The Word *Nigger* as Racialized and Non-Racialized: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis on the N-Word in a Canadian Society

Bukun F. Adegbembo
Colleen MacQuarrie, Ph.D.

University of Prince Edward Island

Abstract The present study addresses the ongoing issues around the reappropriation of the *n-word* in the Canadian context. It sought to find if, and how easily, slurs and language can change their meaning over time. While some prior studies viewed the n-word as too hateful to ever be used by anyone (Embrick & Henricks, 2013), other authors believed that it should only be used by Blacks (Galinsky, Hugenberg, Groom, & Bodenhausen, 2003), and yet others claimed that it has taken on a new meaning and can be used by anyone in society (Croom, 2013). An article titled *Quebec considers removing N-word from 11 place names* and its corresponding comments, which were posted on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation website (http://www.cbc.ca), were used as data for this present study. The current research used Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to investigate both the discourses surrounding the n-word as well as power relations that emerged in those discourses. The two emergent discourses from this study were the *Acknowledgement Discourse: Nigger is Racialized*, and the *Denial Discourse: Nigger is Non-Racialized*. The subject positions created from both discourses, which were the privileged and unprivileged, used language in ways that either reinscribed or challenged White privilege. Through the language, word choice and tones used, comments exemplified the complex and complicated nature of the n-word and showed society's inability to come to a consensus on its meaning and use.

Keywords: nigger, nigga, n-word, Foucaldian Discourse Analysis

INTRODUCTION

I n his book, *Tupac: Resurrection, 1971-1996*, Tupac wrote, "Niggers was the ones on the rope, hanging off the thing. Niggas is the ones with gold ropes, hanging out at clubs" (Shakur, Shakur, Hoye, Ali & Einenkel, 2003, p. 155). This quote highlights the complexity of the word nigger and its derivative, nigga. The terminology nigger was first used to refer negatively to Black people, perpetuating stereotypes that they are intellectually and morally inferior, animal-like, undeserving of humanity and other such negative beliefs (Embrick & Henricks, 2013; Croom, 2013). Within the Black community, this word has been transformed into having a less violent definition and into a general term of endearment. The way of spelling the expression nigga versus nigger is usually the way to differentiate between the two meanings, with nigga being the positive term (Neal, 2013). As Neal (2013) stated, while the term nigger refers to "an embodiment of Black racial subjects in the pre-20th century South", the word nigga "relates to concepts of [Blackness] as mobile, fluid, adaptable, postmodern [and] urban" (p. 557)

How can a word come to have opposite definitions, and who determines which definition is at work each time the word is said? In the following paragraphs, I will explore how a word can be viewed as both a slur and a term of

endearment. In examining this, I will discuss the ideas and thoughts behind language being both productive and ever-changing. My approach will illustrate the intricacies and complexities that restrict the term nigger from having a universal definition. I will begin this exploration by first discussing the history of the terms nigger and nigga, leading into the reappropriation of the term nigger by Blacks to understand both the positive and negative effects of the intra-racial use of a slur. Following this section, I will take a look into the use of the term nigger by Whites in an attempt to claim that the word is non-racialized and that its historical meaning has transformed. This analysis of the term nigger will be followed by an introduction to the present study in which I will show that the tethering approach to the phrases nigger and nigga continues across the border and into Canada.

This paper will use the words, nigger and nigga interchangeably, rather than using the socially and politically correct phrase, "n-word", in order to reflect the terms' conversational and controversial use in society. It must be noted that the way of spelling the reappropriated version of the term nigger, as nigga, is more contained and understood within the hip-hop community but has not yet been as widely recognized in the scholarly world (Neal, 2013; Jacobs, 2011). What this means is that though scholars have written about the reappropriation of the word nigger, they maintain the spelling as nigger and not nigga. This paper will use the term similarly to show both the vitriol use and its reappropriated format but will employ the word nigga to stress and reflect when it is being reappropriated by and amongst Blacks, especially Blacks who subscribe to the hip-hop subculture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Origin: Nigger as a Slur

The terms nigger, Negro and nigga are said to derive from the Latin word niger which means black (Fogle, 2013). According to Fogle (2013), the word nigger began being used to both psychologically and publicly put down slaves, who did not have property, funds, or legal rights in the 18th century (Fogle, 2013). Slurs, as defined by Croom (2013), are terms or labels used to derogate certain groups and their members. Slurs represent negative attitudes about groups and are uttered with the intent to offend the target group (Anderson & Lepore, 2011). The phrase, nigger, is a slur because it goes beyond being a descriptive term and "[imposes] contempt on [Blacks] as an inferior race" (Easton, 2007, p. 40). Rahman (2012) wrote that the term nigger carries the stereotype of "moral and intellectual inferiority" (p. 158) and when used as a label towards a Black person, stigmatizes them as having "subhuman characteristics" (p. 143).

