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Course

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Prisoner of Color

Chapter 1: Introduction

Primary research question: How passing and racial discrimination effect personal and professional life of African Americans?

Research questions:

1. How passing influences the personal and professional lifestyle of African Americans?
2. What is the negative psychological impact of racism and how passing can help overcome it through the formation of personal identity of African Americans?
3. How passing effects the cultural development of the African American personality?
4. Is passing a way to tackle racial discrimination in the society of white people?

Thesis statement: Passing and racial discrimination have a strong negative impact on the formation of cultural identity of African Americans and their personal and professional life.

This research is based on two books by Johnson *The Autobiography of An Ex-colored Man* and Charles W. Chesnutt *The House Behind the Cedar*. Both books deal with the subject of racial passing and personal identity. Therefore, this research is going to discuss these themes in both novels. The research is called the *Prisoner of Color* since both novels illustrate scenarios of people from different races. In fact, the critics of both novels make a specific emphasis on the issue of color.

Overall, both authors explore the themes of racial passing as a means of achieving the American dream. By exploring the themes of passing, individuality and irony in both novels, the research is aimed at positioning the struggles of the protagonist in assuming a white identity. However, racial passing promotes white supremacy, which is a denial of black blood in the society. In fact, it is one of the greatest disadvantages in the African-American history.

The overall research methodology will consist of the analysis of the related literature, including the novels of Johnson *The Autobiography of An Ex-colored Man* and Charles W. Chesnutt *The House Behind the Cedar*. Thus, the research will examine the secondary information with respect to the major research question, such as racial passing. It will also support the findings based on the primary research that will take advantage of the online survey questionnaire that will address the most significant aspects of the secondary research findings. In all, the research is structured in a way to cover the secondary information and support it with the results of the primary research. As a result, the research outcomes will be reliable and valid, which will address the quality of the provided information.

Overall, this thesis will address the primary research question in search for the nature of racial discrimination and passing as a way to avoid its negative consequences. The research is structured in a way to address four research questions that adhere to the influence of passing on the personal and professional side of life for African Americans. This could be illustrated in the brief overview of both novels. The next aspect of concern is the negative psychological impact of racism and how passing can help overcome it through the formation of personal identity of African Americans. This is challenged by the ability of African Americans to adapt to the social environment that mainly consists of white people. However, in case black people manage their growth culturally and develop their personality, they are in the better position to overcome challenges in both business and life. The final question is the way of facing racial discrimination with the help of passing for a white man/woman. In fact,

there are many cases when such approach to living by the African Americans brought them wealth and abundance as well as helped to manage their family life.

Chapter 2: How Passing Influences the Personal and Professional Lifestyle of African Americans?

The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man

The overall perception of passing has a significant influence on the African Americans since it directly reflects their lifestyles as a whole. On the one hand, people find it difficult to become successful and achieve financial independence with the help of passing. On the other hand, passing serves as a way to get married with a white man/woman and be happy in the family life. Both implications of passing have a strong negative impact on the personal and professional wellbeing of African Americans. Below is the example how passing is illustrated in the novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. The plot of the novel gives an idea of what a real life of African Americans is from the position of the author and his perceptions of racial discrimination (Skeggs 74).

The author of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* does not provide the name of the main character. The novel describes a person who spent his life “passing as white.” The novel also refers to the character by forming the visions of his upbringing. It is not possible to understand the racial status of this character. The only information in the novel is that the character is from the North (Johnson 1-17).

However, later in the novel, the author reveals the racial status of the main character after he describes an incident at school. After the death of his generous mother, the main character goes south in order to study in college. Yet, after the incident with the main character, he goes to Jacksonville in Florida. There, he gets hired to work in the cigar plant.

After a while, the plant is closed and the main character needs to go to New York. There he starts working as a piano player (Johnson 23-35).

The main character faces many challenges, one of which is the witnessing of a murder. As a result, he escapes to Europe together with his benefactor. After having spent some time in Europe, the main character decides to go back to the American South. The purpose is to study “traditional black music.” Due to the overall story of the novel, the critics find it difficult to define the nature of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. This could be explained by the author’s idea (Johnson 37-48).

On the one hand, this novel is about a conventional story of a black man who passes as being a white man by living his life as a regular person. This is a standard scenario of a man living through the puzzling situations. The major challenge of the main character is that he ends up with the “death of his wife and birth of his children.” Such a situation is rather difficult to cope with for any man; however, it gets more challenging due to being a black man (Johnson 51-62).

On the other hand, the novel of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* outlines another idea of the author that is hidden within the story. In other words, there is a deep irony in the life of the main character. In particular, he identifies himself as “an ex-colored man,” which is specified in the autobiography. At the same time, the main character is himself a deep racist with self-loathing life perceptions (Johnson 65-82).

The critics indicate that this novel focuses on the “spiritual awakening” of the personality. Therefore, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* can be perceived as a novel about a spiritual awakening that concludes with the eventual immersion in the divine. In fact, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* describes a number of failures that the main character faces during his life (Johnson 81-93).

In particular, the novel emphasizes the formation of the person's identity and the ability to defend it. If not, the main character has to be an African-American. Moreover, the divine nature of the main character is his failure to succeed in life. At the same time, the main character has to face the challenge of execution. Hence, the main character frequently fails in his life journey. Nevertheless, the author draws the attention of the reader by the unforgettable and unexpected end of the novel (Johnson 98-100).

The author indicates that the main character passes on his life journey through the failures connected with his racial status. However, the life teaches him not to project similar future for his children. Despite the challenges of his life, the main character does not denote the racial status to his children. He repeats the attitude of his mother who never told him to be a black man. Consequently, he follows the same attitude in his life and passes it to his children (Johnson 105-108).

Conversely, the irony of the novel is in the well-defined perceptions of racial discrimination. After the execution to the end of the novel, the author points out that the main character proclaims his willingness to "grow a mustache and move back to New York." Besides, he remains with the attitude that people can identify him as "whatever they want." As expected, a new environment, his physical appearance is considered as that of a white man. The status of the main character allows him to have a certain advantage towards the race relations. Despite the number of failures that the main character passed, he has to face the challenge of racism and self-contempt (Johnson 110-118).

The novel of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* was secretly published in 1912. After a while, it was republished in 1927, and Johnson was indicated as the author of the novel. In fact, Johnson participated actively in the Harlem Renaissance. For this reason, the author uses many definitions dated back to the time-frame of the 1919-1930s. Thus, the

author emphasizes the Harlem Renaissance movement in his novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (Johnson 121-130).

Simultaneously, several elements of the novel indicate the personal life of Johnson. For example, at that time, the author worked in Nicaragua and studied the traditional black music in Jacksonville. The author inclines the idea that children of a black man have to be lighter-skinned as this will provide them with more opportunities in life. At the same time, the author indicates that this idea has become natural for the majority of different races (Johnson 132-138).

The author also posits the idea that from the position of that time, it was easier for the representatives of the black race to live with such an idea. Unfortunately, at that time it was easier to accept this idea instead of demolishing the system of discrimination that applies the color of skin. The bottom line is that the true nature of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* lies in the irony of this novel. In fact, the author puts forward a deep racist attitude and self-antipathy of the main character. As a result, this novel has a strong historical significance for people of different races (Johnson 141-180).

In other words, the perception of passing is illustrated on the life of an ex-colored man with a significant influence on his personality and life as a whole, including the striving for music, grief and pain about the family and decision to treat his children differently. All of the struggles performed by the ex-colored man reflect his personal and professional lifestyle in contrast to each other. At the same time, the novel illustrates a worse position of the African Americans in search for the so-called American Dream. Many black people find it quite challenging and rather difficult to tackle as they face with many obstacles while trying to achieve success and financial independence for the family by passing as a white man. Therefore, passing is a bridge between prosperity and happy family life (Skeggs 77).

