

NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) not included in the original manuscript and are unavailable from the author or university. The manuscript was scanned as received.

113

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]

**The Impact of Race and Class on the Educational
Experiences of Black Students in Ottawa's
Educational System**

Janet M. Haynes

The Department of Integrated Studies in Education

**Faculty of Education
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec**

August 2005

**A thesis submitted to McGill University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

© Janet M. Haynes 2005



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-25168-3

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-25168-3

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

Dedication

I dedicate this study to the students and parents who have struggled, and those who continue to struggle for equality and equity within Ottawa's educational system. Through pain, frustration and tears, you have entrusted me with your most painful and humiliating educational experiences. You have asked me to break the silence of your continued struggle to be afforded a basic right - a right to be educated equally as other Canadians. And while I could not undo what you have endured, I have nonetheless attempted to capture your voices and break your silence. I have attempted to bring in the public domain your pain and your suffering caused by the pervasiveness of racism and class discrimination in an unjust educational system. I respectfully salute your courage and the spirit with which you continue to fight for the right to be educated equally as other Canadians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to first acknowledge God for his love and guidance. My faith in God's power, strength, love and patience enabled me to endure to the end. His guiding light shone throughout the dark periods and gave me the Spirit to carry on.

Special thanks to my family for their endless support, love and confidence in my ability to complete this important journey. I would also like to say heart felt thanks to Francis Julien for the valuable support and encouragement I received throughout the most critical stages of the program. Also special thanks go to Mr. Michael Baffoe and Dr. Stephen Aduboufour for the many hours that they invested in this project and their valuable suggestions and encouragements. Sincere thanks and appreciation go to members of the Consulting Committee in Ottawa that has worked with this project. Their commitment and determination to improve the lives of Black youths in Ottawa schools were great inspirations to me. To my peers in the Faculty of Education, thank you for helping me to cross the finishing line. Through tears, pain, anger, and laughter we drew the necessary strength from each other in order to survive the war.

As a student with a learning disability, I would also like to recognize and extend great appreciation to Dean Roger Slee and Dr. Michael Doxtater for their inclusive intervention approach that made it possible for me to complete this program, despite the systemic barriers. Thanks also to Manuel Lucio for his kindness, generosity, and eagerness in making my experience within the Faculty a memorable one.

A special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Kevin McDonough, for the respect, trust, honesty, and confidence he has shown to me over the years. Although my journey was an arduous one, he was always patient and there to support and represent me during the most difficult times. I consider the field of education a battle ground and I could not have successfully fought this war on my own without his help. He depersonalized the educational struggles facing Black students such as myself and became actively

involved. In other words, my struggle became his struggle. Dr. McDonough, thank you for filling my educational journey with love, respect and kindness.

Last but not least, I would like to say thanks to my doctoral committee members: Dr. Mary Maguire for the guidance and valuable feedback she provided throughout the process; and Dr. Eric Shragge for his continued support and encouragement. Dr. Shragge, thanks for your display of confidence in me and in support of my work. Your reassuring words and consistent encouragement brought me in from the margins - closer to the centre – thank you.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the educational inequalities facing Black high school students, particularly working-class youths in Ottawa's educational system. In consultation with several community organizations, educators, parents and students, several concerns were identified as barriers that impacted the educational achievement of Black youths in Ottawa's schools. They identified issues such as the continued negative stereotyping of Black students, particularly Black males as being aggressive, violent, low achievers, and lacking respect for authority, which often results in their suspensions and/or expulsion. Most importantly, they argue that in addition to the high rate of suspensions and expulsions, there also appears to be a funneling of Black working-class males into the criminal juvenile justice system, by schools, which results in the criminalization of Black youths by Ottawa schools.

This study was framed within a Black antiracist feminist framework that employed an oppositional and critical pedagogy aimed at interrogating the educational experiences of Black youths. The study examined the impact of race and class on educational outcome, and the ways in which the current educational arrangement benefits some students while disadvantaging others. Critical to the study is the denial of racism within Ottawa schools by educators and administrators. The problem is further complicated by the fact that neither the Ottawa Carleton District School Board nor the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board compiles statistical database on students' race, ethnicity and/or social class, which is a necessary tool in determining the existence of educational inequality. Due to the lack of educational statistics educators have avoided accountability, thus preserving the status quo.

Résumé

La présente thèse examine les inégalités pédagogiques auxquelles les étudiants de race noire dans les écoles secondaires du système scolaire d'Ottawa doivent faire face, en particulier les jeunes venant de famille de cols bleus (travailleurs manuelles).

En consultation avec plusieurs organismes communautaires, éducateurs, parents et élèves, certains événements ont été identifiés comme des barrières qui affectent la performance des jeunes noirs dans les écoles à Ottawa. Ils ont identifié des questions tels que le cliché négatif auquel les étudiants noirs sont continuellement sujets, particulièrement les mâles de race noire ; ils sont considérés comme agressifs, violents, de basse performance avec un manque du respect envers les autorités, qui souvent résulte par des suspensions et des expulsions. À la limite, ils soutiennent que non seulement le taux des suspensions et d'expulsions est assez haut, mais en plus, ils semblent que les écoles servent à acheminer des mâles noirs de la classe des travailleurs manuels dans le système criminel juvénile judiciaire.

Cette étude a été encadrée dans un concept antiraciste féministe noir qui a employé une pédagogie oppositionnelle et critique qui cible et questionne sur les expériences éducationnelles des jeunes noirs. Comme tel, l'étude a examiné l'impact de la race et de la classe dans les résultats scolaires et comment la présente organisation scolaire bénéficie à quelques élèves et en désavantage d'autres. Le point critique dans cette étude est refus du racisme dans les écoles d'Ottawa par éducateurs et administrateurs. Le problème se complique par le fait que ni la Commission scolaire du district Carleton d'Ottawa ni la Commission scolaire séparée du Catholique Roman du Carlton compilent des données statistiques basés sur la race, ethnicité et/ou classe sociale des élèves; qui seraient utile et nécessaire à déterminer l'existence d'inégalités pédagogiques. Ce manque de données statistiques et pédagogiques permet aux éducateurs l'évasion de responsabilités, préservant ainsi le statu quo.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	IV
RÉSUMÉ	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
LIST OF TABLES	XII
LIST OF APPENDICES	XII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY	3
1.2 PERSONAL NARRATIVE	7
1.3 MAPPING THE DISSERTATION	12
1.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	16
CHAPTER 2: DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE	17
2.1 MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES	18
2.2 CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF EDUCATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY	21
2.3 LIBERAL VIEW OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION	29
2.3.1 <i>The 'Formal' Liberal view of Multicultural Education</i>	30
2.3.2 <i>The 'Compensatory' Liberal view of Multicultural Education</i>	32
2.3.3 <i>The 'Participatory' Liberal view of Multicultural Education</i>	34

2.4 CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM – A DEBATE	37
2.5 CRITICAL MULTICULTURALIST VIEW OF EDUCATION	43
2.6 ANTIRACIST VIEW OF EDUCATION.....	48
2.7 CRITICISM OF ANTIRACISM FRAMEWORK.....	54
 CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	59
3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	59
3.1 BLACK FEMINISM - AN UNDERSTANDING.....	61
3.2 ‘SISTERHOOD’ IN THE STRUGGLE – WHOSE STRUGGLE? – AT WHOSE COST?	64
3.3 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	67
 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	69
4.0 INTRODUCTION	69
4.1 THE PROBLEM	70
4.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY	71
4.3 GOALS	73
4.4 OBJECTIVE OF STUDY	74
4.5 BREAKING THE SILENCE THROUGH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	75
4.6 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH	76
4.6.1 <i>The First and Second Committee Meeting</i>	78
4.6.2 <i>The Third Meeting of the Committee</i>	79
4.7 ACCESS AND ENTRY	80
4.8 DATA GATHERING.....	82
4.9 PARTICIPANTS’ VOICES	84
4.10 RESEARCH SETTING.....	86

4.11 ETHICAL CONSENT	86
4.12 DATA ANALYSIS.....	88
4.13 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	91
CHAPTER 5: STUDENTS' NARRATIVES.....	92
5.0 INTRODUCTION.....	92
5.1 RACISM IN OTTAWA'S SCHOOLS – IT IS HERE, WE SEE IT, WE FEEL IT	94
5.2 STREAMING & LACK OF GUIDANCE	95
5.3 ZERO TOLERANCE - SUSPENSIONS.....	98
5.4 STEREOTYPING & CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK YOUTHS.....	100
5.5 DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT – BARRIERS TO LEARNING.....	102
5.6 SCHOOL – A HOSTILE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR BLACK YOUTHS	104
5.7 WORK TWICE AS HARD	105
5.8 ETHNIC GRADING.....	106
5.9 MORE DIVERSITY IN SCHOOL STAFF AND CURRICULUM	108
5.10 CLASS AND EDUCATION.....	110
5.11 UNIFORMS – BREAKING THE CLASS BARRIER IN SCHOOL.....	112
5.12 PARENTS' ROLE IN SCHOOLS	114
5.13 LACK OF VOICE – CALL FOR AN ORGANIZATION.....	116
5.14 BLACK STUDENTS' STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL EDUCATION – HOW TO SURVIVE.....	117
5.15 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	119

CHAPTER 6: NARRATIVES - PARENTS, EDUCATORS & LEADERS121

6.0 INTRODUCTION	121
6.1 BLACK YOUTHS: GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT	123
6.2 RACISM DENIED – RACISM EXISTS: TWO OPPOSING VIEWS	125
6.3 STEREOTYPING	127
6.4 CLASS ISSUES IN EDUCATION	129
6.5 CLOTHING – POOR KIDS DO NOT NEED TO WEAR EXPENSIVE CLOTHING?	131
6.6 MULTIPLE JOBS: A MEANS OF SURVIVAL OR LACK OF PRIORITIES?	133
6.7 LACK OF UNDERSTANDING WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.....	135
6.8 RE-EDUCATION OF PARENTS.....	137
6.9 PARENTS NEED TO SPEAK OUT	139
6.10 THE NEED FOR AN ORGANIZATION TO SERVE PARENT AND STUDENTS.....	140
6.11 THE STREAMING OF BLACK YOUTHS	142
6.12 ZERO TOLERANCE, EXPULSIONS & SUSPENSIONS.....	145
6.13 RACIAL PROFILING AND THE CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK MALES IN SCHOOLS....	148
6.14 THE NEED FOR RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG SCHOOL STAFF.....	149
6.15 ANTI-RACIST/CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TRAINING FOR TEACHERS	151
6.16 GOOD TEACHERS – ACKNOWLEDGING EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY	153
6.17 ROLE MODELS – NECESSARY IN BUILDING A POSITIVE BLACK IDENTITY	155
6.18 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	157

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION158

7.0 INTRODUCTION.....	158
7.1 OCDSB & OCCSB BOARD POLICIES ON EQUAL EDUCATION	160

7.2 RACISM, STEREOTYPING & CRIMINALIZATION IN OTTAWA'S SCHOOLS.....	166
7.2.1 Overt Racism due to Stereotyping and Differential Treatment	167
7.2.2 Covert Racism due to Stereotyping and Differential Treatment.....	170
7.2.3 Dressing Black – Imagery Linked to Deviance, Drugs and Gangs	172
7.2.4 Racism in Ottawa's Educational System - Fact or Fiction.....	174
7.2.5 Zero Tolerance for Whom?	177
7.2.6 Guilty until proven innocent – Black students' reality.....	180
7.2.7 Racial Profiling, and Zero Tolerance.....	183
7.2.8 The Systematic Extraction of Black Youths via to Zero Tolerance Policies.....	186
7.2.9 Zero Tolerance and the Lack of Accountability.....	189
7.2.10 The Criminalization of Black Youths.....	192
7.3 CLASS ISSUES IN EDUCATION	197
7.3.1 Clothing – A means of avoiding 'class distinction' in schools	202
7.3.2 Multiple jobs: A means of survival or disposable income?	205
7.4 EQUALITY ON PAPER - CONTRADICTION BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE	208
7.4.1 The Systematic streaming of Black youths - Killing of Dreams.....	210
7.4.2 Streaming made possible due to parents' lack of understanding	216
7.4.3 School as a hostile environment	222
7.4.4 Working twice as hard – due to low teacher expectation.....	225
7.4.5 Ethnic Grading.....	229
7.4.6 Black students provide evidence of ethnic grading	232
7.4.7 Impact – shaming, doubting and internalizing ethnic grading.....	233
7.4.8 Ethnic grading as a means of denying access to higher learning	235
7.5 THE NEED FOR OTTAWA SCHOOLS TO RACIALLY DIVERSE	237
7.5.1 Lack of diversity – Towards an inclusive curriculum.....	241
7.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	243
CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	245
8.1 LOOKING BACK - MOVING FORWARD	245
8.2 ZERO TOLERANCE AND THE LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY	247
8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	249
8.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR ETHNIC GRADING	254
8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LACK OF GUIDANCE & NEGATIVE STREAMING	254

8.6 ESTABLISHING AN EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTRE.....	258
8.7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	259
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION.....	261
9.0 CONCLUSION	261
BIBLIOGRAPHY	270

LIST OF TABLES

Table A:	Students Biographical Chart.....	93
Table B:	Parents, Community Leaders, Educators Biographical Chart.....	122
Table C:	Suspension & Expulsion Data by Race.....	250
Table D:	Supplementary Suspension Report, Fall 2004.....	252

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A:	Informed Letter of Consent.....	281
Appendix B:	Consent Form to Participate.....	282
Appendix C:	Referral Consent Form.....	283
Appendix D:	Interview Guide.....	284
Appendix E:	Certificate of Ethical Acceptability.....	285

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

The primary aim of this study is to examine the educational experiences of Black youths in Ottawa's educational system at the high school level. The primary reason for this examination is to better understand how experiences of educational inequality affect the educational opportunities of Black youths. I also hope to develop an understanding of how such experiences are caused in the first place, and why they remain largely unaddressed by the Ottawa school system. Hence, the study places Black students and parents at its core. In attempting to deconstruct the educational experiences of Black youths, it was essential to develop an understanding of the various ways in which the intersection of race and class impacts educational outcome within a Canadian context. Also, an attempt was made to examine the degree to which class differences might have mediated the relationships between teachers/administrators and Black parents/students, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged. In other words, based on the perception of the participants, do teachers/administrators treat all Black parents and students equally, irrespective of class? Through the lenses of Black students and parents in Ottawa, I will attempt to deconstruct not only the Black youths' educational reality, but also the parents' interaction with teachers/ administrators along race and class lines.

In addition to the parents and students, it was also important to incorporate the views and perceptions of the wider Black community, including community leaders and teachers. I believe their perspectives on the situation facing Black youths are critical because they are engaged with the wider community and the educational system and thus have a comprehensive view of the problem. In addition, my ability to successfully solicit and engage various members of the larger Black community to become involved in the research project and to view this involvement as an investment in the educational future of Black youths was also essential. Consequently, working with a community group will enable members of the community to get involved in the project and upon its completion, use the dissertation as a tool to lobby for educational change on behalf of Black youths in Ottawa schools. Also, since there appears to be doubt amongst educators within Ottawa's educational system as to whether or not racism is present in Ottawa's schools, I felt it was both necessary and important to have a committee representing Ottawa's Black community attached to the project. Certainly, based on the reports coming from the community, there appears to be no doubt in the minds of Black students, parents and community leaders of the pervasiveness of racism in Ottawa schools. Most importantly, using the dissertation, members of the community will now be able to engage educators in discussions or debate on issues of racism and other forms of educational inequality facing Black students. Accordingly, a committee of six members representing parents, educators and community leaders was established within the research process.