Reappropriation

Blacks' use of the terms. By classifying the word nigger, as a slur, we can connect it to the idea of reappropriation. Galinsky et al., (2003) defined reappropriation as taking "possession for oneself that which was once possessed by another " (p. 222). Reappropriation occurs when a stigmatized group purposefully refers to themselves with the stigmatized label used by those in the out-group (Galinsky et al., 2003). Galinsky et al. (2003) described the 3-step model for reappropriating a word in which an individual self-labels with the slur (step 1), which leads to collective self-labeling (step 2), and eventually, a positive meaning of the word is formed (step 3) (Galinsky et al., 2003). According to Galinsky et al. (2003), it is possible to reappropriate a stigmatized word because what is classed as a stigma is ever-changing, socially constructed and "contextually sensitive" (p. 223). By viewing slurs as negotiable, people can better understand the possibility of reappropriating them.

It follows that "individuals ensuring their own order is a form of power" (Foucault, 1994 p. 66). Therefore, the ability of those within the disadvantaged group to self-label in order to 'ensure their own order' is seen as a reflection of their power. Jacobs (2011) stated that "to proclaim oneself a nigger is to declare to the disapproving mainstream 'You can't fire me. I quit' […] To growl that one is a nigga is a seductive gesture…that can feel bitterly empowering" (p. 12).

Internalized oppression. Though many authors have discussed the creation and redistribution of power in reappropriation, others question whether power is truly created. Such that, self-labelling may be a manifestation of the ideologies of White supremacy instead (hooks, 1989). Due to the negative history of the word, nigger, its intra-racial use is viewed by some as a type of self-hatred (Embrick & Henricks, 2013). Fanon referred to this reproduction of White supremacy and White power ideologies by Blacks as internalized oppression. He wrote that the pervasive nature of Whiteness as superior not only subjects Blacks to its ideologies, but also manifests itself within how they (Blacks) come to think of themselves and their place in society (Fanon & Markmann, 2008). When Blacks use the phrase nigga, towards themselves, they "crystalize [their] group's location" within the racial and social order (Embrick and Henricks, 2013 p. 211). In other words, some authors saw no difference between the terminology nigger (the slur) and nigga (the reappropriated term); both versions were stigmatized labels regardless of the speaker.

Whites' use of the terms. Embrick and Henricks (2013) believed that when it came to the word, nigger, there was no time it could be used positively as they saw it as far too insular and its history far too tainted to be reappropriated. Croom (2014), on the other hand, argued against this and believed that "linguistic expressions are open to semantic evolution and renegotiation", (p. 149) regardless of the word or term in question. He stated that we must move to a place where both Whites and Blacks can

use the term nigger freely, as "linguistic expressions are not rigidly fixated on points of the past" (Croom, 2014, p. 149).

According to the reappropriation model by Galinsky et al., (2003), the final step and proof of successful reappropriation occurs when both the out-group and in-group see and use the slur in question positively. However, in the case of the reappropriation of the term nigger, this does not seem to be the goal. As Def Jam producer, Russell Simmons mentioned, the use of the word nigga, showed that "[Blacks] have created [their] own culture so [they] don't have to buy into a culture that doesn't want [them]" (Jackson, 2005, p.1). To say that the goal of reappropriating the phrase nigger is universal usage undermines the very raison d'être of self-labelling with this word.

Whites challenging White superiority. As mentioned above, it has been theorized that the intra-racial use of the words, nigga/nigger, challenges the power differences between Whites and Blacks. One may then wonder whether the word nigga can be used interracially for the same political reasons. According to authors like Carpió (2008) and Bailey (2012), the answer to this is that regardless of intent, Whites occupy a space of domination and using nigga is not an appropriate way to question and challenge White privilege. Blacks have used venues such as humor and language to "[affirm] their humanity in the face of its violent denial," (Carpio, 2008, p.5) and for that reason, when this same humor or language is repeated and used by Whites, it is stripped of its political power (Bailey, 2012). This use of intra -racial humor mirrors the use of intra-racial slurs, meaning that Whites cannot challenge racism with the word nigger and nigga in the same fashion that Blacks may be able to.

When someone from the out-group engages in racist language, such as using the word nigger (nigga), everything but racism takes the onus. In speaking about racism, bell hooks (1995) and Bryan (2012), explained that many people think of racism in personal, individualistic terms; it is seen as something someone does or does not do, it becomes an action. It is wrong to imagine that racism is only the engagement in obviously prejudiced actions (overt racism). Racism is an intricate system that maintains the super-ordination of Whiteness over Otherness through language, social policies, law, schooling and much more.

