion. However, by actively participating in performative allyship, I began questioning these beliefs and unlearning harmful ideologies. One significant aspect of my journey was experiencing outsider status within the

Ukrainian community. As someone who did not speak or understand Ukrainian, I often felt marginalized and othered by both teachers and peers. This firsthand experience of being on the outside looking in provided me with a unique perspective. It allowed me to empathize with individuals who face exclusion and understand the impact of language barriers and cultural exclusivity. Moreover, within the Ukrainian-Canadian community, I observed a tendency to compare our experiences of racism with those of other marginalized groups in Canada. This comparison compelled me to critically examine the racial dynamics at play and recognize my own privilege as a white immigrant. Based on my experiences, I believe that performative allyship can serve as a valuable educational experience for individuals seeking to become genuine allies. To apply this concept in public school classrooms, it is crucial to create a safe and inclusive learning environment that encourages students to reflect on their own biases and engage in open discussions about privilege, discrimination, and social justice. By incorporating experiential learning approaches and promoting cross-cultural experiences, educators can empower students to embark on their own transformative journey toward becoming authentic allies and advocates for equality and justice.

6.4 Shortcomings or Limitations

A key limitation of this research was the lack of turnout when recruiting prospective participants. One of the reasons for poor turnout was due to the time of the year, as current Lakehead students were emailed during the Summer session when the Professional Bachelor of Education program broke for the summer break. This greatly influenced turnout as the Research and Ethics Board clearance stipulated that participants must be current Lakehead students, disqualifying any teacher candidates who had just graduated a month prior. Due to this, only

students who were returning to the program in September, in addition to current education graduate students, had the availability to participate in this research.

A second, equally influential limitation was Lakehead Orillia's lack of cultural diversity. Due to its location in Orillia, Ontario, a predominantly homogenous rural population, many students at Lakehead did not identify as racialized or as a BIPOC. This meant that an already small pool of available students became even smaller due to the research topic focusing on the distinct perspectives of racialized Lakehead University students.

6.5 Future Research

In light of the narratives and experiences shared, scholars of education must pay attention to these nuanced aspects of allyship. It is important to move beyond performative gestures and cultivate genuine allyship that acknowledges privilege, engages in self-reflection, advocates for equity, and actively dismantles systematic biases. By fostering a deeper understanding of allyship in the school system, educators can work towards creating inclusive and equitable environments for all students, combatting the efforts of far-right conservative parents seeking to ban education about race and gender, and offering truly inclusive "politics-free" spaces.

Throughout the interview process, the importance of critical media literacy came up often. For some of these pre-service teachers, critical media literacy allowed them to disseminate through various social media and news broadcasts pertaining to the Black Lives Matter Movement to discern the reliability of each piece of media. Many of the respondents highlighted the prominent need to incorporate these lessons into the Ontario Curriculum. Further research should be focused on the extent that new media can be used as a medium to not only codify current social realities but also rise against inequality.

Contemporary youth's lives are deeply embedded with digital technology and social media, so 21st-century pedagogy should be aimed at empowering these modern learners. Online learning has become a daily reality for many North American students, further amplifying the amount of time they have already spent on digital technologies. Their online educational responsibilities, compounded with the multitude of social media platforms currently available and in use, show the importance of equipping youth with the necessary competencies to make good choices online. As seen during the two most recent United States presidential elections and throughout the COVID pandemic, online media literacy is an essential tool for distinguishing 'fake news' and highly propagandized information. Often, social media and rapidly spread propaganda can work to further stoke inequality, ethnocentrism and discriminatory ideas against already marginalized groups. An ally does not take every statement at face value and uses important critical thinking skills to weigh fact vs. opinion. Many broadcasters and agencies skew their information for their intended audience, meaning two neighbours can be getting very different coverage of an event or initiative depending on the types of media they consume. In this way, media literacy is "a necessary component of citizenship education that is essential in increasingly semiotic societies" (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012, p.16).