In my attempt to break the silence around the various educational issues facing Black youths in Ottawa, I will describe the process I followed and the theoretical assumptions that underpin my analysis and construction of this dissertation.

1.1 Description of the Problem and Rationale for the Study

Canadian society is becoming increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic due to increased levels of immigration over the past twenty years (Herberg, 1993, Boucher, 1990). The educational system appears to have been ill-prepared to receive large numbers of new arrivals from overwhelmingly diverse backgrounds from areas such as Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America.

For instance, today the Somali population is one of the larger newest non-white, ethnic groups in Ottawa. This new community, which is approximately fifteen years old, continues to face settlement issues resulting from differences in culture, religion, family values and traditions. The youths within this ethnic group have joined the ranks of other Black youths who are over-represented in the justice system and who are also experiencing high rates of educational inequalities which results in their being pushed out of the school system. Nonetheless, despite the ethnic differences between the Somali youths and other Black youths in the community, these ethnic differences appear to melt away in Ottawa's schools, because the issues being identified by the Black community are due to race and class differences rather than ethnic differences. Consequently, the study was not conducted along ethnic lines, but it rather focused on examining the ways in which the intersection of Blackness and class affects educational outcomes within Ottawa's educational system.

One obstacle in attempting to investigate racial inequality in Ottawa schools is that the problem of racial inequality is often denied, and certainly rarely if ever acknowledged by the officials of Ottawa's two school boards. This dissertation should be understood as an attempt to vigorously challenge this culture of official denial. In this respect, I follow in the footsteps of many other scholars – Canadian and otherwise – who have sought to expose the reality of Black youths' educational disenfranchisement (Alladin, 1996; Dei, 1995, 1996; Radwanski, 1987; Solomon, 1992; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Giroux, 2000, Kailin, 2002; Neito, 2004; O'Neill, 1976; McLaren, 2000; Fine, 1991; Kozol, 1991; and Oakes, 1985), in the face of official, bureaucratic denial.

Due to the fact that unequal educational practices, leading to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes, has not been acknowledged or legitimized in Ottawa, incidents that expose such realities are often referred to as 'isolated' rather than systemic. Despite the fact that Black youths throughout the educational system in Ottawa are sharing similar experiences within their schools, and have concrete and frequent references of such incidents, they are nonetheless considered 'isolated'. As such, a false perception of educational equality has been created and vigorously defended in Ottawa's educational system. This false portrayal of educational equality, coupled with the lack of statistical data, has compounded the problems facing many Black families in Ottawa today. It has also become the anchor upon which educators in Ottawa are able to make claims of educational equality without any means of accountability while ignoring the actual educational inequalities facing Black youths.

To understand this dilemma facing the Black community, I took a closer look at the Quality Assurance Office located within one of the school boards in Ottawa. When

asked to explain the role of the Quality Assurance Office, the officer reported that the Board ensures that all schools deliver equal quality education to all students through the national testing program, which measures the achievement levels amongst the student population on a national level. When asked how can non-white groups ascertain how well their students are doing nationally in comparison to students from the dominant group, the official responded that those statistics are simply not available. When asked - how can the Black community prove that a disparity exists in relation to the high suspension, expulsion, and/or dropout rate of Black students, particularly males? She responded that while it is factual that the majority of students that get suspended or expelled are males, there are no data that establishes a disparity in the application of the Boards' disciplinary practices towards Black males.

The official stated that if school administrators were concerned about any existing disparity it is up to that administrator to request such data, which would then enable the Board to address the issue. According to the official, to date, no such disparities have been reported by school administrators. If school administrators do not report disparities in their schools – educational inequality does not exist - therefore, quality assurance has been achieved (Conversation, 2003). In short, no solutions are being sought because the official position is that there are no inequalities facing Black youths in Ottawa's schools. By a similar reasoning I suggest that the absence of statistical data works both ways. On what basis can those claims of equality be challenged or even evaluated if there is no data to show the existence or non-existence of inequality?

How can either of the two Boards in Ottawa prove that no particular racial or ethnic groups are being disadvantaged within their system? To date the Boards have

only been concerned with gender statistics, without regards to the reality that an educational system rooted in white dominance is inherently racist, therefore achieving gender equality does not assure racial equality in such an educational arrangement. For example, the literature supports and reveals a disparity in non-white administrative/faculty/ teaching staff and a Eurocentric curriculum existing at levels within the educational system in both Canada and the United States, which not only maintains the status quo but also aims to promote monoculturalism and white dominance (see Brathwaite, 1998; Solomon, 1992; Neito, 2004; Giroux, 2000; Dei, 1998; and hooks, 2003).

Despite the role of the quality assurance office, and despite their claims that educational equality exists in Ottawa's schools, evidence that indicates otherwise are visible throughout the community. For instance, although there is no statistical evidence to support community claims that the suspension/expulsion/dropout rates amongst Black youths are disproportionately higher than that of white youths, the physical evidence can be observed throughout the community on a daily basis. During school hours Black, school aged, youths, particularly males, are often seen hanging out on the streets, in the malls, in arcades, or just hanging around each other's neighborhoods. The question then becomes – why are they not in school – what future do they have without an education? Consequently, while educators in Ottawa are evading the questions of racism, inequality, and the high dropout rates amongst Black youths in their schools, the Black community is struggling for answers and solutions to the miseducation of their youths, particularly males. To this end, this study aims to examine the educational experiences of Black youths, parents, community leaders, and

educators with the hope of engaging the various educational stakeholders in honest and open dialog regarding the educational plight of Black youths, particularly youths who are economically disadvantaged. Finally, having described the research and my reasons for conducting this study, I would like to take you on a brief historical journey aimed at illuminating my passion for equal educational opportunity.

1.2 Personal Narrative

In attempting to deconstruct my own identity, it is my belief that history occupies a critical and significant role in my narrative due to its legacy and the many ways in which it has helped to shape who I have become today. As such, I will travel back to my grandmother, Mammy, because she has had the greatest and most significant impact on my life.

As a child it was my greatest desire to stay at home with my mom and not go to school. I hated going to school, and could not understand the need for education. But for many years my mammy would tell me stories of her childhood desire to go to school and how she couldn't because she had to work the coffee fields picking coffee beans. She always told me how lucky I was to have gotten the opportunity to go to school. On the other hand, I felt she was the lucky one. She did not have to go to school and memorize her time tables or the long list of words for the next spelling test. Being a young person then, I never comprehended the degree of pain she must have endured living with such painful memories. However, I do recall the pain in her voice as she often reflected back to the gaps in her own history - "I do not know who I am - I have no history".

My grandmother passed away 31 years ago, at the age of 106. Although slavery had been formally abolished many years earlier, the practice of 'informally' owning Blacks continued for many years later. As a child she was never allowed to attend school and lived the life of a slave until she ran away and got married at the age of 17 in order to break her life of bondage. My grandmother had no history or identity, did not know her mother, father, or any relatives. I grew up listening to my grandmother wishing for a past that was devoid to her until her death at the age of 106.

I will also never forget the sadness in her eyes as she looked off in the distance, mentally traveling back in time attempting to reconstruct her history – a history that did not exist for her. So, in times of great struggles, I often reflect back on my grandmother's narratives, her pain and most of all, her determination for survival. I use the memories as a source of strength to enable me to endure and persevere through my own struggles. It has also helped to shape my passion for equal education, because, although education was a privilege for which my grandmother had no entitlement, today, education is a *right* for all children.

As I continue to advance through this historical period of my life, the clock has now moved forward to my arrival in Canada. Similar to my earlier beginnings in Jamaica, my earlier experiences of being a new Canadian has also played an instrumental role in helping to shape my reality and identity as a Jamaican-Canadian. Like many Black immigrant families, I have also faced and continue to face varying degrees of inequality in all aspects of Canadian society i.e. employment, justice, housing, education, etc. Thus, the ensuing discussion will focus primarily on the

educational challenges and struggles faced by my family, which also marks the experiences of many other immigrant families in my community.

In 1977, I, along with my two young children, immigrated to Canada from Jamaica to join my husband who had migrated the previous year. Like many newly arrived immigrant families with young children, we were in need of affordable housing. Consequently, we applied for and received subsidized housing. My son started 4-year-old kindergarten two and a half months after our arrival in Canada. This was my initiation into an unequal educational system that was stratified primarily by race and class. Although privately owned homes were also located in and around the housing complex, many of the middle-class neighbors who owned their homes did not send their children to the neighborhood public school. Their children were often sent to either French immersion or to the Catholic separate schools. This was my middle-class neighbors' strategy to avoid sending their children to the neighborhood public school with a reputation of streaming its largely working-class student population primarily for vocational study.

On the other hand, many immigrant parents feared sending their children to French schools because they could not speak the language and their children could not access Catholic schools unless they could prove that their children were Catholic. Most importantly, newly arrived immigrants did not have knowledge about the Catholic school policy with regards to students' eligibility to transfer from the public to the Catholic system. As a result, this was a means of excluding non-white immigrant families from accessing a Catholic education. This exclusionary practice of denying

Black children access into the Catholic system remains in place today, although not to the same degree.

Today, we now see a shift whereby many Black students are now attending Catholic schools, although they or their families are not Catholic. One reason for the shift is that many public school administrators and their staff, in their attempt to informally rid themselves of Black students, are now happily providing the correct information on the policy regarding transferring from the public to the Catholic system. Students wishing to transfer from the public system to the Catholic system are now armed with the correct information for the smooth transition from one system to another. However, whenever possible, some Catholic schools continue to resist the flow of Black students coming from the public system into their schools. I have personally and professionally experienced administrators and their staff from the Catholic system, attempting to mislead and/or misinform parents about transferring from the public system. On the other hand, public school administrators are very helpful to correct any misguided information that parents may be receiving from administrators in the Catholic system. For example, I last encountered a school's attempt to deny access to a Somali student in 2002 on the grounds that she was not Catholic. Had I not been present, the staff, under the direction of the administrator, would have succeeded in misinforming the parent. However, after informing the staff that I was aware of the transfer policy, and reminded her that a student did not have to be Catholic to attend the school, the staff informed the parent that the school was filled to capacity and could not accept more students.

Finally, due to my personal and professional educational experiences, developing a trusting relationship with teachers became difficult. The most disappointing of all, was that once trust was lost, and I began to carefully monitor my children's involvement with school over the years, I soon came to realize that incidents due to class and race differences were pervasive throughout the educational system. I realized that the only way to guarantee equal access, opportunity and outcome, was to personally police the system. In order to ensure that there were no surprises at the end of the school term/year, I developed a rudimentary routine of debriefing my children after school each day. Through this practice, my children were able to reconstruct their daily school experiences including the level of work they were being assigned. If I felt the level of work being assigned was not adequately preparing them for advanced university preparatory studies, I would supplement with additional assignments at home. On the other hand, if I felt that an issue was raised that needed immediate attention then it would be addressed at the school level. Consequently, this daily rigorous exercise meant regular meetings with teachers, and even more frequent visits to the principal's office. One such visit was prompted by my son's teacher telling the students in her grade three class that all immigrants will have to return to their country because Canada is not their permanent home. My young son came home distraught wanting to know when would we be leaving and why did we have to leave. I had a very difficult time convincing him that Canada is his home and we were not leaving. The teacher's response to my query was that she was not aware that Canada issued permanent resident visa, she thought immigrants were here temporarily. At a very early

age Black/non-white students were being told they did not belong to Canada – they were not Canadians.

Thus began my challenges and struggles within Ottawa's educational system. However, over the years, I discovered that my various struggles were not unique, but that they represented the struggles of many other poor immigrant families. Therefore, as I learnt about the educational system, its policies and practices, and discovered the many ways schools structured inequalities, such as streaming, suspension, misguiding, etc., I became active in educational advocacy for economically disadvantaged families. Years of educational advocacy has now led me to this study.

1.3 Mapping the Dissertation

To conclude this introduction, I offer a Chapter by Chapter outline of the dissertation that follows. Chapter two serves as a critical review of the scholarly literature surrounding debates over the issue of educational equality. Specifically, I have focused on describing and evaluating the various and competing scholarly attempts to clarify the ideological foundations according to which we should understand the school as either an agency for or obstacle to achieving equal educational opportunity and/or outcomes. Specifically, I outline the debate by comparing four ideological frameworks – Conservative, Liberal, Critical Multicultural, and Antiracist. I then assess each of these models by asking and determining what are the possibilities that exist within each framework for educational transformation within the context of a democratic and pluralistic society. In addition, recognizing that no theoretical framework is without critique, I juxtapose each framework against the arguments of its

critics in relation to inclusive education. For example, from a U.S. and Canadian perspectives, I wanted to know how scholars within each framework viewed white dominance in the structure of schooling and its impact on minority education.

A review of the literature and gaining an understanding of the main philosophical thoughts behind the powers that have the greatest influence on our school system enabled me to situate my study within a framework that I believe offered the best opportunity for educational transformation within a multicultural society. The study was framed within a framework whose tenets are oppositional and offers the possibilities of rupturing the existing educational arrangement that preserves the status quo.

Having reviewed and evaluated the various ideological perspectives in Chapter two, I was able to settle on a theoretical framework for the study. Chapter three provides the rationale for the selection of the chosen framework and further expands on the ways in which I believe this framework provides the best opportunity for me to write in a critical and oppositional manner aimed at challenging the existing tensions and contradictions within the dominant framework. For example, as a feminist, and given the fact this scholarship is framed with a feminist framework, and in addition to the literature review, I also illuminated the ways in which mainstream feminism preserves the status quo, despite their rhetoric of gender equality. As a result, I attempted to show the reasons this study cannot be framed using a dominant feminist discourse. Rather, I justify my position that a discourse that employs an oppositional and critical pedagogy is essential in challenging white dominance. To this end, Chapter three is used to explain my rejection of any discourse that has historically and

continually deny or perpetuate racial inequality, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

Chapter four discusses the purpose, goals and objective of the study. It also identifies the issues that were identified by members of the Black community in Ottawa that motivated me to conduct this study. I later identify and justify my decision to employ a qualitative research method to investigate the educational problems facing Black youths. In addition, I also explain my reason for utilizing the principles of participatory action research (PAR) to engage the community in the research process. I describe the process involved in establishing the community group, as well as phases of interaction between the researcher and committee. I later describe the assumptions I make prior to entering the field and the actual difficulties and challenges I encountered while in the field. In summary, the research process described in Chapter four sets the stage for Chapter five.

Chapters five and six are assigned exclusively for the participants. For example, Chapter five reflects the voices of the student participants as they reconstructed their educational journeys. Due to the silencing of the students, particularly economically disadvantaged students, within the educational system, I felt it was critical that they be given the opportunity to tell their stories using their own voice in order to rupture the existing silence within Ottawa schools. Similarly, Chapter six is reserved for the parents, educators and community leaders. Chapter six provided the forum within which the participants, particularly working-class parents were able to name the issues affecting the educational opportunity and outcome of their children. As a result,

Chapters five and six contain, in some cases, lengthy quotes where I allowed the participants to narrate their educational experiences.