The House behind the Cedars

This novel is another illustration of passing and its negative influence on the personal and professional lifestyle of African Americans in the white society. The novel addresses the aspect of passing as a way to search for a better future despite the racial discrimination. The color of skin of the main character allows him to pass as a white lawyer and become successful in the workplace. The illustration of passing is also explained in the fact of treatment for black people from the position of the white society during the Civil War (Smedley & Smedley 22).

The novel introduces a character named John who is from a mixed race family. This means he has a rather light skin to pass for a white man. He considers leaving his family and breaks all the relations with them since he wishes to pass for a white man. He decides to establish his life in a different way by becoming a lawyer. He manages to become successful due to the time of the Civil War. The modern community offers more opportunities for new people, and thus, he wishes to take his place in the society to recover the time with no such opportunities (Chesnutt 14).

As a result, he marries a wealthy white woman, but unfortunately she dies after having given birth to their single child. His success as a lawyer in a small city where he lives helps him to bring up his child. The circumstances are that there are no questions about his race since he acts and behaves as a white man does. Despite his success in the society, he considers returning home to support his sister Rena who also passes as a white woman does. Therefore, he invites her to his home in order to educate and help with finding a good match for the marriage (Chesnutt 45).

Rena is fortunate enough to meet an adequate man named George. He falls in love with her very quickly. Rena promises George to marry him in a week. Unfortunately, Rena receives a letter where she finds out that her mother is ill. Rena goes home to see her mother

despite the reminder of her brother concerning the negative consequences to her image as a white woman (Chesnutt 96).

After a series of unsuccessful events, George also goes to her home city without knowing she is there. As a result, he realizes that Rena is partially black while claiming to be a white woman. For George, it means that he cannot marry her. George leaves the city without Rena. She is left demolished with her mother. After a while, Rena gets back home to recommence her life as a black woman while taking care of her sick mother (Chesnutt 77).

The author does not mention anything about George after this story and mainly describes the life of Rena as a black woman. After some time, Rena starts working at school as a teacher. The circumstances happen to that this school is located in the same city where George lives with his mother. The author indicates that both Rena and George still love each other. However, they understand that they can never be together (Chesnutt 124).

Time passes and George finds out that Rena is currently living in the same city. Therefore, he makes everything possible to ask her to meet with him. Rena considers that such a meeting will be pointless and makes no sense for both of them. In fact, George happens to live close to Rena and can see that a truly disgusting man is willing to court her. He can also see that Rena is not interested and decides to get back home at the end of the week after the school closes for one year. George plans to meet Rena on the way home so that they could confront each other face to face. It occurs that at that time, both George and the other disgusting man walk on the left and right sides of the street. Since Rena cannot think clearly, she screams and runs into the woods where she disappears. As a result of such actions, Rena gets a fever and stays in the woods while lying on the ground (Chesnutt 193).

It is the time to consider the true love of George since he is looking for her all over the county. However, all his searches do not lead to a positive result. In the meantime, Rena's neighbor, Frank who also loves her for many years passes through this area where she lies in

the woods. Obviously, he takes her back home in his car. This story ends with the death of Rena and Frank close to her telling he would have loved her more than anything in the world. The author also mentions that George still tries to ask her to marry him since he does not care about her being a partially black woman (Chesnutt 277).

This novel is somewhat similar to *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* as it also reflects passing as a way to use the color of skin to become accepted by the white community. At the same time, the author illustrates that main character faces difficulties understanding women. This novel addresses a complicated lifestyle of black people towards having improper education that does not allow them to get respected by white and work with them equally. In all, the story of Rena and George depict the conventional lifestyles of African Americans and their willingness to pass as a white person to improve both personal and professional well-being (Smedley & Smedley 25).

Chapter 3: How Passing Effects the Cultural Development of the African American Personality in the Novels?

The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man

This chapter illustrates the passing effect towards the cultural development of African Americans through the ability to pass as white people and communicate with the white nation. This brings many benefits to the formation of the cultural perceptions of black people. In addition, it reflects the process of cultural transformation for the black personality towards the white nation. In *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, the author indicates a need to take advantage of passing for the sake of children. At the same time, after the ex-colored man starts passing as a white man, he indicates a better future with a way more opportunities for his family. In other words, passing helps the main character to overcome racial discrimination

and get sufficient cultural education to work with the community of white people (Smedley 10).

The critics indicate that before the book was published referring to the actual author Johnson, it was published anonymously in 1912. At that time, the author added a preface where the conditions concerning race discrimination in the United States were described. This justifies *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* as a sociological study that evaluates race differences, classes of people, geography concerns, and revelation narrative (Johnson 1).

However, the author presents a novel that involves the reader to perceive the life of the narrator. The novel refers to the great secret of a man who is not white but passes as white due to the color of his skin. For example, during the school years he passes as white due to the white father who is considered having “the best blood in the South.” Finally, the author indicates the decision of the narrator to live as a white man, which is the most important inclination of the novel (Johnson 2).

Another example that refers to the narrator's race is when he confesses in love to a white woman. Racial discrimination takes place when he reveals the truth concerning his race to his beloved, and she leaves him without saying a word. However, race discrimination is not that strong compared to love and compassion. Referring back to the novel, she returns to her beloved and agrees to marry him. As a result of accepting the race differences, they turn to have two children while he strives for passing for a white man. The racial difference is also visible when his wife dies and he is left with two children as a white man. In other words, his passing for a white man has many benefits for his children (Johnson 154).

In all, the issues of attitudes and justice struggle to bring more value to the lives of the ordinary people in the 21st century. However, according to Johnson, it is important to learn how to change attitudes to a life with all the complexity of the racial passing issues. In fact, racial passing starts with the early childhood when children have to strive for being treated as

white people. For example, in the novel, there is a case when the school principal comes into the classroom and the teacher asks the white people to stand up. The narrator of the novel also stands up, but the teacher instantly asks him to sit down (Feagin 9).

The same racial passing issue relates to all the people whose mothers were Afro-American and could not pass as a white race. It is important to acknowledge that racial discrimination was difficult for the narrator since he was observed differently by the society. The understanding of different racial complexities adheres to the three levels of classes that the Afro-American race had in relation to white people (Sanchez 20).

The first level refers to the despairing class and represents the present day hustlers and ex-criminals who had low salaries to hardly make both ends meet. These people have a negative attitude towards the white men; however, they continue to work hard to make a living. In fact, such an attitude of the Afro-American population is the minority that dominates throughout the public opinion.

The second class represents the people who work with the white one while being kind, extremely religious, and truthful. They do not have any negative implications about the white people since they positively treat their kindness.

The third class represents the self-made business people who are well-educated than the white ones. The third group of people has nothing to do with the previous classes of the blacks as they have their own community. However, the whites happen to attack these people due to their success. It is important to emphasize that this particular group of the blacks is not recognized by their own race (Memmi 12).

From the position of Johnson, racism is a belief that natural differences between different human races define cultural and / or personalized accomplishments that comprise the perceptions that one race is superior, whereas the other one is inferior. At the same time, racial discrimination refers to a policy or the governmental system that refers to any kind of

discrimination. In other words, Johnson expressed what he experienced. He also indicates that many black people prefer passing as the white ones since they have witnessed the race that has already won the battle of power. The people who are passing as the white ones strive to take advantage of all their skills in order to live a life based on their talents that are properly positioned in the society. According to Johnson, the whites can respect only money, but they are incapable of recognizing other races. Johnson also implies that, in order to understand deep perceptions of racial discrimination, racial passing and formation of a racial identity, it is important to see the position of the black people from within (Dain 22).