When perusing social media posts, an ally asks critical questions about why the individual is posting this, what they have to do to prepare for this, whether it is spontaneous, what they get out of it, whose voice is being amplified and whose voices are being minimized. Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy, Media Smarts (2021) outlines the fundamental principles of media literacy and the importance of incorporating media literacy teachings in the classroom. The latter highlights the crucial learning students engage in when unpacking and conceptualizing media critically. They underline the importance of critical literacy using ten

points; however, the four ideas most relevant to this research are as follows: Digital media literacy education fosters youth engagement in key ‘real-world issues,’ fostering active citizenship and countering political apathy (Media Smarts, 2021). Media literacy teaches students how to unpack and understand the influence of media portrayals and the ways that different groups can be criminalized or misconstrued in popular media. This further fosters an understanding of social differences, perspectives and identity (Media Smarts, 2021). Media and digital literacy foster students’ social and personal development by providing the opportunity to critically unpack popular culture in the classroom (Media Smarts, 2021). Media and digital literacies foster the necessary skills to allow students to critique media representation and critically compare and contrast media and reality (Media Smarts, 2021). “Scholars such as bell hooks (1994), with her call for the liberatory pursuit of an "engaged pedagogy," and Ladson-Billings (1995), with her challenge to develop a "culturally relevant pedagogy," have pushed the field of teacher preparation toward recognizing and developing pedagogical approaches that promote the purposeful recognition of race in the classroom” (Carpenter & Diem, 2013, para.10). By equipping students with the necessary tools for deconstructing media, we instil in them the critical theoretical foundations to evaluate and define the various media texts they come across. By fostering critical consciousness in students, we are better equipping them to take on the nuanced and coded society we live in, “to interpret and analyze media texts and institutions, and hence to read more critically into their social and cultural environments” (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012 p. 63). Media in itself holds tremendous social and political implications as different types of media texts transmit specific ideological ideas about our society (Media Smarts, 2021). A key aspect of critical media literacy is to consider the perspectives that are omitted from the media. These unconscious and implicit meanings “may be the result of

conscious decisions, but more often they are the result of unconscious biases and unquestioned assumptions – and they can have a significant influence on what we think and believe" (Media Smarts, 2021, para.8). These influences underline the importance of fostering critical consciousness in the classroom as each piece of media we consume can unconsciously influence our politics and attitudes towards social difference and change. Further research should be focused on the extent that new media can be used as a medium to not only codify current social realities but also rise against oppression and inequity. "Applied to the study of media in education, the Lévi-Strauss insight, which is characteristic of the approaches of the arts and sciences in our time, means that we have to regard our media as mythic structures, as massive codifications of group experiences and social realities. And just as print profoundly altered the structure of the phonetic alphabet and repatterned the educational processes of the Western world, so did the telegraph reshape print, as did the movie and radio and television. These structural changes in media myth coexist in an ever-live model of the learning and teaching process" (McLuhan, 2003, p. 6). Further research should be focused on the extent that new media can be used as a medium to rise against oppression and inequity. The beneficial aspect of new media is our collective ability to communicate, advocate and exchange opinions within a global community, gain insight into various perspectives, and give voices to those historically voice-less. In this way, technology acts as an overwhelmingly empowering and critical tool for activism, which only further underscores the importance of critically engaging in productive and authentic conversations around anti-racism and white supremacy.

6.6 Conclusion

Throughout this study, pre-service teachers who identified as racialized gave direct and reality-based insight into what it means to be an authentic ally. The perspectives of each of the

participants who identified as racialized provided a nuanced understanding of the fluidity of allyship.

The current uprising in contemporary social movements in the United States and Canada has propelled social justice, social activism and calls to action across the continent. As a result, previously entrenched inequities and discriminatory barriers are being called into question and ousted from our institutions as we see a societal shift towards equity and inclusion. While a large majority of the population has shown a desire to work towards an inclusive society, some groups continue to resist change either out of fear of a potential loss of status or from feeling alienated from the current social justice movements (Akhtar, 2019). Seeing the growing increase in global activism and the resistance from those opposed brings forth the question: how can educators contribute to the fairness and inclusivity of all equity-seeking groups, and how can they ensure their classroom is an equitable and safe space for all students?

