

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF PREJUDICE IN EVERYDAY LIFE:

AN EXAMINATION OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS,
ETHNOPHOBISMS, AND INTEGRATED THREATS AS
OBSERVED BY WHITE POST-SECONDARY YOUTH IN
ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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The Manifestations of Prejudice in Everyday Life: An Examination of Racial Microaggressions, Ethnophaulisms, and Integrated Threats as Observed by White Post-Secondary Youth in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

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Executive Summary

With the arrival of some 250 Syrian refugees to Newfoundland and Labrador in 2015, there has been much news coverage of the crisis both at the provincial and national level. Unfortunately, over the past few months, reader comments on on-line news stories from local provincial media (e.g., CBC, VOXM, *The Telegram*) have expressed a very negative and often prejudiced view on whether Newfoundland and Labrador should accept more refugees. These views, however, appear in contrast with the belief that Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans are welcoming and friendly. The goal of this research was to determine whether Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans hold racist, prejudiced, or discriminatory views.

In order to better understand this topic, interviews were conducted with 30 post-secondary students aged 18-26 who were studying at Memorial University of Newfoundland during the 2015 spring semester. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the specific themes to be explored were: *What is the nature of racism as observed by white youth? Do white youth believe the term Newfie is an ethnic slur? What are white youths' views of Canada's response to the Syrian Crisis?*

This research was designed to not only allow for an in-depth understanding of these issues but also to allow for comparisons to be drawn from my earlier work (Baker et al. 2016) on observations of racism among junior and senior high school students in St. John's as well as a similar survey research conducted with first-year post-secondary students (Baker 2017). This latter research was also partially supported by the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development. Ultimately, the goal of this research was to help inform the development of programs and services aimed at supporting the inclusion and integration of newcomers as well as to challenge public sentiments that in their consequence, if not in their intent, support the negative characterization of visible minorities living in the province. Based on this research, the following observations have been made regarding the views of post-secondary youth attending Memorial University:

1. The majority of racism, prejudice, and/or discrimination has been observed among the peers of post-secondary white youth but, in general, it was noted that many failed to address it directly with their peers.
2. The types of microaggressions observed are generally directed towards racialized minorities (e.g., immigrants/refugees).
3. The majority of microaggressions are microassaults that are either ethnic slurs and/or racialized jokes.
4. The majority of white post-secondary youth, who were born in Newfoundland, do not view Newfoundlanders as an ethnic group.
5. Most white post-secondary youth do not view *Newfie* as an ethnic slur nor do they find *Newfie* jokes offensive; however, their opinion would likely change depending on the context in which the term is used or the joke is told.
6. Most view Canada's response to the Syrian Crisis as positive but there is obviously a generational divide. Respondents noted that their parents/grandparents are more likely to express a negative perspective regarding Canada's response than their peers.
7. The perspectives on the Syrian Crisis found among their peers on social media varied from highly positive to highly negative.

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Introduction

With the slow but steady increase of immigrants to the province, and especially St. John's, this demographic change provides the opportunity to better understand young Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' views of race and racism. Given the relationship between context and racial attitudes (Cabrera 2014; Condor 2006; Jimenez and Horowitz 2013; Schonfeldt-Aultman 2014; Vargas 2014; Vaught and Castagno 2008; Weiner 2015; Wilkes and Corrigan-Brown 2011), the homogenous nature of St. John's provides an excellent opportunity to examine how racial discourses are utilized and navigated in white-dominated spaces. While studies of racism have focused primarily on large urban centres, its effect on those living in smaller centres has only recently been given increased attention. In fact, there remains a paucity of data on the effects of racism on youth in Canada's Atlantic region (see, for example, Baker (2013) and Baker, Varma-Joshi and Tanaka (2001)), and especially that which explores the perspectives of White youth, though similar research has been conducted in Canada (Raby 2004; Zinga and Gordon 2014), the United States (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Cabrera 2014; Hardie and Tyson 2013; Picca and Feagin 2007) and Britain (Back 1991). Hence, the goal of this research was to understand how white post-secondary youth observe, interpret, and perceive acts of racism within a local context. As a highly homogenous white city, St. John's represented an excellent case study in race relations. Indeed, it also represented an excellent opportunity to expand on my research conducted on post-secondary students' attitudes towards immigration and which was partially funded by the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development in 2012.

Rationale

Empirical research in the United Kingdom (Kirkwood et al. 2012), Canada (Varma Joshi et al. 2004; Baker et al. 2001; Noh et al. 1999), the United States (Nugent and Roberts 2013; Dow 2011; Hadley and Patil 2009; Ellis et al. 2008; Willis and Nkwocha 2006; Halcón et al. 2004), Norway (Fangen 2006) and Australia (Schweitzer et al. 2005) has documented that visible minorities are often marginalized, treated poorly due to their race, or experience racially motivated violence. Ellis et al. (2008, 185) argue that ongoing stressors such as those brought on by experiencing racism, discrimination, and prejudice can further increase visible minorities' risk to healthy development and potentially function as traumatic reminders, especially for those who have fled their country due to persecution associated with their ethnic or religious identity. Ironically, and perhaps sadly, research that I conducted based on a survey of refugee youths' white peers (Baker et al. 2016) in Newfoundland and Labrador and first-year university students attending Memorial University (Baker 2017) suggest that white youth are keenly aware of the subtleties of racism - having observed it directly- but are unaware of its tremendous impact. Representing the covert, subtle, and unintentional forms of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, racial microaggression theory (Sue et al. 2007) is therefore well suited to understand the complex range of racial experiences among refugee youth.