Hence, it is disappointing to acknowledge that the blacks faced many racial issues. For example, it was rather common to marry a person who had a lighter skin in order to improve the overall position in the society. The reason why many black people accept such a position is that living as a white man is more convenient and safe. At the same time, passing as a white man usually leads to the fact that families have more privileges and live happier lives. For example, racial discrimination is visible in the workplace by the fact that there are only smoking compartments for white people. This is one more reason for an adequate treatment towards the black people with the lighter color of the skin who pass as white men (Feagin 2).

The idea of the author is to position the ex-colored man as a white one. In particular, during the life, the narrator is passing as a white man without actually revealing he is a black one. This is what justifies the title of the book, *The Ex-Colored Man*. The novel also describes his life with a white woman and their two children. In fact, the author indicates that they lived a happy life together as a white couple. However, it has become possible only after he revealed the truth to his beloved wife and she accepted him being a black man. In other words, “passing” could be acknowledged as a willingness to escape from referring to the black race. However, the author indicates that there were doubts regarding whether it is

possible for the black man to live a life as a white man. The contemplation is led to holding himself to the black community that would embrace him, thus making a difference in his life (Smedley 9-10).

The Ex-Colored Man represented a minority of people who did not hold back while being black. In addition, his strong points were in his education, intelligence, and light color of the skin. Therefore, the vast majority of people considered that he was a white man. However, there is a negative implication about being a white man. Due to the willingness to live a better life, he decided to give up his talent of playing black music. Such a choice illustrates the position of the society in 1910. At the same time, it emphasizes how difficult it was for him to make a choice between music and safety of a white man. The book of *The Ex-Colored Man* is a representation of what some black people did in order to live better lives. However, it is not what most of them did in 1910. In case of the Ex-Colored Man, he failed to play the music since his wife died and he had to take care of his children. Going back to the blacks would mean a worse future for his children compared to what he could have given them while passing as a white man (Smedley & Smedley 15-20).

In other words, the author indicated that racial discrimination has a more negative effect on the cultural development of black people. In fact, passing allows black people to be accepted as white and work together in the community. This often means higher salaries and better opportunities for growth that could adhere to the prosperity of the family. In addition, the opportunity to pass as a white person also addresses the need for cultural development through a higher level of education. The novel illustrates such cultural perceptions in detail based on the life of the main character and negative implications towards racial discrimination. As well, it addresses the importance of passing to deserve a better future for the family needs by working in the community of white people (Smedley 12).

The House Behind the Cedars

This novel claims to address passing as a problem on the way to a better life. At the same time, it emphasizes the effect of passing as a solution to improve the personality by growing culturally and obtaining a better education usually referred to the white people. In more detail, this novel faces the impact of passing on the cultural development of black people through the ethical issues, obligation and public recognition of African Americans. A special attention is given towards the family importance that helps the main character to overcome the life challenges in search for a better future for the children. Unfortunately, the color of skin makes a significant impact on the personal qualities and professional qualifications of black people influenced by their cultural education.

The House Behind the Cedars is a novel that was published in 1900. It emphasizes the problem of passing, which is a common practice that made the African-Americans with the light skin present themselves as white people. The novel is about John Warwick and / or John Walden, a prominent attorney who had a light color of his skin and could pass as white man. This novel is another illustration of the categorized forces that represent a wicked community composed by racism (Trepagnier 10-16).

In addition, the overall white society is focused against the long-established belief of the family importance. At the same time, this novel is about the illustration of misery due to the fact of a different race that creates racial discrimination. However, such a situation is also the reason of perceptions that Rena has in regards to her race and home obligations. Rena also establishes an ethical obligation that correlates to her recognition of the racial identity, which is inevitable (Rocchio, 2).

In fact, the focus of the author is aimed at describing John and Rena for a quite important reason. For example, while John is passing as a white man, he strives throughout his life to become successful by growing personally and developing professional qualifications. At the same time, Rena is of the mixed-race and has a completely different

destiny filled with embarrassment, sickness, pain, heartbreak and death of her mother ever since she started to pass as a white woman (Crary 23).

The author also indicates her striving to keep in a secret that she is a black woman. Passing as a white lady allows her to fight for the things that white people normally have. However, Rena admits that such passing is a lie. She tries to mislead George. For example, the novel reveals pain, guilt and shame that Rena feels and what makes her get back home and continue living as a black woman. Conversely, when she gets back home, she finds it difficult to pass as a black woman because of the color of her skin. It appears to be so white that people feel confusing about her race and always question her behavior (Johnson, 12).

The novel also describes that Rena does not feel comfortable being with the black people. In contrast, the white people also do not recognize her after they realize she is black. As a result, she finds it rather challenging to find her place in the society. This could be explained by her physical characteristics and behavior. For example, the author describes her as a sentimental and weak but an independent woman who works hard to make a living. At the same time, she has good education similar to that the white women have. Overall, it turns out that due to racial discrimination and hard time passing as a white woman, she feels as if she could not strive for either community (Harris 1709-1795).

The perceptions of the author are quite challenging and contradicting. On the one hand, the author indicates the existence of racial categories, which is difficult to acknowledge. For example, it is evident that there are different races apart from the black and white ones, which mixes people as being yellow or having other shades. On the other hand, the author is trying to attract the readers to the social standing of the black people who became independent and free from slavery. Overall, the combination of races and / or mixed blood people could be perceived as absurdity (Lentin, 8).

In addition, the author indicates the ridiculousness of the community construct in regard to race discrimination. At the same time, the author indicates that people treat both Rena and her brother as white people. Therefore, the issue of race is purely subjective in this case. Simultaneously, people do not have the right to treat black people differently in case the aspect of blood is not that visible. Hence, the paradigm of race that makes people live by passing as being a white person exists only in their minds and has nothing to do with the biological realities (Bonilla-Silva 23).

Another emphasis of this novel is on gender discrimination that is somewhat equal to her race. In other words, she does not behave as a black woman and yet not capable of achieving success while passing as a white woman. The reason for such situation is that she is not in a position to marry a white man and pass as a white woman. Consequently, these aspects put her in the third category of people who fail to find their place in the society. In parallel, the brother of Rena has a completely different situation of passing as a white man because his gender does not add any difference to his race issues (Allen, 19).

In other words, his brother does not have to rely on other people to become successful compared to Rena who needs to marry a white man who will accept her as a black woman and help her to become successful as a white woman. The author could contrast the gender roles with racial discrimination, which altogether could be assumed as farce. Alternatively, Rena's intelligence, grace and humanity are those things that challenge her success compared to her brother's ambitions and absence of consciousness. The problem that the author illustrates addresses the inability of Rena to live independently and strive for the care of another person (Graves 14).

At the same time, the problem is in the denial of her personality and inability to accept both parts of her individuality, while being a black woman passing as a white one. As a result, her destiny is in her attempts to pass as a white woman who is punished for giving up

her life. In parallel, her brother does not have such concerns and turns out to live a happier life than other people. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the attitudes of people in the society towards the differences in gender and racial discrimination as reasons for passing as a white person (Chesnutt 19-27).

The author also mentions the increase in racial discrimination after the Civil War where passing as white people closely correlates to the social standing of the black people. However, the Civil War had a great negative impact on the position of the black people and their willingness to pass as the white ones. The overall treatment of the blacks is true, but that does not indicate the fact that white people do fall in love with the black women. At the same time, people with a skin close to white have a better treatment compared to those who have a pure black skin. For example, John works hard as he does not want to settle down with what a conventional life can bring while other people are accepting everything as a fate and a will of God. In fact, John refuses to live as a black man and strives to achieve the most challenging goals while passing as a white man. In contrast, Rena considers that she is punished by Lord and deserves to live as a black woman (Foster 6-13).

