STORIES FROM WITHIN

A YORKVILLE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of employees who have work experience of being employed in Yorkville, and reside in other areas around the Greater Toronto Area. The study examines how gentrification impacts neighbourhoods, and explores how the gentrification that shaped what Yorkville is today, impacts the employees of the neighbourhood. Using a narrative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. The study discusses the experiences of the participants in relation to their lived experience of being employees in the Yorkville neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario. Data analysis draws on anti-oppressive theory. The findings in this study provide awareness of the lived experiences of employees who work in Yorkville. These findings help to understand how the image and perception of Yorkville impact the daily lives of these employees. This paper concludes with implications and suggestions of how future research can use this study to further explore the neighbourhood of Yorkville, from a firsthand, front line perspective.

Key words: Gentrification, Yorkville, Racism, Whiteness, Power, Privilege, Community, Employee experience.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Major Research Paper to all of the people who supported me throughout this process, to the participants in this study, and to all of the individuals who have been told that you cannot, and will not accomplish your dreams. You will, and you can.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this narrative research study is to explore the lived experiences of employees who work in Yorkville, but reside in other parts of the city or in the Greater Toronto Area. The aim of this research study was to gather unique stories based upon lived experience from employees in the Yorkville area that connect with larger social, cultural and historical discourses. The stories of lived experiences will be contextualized within the process of gentrification that the Yorkville neighbourhood experienced in the 1960s.

My interest in this research project stems from my own personal experience of working as an employee in Yorkville for a year and a half. I am a biracial, half Pakistani, half Polish, cisgendered, able-bodied, heterosexual female who carries privilege. Prior to working in Yorkville I worked in downtown Hamilton, the Lawrence Heights community in Toronto, and the Regent Park neighbourhood in Toronto. Social justice and diversity have surrounded me for my entire life. At the time when I worked as a front line worker in Yorkville, I had just completed my Bachelor of Social Work degree from Ryerson University. I had never been exposed to the Yorkville neighbourhood prior to becoming an employee in the area. Quickly into my journey as an employee in Yorkville, it became very clear to me that there was a rich history in the area that contributes to the postmodern environment of Yorkville. In my previous work experience, the neighbourhoods in which I was employed were all victims of gentrification and I saw firsthand how the space and construct of communities shifted to become more attractive to powerful, wealthy populations. I have always worked with communities and individuals who have been in a system that has the ability to marginalize and oppress them due to their intersecting identities. Working in Yorkville was the first time I had ever been exposed to extreme amounts of wealth, power and privilege. I had in essence worked for the most

marginalized in society and the most privileged in society. I saw the complete divide between the intersecting identities that are associated with wealth and power, as well as marginalization and oppression. This divide was what I began, as an employee in Yorkville, to analyze as worker well-being issues. I developed a passion to learn more about the neighbourhood and the process of gentrification that shaped it into one of Toronto's most upper class hangouts.

Yorkville was historically known as "The Village" (Hutcheson, 1978). The Village was founded in 1830, by Joseph Bloor and Sheriff Botsfor Jarvis (Taylor, 2015). Bloor and Jarvis were two individuals who were looking to escape the city's polluted air by moving away from Toronto's downtown (Taylor, 2015). Together, Bloor and Jarvis purchased the land just outside the former Toronto city limits and subdivided the land into lots, which were later then formed into small communities (Taylor, 2015). In 1853, Yorkville was officially incorporated as a village and originally named Town of York, which later transitioned to The Village (Taylor, 2015). The Village was an area used for rural purposes, such as barns, which eventually turned into electric street railways and brick car barns filled with amenities such as quiet spaces, residential streets and accessible transportation (Hutcheson, 1978). By 1861, the majority of the area was used for residential purposes (Hutcheson, 1978). These residential areas attracted specific grand families, hard-working, middle class gentlemen who were employed as painters, carpenters, bookbinders, blacksmiths and professors of music (Hutcheson, 1978).

The integral boundaries that made up Yorkville were the Annex and Rosedale, running from the Annex to Avenue Road and Bedford Road, and from Bloor to Davenport (Hutcheson, 1978). In the late 1800s, Yorkville was predominately run by two main industries, brickworks and breweries (Taylor, 2015). This humbling village later transitioned to a business and luxury-shopping district by the mid-1900s (Taylor, 2015). By the 1960s, the area became grounds for

some of Canada's greatest white musical and literary talent (Taylor, 2015). In the 1960s, the individuals who called Yorkville home were the white "young self-appointed great singers, poets, painters, guitarists, novelists, could day dream about future greatness", also known as the bohemian hippies of the time (Mathews, 2008, p. 2849). Due to the close proximity to the University of Toronto, Yorkville fostered an area that attracted prominent thinkers and writers (Taylor, 2015). The area began to boom with clubs, coffee houses and galleries (Taylor, 2015). These new businesses attracted a different crowd, from the once middle class individuals who had previously populated the area.

The 'free spirit' reputation of the Yorkville neighbourhood spread quickly and many tourists began visiting the area in their cars (Taylor, 2015). Local residents protested these vehicles being allowed in the area, because the community did not want the pollution coming into the neighbourhood (Taylor, 2015). In return, these protests created conflict between community members and tourists (Taylor, 2015). The City of Toronto was not responsive to these protests between community members and tourists, and the Yorkville neighbourhood began to take on a reputation of an eye sore (Taylor, 2015). This is when council decided to incorporate police presence in the neighbourhood in order to control countercultural activity (Taylor, 2015). Young bohemian culture was framed as the enemy of an established society, and the council's agenda was to turn Yorkville into a prestigious, very well established society (Henderson, 2012). Curfews were introduced and enforced for youth under the age of 18, and police foot patrolling was established (Taylor, 2015). With the increased surveillance and police presence, the area became tightly monitored which made shop keepers feel safe, and attracted a new type of industry to the neighbourhood (Taylor, 2015).

This was the beginning of the transition from an area, which was once Canadian music and literary focused, to now a high-end shopping destination (Taylor, 2015). By the late 1960s, developers began buying properties for low prices (Taylor, 2015). By the 1980s, Yorkville began attracting high-end businesses such as Holt Renfrew, boutiques and first class art galleries (Taylor, 2015). Public street space was now becoming private, with less public space available for shoppers to rest (City of Toronto Planning Board, 1971). Fewer casually contained open spaces were accessible in the neighbourhood (City of Toronto Planning Board, 1971). Gentrification was in full swing, and Yorkville was becoming a birthplace for the condominium trend (Taylor, 2015).

The 1870-1871 Census data showed that the majority of people living in The Village, originated from the British Isles (Hutcheson, 1978). This is an important piece of history to understand; to be aware that the neighbourhood has always been occupied by the dominant, white culture. Yorkville's roots are connected to privilege and wealth, but the population who occupied the neighbourhood transitioned over time because of the influx of businesses that came into the neighbourhood, and later left. Communities experienced displacement due to the transition of wealth and increased prices moving back into the area, community members who identified as bohemian hippies, were labeled with stereotypes that judged their character and assessed their risk to other community members.

As a front line worker in the neighbourhood who has white privilege, I saw how I could use this privilege to move freely in the space. On the other hand, I saw how boutiques, botox and plastic surgery clinics, restaurants and grocery stores targeted audiences who were able to fit into the perfect, wealthy mold that the neighbourhood is desirous of. I decided to use my Major Research Paper as a platform to connect with other employees in the Yorkville neighbourhood

who reside in other cities across the Greater Toronto Area to hear their lived experiences and stories of how working in Yorkville has impacted them.

I conducted a qualitative study utilizing a narrative approach. I interviewed five participants, in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. My findings revealed three main themes, which are as follows. The first theme that was revealed from the findings was participants' descriptions of Yorkville, the second theme revealed was the perception and image of Yorkville and the third theme revealed was the sense of community the participants feel in relation to Yorkville.

The findings were then analyzed and related back to themes of gentrification, which are determined and discussed in the literature review. The paper concludes by explaining how this research can be used in the future, and where improvements could be made in the research process to ensure a more in depth, anti-oppressive research approach is achieved.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In my review of the literature pertaining to the gentrification of urban neighbourhoods and the experiences of those who work in but do not reside within gentrified spaces, I found three major themes: 1) Gentrification displaces community; 2) Gentrification is embedded in power and whiteness and that communities work to resist gentrification; 3) Gentrification has affected many neighbourhoods and communities in Toronto, such as Regent Park, Parkdale and the Jane and Weston area.

Gentrification is a leading cause of pushing low-income individuals out of neighbourhoods in order to make spaces more appealing to affluent crowds. Gentrification is linked to neighbourhood inequality according to race and class (Hwang & Sampson, 2014). Gentrification is explained as, "the process by which central urban neighbourhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off and upper middle-class population" (Hwang & Sampson, 2014, p. 727). In nations such as Canada, the well-off, upper middle-class population most often implicates white bodies moving into poor and often marginalized neighbourhoods (Hwang & Sampson, 2014). The process of gentrification is linked to the states' participation in demolition of social housing projects and capital investment projects through the power that the state holds in reshaping neighbourhood identity. Furthermore, this process is often implicated in the construction of negative stereotypes of racial groups (Hwang & Sampson, 2014). Negative stereotypes of racial groups are maintained and controlled through the process of gentrification. The underlying assumption of gentrification is that neighbourhoods that are gentrified are reshaped into 'safer' neighbourhoods. Black bodies are labeled with negative stereotypes that are attached to criminalization, and brown bodies are associated with stereotypes of terror (Nelson, 2011), (Ahmed, 2007). White neighbourhoods are socially constructed as 'safer', and the stereotypes and

fears associated with racialized bodies are connected to the social construction of class and race (Boterman, 2013).

I was not able to locate studies that specifically examined the experiences of workers who are employed in gentrified neighbourhoods, but do not reside therein. One area, however, that resonates with my topic are the experiences of live-in caregivers. Previous work has studied the lived experiences of domestic workers. Live-in domestic workers' experiences connect to how they are displaced from their familiar community, and depending on one's' race, they are treated differently; they also resist against poor living and pay conditions (Shu-Ju, 2013). Scholars have noted that the Live-In Caregiver Program in Canada is also highly gendered as this program targets the recruitment of racialized women (Coloma & Pon, 2017) When domestic workers come overseas, their employers have control over their sleep, food, personal space and social networks when they are in the home of the employer, which makes these women very isolated, vulnerable, and controlled (Hsiung & Nichol, 2010). Many women choose to participate in domestic work as the alternative is being impoverished and unemployed (Marais & van Wyk, 2015). The lived experience of white domestic workers differs from the lived experience of racialized domestic workers due to whiteness (Shu-Ju, 2013). White racial identity provides workers with privilege, though they are doing exploitative work (Shu-Ju, 2013). White domestic workers have privilege at a macro level, and are not stereotyped or racially constructed in the same way that racialized domestic workers are potentially subjected to. Live-in domestic work stems from the rise of upper middle class women who organized to encourage the state to fill the new void in domestic labour by recruiting overseas; this void was especially pronounced after the Second World War when factory work was expanding and in need of labour (Hsiung & Nichol, 2010). Many women enter the field of domestic work because their mothers did the same work, and because they

were experiencing family hardships which was linked to the lack of means to support their basic needs; another reason was because they had lost a parent (Marais & van Wyk, 2015).