Houshmand and her colleagues (2014, 377) contend that racial microaggressions may be particularly salient in Canada because of its hidden, coded nature. As the official policy of multiculturalism emphasizes the value of cultural diversity and its focus on equality, there are strong societal norms that downplay the significance of racism. Despite Canadians' egalitarian attitudes, some scholars such as Arat-Koc (2005) and Henry and Tator (2010) argue that liberal multicultural and refugee policies belie a lack of tolerance for diversity. As a result, Canadians can

simultaneously hold egalitarian values and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Houshmand et al. (2014, 378) also conclude that as a consequence of their multicultural views, Canadians often deny their own racism. Despite such beliefs, there is ample evidence to suggest that racism is commonplace in Canada generally (Nelson and Nelson 2004) and Newfoundland and Labrador specifically (Baker 2013; Baker et al. 2016; Baker 2017). Such research therefore has the potential to ameliorate visible minorities' health and well-being, enhance Newfoundlanders' and Labradoreans' understanding of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, as well as facilitate the overall inclusion and integration of newcomers. Although there is a paucity of research using racial microaggression theory within the Canadian context (Houshmand et al. 2014), it remains a promising means within sociology to better understand visible minorities' experience with racism in Canada.

Newfoundland and Labrador provides an ideal setting in which to engage in further study of this issue due to historic immigration patterns and the homogeneous nature of the population. Indeed, the proportion of the immigrant population has steadily remained at 1.5% since at least the mid-1980s (Akbari et al. 2007). In 2007, the province released its Immigration Strategy, *Diversity ~ Opportunity and Growth*, in order to increase immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador. Through a combination of the Provincial Nominee Program and other federally administered immigration programs, the number of racialized minority immigrants to the province has increased, especially in the City of St. John's. Indeed, with the anticipated labour market shortage for both skilled and unskilled labour, the number of immigrants entering the province is expected to increase significantly over the next few years. Moreover, in March 2017, the government released its second immigration strategy – *The Way Forward on Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador* – which builds upon the efforts of the 2005 strategy and is designed to increase immigration to the province by 2022.

Given the generally homogeneous population coupled with the fact that individuals who reside in urban centres are more likely to (or have more opportunities to) interact with people of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, the St. John's CMA presents a unique opportunity to investigate whether racism is potentially an issue. As recent research in St. John's has shown that young visible minorities are experiencing racism (Baker 2005) and white post-secondary and secondary youth have observed it (Baker 2017; Baker et al. 2016), this research is especially timely. The issue of immigration is not only an increasingly salient topic for government policy makers (both at the provincial and federal levels), but also for program developers and service providers such as the Association for New Canadians. The recent shift in economic opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador has led the provincial government to become aware of the potential for an acute labour shortage—a recent document released by Human Resources, Labour and Employment in the Province provides an overview of the labour needs for the province for the next ten years (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2011).

Obviously, the perception of “outsiders” and immigration policy among the province's residents has the potential to play an important role in the coming years for policy-makers and for service providers. As such, this project sought to not only explore the observations of racism by post-secondary youth but also their views of their own ethnicity, the term *Newfie*, as well as *Newfie jokes*. If young Newfoundlander's and Labradoreans' view themselves as an ethnic group and/or Newfie as an ethnic slur, it may lead them to better understand the impact of racism on racialized

minorities. Such a perspective may ultimately help to challenge negative characterizations of people of color living within the province.

The federal response to the Syrian Crisis was unprecedented and represented a renewed focus on Canada's commitment to humanitarianism. In resettling over 40,000 Syrian refugees (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada 2017) through the Government Assisted and Privately Sponsored Refugee Programs, Canada and Canadians demonstrated clearly their compassion toward and desire to support the most vulnerable in society. With that being said, however, challenges remained. For example, there have been media reports of instances of racism directed towards Syrian refugees (see, for example, CBC News 2016; von Stackelberg, 2015) as well as on social media (CBC News 2015) and in Calgary (CBC News 2016). Given the prevalence and use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) among Millennials, there is a demonstrated need to better understand their view towards Canada's response to the Syrian crisis. Post-secondary students are an especially important cohort to examine given that education represents a strong marker to reducing racial resentment, and, as a generation, Millennials are supposed to be uniquely tolerant (McElwee 2015; Hogan and Mallett 2005; Chang 2002) in comparison to previous generations.

Objectives

Understanding the nature and nuances of racism directed towards people of colour in Newfoundland and Labrador has important policy implications, especially given the provincial government's desire to attract and retain immigrants in order to help address population decline, outmigration, and labour shortages. In this regard, this project had several key objectives:

- Identify and describe the nature of racism as observed by white post-secondary youth attending Memorial University;
- Interrogate Newfoundland-born, white post-secondary youth views on the idea of a Newfoundland ethnicity, their views towards the term *Newfie*, and whether they believe *Newfie jokes* to be offensive;
- Identify and describe the views of white post-secondary youth towards Canada's response to the Syrian Crisis; and,
- Identify strategies to reduce racism and to support people of colour living in the province.