In all, this novel addresses racial relations of the white people and the African-Americans in the post-Civil War America. At that time, the only option that the black people with the light skin had was to decide to live a different life of a white man if there was an opportunity to pass as a white person. Simultaneously, the understanding of racial identity for the black people is about passing as the whites to become successful. In addition, the other problem of the black people was education. Even if they could pass as the white people, they usually lacked proper education to accomplish the goals for a better life. The racial perception is also controversial as the meaning of passing always correlates with racial tension, morality, and social dissatisfaction. Overall, the author strives to find a solution to

the problem of racial discrimination and passing in terms of adjusting the racial question (Daniels 17-19).

However, a mixed race is an opportunity to pass as a white person while pursuing a life within the community of white people. In addition, the behavior of the African Americans often corresponds to the racial discrimination due to the lack of proper cultural awareness. Therefore, black people have hard time passing as white and hiding from racial discrimination during the lifetime. One of the challenging examples of cultural implications of passing and its effect on the life of black people is by facing the development of the personality and pushing forward despite racial discrimination and / or the Civil War. However, it often negatively results in the family relations for the black people who face many difficulties finding the right partner. In all, the formation of the racial identity through the cultural development is a way to deserve a better future while passing as white people.

Chapter 4: Passing as a Way to Tackle Racial Discrimination in the Society of White People

Passing is the most significant and challenging aspect of life for the African Americans. On the one hand, it gives an opportunity to become one of the white men's and be accepted by the community, which means achieving success in both business and life. On the other hand, the ability to face racial discrimination is rather painful and the vast majority of black people have difficulties coping with it. In all, the society of white people of that time was not ready to accept different races as part of the white community (Trepagnier 12).

Consequently, one of the best ways to avoid making such decisions was to take advantage of the racial discrimination in the white society. However, passing is acknowledged as the way to tackle racial discrimination in the white community. However, black people have to consider that passing as a white person is not an easy task as it requires

proper readiness and commitment to actions that will promote one's personal identity within the white society (Trepagnier 13).

In other words, African Americans should dedicate much time in their cultural development in search for the so-called American dream. The purpose is to learn how to adapt the limitations of the black race and take advantage of passing as a way to penetrate into the white society. In fact, both novels *The Autobiography of An Ex-colored Man* and *The House Behind the Cedar* represent a detailed representation of the real life scenarios that many black people faced in the past. The overall focus of these novels is passing as a white man or woman with the purpose to achieve a better personal life and become successful in business while being a man of mixed blood and a different skin color (Trepagnier 15).

Chapter 5: What is the Negative Psychological Impact of Racism and

How Passing Can Help Overcome it through the

Formation of Personal Identity of African Americans?

In order to address the negative impact of racism and understand how passing can help black people to overcome discrimination through the formation of personal identity, it is important to conduct a research that will cover the most significant aspects that will illustrate the life for the African Americans. The following research tends to clear out the nature of such a negative psychological impact and its connection with passing as a roach to a better future. The research below refers to the most challenging questions that address both passing and racial discrimination for the black people while living in the white society.

Ethical considerations are important for any research as they determine the credibility and reliability of the research outcomes, including the conclusions and limitations. In fact, ethical concerns are strongly affected by the research approach and are used to adjust the

secondary data and primary research results to provide the target readers with the high quality of information. Therefore, it is perceived as ethical to ask for permission from the research respondents in terms of using their information in the research.

This makes sense since many of the research participants have jobs and families and belong to different races. Therefore, some of them are still afraid of any kind of discrimination in their environment, including employment and family affairs. Consequently, the researcher asked permission to take advantage of the research data in order to conduct the research. In fact, the participation in the online survey questionnaire was absolutely voluntary as only those answers that were approved to be shared by the research participants were examined and analyzed. Thus, it is possible to claim that the research results would be more accurate since the participants would share merely valid and important information.

At the same time, there is not necessary to use any financial encouragement to make the respondents share the information that could have a negative impact on the quality of collected data. The researcher will also reassure the research participants who took part in the online survey and agreed to provide valuable information to remain totally anonymous during and after the research is completed. In addition, all the contact details that were collected from the participants will remain confidential. This will help to avoid any kind of discrimination and / or violation of the ethical practice of the following research.

Therefore, in order to address the research question more thoroughly, the researcher conducted an online survey that included a hundred participants across Europe, Canada, the United States, and Asia Pacific. It was important to conduct a survey based on the responses of actual people who have seen passing as part of their lives. The obtained data will support the analysis of the novels and provide the reader with more accurate findings.

Online Survey Questionnaire: Data Collection and Results

1. Are you a male or female?

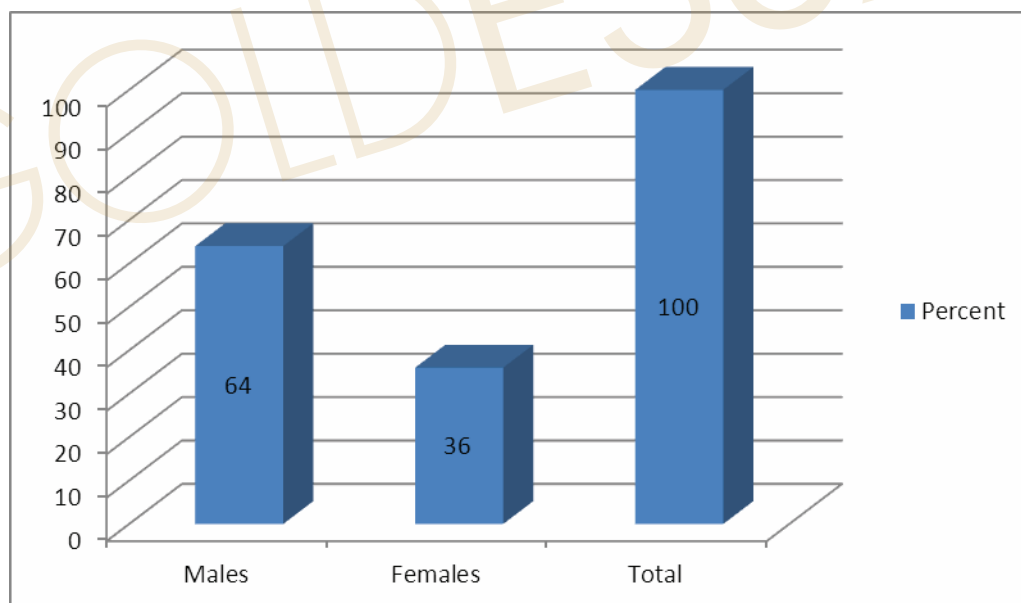
- Male
- Female

Due to the nature of the research, gender makes a specific meaning to the contribution of the research results. Therefore, the researcher examined the answers of a hundred respondents who live across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia Pacific. In fact, gender plays an important difference in the outcomes of the research since men and women think differently. Hence, the data was collected based on the 64% of males and 36% of females out of a hundred research participants. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 1.

<i>Percent</i>	Percent
Males	64%
Females	36%
Total	100%

Graph 1.