Displacement of Community

Many articles reviewed explained that many community members in communities that were gentrified felt displaced. Many residents explain that being forced to move due to gentrification, results in community members having to relocate away from one and another. This results in community members losing their neighbourhood support systems (Morris, 2017). These community members are pushed into unfamiliar territory, without the same sense of community that they are familiar with (Morris, 2017). Displacement of community is also present in the way gentrification impacts the closure of familiar shops, restaurants and services (Monroe Sullivan & Shaw, 2011). Areas prior to gentrification were often ethnocentric, and stores and spaces that once made communities feel safe and welcome; after gentrification these spaces are now catering to a new group of people that are most often part of the dominant white culture (Monroe Sullivan & Shaw, 2011). As these community members become displaced, they become suspects for criminality in their own neighbourhoods (Hudson et al., 2016). Due to this feeling, many people feel displaced and removed from communities that they were once so largely a part of (Hudson et al., 2016).

Food and culture are gentrified when spatial gentrification takes place. Health food stores and high end grocery stores have been moving into gentrifying neighbourhoods and replacing cultural grocery stores that were owned and operated by community members (Anguelovski, 2015). Local grocery stores, which once served as main hubs for socializing and supplying affordable, culturally specific food have been shut down and replaced by more expensive mainstream grocery stores (Anguelovski, 2015). Architecture and community festivals once ethno specific have been now targeted as trendy plots for condominium developers (Murdie & Teixeira, 2011). These condos are

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celebrated as spectacular, and in reality they represent an undercurrent of insecurity that is managed through gating, policing and technology interventions (Kern, 2010).

There is a discourse that engulfs the need for redevelopment that legitimizes the violence of displacement and marginalization (Kern, 2010). Poor, racialized, and other marginalized groups are the targets of this gentrification process (Kern, 2010). These condominiums have displaced communities that once occupied the old styled, Victorian homes (Murdie & Teixeira, 2011). Displacement from the community has a large impact on the most vulnerable.

Power, Whiteness, Racism, and Transnationalism

Power and Whiteness

The second theme is how gentrification is embedded in power and whiteness. It is important to define whiteness, and white supremacy to set the stage for further reading. The idea of whiteness is explored by Murphy, who determines whiteness as something that operates in society, to force certain kinds of identity to stand forth to speak for everything, while others are pushed to the side (Murphy, 2013). There is an underlying assumption within whiteness, that people who appear to be 'non-white' must identify themselves, forcing specific individuals to name their identity (Murphy, 2013). Ahmed (2007) explores whiteness as ongoing and unfinished history that orientates bodies to move in specific directions, and how their bodies affect how they take up space. The idea of monitoring bodies and how they take up space begins with how history began and how history moves forward (Ahmed, 2007). The starting point of history is where the world unfolds, and from the beginning, what you came into contact with shaped what you would do and how you would act (Ahmed, 2007). Prior to history unfolding, bodies were not racialized, and as history progressed, bodies became labeled as racialized in order to depict an "other" from the mainstream of whiteness (Ahmed, 2007). These histories stem from colonialism, which was a process that worked to make the

world white (Ahmed, 2007) and involved the genocide of Indigenous people and theft of land by Europeans (Kennedy-Kish, Sinclair, Carniol, & Baines, 2017). As colonialism makes the world white, the world is only ready for specific bodies (Ahmed, 2007). Whiteness is essentially the implicit norm (Gunew, 2007).

Racism

White supremacy is a concept that locates white racial domination by masking the production and violence of racial structures and the control of whiteness in settler society (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). White privilege is tied closely to the notion of whiteness and white supremacy, because there is an advantage and granted benefit that is afforded to white individuals, based upon their skin colour (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). White supremacy gives attention to the brutality and dehumanization of racial exploitation and domination that has emerged from settler colonial society (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). To tie these ideas together, white supremacy highlights the structures of white power and the domination and exploitation that rises due to the exclusion of people of colour in settler colonial states (Bonds & Inwood, 2016).

Mobility is used to hide the violence of white supremacy (Sharma & Towns, 2016). Our society has produced, and continues to produce, structures in which race matters, and until acknowledgment is given to the racist structures and systems within society, the racism will always exist (James, 2012). Under white control, some have the right to move freely, stop when they want to, park where they want to, shop where they want to, and sit where they want to (Sharma & Towns, 2016). Non-white bodies living in a white world are surveilled in a different way. For example, the perception that if a body is recognized as 'could be Muslim', then this is often translated into 'could be terrorist' (Ahmed, 2007). Not being white means your ability to maneuver in spaces is constricted and surveilled (Ahmed, 2007). Society is structured around males, by the Anglo white, middle class,

heterosexual masculinity, with the expectation that men demonstrate and live up to dominance, strength, aggression and control (James, 2012). Racialized males, particularly Black males, are marginalized and racialized by the white, dominant 'ideal' member of society (James, 2012).

Transnationalism

Many Chinese immigrants have been able to access resources and wealth that has enabled them to experience upward mobility in society, while simultaneously being discriminated against due to their racial background.

There has been a rise of global capitalism and transnational movements, which has resulted in state desire for the wealth of select Chinese immigrants who have come to Canada, the United States of America and Australia, to expand business and invest in economic realm (Shen, 2016). 'White Australian Policy' was aimed at ensuring the racial purity of Australia was not disrupted, but in 1973, that policy was abandoned (Shen, 2016). With the abandonment of Australia's immigration policy and the loosening grip of China's emigration control, many successive, well-resourced Chinese students, professionals and business people have moved into these high profile destination countries (Shen, 2016). The influx of Chinese immigrants, under the business investor program, has allowed for this specific population to experience some upward mobility in societies that were once controlled by predominantly white folks. However, as noted by Pon (2005) and Coloma (2017), these Chinese investor-immigrants continue to face racial discrimination and barriers to full acceptance in Canadian society. Coloma contends that the state both desired and undesired this class of Chinese immigrants.

Racism is a key reason as to why some bodies are able to mobilize freely in society, while other bodies experience controlled mobility, which results in certain groups not having access to achieve what other groups can. The concept of race is tied to a politics of mobility, and violence and

displacement towards racialized bodies which does not happen without reason (Sharma & Towns, 2016). Dominant actors in society regulate poor, racialized communities (Nelson, 2011). Dominant white discourses pertaining to Black communities have been a barrier towards the mobility of Black communities (Nelson, 2011). Young Black men are stigmatized and heavily policed, while low income neighbourhoods are populated by a significant number of immigrants, who potentially are experiencing unemployment, poverty, limited access to education and other resources, and labeled negatively through the media (James, 2012). Racism is the overarching oppression that encompasses these oppressive expressions and realities for certain identifying groups.

Global displacement, land theft, and residential segregation are all contributing factors of systemic racial inequalities (Neely & Samura, 2011). The factors of systemic racial inequalities have affected the ability for racialized bodies to move freely (Neely & Samura, 2011). Certain racialized bodies are surveilled differently based upon social constructions of stereotypes associated with their bodies, resulting in some racialized bodies not having the access or the ability to move freely in certain spaces (Neely & Samura, 2011).

Some racialized bodies are subjected to surveillance in ways that other bodies are not (Neely & Samura, 2011). There is a long history of roots of race-space connection in the process of imperialism, and how racialized bodies, such as Black and Indigenous communities, have had their land stolen and controlled by white dominant communities (Neely & Samura, 2011). Geographers explain the process as global imperialism (Neely & Samura, 2011). This global imperialism refers to geographical areas that are continually influenced by the mobility of global capital (Neely & Samura, 2011). Globalization has produced extreme disparities between the rich and the poor, allowing investment and migration to advance in specific geographical locations, benefiting a specific group of people (Ong & Nonini, 1997). Certain geographical locations that allow investment and migration are

raced and gendered, as a result of historical events of racial inequalities that are embedded in modern day ideas of freedom (Massey, 1994). The global process of racism creates an environment in which some people can move freely, and others are forced to move, or stay put depending on their identity (Massey, 1994).

Transnationalism has allowed for certain bodies to have more access to wealth and power in other countries. Transnationalism refers to the connection between people and declining economies that creates a diaspora while still having connection to that community's homeland (Benton, 2003). The diaspora of Chinese immigrants, who settled in Britain during the First World War, came to work in the offshore factories (Benton, 2003). These Chinese migrant workers were still connected to their home countries and were able to network and make businesses out of organizing further immigration for their hometowns (Benton, 2003). As time went on, these Chinese migrant workers began to take ownership of many cafes and other businesses in Britain (Benton, 2003). By the end of the First World War, tens of thousands of Chinese labourers were recruited by allies to work in Europe, in search of opportunity (Benton, 2003). During this time period, many of the migrants were poor labourers who were facing economic, religious or political unrest in their home countries (Shen, 2016).

Today, large proportions of transnational migrants are well off, and migrate for the purpose of self-fulfillment, rather than survival (Shen, 2016). Specifically in Australia, there was a push to contract out systems, which qualified ethnic organizations for grants and subsidies to run services that catered to the needs of their communities (Shen, 2016). This policy led to growth for the not-for-profit sector and the emergence of Chinese specific organizations in Australia, in the 1980s (Shen, 2016). With flexible citizenship, which is defined by Ong (1999) as "The cultural logics of capital accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changings political-economic conditions" (p. 6). The concept of flexible

citizenship has been the lens in how migrations among Chinese migrants have been understood (Lin, 2012). Chinese mobility has been described as inventive pathways that migrants carve out for themselves through strategies and logic (Lin, 2012). These strategic pathways allow for mobile projects to take place between Chinese host societies and their ethnic homelands (Lin, 2012). Chinese migrants inhabit multiple national spaces, resulting in globalization and a radical structural economic shift (Lin, 2012). With increased global connectivity, it has demanded a greater sensitivity to the border crossing nature of process, social organization, identity information, cultural reproduction and political engagement, which present day Chinese migrants have taken notion to (Lin, 2012).

Ong (1999) argues that many Chinese immigrants, who are professional investor immigrants, are subjected to racial biases that prevent them from gaining full acceptance into white, Anglo elite social groups. In Vancouver specifically, white neighbours show resentment to Chinese Canadian and Chinese American immigrants who move into neighbourhoods that are traditionally white, upscale neighbourhoods (Mitchell, 1997; Ong, 1999). Chinese immigrant neighbours are frequently not invited to elite, predominantly white social events, and are subjected to stereotypes such as laundrymen and restaurant workers (Ong and Nonini, 1997). This is an example of how white space can control racialized bodies.

Space is contested, fluid and historical, relational and interactional, and infused with difference and inequality (Neely & Samura, 2011). These spaces such as communities, parks, neighbourhoods, store fronts, and other physical spaces of geography are constantly changing (Neely & Samura, 2011). There is a political struggle that plays out through structures of difference and inequality that define and organize particular spaces in accordance with dominant discourses and interests (Neely & Samura, 2011). Particularly in the space of an educational institution, stereotypes

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exist and they serve to categorize, essentialize and disenfranchise young, Black males as they attempt to maneuver through systems such as the education system (James, 2012).