Research Site

Located on the east coast of the North American continent, Newfoundland and Labrador remains one of the most homogenous provinces in Canada. While there is large Indigenous population located on the mainland portion (i.e., Labrador) of the province, the island portion (i.e., Newfoundland), however, is primarily white. While the province has witnessed more than a doubling of its immigrant arrival numbers from 2005 (487) to 2015 (1,122), Newfoundland and Labrador still continues to attract less than one half of one percent of the total immigration population arriving in Canada (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2016; Government of Canada 2015). Indeed, the majority of immigrants who arrive in the province settle in the capital city – in 2015, for example, nearly 70 percent of immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador was to the St. John's CMA (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2016). In 2015,

Newfoundland and Labrador received 1,122 immigrants, of which approximately 22 percent were refugees from such countries as Syria, Eritria, Iraq, and Sudan.

Despite the slow but steady increase in immigration, the population of St. John's is primarily European descended (mostly from England and Ireland) and, with a population of nearly 180,000, less than two percent identify as racialized minorities (Statistics Canada 2011). Due to its majority white environment and limited number of racialized minorities, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, represents an excellent environment in which to examine how white youth observe, interpret, and perceive acts of racial microaggressions. This is especially important given that such an environment can insulate white youth from the types of racial antagonisms frequently associated with racism (Cabrera 2014; Picca and Feagin 2007) but may also unintentionally mask white privilege (Vargas 2014; Bonilla-Silva 2010; Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000). Moreover, by focusing on the observations of racial microaggressions among white youth, this research may help better understand the sociological and social-psychological consequences of whites living in primarily white environments (Bonilla-Silva 2010, 99).

Methodology and Clearances

This research draws upon 30-40 minute semi-structured interviews conducted with 30 participants who were enrolled at Memorial University during the Spring Semester of 2016. Interviews were conducted either in-person or telephone (for those enrolled at Grenfell) with students aged 19-26. Every attempt was made to ensure that the sample reflected a gender balance (there were 16 female and 14 male respondents). Funds for this project were also leveraged to receive support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to conduct similar research in Hamilton, Ontario. These interviews with students enrolled at McMaster University are currently underway and is expected to conclude by August 2017.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed (by a graduate student in sociology hired as part of the project), and the analysis was conducted by the lead researcher using racial microaggression, ethno-phaulism, and integrated threat theory. Utilizing grounded theory, the analysis was conducted by systematically reviewing texts until patterns emerged (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998). The process occurred in two parts: first, all examples were identified and coded and second, these examples were assessed to determine whether patterns could be identified. The project received ethics approval from the *Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research* on March 30, 2016. It is anticipated that an additional ten interviews will be conducted during mid-2017 which would bring the total sample to 40 undergraduate youth.

Project Details and Results

This section is divided into three areas: a discussion and analysis of microaggressions, Newfoundland ethnic identity, and Canada's response to the Syrian Crisis as observed by white, post-secondary youth attending Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Interrogating White Post-Secondary Youths' Observations of Racial Microaggressions

As Sue et al. (2007) explain, the subtler forms of racism have been labelled new racism (Barker 1981), modern racism (McConahay 1983), interpersonal context (Harrell 2000), symbolic racism (Sears 1988), everyday racism (Essed, 1991), aversive racism (Dovodio and Gaertner 2008), and

within Canada, democratic racism (Henry and Tator 2010; Satzewich, 2011). These new explanations for racism tend to emphasize the covert aspect of racism while eschewing the “old” racism wherein overt racial hatred is consciously and publically displayed. Indeed, contemporary sociology views racism “as individual- and group-level processes and structures that are implicated in the reproduction of racial inequality in diffuse and often subtle ways” (Clair and Denis 2015, 857). As such, this “new racism” is most potent because it reflects a covert and continued form of prejudice - even though an individual may not recognize that her/his actions are causing harm. It represents “the empty seat next to a person of colour which is the last to be occupied in a crowded bus, the slight movement away from a person of colour in an elevator, [and] the over attention to the Black customer in the shop...” (Henry et al. 2000, 55). Ironically, research by Solórzano et al. (2000) suggests that the daily common experiences that characterize racial microaggressions “may have significantly more influence on racial anger, frustration, and self-esteem than traditional overt forms of racism” (Sue et al. 2007, 272). In order to address this issue, the question asked was: *Can you tell me about a time where you witnessed racism in Newfoundland and Labrador?*

Racial Microaggression Theory

Sue and his colleagues (2007) have developed a racial microaggression taxonomy that comprises three types: *microassaults*; *microinsults*, and *microinvalidations*. The first type refers to verbal or non-verbal acts designed to defame an individual through name calling, avoidant behaviour, or purposeful discriminatory actions. While this type is most likely to be conscious and deliberate, it is generally expressed in private or what Goffman (1959) terms the backstage. The second type - microinsult - is statements/comments that convey insensitivity while demeaning an individual's racial heritage. Sue and his colleagues (2007) contend that microinsults represent subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden derogatory message to the person of colour. Finally, microinvalidations focus on subtle communications that negate the lived experience of the person of colour – for example, when a visible minority is complimented for speaking English well, the effect is to potentially negate their Canadian heritage. Despite the growing trend towards research on microaggression theory using psychology, few studies, if any, have been conducted using a sociological lens. To date, empirical research on racial microaggression theory has primarily focused on the United States (Ong et al. 2013; Mercer et al. 2011; Sue et al. 2008; Constantine 2007) and only two psychology-based studies have been conducted focusing on Canada (Houshmand et al. 2014; Hernández et al. 2010).

Analysis

The respondents indicated that the majority of microassaults were racial epithets and, oftentimes, framed as a joke which supports previous research (Baker 2017; Baker et al. 2016).