To show true willingness to be an ally, Whites must engage in political and strategic acts that challenge the system while respecting Blacks by avoiding acts that obviously or intentionally reinscribe White supremacy. What is needed is a process that subverts the racialization of the Other for the purposes of shifting power. One such empowering act is de-ideologization which is a consciousness raising process of "[retrieving] the original experience of groups and persons and [returning] it to them as objective data" (Martín-Baró, 1986, p. 230). Part of this includes a clear examination of the privileges one has in

society (Madrigal and Tejeda, 2009). By engaging in such a process that allows them to truly evaluate and acknowledge their privilege as opposed to erasing the history of certain words as a way to present those words as neutral, Whites can be effective allies.

THE CURRENT STUDY

An overwhelming amount of research on the words nigger and nigga has been within the context and perspective of the United States of America as these words are most often associated with American history and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The present study was conducted in order to discover how individuals respond to the use of the term nigger within a Canadian context. On CBC.ca, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation posted an article entitled "Quebec considers removing N-word from 11 place names." Individuals were able to comment on and offer responses to others' opinions about Quebec having a site called Nigger Rapids, which was said to have been named after a Black couple that drowned there in the early 1900s. The present study sought to find out the following: What discourses would individuals draw upon regarding the word nigger being used by government officials to refer to a site in Quebec, Canada in 2015?

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Materials

To explore discourses surrounding the term nigger, I chose a data source that would provide raw and undirected responses to how people in everyday society spoke about it. By undirected responses, I refer to the fact that the responses were not being controlled by a moderator who swayed the conversation in a particular manner. Instead, responses occurred naturally where people could state their own ideas, or respond to other comments and where I as the researcher had no influence on the posts that people made.

Coding of Materials

After I completed background research on the topic at hand and chose the data to use, I employed the help of NVivo (versions 10 and 11), which is a qualitative data analysis software. I coded the news article, the original comments and the responses to comments by looking at the words that were used, the tone of the writer, the topics they referred to and so on. If a sentence from the article or one of the comments had a similar tone (e.g. positive versus negative), used similar words or discussed similar ideas (e.g. this is problematic versus there is nothing wrong with this), they were categorized under one code. Generally, when I created codes from the original news article I went sentence by sentence. Regarding the comments and responses, in most cases each comment was analyzed as a whole and coded accordingly, without breaking it up into sentences. It must also be noted that though I coded

sentence by sentence for the article and comment by comment for what respondents had to say, some sentences and comments fit more than one code. The following comment, for example, was coded in more than one way: "Political Correctness = Censorship in its ugliest form. Erosion of speech is erosion of freedom.". This comment fit under the codes: political correctness, diversion, emotional response, and n-word as acceptable.

If a new line or response did not fit a code I had already created up to that point, a new code was created. Some codes also had nuances within them which led to sub-codes. An example of this was with the diversion code which included responses and lines that diverted from the article at hand but had nuances within it, such that some respondents used humor to divert from the topic at hand, others used the idea of this being a form of political correctness and nothing more, and yet others spoke about other racialized groups that are being oppressed in a way that did not address the particular issue of the article. All in all, I ended up with a total of 210 codes.

Upon completing the coding of the data, I went on to identify how the comments within each code fit into discourses that exist in the world. These were identified by narratives I am familiar with that people draw from and rely on when having conversations about racism and the phrase nigger. In other words, these discourses existed outside of the data and me. I therefore created the name of the discourse for this particular paper but did not create the particular way in which the discourse was shaped or how people employed it. When I coded the 210 codes into discourses, I ended up with 11 discourses.

All 11 discourses were identified to fit into two larger discourses: they either saw the terminology nigger as connected to racism or they did not. In order to determine whether or not the discourses connected the term nigger to racism or they did not, I assessed their approach to the term. For example, comments that stressed the history of the expression nigger, mentioned that the term was a sensitive one, or believed that it was wrong for this word to be used in the manner that it was, were put under the discourse of connecting the term to racism. On the other hand, comments that pushed the idea of the term nigger being just a term, called people emotional for being offended, believed that the history of the word should be forgotten and so on were put under the discourse that saw the term nigger as not being linked to racism. The acknowledgement discourse (the discourse that connected the term nigger to racism) had three main discourses and the denial discourse (the discourse that rejected the term nigger is still being a racialized word) had four main discourses. Three of these discourses were the same for both the acknowledgement discourse and the denial discourse.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

I completed a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) as it allowed me to connect how people spoke about a subject to discourses that existed in the world. It also allowed me to understand how power circulated through the use of language and discourses. Lastly, I was able to examine what operating within certain discourses let individuals do, feel and understand, as well as what they could not do, feel and understand. This allowed me to allocate certain social perspectives to individuals, referred to as subject positions in FDA.