There is an added layer of systemic racial violence against brown and Black bodies that had committed offenses against the white control of mobility (Sharma & Towns, 2016). From colonialism to transatlantic slavery to contemporary tourist culture, certain people become white based on their mobility and the assumed rights to move others (Sharma & Towns, 2016). White people have historically imagined that they are a civilizing safe presence that aids others by implementing their culture, political and economic values over others (Sharma & Towns, 2016). White control has materially and symbolically required the unjust displacement of people of colour and Indigenous communities, through reservation systems and urban ghettoization (Neely & Samura, 2011).

Black bodies are labeled by stereotypes that transition between institutions, such as the education system (James, 2012). Labels and terms that stereotyping produces are used to control our perception, shape our understanding and develop particular outcomes (James, 2012). Some negative stereotypes that are associated, particularly with young Black men, are disengaged, poor academic performers, low educational outcome, all of which contribute to the discursive construction of this population as 'at risk' (James, 2012). The stereotype of at-risk serves as a form of racism, sexism, and classism, all of which are based on factors such as poverty, family makeup, immigrant status and neighbourhood of residence (James, 2012). The underlying disregard and unwillingness to acknowledge race and racism and how it affects young Black men in our institutions is how these stereotypes continue to be reinforced by other members of society (James, 2012). This stereotyping of young Black men operates to racialize and marginalize these individuals, and in return structures their social opportunities and life chances, of being up against a system that already has them so heavily labeled in negativity (James, 2012).

An example of how white communities have attempted to control Muslim communities is through the ban of the Niqab. The ban on the Niqab is a direct example of racial violence towards Muslim women (Razack, 2018). Bans, such as this racially specific one, are developed when dominant, powerful groups in society do not agree with, or do not accept something that goes against the Western, white routine (Razack, 2018). Violent, racist bans, such as the banning of the Niqab, express command to Muslim women to yield to racial and sexual superiority; it also reveals fear on the part of the dominant culture when racialized people refuse to assimilate to the Western gaze (Razack, 2018). The Niqab is a barrier to visual control which makes dominant groups in society feel anxious and unsettled, that threatens and disturbs the state because women who wear the Niqab represent the possibility that not everything is governed by the male gaze of white Christianity (Razack, 2018).

Black bodies are also subjected to systemic racial violence. Historically, Black communities have been discriminated against in the labour market and been labeled as the other through residential segregation (Griffiths, 2013). Racism and poverty are interconnected and dependent on one and other (Nelson, 2011). Black bodies have been historically labeled by white bodies as poverty, deviance, and criminality (Nelson, 2011). These labels have contributed to the discourses that white communities have used to violently label Black community members (Nelson, 2011). Discourse refers to the way in which knowledge is presented at a specific time (Woodward, 2002). Black communities have been bulldozed and torn down to build new neighbourhoods that appeal more to white community members (Nelson, 2011). The homes, religious and cultural centers of these Black communities become displaced and these individuals and families are offered no type of compensation or assistance with relocating (Nelson, 2011). The dominant white discourses that were historically created to label Black communities are used as a way of beautifying of Black neighbourhoods by the destruction of Black neighbourhoods (Nelson , 2011). These neighbourhoods

are referred to as colonial projects, as a way of using systemic racism to label specific bodies and move them from neighbourhoods in order to be more attractive to the dominant culture (Nelson, 2011). The regulation of neighbourhoods through deconstruction and rebuilding intentionally keep the undesired people out of the neighbourhood (Nelson, 2011).

Many cities that are under gentrification are marketing to affluent audiences to attract them to parts of cities that once were labeled as violent and unsafe (Gibson, 2005). City officials use their political platforms to discuss that there is a need for affluent populations to move into the downtown cores because they are the ones who have physical and financial mobility (Gibson, 2005).

The City of Toronto introduced a new economic and social upgrade that influenced Yorkville's new face which became the new age of privilege and power in Yorkville (Mathews, 2008). The presence of racialized bodies often makes white, middle class individuals feel uncomfortable and threatened (Gruner, 2010). Racialized bodies are often socially constructed as dangerous and violent (Boterman, 2013). With this social construction, many white people believe areas that have been gentrified are much safer and more comfortable (Schuermans, Meeus, & Decker, 2015). There is enjoyment experienced by some community members in seeing new businesses being built in communities, but the issue is that these new businesses cater to mainly white, upper class employees and clientele and can be damaging to the community that previously existed (Shmool et al., 2015). The discourse of the ideal condo owner is built in whiteness and privilege so if the condo owner is not aware of what their body represents in communities, and is damaging to the once dominant community that was living there (Kelly, 2013). The discourse of safety is used in a way that further legitimates the white control of mobility (Sharma & Towns, 2016). In the United States, there are several neighbourhoods that are diverse, with many community members identifying from various ethnicities (Sharma & Towns, 2016). These groupings are according to dominant discourses often affiliated with

gang activity, and the discourse of safety is often used to stereotype racial gang affiliation and legitimize the white control of mobility (Sharma & Towns, 2016). The white mobile subject who enters these spaces is future focused and aspirational for these communities (Sharma & Towns, 2016). White subjectivities with the agency to invoke discourses have the ability to use power to alter organization of the life of others through mobility by socially constructing discourses of race (Sharma & Towns, 2016). According to Sharma and Towns (2016), gentrification makes white people feel as though they have the power to improve the neighbourhood and transform the lives of the current community members.

Gentrification is ironically produced as racially authentic by white mobility, or the discourse around safety that is created in inner city spaces with white mobility (Sharma & Towns, 2016). These businesses that white people refer to are businesses owned by white businessmen, such as Wal-Mart and Kmart (Sharma & Towns, 2016). The influx of white businesses coming into the area would increase police protection, thus, mitigating the public potential of gang violence in the area (Sharma & Towns, 2016). Whiteness is central to redevelopment and having corporate businesses lay the groundwork to redevelop the inner city, so white people would become more attracted to the area (Sharma & Towns, 2016). This in return displaces the present community, and increases the violence towards racialized communities (Sharma & Towns, 2016).

Resistance

The final theme is communities resisting against gentrification. Black mobility can be a radical act and create 'Black geographies', which are spaces where Black subjectivity emerges in spite of marginalization (Sharma & Towns, 2016). Community members can initiate a creative community space and gain interest and support of their neighbours, which may trigger a collective community initiative (Marche, 2015). Though the area in which these community members live in is being

gentrified, this community space that has been initiated and operated by community members is a form of resistance which involves community members having an opinion and control in the remodeling of their neighbourhoods (Marche, 2015).

Homeless people that are living in urban areas are being pushed out of their nieghbourhoods through the process of gentrification. Homeless people are socially constructed to be drug and alcohol addicted individuals who are lazy and constitute a safety risk to the elite community members (Wasserman & Clair, 2011). Homeless people have a strong sense of community and though their space has been taken, that sense of community is a form of resistance to the gentrification (Wasserman & Clair, 2011). Artists resist against gentrification because low-income areas offer them studio spaces that are reasonably priced (Bain, 2003). Resisting gentrification is a way to stay apart from the business world (Bain, 2003). Resistance also takes form in petition signing and protests at places that hold institutionalized power (Debasree, 2015).

Resistance against the marginalization of Black bodies has been seen through the protest group Black Lives Matter, specifically in San Francisco's Bay Area. In Maharawl's (2017) article, participants describe their experiences of how they are treated due to the colour of their skin. One participant explains their experience by stating "How do I say this…because they don't care about us. The police, the politicians, the city they just want to kill us like we don't matter" (p. 339). There has been an increase in racialized violence in the form of policing and systemic targeting and killing of Black people by the US security, which is a result of the system being founded on violence and racism (Maharawal, 2017). Black Lives Matter protests have taken place internationally and as a result the protests have forced a political conversation about race, racism and the value of Black lives in connection to local histories and the contexts that shape these histories (Maharawal, 2017). Black Lives Matter Toronto has worked to resist against white supremacy, while working alongside

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Indigenous communities (Black Lives Matter-Toronto, 2016). The resistance that Black Lives Matter

Toronto continues to participate in is active resistance towards the white supremacist agenda, which

gentrification is entrenched within. Maharawal draws on the fact that the practice of policing the poor

is in direct relation to gentrification and the restructuring of the economy (Maharawal, 2017). The

political agenda of gentrification and displacement have complex racial dynamics that play out in

urban spaces (Maharawal, 2017). Pushing racialized minorities, specifically Black communities, into

the suburbs has resulted in the whitening of cities (Maharawal, 2017).

The Black communities, specifically in the San Francisco Bay Area, are being displaced

and subjected to criminalization, incarceration and excessive forms of police violence at the hands of

the state (Maharawal, 2017). San Francisco is currently under the gentrification wave of racial

capitalism (Maharawal, 2017). Racial capitalism is the development, organization and expansion of

capitalist society that has an essential racial direction (Maharawal, 2017). This type of gentrification

signifies not only the reinvestment of capital into urban areas, but security forces that exert violence

and spatial control over poor, racialized urban populations (Maharawal, 2017). As cities gentrify in

order to attract business and young white professionals with disposable incomes, the police presence

increases; this in turn results in more police calls due to heightening fear on the part of predominantly

white community members who have moved into neighbourhoods that were once occupied by

racialized bodies (Maharawal, 2017). Black Lives Matter protests, specifically the one in San

Francisco's Bay area, need to be analyzed as being a form of resistance against the violence of

displacement, eviction, gentrification and police brutality (Maharawal, 2017).

As explored above, this literature review focused on three main themes: 1) Gentrification

displaces community, 2) Gentrification is embedded in power and whiteness and communities have

worked to resist gentrification, 3) Gentrification has affected neighbourhoods and communities within

Toronto and across the world. These themes, along with the supporting literature, will further be

explored and used in relation with participant's findings, analysis and how these themes affect anti-

oppressive social work practice, and theory.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that informs this study is anti-oppression theory.

Anti-Oppression

Anti-oppression seeks to address power imbalances between those who have power, versus those individuals who do not, and how to eradicate the oppressive structures that contribute to unequal power relations (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-oppressive theory critically examines how experiences of oppression are historically and contextually situated in the present, which allows for a researcher to look closely at how history continues to repeat itself with a strong dominant culture accepted as the norm (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). The theory further explains how the struggle of the oppressed and marginalized people acknowledge that everyday experiences of inequalities stem from oppressive structures in society that continue to target specific individuals and groups (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). The theory does not pathologize people because of their problems, as the theory believes individual problems are connected to larger systems of oppression at macro levels (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016).

For social workers, it is vital to be self-reflexive when working through an anti-oppression lens, as your own oppressions and privileges influence the power you can exercise (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Pushing oneself to be critically self-reflexive, encourages individuals to reflect on their own biases, desires, fears and practices in an effort to uncover meaning of their own actions (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). As a researcher who is using anti-oppressive practice as a framework, it is important to recognize my own social location and challenge racial, class, gender, heterosexual, ableist structures of dominance (Heron, 2005). Power and oppression shape one's sense of self and their approach to research; so there is an importance to understanding the power and privilege I have within the dominant structures of

society (Heron, 2005). By admitting one has privilege, it does not unsettle the operation behind it (Heron, 2005); rather anti-oppressive practice pushes researchers and workers to critically unsettle dominance (Heron, 2005).