I've witnessed like jokes... like racism jokes is the biggest thing that I have witnessed. For example like it was a sick humor joke... well it wasn't sick humor, it was just ignorant. One time there was a bomb threat in our school and I've seen someone say something along the lines of where are they gone, they must be planting the bomb or something. They were of Indian background.

Another example would be when I was in high school a lot of people would use the 'N' word kind of casually to speak to their friends. It is obviously not appropriate to do so but that was quite common.

Sure. When I was... I don't remember the exact age but I want to say 15 or 16, I played on a soccer team and we were away for a tournament. On our team there was one person from Pakistan, he was the only person who wasn't from Newfoundland. In the locker room we were getting ready for the game, kind of messing around and I saw ... he had a uh... what's it called in Pakistan what would be the proper term for the head gear.. ah head wear? [Turban?] Yea. One person, one of the people on the team came over and took it away from him and knocked it off his head, started calling him names, just generally insulting him. He wouldn't give it back, he was kind of making a joke about it.

So I served the first person in my lineup but then the first person in her lineup had to come into my cash to get served. They were a family, probably of Middle Eastern decent I would say. They came over and I was serving them- there was five of them. I guess mother, father, and three kids- I would assume. But when they came over, the people who were in my lineup, who they thought were first, I guess they were a bit jaded. They thought that they had been cut in line by this family. Basically, immediately, they started waving their hands. Gestures of like, what is going on here? We were first. So, they didn't say anything initially. I started serving the family, and I started hearing them saying, 'oh, I can't believe this.' 'this is disgusting'. Very rude, and they were saying it loud enough that the family could hear but not saying loud enough that they were making a scene. I don't know if the family could hear this at this point or if they were ignoring it. So I continued on serving the family. They started getting more vulgar. 'This is f--king ridiculous. They have no right to do this.' Then there was this man and women, and the man said, 'I can't believe this for towel heads.' At this point, I could hear it, so I'm sure they could hear it. The man seemed kind of mortified at this point.

Yeah, I worked in the restaurant industry downtown and mostly white people worked. So obviously, that would be bartending, serving, and hosting. People [who were] immigrants or refugees usually worked up in the kitchen doing dishwashing. I've seen several instances where fellow co-workers didn't want to serve tables of people of color or didn't even want to greet them coming in the door, they said explicitly racist things about them and just explicitly said they didn't like people of different ethnic origins. [Saying things like] I'm not going to serve them. I don't like black people or brown people just things like that. Also, I've heard generalizations about ... I'm trying to think now...just a general distaste absolutely, just explicitly... not even hinting.

I was working at a Walmart; this was probably around Christmas time. There was a young black couple and they came up with their cart full of groceries. I came up and checked them in, and had chit chat conversation. Their English wasn't very well, she was talking and he was just smiling. She could say enough to just communicate. When it came to pay, she couldn't find her card. She communicated through her hand signals that she couldn't find her card, and she couldn't pay. So I just smiled and nodded and said it was OK. It was fine. She smiled and went on. The guy behind her, who was waiting came up and said, 'stupid ni--ers eh?'ⁱ I was like Oh my God, so I said 'Excuse me sir, I don't have to serve you if you are going to be like that.' He kicked up a fuss and asked for a manager. I said 'no by, I'm not serving you if you are going to act like that towards another customer.'

These examples sadly demonstrate the ease at which some whites feel it is appropriate to use microassaults, in the form of racial epithets, jokes, or avoidant behavior, to convey authority and/or superiority, or to suggest a link to terrorism. Sadly, one respondent attempted to excuse his peer's behaviour ("For example like it was a sick humor joke... well it wasn't sick humor, it was just

ignorant.”) by suggesting it was ignorant rather than as racist (despite suggesting initially that it was ‘sick humor’). Such comments reflect what Trepagnier (2010, 3) terms the “white definition of racism,” that is, racism is only defined as such when it is blatant and/or intended. The last example indicates the supposedly ease at which individuals feel it is appropriate to use a racial epithet. It is important to note, however, that this individual calls out the behaviour of the customer rather than passively accepting it without challenge. In fact, Parrillo (2012, 110) contends that “one’s silent acquiescence to others’ discriminatory actions is still a form of discrimination....”

Microinsults are designed to invalidate the lived experience of minorities or to call into question their suitability or desirability to integrate into “white culture.” In the following examples, respondents describe the actions of family members, classmates, friends, and co-workers that demonstrate that these individuals are unwelcome or that their cultural practices are inherently different from accepted Canadian cultural practices.

Once again it is that more implicit, I have never witnessed like a hate crime, I have never witnessed someone being targeted with aggression because they were a different race but obviously like I said before they are treated differently. People make remarks about how the Tim Horton’s are filling up with minorities, that is all that work there. People say, ‘oh they are taking our jobs.’ I’ve heard that specifically.

I worked at the [redacted] and I had someone say to me once that there was someone who was of Middle Eastern origin that served them at the hospital in one of the restaurants and they were angry because they thought that person was taking a job away from a Newfoundlander.

When I was a lot younger probably eight or nine. My cousin had a boyfriend who was black, and I remember my grandmother telling her to break up with him because if they had kids they had kids they would be black, or they wouldn’t be white and she had a problem with that.

I mean walking behind like an Indian person, I’ve heard people complain about the smell of curry and the stuff and say things about that. Never to them but about them.