As previously mentioned, the 11 discourses and the overall 2 discourses that I created and applied to the comments were based on their implied construction of whether the phrase nigger is connected to racism or not. The 11 discourses can be understood as navigating discourses. A navigating discourse can be defined as the ways in which individuals maneuver and understand the discourse they operate within. The acknowledgement discourse, which recognized the term nigger as being connected to and reflective of racism, was identified as a competing discourse. A competing discourse refers to one of the ways in which individuals frame a certain topic. The denial discourse, which rejected nigger as being related to racism was identified as a response discourse. This discourse was employed in response to comments belonging to the competing discourse as well as the actual article in a way that disagreed with the proposal of the article.

Reflexivity

It is of the utmost importance to note how I influenced this research paper at hand. Being a woman affected my relation to this word as the way I understand this word differs from how a Black male would. I was also born in Jos, Nigeria, where I did not grow up around this word and my experience with the terms nigger (nigga) only began when I lived in Canada and the United States. Being a Black female from Nigeria greatly impacted my writing as it positioned me to view the words nigger and nigga in a certain way due to how I have experienced and come to understand these words. Writing this paper challenged me at times as I was forced to understand the words from points of views with which I may not personally identify with.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Acknowledging and Denying Racialized Language

Two overall discourses were identified from the comments section of the CBC article concerning the removal of the word 'nigger' from the name of a body of water in Quebec. Discourses that racialized the terminology nigger were identified as belonging to the *Acknowledgement Discourse: Nigger is Racialized* while the response discourse, which viewed nigger as a non-racialized phrase belonged to the *Denial Discourse: Nigger is Non-Racialized*. Based on the comments and speech employed, the Acknowledgement Discourse can be defined as the acceptance of racism as a reality in our world and in the Canadian society. Commenters recognized the use of the word nigger as symptomatic of racism and recognized that racism is based on unequal power relations between

Whites, the Western world and everyone else deemed as *Other.*

The following comment illustrates the Acknowledgement Discourse perfectly: *"It should have been changed years ago. The word is unacceptable and racist now and was so in the past."* This comment connected with work done by Fogle (2013), Embrick and Henricks (2013), Croom (2013), Anderson &and Lepore (2011) and Allan (2015), who all recognized the link between the term nigger and racism. Just as Fogle (2013) wrote, comments such as this showed an awareness and understanding of nigger as a word historically used to define Blacks as morally and intellectually inferior and lacking in power. These comments also recognize the word's ability to still evoke a similar meaning in the present-day (Allan, 2015; Fogle, 2013; Embrick & Henricks, 2013; Anderson & Lepore, 2011; Flores-Rodriguez, 2012).

In response to discourses that acknowledged Nigger Rapids within a racist world as problematic, the Denial Discourse was reflected in comments that denied the ability of a word to be racist. It is important to note that this denial took one of two forms. They either denied certain very important aspects of racism or they dismissed racism as a whole.

One commenter wrote, *"I think we are too sensitive as a society and people are just looking for something to bitch about,"* which illustrated how discourses denied a site called Nigger Rapids as racialized and problematic. Such a view was seen in work by Croom (2014) who believed that words are just words, which illustrated the cognitive difficulties people have in identifying certain things as racist as proposed by Hartigan (2009).

Subject Positions

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis tells us that subject positions determine how individuals can or cannot feel, act and think. Two subject positions were evident from the discourse of *Acknowledgmen*t; that occupied by the privileged and that occupied by the disadvantaged. Both subject positions acknowledged the space they occupied and while some accepted the power differentials, there were those that tried to fight or challenge it.

As with the Acknowledgement Discourse, there were two subject positions created in the Denial Discourse, that of the privileged and that of the underprivileged. Those within the Denial Discourse proposed that there was nothing to change since there was no problem or called for some sort of change but dismissed how such a change connected to racism as a whole.

FINDINGS

Table 1 outlines all the discourses found from the data that either fall within the *Acknowledgement Discourse* or the *Denial Discourse*. It shows the two overall discourses in bold. The four main discourses are italicized and are shown in the left column; their corresponding navigating discourses, a total of 11, are shown in the right column. I will now begin to unpack and explain the results and the findings from the data and my coding.