Chapter seven discusses the issues that were highlighted in Chapters five and six. The Chapter begins with a review of Ottawa-Carlton District School Board and the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic Separate School Board's policies on equality and diversity, which are aimed at promoting a learning environment that is welcoming, safe and inclusive. These policies are later interwoven throughout the discussion of the various issues that illuminate the tensions and contradictions between the Boards' policies and actual school practices that yields unequal outcome for some students. In addition, efforts are also made to develop and expand knowledge around some of the themes that emerged from the narratives of adult participants. I felt it was critical to deconstruct as well as reconstruct some issues that were raised and are contributing to the alienation of parents within Ottawa's schools. Also, the in-depth discussion of certain issues was aimed at highlighting assumptions that were made by both educators and parents that have contributed to greater inter-cultural misunderstanding between teachers, administrators, students and parents.

Consequently, Chapter eight serves two purposes. First, it builds on Chapters five, six and seven and highlighted the ways in which my own educational journey reflected those of the participants in the study. In addition, in personally reflecting on my educational struggles, the struggles of my peers, and the struggles of the student participants, I show that white dominance is rooted throughout the educational system, which has resulted in a correlation between the educational experiences of the participants and the experiences of me and my peers. Secondly, I offer suggestions on

ways in which many of the issues highlighted by the participants could be addressed by connecting the Boards' policies with actual school practices to the benefit of all students. Finally, Chapter nine concludes with a brief summary of the overall dissertation.

1.4 Concluding thoughts

While educators in Ottawa continue to make claims of equal educational opportunity, access, and outcome, members of the Black community are making counter claims that refute this notion that Ottawa schools offer a safe, nurturing learning environment where all students are equal regardless of race, religion, culture, etc. It is the tension and contradictions between the educational policies of the Boards, the school practices and the actual educational experiences of the students and parents that this study seeks to address. In addition, this Chapter highlights my historical journey as well as my earlier educational struggles that have shaped my identity and continue to fuel my passion for educational equality. As such, my personal and professional experiences together with the continued struggles of many Black families, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged have motivated and impacted my decision to conduct this study. The following Chapter provides an examination of the literature which draws predominantly from the United States and Canada with reference to a few British scholars.

CHAPTER 2: DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

In struggling with the vast amount of literature available on the issues that were identified by many of the research participants, such as streaming, zero tolerance, criminalization of Black youths, classism, stereotyping, and racism etc., (see Dei, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000; James, 1996, 2003; Abu-Lughod, 1991; BLAC, 1994; Brathwaite, 1996; Fleras & Elliott, 1992, 2002; hooks, 2000, 2003; Gosh, 2002; Solomon and Palmer, 2004), to name a few; I had to make a decision as to the direction the review should take. In struggling with this decision, I decided that although my literature review covered many of the issues identified earlier, I nonetheless wanted to focus primarily on the various ideological underpinnings of schooling. Given the long standing political debate on equal educational opportunities (EEO) and equal educational results (EER), (see Nieto, 1999, 2004; Oakes, 1985; O'Neill, 1976; Howe, 1997; Solomon, 1992; Schlesinger, 1992), I felt it was important to understand the main ideological tenets of each perspective in order to understand which perspective supports the status quo and which one offers the greatest possibility for educational transformation within a multicultural society.

I also felt that given the current political influence and struggle between each framework, it was necessary to gain an understanding of the various 'politics' implied within each framework, especially, since I consider politics and power to be interrelated. Consequently, issues of unequal education continue to be an area of serious contentious debate within the various ideological arenas amongst the liberal, conservative, critical

and antiracist theorists. For example, critical multiculturalists and antiracist educators argue that “Education is politicized and takes place in an arena of unequal power relation” (Giroux, 1994, Dei, 1996, 1998). However, conservatives, and to a lesser extent liberals, would deny or at least interpret very differently, the claim about ‘unequal power relations’ in education. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, developing an understanding around the various ideological viewpoints and issues associated with achieving EEO and EER will enhance my analysis of the participants’ educational experiences.

The recent literature on multiculturalism and multicultural education is vast and diverse. Fortunately, however, Kenneth Howe has recently written an accessible and sophisticated synthesis of much of this literature. In order to focus on the salient issues without becoming bogged down in scholarly minutiae, my analysis of the liberal critique of conservatism, as well as the liberal perspective itself, relies on Howe’s simplifying account. And my analysis of the critical multicultural and antiracist framework will be drawn from various other sources. Prior to situating the various ideological frameworks within the ongoing debate, taking a brief historical look at multiculturalism in Canada and the United States is a necessary first step.

2.1 Multiculturalism In Canada and the United States

Similar to the United States and Britain, Canada has been engaged in much heated multicultural debate. However, despite much debate and unlike Britain and the United States, Canada was the first to adopt an official multicultural policy in 1988. Kymlicka (2002) noted that Canada’s multicultural policy had four aims: to support the cultural

development of ethnocultural groups; to help members of ethnocultural groups overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society; to promote creative encounters and interchange among all ethnocultural groups; and to assist new Canadians in acquiring at least one of Canada's official languages (p. 15). Proponents of multiculturalism consider Canada a land of ethnic diversity where people are encouraged to retain ties with their past rather than forfeit their traditions to a cultural melting pot (Stewin & McCann, 1987). However, Canadian critics such as Neil Bissondath and Richard Gwyn argue that multiculturalism impedes the integration of non-white groups into Canadian mainstream society (Kymlicka, 1998). Other critics argue that despite the official multicultural policies of Canada, as long as a celebratory multiculturalism is given preference over a race relations philosophy, questions will remain as to whether or not a policy rooted in celebrating our heritage can also cope with the challenges of managing diversity in a racially mixed society including its ability to deal with concerns about discrimination and equality (Fleras and Elliott, 2000). Arguably, Trudeau's vision is still the dominant mainstream vision of Multiculturalism in Canada.

Within a Canadian context, Kymlicka (1998) argues that the multicultural debate in Canada has resulted in misinformed critics and inarticulate defenders simply exchanging unfounded accusations. He argues that we need a new debate where participants are assumed to be reasonable and share a basic commitment to social integration (p. 122). Nonetheless, opponents of multiculturalism in Canada and the United States continue to argue vehemently that multiculturalism is responsible for the

existing cultural tensions and views 'multiculturalism' as promoting conflict rather than harmony between ethnic groups (Howe, 1997).

Sleeter (2000) noted that multiculturalism in the United States grew out of the civil rights movement of the 1960's and was centered on racial inequality and oppression (p. 19). However, despite racism and the unequal distribution of power between the dominant group and non-white groups in the United States, the approach to pluralism was one of total assimilation in the name of national unity. Critics of multiculturalism such as E.D. Hirsch and Arthur Schlesinger similar to Canada's Bissondath and Gwyn, argue in favor of promoting a monocultural society. Arthur Schlesinger is one of the most prominent and vocal critics of a Canadian-style policy of 'multiculturalism. Arguing within the US context, Schlesinger makes the point that the melting pot interpretation has 'thus far managed to keep American society whole' but it is now being challenged by what he calls the 'ethnic interpretation' (Schlesinger, 1992), which may be taken, for our purposes here, as a synonym for Canadian style multiculturalism - the key feature of which is the allowability of public recognition of ethnic, cultural, racial, religious and minority national differences. Notably, in attempting to validate and justify his arguments, Schlesinger points to Canada as an example of why the recognition of multiple cultures cannot create a unified national identity. He further points out that despite all its advantages, Canada is vulnerable to division due to the fact Canadians have never developed a strong sense of what it is to be a Canadian. Schlesinger goes on to say that the consequent increase in ethnic and racial conflict lies behind the 'hullabaloo' over multiculturalism (p. 13). However, Kymlicka refutes the claims by opponents of multiculturalism that Canada is at risk of disintegration and

points out that there is positive evidence that ethnic groups are more thoroughly integrated into Canadian society. He also argues that the level of participation adhered to common political values of democracy and individual rights than prior to the adoption of multiculturalism. In opposition to Schlesinger's argument Kymlicka argues that a policy of multiculturalism which allows the recognition of public cultural differences need not conflict with or undermine common political values of democracy and individual rights (p. 132). Nonetheless, proponents of monoculturalism continue to view multiculturalism as creating conflict between groups, as such the United States adopted and fostered a 'melting pot' approach towards ethnic groups, which required the melting of non-white minority cultures into the largely European based culture. These differences in the approach to multiculturalism are also reflected in the various ideological view of education. In examining the various ideological views of education, I will begin with the conservative view of multicultural education.

2.2 Conservative View of Education in a Multicultural Society

My point here is not to adjudicate the multicultural debate, but rather to outline the main features of conservative ideology as it applies to the issue of multiculturalism, and in particular multicultural education. Within a conservative framework, E.D. Hirsch warns that multicultural education is inherently fragmentary therefore schools should foster a uniformed cultural literacy by choosing and promoting our best tradition/culture in order to equalize educational opportunity (Hirsch, 1988). Hirsch, in his analysis, attribute students failure not to the way schools teach pedagogically, but to a lack of 'cultural literacy', which occurs when students from minority racial backgrounds lack

'mainstream' knowledge. He charges that schools today teach a fragmented curriculum in which true knowledge is lacking and that unequal education can only be eliminated in one way – each child is to be taught what he or she needs to know (Hirsch, 1999 in Dunn, 2005). Thus, educators have a duty to supply children with what they 'sorely need' (Howe, 1997). Hirsch then warns that either we inculcate a shared language and culture or disintegrate as a nation (Hirsch, 1988). Based on Hirsch's argument, that shared language and culture to which he refers is *Euro-American* or *Euro-Canadian*. However, Nieto (2000) makes a persuasive argument that disrupts Hirsch's vision of an inclusive education in that:

Through this kind of curriculum, students from dominant groups learn that they are the norm, and consequently they often assume that anyone different from them is culturally or intellectually disadvantaged. On the other hand, students from subordinated cultures may internalize the message that their cultures, families, languages, and experiences have low status, and they learn to feel inferior (p.64).

So far I have been focusing on the task of illuminating the main features of conservative ideology as it applies to multicultural politics, and hence multicultural education. The point I wish to stress here is that within a multicultural framework, conservatism views national unity as dependent on cultural uniformity. Thus, a shared cultural identity is essential in promoting national unity. As such, multiculturalism is seen as promoting fragments within society and among groups, as such, education within such arrangements is also fragmentary and result in unequal education of non-white minority children. Within this framework, non-white minority children are disadvantaged because schools are teaching minority cultural content within the curriculum rather than focusing on 'mainstream' knowledge. Consequently, racialized minority students lack 'white' knowledge, which is required to advance in the dominant

society. It would be misleading to describe conservatism without also discussing those who have criticized the arguments of conservative scholars. Since the following section of this Chapter focuses on liberal ideology, I begin by discussing the liberal critics of conservative opponents to multicultural education.

One of the most perceptive critics is Kenneth Howe. Howe's criticism draws on the Philosopher Charles Taylor's idea of 'the fusion of horizons' to illuminate one major difficulty with Hirsch's version of the conservative rejection of multiculturalism. One of the major difficulties with Hirsch's position is the assumption that we can already identify what constitutes 'mainstream' knowledge that all kids need to know. The problem is, what now counts as 'mainstream' knowledge has been and is highly likely to continue to be, determined on the basis of a long and terrible history of oppression and inequality with respect to non-white minority groups in both Canada and the US. In other words, what appears as 'mainstream' knowledge to members of the majority culture will inevitably be marginalizing and exclusionary toward minorities. Why do intelligent conservatives fail to see this obvious problem?

As Howe points out, the explicit purpose of conservative theorists like Hirsch is not to exploit children of minority groups, but to provide equal opportunity by exposing all children to the same quality of education. The content of this 'quality' education – Hirsch's 'mainstream knowledge' – is capable of being somewhat inclusive with respect to minority groups. However, despite Hirsch's good intention, this type of educational arrangement, as Nieto (2000) argues, promotes a false sense of superiority for white students while devaluing non-white students' cultures, values and identity by making the dominant culture supreme over all others (Giroux, 2000 and McLaren, 2000).

As Howe points out, this interpretation of Hirsch's argument entails a kind of utopian-communitarianism in which group distinctiveness vanishes as horizons fuse. The assumption, however, seems to be that the process of epistemological 'fusion' is morally, politically and cultural equitable. I will argue that not all processes of cultural fusion are equitable and some are the result of oppression and dominance, as was the case with the First Nations people. What Hirsch failed to provide is any evidence that a common curriculum based on the existing conception of 'cultural literacy' will provide fusions of the equitable kind rather than of the oppressive kind. Especially since the process of fusion will be conducted in a context of unequal power relations. Howe emphasizes, historically marginalized groups would be those most saddled with the burden to fuse (assimilate) – and most vulnerable to continued oppression (Taylor 1995 in Howe, 1977). Other critics have helped us to see that race and ethnicity have been mechanically interpreted in the dominant discourse, (Li, 1990), therefore, non-white culture is used to "make the other" (Abu-Lughod, 1991). Critics further argue that people of color were not welcomed into this possibility of assimilation as equals, (Perry, 1993). Under the existing social arrangement fusion is not possible.

One of the most important critiques came from critical multiculturalist Peter McLaren in his statement that conservative multiculturalism refuses to treat whiteness as a form of ethnicity and in doing so posits whiteness as an invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged. He further add that conservative multiculturalism wants to assimilate students to an unjust social order by arguing that members of minority groups can reap the economic benefits of neocolonialist ideologies but that such benefits can only be derived by becoming deracinated and culturally stripped (McLaren, 2000).

In this light, the process of seemingly equitable and progressive educational 'fusion' looks much more like a systematically predatory and exploitative process of cultural plundering. Those elements of minority cultural knowledge that are deemed valuable and useful are essentially stripped from their native context and 'assimilated' into the dominant ideology, while the rest is essentially disposed of and left for the minority groups to gather up and cobble together for use as best they can. McLaren charges conservatives such as Ravitch, Schlesinger and others for using the term 'diversity' to cover up their assimilation ideology (p. 217). He further argues that many conservative multiculturalists have scarcely removed themselves from the colonialist legacy of white supremacy and charge unsuccessful minorities with having "culturally deprived backgrounds" and a "lack of strong family-oriented values" (McLaren, 2000, in Duarte and Smith, 2000).

In a similar vein and within a Canadian context, Fleras (2001) noted that the educational system has for the most part reflected a fundamental commitment to monoculturalism and that this conformist ideology sought to absorb immigrant children directly into Canadian society by stripping them of their languages and cultures. She argues that all aspects of schooling, from teachers and textbooks to policy and curriculum, were aligned with the principles of Anglo-conformity and that although the explicit assimilationist model that once prevailed within educational circles is no longer officially endorsed; assimilation had remained an unspoken yet powerful ethos at all schooling level (p. 255).

The continued quest to promote and justify monoculturalism has led Hirsch and like-minded thinkers to give an account of history in which multiculturalism and

multilingualism can serve only to tear nations apart while ignoring the different historical condition from which they generalize (Howe, 1997). McLaren charges that within a conservative framework history, in relation to Blacks, has been distorted and can be traced to colonial views of African Americans as slaves, servants, and entertainers, views which were embedded in the self-serving, congratulatory, and profoundly imperialist attitude of Europe and North America (McLaren, 2000, in Duarte and Smith, 2000). Banks and Banks also argued that history has been distorted to suggest that the Americas were discovered by the Europeans and suggests that Indian cultures did not exist until they were "discovered" by the Europeans and that the lands occupied by the American Indians were rightfully owned by the Europeans after they settled on and claimed them (Banks & Banks, 2004). By continuing to ignore the historical relations between the dominant group and subjugated groups like Black and First Nations people in history, education have primarily attempted to reconstruct the identity of non-white minority students as defined by Europe.