In the above examples, the responses clearly note that there is an assumption of deviant status. In the first and second examples, the individual believes that minorities and/or immigrants are taking “white” jobs which also belies a lack of tolerance despite the supposed multicultural nature of Canada. It may also speak to the policy challenges that provincial government may face when attempting to implement its most recent immigration strategy. While this is clearly a racist perspective, it is interesting that the respondent did not indicate it as such. In the second example, the individual recounts her grandmother’s view towards blacks which clearly reflects the outdated idea of miscegenation. In the third example, the respondent comments on the suitability of individuals of Indian descent living in Canada. Hence, there is the message that their culture is somehow inappropriate or incompatible with “white” Canadian culture.

While the majority of observed microaggressions were microassaults and microinsults, there were a few responses that suggest that whites do recognize the unconscious nature of certain racist, discriminatory, or prejudiced actions/statements. Sue (2010) contends that microinvalidations are

perhaps the most damaging form of microaggressions because they directly deny the racial reality of racialized groups. They are also the most difficult to recognize which may explain why only a few were identified.

I think subconsciously a group of us, we were not very inclusive because we were uncomfortable with being around people of different racial backgrounds even if it just came down to that. It might have taken me time to really accept someone as you got to know them because it was just a new scenario. It was something that some of us never encountered. It is something, it kind of why I wanted to come and talk about something like that because I realized since that my behaviour was probably... like I didn't even realize I was doing anything at the time.

Explicit racism is being like, 'Man, I hate how there are so many 'X' around' or something like that. I haven't heard a whole lot of that here in Newfoundland but the implicit racism of like, we had one black student in my school and no one picked on him. No one treated him worse but he was treated differently. He was the black student, probably someone in a big city would think that was really weird. If you asked me who the black guy was at your school, I'd be able to tell you who the black guy at my school was.

I have friends who won't talk to black guys or guys who are anything other than white guys basically. I don't even know if they are realizing that they are doing it type of thing or just... I don't know.

These three examples reflect the theme of an alien in one's own land, which reflects the belief that visible racial/ethnic minority citizens are foreigners (Sue 2010, 29). In the first example, the student is quite reflective of his experience as a student living in residence and meeting a racialized minority for the first time. In the second, the respondent first differentiates between explicit and implicit racism, and while noting that his high school peer did not experience explicit racism (at least as far as he was aware), he did note that his peer was treated differently. This example reflects the denial of individual racism (Sue 2010, 38). Here, the respondent acknowledges that his black peer is treated differently due to his skin color but does not believe that it is the result of his skin color. With regard to the last example, it appears that the respondent recognizes the inherent racism of his female peers' actions but accepts that they appear to be unaware of their own actions.

Conclusion

Research on microaggression theory outside of psychology is increasing and certainly empirical studies within the realm of sociology is growing. Unfortunately, there remains a paucity of research on white observations of racism or their views on race, though scholars such as Jackson et al. (2014), and Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) have sought to understand this phenomenon. This suggests, however, that research in this area is an emerging field of inquiry especially if analyzed through a sociological lens using microaggression theory.

This research sought to understand the nature and observations of racism as observed by white post-secondary youth attending Memorial University. The research demonstrated that white youth are acutely aware of racism, discrimination, and prejudice despite the argument by Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000, 66) that racism "is a belief that a few individuals hold and which might lead them to discriminate against some people." Clearly, the number of examples in which white post-

secondary students describe examples of racism demonstrates that it not isolated to a few bigoted individuals. Moreover, in the examples noted above in which the respondents note cultural differences or minorities taking jobs may be partly explained by Herbert Blumer (1958), who argued that prejudice always involves of sense of group position in society. In these examples, the respondents observed the white individuals attempting to assert their dominant position in Canadian society by assailing individuals of Indian descent and blacks for seemingly innocuous reasons. In effect, Blumer argues that prejudice will rise or fall according to issues that alter a groups' position in relation to another. Parrillo (2012, 89) also argues that economic competition too can play a role in the development of prejudicial views as individuals tend to be hostile towards others whenever competition for available employment increases.

In rebuttal letters to Sue's 2007 *American Psychologist* article, DeAngelis (2009, 42) notes that respondents accused him of exaggerating the microaggression phenomenon and advancing an unnecessarily negative agenda. While this response is unfortunate, it is perhaps not unexpected, especially in light of Bell's (1992) "rules of racial standing," in which he outlines how, despite their experiences, statements from minorities about racism are seen to be examples of special pleading and not to be taken seriously. It is precisely this view that helps to inform the intent of this research.

Interrogating Newfoundland Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity

Over the past few years, those who find the term *Newfie*, i.e., used here to refer to those residents and expatriates of the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador, offensive appears to have grown. For example, former Great Big Sea band member Bob Hallett called out Walmart for selling a tee shirt emblazoned with the term (Bradbury 2016) and the band itself took umbrage with its usage in a *Macleans* (Doyle et al. 1997) article about their album *Play*; an unidentified Halifax-based former St. John's resident complained to the Halifax Regional Municipality regarding the Middle Sackville street sign "Newfie Lane" (Sweet 2013); and in 1997, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) received a complaint regarding the use of the phrase "Those Newfies are so stupid..." in an episode of the American comedy *Ellen* (CSBC 1997). Indeed, historian Raymond Blake (2004, 28) notes that during the Confederation negotiations, Canadian civil servants "were warned against calling any resident of the island a 'Newfie'."