2. Where are you from?

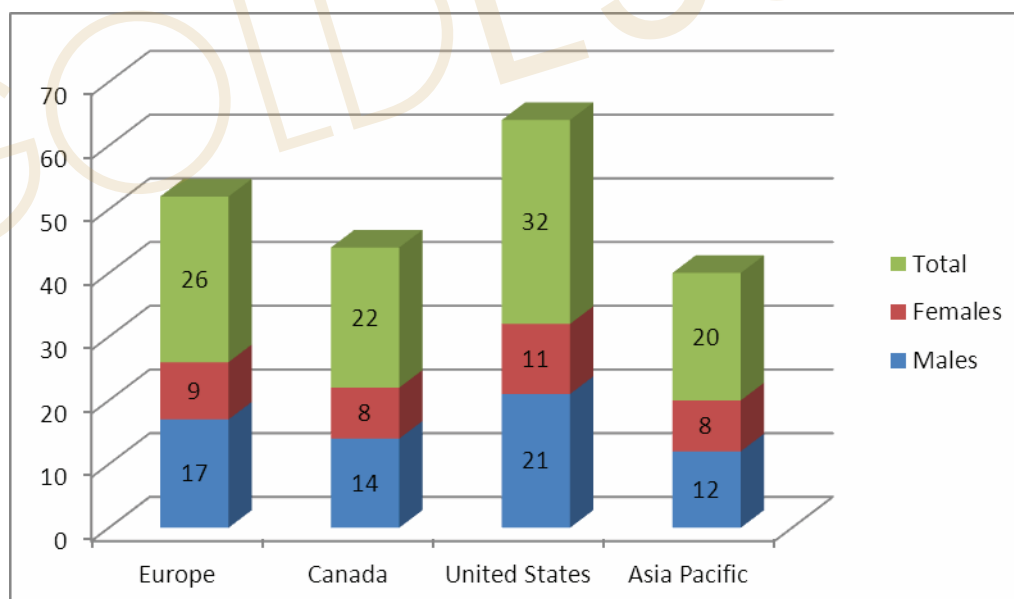
- Europe;
- Canada;
- United States;
- Asia Pacific.

The next question also makes a difference since it projects the opinions and attitudes of people who live in different parts of the world. Therefore, the researcher revealed that there were 26% of the participants from Europe, 22% - from Canada, 32% - from the United States, 20% - from Asia Pacific. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 2.

<i>Percent</i>	Males	Females	Total
Europe	17	9	26%
Canada	14	8	22%
United States	21	11	32%
Asia Pacific	12	8	20%
Total	64%	36%	100%

Graph 2.



3. How old are you?

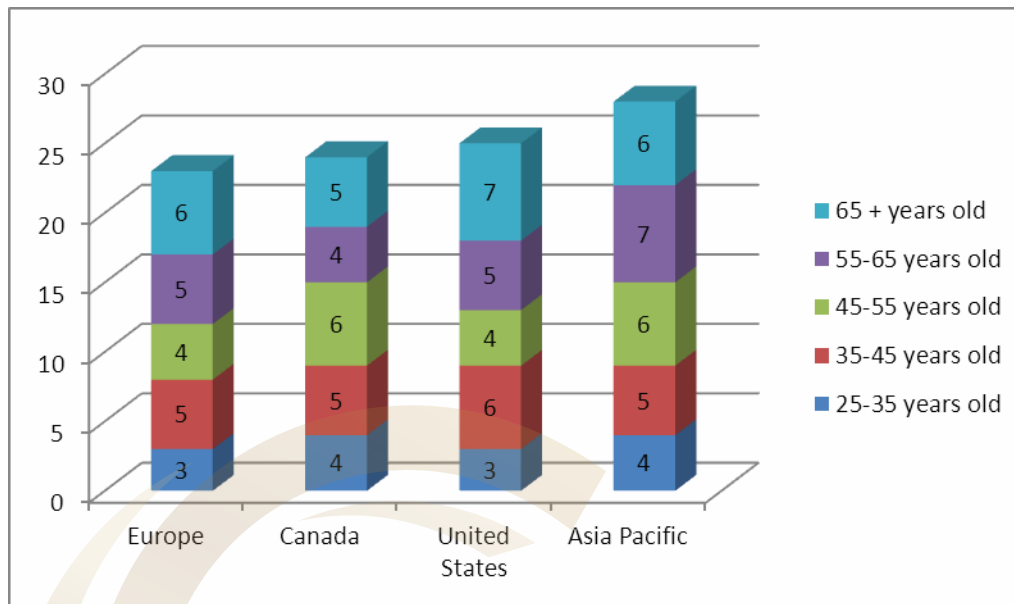
- 25-35 years old;
- 35-45 years old;
- 45-55 years old;
- 55-65 years old;
- More than 65 years old;

The following question also makes a concern since the age of participants makes a difference in their decision making process, as well as awareness of the racial passing and social discrimination. Therefore, it was revealed that 14% of respondents were between 25 and 35 years old, 21% - between 35 and 45, 21 - between 55 and 65 years old, 20% - 45 and 55 years old, and 24% - more than 65 years old. At the same time, the researcher revealed that there were 23% of the participants from Europe, 24% - from Canada, 25% - from the United States, and 28% from Asia Pacific. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 3.

<i>Percent</i>	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
25-35 years old	3	4	3	4	14%
35-45 years old	5	5	6	5	21%
45-55 years old	4	6	4	6	20%
55-65 years old	5	4	5	7	21%
65 + years old	6	5	7	6	24%
Total	23%	24%	25%	28%	100%

Graph 3.



4. What is your ethnic origin?

- White;
- Caribbean;
- African;
- Indian;
- Hispanic;
- Latino;
- Cuban;
- Filipino;
- Korean;
- Vietnamese;
- Pakistani;
- Bangladeshi;
- Asian;
- Other black background;
- Other including mixed ethnic background;
- Unknown;
- Do not wish to disclose;

This question makes a particular importance since all the people were selected of different races and it is significant to know the percentage of race that participated in the research. Therefore, the researcher revealed that 4% of people are white, African,

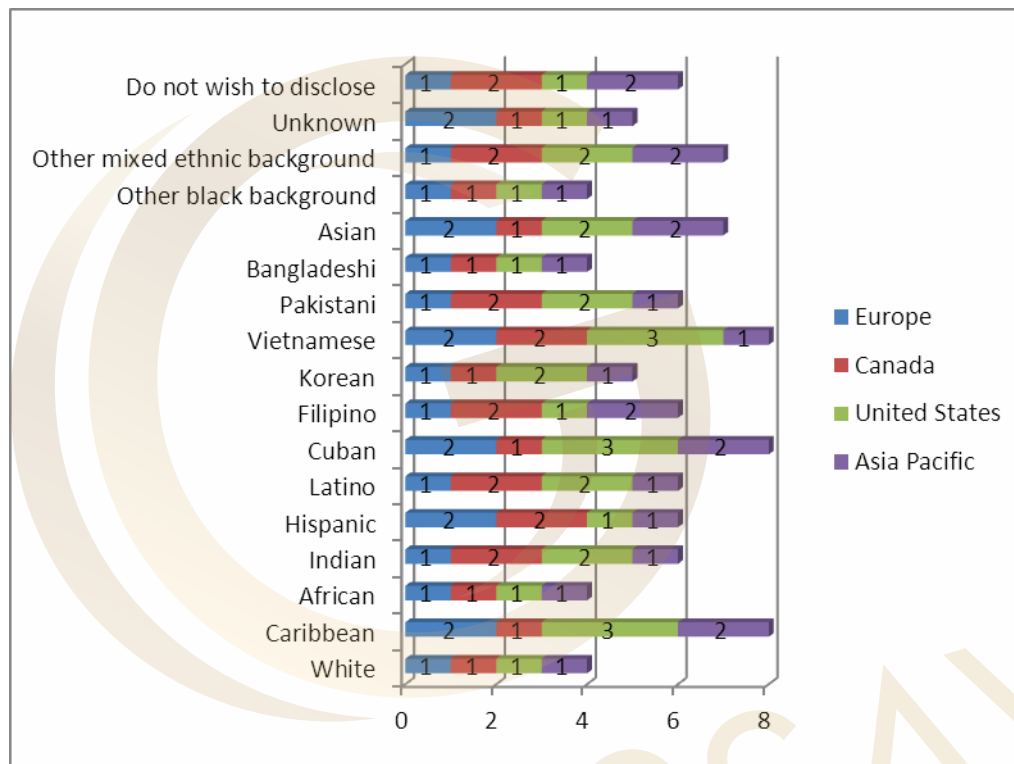
Bangladeshi, and other black background; 8% - are Caribbean, Cuban, and Vietnamese; 6% - Indian, Hispanic, Latino, Filipino, Pakistani, and do not wish to disclose their race; 5% - Korean and of unknown race; and 7% - Asian and other mixed ethnic background. The research also revealed that there were 23% of the participants from Europe and Asia Pacific, 25% from Canada, and 29% from the United States. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 4.