The beginning of this research identified a knowledge gap regarding distinct perceptions of racialized pre-service teachers on anti-racist and inclusive-driven behaviour and protest during the June 2020 BLM protests. The literature review highlighted how current research on the topic of performative activism and combating anti-black racism was predominantly centred around the beliefs, perspectives and actions of majority group members. In the example of Carlson et al.'s (2019) discussion on allyship in academic literature, their discussion and analyses focused on the male ally perspective in regard to gender-based violence and neglected the input and perspectives of female activists and women affected by gender-based violence, offering a biased and one-sided view. Similarly, Clark's (2019) research on White allies' digital allyship in the #BlackLivesMatter movement strictly centred on the views and perspectives of White allies and omitted the views of racialized students. During the literature review portion of this Master's

thesis, I assumed that racialized PSTs would vehemently deny the findings that White Allies worked to amplify the voices of marginalized groups using their online behaviour. Instead, their understanding of genuine and performative allyship showed a complex and nuanced relationship between intent and product. They indeed agreed that the work of these anti-racist labourers could contribute to amplifying the voices of marginalized groups through the idea that any attention or awareness to the issue is good for the cause, regardless of if that person was posting their support for their own ego. At least the message was still being put out there.

The objective of this research was to understand racialized students' distinct perceptions of allyship (both performative and genuine) during the BLM movement. Performative activism is activism rooted in growing one's social capital rather than raising awareness for human rights issues. This trend has been prevalent online, where social media influencers use BLM-centred demonstrations as an accessory to promote an image of social conscience and activism. Using the examples of Blackout Tuesday and three influencers who went viral for being recorded, creating social media content during various June 2020 Black Lives Matter-centred events. Placed against the purpose of this study, the following research questions emerged: How do racialized students understand and define genuine allyship? How do racialized students view and understand optical or performative allyship? What is the relationship between genuine and performative allyship? What is the role of race in allyship and ally behaviour? What are the participants' opinions on optical allyship and whether it works for or against the objectives of the BLM movement? This research included four current Lakehead Orillia students who identify as racialized. Three of the four participants were female, and one was male; each came from different ethnic backgrounds, including Black, Asian-Canadian and Latin. Throughout this research (4) main perspectives surfaced: Racialized pre-service teachers' understandings and

definitions of genuine allyship; Racialized pre-service teachers' understandings and experiences of performative allyship; Performative versus genuine allyship: a nuanced relationship; and the role of race. The research found that racialized pre-service teachers all understood allyship in regard to action and being actionable by supporting and listening to the needs of the allied group. Allies acknowledge the role of social power and privilege and are actionable when confronted with their own behaviour. It was underlined that allies must engage in regular self-reflection in their practice, making a concentrated effort to learn and evolve. Pre-service teachers described a genuine ally described as courageous, reflexive, vocal, non-judgmental and empathic. In regards to Racialized pre-service teachers' understandings and experiences of performative allyship, most of the participants had a previous understanding of the term and elaborated on their experiences of genuine and performative activism during the summer of 2020, both online and in-person. One PST described the impact performative allyship by large brands had on their consumption, aligning themselves with brands who showed genuine support for the movement and distancing themselves from brands who stayed silent or seemed non-genuine. Their discussion of this experience shifted the conversation to the importance of critical media literacy in elementary education. The perspective of understandings and experiences of performative allyship unpacked participants' experiences of online and in-person allyship and performative activism during the Summer of 2020. Two of the four participants were already familiar with the term performative allyship and activism, while the other two respondents knew about the concept of the issue but not the specific name. One respondent described how they themselves participated in a shallow form of activism when creating a fundraiser for BLM but not deeply researching the connections of the individuals she gave the donation to. Another participant described their experience of performative activism by a local school board that made a rather shallow and surface-level

attempt at hi ng racialized occasional teachers. The perspective of Performative versus genuine allyship: a nuanced relationship emerged from pre-service teachers' discussions of how posting one's allegiance to the BLM movement because of a viral trend incites posts from family and friends who rarely updated their social media. While discussing the viral #BlackoutTuesday trend, each PST cited the mass number of posts relating to BLM has all but died on their personal feeds. Highlighting the nuance of the initiative, each agreed that while the initial social media movement was positive and held a powerful message, #BlackoutTueday highlighted the complicated and non-static nature of allyship and the ways genuine intent can become performative. In the final perspective, the role of race in allyship, all participants vehemently agreed that race plays a pivotal role; however, the discussion with each participant was distinct and nuanced.