Despite its acrimonious history, there are those who do not find the term offensive. In response to the article on "Newfie Lane," *The Telegram* hosted an on-line poll, in which approximately 41 percent (based on 1,101 respondents) indicated that they were either indifferent to the term or loved it (~22 percent). The remaining 35 percent, however, stated that they hated it (Robinson 2013). While the poll lacks scientific rigor, the fact that over one-third of respondents found the term *Newfie* offensive is interesting. The purpose of this section then is to examine the responses of post-secondary white youth regarding their perspective on the term *Newfie* and the use of *Newfie* jokes. The questions asked were: *When you hear the word 'Newfie' what comes to mind? Do you think 'Newfie' is an ethnic slur? Do you find 'Newfie' jokes offensive?*

Origin of the Term *Newfie*

In the lone article dealing with *Newfie* as an ethnic label, King and Clarke (2002, 537) contend that while the term itself serves as a "vehicle of social marginalization," its meaning among in-group members remains complex. In fact, research suggests that Newfoundlanders are viewed

negatively by mainland Canadians (McKinnie and Dailey-O’Cain 2002; Edwards and Jacobsen 1987). Narváez (1986, 58) notes that *Newfie* was first employed as an ethnic slur in 1938 during an American radio narrative. While Pringle (1985) equates *Newfie* with the ethnic slur “Polack,” the editor for the first and second editions of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, Katherine Barber (2004; 1998) for example, describes *Newfie* as “informal” while “Polack” is listed as offensive. King and Clarke (2002, 545) note that within Quebec the term has a negative connotation, as it roughly equates with imbecile and/or fool. While it may seem odd for some to consider Newfoundlanders an ethnic group (and hence *Newfie* as an ethnophaulism), both I (Baker 2014) and King and Clarke (2002) make such an argument. In Berry and Laponce’s (1994) work on contemporary ethnicity in Canada, however, there is no discussion regarding Newfoundlanders as a distinct ethnic group.

Ethnophaulism

As Parillo (2012, 93) notes, an ethnophaulism is a “derogatory word or expression used to describe a racial or ethnic group.” He contends that ethnophaulisms fall into three categories: disparaging nicknames (e.g., “Polack,” for those from Poland or of Polish descent); alleged physical characteristics or foods (e.g., “frog” for French Canadians); or alleged behaviours (e.g., “to gyp (i.e., cheat or swindle) someone” which is based on the supposed criminality of the Roma (i.e., Gypsies). Interestingly, American sociologist Erdman Palmore (1962, 442) has argued as early as 1962 that “all racial and ethnic groups use ethnophaulisms to refer to other groups” which supposedly speaks to the cultural universality of ethnophaulisms.

While there appears to be little (if any) qualitative sociological research on ethnophaulisms, the studies that have been conducted have been quantitative and within the realm of psychology. These works suggest that ethnophaulisms directed towards immigrants vary in both valence (relative positivity or negativity of its portrayal) and complexity (Rice et al. 2010; Mullen and Leader 2005; Mullen et al. 2000). Rice et al. (2010, 118) further contend that one of the limitations of such research is that these ratings are based on American perceptions rather than the in-group’s own perceptions. Hence, I was interested in understanding how young white youth attending Memorial University of Newfoundland perceive the term *Newfie* and *Newfie* jokes.

Analysis

There appears to be two general themes that emerge from the interviews: first, most youth respondents do not see *Newfie* as an ethnic slur (including four interviews from those youth who were born outside Newfoundland and Labrador) or they feel that it is context dependent. For example, one respondent suggested that the term is “not offensive if used in a light hearted way” while two others described the term as “cute.” This perspective is somewhat ironic given that when asked what comes to mind when they thought of the term *Newfie* almost all of the respondents indicated stupid or some other synonym.

Interestingly, two respondents believed that there is a desire to reclaim the term, which suggests they believed *Newfie* was, at one point, offensive, though they both indicated that did not view it as such. Five of the respondents could be categorized as believing the term is offensive, with one respondent noting that she doesn’t “...like the term *Newfie* ... [believing that it has] a negative connotation.” One male youth described *Newfie* as a “cultural slur” rather than an ethnic slur, based on his belief that Newfoundlanders were not an ethnic group. This perspective was not unexpected

given that almost all of the respondents conflated ethnicity with race. It may also help explain why many of the respondents did not view Newfoundlanders as an ethnic group despite my assertion (Baker 2014) that it fits the criteria of Anthony Smith's (1986) *ethnie*.

In response to whether the interviewees believed that *Newfie* jokes were offensive, the responses mirrored their views on *Newfie* as an ethnic slur. Again, a significant majority believed that these jokes were not offensive or that context was important. In making a contextual argument, some respondents suggested that the jokes were, for example, "fine when it's a Newfoundlander telling it" or "not if they are well made." These perspectives may reflect Picca and Feagin's (2007, 74) assessment that such jokes "may sometimes operate to sustain or illustrate social bonds between friends..." Indeed, many of the respondents noted Newfoundlanders' penchant for being able to take a joke or to laugh at their selves.

Conclusion

There is uncertainty in arguing that the term *Newfie* is an example of an ethnophaulism. From the perspective of these 30 white youth, the general consensus is that *Newfie* is not, primarily I believe, because they do not see Newfoundlanders as an ethnic group. There are, however, those who would find either *Newfie* or *Newfie* jokes offensive depending on the context. There were also two respondents who pointed out that the term *Newfie* is used pejoratively in Quebec supporting the work of King and Clarke (2002). Parrillo (2012, 93) contends that the use of ethnophaulisms has the "effect of a less than human abstraction" by reinforcing particular stereotypes about a group. Indeed, this is reflective in the respondent's views that the term *Newfie* equates with stupidity despite their assertion that it is, at the same time, not offensive.