The anti-oppressive approach incorporates common features of Marxist, socialist, radical ideologies and the understanding of intersecting oppressions (Sakamoto, 2005). Based on all of these theories, the ultimate goal of anti-oppressive theory is to eradicate oppression through societal change (Sakamoto, 2005).

The intersectional model of oppression does not assert or create hierarchy amongst oppressions, but rather seeks to explain that oppression may be in opposition, or interact in other complex ways in particular contexts and differ amongst the lived experiences of individuals (Heron, 2005). Anti-oppressive theory aims to eradicate all oppression and focuses on intersecting oppressions (Heron, 2005).

Mullaly (2010) explains that anti-oppressive theory has three themes in order to avoid the reproduction of oppressive patterns and relations while working with participants (Mullaly, 2010). The first theme is to see the agency people have who are oppressed in specific ways from the dominant culture, and use that agency to create their own cultural and social change (Mullaly, 2010). The second theme is to manage power to promote empowerment (Mullaly, 2010). This is an example of how oppressed communities resist against the dominant group. Foucault explains that when there is power, there is also resistance (Foucault, 1990). The final theme Mullaly discusses is to ensure that you are being critically self-reflective in order to not perpetuate oppressions towards individuals and communities (Mullaly, 2010).

The History of AOP in Canadian Social Work

Anti-oppressive practice has evolved over time, but the importance of anti-oppressive theory lays in its history. In order to understand how modern practices of anti-oppressive theory have evolved, there is an importance to understand where the theory began. Anti-oppressive theory had originally excluded the concept of race and how it relates to one's identity. Anti-oppressive theory was shaped as a result of limitations seen with anti-racism theory.

In order to understand the foundations of anti-racism in Canadian social work, one must first understand the history of racism and white supremacy that is embedded in the settler society of Canada (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Racism has targeted several groups in Canada, beginning with Indigenous communities, which later encompassed the enslavement of Black people, then the internment of Japanese Canadians, the imposition of a Head Tax on Chinese immigrants, and the refusal to allow South Asians aboard the Komogata Maru to enter Canada (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). This racism that started in a historical context is still happening in Canada. Canada is founded on colonialism, and still perpetuates colonization through systems, institutions and policies (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Racism and colonialism continue to manifest in Canada with the refusal to recognize Indigenous sovereignty, such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, the racial profiling of Black and brown men, and the overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous people in prisons, and the child welfare system (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). This colonial relationship is still prominent within the relationships between the dominant white culture and Indigenous, Black and Brown, and Asian communities (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Canada is seen as a diverse, multicultural space, but ignores the fact that Canada is a white settler colony involved in the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous lands and resources (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016).

Anti-racism theory emerged in the 1990s, from powerful influence and activism of Black-Canadian teachers, parents, students and community leaders (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-racism theory addresses the racism, particularly at the structural and institutional levels (Pon, Giwa, Razack, 2016). Anti-racism uses race as the primary lens through which to address intersecting and interlocking oppressions (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-racism theory works to address the impact of racism on the lives of people of colour, while simultaneously advocating for structural change to social systems that reinforced the dominant culture (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-black racism later formed, which refers to the particular type of racism that is specifically targeted towards and experienced by Black people, as well as the resistance to this racism (Pon, Giwa, Razack, 2016).

Social work is a contradictory profession, where we have desire to advance social justice, while still being constrained by imperatives to enforce the social order (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). This history is what sparked the emergence of anti-racism social work education, which has transitioned into anti-oppressive theory in social work (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016).

Social systems, which are rooted in colonialism, are reasons why whiteness is reinforced, and power is given to the white dominant group in society (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). In 1997, the department of Canadian heritage awarded funding to the CASSW (Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work) to explore anti-racism in the curriculum within schools of social work (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Provincial teams were organized to conduct the research, and many provinces adopted anti-oppressive theory in order to focus on other forms of oppression, not just race (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). The findings of this research revealed a beginning discourse of anti-oppression curriculum where racism was subsumed within the analysis of other oppressions people experienced (Pon, Giwa, Razack, 2016). Conflicting belief

systems, values and discriminatory behaviours existed simultaneously between white social work educators and racialized social work educators, because the gap in theories was being critically analyzed (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016).

The transition into an anti-oppressive theory began in the 1990s in Canada, and was purported to be better and more inclusive than anti-racism (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Rather than using race as the primary lens through which to view intersecting oppressions, this approach adopted a broad view of oppression and discrimination, with the understanding that human experience is shaped by several different aspects of social differences (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-oppressive theory was introduced as a way to not create a hierarchy of oppressions, and look at experience as multidimensional (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016).

<u>Limitations of anti-oppression</u>

Anti-oppressive theory has limits, which constrict the ability to further push analysis. Many have critiqued anti-oppressive theory. It has been described as a theory that attempts to avoid racism while at the same time appearing to be progressive (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-oppressive theory is also critiqued for avoiding anti-Black and anti-Native racism (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). It often also does not involve in-depth analyses of white supremacy and settler colonialism; whereas anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and critical race feminism are purported to be stronger in the theorization of these oppressions (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Though the theory does not focus on lived experiences in relation to racism specifically, this research paper does analyze how the white dominant culture has access and privilege to power because of colonialism, and how that impacts individuals who identify themselves as being from Black or Indigenous communities. I chose to use an anti-oppressive theory as a lens for my

research because it critically focuses on the operation of power and the social construction of identity within these social structures (Healy, 2014). The research of exploring the lived experiences of employees who work in Yorkville, but do not reside in Yorkville needs a lens that recognizes how power operates and is maintained in society. Connecting these lived experiences to the theme of gentrification in Yorkville, it is important to look at how power of dominant groups has worked to push other groups out of areas, specifically Yorkville. The intersecting of oppressions and privileges is where experience will differ between participants.

The current literature does not examine employee's experiences of working in Yorkville as they relate to an anti-oppressive theory. This research study can begin to fill these gaps in current literature. The use of anti-oppressive theory guided my lens in analyzing the findings and through the interviews, to determine common themes amongst participants that related back to power and the structures of dominance. An anti-oppressive lens guided the understanding of how participants have multiple identities, such as race, age and gender and how those identities gave them privilege or oppressed them and interlocked in their work experience in relation to Yorkville.

It is important to be aware of one's own worldview and how it affects the experiences one may have in relation to others working in the same neighbourhood (Heron, 2005). Individuals will question the world and specific interactions in relation to the world they see, meaning their interpretation differs from one and other depending on their histories and how their histories have shaped their present experiences (Heron, 2005). The self is a co-constructor of social reality and because of this, the self cannot escape the part they play in reproducing structures of society (Heron, 2005).

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a narrative methodology. A narrative expresses emotions and conveys beliefs about how things should be (Fraser, 2004). Narrative is a form of storytelling that helps participants organize their experiences into meaningful conversation that call upon cultural modes of reasoning and representation (Fraser, 2004). Culture shapes how individuals envision their world and speak about their place in their world (Fraser, 2004).

Chase (2003) presents the idea that in order to facilitate meaningful conversation and discussion, listening well to participants is the most difficult, yet the most important skill in narrative research (Chase, 2003). Chase further explains how narrative is a major way in which people make sense of experience, construct the self and create and communicate meaning (Chase, 2003). Personal narratives are unique to the individual and unavoidably social in character (Chase, 2003). Narrative combines a focus on people's actual stories with analysis of the social character and how society and culture influence individual stories (Chase, 2003). In narrative methodology, there is a narrator and a listener (Chase, 2003). The narrator tells their story to the listener who has the power to shape the telling of the story by encouraging the narrator to share more, or to interrupt and resist the narrator's story (Chase, 2003). The written word is privileged and the person who chooses the word is more powerful than the person who used the word (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). This is important in narrative research because researchers who are aware of power differentials in an interview setting will value the stories being shared from narrators (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Stories of lived experience play roles in specific communities as well as in society at large (Chase, 2003). We listen to these stories and we learn how people as individuals and as groups make sense of their experiences (Chase,

2003). This is integral to in-depth interviews with participants, as researchers have the ability to steer conversation and storytelling.

Narrative resistance is a concept that attends to power and oppression and provides a platform to support people's efforts in resisting harmful storying of their lives (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Some stories wield more power than others (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Master narratives are stories that accumulate familiarity and maintain behavioural norms (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Researchers need to open up space for participants to resist master narratives. This requires a deep consideration of the meanings and power inherent in our invitations to open space for an interview, including the words we use and the space we inhabit during the time of the interview (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017).

Recall my guiding research question is what are the lived experiences of individuals who work in Yorkville, but reside in other neighbourhoods within the Greater Toronto Area? This question draws on lived experiences of individuals who work in Yorkville. The stories shared with me will be connected to broader social, cultural, ideological and historical themes.

Due to my own experience of working in Yorkville, I was able to draw upon previous relationships that I formed with other employees in Yorkville, to use the snowball method as a way of recruiting participants for the study. A telephone script/email script (see appendix A) were used as guides to interact with participants. Potential participants could forward my email and telephone contact information to other potential participants. If these participants were interested in the study, they had the opportunity to reach out to me and express their interest. In some cases, the mutual person, who connected me and the participant, gave me the participant's contact information, and I then reached out to the participant. I reached out by introducing myself to the participant, sharing a consent form (see appendix B) with the participant and

having casual conversation with them to form a relationship and initiate the research process. Interview questions were formatted in an interview guide (see appendix C), which I used as a tool to guide the interview and refer back to in times when needed. Participants were given a list of support resources that they could contact if they felt as though they needed to reach out to a professional after the interview (see appendix D). Three interviews took place face to face, in places such as a library and the participant's home. One interview took place over the phone, and the participant and I were both in the presence of their own homes, and both parties knew the conversation was being audio recorded. One interview took place over email due to the participant living in another part of the world. Both emails were password protected, and communication was only shared between the researcher and the participant. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure their identity was kept confidential. The demographics of the participants who were involved in the study are listed below. This study was cleared by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board.

Below I provide some details about each participant.

Jack

Jack is 27 years of age, identifies with 'he' and 'him' pronouns. Jack describes his racial background as 'light brown'. Jack has worked in Yorkville for a year and a half and works in the business sector.

Sally

Sally is 24 years of age, identifies with 'she' and 'her' pronouns. Sally described her racial background as 'Caucasian'. Sally has worked in Yorkville for several months and works in the service industry.

Isabelle

Isabelle is 22 years of age, identifies with 'she' and 'her' pronouns. Isabelle described her racial background as 'Caucasian white'. Isabelle had worked in Yorkville for several months and worked in the retail sector.

Ivan

Ivan is 66 years of age, identifies with 'he' and 'him' pronouns. Ivan describes his racial background as 'white, Jewish from Russian European descent'. Ivan had worked in Yorkville for several years and worked in the entertainment sector.

Eli

Eli is 71 years of age, identifies with 'he', 'she' and 'it' pronouns. Eli describes his racial background as 'Canadian Jew'. Eli had worked in Yorkville for several years and worked as a business owner.