Personal and Context-Based Discourse

Offense is personal. It is pertinent to recognize that there were Whites who accepted that nigger was a racialized word but did not see it as problematic because it did not negatively affect them due to their privileged position. A good illustration of this from the data was seen when a commenter wrote, *"honestly, I have no problem, since it's not offensive to me."* When people are allowed to view certain situations as non-problematic because they are not personally offended, we are faced with individuals that act and think in accordance with a racist discourse (Greason, 2012; Madrigal & Tejeda, 2009; and Bailey, 2012). By stating that they do not care how a word affects others, individuals operated on the idea that racism is a personal issue (hooks, 1995; Bryan, 2012)

Context matters. The main premise of the Acknowledgement Discourse was that the word nigger, even when used to describe a place and not directly to denigrate a Black person, was still wrong. Related to not having a problem with Nigger Rapids because it was not personally offensive, there were those who felt that some things were not always racist due to context. They approached racism as being absent in certain situations, time periods, geographical locations or cultures by taking into account the speaker, the target group, intentions, and much more. For example, a comment stated that "blackface does not officially exist in French, it is culturally bonded to the English language and the US slave owning culture just like their N word." The view that slurs cannot cross national or cultural borders reflects the idea that racism is not properly understood as a global issue that exists rampantly and exists outside the confines of the United States (hooks, 1995; Foucault, 1994).

Change and Challenge Discourse

Using one's privilege. Whites are acknowledged as the benefactors of privilege and power so it followed that there were discourses and ideologies that believed that for true change to occur, it must come from the top. Such a discourse aligned with the following comment: "In embracing other cultures instead of forcing assimilation, we are bettered. We experience greater empathy by seeking to understand the various points of view in this incredible world we all share [...]" We can see how this discourse both accepted racism as real as well as called for fellow Whites to work towards accepting others. Prior literature by Madrigal and Tejeda (2009) understood this as Whites de-ideologizing and using their privilege to call out other Whites.

Everyone can create change. Rather than thinking it is solely up to them to create change, there are Whites who genuinely try to combat racism by being aware of their

privilege, educating other Whites by truly listening to and respecting the voices of Blacks. In this discourse, change was believed to be possible from either Blacks or Whites. This was shown when someone called for the Quebec Toponymy Commission to "rename all 11 sites that include the N-word racial slur and replace it, in consultation with the Afro-Canadian community, with names more respectful of the people whose memory the sites were first named after." This call for change resonated with much of the previous research. For example, Madrigal and Tejeda (2009) specifically called for Whites to de-ideologize their position in society in order to create lasting and needed change while Ahluwalia and Zegeye (2011), as well as Lindorfer (2009) called for Blacks to become consciously aware of their oppression and then use their power to change things.

Something interesting that arose within the discourse that called for change from everyone where comments that discussed Native American disenfranchisement, such as the commenter who wrote, "How about First Nations slur names like Squaw Lake, etc... start there." This is particularly relevant to Canada as the maltreatment of Natives in Canada is well documented and some people believe it to be Canada's worst offense of racism in a way that overlooks Canada's mistreatment of other racial groups. Of course, this is not a fact as history shows both Canada and America contributed to the poor treatment of Blacks and Natives and both countries are perpetrators of worldwide colonialism and the privileging of Whiteness over people of color. Nonetheless, it was an interesting dynamic because it showed that even within those defined as 'Other' there are often hierarchies in an attempt to make sure all voices are heard.

Are White allies needed? Although the previous discourses showed that both Blacks and Whites pushed for change, it is important to know that a discourse existed that attempted to challenge racism outside of the White ally. This perspective stemmed from the fact that Blacks are the only ones who can speak on their experiences and know best how to better their situation (Ahwualia & Zegeye, 2001; Lindorfer, 2009).

This leads us to the idea of the limit-situation which, according to Karl Jaspers, is a situation that cannot be changed or avoided (Bornemark, 2006). In order to understand why people would take time to try to change their situation and challenge power if they are in a limit-situation, we can view the limit-situation from the perspective of Paulo Freire. Freire explained that limit-situations are dependent on historical realities and by questioning and debating those realities, individuals can transform how they perceive the so-called 'limit-situation' they are in (Rainford, 2014). In this case, when Blacks call into question the realities of racialized rhetoric and language, limit-situations can be challenged in order to bring about change.

This view was reflected in the comment that read, "I'm a white guy from BC so a long way from an expert." This quote shows the recognition that as a White person,

the respondent believes that the conversation is not one that his opinion or allyship is needed, but rather it should be left to Blacks. As stated by Foucault (1994), power is neither here nor there, and through various interactions, power is negotiated and constructed by those at the bottom. To have operated within a worldview that saw Whites are necessary for change to occur would have been to undermine the transactional and relational role of power (Foucault, 1994). That is to say, some Blacks, in these situations, forgo white alliance and approval in favour of leading change themselves and Whites understand that is not always their place to have their voices heard but for the oppressed to speak on their own behalf.