What is your ethnic origin?	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
White	1	1	1	1	4%
Caribbean	2	1	3	2	8%
African	1	1	1	1	4%
Indian	1	2	2	1	6%
Hispanic	2	2	1	1	6%
Latino	1	2	2	1	6%
Cuban	2	1	3	2	8%
Filipino	1	2	1	2	6%
Korean	1	1	2	1	5%
Vietnamese	2	2	3	1	8%
Pakistani	1	2	2	1	6%
Bangladeshi	1	1	1	1	4%
Asian	2	1	2	2	7%
Other black background	1	1	1	1	4%
Other mixed ethnic background	1	2	2	2	7%
Unknown	2	1	1	1	5%

Do not wish to disclose	1	2	1	2	6%
Total	23%	25%	29%	23%	100%

Graph 4.



5. How many years have you been studying racial inequality and racial passing?

- 1-5 years;
- 6-10 years;
- 11-15 years;
- 16-20 years;
- More than 20 years;

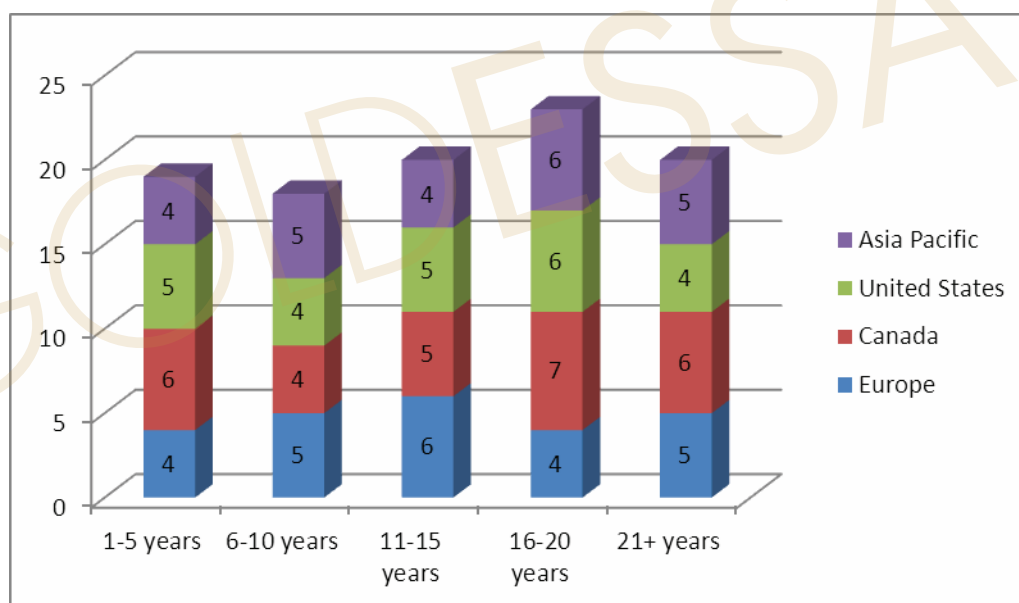
The level of experience in studying racial inequality and racial passing is one of the most important questions of the research. Consequently, it was significant to find out the years of dedicated experience in evaluating racial passing. Therefore, the research exposed that 19% of participants had from one to five years of experience, 18% have from six to ten

years of experience, 20% have from eleven to fifteen years of experience, 23% have from sixteen to twenty years of experience, and 20% have more than twenty years of experience researching racial passing and discrimination. The researcher also revealed that there were 24% of the participants from Europe, the United States and Asia Pacific, and 28% were from Canada. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 5.

<i>Percent</i>	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
1-5 years	4	6	5	4	19%
6-10 years	5	4	4	5	18%
11-15 years	6	5	5	4	20%
16-20 years	4	7	6	6	23%
21+ years	5	6	4	5	20%
Total	24%	28%	24%	24%	100%

Graph 5.



6. What is your relationship with other races and ethnic groups?

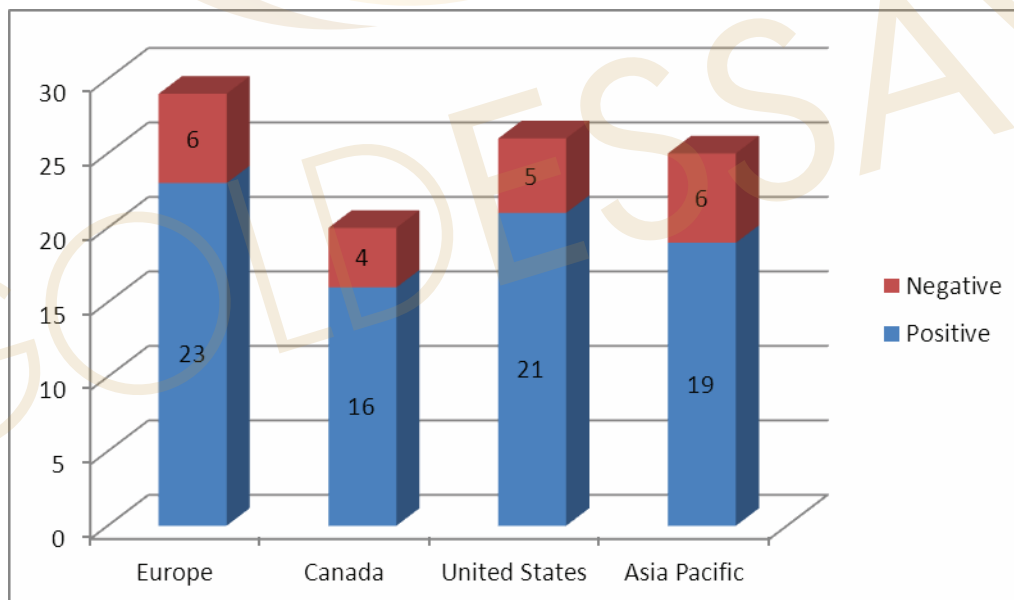
- Positive;
- Negative;

At the same time, it was important to find out the attitude and opinions of the research participants towards different races. Therefore, it was revealed that 79% of people were positive about their relationship to other races, whereas 21% were negative according to the research findings. In addition, the researcher found out that there were 29% of the participants from Europe, 20% - from Canada, 26% - from the United States, and 25% - from Asia Pacific. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 6.

<i>Percent</i>	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
Positive	23	16	21	19	79%
Negative	6	4	5	6	21%
Total	29%	20%	26%	25%	100%

Graph 6.