Participants signed a consent form informing them that a voice recorder will be used throughout the interview to ensure the richest data is collected for the analysis. By not audio recording the interviews, the research would be summarized by the researcher's interpretation of the interview, which does not allow for a narrator's story to be told (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). The interviews lasted 60-90 minutes and were held at locations where the participant felt the most comfortable. The interviews were semi structured. The questions posed to participants were organized around their life story that the narrator has to tell (Chase, 2003). Chase explains the importance of asking questions that follow from close listening to the narrator's story rather than asking specific questions from your interview guide (Chase, 2003). This allowed for narrators to develop their own story and express their experience in ways that were meaningful to them. A structured interview guide (see appendix C) was used as preparation, but the main

goal of the interview was to have the ability to invite listening to the narrator's story to ensure that their story is valued and respected as knowledge (Chase, 2003).

The data analysis of this study reflects personal stories of the lived experiences of those who work in Yorkville, Toronto, and reside in other parts of the Greater Toronto Area. I transcribed the interviews, which captured the lived experiences of participants. It was important to slow down and immerse the interview in the memory of the experiences that the participant is sharing (Chase, 2003). It was important to pay close attention to the details that the participants shared in their stories and how they expressed themselves (Chase, 2003). Taking notes on body language, the place where the interview is happening and the emotional climates of the interview may prove useful because they are non-verbal actions that can be linked to what is verbally being said (Fraser, 2004). From the transcripts, themes were compiled from the participant's stories. It was important for me to transcribe the stories from the participants because I was the closest person to the story, and information that is crucial to the research can be lost if another person transcribes (Fraser, 2004). When reviewing the transcripts, large chunks of information were separated into segments of narratives to better organize the data (Fraser, 2004). With smaller segment passages, themes were gathered from line by line coding. Line by line narrative is used to deconstruct the use of specific discourses and see how those discourses have played out in the participants lived experience (Fraser, 2004). These dominant discourses can be linked back to how the lived experiences of individuals are affected by greater social and cultural influences (Fraser, 2004). This way, main points, common themes, body language, gaps of silence and understanding what meaning of the word was applied to specific words were more efficiently organized (Fraser, 2004). During the interview, a check in was used to ensure that participants

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did not feel that they were under obligation to participate in the research and that they had the ability to remove themselves as participants at any point throughout the interview (Fraser, 2004).

Overall, participation in the study posed minimal risk to participants. The psychological risks stem from the participant reacting to emotions that are triggered through conversation. The participants are sharing their stories of their lived experience while working in Yorkville, and along with that there may be memories or stories they have not shared with people before. There is potential for participants to react to this. A resource guide was handed out to each participant prior to the interview, and was taken up in consultation with me after the interview. I conducted frequent check-ins to make sure the participant was comfortable throughout the interview process. The consent form clearly outlines that the participant has the right to withdraw from the research at any point in time, and that was also verbally repeated to the participants before prior to the start of the interview.

Narrative research focuses on the lived experiences of individuals and their unique stories. The goal of the design of this study was not to generalize the findings to a larger population. It is a priority for the research to be brought back to participants before the research had been published. Participants had the opportunity to read their transcripts to ensure the interpretations I made of their stories were accurate before the research study was submitted to Ryerson University.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The following section discusses the similarities and differences of the participant's experiences of working in Yorkville. This discussion is centred around three themes that emerged from the data. The three themes are: 1) participants' descriptions of Yorkville, 2) the perception and image of Yorkville, and 3) the sense of community the participants feel in relation to Yorkville.

<u>**Theme 1: Participants descriptions of Yorkville**</u>

The participants described Yorkville, and compared and contrasted the neighbourhood to other neighbourhoods they have or have had experience working in. Amongst the participants, there were positive and negative descriptions, through their own lived experience of working and being immersed in Yorkville.

Participants used words such as 'affluent', 'clean', 'wealthy' and 'entitled' when asked to describe the neighbourhood.

Eli stated: *"I would describe the neighbourhood as an affluent, densely populated, casual and friendly oasis in Toronto"*.

As Eli described the neighbourhood as 'casual' and 'friendly', Isabelle also drew upon the term 'affluent'.

Isabelle stated how she began working in Yorkville and described her first impressions of the neighbourhood as:

"When I first arrived, I immediately noticed the nice cars, the very nice building, nothing was falling apart, everything was very up to date, very up to the times and the place I worked at was the same, nothing needed renovations, everything was very up to date, everything was very up with the times, very stylish", she further goes on to explain this as "It was very apparent, it

wasn't like you had to start talking to people and had to go hunting for things, you could just see the gems in the spot you can walk in and immediately notice the affluence, that's for sure".

Sally works in the service industry, particularly the restaurant industry. Sally mentioned what drew her to Yorkville and why she began working there. She described that draw as 'the economic status of the people'. The explanation of the 'economic status of the people' can closely be linked to the 'affluent' and 'affluence' terms that Isabelle and Eli used to describe the neighbourhood. Sally stated:

"Higher end restaurants, better tips, meaning higher standards of service".

"Mainly serving very wealthy people such as celebrities and athletes, so on and so forth".

Jack described the area in terms of the physical environment and his surroundings. Jack offered a description of *"It's clean"*. Jack further stated:

"I don't know if the city spends more time cleaning up the streets, but it's much cleaner than most of the other neighbourhoods I've been in".

This sense of cleanliness was complemented by Eli when comparing Yorkville to another area they worker in, saying *"I absolutely hated working in downtown Toronto-Queen and Bay- it was bland, unfriendly, no greenery around, and one would have to go to Eaton Center for shopping or eating which was boring".* In opposite effect of the 'unfriendly' environment of the Queen and Bay neighbourhood that Eli explained, Jack also uses the term 'friendlier' when comparing the Yorkville neighbourhood with other neighbourhoods he had worked in. Jack states:

"People are friendlier and seem to be nice. No one is zoning in on one thing and just on their phone the entire time. The atmosphere and vibe is just different then what I've experienced in other areas".

Ivan gave a unique description and explored how the actual architecture and layout of Yorkville was so different than other neighbourhoods he had lived, or worked in. He explained this by stating:

"Yorkville is such a small concentrated area, obviously it was more prevalent, it's so concentrated, not just the wealth concentrated, but it's a small space, its' kind of unique that way".

Part of the participants' descriptions of Yorkville included what they liked and disliked about the neighbourhood. All participants discussed the restaurants and shops in the area, while some described them as being 'expensive', 'entitled' and 'artificial', while other participants described them as 'hangout spots', 'an easy spot' and gave insight into why they enjoyed spending recreational time in Yorkville, away from the time they are there as employees and for work purposes.

Some of the participants expressed their dislike of how 'expensive' Yorkville is, and how that was a main reason as to why they did not spend time in the area outside of work hours. Isabelle noted how expensive the restaurants and grocery store option of Whole Foods is, and how the prices make it difficult: *"If I wanted to kind of pick up some nail polish remover or some makeup remover, or anything, on my lunch break, I couldn't because the Rexall in Yorkville was four times the premium of something even a ten minute or fifteen minute walk down the street"*. Jack expressed that they understand Yorkville gets a 'bad rap' for being expensive, but if you look for deals and explore more, you can find cheap drink and menu options at some of the

restaurants, *"discounts, certain restaurants will have certain deals on particular days throughout the week and the weekends"*.

Another aspect of the participants' descriptions was what they wanted to see change, or remain the same in Yorkville. Although some participants expressed interest in what they wish to have remain the same in Yorkville, many were able to further expand on what they would like to see change in the area to make it more appealing to themselves and their interests. Jack, Ivan and Eli all mentioned how they would like the condo developments and the destruction of the Victorian infrastructure to stop. Eli described his want for change as, *"If I could change the neighbourhood, I would have banned demolition of the old Victorian houses and not allowed high rise condominiums"*. This is further expressed by Ivan who mentioned that *"If I had my personal opinion, leave the density low, not too many high rises, to keep the atmosphere"*.

Sally discussed how she would not change much because she has 'hung out' in Yorkville for recreational time, but she did express that she does not visit the area often for recreational time because not many places are approachable for a student budget, *"I guess if there were more regular places, like shops and diners, more affordable attractions"* those are the changes she would want to see in order for Yorkville to better suit her needs.

Theme #2: Perception and Image of Yorkville

Throughout the participants' descriptions of their experience of working in Yorkville, all of them expressed ideas surrounding body image, impression and what is deemed as 'presentable' in Yorkville. Isabelle explained the 'standard' of Yorkville she had to live up to. She stated:

"I had to be extremely presentable whether it be nicely brushed hair, well-done nails, not just sort of a blazer and nice pants, it was really the fine details that all had to be particular, that

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say former jobs I've had whether they be in nice places or not, didn't require". Isabelle further explains that "the clients you interact with, I think that puts high pressure on the people running the small businesses because they want to appease these very, very particular clients, so in order for the bosses to please these people, you need to please your boss. So that being said, you really need to adhere to these people's standards, very, very presentable, very, very affluent, and like I said artificial or not, that is what they present themselves as and that is what you need to keep up with, so definitely very, very classy and well dressed".

Sally expressed how there is a level of dress code at the restaurant she works at, but that depending on how much money clients are spending, exceptions to the dress code are accommodated. She described this as *"we are told to let people know it is business casual. We wouldn't allow someone in who is wearing like sweatpants".* This response from Sally is linked to participant Isabelle's answer, and the idea that the way people present themselves is highly analyzed in Yorkville.

Sally states: *"If they're [people wearing sweat pants] with a group of people who are buying bottles, then they're allowed in. They make exceptions quite frequently depending on the situation".*

The term 'suit' came up throughout some of the participant's descriptions. 'Suits' were described as the form of dress, if not uniform, for most of the business people occupying Yorkville. The term "suit" was most often brought up in relations to the question I posed. "When you are out in Yorkville on lunch, are the majority of people from offices in the area that you've seen before"? This question was responded to by Jack, who explained that *"It's hard to say. Maybe the last few times I've gone out to lunch, it has been people in suits, but, I mean, people can just be wearing suits because".*

The idea of a suit being a prominent form of clothing to people who occupy Yorkville was also expressed by Ivan. Ivan expressed *"The image of Yorkville now is more of money. It's more how to impress other people with how much money you have, and what kind of suit you're wearing, again not everyone".* In contrast to this statement, Ivan, who worked in Yorkville throughout the later 1990s, and witnessed firsthand the experience of the gentrification. Ivan stated:

"It was an exciting time and there were all sorts of characters and you didn't have to be wealthy, you could be a hippy, most were dropping out and all types, a lot of flower child's, hippies, not having to be the suit and tie people you might find now, more prevalent".
When Isabelle was asked "What sort of image do you see as representative of Yorkville"?, Isabelle stated that:

"umm fit, definitely very artificial, fake whether it be freshly died, or a nice wig that looks like real hair, not much natural hair. Probably a fake tan, very heavy makeup, normally a yoga mat and a latte in hand. Then there's the whole crew from ya know Asia and Europe who are all in the highest brands (**highly exaggerated 'highest brands'**), who have the nicest cars (**drags out the word 'nicest'**). It's kind of like you're decked out very, very flashy, or you're like very, very artificial. Like a fixed face (**Laughs**)".