Racism is too large. If Whites are held responsible for the maintenance of power, and the onus is placed upon them to give up their power, there might be feelings of guilt when the power imbalance remains. With such a duty, those in the subject position of privileged found ways to lessen this guilt. One of the ways this was by done in the data was by envisioning racism as too large to tackle. This discourse was exemplified by a comment left on the article, which stated that "maybe just change the word. The world will be no more racist nor less racist for the change." Operating within this discourse prevented one from seeing how small steps can affect racism and work to eradicate it. This view, that erasing the word nigger does not erase it from White minds, was offered as one of the reasons for the intra-racial use of nigga (Naylor, 1986 and Galinsky et. al, 2003). By using the word nigger (nigga) against oneself because of a belief that not using it does not change racism, Blacks do not see the full extent of their power.

Isolating racism. Within the data, those in power also lessened their guilt by treating racist incidents like isolated situations unrepresentative of society in general in order to paint themselves as innocent bystanders. In response to a comment in which someone wrote that they were ashamed of their White ancestors for what they did, someone else wrote, "I'm white too and I'm not ashamed of them. After all I didn't do anything." By distancing themselves from their ancestors, this commenter erased the history of racism as built on differences and power inequality, though those differences and inequalities still remain (Trainor, 2005). As Foucault (1994) wrote, everyone in the system maintains the power differences, regardless of their overt actions and their willingness to participate. Whites painted themselves as innocent bystanders because it was a threat to their worldview to be called racist (Trainor, 2005; Sue and Constantine, 2007).

Equality Discourse
Reverse-racism and counteraccusations. By believing that racism is personal, not systemic or institutionalized, discourses came about that believed that anyone could be racist, defining it simply as prejudice from one race to another (hooks, 1995; Bryan, 2012; Trainor, 2005). When this happened and racism was discussed, Whites felt victimized (Gallagher, 2003; Sue & Constantine, 2007). To combat this, Blacks were said to be

reverse racists. One comment that exemplified this stated that those concerned with the removal of slurs should "tell that to Canadian aboriginals who use 'settler', 'colonial', etc., pejoratively." The respondent tried to make parallels between the term nigger and words like settler or colonial being used in negative ways as a means to claim that Whites could also be derogated based on their race. Croom (2014) echoed this when he claimed that slurs against Whites can be just as detrimental, to which authors such as Embrick and Henricks (2013) as well as Anderson and Lepore (2011) argued that slurs against Whites are not as damaging. In speaking about slurs used against non-Whites, Embrick and Henricks (2013) wrote that these slurs "further exclude racial minorities , blacks and Latinas/os in particular, from opportunities and resources, all the while preserving the superior status of Whites" (p. 211). The same could not be said for the use of slurs against Whites.

Another discourse was the narrative that did not understand why Blacks could use the term nigger (nigga) and Whites could not. It was seen as unfair and racist that certain words are written off as socially and politically inappropriate based on the speaker. The following comments reflected how this discourse was manifested in the data: "funny how rap music is allowed to use all kinds of slurs and no one says a thing," "[…] everyone should stop using it," and "Given that the N word is used by many Blacks in reference to themselves, it seems rather silly to change the names of places […]" Due to the racial contract and cultural authority Whites navigate the world from, they truly believed that everyone is equal and so differential treatment based on race was foreign to them and met with criticism (Hartigan, 2009; Greason, 2012).

Liberal individualism and victim-blaming. The result of racism becoming more difficult to identify manifested itself in ways that rejected the idea of oppression and racism existing on an institutional and macro level. Liberal individualism, or liberalism, argued that people have the ability to create whatever life they envisioned as long as they worked hard enough and this became one of the reigning views (Alexander, 2015). Thus, when Blacks discuss race and cite racism as a source of certain disadvantages, they are said to be playing the race card in an attempt to claim victim-hood (Wise, 2006). However, the term 'playing the race card' is nonsensical and is instead a denial card that is played by Whites to unlink racism and White power from situations they apply to (Wise, 2006).

Regarding the word nigger, a respondent wrote, "I'm saying that what's objectionable is entirely subjective. […] What you can do is deal with your own hang-ups and not expect everyone to do that work for you." Blaming victims for their situation denied their claims of disenfranchisement, saw the individual as the cause rather than a consequence of oppression, and wrongly believed that everyone had an equal opportunity (Trainor, 2005; Greason, 2012).