This often results in the alienation and disengagement of many racialized minority students. One such example lies in the statement of a First Nation student: "I think white people think education is good, but Indian people often have a different view...they see it as something that draws students away from who they are...I would like to tell them that education shouldn't try and make me into something I'm not" (Tierney, 1993, in Howe 1997). I believe that employing an understanding of cultural and ethnic 'difference' in a manner whereby 'difference' becomes a significant and valued factor in not only recognizing and affirming our varied history, individual

identity and collective strengths, but where it also enables us to build an understanding of how “recognizing our difference can help us to learn from each other” (Dei, 1996).

Most relevant to the discussion and essential to the multicultural debate is the notion of equal educational opportunity and equal educational results (EEO and EER). Given the focus and emphasis on monoculturalism, it is critical to also understand how the conservative framework views educational opportunity and outcome within pluralistic societies.

Onora O’Neill, a conservative critic of multiculturalism, argues that EEO and EER are fundamentally different, and cannot be entangled (O’Neill, 1976). The received view of education is founded on the belief that individuals are fundamentally autonomous choosers, therefore, their lives and activities should reflect their choices. It is my understanding that to attempt to equalize results is to deny the autonomous individual the right to choose. To this end, O’Neill argues that EER cannot fairly be equalized due to the differing choices of individuals. Therefore, the autonomous chooser freely determines his/her educational attainment/outcome and education that seeks to promote EEO cannot also simultaneously provide EER. O’Neill further argues that there can only be a commitment to equality of opportunity but not results. She explains that while one can ensure EEO by removing ‘*external impediments*’ that create barriers and limit access to opportunities, educational results/outcome are unable to be equalized because results reflect the free choice of the individual (Howe, 1997).

Howe’s response to O’Neill is that EEO and EER should not and cannot be disentangled because although EEO may exist, a student may lack the basic preparedness to maximize the opportunity available to him/her. In solidifying this point,

Howe explained that a student that was placed in a vocational track who, along with his/her parents did not know the consequences of this placement would only have a 'bare' compared to a 'real' opportunity to attend university. He uses Daniel Dennett's argument to solidify the notion that in certain instances, equal opportunity has the possibility of offering only a 'bare opportunity' as opposed to a 'real opportunity' to maximize educational opportunity (p.18).

In my personal response to O'Neill argument, similar to Howe, I agree that EEO and EER cannot and should not be disentangled. In applying Dennett's concept of a 'bare opportunity' to my study, a reasonable argument can be made that the working-class student participants in my study did not have a 'real' opportunity of attending university compared to their middle-class peers. Neither could these students be considered 'autonomous choosers', because contrary to O'Neill's arguments, although there were no observable external impediments present, they were nonetheless covertly and systematically streamed out of the university track without their knowledge, understanding or input due to the combined negative effects of race and class differences. Howe argued that educational opportunities have to be meaningful - to be worth wanting. Consequently, an educational opportunity worth wanting should be defined in terms of the interaction between individuals and educational institutions, and not only in terms of the features of educational institutions (Howe, 1997). As such, they were only offered a 'bare' opportunity to receive an education that was not worth wanting because the actual education they received was insufficient to enable them to realize their full academic potential and advance to university studies as per their original plan.

Despite O'Neill's position, some students were disadvantaged, thus denied EEO, which in turn yield an 'unequal' educational outcome. Solomon, 2000, Dei 1995, 1996, Alladin 1996, Oakes, 1985, Nieto, 2004, and Brathwaite & James, 1996, substantiate the fact that streaming of poor Black youths does not occur because they are unable to perform within the scope of a regular academic program, but because of racial/cultural and class discrimination within education. In addition, Curtis et al, 1992, also noted that students are not streamed in any random way: rather, children of working-class, ethnic/racial-minority and single-parent families end up in the lower streams in highly disproportionate numbers (Curtis, Livingstone, Smaller, 1992). Consequently, O'Neill failed in her analysis to recognize that one's ability to exercise his/her rights as autonomous choosers is often impacted by factors such as race, culture, and/or class position in society. Therefore, O'Neill's conservative argument that simply removing external impediments to educational opportunity will somehow equalize educational results is naiveté and lacks a race/class/cultural analysis. Unlike the conservative view of multicultural education, the liberal multiculturalists offer several different perspectives.

2.3 Liberal View of Multicultural Education

The liberal view of education appears to be the most dominant ideological framework in both Canada and the United States. There has been a recent onslaught of scholarly writing on multicultural education from a liberal perspective such as Rob Feinberg, (2001); Reich (2002) and Kymlicka (1998), to name a few. However, my aim here is not to provide a comprehensive view of what liberal educational scholars have

recently had to say about multicultural education. Rather, I want to clarify the main features of a liberal approach to educational equality, and particularly racial equality, in multicultural societies. Fortunately, the liberal philosopher of education, Kenneth Howe has written clearly and with sophistication on this topic. In addition, Howe's work is closely informed by the scholarship of other liberal educational and political theorists. I choose here to focus primarily on Howe's work both to provide a sketch of the broader outlines of the liberal perspective on multicultural education, and especially the liberal perspective of educational equality. According to Howe (1997) there is not a single liberal position, but several. Accordingly, he helpfully distinguishes between what he calls Formal, Compensatory, and Participatory liberal perspectives. He begins with an examination of the Formal interpretation of education.

2.3.1 The 'Formal' Liberal view of Multicultural Education

Similar to the Conservative view discussed above, Howe (1997) identifies the '*formal*' interpretation of educational equality as requiring only the absence of formal barriers to participation on morally irrelevant criteria such as race, disability or gender, as well as equalizing resources among schools to some level. Many critics, left and right, have rejected the formal liberal views of education, and scholars such as: McLaren (2000); hooks (2000 & 2003); Fleras (2001); Kymlicka (1995, 1998); Feinberg (2001); Richards (1980); Grinter (1992 & 2000); Nieto (1999 & 2004); and Young (1990), have illuminated areas of inadequacies within these framework including Howe himself.

Howe argues that despite its progressiveness in recognizing and removing formal barriers based on race, disability and gender, it is nonetheless, often insensitive to the profound influence social factors have on educational opportunity. For education to be meaningful or worth wanting, inequalities cannot be construed only in term of the formal feature of educational institutions but rather, inequalities must also be viewed in term of the interaction between institutions and individuals/groups (p. 28). To demonstrate Howe's point and more relevant to my study, while there were no formal racial barriers that denied my participants access to equal participation in school activities, nonetheless, participants complained that intramural sports were exclusionary. They argued that because their teachers are all white and they were also the ones volunteering to couch the intramural sports, they often played sports such as hockey or volley ball. They argued that these sports are mainly white sports and excludes many Black youths from engaging in intramural activities at lunch time. Consequently, they were often left with no lunch time activities.

Therefore, by focusing only on the formal barriers to education, the formal view failed to see the ways in which white dominance is inherent in schooling arrangement to the exclusion of minority groups. Despite the absence of formal racial barriers in schools, the promotion of monoculturalism resulted in the exclusion of Black students, while promoting and reinforcing the cultural aspect of the white culture among white students. Either Black students assimilate or become alienated. Consequently, from daily routines to decision-making at the top, education is organized to facilitate cultural indoctrination and social control of minority students (Fleras, 2001).

In cementing his argument, Howe argues that the 'formal' liberal view of education identifies equality of educational opportunity with the formal structure of educational institutions and as such this view falls considerably short of the goal to which the principle of equal educational opportunity should aspire. As an example, Howe noted that while removing formal barriers that were legally sanctioned in the past improved educational opportunities for some ethnic groups, it did not do so for others. Howe specifically referenced the removal of legally sanctioned barriers to education for Jewish people, which resulted in their improved educational opportunities. On the other hand, while removing legally sanctioned barriers may have worked for Jewish students, Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* highlighted the reality that 37 years after the racial barriers were removed due to Brown vs. Board of Education, 1954, educational opportunities for Black students did not improve (pp. 6-28). In addition to the formal view, Howe also described another strand of the liberal framework the 'compensatory' view.

2.3.2 The 'Compensatory' Liberal view of Multicultural Education

He explains that in contrast to the formal view of education, the compensatory view recognizes the importance of how the interactions between the characteristics of individuals and the features of educational institutions can function to either increase or decrease the worth of educational opportunity. He noted that the goal of this framework is to compensate for characteristics of individuals that disadvantage them in educational institutions (p. 29). In reference to the student participants who were excluded from intramural sports in their schools; James (1990) noted all school activities contribute to

the educational process; therefore, similar to other academic activities, extra-curricular athletic activities must also be assessed for inherent biases. Thus, it is important for educators to provide learning activities that take into account the diverse needs and interests of students (p. 273). Accordingly, within this framework, one response to the alienation of Black students, would be for the school to compensate by making a special effort to appeal to white teachers to volunteer to coach intramural basketball in addition to hockey and volleyball, since there are no Black teachers to coach the sports that are of interest to Black youths. Howe further noted that the general objective is to provide children with special or missing educational opportunities that will expand and enhance the worth of their educational careers.

Although the compensatory view of EEO is an improvement over the formal interpretation, Howe ultimately rejects this view, arguing that it does not go far enough. In particular, he argues that it 'fails to recognize the ways in which the underlying structural sources of inequality can and do preserve the status quo and instead, implicitly adopts the status quo in determining what is of educational worth, which is based on mainstream customs and values. It therefore fails to afford educational opportunities of equal worth to non-white individuals who have had no part in shaping the educational practices and curricular content that are deemed educationally worthwhile (p. 29). If a group is kept out of doing something long enough it is overwhelmingly likely that educational activities and programs will develop in a way unsuited to the excluded group (Richards, 1980). In a similar spirit, Gosh and Abdi (2004) noted that liberal rhetoric implies equal opportunity to all ethnic groups by giving equal status to all cultures; thus, multiculturalism ignores ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic differences. It

legitimizes a Eurocentric view of the world with other cultures, and depoliticizes culture (p. 47).

However, unlike other critics of liberalism, Howe does not completely reject the liberal framework of multicultural education. Instead, he proposes what he calls a 'radical reconstruction' of the liberal framework, which he believes can take account of the criticisms surveyed above, and provide an improved liberal theory of multicultural equality.

2.3.3 The 'Participatory' Liberal view of Multicultural Education

The 'participatory interpretation' of educational opportunity is Howe's preferred interpretation of liberalism. His interpretation of liberalism moves beyond the formal and compensatory view by emphasizing the connection between equal opportunity and participatory democracy. This ideal provides a potential means of responding to some of the fundamental challenges of equality of educational opportunity. Particularly since the previous frameworks in their attempts to equalize educational opportunity have legitimated and perpetuated inequality by diverting attention away from the underlying structural sources of inequality. As its name implies, the 'participatory' ideal operates on the premise that an educational system that makes claims of democracy must then include groups' participation, regardless of their varied race, gender, disability, and cultural identities. Howe further argues that genuine equality of educational opportunity cannot be achieved unless the voices of disadvantaged groups, who have been historically excluded, have a say in deciding which educational opportunities have worth (p. 29). Kymlicka (1991) supports Howe's position in his argument that "it only

makes sense to invite people to participate if they are treated as equals...And that is incompatible with defining people in terms of roles they did not shape or endorse” (p. 30). Fields and Feinberg also make the point that the obverse of representation is direct participation, and that a group or movement can attempt to give everyone who cares to participate relatively equal weight in determining goals, and strategies, designed to force a change in policies or systems of decision-making. He noted that the other option is to have a centralized system that serves to isolate marginalized groups and inhibits them from gaining a voice in the schools resulting in increased alienation and inequality within and between segments of the community (Fields & Feinberg, 2001).

According to the participatory ideal, the first responsibility of public schooling is to educate its students for democratic participation and that mere compensation for disadvantages – is insufficient or objectionable if it is not rooted in equal respect for different views, especially when self-identity and self-respect are at stake. Thus, the participatory view of education provides a framework with which to respond to some fundamental challenges to the ideals of equality of educational opportunity (p. 32-33).

As I have emphasized earlier, liberalism advocates not only the removal of formal barriers to EEO but also the enabling means necessary for minority students to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Beyond this, participatory liberalism emphasizes further that decisions about (1) which opportunities schools should provide for children, and (2) what substantive measures should be taken to ensure that all opportunities are genuinely ‘equally available’ to all, must be determined by and implemented with the democratic participation of members of all groups within the school, and not merely members of the dominant group. Thus, it is not enough for

white teachers and administrators, for example, to decide that institutional mechanisms are needed in order to equalize racial participation in school sports. Such decisions, and the measures to correct them, require the democratic participation of minority students and parents as well.

Up to this point I have been comparing and contrasting the conservative and liberal approaches to education. Before moving on to discuss the critical multiculturalist standpoint, I would like first to review the main points that have emerged from the discussion so far. First, the main aim of the conservative approach is to assimilate all children within the dominant cultural framework in order to enable all children to compete equally. However, as liberals point out, the conservative framework ignores the enduring and deep structural inequalities that exist within contemporary multicultural societies. As such, the educational aim of equal opportunity becomes a cover for cultural domination. Second, liberalism rejects the 'formal' framework and instead proposes specialized, 'compensatory' measures designed to equalize opportunities for minority students. But even this compensatory feature of liberalism does not go far enough according to some liberals, such as Howe.

Howe then offers a new reconstructionist liberal framework aimed at addressing the shortcoming of the previous ones discussed earlier. Howe's approach calls for the recognition of not only the historical nature of educational inequality but also he calls attention to the ways in which the status quo is maintained within social institutions and in relations to subordinate groups. He especially illuminated the point that subordinate groups have been and continue to be excluded from decisions that affect their lives. He

argues for major renegotiations of the aims and practices of schooling and that the first responsibility of public schooling is to educate its students for democratic participation.

While Howe offers the best of the perspectives reviewed thus far, it nonetheless falls short. Negotiating within a system that is inherently unequal without challenging the foundation upon which such inequality is built will result in the reservation of such system. Also, recognizing that the voices of Blacks and other non-white groups are missing from the decision making process is good, we must go beyond recognizing and acknowledging the absences of those voices, rather, we must begin to challenge and disrupt the hegemonic nature of those absences. Because inviting subordinate groups into the decision and policy making process without them having the power to be heard results in a similar outcome – dominance. Thus the white supremacy nature of schooling and the power imbalance between groups must first be acknowledge, and then challenged. As such I will examine the critical multiculturalists' view of schooling within pluralistic societies.

2.4 Critical Multiculturalism – A debate

In reviewing the literature on critical multiculturalism, it became apparent that there are marked differences depending on the national context to which they orient their research - i.e., Canada or United States. Specifically, the discourse of critical multicultural education in the United States tends to be very similar to the antiracism scholarship in Canada. For example, McMahon (2003) noted that US scholars such as Banks (1993), McLaren (1995), and Gay (1995), use the term multiculturalism to express ideologies that could be termed antiracist. According to Sleeter (2000)

multicultural education grew out of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and that educators with roots in African American studies have been among the most active conceptualizer of multicultural education as a discourse aimed at advancing power-sharing and uplifting communities of colour. Having its roots in minority discourses about oppression, multicultural education was part of a larger quest for redistribution of power and economic resources (p. 119).