In comparison to the image that Yorkville portrays and upholds through who occupies the space, Sally made it clear that she does not belong in Yorkville, *"I definitely don't feel like I fit in there",* and through her further explanation, it is linked to how people who do occupy the area frequently, the clients of the participants, know she does not belong.

Sally had explained this by saying *"obviously I don't feel like I fit in when I'm in Yorkville"*. By stating this, from Sally's experience of working in Yorkville, she has developed an idea of what Yorkville represents and who is classified as someone who belongs to Yorkville, tying very closely to the observations and experience that Isabelle also mentions.

The idea of the 'nice cars' was expressed and described by Sally, a common topic in connection to participant Isabelle's description. Sally goes on to further describe that *"I don't dress like people do, I don't carry the same name brands, I'm not driving a nice car, I get off the TTC"*.

Many of the participants described what the image of Yorkville is, and who can belong, so there was a need to probe around what participants ideas were of who did not belong in Yorkville. Some participants explained this when describing their experiences of working in Yorkville.

When meeting with Jack, the idea of surveillance of particular bodies was discussed in relation to the limited public space in Yorkville, with an underlying intent of why the public space is so limited. Isabelle had described that from her experience of working Yorkville, she recognized that *"Homeless people, they are all over the world, they're a human just like you and I, they're not even allowed to step foot in Yorkville"*.

I had mentioned to Jack that *"different bodies are surveilled differently, because of higher structural and social issues"*. This comment that was made by myself opened space for Jack to describe their experience of seeing this in Yorkville. Jack stated:

"When it comes to bodies, I understand what you're saying. Umm I think as someone who identifies, not necessarily as a marginalized group, but as minority group, I haven't had any issues, or oppressive states or oppressive powers bear down on me. That being said, maybe, I

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think it comes out on how people present themselves and I think that just applied across the board. If you present yourself in a certain manner, you're going to get treated in a certain way".

Jack made that statement, but then later was able to connect how bodies are surveilled depending on appearance, and how that is relevant to his experience in Yorkville. He further goes on to explain that *"Maybe it's because I am dressed, in dress shoes, dress pants and a dress shirt on, people will take that in a different way whereas if you were dressed differently that would I guess require some other sort of look, but I don't know, especially I have spoken to a few of my other colleagues, with the same sort of background make up and they sort of say the same thing".* To tie his thoughts together, Jack ended his statement by stating:

"We all love where we work, we enjoy working in Yorkville there's no real, issues".

The conversation regarding bodies, and surveillance was described by Isabelle, who drew upon her life experience as a young white woman, and how she was portrayed in Yorkville, compared what she thinks others would have struggled with based upon her observations and experiences of working in the neighbourhood. Isabelle had explained that she grew up in a very racially diverse neighbourhood, and that she had friends from a variety of racial and financial backgrounds. The question asked to Isabelle was "Did you ever feel looked at differently in Yorkville or did you ever feel people treated you differently". Isabelle stated:

"Well thankfully not me because I'm lucky I'm a white, straight female, so I'm obviously privileged in the world, but if I was any other race or if I had an accent, I would absolutely feel ostracized, and feel out of place just because, not because you don't see people of different races, just because it's kind of its very, perfect and you have to be a certain standard of each race".

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That statement made by Isabelle comes from and is connected to Isabelle's experience of working in Yorkville and what she was exposed to, and what she saw. She also identifies her own privilege and is able to connect that to not being 'ostracized ' while working in Yorkville, because she explained that *"Whereas in Yorkville, I don't even think I was looked at in a certain way, I think that because I was just a white female, minding my own, no one kind of gave me a second look and I definitely didn't stand out".*

Through Ivan's description of the community and because he experienced the gentrification throughout the 1960s when his business was in Yorkville, he mentioned that one of the changes overtime that he saw was the increase of different types of ethnic identifying groups moving into the area. He explained that he saw more Italians, and Jewish people, but it was particularly the ones who had money. This connects back to the idea of 'wealth' which was heavily spoken about throughout several participants' descriptions of their experience, as well as tied to Isabelle's explanation of how as someone who identifies as a white woman, she fit right into the crowd.

Theme #3: Yorkville's Sense of Community

In terms of being connected to the community in which participants have worked, or currently work, it was mixed descriptions on whether or not participants felt a sense of community. It is important to mention that every participant had a different perception and definition of community. When I asked the question of "Do you feel a sense of community in the area?", a common response was questioning what my idea of community was. This is important when sharing the findings of the research because community means something different to everyone.

Jack explained that it was hard to grasp a sense of community because he does not live in the Yorkville area. This statement stood out to me, as community is being drawn to an area that someone potentially calls home. That idea of community is much different than a community in which one works, or does not frequent often.

Jack stated: *"I mean you get to know the people that work in the area and in different coffee shops, say hi, I don't know if they remember your name or what, but it appears a sense of belonging if you know the area well. But also, I don't live here, so when I leave, I don't think, 'oh, I can't wait to go to Yorkville again'. It's a nice spot, and nice area, but because I don't live here, and I don't experience to a degree, or to that extent, I can't really say that I feel a sense of community in that way. But I feel comfortable here".*

Other participants compared the neighbourhoods they grew up and currently live in to the Yorkville neighbourhood. They shared their opinions of how the neighbourhood itself was different in comparison to the neighbourhoods they have more of a connection with in terms of spending more time in, and being a resident. Isabelle explained the neighbourhood where she lives as having a diverse group of people, in terms of racially diversity, but also financially diverse. Isabelle further described that her neighbourhood is comprised of diversity, *"There's any different race, there's any different age, any different background, there's people from all walks of life".* She used this to compare to her experience of the community in Yorkville, where she explains that Yorkville is occupied by a lot of affluent people, and because of that, the less financially privileged are looked at differently, whereas where she grew up and where she lives, that diversity is what attracts her to the neighbourhood.

Ivan explained when he worked in Yorkville, he connected with the community through restaurants that liaised as hangout places for him to mingle with friends, as well as do business. Ivan stated:

"The deli that was there was there for years, it was called Myers deli, and basically it was the Jewish hangout so it wasn't just Yorkville, but pretty much all Jews and particularly late at night and it was a neighbourhood hangout and you'd bring your date if you had one, it was a local community".

Ivan's idea of community was brought into the conversation without a question to prompt the idea of community. His introduction to community came at the beginning stages of the interview, and this could be related with the idea that because he was so connected to the area for work, and had a large social group that also identified with the neighbourhood, his sense of community towards Yorkville differed from other participants who were just strictly in Yorkville for employment purposes. Ivan further went on to say, *"And I say community because it really was like a community. It was at the point where pretty much anyone could afford it then and it was a reasonable price".* This statement is linked to the firsthand experience that Ivan had when he was working in the area prior to the 1960s gentrification, and saw the change. By that statement, Ivan has also made a connection to how community shifted overtime and how the local, affordable eatery gave him a sense of community.

Eli also would frequent the area after work, and was involved with community events and committees. His involvement in these events and as being a member on these committees was a way for him to mingle with people which would help bring people to his shop. Eli did not use the term community, but when asked *"Did you take part in community events, and if so, why?"*, he did reply by describing some of the committees he was on. This is also linked to the question of

"Did you frequent the neighbourhood outside of work time? If so, in what capacity and if no, why not"? This question is connected to the larger idea of community.

When someone frequents a particular area often, there are certain aspects of that area that draws the person in. Though community has several different definitions depending on one's experience, if someone frequents a particular area, it could be because they feel comfortable in that area. The person could feel connected to the space, the people or the environment in the area. This could be explained as someone finding community. Eli further stated:

"After work I would often go to the Four Seasons Hotel ground floor bar where they had free appetizers with a drink. I would have my hair styles there, and often walked over to restaurants on Bloor Street".

Sally and Isabelle both made strong statements that they do not go to Yorkville outside of working hours, and do not have a desire to do so.

Related ideas of community and feeling connected to the area can be described through the time people spend in the area. The participants who were involved in community events, and frequented the area showed excitement when describing Yorkville and their involvement with the neighbourhood. They had passion for their community and passion to explain why they enjoyed the neighbourhood. Participants who did not feel a sense of community to Yorkville, had reasons that were from their own personal experiences of why they did not feel connected to the neighbourhood. Asking one about their idea of community can be a difficult question to grasp, because community means so many different things, to so many different people. What makes one person feel connected, can potentially make another feel disconnected.

The findings gathered from the participants are important to recognize as they directly relate to social work practice. The themes that were developed from the findings, being: 1)

Participant's descriptions of Yorkville, 2) Perception and Image of Yorkville, 3)Yorkville's sense of community, relate to the themes that were developed through the literature review surrounding how gentrification displaces community, how the process of gentrification is embedded in whiteness and communities do resist against it, and that gentrification is happening throughout neighbourhoods in Toronto, and across the world.

For social work practice, these findings are crucial in developing a better understanding of when communities and neighbourhoods gentrify, how the process of gentrification and the aftermath affect people's lives. The findings discuss wealth, race and gender, all of which are aspects of one's identity, and how these identity factors are affected by someone's experiences and environment. For social work practice, it is important to critically analyze and challenge how spaces that are gentrified affect the lives of the human beings that maneuver in these new, transformed spaces. In relation to wealth, race and gender, in social work practice, there is a need to decolonize these labels and further look at how systems of power and privilege affect access to wealth, how race is portrayed race and how gender is constructed, and what the effects are for certain individuals.

The perception and image of Yorkville is another theme that developed from the findings. This theme is essential to deconstruct for social work practice as many stereotypes have been constructed over time that symbolize wealth and importance, along with poverty, fear and crime. For social work practice, it is important to further explore how these stereotypes continue to develop and how racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism and classism all contribute to shaping stereotypes.

As one of the findings' major theme is tied to community, it is also important for social work practice to have an understanding about how community is a diverse term with many

definitions depending on one's experience. The findings explain how a neighbourhood can be a community for one participant, and not for another. For social work practice, it is critical that social workers analyze and deconstruct the larger issues as to why a space does not symbolize community for someone.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS

Using an anti-oppression theoretical framework, along with a thematic understanding of the participants' experiences of being employees in Yorkville was examined to form an analysis of these experiences.

The participants described their experience of community in Yorkville, with some feeling they felt no community because they felt as though they did not fit into the crowd; while others experienced their sense of community change overtime as they worked in Yorkville throughout the gentrification and saw the influx of new businesses move in, and others felt as though they found community in Yorkville and felt comfortable in their surroundings. These various ideas of how community shifts were also discussed in the literature. Monroe, Sullivan and Shaw (2011) explain how in the midst of gentrification, local shops and local restaurants tend to shut down, and more expensive, higher end businesses move in. These findings demonstrate the understanding of how community members feel displaced over time when their neighbourhoods become gentrified, and familiarity becomes lost through the process, as discussed by Morris (2017). These findings related to the theme of sense of community.