Focusing Discourse

Racism is the real issue. Although the 'Acknowledgement Discourse' emerged as a competing discourse while the 'Denial Discourse' was a response discourse to it, there was a way in which commenters used the 'Acknowledgement Discourse' to respond to the denial of racism. In this case, the 'Acknowledgement Discourse' used language and replied in a way that tried to focus individuals who tried to deny racism as the root problem. For example, in response to a comment that spoke about there being a place in Newfoundland and Labrador named "Dildo," another commenter responded "What about it? What has it got to do with the topic at hand?" This followed Foucault's (1994) claim that one fights the enemy close at hand. In fighting power and inequalities, individuals must be able to determine what is and is not a threat and not allow themselves to be distracted from the issue.

Racism is a Diversion from the Real Issue. One such topic that the Focusing Discourse responded to was to those that viewed oppressions such as racism as a means to divert and divide people from bigger issues. A respondent wrote the following: "This is how we […] adhere to the absurd doctrine of political correctness which is also a form of mind control that runs alongside corporate agendas." Drawing on things such as corporate agendas and painting political correctness as negative diverted the conversation from racism. Greene (1995) mirrored this in her work when she wrote that focusing and talking about political correctness as an infringement on rights when speaking about racism redirected the conversation. Rather than trying to understand why the word nigger should be removed, the conversation became about control, censorship, and claims of propaganda.

LIMITATIONS

This study added to current literature on the use of the word nigger by exploring how people spoke about this term within a Canadian context through a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. There were a few limitations that were evident from the study. Firstly, because the data existed before the research question, I was unable to ask specific questions and probe further into the responses of the commenters. This may have created a gap in the findings as I could not ask clarification questions or have a more organized and in depth discussion.

Due to the design of the study, being that the data was selected from an online forum, respondents could not be identified, the reality of censorship was an issue and the possibility that responses were not true to the respondents' beliefs and everyday discourse was an issue. By not knowing the race, ethnicity, age or gender of the commenters, I was unable to identify how intersectionality may have influenced the findings and therefore I had to theorize the subjective positions of respondents.

Extracting data from an online source and particularly with the subject of this research study, it is a

fact that certain comments were censored and not posted by the CBC. This is important as it could have hidden certain discourses. As well, the anonymity of responding online could have lead to comments and responses that were not true to the writer's thoughts and instead were written in order to push people to respond emotionally (trolling).

Future studies in analysing discourses on the term nigger in a Canadian context would employ a focus group to address the limitations that came about in this study. This would allow for a study that can ask more questions to guide the discussion, which can lead to deeper, more in-depth conversations. A focus group would also help to identify individuals, thereby tackling the issue of how their identity played a role in their subject positions.

CONCLUSION

The discourses drawn from this current study reflected and aligned with the topics prior researchers have written about. This study showed that even when used in Canada, the word nigger could be seen as both racialized and non-racialized, proving once more the lack of consensus on the meaning and ideas that the term nigger evokes.

The terminology nigger is as much a part of American history as slavery. It is a word with a violent history that has been reappropriated by its targets as a way to reduce its negativity and as a claim to power. If the word nigger has not yet reached a status of consensual meaning intra-racially or outside of the United States, then the use of the word nigger (nigga) inter-racially or used by the government of a different country to name a body of water will definitely be problematic. Conversation is the first step in understanding the various messages the term nigger (nigga) conveys. However, true progress will not occur until a reconciliation process begins in which society admits that language can be racialized as it is just one of the manifestations of White superiority and that the phrase nigger being racialized is not isolated to the States. It must also be acknowledged that White power and colonisation do exist and negatively impact our world. Until then, it is difficult to say whether nigger and nigga as a word will ever reach the final stage of reappropriation—positive interracial use.

Table 1. *Acknowledgement and Denial Discourses*

Acknowledgement Discourses	
Personal and Context Based Discourse	Offense is Personal
Change and Challenge Discourse	Using One's Privilege
	Everyone Can Create Change
	Are Whites Allies Needed?
Focusing Discourse	Racism is the Real Issue
Denial Discourses	
Personal and Context Based Discourse	Context Matters
Change and Challenge Discourse	Racism is too Large
	Isolating Racism
Equality Discourse	Reverse Racism and Counteraccusations
	Liberal Individualism and Victim-Blaming
Focusing Discourse	Racism is a Diversion from the Real Issue

REFERENCES

Ahluwalia, P., & Zegeye, A. (2001). Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko: Towards Liberation. *Social Identities, 7(3),* 455-469.

Allan, K. (2015). When is a slur not a slur? The use of nigger in 'Pulp Fiction.' *Language Sciences,* 187-199.