7. Do you consider the benefits of passing have a strong positive impact on the formation of racial identity?

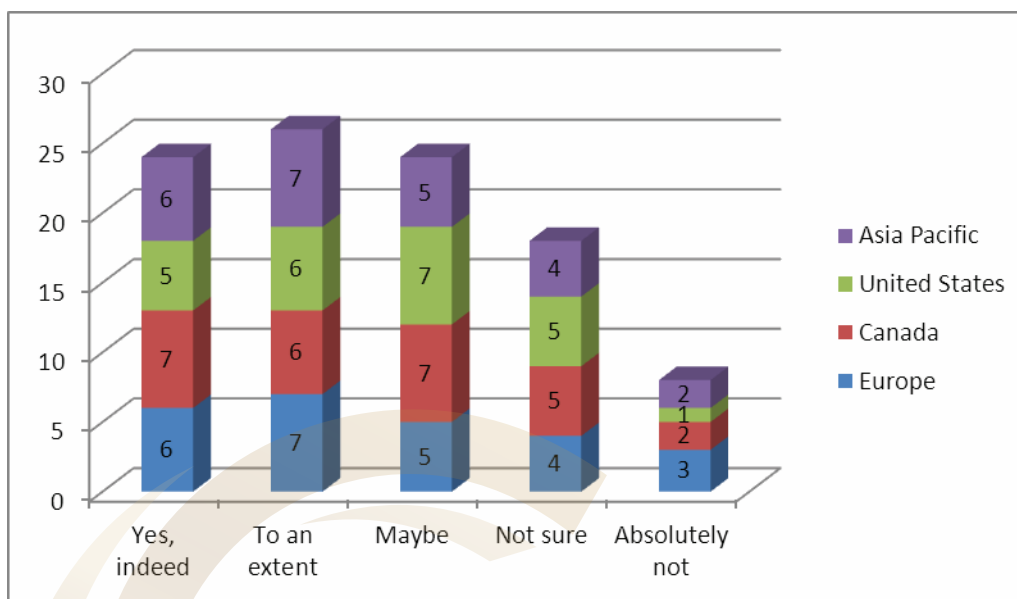
- Yes, indeed;
- To an extent;
- Maybe;
- Not sure;
- Absolutely not;

The benefits of passing are one of the foremost questions of the entire research, which also reflects the negative implications of passing. Therefore, the researcher was going to examine this question from the position of the research respondents. Consequently, the it was revealed that 24% of the participants replied “Yes, indeed” and “Maybe; 26% replied “To an extent”, 18% replied “Not sure”, and 8% replied “Absolutely not”. The following findings mean that the half of respondents is positive about the benefits of passing and formation of a racial identity. At the same time, the researcher revealed that there were 25% of the participants from Europe, 27% - from Canada, as well as 24% - from the United States and Asia Pacific. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 7.

<i>Percent</i>	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
Yes, indeed	6	7	5	6	24%
To an extent	7	6	6	7	26%
Maybe	5	7	7	5	24%
Not sure	4	5	5	4	18%
Absolutely not	3	2	1	2	8%
Total	25%	27%	24%	24%	100%

Graph 7.



8. Is there a strong negative effect of racial discrimination on the lifespan of different ethnic groups?

- Strongly agree;
- Agree;
- Somewhat agree;
- Not sure;
- Disagree;

The next question concerns the negative effect of racial discrimination, which is also important to be confirmed by the participants. This question added more clarity towards both positive and negative implications of racial passing. 29% of participants replied “Strongly agree”, 23% - “Agree”, 20% replied “Somewhat agree” and “Not sure”, and 8% replied “Disagree”. At the same time, it was revealed that there were 22% of the participants from Europe, 25% - from Canada, 29% - from the United States, and 24% - from Asia Pacific.

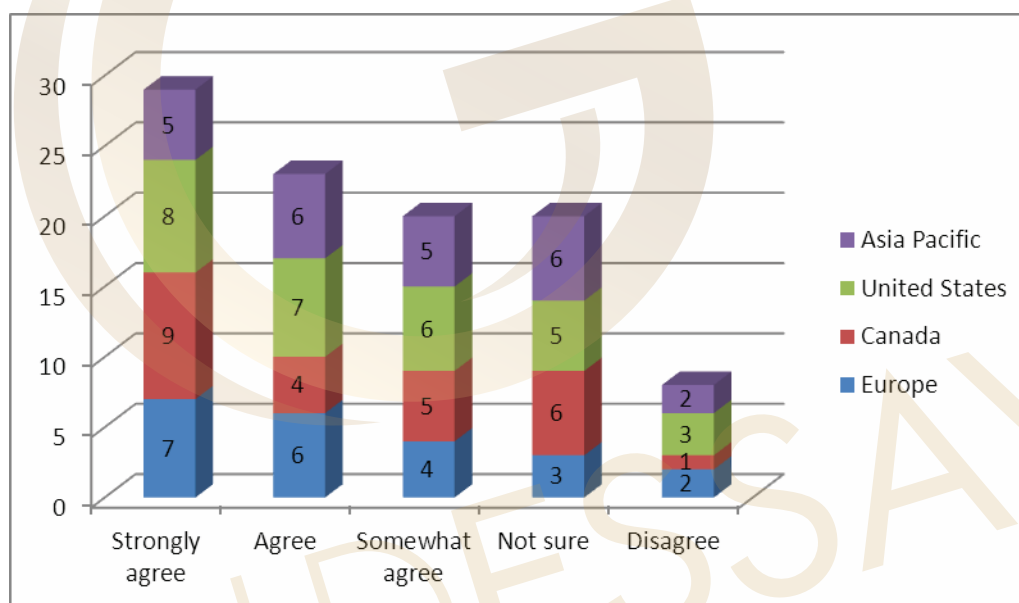
Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 8.

<i>Percent</i>	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
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Strongly agree	7	9	8	5	29%
Agree	6	4	7	6	23%
Somewhat agree	4	5	6	5	20%
Not sure	3	6	5	6	20%
Disagree	2	1	3	2	8%
Total	22%	25%	29%	24%	100%

Graph 8.



9. What is important to eliminate racial passing and promote equal rights for different races?

- Public awareness;
- Improved racial attitudes;
- Public justice;
- Open public laws;
- Anti-racism behavior;
- Positive ethnic ideology;
- Economic benefits;
- Solvation of ethnic conflicts;

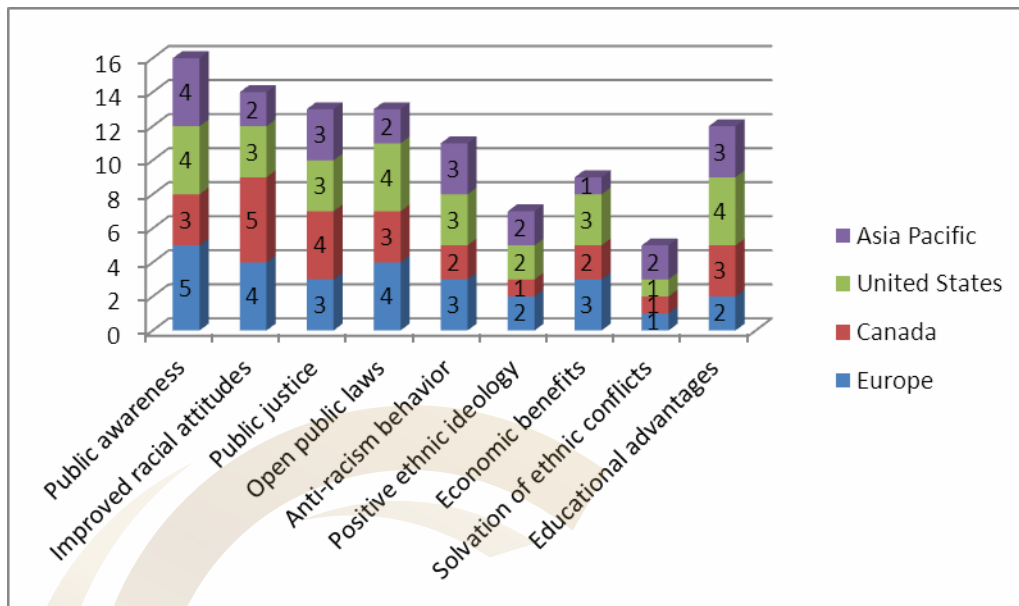
- Educational advantages;