Many of the pre-service teachers highlighted the importance of introducing elementary-aged students to allyship and activism in developmentally appropriate ways. Allyship, empathy, and global citizenship can be fostered in the classroom by cultivating media literacy, and reflexivity, creating an 'open' classroom community and through the use of diverse texts. However, it is key to note that allyship is a nuanced concept, and one cannot simply declare themselves an ally. "Solidarity is messy: it is not fixed or settled or easy, but requires continuous rethinking, and acknowledgement and self-reflection on positionality, power, privilege, guilt and legacies of oppression" (Walia 2012, Irlbacher-Fox 2014, Land 2015, Boudreau Morris 2017 cited in Kluttz et al., 2020, pp.52). In this way, being an ally is not a static role; it is a continual, organic process that does not fit into a binary or dichotomous thought. Activist and ally education can only go so far if lessons solely focus on theory and omit practice. It is important to take students' interests and incorporate them into true allyship and change that can be achieved

as a classroom community by constructing initiatives that allow students to act on passionate issues. Activist educators work to role model critical questioning to students while challenging them to consider their own experiences as allies and activists. “While activist education can occur in any context, the learning purpose inherent to schools offers focused opportunities to join activist actions with ideas connected to curriculum expectations” (Niblett, 2017, pp.2-3). Some real-life examples provided include a primary class that picks up litter in a nearby park every second week over an 8-week period. They work in conjunction with a local initiative, sorting garbage and creating pictorial and graph representations of their findings (Niblett, 2017). Another example included a junior class that has formed a relationship with a local Indigenous community exchanging letters and writing to local MPs on Indigenous issues, culminating in an in-person visit to partake in their annual Our Dreams Matter Too Walk (Niblett, 2017).

The current uprising in contemporary social movements in the United States and Canada has propelled social justice, social activism and calls to action across the continent. As a result, previously entrenched inequities and discriminatory barriers are being called into question and ousted from our institutions as we see a societal shift towards equity and inclusion. While a large majority of the population has shown a desire to work towards an inclusive society, some groups continue to resist change either out of fear of a potential loss of status or from feeling alienated from the current social justice movements (Akhtar, 2019). Seeing the growing increase in global activism and the resistance from those opposed brings forth the question: how can educators contribute to the fairness and inclusivity of all equity-seeking groups, and how can they ensure their classroom is an equitable and safe space for all students? One avenue is to foster vital concepts of allyship and activism in students through an integrated social justice and activist praxis in conjunction with a transformative pedagogy that utilizes diverse texts and an open

classroom to foster online media literacy, reflexivity, global citizenship and action. The Ministry of Education and the Government of Ontario respectively highlight the importance of equity and inclusion in broader education and the classroom yet some PSTs may still shy away from the idea of incorporating social justice, transformative pedagogy, and activist or allyship lessons into their classroom praxis. This could stem from the belief that activism and human rights issues are politically ideological or cross the boundary of what education schools should provide. So often, parents and teachers may focus too much on the hard skills associated with the curriculum and knowledge production while failing to regard the soft skills necessary for fostering democratic citizenship and inclusive, reflexive human beings. As educators, our academic duty is to provide a critical social justice education that is rooted in activism and allyship to ensure an equitable future for all. A transformative pedagogy can be used to move away from previous traditional notions of teaching and learning that regard the teacher as the keeper of knowledge and the student as a passive listener that must regurgitate information to show learning.

'Ally' or 'activist' are not clear-cut and static identities. They are nuanced, active roles that require ongoing initiative and personal commitment. The fostering of these identities in students is an essential step toward global citizenship and a sustainable society. Our goal as educators is to instil a sense of community, empathy and appreciation for diverse learners and their experiences and identities. To foster a classroom community that celebrates differences and students' unique schemas. As educators, our objective is to create future caring, responsible and democratic citizens fluent in online media literacy and self-reflexivity. To achieve this, students require role models that act as exemplars for active citizenship, self-reflection and dedication to equity and inclusion. This can be done by cultivating and integrating diverse texts into lessons, creating an 'open classroom environment' that allows a respectful and practised discussion and