Similarly, Grinter (1986) noted that the development of American multiculturalism in the 1960s happened at a time of major movements for Constitutional civil rights for Black citizens, who had been first enslaved and then exploited throughout American history and had significant impact on multicultural education. Multicultural education in the USA from its inception had education against racism as its basis and as such was part of a larger antiracist reform movement in both Europe and America. He further noted that the multicultural approach to education took on a wide range of strategies by teachers in the United States. Teachers who were considered radical approach education from an antiracist stance and others employed the more superficial approach based their situation and personal philosophies. Different strands of multiculturalism emerged ranging from the right winged approach of celebrating festivals associated with 'other' cultures to the left wing antiracist strategies of tackling racism by attacking stereotype and ethnocentric images head-on in curriculum. Thus the celebratory form of multiculturalism was preferred and became the more influential approach due to its non-political stance (p. 137 - 144).

In contrast, Grinter noted that similar to the US, multicultural education was created by white teachers in the 1960s and worked through assimilationist stages to

meet perceived problems of Black youths without addressing racism. He further noted that although multicultural education we adopted in a half-hearted manner by the state in the 1970s its ineffectiveness led to the 1970s emergence of antiracist education as an initiative led by Black communities, scholars, and of an increasingly bitter debate between the two philosophies (p. 136). As such the antiracist movement was first developed in Britain in the 1970's to address the racism that was facing Black students, which resulted from the large-scale Black immigration and 'overt' racism which arrived together in the 1950s and 1960s.

So, as noted earlier, racial inequality was the foundation upon which multiculturalism and multicultural educational scholarship was established in the US. However, within a Canadian context, and similar to the UK, multicultural education was never equipped to effectively challenge the racial inequality facing non-white students in Canadian schools (Fleras and Elliott, 1997). Rather, with the adoption of an official multiculturalism policy, multicultural education was used as a cover to disguise the monocultural nature of schooling, thus making it possible for the continued assimilation of non-white students into the dominant culture while supposedly celebrating their heritage. This created an impression of racial harmony/tolerance within Canadian schools because issues of racism and systemic inequality was reduced to cultural maladaptation, or outright denied, as will be later discussed. Gosh and Abdi (2004) noted that multicultural education began in Canada with an emphasis on culture as exotic and as artifact. They argued that the song and dance routine completely depoliticized culture, and avoided issues of discrimination and race relations. They further argued that this form of multicultural education also absolved educators for

neglecting other cultures as long as they were willing to observe psychologically soothing but otherwise ineffective multicultural days and festivities (p. 48), (see Dei, 1996; Solomon, 1992).

Much of the existing debate on multiculturalism within the United States and Britain centers on the possibilities of merging the antiracist and critical multicultural frameworks. For example, many of the left winged critical multiculturalists are calling for the merging of both the critical multicultural and antiracist perspectives, while others are arguing that these two perspectives are fundamentally different, and cannot be merged. However, Critical multicultural scholars such as Nieto, McLaren, Banks, Short, and Sleeter, have begun to incorporate an antiracist perspective within their critical multicultural framework. In addition, antiracist scholar bell hooks is also calling for a scholarship capable of generating collective political action. She argues that while individual action to end white dominance is important, for it to be truly effective, individual struggle must also be linked to collective effort to transform structures that reinforce white dominance. In expressing her commitment for a collective effort to end white dominance, hooks noted "I am not making a commitment to working only for and with black people, I must engage in struggle with all willing comrades to strengthen our awareness and our resistance" (hooks, 2000 in Duarte & Smith, 2000).

In a similar struggle to merge the two perspectives Sonia Nieto who considers herself a critical multiculturalist, argues that an antiracist and anti-bias perspective must be at the core of multicultural education, due to the general belief that multicultural education automatically takes care of racism (Nieto, 1999). She further argues that schools that are committed to multicultural education with an antiracist focus would

need to closely examine both school policies and the attitudes and behaviors of their staff to determine how these might be complicit in causing academic failure. In addition, she argues that schools would also have to pay attention to the kind of expectations that teachers and schools have for students, whether native-language use is permitted or punished, how sorting takes place, and how classroom organization, pedagogy, and curriculum may influence student learning, each, she argues need to be considered (Nieto, 1999). Most critically, Nieto, argues that such a perspective places power at the very centre of the concept because it concerns issues such as structural inequality and stratification due to social class, gender, ethnicity, and other differences, as well as the relative respect or disrespect accorded to particular cultures, languages, and dialects (p. 405), (see hooks, 2003 and McLaren, 2000).

On the other hand, scholars such as the late Barry Tronya and Robin Grinter argue that these two frameworks are separate and cannot be integrated. Grinter (2000) and Lynch (1987) argued that multicultural and antiracist education is incompatible philosophies between which a choice has to be made to ensure effective education against racism. They make the point that these two perspectives work from different philosophical bases and towards different purposes, therefore, they cannot be run in harness due to the fact they pull against one another (p. 135).

Grinter argues that the nature of antiracist education and its conflict with multicultural education are more fully seen by development of the points of divergence because multicultural education believes in the perfectibility of the existing social structure, and assimilation of its component cultures into a social consensus with shared values, and that underachievement is seen in terms of cultural interference. Whereas

antiracist education believes in the reality and significance of conflict in a social system that concentrates power in White, middle-class and male hands, and which discriminates against other groups on grounds of their 'inadequacy' or 'incompetence'. Therefore, within this framework, he argues that society is not seen as a neutral area for sharing values, but an arena in which dominant values impose themselves on cultures that are not equal in power or value (p. 142).

In addition, Grinter makes the argument that multicultural education is based on the belief that racism is founded on misunderstanding and ignorance that leave individuals open to racist misrepresentation of non-white ways of life and value systems. Such philosophy, he explains, attempts to promote a more positive understanding and appreciation of Black cultures, and thereby begin to undermine racism. As oppose to antiracist education that believes that racism as an ideology is based on learnt attitudes of White superiority to human groups that Europe and North America have historically exploited and that these attitudes have helped to ensure that an unequal distribution of power and resources between racial groups is accepted and seen as natural, thus structural factors that maintain this inequality are not questioned. Consequently, antiracist education, in his view, as a philosophy, maintains that education based on individual cultural understanding will not eradicate racism, because racism is not rooted in cultural misunderstanding and negative images of Black cultures.

He concludes that antiracist education demands a more overt, direct and analytical approach to the living experiences of racism for pupils and their communities, both inside and outside school, and for assistance in combatting these experiences. As such, antiracist theory not only incorporates a fuller range of factors contributing to

racism, particularly its historical roots, class contexts and the denial of political, social and economic rights by group discrimination for the benefit of the existing holders of power, but it also relates to the living experience of those experiencing discrimination. Whereas, multicultural education, has the fundamental shortcoming that it cannot incorporate and respond to this context and these experiences, without abandoning its philosophical base of cultural causation of conflict.

He argues strongly that to this extent, antiracist education aims, through learning processes that question the social structure and its basic assumptions, to produce activists against social injustice, which will equip students to develop the ability to analyse the whole school ethos and power structure, and to identify and remove racism from their educational institution. As such, its emphasis is far less on the cultural content of the curriculum than on learning processes that will develop students' powers of analysis and action. Thus, he maintains that the antiracist perspective transforms the whole approach, and demands a fundamental rethinking of all teaching, including multicultural teaching, and of the nature of educational structures, which he asserts accounts for the reason antiracist education has been resisted and also why a smooth transition from the multicultural to an antiracist position is a Utopian hope, and an 'antiracist multiculturalism' an impossibility (p. 135-142). Thus the debate between critical multicultural and antiracist education continues.

2.5 Critical Multiculturalist View of Education

Multiculturalism has become a central discourse in the struggle over issues regarding national identity, the construction of historical memory, the purpose of schooling, and the meaning of democracy (Giroux, 2000). Duarte & Smith (2000) noted

that multiculturalists are identified in large measure by their rejection of, and resistance to assimilation and that for critical multiculturalists, the rejection of assimilation compels one to identify the potentially undemocratic nature of schools with respect to cultural diversity. They also noted that similar to antiracist pedagogy, critical multiculturalism argues that monocultural hegemony within schools undermines the democratic commitment to the creation of learning environments in which all students are provided the resources and liberties needed for the practice of freedom (p. 173).

In an effort to challenge the pervasiveness of racism and structural oppression, La Belle (1994) noted that some multicultural educators had begun preparing students for cultural diversity and teaching them to challenge structural inequality in an approach Sleeter and Grant (1988) labelled "Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist." La Belle described this phrase as meaning an approach to education that deals directly with society's structural inequality based on race, social class, gender, and disability. She further described this approach as a means of preparing students to change society to better serve all people, particularly members of groups which have been oppressed. This is done by working with young people to help them understand the nature of oppression and develop the skills needed to work for constructive social change (Sleeter and Grant 1988 in La Belle, 1994). As such, Giroux (2000), noted that academic culture has become a contested space primarily because groups that have been traditionally excluded from the public school curriculum and from the ranks of higher education are now becoming more politicized and are attending higher education institutions in increasing numbers (p.195), (see Fleras and Elliott, 2002 and Dei, 1996).

Accordingly, a key tenet of critical multiculturalists as explained by Duarte & Smith (2000) is its dedication to exposing the specific administrative, curricular, and instructional practices, as well as the organizational policies within schools that produce cultural alienation for students of color. Within this strand of multiculturalism being described here, students are encouraged to reject racism both within the learning environment and the larger society in general. According to Kailin (2002), Nieto's conception of multicultural education is more explicitly antiracist and calls for a commitment to activism. For example, within this framework students are being prepared to become activists and take a stand against racism and other forms of social injustice that directly or indirectly impacts them. In relation to my study and in reference to the incident where the teacher made the racial comments about his students bringing Aids back from Africa and where the other teacher stated that the next world war should take place in Asia, the students, regardless of race, would be encouraged to challenge both teachers without fear of reprisal. Most importantly, rather than experiencing feelings of isolation, alienation, silence, humiliation and helplessness as described by Sara, the students could unite collectively to resist racism within their learning environment.

Duarte & Smith (2000) defined 'cultural alienation' as the experience of feeling that one's culture is unwelcome, one's ethnicity is unacknowledged, and one's tradition is unimportant, all of which they argue, occurs within school settings that is inhospitable to cultural diversity. Consequently, they further argue that critical multiculturalists are intent on identifying and explaining the multiple and often overlapping sources for those policies and practices which produce monoculturalism and institutional racism within

schools (p. 173). Therefore, Giroux argues that critical multiculturalism is not a multiculturalism that is limited to a fascination with the construction of identities, communicative competence, and the celebration of tolerance. Instead, he argues that there is a shift in the discussion of multiculturalism to a pedagogical terrain in which relations of power and racialized identities become paramount as part of a language of critique and possibility, Giroux (2000), which also includes the historical nature of inequality and unequal power relations, (see Gosh and Abdi, 2004; Nieto, 1999 and McLaren 2000).

Within a Canadian context, multicultural education has become the most popular term used by educators to describe education for pluralism. Simply defined, “multicultural education is an attempt at a dynamic unity of socially constructed opposites and differences.” Gosh and Abdi, (2004). They further argue that a significant aspect of multicultural education is to teach dominant groups to challenge oppression, especially because their privileged position tends to make it difficult for them to see the world critically. In addition, they argue that multicultural education to be effective in removing discrimination, educational programs must be founded on a philosophy of education linked to equity and empowerment. For them, it means educators must acquire an understanding of the construction of difference and inequity created around conceptions of race and ethnicity, gender, and class, among other things. This they argue comprises knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the social consequences of difference expressed through prejudice, and discrimination in the form of racism, sexism, and classism (p. 48).

As such, they assert that a quality multicultural education must include the lessons of pluralism, because to pretend that differences do not exist is to do a disservice to all children, which will result in the 'other' being disadvantaged, and at the same time, the dominant up will be incapable of coping within a real world where the majority are non-Europeans. Most importantly, they make the point that race and racism are defining concepts that construct our understanding of Canada as a nation where the "founding races" depicted the norm as white in establishing their relationship with the original peoples and with immigrants. Gosh and Abdi (2004), noted that both in its overt and covert forms, racism in Western societies is now seen as a system of discrimination directed mainly at non-white people. As such, within a North American context, they have further explained that both ethnic and immigrants have come to mean non-white groups and have, therefore, taken on racial connotations and that race discrimination in economic, political, and cultural situations has strengthened race consciousness among those who experience the multiple pains of exclusion from the dominant society and culture (p. 39-88).

In conclusion, despite the more left-winged approach being employed by many US critical multicultural scholars, both the Canadian and US critical multiculturalists such as Gosh and Abdi (2004), Nieto, (2000, 2004), McLaren, (1998, 2000), to name a few, agreed that the traditional multicultural education is ineffective in addressing the education of non-white minority youths. May (1999), noted that the antiracist critique has led to the development of a more critical conception of multicultural education theory and practice. He further argued that a key weakness historically of multicultural education theory and practice has been its weakness in recognizing the structural impact

of racism on student lives (p. 2). However, it is my position, that there continues to be a weakness within a Canadian context, within the critical multicultural framework. Although the legitimacy of white dominance is being acknowledged, and its impact on non-white students has been illuminated, the powers that support and preserve such arrangements are not being challenged. Rather, this framework seeks to build on the existing social order with hopes of reform, but does not give enough recognition to the power imbalance inherent in an educational arrangement rooted in white dominance. I seek a framework that challenges the de-personalization of minority students in the school system and ruptures the institutional processes that disengage some students while engaging others (Dei, 1998). Most importantly, the framework I seek to employ must have the ability to not only challenge those relationships of power that racialize the school social order, but can also invoke direct actions for dismantling the structural roots of educational inequality (Giroux, 1994 in Fleras, 2001), (see Thomas, 2002; Kailin, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Dei, 1996, 1998). As such, I turn my gaze to the antiracist framework.

2.6 Antiracist View of Education

An Antiracism education is defined as an integrative educational and political, action-oriented strategy for institutional and systemic change for addressing issues of racism and other interlocking systems of social oppression related to sexism, and classism (Dua and Robertson, 1999; Dei, 1998). As such, antiracism education emerges from an understanding that racism exists in society; therefore, the school, as an institution of society, is influenced by racism (Lee, 1985). Dei noted that antiracism education is egalitarian in outlook insofar as it seeks equality, not in the liberal sense of

everyone being equal in the same way, but through structural changes that foster power-sharing, in an attempt to challenge historically constituted relations of domination that are embedded within societal structures (Dei, 1996 in Fleras, 2001). In addition, Dei, (1998), makes the argument that antiracism strategies consist of measures and mechanisms aimed at dismantling the structural basis of institutional racism as such, removing discriminatory barriers becomes central to the framework. Also, while the concepts of equity, social justice and educational democracy are fundamental to antiracism analysis, the framework also recognizes that at both the theoretical and practical levels, the concepts of "justice," "equity" and "democracy" are not only value-laden but also subject to different interpretations depending on racial, ethnic, class, gender and sexual positionalities. Thus, social justice and equity are defined in terms of how a society treats the most disadvantaged or least privileged in its midst (p. 302).