The following question addresses the importance of eliminating racial passing and promoting the equal rights for different races. Among the research participants, 16% referred to the public awareness, 14% referred to the improved racial attitudes, 13% referred to the public justice and open public laws, 11% referred to the anti-racism behavior, 7% referred to the positive ethnic ideology, 9% referred to the economic benefits, 5% referred to the salvation of ethnic conflicts, and 12% referred to the educational advantages. In addition, 27% of the participants were from Europe and the United States, 24% were from Canada, and 22% were from Asia Pacific. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 9.

<i>Percent</i>	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
Public awareness	5	3	4	4	16%
Improved racial attitudes	4	5	3	2	14%
Public justice	3	4	3	3	13%
Open public laws	4	3	4	2	13%
Anti-racism behavior	3	2	3	3	11%
Positive ethnic ideology	2	1	2	2	7%
Economic benefits	3	2	3	1	9%
Salvation of ethnic conflicts	1	1	1	2	5%
Educational advantages	2	3	4	3	12%
Total	27%	24%	27%	22%	100%

Graph 9.



10. While participating in the survey, do you agree to share your responses to the public?

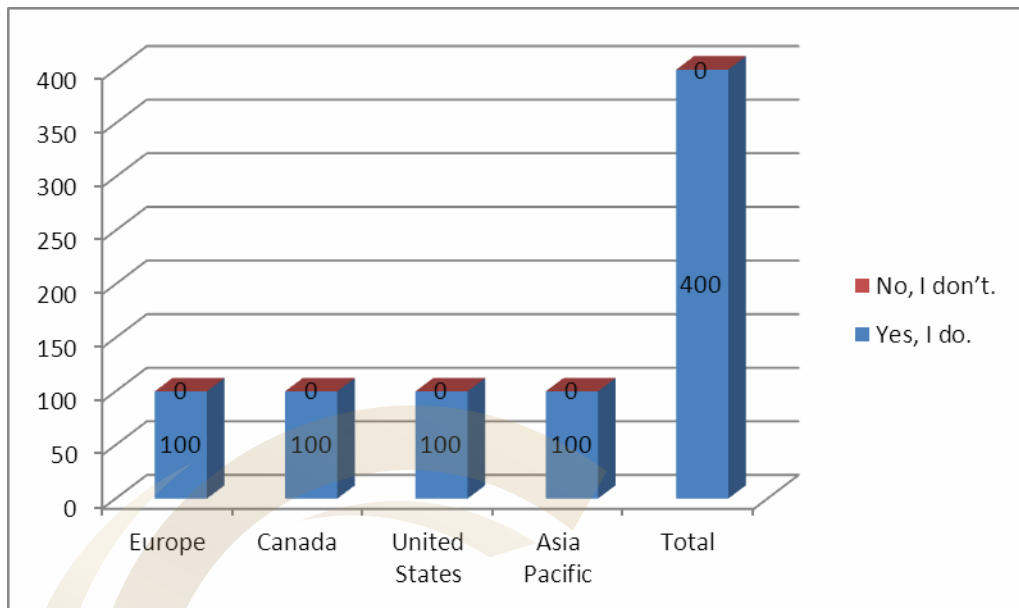
- Yes, I do.
- No, I do not.

The final question addresses the willingness of the research participants to share their data for the public use. Therefore, it was asked to reply to the questionnaire. It was revealed that a hundred percent of the replies obtained from the respondents in Europe, Canada, the United States and Asia Pacific were positive about the answer to this question. Refer to the table and graph below for more details:

Table 10.

Percent	Europe	Canada	United States	Asia Pacific	Total
Yes, I do.	100	100	100	100	400
No, I don't.	0	0	0	0	0

Graph 10.



Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks and Research Limitations

To conclude, the research has collected the evidence of both racial discrimination and passing on the basis of two novels: *The Autobiography of An Ex-colored Man* and *The House Behind the Cedar*. It has fully addressed the primary research question by claiming that both passing and racial discrimination indeed have a strong effect on the personal and professional life of African Americans. At the same time, the research covered the research questions through the analysis of the literature with respect to the aspects of passing as an impact on the personal and professional lifestyle of African Americans. It also examined the negative psychological impact of racism and how passing can help to overcome it through the formation of personal identity.

At the same time, the aspect of passing could be acknowledged as the incentive for the cultural development of the African American personality. The final element of the research is to understand how to take advantage of passing in terms of facing racial discrimination in the society of white people. In all, both primary and secondary research findings prove the thesis statement and indicate that passing and racial discrimination have a strong negative

impact on the formation of cultural identity of African Americans and their personal and professional life in the society of white people (Trepagnier 16).

Racial passing addresses an ability of a person to be acknowledged as part of a different racial group. This was used mostly in the United States in order for a person with mixed blood and combined race to adjust to a society. The racial discrimination goes in line with racial passing. It is the ability of people with a light skin to pass as whites, including ethnicity, social class, emotional intelligence, age, gender, and / or community status. The purpose of passing adheres to the need to achieve social acceptance and to be able to cope with negative implications of a “black life” in the 1920-s (Allen 14).

Racial passing also closely relates to the ethnicity of the mixed-race African-Americans who strived to pass as the white people in the society. In fact, the perception of discrimination mostly refers to the United States and Europe. However, it could be used as a choice of actions that the black people use to transform their lives and live as the white ones. Racial passing is a genuine opportunity for the African-Americans. It allows them to live a better life by passing as the white people and hiding their black origin on the one hand, but promoting white appearance and erudition on the other hand (Skeggs 74).

Racial passing is set to strive for a so-called American dream positioned in the United States. The ideal perception of living corresponds to the opportunity to live safer lives, including the ability to become successful and free from racial discrimination. Overall, Afro-Americans pursued the ideals of success and prosperity by passing as white people. The goal was to reach a better future for the ethnic families regardless of their social class, status, and educational background (Eliav-Feldon & Ziegler 20).

The same was revealed by both the review of novels and overall literature review, including the online survey that supports the original findings. However, there were some limitations for the following research. In particular, the researcher lacked time and money.

Thus, these factors could be considered as the major limitations for the research. At the same time, some of the research respondents were afraid of giving their personal details because of the same racial discrimination aspect. Indeed, today, the problem of passing is no longer applicable, but some people are still afraid of being in public and sharing any private information, especially in the online survey.

Therefore, such a fact of fear could be acknowledged as a matter of inconsistency and incorrectness of some answers provided by the research participants. Consequently, in order to avoid this fear, the research participants were reassured that the online survey would be completely confidential and the contact details would be taken to collect the data and manage the research results. Thus, complete security of personal information given by the every research participant was maintained.

For this reason, the research participants were asked to share absolutely applicable and accurate data, including all the information that was asked to be shared during the online survey. This approach to conducting a research will provide a greater contribution into the research outcomes. In fact, most of the research participants are interested in the retrieved research results and are willing to continue sharing information in the further researches.

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