Anderson, L., & Lepore, E. (2013). Slurring words. Nous, 47(1), 25-48.

Bailey, C. (2012). Fight the Power: African American Humor as a Discourse of Resistance. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 36(4),* 253-263.

Bornemark, J. A. (2006). Limit-situation: Antinomies and Transcendence in Karl Jaspers Philosophy. *SATS*, 63-85.

Bryan, A. (2012). 'You've got to teach people that racism is wrong and then they won't be racist': Curricular representations and young people's understandings of 'race' and racism. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 44(5)*, 599-629.

Carpió, G. (2008) *Laughing Fit To Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery*. Oxford: Oxford UP

Croom, A. (2013). How to do things with slurs: Studies in the way of derogatory words. *Language & Communication, 33(3),* 177-204.

Croom, A. (2014). Slurs, stereotypes, and in-equality: A critical review of "How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal". *Language Sciences, 52,* 139-154.

Embrick, D., & Henricks, K. (2013). Discursive Colorlines at Work: How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal. *Symbolic Interaction, 36(2)*, 197-215.

Fanon, F., & Markmann, C. L. (2008). *Black skin, White Masks*. Pluto Press.

Flores-Rodríguez, D. (2012). Language, Power and Resistance: Re-Reading Fanon in a Trans-Caribbean Context. *The Black Scholar, 42(3- 4)*, 27-35.

Fogle, C. (2013). The Etymology, Evolution and Social Acceptability of 'Nigger', 'Negro', and 'Nigga'. *Insights to a Changing World Journal, 2013(1)*, 82-125.

Foucault, M., Faubion, J. D., & Hurley, R. (1994). *Power*. London: Penguin Books.

Galinsky, A., Hugenberg, K., Groom, C., & Bodenhausen, G. (2003). The Reappropriation of Stigmatizing Labels: Implications for Social Identity. *Research on Managing Groups and Teams Identity Issues in Groups, 5*, 221-256.

Greason, W. (2012). White Like Me. *Journal of American Ethnic History, 32(1)*, 77-83.

Greene, L. S. (1995). Racial discourse, hate speech, and political correctness. *National Forum, (2),* 32.

Hartigan, J. (2009), WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT? ASSESSING THE "RACIAL" IN U.S. PUBLIC DISCOURSE. *Transforming Anthropology, 17*, 4–19

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1995). Teaching Resistance. In *Killing rage: Ending racism*. New York: H. Holt and Co.

Jackson, D. Z. (2005, December 15). *The N-word and Richard Pryor*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/15/opinion/the-nwordand-richard-pryor.html?_r=0

Jacobs, B. A. (2011). *Race manners: Navigating the minefield between black and white Americans.* New York: Arcade Pub.

Lindorfer, S. (2009). In Whose Interest Do We Work? Critical Comments of a Practitioner at the Fringes of the Liberation Paradigm. *Feminism & Psychology, 19(3),* 354-367.

Madrigal, L., & Tejeda, W. (2009). Facing Gender-based Violence In El Salvador: Contributions From The Social Psychology Of Ignacio Martin-Baro. *Feminism & Psychology, 19(3),* 368-374.

Martín-Baró, I. (1986) 'Hacia una Psicología de la Liberación' (Towards a psychology of liberation), *Boletín de Psicología, (22),* 219–231.

Naylor, G. (1986). *"Mommy, What Does 'Nigger' Mean?"*. Retrieved from
http://apewiki.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/62984024/Naylor_Mommy_What_Does_Nigger_Mean_000-1.pdf

Neal, M. A. (2013). NIGGA: The 21st-Century Theoretical Superhero. *Cultural Anthropology, 28(3),* 556-563.

Rahman, J. (2012). The N word: Its history and use in the African American community. *Journal of English Linguistics, 40,* 137-171.

Rainford, K. (2004). ON PAULO FREIRE. *Discourse of Sociological Practice, 6(2)*, 212-215.

Shakur, T., Shakur, A., Hoye, J., Ali, K., & Einenkel, W. (2003). *Tupac: Resurrection, 1971-1996.* New York: Atria Books.

Sue, D., & Constantine, M. (2007). Racial Microaggressions as Instigators of Difficult Dialogues on Race: Implications for Student Affairs Educators and Students. *College Student Affairs Journal, 26(2),* 136-143.

Trainor, J. S. (2005). "My Ancestors Didn't Own Slaves": Understanding White Talk about Race. *Research in the Teaching of English, 40(2),* 140–167.

Wise, T. (2006, April 24). *What Kind of Card is Race?* Counterpunch.