Proponents of antiracist education also argue that it differs sharply from multicultural education, (see Dei, 1998, Kailin, 1999, Giroux, 1994, Thomas, 1998, James, 1996, McMahon, Grinter, 1999, Fleras, 2001). For example, in defining the areas of distinction, Giroux argues that - multicultural education is about learning, whereas antiracism education is about doing; multicultural education is about diversity, but antiracism education is about disadvantage; multicultural education is about cultural diversity, and antiracism education is about social relations. To complement Giroux, Fleras (2001) also noted that sharp differences occur in terms of focus, objective, concern and outcome. She pointed out that the *focus* of antiracist education is on structure while multicultural education focuses is on culture; the *objective* of antiracist education is the removal of discriminatory barriers versus multiculturalists objective is

on sensitivity; antiracist education is *concerned* with system racism, whereas multicultural education is concern with ethnocentrism and most importantly, antiracist education expects equality as its *outcome*, while multicultural education work towards understanding (p. 244), [emphasis added]. Fleras, summary is affirmed in Moodley's statement that instead of antiracists self-righteously demonizing racism, the widespread need for such a mentality has to be understood (p. 145). According to Grinter, (2000), multicultural education is based on the belief that racism is founded on misunderstanding and ignorance that leave individuals open to racist misrepresentation of non-White ways of life and value systems. He reject this and argues instead that antiracist education as a philosophy maintains that education based on individual cultural understanding will not eradicate racism, because racism is not rooted in cultural misunderstanding and negative images (p. 136).

The analysis of power is also central to the antiracist framework, accordingly, Dei, (1998), argues that antiracist education takes a critical view of power relations in society, and directs its attention to how the dominant sector exercises power over subordinate groups, as such the historic relations of domination are analyzed and assessed at the level of individuals and institutions, thus exposing both minorities and the mainstream to the structural sources of oppression in society. In short, antiracist education privileges power at the centre of any reconstruction, it also acknowledges institutionalized power to establish hegemonic dominance, it provides a discursive framework for analyzing how different oppressions intersect and overlap, and it challenges the notion of what is valid and legitimate knowledge, and how other forms of

knowledge can be incorporated, given the racialized practices in schools that have the intent or effect of erasing others (p. 101).

Equally as important to the antiracist framework is the way in which whiteness is interrogated and centralized within the antiracist framework, as such, antiracist education is also about investigating and changing how schools deal with issues of white privilege and power sharing (Dei, 1996). In supporting this argument, Kailin, (2002), noted that the consideration of teachers as raced, classed, and gendered actors must be critically examined and incorporated into an antiracist multicultural strategy for teachers (p. 64). It then becomes critical, according to Dei, (1998), that antiracism recognizes race classification is a potent act or weapon in the distribution of rewards, privileges, penalties and punishment in a highly stratified, racialized society. As such, antiracism sees race identification as a fundamental organizing principle and tool which profoundly mediates the concrete realities of our lives in conjunction with other socially constructed, and empirically significant, locations of gender, sexuality, ability and class. Antiracism then seeks to subvert the institutional processes that reproduce the dominance and normalcy of "Whiteness" and White culture in the schools and in society because "Whiteness" has historically bestowed unquestioned privilege and power on its members (p. 304). Therefore the significance of whiteness cannot be fully interrogated within the existing educational arrangement because such examination must take place within critical pedagogy which is not a part of the present arrangement, and which also forms another central tenet of the antiracist framework.

Within a Canadian context, McMahon, (2003), argues that multiculturalism is often used in a manner that is inconsistent with critical pedagogy, and to solidify her

point, she quoted Miner, (1995), in that multiculturalism is sometimes used to highlight cross-cultural similarities and is often intended to portray something that is quite superficial- the dances, the dress, the dialect, and the dinners. However, within the antiracist framework, critical pedagogy attempts to teach students how to read social and political situations, familiarize them with power interests, and connect ethical values with political actions in order to bring about change. She further argues that the use of a singular focus or master narrative to represent a group is bound to provide a very narrow depiction of what it means to be Black as it would be for one description to capture the essence of what it means to be White. The same can be said for other racial groups or identifiers. We need to be cognizant of differences within as well as across groups (p. 265).

Similarly, in Nieto (2004), discussion about the importance of critical pedagogy, she argues that that critical pedagogy is an approach through which students and teachers are encouraged to view what they learn in a critical light, thus it values diverse viewpoints and encourages critical thinking, reflection, and action. In this framework, using critical pedagogy, students are empowered as learners because they are expected to become problem solvers and so the knowledge they learn can be used to explore the reasons for certain conditions in their lives and to design strategies for changing them. Therefore, critical pedagogy is based on using students' present reality as a foundation for their further learning, rather than on doing away with or belittling what they know and who they are. As a result, critical pedagogy acknowledges diversity of all kinds instead of suppressing or supplanting it. Without a critical perspective, Nieto argues, reality is often presented to students as if it were static, finished, and flat; underlying

conflicts, problems, and inherent contradictions are omitted. She noted that according to Freire, the opposite of a critical or empowering approach is "banking education," where students learn to regurgitate and passively accept the knowledge they are given (Freire, 1970 in Nieto, 2004 in Banks and Banks 2004), whereas a critical education expects students to seek their own answers, to be curious, and to question (p. 404). Most importantly, Nieto argues that critical pedagogy has inspired the inclusion of student voices that had previously been missing from most treatments of multicultural education (Nieto, 1999 in May, 1999).

So, in summary, Dei, 1998, noted that the antiracism challenge has provided a critique of dominant hegemonic discourse about race relations and multiculturalism in White-dominated societies in the following six ways: (1) antiracism workers and educators challenge conventional discourse and praxis of race relations that simply imply "let us all get along" without any serious interrogation of the power dimensions embedded in social relations and education (for example, classroom teaching); (2) the discourse exposes the need to recognize institutionalized power and its discretionary use to establish dominance and unearned privilege in society; (3) antiracism critiques the valorization of diversity and the failure to consider seriously the pointed notion of "difference" (for example, how difference is named, recognized, interpreted, acted upon in social/race relations); (4) the discourse offers a model to interrogate the failure to see difference as a site of power imbalance and to deal with the intersection of oppressions, as well as the relational aspects of difference; (5) the traditional emphasis within multicultural education on "culture" is problematized; and (6) while not negating the relevance of the concept of "culture," politicized notions of race, culture and history are

relevant for a progressive politics of transformative change in schools and other institutional settings. (p. 303). However, similar to the previous theoretical frameworks, the antiracist framework has also been subjected to critique.

2.7 Criticism of Antiracism Framework

Similar to criticism that multicultural education has failed to address issues of racial inequality in schooling which resulted in unequal educational outcome and failure for many non-white minority students, antiracist education has also come under sharp criticism. According to May, critics such as Gilroy, 1992, Hall, 1992, Donald and Rattansi 1992, MacDonald et, 1989, Modood, 1992, 1998 antiracist education have privileged racism over other forms of inequality in its early articulation, which has resulted in a preoccupation with 'colour racism' and the black-white dichotomy. Consequently antiracism has attributed racism to be the primary modality in intercultural relations (May, 1999). In response to the critical multicultural critics, Dei, 1998 noted that although skin-colour racism is only one of many forms of race and racialized practices, the recognition of new and multiple forms of racisms should not, however, deny the saliency of skin-colour racism (304). Nieto furthers the argument in that antiracist education seeks to engage the energies of both those who experience racism and those who are members of the dominant culture, in the challenge to racism. As such, it also recognizes that there are some who will resist such engagement because of fear, or because they are doing just fine in their current situation. People who have power or who benefit from current power relations are not likely to be in the forefront of changing those power relations. Thus the fight against racism has been led by those who suffer most from their effects. It is difficult for those who are hurting from racism to put

racism "in a positive light" so as not to offend or "turn off" those who do not want to see it (Nieto, 1999).

It is also important to note that the historical significance of slavery in the US has meant that the racialization of black-white relations has remained a prominent, perhaps defining feature of discussions around racism, disadvantage and minority rights (Kymlicka, 1989). As such, given the fact that race was the primary basis upon which inequality was and continue to be structured within North American white patriarchal societies, the issues and nature of racism has to also be at the forefront of any discourse that addresses social/racial inequality. To support this point, Giroux argues that the more demanding forms of inclusiveness are expressed in an antiracism education that not only challenges those relationships of power that racialism the school social order, but also invoke direct actions for dismantling the structural roots of educational inequality (Giroux, 1994 in Fleras, 2001), (see also Thomas, 2002, Kailin, 1999, Nieto, 1999, Dei, 1996, 1998). Thus, Thomas argues that the very term "antiracist" presumes the existence and extent of racism, and the need to confront and stamp it out because racism is deeply entrenched in our history and everyday understandings of ourselves, of others, and of the world around us (Thomas, 2002).

In addition, according to proponent of critical multiculturalism, the unwillingness of antiracists to incorporate a cultureless approach - a legacy of their rejection of all things multicultural - has also meant that they have been unable to address the impact of 'new racist' discourses and their largely cultureless and nationalist emphases (May, 1999). Giroux offers the rebuttal in that antiracism education shifts attention away from minority cultures as timeless or exotic and instead approaches

racism as something that is historically created, symbolically expressed, and institutionally embedded at various levels in society. As such, within this framework, students and teachers are offered an opportunity to see how culture is organized, how some people become authorized to speak about different forms of culture, and how some cultures come to be seen as "worthy" of public esteem. The emphasis here is on understanding how power operates in the interests of the socially dominant, and how existing relations can be challenged and transformed (Giroux, 1994).

In addition, since whiteness is used to largely define culture in North America, McLaren argues that unless we give White students a sense of their own identity as an emergent ethnicity, we naturalize Whiteness as a cultural marker against which 'otherness' is defined. So, as long as European culture, is used as the defining cultural frame for White-ethnic transactions, and defines and sets the limits on all thought about human relations, there can be no prospect for human equality (McLaren, 1995). It is this quest for equality that McMahon (2003) advances her claim that those of us who are White educators need to be aware of what we bring to classrooms and schools. She argues that a part of gaining that understanding comes through the need for us to examine our Whiteness and to locate ourselves consciously within the curriculum. She gave two reasons for this, first, she argues that in order to understand issues of race and culture for ourselves and for our students, we need to understand ourselves as raced participants, not as removed from issues of race and culture. She further argues that, secondly, because schools within Toronto and North America are composed of multiracial student populations and predominantly monorail teaching staffs, educators

need to acknowledge the significance of race and privilege as they impact on all aspects of educational experience (p. 266).

2.8 Concluding Thoughts

Having reviewed the literature on the various philosophical frameworks regarding schooling in a multicultural/multiracial society, the goal was to gain an understanding of the basic tenets of these frameworks which is necessary in order to develop an understanding of the study participants' experiences with schooling. The literature enabled me to develop an understanding of how school/board administrators may maintain the status quo while denying the existence of racism, despite continuing complaints from students, parents and community members. The continued denials of racism in Ottawa's schools have prevented administrators from developing a sense of responsibility in addressing the problem and thus avoid accountability. Most importantly, I am able to understand the ways in which schools foster and structure inequality along race, class, disability, gender, etc. and how these systemic inequalities are maintained to the disadvantage of mainly non-white, working-class, students.

The review of the literature has also enabled me to develop a fuller understanding of the ways in which the very educational system that promotes issues of diversity and equality can also simultaneously maintain the status quo. As such, it is very evident that the issues which were identified by the participants and which centered around racism, streaming, differential treatment, criminalization and the unequal application of zero tolerance etc., are in of themselves symptomatic causes of an educational system that is inherently unjust. Gaining this understanding of the various philosophical foundation of schooling and their possibilities, has prepared the foundation upon which I can begin to

adequately interrogate the inequality facing Black youths in Ottawa's educational system and the various transformational possibilities that exist to facilitate equal opportunity and equal outcome for all students. Consequently the following the Chapter will examine the theoretical framework I have chosen to interrogate the educational experiences of the research participants.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**“When I dare to be powerful
to use my strength in the service of my vision,
then it becomes less and less important
whether I am afraid”**

Audre Lorde

3.0 Introduction

The previous Chapter examined various philosophical debates around schooling in regards to minority education in Canada and the United States. In reviewing the literature, I was able to settle on a theoretical foundation upon which to anchor my study. As such, this research draws from two bodies of literature which will incorporate a Black antiracist feminist framework to analyze the research findings, and also frame my understanding of equal educational opportunities (EEO), and equal educational results (EER), with regards to the educational issues facing Black youths and their parents in Ottawa. As a researcher from the margins, whose project is controversial and attempts to disrupt the image of the educational system in Ottawa, I am required to write from an oppositional and critical stance.

A Black antiracist feminist perspective necessitates the use of a critical and oppositional pedagogy within which to seriously interrogate the ways in which multiple interlocking barriers impact the educational experiences and outcome for the research participants. In describing oppositional pedagogy Brandt (1986) noted that:

Oppositional pedagogy is a theory and practice that premises itself on the notion of schooling as repressive and as serving to maintain the power structure vis-à-vis the social and racial status quo of schooling as well as in the wider social structure. Schooling, therefore, is seen as principally serving the ends of the powerful in society by maintaining their position of power

through ideological induction into dominant norms and values of society, thus helping to maintain the social/racial status quo (p. 56).

In addition, one of the central tenet of antiracism is that it places the students, especially working-class students, at the heart of its politics. Thus, it recognizes the socioeconomic arrangement of American and Canadian society as well as the existence of class, race, and gender inequalities in education (Kailin, 2002, see also Neito, 1996). Inequalities such as streaming, stereotyping, excessive/severe disciplinary measures and the criminalization of Black youths can be illuminated and interrogated within a framework that is counter hegemonic and capable of rupturing the silence around the existing status quo. Most importantly, employing a critical/oppositional pedagogy within an antiracist framework will enable me to freely speak on my own terms within an environment that is hostile, restrictive and strongly resistant to voices from the margins. This is especially so of voices of Black feminist scholars who seek to highlight the tensions and contradictions in educational policies and practices that are aimed at maintaining the existing status quo. Dei (1998) argues that self-criticism is crucial to anti-racism politics and that education within this framework seeks to rupture racist projects in schools, and question White dominance and pathologized views of marginalized groups that result in the production and reproduction of racialized practices (p. 302). In addition, the language used throughout this framework will refer to people of African ancestry as Blacks and the term non-white will refer to people who are non-European/non-white, while Canada's first people will respectfully be referred to as First Nations.

Finally, essential to the discussion is the fact that this interrogation is taking place within an educational environment that is heavily influenced by feminist ideology and as such, the tensions existing within the feminist movement have to be highlighted in order to expose the point at which my Black antiracist feminist ideology diverge from the dominant feminist ideology.

3.1 Black Feminism - An Understanding

It is essential to begin this discussion by declaring my personal commitment to feminist scholarship. As such, feminism as an ideology is central to my framework because like Christine Overall, I posit that “Feminism is the heart of who I am, not only as an academic, but as a citizen and an individual....feminism is comprised of the well-founded belief that girls and women are legally, politically, and socially disadvantaged on the grounds of their sex” (Overall, 1998). While to some degree, I do share Overall’s gender analysis, I also believe that her framing of women’s oppression represents a narrow view that is similar to many other middle-class white feminists. Which is the reason I have adopted a Black feminist framework and analysis aimed at interrogating the ways in which mainstream feminism denies and ignores multiple oppressions.