Parrillo (2012, 93-94) further contends that ethnophaulisms can be used by the in-group to reprimand those who appear to be acting out the stereotype though mostly it is meant as a "humorous expression of friendship and endearment." This perspective too was reflected in the responses, with many of the youth describing *Newfie* as a term of endearment among Newfoundlanders. With regard to ethnic joke telling, Laveen (1996) contends that if an ethnic tells the joke to the ethnic in-group, the phenomenon of laughing together has the effect of developing a sense of "we-ness" among the in-group whereas if an ethnic tells the joke to an outsider, it has the effect of undermining the stereotype by ridiculing it (Parrillo 2012, 94). This is certainly reflective of the perspectives of the respondents who believe that the telling of *Newfie* jokes helps to promote solidarity while combating stereotypes associated with being labelled a Newfoundlander.

Interrogating Canada's Response to the Syrian Crisis

The election of Donald Trump has led to a *Network* Howard Beale moment in the United States – "we're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore." While Trump was espousing his vitriol and heralding building walls and restricting Muslim immigration, here in Canada, the Liberal government announced it would expand immigration, including responding to one of the largest refugee crises since the Second World War. Politicians, however, do not operate in a vacuum and they are more often than not influenced by public opinion. As such, it is important then to shed some light on a specific cohort of public opinion, specifically white post-secondary students attending Memorial University. In order to interrogate Canada's response to the Syrian Crisis, white post-secondary students attending Memorial University were asked the following questions:

What are your thoughts on Canada's response to the Syrian crisis? What were your friends or family member's thoughts? What comments have you seen on your social media accounts? Do you think Canada's response was appropriate?

Integrated Threat Theory

In order to examine the responses, integrated threat theory was employed. While primarily a psychology and social-psychology theory, it has been adapted to sociology, particularly criminology, when examining, for example, racial threat. Most scholarship on integrated threat theory, however, is based on quantitative data so there is little empirical research using the theory to analyze qualitative data – though Harrison and Peacock (2009) have used it to analyze home higher education students' perspectives on “internationalization at home.” Research (Stephan and Stephan 2000; Stephan et al. 2009) has attempted to describe the components that cause a perceived threat between social groups as well as to describe the role fear plays in producing prejudice. This basic model includes four types which Stephan and Stephan (2000) believe can cause prejudice. The first is realistic threats which are threats to the very existence of the in-group (e.g., through warfare), threats to the political and economic power of the in-group, and/or threats to the physical and material well-being of the in-group or its members (e.g. health). Secondly, symbolic threats primarily involve perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes. These threats arise, in part, to the moral rightness of the in-groups system of values and beliefs. Third is intergroup anxiety which can be described as threats resulting from the in-groups' fear of negative outcomes for the self, including feeling embarrassed, ridiculed, or rejected. It may also result from anticipated interactions with the out-group. Finally, negative stereotypes represent threats resulting from perceived differences that conflict with or run counter to in-group expectations for appropriate behavior. It should be noted that this latter type was not found to be evident in the responses.

Analysis

Assessing post-secondary youths' views towards the Syrian Crisis is important given that Canada's intervention has been one of the largest humanitarian responses in over half a century. It is interesting to note that while 44 percent of Canadians oppose the Liberals resettlement of Syrian refugees, 58 percent of Canadians aged 18-34 support the government's plan (Angus Reid 2016). Despite the election of Republican President Donald Trump, Americans, and specifically American youth, seem to hold similar views with 53 percent of Americans opposed to accepting Syrian refugees while 63 percent of Americans aged 18-29 support accepting Syrian refugees (Galston 2015).

With regard to realistic threats, respondents noted the following observations:

I relatively agree with Trudeau's decision on the matter. I do think that he should be very thorough when there is a legitimate threat of a terrorist coming into Canada, so we should be careful with it.

I am no expert on it but I'm glad we have taken refugees ... [but] with the bombing in France people were scared of terrorism. They thought that ... one thing I heard a lot of was that you never know who you are letting in.

Canada seems more peaceful but I know it had also placed a lot of strain on resources like when refugees showed up and they didn't have enough hotel rooms for them.

I have obviously seen a lot of backlash against it as well. In terms of it's not our responsibility to look after them, they are going to be too expensive...

People are getting upset that they get jobs, that their jobs are being lost. I see that as a double edge blade.

That these people are going to come to Canada and steal Canadian jobs.

While each of these respondents supported Canada's overall approach, they nonetheless expressed some reservations or expressed the reservations of their friends/family. These reservations mostly manifested themselves through such realistic threats as a potential terrorist attack in Canada, cost required to support refugees, and concern over refugees taking jobs from Canadians. It is interesting to note that some of these responses could also have been analyzed using microaggression theory.

With regard to realistic threats, these youths expressed concern over threats to Canadian values, standards, and beliefs – which is somewhat disconcerting given the recent musings of Conservative leadership candidate Kellie Leitch regarding her interest in implementing a “Canadian values” test for immigrants. Indeed, Rick Mercer (2016) has lamented that Leitch spoke three languages “French, English, and a secret language only angry white people can understand” – which suggests that the views of Trump, and by extension Leitch, are resonating with a certain segment of the Canadian population, and perhaps more surprisingly, a relatively well-educated population. This is perhaps cause for concern given that research has shown that those with increased education and from a higher social class tend to have less prejudicial views (Carvacho et al. 2013).