dissemination of complex ideas, modelling and scaffolding reflexivity, active global citizenship, and the opportunity to engage in community change.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What does allyship mean to you?
    - What characteristics does an ally have?
2. Have you heard of the term optical or performative allyship before today?
    - What examples or instances come to mind when you think about both genuine or performative activism/allyship?
3. Tell me about what types of allyship (either online or in-person) you saw during the BLM movement?
    - Did you see people close to you, or people you know engaging in allyship practices?
4. How did you feel about Blackout Tuesday?
    - Do you think initiatives like #blackoutTuesday contributes to or work against the BLM movement?
5. Does race play a role in allyship?
6. What were your opinions of the All Lives Matter counter-movement?
    - What characteristics would you associate with these supporters?
7. Can performative activism lead to genuine activism in individuals?
    - Can performative inspire genuine activism in others?
8. This question has to do with age and development -- would it make sense for young people to carry out performative roles before they have a genuine, thorough understanding of these issues? For example, if you're a teacher and have your classroom

read a story about Anti-racism and then create BLM posters to place around the school. What are your thoughts on non-genuine or performative activism by the children? Is this productive towards the cause?

Appendix B

Consent Form

MY CONSENT:

I agree to the following:

- ✓ I have read and understood the information contained in the Information Letter
- ✓ I agree to participate
- ✓ I understand the risks and benefits to the study
- ✓ That I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time, and may choose not to answer any question
- ✓ That the data is securely stored at the primary investigators home in a locked safe for a minimum period of 5 years following completion of the research project
- ✓ I understand that the research findings is made available to me upon request
- ✓ My identity will remain confidential
- ✓ All of my questions have been answered

By consenting to participate, I have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

_____ Name (printed)

_____ Signature _____ Date

_____ Contact email or address for request of a copy of the research results

_____ Do you consent to the allowance of audio/video recording? (Yes/No)

Appendix C

Cover Letter

Dear Potential Participant:

If you are a student who identifies as a Black, Indigenous, Racialized, person of colour or non-White individual, you are being invited to participate in a research study on the perspectives of racialized students in regards to online activism and social allyship shown during the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study, please read this letter carefully to understand what is involved. After you have read the letter, please reach out via my email below to ask any questions you may have.

PURPOSE

My name is Jana M. Semeniuk, and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, Orillia, specializing in Social Justice Education. I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Seth Agbo for my Master's of Education thesis titled "Racialized Bachelor of Education Students' Perspectives on Performative Activism and Allyship in the Black Lives Matter Movement".

WHAT INFORMATION is COLLECTED?

In this research study, the type of information collected is related to your individual opinions and experiences watching the online and in-person allyship throughout the BLM Movement. You is probed on your opinions of performative and genuine activism, in addition to your perspectives on whether it contributed or took away from the BLM Movement.

WHAT IS REQUESTED OF ME AS A PARTICIPANT?

Through one 60-minute Zoom interview, you is asked semi-structured questions regarding your

views of social media activism and support during the BLM Movement.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT?

As a participant, you is asked to choose an hour at your convenience to conduct the interview online over zoom. Once you respond with your interest in being involved in the research, I will email you back to set up a suitable time to hold the Zoom interview. During this correspondence, I will affirm your ability to withdraw and will include a privacy statement in the email outlining the use of your data (see below in Ethical Considerations and Privacy Statement). On the day of the interview, I will again restate your ability to pull out of the process at any point and will go over the privacy statement and format of the interview. As a willing participant, you have the right to decline any question you do not wish to answer.

I assure you that you are under no obligation to participate and are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice to pre-existing entitlements. Your decision to participate will not affect your academic status/employment. You is given, in a timely manner throughout the course of the research project, information that is relevant to your decision to continue or withdraw from participation in addition to this, you is given information on your right to request the withdrawal of data, including any limitation on the feasibility of that withdrawal.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS?

There are both risks and benefits associated with this research. Emotional harm could be a possibility due to the topic of discussion. Students could become upset when thinking back to the reason for the BLM movement, which was born initially from the death of Trayvon Martin and catapulted back into mainstream media after the death of George Floyd. Before and after the interview, students will receive links to relevant mental health agencies. As a participant, you are entitled to be paid a $50 honorarium to be compensated for your time.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE MAINTAINED?

Your identity will remain confidential through the use of aliases on all transcripts and data to ensure your safety, privacy, and dignity. Once you reach out, signifying your willingness to participate, I will respond by outlining the interview process, in addition to the ethical considerations and asking for permission to record the sessions. Once the interview begins, you will again be asked to confirm that you consent to the recording on video. I will stipulate again the degree that your information is hidden and secured. Since the interviews is done on zoom, only I is aware of the participants, and you is allowed to change your zoom name and hide your camera if desired.