Many of the participants described the Yorkville neighbour as being 'affluent'. In an article explored by Anguelovski, the concept of food access is linked to affluence. The article explains how the image of a supermarket like Whole Foods, represents class and an affluent lifestyle (Anguelovski, 2015). The article further explains how Whole Foods is a place where people shop who can afford healthy foods to ensure their bodies are kept healthy (Anguelovski, 2015). This theme of affluence is closely tied to how specific brands represent class. Isabelle had mentioned how the Whole Foods made it difficult for her to do her grocery shopping or buy lunch, because the prices were high and unaffordable for her. Anguelovski further explains how

the concept of having access to food supply is closely linked to privilege of the upper class (2015). The article explains how supermarkets left declining inner-city neighbourhoods and relocated into higher profit areas like suburbs (Anguelovski, 2015). Food insecurity is not necessarily something someone of an upper class experiences, as grocery stores are staple infrastructures in wealthy neighbourhoods, to ensure people do not need to travel far for food, that the food supply is accessible and convenient to them. This represents the way in which affluent communities are assured access to food (Anguelovski, 2015). In an article by Zukin et al. (2009), it explains how structural changes work to attract a more niche market and clientele. The article explores how when gentrification begins in a neighbourhood, the family run businesses disappear and are replaced with stores such as Whole Foods (Zukin et al., 2009). The construction of new stores, like Whole Foods, also attracts boutiques, which reflect a strategic change in an attraction for the new, more elite clientele (Zukin et al., 2009). The literature shows that as structural gentrifying changes occur in neighbourhoods, the redevelopment is targeted towards the more affluent.

In relation to the term 'affluent', many participants emphasized how one dresses in Yorkville. The heavy emphasis on how one dresses is reflected in articles that have researched gentrification. In an article by Housel (2009), it explains how the experience of someone who was once familiar in their community became outsiders, after gentrification. The article explains how when gentrification happens in a neighbourhood, people feel a need to change their appearance to legitimize their rights to be in the neighbourhood (Housel, 2009). This concept from Housel's article relates to what participants emphasized when explaining their experiences of working in Yorkville. Jack mentioned how many people he noticed in the neighbourhood were most often in suits. Isabelle mentioned that she rarely saw the presence of people

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experiencing homelessness. The image of someone in a suit can be associated with the idea of Housel's, that the person wearing a suite has the right to be in Yorkville, where as someone who is unable to afford that type of dress is unable to have the privilege of occupying the neighbourhood's space. Along with the idea that someone in a suit has the right to be in specific neighbourhoods, it can be linked with the assumption that someone in a suit has access to money, with intent to spend. This could represent the idea that they are welcomed in hopes to create business, for many of the highly priced boutiques, grocery stores, dining options and hangout spots that were mentioned by participants.

In an article written by Kelly (2013), it explores how Regent Park, a neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario, experienced gentrification and how community members used performance arts as ways to express their feelings towards the gentrification process. A key highlight of the performance art, which was then critically analyzed by Kelly, was a person dancing, while undressing and redressing into a suit. Kelly explained this as how the image of the new condo owner, the gentrifiers, is associated with clothing and how suits add purpose to someone's appearance (Kelly, 2013). Kelly's idea of how someone wearing a suit invokes purpose is attached to the participants' emphasis on people wearing suits in Yorkville, and how their identity is not questioned, that it is assumed they are employees working in the neighbourhood, or upper-class people shopping, dining or exploring the neighbourhood.

The participants showed a varying response of connectedness to the Yorkville community. The participants, who felt more connected to the community, often frequented the neighbourhood outside of work hours, and would spend much of their leisure and social time in the neighbourhood exploring new restaurants and spaces. These participants may share a mutual understanding and connectedness to the area because they experience similar aspects of the

neighbourhood that other participants did not. These findings reflect elements, such as membership, influence and emotional connection that contribute to the ideas surrounding what makes up a community, which is discussed by McMillan & Chavis (1986).

The idea of space and who was welcomed into the Yorkville space was brought up throughout many of the participants' interviews. Some participants explained that they fit into Yorkville and did not stand out do to their white skin, while another participant felt as though their skin colour did not impact the way they were treated in the neighbourhood. One participant explained that it is rare to see people experiencing homelessness in the neighbourhood, because they most likely are asked to leave as soon as they enter. One participant explained that they felt more connected to other neighbourhoods that offered financial and racial diversity, and that Yorkville did not have a visible representation of racialized individuals. This connects to the literature by Gruner (2010) which was previously mentioned. Gruner explains that the presence of racialized bodies make white, middle class individuals feel threatened (Gruner, 2010). The participant who mentioned that because of their white skin colour, they are able to fit into the crowd, is a reflection of the point Gruner is addressing, that white skin does not initiate an unsettling feeling, or fear of violence and intimidation (Gruner, 2010). Global displacement, land theft, residential segregation and colonialism are all explained through history and used as tangible manifestations to reproduce racial inequalities and stereotypes (Neely & Samura, 2011). This relates to the findings around the theme of perceptions and image of Yorkville.

It is important to focus both on 'what' the participant said, along with 'how' the participant spoke about their experience of working in Yorkville. During some of the interviews, participants emphasized specific words. Isabelle exaggerated or emphasized the word *'prestige'*.

This emphasis could mean that Isabelle wanted this word highlighted and the researcher could have followed up by asking why this particular word was said in such a specific way.

The participant's language was sometimes filled with words such as *"uh"*, or *"umm"* or *"like"*. These words that were used as filler words could be given the perception that they were communicated from the participant while the participants were still attempting to find words to answer the specific question. These smaller, filler words could be used as a way for participants to take a break, process the question and then explain themselves. This did show that participants wanted to give particular answers and make sure that their points were thought over before expressed to the researcher. Some participants asked the researcher to further explain the question, to clarify the question and some ended their statements by saying *"I hope I answered your question".* The body language of participants was very open, making frequent eye contact with the researcher when questions were being asked, and answered. This eye contact felt as though it was a form of reassurance from the participant to ensure that what they were communicating was coming across to the research appropriately. The participants all appeared to be engaged in conversation with the researcher, and had a passion for their explanations of experience. Many of the participants spoke with high energy, which could be connected to the idea that the participants wanted to share their stories and have their experiences listened to.

In relation to the data collected, two concepts can be explored in relation to gentrification. The concepts are globalization and transnationalism.

Bridge et al. (2012) explain how gentrification has become a global strategy by which entrepreneurs seek to secure investment in cities across the world (Bridge et al., 2012). The concept of globalization refers to the economic restructuring that strengthens the relationships at a global scale (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016). Gentrification is the pathway that allows for the

process of globalization to take flight (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016). The relationship of

globalization and gentrification increase access for migration to distant neighbourhoods possible,

by encouraging reinvestment in international properties (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016). This

relationship has allowed for an increase in worldwide expansion of capital, people, information

and culture (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016). This process results in creating connection between

countries, connecting local capital to international consumer demand, thereby resulting in

increased migration of the extremely rich (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016). Sally explained how the

restaurant she works at will make accommodations to policies to attract the consumer demand.

Sally's lived experience is an example of how her workplace has connected local capital with

international consumer demand.

Mitchell (1997) has explained how capitalism has resulted in classism. The visible

display of name brand and high status items is considered appropriate in Hong Kong society, and

is a way of displaying wealth over the dominant class (Mitchell, 1997). Classism is very apparent

in Vancouver specifically, as there is a divide between the Anglo residents, and the Hong Kong

immigrants. Mitchell explains that Hong Kong immigrants choose houses, cars and clothing that

visualize wealth as a tactic to ensure that they are accepted by the dominant class (Mitchell,

1997). In Vancouver, houses are a key determinant of wealth and representation of class, as

many small homes were demolished to build larger homes in hopes of attracting the investment

of Hong Kong immigrants (Mitchell, 1997).

Mitchell's (1997) explanation of demolishing small homes and making larger homes as a

symbol of wealth, was mentioned by Eli. Eli explained that he wishes the old Victorian homes in

Yorkville were not demolished and turned into condominiums. The building of condominiums in

Yorkville can be related to the large homes that were built in Vancouver to attract the investment

of Hong Kong immigrants. Condominiums in Yorkville have replaced the old Victorian homes to attract investors and create space to house an increased amount of residents.

The concept of classism is mentioned by some of the participants. Isabelle mentioned how Yorkville is full of flashy cars and everyone is dressed in name brand clothing, carrying designer handbags. The idea that class is essentialized and represented through name brand materials is described through Isabelle's experience of working in Yorkville.

Sally mentioned that she does not dress like people in Yorkville; she does not carry the same name brands and she does not drive a nice car. Sally described three common ideas from Mitchell's (1997) article regarding what represents class and wealth. Sally feels as though people know she does not fit into Yorkville because she does not have the defining three material objects that signify and symbolize the type of class that is represented and looked for in Yorkville.

Globalization is linked closely to gentrification. An example of this is in Shanghai, where there has been an influx of redevelopment that has displaced the original residents of the neighbourhoods (Wang & Lau, 2009). The rapid development of infrastructures has led to a growing inequality between the rich and poor, along with issues regarding access to housing and consumption of services (Wang & Lau, 2009). Middle class families, which previously displaced the working class, are now experiencing their own displacement from the entry of super-rich financiers who are redeveloping areas at an international level (Wang & Lau, 2009). In Shanghai specifically, elite neighbourhoods have been established through environmental and physical improvements made in neighbourhoods, while simultaneously displacing the poor by foreign expatriates and entrepreneurs (Wang & Lau, 2009). The split between the rich and poor, resulting in the displacement of residents and businesses, was discussed by Ivan. Ivan explained

that when he worked in Yorkville prior to gentrification, the housing market and rent was accommodating to a variety of financial classes. Ivan continued by mentioning that after gentrification, only the richest of the rich were able to afford to remain in the neighbourhood. In Ivan's experience of working in Yorkville, he saw businesses shut down due to increased rent prices and their inability to compete against the richer businesses moving in to Yorkville, along with residents becoming displaced and forced to move to other neighbourhoods due to the increased rent.

As globalization and gentrification work together to invest and internationally develop, the rise of global capitalism has promoted a discourse of Chinese as the model minority (Pon, 2005). Countries have gone as far as changing immigration policies to lure Chinese immigrants with investment capital (Pon, 2005). This can be related back to Mitchell (1997), who pointed out that very wealthy Chinese immigrants are moving into predominantly white neighbourhoods, yet experiencing racism in their neighbourhoods (Mitchell, 1997). Cross border migration has resulted in unequal power structures and relationships for migrators, specifically Chinese migrants (Ong & Nonini, 1997). Transnationalism has allowed for Chinese migrants to relocate internationally, and still be connected to their nation of origin. Chinese migrants are still connected to their countries of origin, and though access to money and wealth is believed to increase power and status in society, Chinese immigrants are subjected to racism and have the barrier of racism to fight against when wanting to socially advance in Canadian Society (Mitchell, 1997).