Feminism, from its inception was a movement riddled with tension and division along race and class lines. For example, Betty Freidan, often referred to as the mother of feminism, stated in her book titled the Feminist Mystic, that “[t]here are aspects of the housewife role that make it almost impossible for a woman of adult intelligence to retain a sense of human identity, the firm core of self or 'I' without which a human being, man or woman, is not truly alive” (Freidan, 1963). The human being Freidan

was describing was not that of a Black/non-white woman, because many of these women were and are still being exploited as domestic laborers and nannies in the home of many white middle-class women to which she was referring. Traditional western feminist discourse has historically, traditionally and continually defined and framed 'women's oppression in accordance with their own middle-class lived experiences that is centered on white privilege to the exclusion of many women of color. hooks (1984) argued that the exclusionary practices of women who dominated feminist discourse have made it practically impossible for new and varied theories to emerge....women who feel a need for a different strategy, a different foundation, often find themselves ostracized and silenced (p. 9). Thus, although, Freidan scholarship may appear dated, it remains very relevant in today's 21st century feminist movement, because the silencing that hooks is talking about continues today.

One such silencing experience occurred at a conference that I attended during my Master's program. The discussions centered on issues in feminism in the 21st century. As I listened to the opening speaker talk about where we were heading as feminists in the new century, I became hopeful that the errors of the past were behind us. That hope turned to despair as I listened to the keynote speaker, a prominent white Canadian, middle-class feminist, describing what she considered to be the 'oppression' that her grandmother suffered as a young wife and mother.

She described a young woman who had to leave her parents and country with her children to follow her husband who had immigrated to Canada because he bought a hotel in Toronto. Her grandmother was forced to make a series of moves because her grandfather was a real estate investor and trotted across the country buying properties.

He finally bought a large ranch, which forced her grandmother to uproot her children and move once again. Before she could recover fully from the move, her grandfather died leaving the vast estate to a distraught widow who knew nothing about taking care of a ranch of that magnitude along with raising children. As I sat listening to the privileged life of her grandmother, I reflected on my own grandmother who was 'informally' owned by the family who had raised her and who spent her entire childhood in the coffee fields on the plantation upon which she was raised. In relation to the life experiences of many non-white women, especially Black and First Nations women, I failed to understand the term 'oppression' as framed by this prominent white Canadian feminist. So, the feminist movement as defined by early feminists such as Betty Freidan has not changed in the 21st century. Middle-class white women continue to define and frame women's oppression within a privileged framework. Most importantly, one of the main areas of contention within the movement had not changed that is – diverse voices. In this conference, of the two Black women that attempted to speak only one was given a voice. A conference of over 250 people with three Black women in attendance, only one was allowed to speak, because they did not want oppositional views, despite their claims of solidarity and sisterhood.

So, despite attempts to become inclusive, many white feminists remained resistant to opening up spaces within which honest dialogue could take place with women of color. The space to which I refer would enable women of colour to frame their oppression as they experience and live it. Lorde argues that by emphasizing one social division, between men and women, above all others, feminism denies racism, and denies the recognition of Black women's difference. As such, little has been learned about the

ways in which race, class, and gender intersect in the lives of non-white women who have immigrated to Canada from Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean (Lorde, 1994, in Agnew, 1996). It is this silencing that the research participants was also describing in their schools. As described later in Chapter 7, the students felt that they were not able to write and express their ideas in ways that differed from their teachers. They argued that if they did, they would receive lowered grades. Neito (2000) argues that when students are given time and support for expressing their views and experience with racism, the result can be compelling because their experiences are legitimated and used in the service of their learning (p. 65). Consequently, it is this notion of sisterhood as it exists today within education which is intricately linked to feminism that I seek to challenge and rupture in order for non-white women and students to have a voice in framing the way they experience the world.

3.2 'Sisterhood' in the Struggle – whose struggle? – at whose cost?

In turning the gaze back to white feminism, and their influence in education, it must be recognized that the framing of 'struggle' and 'equality' have different meaning depending on your positionality. For example, my white feminist sisters' struggle for equality was and continue to be a struggle aimed at achieving gender equality with white males in positions of power, and not men of color. As such, race was never a factor in their struggle for equality. Consequently, the successes that white feminists achieved came as a result of displacing white men in positions of power, without consideration being given to non-white women's struggle against race and class oppression within the existing patriarchal order. Thus, the social order that resulted from the new feminist

arrangement did not change from its previous patriarchal arrangement, because the ideological beliefs of the white middle-class feminists were also rooted in dominance, despite their claims of 'sisterhood' in the struggle for equality.

In simple terms, white middle-class feminists have struggled successfully to displace white males who had gained their privilege and positions through white dominance. The only difference between patriarchy and white feminism is that - white males never advanced claims of 'brotherhood' with non-white males in their struggle for dominance. Rather, their struggle for control was rooted in the ideology of dominance and capitalism, which was clearly evident within the social order of the day. On the other hand, the white feminist ideology was falsely constructed on the notion that 'all' women are 'equal', and as such, 'all' women are also equally oppressed. Thus the aim of the movement was to eradicate the oppression faced by all women, as defined by privileged white women without regards to the existing race and class stratification of society or the impact of multiple interlocking barriers on non-white women, especially Black and First Nations women and their children. As a result, the educational inequality faced by working-class Black students are often denied and/or ignored, and the voices of their parents silenced, due to their class and race status.

Today, although these areas of tension and contradiction within the feminist movement and education have been illuminated by many non-white feminists and scholars, reforms have largely been superficial with major changes occurring only at the political level in terms of mission statements aimed at sending political messages about institutions' commitment to equality and embracing diversity. With minor changes being made in terms of mainstream courses which generally reflected the occasional

tinkering of a few changes to the curriculum in an added-on manner or a few non-white references being added to the suggested reading list without altering the substantive course material, thus preserving the status quo. In addition, despite a sprinkling of non-white teachers, Black and First Nations teachers are usually underrepresented at all levels within the field of education, regardless of educational mission statements making claims of equal access, equality, diversity, and equity. For example, although the representation of white women both feminist and non-feminist, have increased in many areas of education, Black and First Nation's women are still considered a novelty in many Canadian institutions of higher learning, despite claims of equity, diversity and equal opportunity.

This disparity has also been highlighted by the student participants in that many reported that they have never had a Black teacher. At the post-secondary level, while teaching at the college and university level, my students have always pointed out that it was their first time having a Black lecturer. The tension that is clearly highlighted here begs the question that if one is to believe in this notion of equality, solidarity, and sisterhood, amongst feminists, then how do we explain this racialized gap amongst women within Canadian institutions of higher learning and the educational system in general? If we are sisters in the struggle for equality, then why is the door still closed for Black and First Nations women in higher learning institutions within mainstream programs, especially teacher training programs? Most importantly, why are the white feminists who have successfully gained access into the field of education on the grounds of gender inequality now ignoring the existing disparity between themselves and Black and First Nation women due to racial inequality?

The reports regarding the under-representation of Black teachers are consistent with the literature (see Brathwaite, 1998, McMahon, 2003, Henry, 1996, Nieto, 2004, Dei, 1995, 1996). In deconstructing the status quo, Nieto (2000) argues that one major way in which racism and ethnocentrism are reinforced and perpetuated in schools, colleges, universities, and society at large is through a Eurocentric curriculum that centralizes the experiences of mainstream and largely ignores the experiences, cultures, and histories of other groups. She further argues that it has negative consequences for both white and non-white students because while it denies the experiences and histories of non-white students, it reinforces white students' false sense of superiority, and denies them the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, perspectives, and frames of reference that can be gained from studying and experiencing other cultures and groups (p. 65). Thus, the white dominance ideology that is inherent in the feminist movement continues to permeate the educational system at all levels, elementary to post-secondary despite the political rhetoric of solidarity and equality.

3.3 Concluding Thoughts

In summary, the continued politicking around patriarchy by white feminists, I will argue, is a disguise to distract and avoid attention being given to the ways in which the current feminist arrangement reflects the repackaging of white dominance within a feminist framework. As such, the challenge to disrupt the existing status quo and break the silence and denial of racial and class inequality within education and society, has largely been relegated to the realms of non-white feminists. But for the non-white feminist to challenge the status quo, within environments of resistance, will often earn her the label of 'trouble maker' within the institution, especially, if the conflict relates

to race or class inequality and is directed towards her middle-class white feminist 'sister'. According to Kailin (2002) the cultivation of an antiracist oppositional consciousness, which goes against the grain of the dominant institutions, often leads to labeling the advocates of such an antiracist strategy as outcasts or enemies of the "system" (p. 50).

This is generally where the notion of 'equality and sisterhood' falls apart. Thus, the non-white minority woman is quickly reminded that this notion of 'sisters in the struggle' exists only on paper. In reality, for the non-white woman, in situations of conflict with a white feminist, 'whiteness' and its inherent power supersedes gender. It is important to remember that racial conflict occurring in a feminist environment that is rooted in inequality, despite claims of sisterhood, will yield similar results as racial conflict occurring in a patriarchal arrangement where white dominance ideology is explicit in policy and practice. hooks (2004) noted,

Sexism pits women against one another, and the power struggle that ensues may become even more intense when racial difference is added to the mix. Anti-racist white women are not afraid to engage with critiques by black women/women of color because those white women fundamentally understand that as long as we fear facing our differences and avoid conflict we cannot arrive at a true place of solidarity and sisterhood (p. 61).

Today, similar to the participants who are in learning environments where policies and practice are in contention, I, as a Black antiracist feminist, am also engaged in a feminist environment that has similar contentions and contradictions. The critical link to be established here is that feminism is intricately connected to the field of education. As such, many of the inequalities within feminism are also visible in education, despite the politics of language. Given my attempts to deconstruct the feminist movement as I

understand it, I am able to then understand more clearly why many of the barriers I have faced as a Black feminist within the field of education is very similar to the struggles faced by the research participants in their learning environment.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

Despite claims that every child has the opportunity to achieve his/her full academic potential, and despite claims of equal educational opportunity in Ottawa's schools, the educational experiences of Black youths, particularly males from working-class background, appear to be in contention with the Boards' claims. Based on the data which will be discussed later, it also appears that the primary area of contention lies around school boards' denial of racism and its various manifestations. In addition, the problem is further complicated by the fact that neither the Ottawa Carleton District School Board nor the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board compiles racial statistics, which are necessary to either validate or refute the Black community's claim of racial inequality. As a result, many of the participants argue that the existing zero tolerance and antiracist policies that project Ottawa schools as welcoming and safe for all students regardless of racial, cultural, religious differences are the very policies that are being used to target Black youths, particularly working-class males. Therefore, my attempts to interrogate these tensions necessitate the use of an antiracist framework that employs a structural analysis of racism that recognizes the contradictory consciousness

and consequences that are often involved in the struggle for justice in an inherently competitive and unjust system (hooks, 2003). The outlined problems and areas of contention as defined by the participants form the basis upon which this research seeks to interrogate the existing contradiction between policy and practice in Ottawa schools.

4.1 The Problem

Although there have been several educational research projects regarding the issue of racism and its various manifestations such as streaming, expulsions /suspensions etc., in Ontario, particularly as it pertains to Black youths, there has never been a specific project that addresses the various concerns as outlined by the participants in Ottawa.

The main problems identified by the community consulting group are:

1. Black working-class youths tend to be streamed into low-level academic programs.
2. Black youths appear to be dropping out of the educational system, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.
3. An increasing number of Black youths, from working-class families, who have been previously suspended or expelled, are also being introduced to the criminal justice system via the educational system.
4. The continued stereotyping of Black students, particularly Black males, as being aggressive, violent, low achievers, and lacking respect for authority, which result in harsher disciplinary actions. In addition, there is concern that this pattern of suspensions and expulsions is another means through which Black youths are being disengaged from the educational system.
5. The existence of racism, and its various manifestations in Ottawa schools.

When a disproportionate rate of Black working-class youths prematurely exit the educational system, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, due to low-level academic streaming/placement, suspensions and/or expulsions, it raises serious questions as to the

process used to determine whether or not local school boards are living up to their claims of 'educational equality' for all students. According to Bireda (2000), African American students who are sitting in the office, with nothing to do, in in-school suspension, out of school without the benefit of instruction, or placed in inadequate alternative educational settings cannot and will not experience academic success (p. xiii).

4.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to offer a Black anti-racist feminist analysis of the problems facing Black youths and their parents in Ottawa's educational system. According to Kailin (2002), we must invest in analysis that considers how race intersects with other aspects of our being, such as gender and class, in the formation of racist assumptions, attitudes and behavior (p. 22). Further, I chose to conduct this research in Ottawa for personal and professional reasons. On a personal level, I came to develop a deep rooted passion for educational advocacy due to the educational inequalities and challenges my own children encountered in the educational system. Over the years, I discovered that many of the educational inequalities were not only systemic but that they also fell along race and class lines. As a result, many Black working-class students, similar to my own children, were subjected to unequal educational treatment due to racism.

Consequently, I spent many years learning about the overall educational structure, specifically the policies and procedures that govern schools in Ottawa. It then became clear that the educational system was structured in a manner that divided students along class lines, by imposing a boundary system that determines which school a child may attend based on her/his place of residence. My knowledge and awareness then led me

to a life of advocacy in defense of many working-class students whose parents lacked the understanding of how the system worked to disadvantage their children.

On a professional level, I came to discover that the streaming of Black working-class youths was pervasive. Similar to the study that was conducted by Solomon (1992) in Toronto, where Black working-class immigrant youths were being streamed into a vocation school, this streaming practice was also in operation in Ottawa. For example, in the working-class area where I lived, during a particular period, 'all' the Black youths, with no exception, were streamed progressively from elementary into a vocational high school, which created an overrepresentation of Black students in these schools. It was a given that once you graduated from our neighbourhood elementary school as a Black youth, you were automatically sent to this particular vocational high school. The parents were recent immigrants and did not understand the implication of such educational track system. As a result, all of these youths were denied access to post secondary studies. Today, streaming along race and class lines continues although Ottawa has managed to develop and maintain an image of racial harmony, equality and equity for all groups in education.

In this study, participants' narratives form the basis upon which greater understanding and knowledge could be developed in regards to the various ways in which race and economic factors may affect educational opportunity/outcome. To this end, given that all the students were Black, I enquired if race, and/or class affected educational opportunities and outcome, if so, to what degree and in what ways? More importantly, if students were subjected to differential treatment, how do parents respond to such situations and what role does class play in these relationships. For example, I

wanted to know if students and parents were treated differently based on their perceived social class by teachers and/or administrators. Social class was defined in this research project base on level of education, place of residence, employment status, and access to financial resources. For instance, did the parents who were university educated, owned their own business or occupied white collar jobs have more voice compared to parents who had a lower level of education, and who were either unemployed or employed in blue collar/service jobs. In other words, do all parents, regardless of factors such as educational level, place of residence, employment status, etc. have reciprocity – are they able to successfully advocate, influence, and negotiate educational issues affecting their children's academic outcome?