WHAT WILL MY DATA BE USED FOR:

Your data is used explicitly for the writing and dissemination of this thesis, and will not be sold or given to any external agencies.

WHERE WILL MY DATA BE STORED?

The Zoom interview is secure due to the Premium Licensing supplied by Lakehead University, and the transcription and recording will only be completed and seen by the primary investigator. Additionally, the information is backed up and stored on a private USB stick that will remain locked in a secure area for a minimum of 5 years following the completion of the project.

HOW CAN I RECEIVE A COPY OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS?

You is given a pseudonym and will never be directly related to the research results. If you would like to receive a summary of the results, please stipulate that to the investigator at any point in the research process by contacting Jana Semeniuk at jsemeniu@lakeheadu.ca or Dr. Seth Agbo at sagbo@lakeheadu.ca.

WHAT IF I WANT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

If you would like to withdraw for any reason at any point during the process, please contact Jana Semeniuk at jsemeniu@lakeheadu.ca or Dr. Seth Agbo at sagbo@lakeheadu.ca.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION:

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to indicate your interest in participating in this research, please reach out to Jana Semeniuk at jsemeniu@lakeheadu.ca. If you would like to speak to my Graduate Supervisor, Dr. Seth Agbo, he can be reached at sagbo@lakeheadu.ca.

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL:

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Appendix D

Faculty Email

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Jana M Semeniuk and I'm a graduate student and research assistant in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, Orillia. I am conducting a research project for my Master of Education thesis, titled "Racialized Tertiary Students' Perspectives on Performative Activism and Allyship in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement".

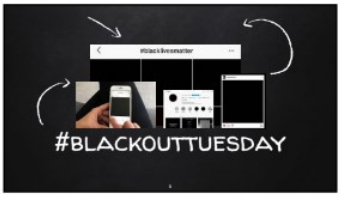
The objective of this research seeks to understand racialized students' distinct perceptions of allyship (both performative and genuine) and White resistance during the BLM movement. If you agree to participate in this study, you would be asked to participate in a Zoom interview online with me, where I ask you about certain attitudes, perceptions, and emotions you experienced in regards to social media and online activism during the height of the BLM marches. These interviews will take about 60 minutes to complete and is compensated via a $50 honorarium.

Participants must be either currently enrolled students at Lakehead University. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants' relationship/academic status at their institution will not be affected whether they choose to participate or not.

If you have questions about the study please contact the Supervising Primary Investigator, Dr. Seth Agbo at sagbo@lakeheadu.ca or the co-investigator Jana Semeniuk at jsemeniu@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix E

Pre-Interview Slideshow with Script



Slide 1

Title page

Slide 2

The definition of Performative Activism / Performative Allyship: Is when an individual from a majority or privileged group (white/straight/cis/abled) professes their support and/or solidarity with a marginalized group in a way that either is not helpful to that group, draws attention away from that group, or actively harms that group. They are performing for the perception of good and social capital gain rather than genuine care.

Slide 3

1-minute parody skit showing Youtuber Vic RL *performing* activism.

Slide 4

3 Influencer examples of performative activism: The first image shows an influencer posing for a photo dressed formally while holding a Black Lives Matter sign. Throughout the video, we see the other protestors dressed casually and sporting face masks, having to physically change their path and move out of the way to avoid the pair taking photos. The second image is from a video showing an influencer stopping a worker boarding up a shop during the Santa Monica protests to ask if she could pose for a picture. She then poses with the man's power drill, pretending to board up the shop as the worker takes her photo. Once the picture is taken, the man hands back the phone, and the woman is seen jumping into the passenger seat of a Mercedes and driving off. The final image is a still from a video a passenger captured while stopped in traffic. As the video begins, you can hear the videographer exclaim, "this girl is making her boyfriend take a picture of her in front of a smashed T-Mobile." As the video pans, it shows the young women posing, staring at the store, back to the camera. Once the photo is taken, she spins around and continues on her way.

Slide 5

In June 2020, Instagram was covered with black squares and the hashtag #BlackoutTuesday. Initially created to show solidarity and support for the BLM movement and the need to 'pause the show' and reflect on the current systemic barriers. However, by filling the #BlackLivesMatter algorithm with images of blank squares, important information was drowned out during a really critical moment in the protests as activists had been using the hashtag to communicate, gather and share information.