People saying that we shouldn't be welcoming terrorists into our country and that they are going to be preaching their religion into the street...

[Saying that] they stay in their own country and help fight the war.

They should be rebuilding their own country and fighting for their own country instead of fleeing the war.

There are a lot of people who are saying to them [to go] back to their own country, help our people first.

It is clear that such symbolic threats mostly manifested in concern over threats to values as well as differences in Canadian standards and beliefs. There is also the belief among the respondent's peers and family members that the Syrian refugees should return to fight for their country. Sadly, this view has also been expressed by certain right-wing political leaders in New Zealand (Awford 2017), which suggests that this perspective is not limited to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Finally, with regard to intergroup anxiety, the respondents did appear to be concerned over the idea of other-group anxiety, that is, the belief or feeling that the other might do something to the individual (Greenland et al. 2012).

People saying that ... the moment we retaliate or say anything to them ... they will pull the race card and will say we are racist.

A couple of my aunts who I can't stand said they [Syrian refugees] don't have a place here. I think they were old fashioned so they don't embrace change.

Because people were afraid. Because the terrorist attacks that were happening in other Western societies ... People are just straight up afraid.

Whether these people were refugees or not, they were kind of scared of who was coming into the country and what could happen to them.

The above examples suggest that the respondents had concern over being labelled a racist, family members anxiety of it disrupting the social order, or the fear that they or their family members would be hurt. Given the homogenous nature of the Newfoundland population, it is not unexpected that respondents would express some form of intergroup anxiety given the few opportunities available to facilitate positive intergroup contact.

Conclusion

While there is evidence to support the argument that these youth do perceive Syrian refugees as a threat [or at least they perceive others as perceiving them as a threat], interestingly, the youth interviewed were generally supportive of the Liberal plan. This supports research by Partridge (2016, 17) who found that the “vast majority of [the UWO] students [interviewed] thought [that] bringing in refugees was a positive action” – however, like Partridge (2016), there were caveats to their perspective. Youth also believe that support for the Liberal plan is a generational issue. They perceived or believed that their older aunts/uncles and grandparents were more likely to reject accepting refugees. Interestingly, they also believed that their peers were more likely to support the Liberal plan than oppose it –which reflects the results from the 2016 Angus Reid poll.

Public Policy Recommendations

This research has interrogated several areas of interest for post-secondary students attending Memorial University and the findings have policy implications, not only for Memorial University, but also for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Based on the findings, the following five public policy recommendations are being suggested:

- That Memorial University investigate the benefit of establishing a first-year mandatory course on race and ethnic relations, to be delivered by the Department of Sociology. The goal is to ensure that all students understand the nature of racism in Newfoundland and Labrador society, especially as it impacts racialized minorities and Indigenous groups in the province. This may also help address a key recommendation noted in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* related to appropriate cross-cultural training within Canadian nursing and medical faculties.
- That Memorial University investigate the benefit and/or need for a Canada Research Chair in Newfoundland Identity to be housed in either the Department of Sociology, Political Science, Folklore, or History. The goal here is to expand upon the scholarly research

conducted on Newfoundland identity, nationalism, ethnicity, etc. in order to improve Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans social, political, or historical knowledge of their province.

- That the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador encourage the English School District to introduce diversity training sessions for junior and senior high school students. The goal here is to help inform young Newfoundlanders regarding the issue of racism, the value of multiculturalism and cultural diversity, and to help promote the province as a welcoming community. As similar sessions are currently being delivered by the Association for New Canadians, I am confident that the agency would be willing to undertake such an endeavor.
- That the Department of Education augment parts of its curriculum to include a focus on issues related to racism, prejudice, and discrimination (if it has not already done so). The goal here is to inform Newfoundland and Labrador youth regarding the effects of racism on the province's racialized and Indigenous population and hopefully reduce such instances.
- That the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador increase its efforts to reduce racism, prejudice, and discrimination in the province by establishing and funding an Anti-Racism Secretariat to be co-housed with the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism and the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat. The goal here is to provide community agencies and municipalities with the information and tools necessary to combat racism, prejudice and discrimination in the province, support scholars conducting research on this topic in the province, and to complement the goals of *The Way Forward on Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador*. This too would help address a key recommendation noted in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* related to cultural competency training for public servants.

Conclusion

This present study has demonstrated that despite the general belief that Newfoundlanders are welcoming and friendly, racism, prejudice and discrimination exists in the province. Such a finding is perhaps not surprising given the homogenous nature of the province, especially in rural areas, the current economic climate, and the demographic challenges Newfoundland and Labrador society is facing. In order to address these issues, the province needs immigrants, especially those who can fill areas where there are significant labour market shortages and where skilled labour is difficult to procure among local residents. Moreover, there is a need for youth in the province to be better educated on issues related to racism, prejudice, and discrimination as a majority of the responses indicate that the observations of racism were peer related. As some segments of the provincial population continues to question the validity of the lived experiences of racialized minorities living in the province, it is hoped that these examples - presented in the observations of the dominant white population - will represent a call to action on racism, discrimination, and prejudice in Newfoundland and Labrador society.

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ⁱ Following the example of Matsuda (1989) and Essed (1997), this report does not spell out racial slurs unless it is necessary for comprehension.