Transnationalism, globalization and gentrification are entwined. All three concepts coexist with power, privilege and class and are larger themes of the participant's findings.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

<u>Areas for future research</u>

There is minimal literature that focuses on Canadian neighbourhoods and the effects that gentrification has had on community members. This research was unique in the sense that it explored the impacts of gentrification by speaking with employees who had work experience in Yorkville, and connected their experiences to the larger themes that were described in the literature on gentrification. Further studies of employees' experiences in Yorkville could be expanded upon by including a larger sample size to have more variety of participants' experiences. Only one participant identified as being racialized. For future research, it would be vital to include the experiences of Indigenous, Black and other racialized identifying participants to ensure that there are a variety of perspectives being shared. Similarly, it is important that future studies also include members of the LGBTO2S communities. Questions regarding able bodiedness were not asked, and should have been. If participants identified as being physically disabled, their experiences of Yorkville are potentially different than those who are able bodied.

<u>Implications</u>

A major implication of this research was the short timeline. As a result of colonialism, time is managed and you must be accountable for the timeline you have. I felt as though to do research that could be even more anti-oppressive, a longer timeline would be beneficial. With the short timeline of the program, and when the research must be submitted, the time does not allow for new relationships to foster as much as I would have preferred. A critical aspect of social work is building relationship with coworkers and service users. I felt as though the time we had to build relationships was very limited and time restricted which made parts of the process seemed rush, and removed from the real meaning behind the research.

Final Thoughts

The findings presented some negative and some positive experiences of employees who have experience of working in Yorkville. The analysis discussed some of the findings and how they reflected themes from aspects of the literature review.

One contradiction was the resistance theme that was targeted as a main theme for neighbourhoods which experience gentrification. Throughout the interviews with participants, it became apparent that the participants were not involved with the resistance behind the gentrification because they did not reside in the neighbourhood and because some of them did not work in the area when the majority of gentrification occurred. Employees who have work experience in Yorkville were the focus of this study due to time constraints. With the research timeline, finding participants who lived through the gentrification, and building connections and meaningful, long-lasting relationships with them would not have been done in an ethical way with the time constraints. Having pre-existing relationships with some of the participants allowed me to conduct ethical research and still listen to the experiences of how working in Yorkville has impacted their lives.

It was interesting to hear the experiences of participants, in relations to my own experience of being an employee in Yorkville. Hearing the experiences of the participants introduced me to other perspectives and understandings that were sometimes unfamiliar to the experience I had. The participants' experiences have made me think differently of Yorkville and opened up my mind and encouraged me to view working in Yorkville from several different perspectives.

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the experiences of employees who have work experience in Yorkville. This purpose was achieved. The aim of the research was to

give attention to a neighbourhood that has not been explored in the way of listening to the stories

and experiences of employees. The desire to bring forth voices in a neighbourhood where

employee's voices are sometimes not heard was fulfilled.

This major research paper is important and relevant, because as someone who worked in

Yorkville, I always wanted to connect with other employees and hear their stories and their

experiences of working in the neighbourhood. Every time I explain to someone I have worked in

Yorkville, I get a different type of physical and verbal reaction. This research is needed to

challenge people's ideas of Yorkville, and to give multiple perceptions of how a neighbourhood

that appears to be some people's favourite hangout spot, is avoided by others.

For the participants, the experiences they had shaped their connection with Yorkville.

Some participants had positive experiences to share, while others shared experiences that were

not positive. The participants demonstrated that there are different perceptions of the Yorkville

neighbourhood. It is important to see the differing perspectives to understand that Yorkville is

not everyone's cup of tea.

Appendix A

Phone/Email Script to Contact Old Coworkers

Good morning/afternoon (old coworkers name).

This is Sarah Rashid. For my Master's of Social Work Major Research Paper, I am researching the lived experiences of individuals who work in Yorkville. I am looking for participants who are 18 years or older and who have worked in Yorkville for a minimum of six (6) months.

The interview will last from 2-3 hours in length and a meal or a food service gift card will be provided. Travelling expenses, such as parking or TTC fare, will also be compensated. You can choose where the interview takes place, just please keep in mind, intimate and personal work experience will be discussed. Loud environments are to be avoided, as interviews will be recorded and the recordings need to be as clear as possible.

If you choose to participate, please understand that it is completely voluntary, and that you can decline from your participation at any point throughout the research process. You choosing to decline from the research as a participant will have no effect on your relationship with me as the researcher. If you are interested, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and thank you for considering to be a participant in my research.

Sarah Rashid

**Ryerson University
Consent Agreement**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

Experiences of Employees Working in Yorkville

INVESTIGATORS: This research study is being conducted by Sarah Rashid, who is a graduate student in Ryerson's School of Social Work, supervised by Dr. Gordon Pon, from the faculty of Social Work at Ryerson University. The research results will form part of Sarah Rashid's Major Research Paper and Sarah is working under the direct supervision of Dr. Pon.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Sarah Rashid by email, at sarah.rashid@ryerson.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of individuals who work in Yorkville, but permanently reside in other neighbourhoods. 2-3 participants will be recruited for this study. Participants must be over 18 years of age. Individuals in management positions are not eligible for this study. This research is necessary in completion of Sarah Rashid's Master of Social Work major research paper.

What Participation Means: If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

Steps in the Research Process:
- Contact Sarah Rashid at sarah.rashid@ryerson.ca to express your interest in being part of the study
- If there are any questions that arise throughout reviewing the consent form and the research study outline, you will be free to ask those questions via email
- The researcher will arrange an interview time that works best with the participant via email or telephone
- The research will be conducted in a quiet space where the participant feels most comfortable
- The interview will last from 2-3 hours, with a meal provided
- Sample questions that may be asked in the interview:
    - 1) What are some challenges you face when working in Yorkville?
- The participants 'racial background will be asked when completing the research, and if the participant does not feel comfortable in sharing this information, the question will be left out of the interview

- The research findings will be made available to the participant in hard copy, and a time and place to meet to exchange the findings between the researcher and the participant will be set up via email
- The research findings will be made available for the participants to ensure the researcher has accurately expressed the participant's feelings. If there are things that the participant would like to take out of the findings from their particular interview, they have the right to do so and to remain confidential and anonymous to readers

Potential Benefits:

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study. Participants will potentially benefit from this research because they will be able to have their voices heard, and attention brought to their feelings.

What are the Potential Risks to you as a Participant:

- The potential risks of this study are very low, such as:
  - Because of some of the questions being asked, participants may feel anxious and uncomfortable
  - If the participant feels uncomfortable, they may ask to skip over the question or stop their participation in the study completely, or temporarily
  - A resource guide will be provided to all participants with local resources to reach out to in case discomfort does arise during the interview process

Confidentiality:
- Participants identity will remain confidential throughout the research process and in the completion of the final paper
- Participants can choose how their identity remains confidential, whether this be with pseudonyms or whatever their preference is
- Records regarding personal information of participants will be kept in a password protected file and destroyed after the data analysis process
- No personal information will be released to any other party
- The interview will be audio recorded and participants have the right to review and edit the transcripts prior to data analysis
- The recordings will be stored in a password protected file

Incentives for Participation:
- A meal will be provided to the participant during the time of the interview
- If the participant does not want to eat a meal during the time of the interview, a gift card to their restaurant of choice will be provided

Costs to Participation:
- The interview will take place in a spot that is most convenient for the participant
- Any parking cost, TTC fare, or other transit costs will be covered by the researcher

Compensation for Injury:

By agreeing to participate in this research, you are not giving up or waiving any legal right in the event that you are harmed during the research.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given the incentives and reimbursements described above. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University and the researcher.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.
Sarah Rashid at sarah.rashid@ryerson.ca . You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Gordon Pon at g2pon@ryerson.ca

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact:

> Research Ethics Board
> c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
> Ryerson University
> 350 Victoria Street
> Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
> 416-979-5042
> rebchair@ryerson.ca

Experiences of Working in Yorkville

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Demographic Questions
1) What is you age?
2) What is your preferred pronoun (i.e. she, he, they)?
3) What gender do you identify with (i.e. genderfluid, male, female, gender non-conforming)
4) What is your racial background/ racial identity?

Following Questions
5) What type of industry did you/ do you work at in Yorkville?
6) What are things that attracted you to work in the area? Was it the potential customers, the surrounding stores, what particularly about the environment attracted you?
7) What are things that repelled you from the area? Was it the potential customer, the surrounding stores, what particularly about the environment repelled you?
8) Did you take part in community events in the neighbourhood? If so, why?
9) Did you frequent the neighbourhood outside work time? If so, in what capacity and if no, why not?
10) If you could make changes to the neighbourhood, what would they be?
11) What do you believe the connection is between your demographic identity and the way you connect to the neighbourhood?
12) If you could describe the neighbourhood to others, what would you say?
13) What other neighbourhoods have you worked in?
14) Can you compare and contrast your work environment between Yorkville and other neighbourhoods you have worked in?
15) What do you find comfort in a neighbourhood from?

Appendix D

Support Resources

1) **EdgeWest**

Drop-in youth clinic for ages 13-29 that provides primary medical, mental, and sexual health care services to youth on Toronto's West Side. Offering access to nurse practitioners and mental health counselors. LGBT-positive and pro-choice. Also offers connections to Legal Aid and employment resources.

1900 Davenport
Toronto, ON, M6N 1B7
416-652-4363
edgewest.ca

Ages served: 13 - 29 years
Languages served: English, Translation services available
Fees: None
To be seen: Clients/families may self refer
Must live in Toronto's West Side: An area bounded by Islington to the west, Bathurst to the east, Bloor to the South, and Eglington to the north (plust Mount Dennis).
Area Served: Toronto

2) **Family Service Toronto (FST)**

Family Service Toronto (FST) helps people dealing with a wide variety of life challenges. For over 90 years, we have been assisting families and individuals through counselling, community development, advocacy and public education programs. Our services are available to everyone who lives or works in Toronto.

Mental Health Programs and services include:

* Walk-In Counselling

* Counselling

* David Kelley Services (HIV/AIDS Community, Counselling, Lesbian & Gay Community Counselling)

* LGBT Parenting Network

* Families in Transition (FIT)

* Growing Up Healthy Downtown (GUHD)

* New Directions

* Seniors and Caregivers Support Services

* Violence Against Women (VAW)

128A Sterling Rd.

Toronto, ON,

416-595-9618

www.familyservicetoronto.org/

 Ages served: All ages

Languages served: English
Fees: None
Area Served: Toronto

3) Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Distress Line Operated by various agencies. When in need of someone to talk to. Open 24 hours a day (unless otherwise indicated).

Toronto Distress Centres (416) 408-4357 or 408-HELP

4) Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS)

Accredited Children's Mental Health Centre which serves youth up to age 24 and their families, providing various mental health services.

65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 300

Toronto, ON, M4Y 1G7

416-924-2100

www.ctys.org/

Ages served: 12 - 24 years

Languages served: English, Translation services available

Fees: None

Area Served: Toronto

5) Woodgreen

Various services and programs including:

* Walk-In Counseling

* Children and youth

* Employment

* Health and wellness

* Housing

* Immigrant settlement

* Seniors

815 Danforth Avenue, Suite 100

Toronto, ON, M4J 1L2 Map

416-645-6000 x1100

www.woodgreen.org

Ages served: 6 years and up

Languages served: English

Fees: None

Area Served: Toronto

All resources were taken from http://www.ementalhealth.ca/Toronto/Walk-In-Counselling/index.php?m=heading&ID=442, please visit this website for further targeted resources in your neighbourhood.

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