4.3 Goals

The goal of the study was not to generalize the findings, but to develop an understanding around the impact of multiple intersecting barriers on students' educational achievement. Within this project, class is considered a significant factor, because within the Black community, while all agree that racism is pervasive within Ottawa's school, there appears to be a dichotomized view about addressing the inequality inherent in the educational system. For example, depending on where one falls along the socioeconomic ladder, privilege or marginalization will inform one's frame of reference in relation to the educational plight of Black youths. Therefore, it was necessary to develop an understanding of the interlocking and simultaneous effects of race and class in education and their impact on the educational experiences of Black youths and parents. The reality is that classes in Canada are real in terms of their impact, and are a key determinant of work, wealth, income, and education; they also

'count' as key variables for explaining inequality, whether people are aware or not, and they help shape individual outcomes (Fleras, 2001).

In exploring the interrelatedness of race and class, I think it is important for the reader to understand the meaning of the term 'class' as I understand it. The term 'class' is defined as groups of individuals who can be categorized by their relationship to scarce and valued resources such as wealth, power, or status - a category of persons who occupy a similar rank with respect to their standing in the economy (Fleras, 2001). This definition forms the intellectual foundation upon which I launched my exploration into the experiences of Black youths in Ottawa's educational system.

4.4 Objective of Study

The overall objective of the study is to break the silence around the educational inequality facing Black youths in Ottawa's educational system. Central to this study, is to enable participants who have been previously rendered silent within their school to now have a voice in the deconstruction of their educational reality as they experienced it in Ottawa schools. Through their narratives, participants will be able to break the silence and speak out with the aim of illuminating the tensions and contradictions between their experiences in relation to the Boards' policy and actual school practices. This research is especially needed given the fact: 1) educators consistently dismiss claims of racism and educational inequality within Ottawa's schools, 2) school has become a site that reproduces social inequality, 3) schools foster educational outcomes at odds with the concerns and aspirations of minority students (Dei, 1996).

4.5 Breaking the Silence through Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers want to enter the worlds of the people they study, get to know them and ultimately represent and interpret these worlds. It follows that qualitative writing tends to be rich with quotation, description, and narration, as researchers attempt to capture conversations, experiences, perspectives, voices and meanings. This is research, it could be said, with words instead of numbers (Glynda Hull, 1997).

The decision to conduct this study using a qualitative method was aimed at exploring the varied experiences of Black youths and their parents within the educational system in Ottawa. The study was designed to explore and establish if Black students, male and female, rich and poor, had the same equal educational opportunities to achieve their full academic potential. Therefore, what can be discovered by qualitative research are no sweeping generalizations but contextual findings (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The individuality and variety of issues facing many Black families with students in the educational system required a process that would allow them to identify the issues that they feel is relevant and important to them. In other words, I wanted to tell their stories by giving them a voice through my writing. With this aim in mind, the student participants generally determined what aspect of their educational experiences they wanted to share with me.

Using a qualitative methodology enabled participants' to travel back and recall painful school memories which they often described through anger, pain, laughter and sadness. Also, in reflecting on past school experiences, they were able to deconstruct, and in cases where necessary, reconstruct their educational reality in ways that illuminated the contradictions and tensions between their actual educational experiences and the school policies. In breaking their silence, they were able to express the different ways in which their experiences have impacted their learning, which I would have been

unable to capture using a quantitative methodology. Importantly, qualitative research, generally examines people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Within the qualitative tradition, I will also utilize a participatory action research design.

4.6 Participatory Action Research

In selecting a research design, I have decided to utilize the Participatory Action Research approach, (PAR). Participatory Action Research is a strand of research built on the notion of Paulo Freire's 'thematic research' that view research as a form of social action generated by issues of vital importance to community members. For example, PAR demands some form of intervention: 1) A plan of action be developed to improve what is already happening; 2) To act to implement the plan; 3) To observe the effects of the action; and 4) To reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning and subsequent action through a succession of cycles (Kemmis, 1982 cited by Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen, 1994). Thus, the guiding principles of this approach will enable me to examine the nature and degree of problems facing Black youths in Ottawa schools, and also provide the opportunity to create interventions leading to a series of actions designed to improve and enhance the educational experiences of Black youths and their families.

In addition, the general characteristics of this type of research are: 1. The subject/object relationship is transformed into a subject/subject relationship through dialogue; 2. The social processes and structures are understood within a historical

context; 3. Theory and practice are integrated; 4. The results of research are immediately applied to a concrete situation; and 5. The community and researcher together produce critical knowledge aimed at social transformation (de Schutter and Yopo 1981). This type of research is further described as the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it and is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched. This includes not only those practitioners who work in schools but also the people who live in the schools' community (Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh, 1993). Thus, the goal of the PAR tradition is liberation through knowledge gathering.

Following the general characteristics of PAR, in exploring the issues facing the youths, it was important that this project be open to as many voices as possible because it is my belief that – research from the margins requires intersubjectivity; an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). Consequently, I felt it was both necessary as well as important to establish within the research process, a community-based consulting Committee consisting of six members, representing parents, community organization and educators. The goal of establishing this Committee was to enable community members to provide valuable input into the research process, and to develop a sense of ownership of the finished product. It was my belief that involvement in the research project would equip the Committee with the tool necessary to demand further enquiry into the issues that emerged from this project. The Committee would spearhead the action necessary to begin a process of reform upon completion of the project.

4.6.1 The First and Second Committee Meeting

The Committee of six members was formed in consultation with various community organizations, after informing them about the research. These contacts provided links to individuals, professionals and non-professionals in the community who were also engaged in activities to address the various issues facing Black youths in Ottawa schools. A group of six individuals were chosen to form the research Committee for the project. The group met approximately four times throughout various stages in the research process, which enabled me to maintain a collaborative relationship with Committee members by keeping them up-to-date on the progress of the research project. The Committee first met during the data collection phase of the process. This was an informal meeting where I provided snacks and soft drinks, as customary within Black culture – breaking bread within a group signifies togetherness and solidarity. The introduction of members was followed by a power point presentation to the group describing my research project, which led into a general discussion on the educational problems facing Black youths in Ottawa.

The Committee discussed access to participants and determined that advertising for participants was not necessary, due to the scope of the Committee. After informing the Committee that the two school boards have not responded to my offer to participate in the research project, the Committee stated that they envisioned continued difficulty engaging representatives of the two school boards in Ottawa due to the nature of the research. As such, the Committee concluded that the research should proceed without the involvement of the Boards, and circulated news of the research through personal, organizational, community and professional contacts. The information about the

research was to be disseminated to the larger community in an effort to obtain a wide selection of participants that represent schools from different areas of the Ottawa Capital region.

At the *second* meeting, I provided feedback to the Committee and additional concerns were identified and discussed. For example, Committee members were flooded with calls from elementary level students about racial incidents. However, the Committee decided to stay within the limit of the research, which was to focus on the high school students. Another major area of concern was the ethical dilemma faced by a member of the Committee with regards to racial incidents the individual was witnessing in the educational system. The member wanted to expose the degree of racism to which Black youths were being subjected. However, due to the specific nature of the incidents, such disclosure would have potentially exposed the member's identity. This posed quite a dilemma for the Committee, because on one hand, these are the incidents that the Committee felt needed to be exposed in the research, yet, the safety and anonymity of individuals was paramount. Consequently, decisions were made to exclude narratives that could potentially lead to the identification of individuals.

4.6.2 The Third Meeting of the Committee

The third meeting was held after the data collection and transcription. The themes that emerged from the data collection process were discussed. The research process involved in the analysis of the data was described to the members. Members explored possible strategies and community actions aimed at disrupting the existing status quo and bringing about educational reform for the Black youths and parents in Ottawa. The Committee requested that such strategies should not be recorded in the project, due to

fear that actions maybe taken to block potential community action by defenders of the current educational arrangement. Kailin (2002) argues that the cultivation of this oppositional consciousness, which goes against the grain of the dominant institutions, often leads to labelling the advocates of such an antiracist strategy as outcasts or enemies of the "system" (p.50). The fourth meeting would be held after the defence of my dissertation, at which time copies will be made available to each member. Plans previously made will then be put into action using the dissertation as a tool upon which to anchor their activism for educational change.

4.7 Access and Entry

In our society, with its history of racism, researchers and participants of different racial and ethnic backgrounds face difficulties in establishing an effective interviewing relationship (Seidman, 1977).

While I did not encounter any difficulty establishing a trusting and effective interviewing relationship with most participants due to my race, there was, however, mixed reaction for the project, positive and negative. The positive reaction for the project came from the working-class strata of the Black community. For example, my presence was welcomed by the families whose children were suffering racial and class discrimination within Ottawa's educational system, and who lacked a voice due to their marginalization. They wanted their voices to be heard, and to trust that their stories would not be distorted. It was clear that - unlike the Black elite, working-class Blacks are not ashamed or afraid to talk about class oppression; they simply have little or no public venues in which to air their views (hooks, 2003).

As argued by Seidman (1977) despite commonality of race, class can also become an impediment to establishing a good interviewing relationship. As the researcher, I assumed that due to my racial connectedness with the community, my work would be embraced by all. It turned out to be a very wrong assumption. I became puzzled and confused by the reactions of the middle-class members of the community – I just did not understand. There were two types of negative reactions. *First*, participants acknowledged that they were aware of the problems within the system but felt that there was nothing they could do on a personal level to affect change, so they did not want to participate. There was the sense that the fight is an individual one and as such, parents must take on the individual responsibility of fighting for their children's educational right. hooks (2004) provided the best response to the views of the community members being described here in that she argues that working-class Black folks live the reality of class divisions with the Black community and calls for radical Black voices, especially those with some degree of class privilege, to have the courage to talk about class oppression and that being upwardly mobile need not mean that one betrays the people on the bottom (p. 99).

Secondly, some participants echoed the sentiments that their children are doing well in school and to become involved in this type of project would jeopardize their educational well being. They felt that this research has the potential to 'rock the boat', and make life more difficult for Black students. In short, these participants did not see how this project could help to improve the educational reality of Black students in Ottawa, given the fact that we do not have a voice nor representation at either Board. One individual told me that regardless of the outcome of this research, unless it was

conducted by a white person, it will not be taken seriously by the educational system or policy makers, therefore nothing will be done to help Black students.

Essentially, I was being told that my research lacks the authoritative validity that can only be gained if the research is conducted by white researchers. While I disagree with the argument that this research has no power to affect educational change simply because the principal researcher is Black, I did not attempt to influence their opinion and decision to participate. Nonetheless, I understood their reasoning and beliefs behind their position. Their beliefs resulted from the Black community's lack of power to be heard or to influence policies affecting the educational outcome of Black youths (Howe, 1997). This lack of power, in turn, is due to the unequal power relations between the dominant group and Black/minority groups (Giroux, 1994). Within such arrangements, to legitimate a social/educational problem impacting Blacks the legitimization of such problem must generally be acknowledge and/or validated by the dominant group, otherwise its existence is denied or questioned. Although the participants raising this concern were few in number, I felt their position was critical and worthy of being mentioned.

4.8 Data Gathering

The Committee's commitment to the project was reflected in the number of participants that came forward. In the end, 27 participants, including, students, parents, community organization, and educators were selected for the study. The selection of participants was a difficult process due to the fact members of the community continued to come forward with stories about their educational experiences. I encountered a situation in the field where racism was so pervasive and students and parents felt so

silenced, that I was overwhelmed by the number of participants who wanted to tell their stories, hoping that some action would be taken by exposing their experiences.

The research participants included 14 students who were at varying stages in the educational process, grade 9 – university. The student group consisted of five females and nine males. Of the 14 students, three females, and seven males were from working-class backgrounds, while two females and two males were from the middle-class. Although the study focused on high school students, there were four first year university students who had completed their high school during the data collection phase of the project. They were included in the study because I felt their insight would possible illuminate factors that could be preventing Black youths from advancing to post-secondary institutions. In addition, there were six parents, three educators and four community leaders. Within the group of parents, there were three each from middle and working-class background. The participants were of African, Caribbean and Canadian heritage.

Besides the knowledge gained from the students and participants, the experiences and views of community leaders provided valuable information regarding Black youths in Ottawa schools. For example, the four community leaders' views were considered essential due to the fact that their organization represented and advocated on behalf of the larger community. They were able to provide a wider scope of the existing educational problems, which added depth and breadth to the study. While individual participants spoke on their individual experiences or the experiences of their peers and parents, the community leaders and educators represented the wider community. As such the themes that emerged from their narratives are equally as critical as the

narratives coming from the students and parents.

In addition, the three educators also provided valuable insiders view of the educational struggles of Black parents and students. Due to their unique positionalities, they were able to disrupt the Boards' claim of equality within Ottawa schools, and confirmed many of the claims being advanced by the students, parents, and community leaders. They spoke from within the educational system - the very system that denies the existence of racism or unequal treatment within their schools, despite complaints from parents and students. So, in exploring the issues facing the youths, it was important that this project be open to as many voices as possible because it is my belief that – research from the margins requires intersubjectivity: an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process (Kirby and McKenna, 1989).

4.9 Participants' Voices

In asking the students to reconstruct their educational experiences and school interactions for me, I facilitated the process by utilizing an open-ended interviewing technique along with an interview guide. In using an open-ended approach, the aim was to allow participants to reconstruct their experiences based on what issues they considered to be important to them. Therefore, students were asked to take me on a mental tour of their school, and it did not matter through which door they chose to begin their journey. The aim was to make them my tour guide, thus each participant was able to walk me through the various stages of their school life by determining what they considered to be important in their school experience.

I believe that in order for me to develop an understanding of their educational experiences using their lenses, it was essential that they be allowed to lead the tour.

Since each tour is different, my interview guide contained a list of questions designed to build on the issues being discussed that they may or may not have included in the reconstruction of their educational experiences. As the interviewer, I was then able to - listen actively and to move the interview forward as much as possible by building on what the participant has begun to share (Seidman, 1991). In some cases, the guide was used minimally because the majority of questions listed in the guide were answered during their tour.

With respect to the parents and professionals, a more structured questionnaire was used. Parents were asked to share and describe their personal views and opinions with regards to their interaction with their children's school teachers and /administrators. The professionals were asked to provide insights into the issues they feel Black youths are facing in Ottawa's educational system. When necessary, issues of race, culture, stereotyping, suspensions and expulsions in education were explored with participants. As a Black researcher, my lived experiences within both economic realms, working and middle-class, enabled me to relate and connect to both the middle-class and working-class participants. For example, I connected with the families that were struggling along economic lines as they described their economic struggles in trying to make ends meet while attempting to ensure that their children receive a good education in order to break the cycle of poverty.

In listening to the parents describing their various educational experiences, I was able to personally relate and connection to their pain, frustrations and struggles. They described the difficulty in not understanding how the system works, how the teachers talked down to them because they spoke with an accent, and their inability to advocate

successfully for their children due to their lack of voice and power. I also connected with my middle-class participants in terms of their power to negotiate and influence a desired educational outcome.

4.10 Research Setting

Given the nature of the study, I felt it was important that the participants be given the option of choosing the location for the interviews. The majority of the interviews took place at the participants' homes. Others took place in my home, community centres, and the church. The majority of the student participants requested that the interview takes place in their homes. The student participants appeared most comfortable, in their natural home environment and often led me to a very quite isolated area of their home, where they were able to journey back and reconstruct their educational experiences in private. In many cases, the journey was a difficult and painful one, and the comfort of their home provided safe environment in which to express the various emotions associated with such experience such as tears, sadness, anger, and nervous laughter.

4.11 Ethical Consent

Prior to the commencement of each interview, I personally met with each individual student participant and in cases where the student was under the age of 18, I met in the presence of a parent, with the aim of providing information about the research. As well, participants were also given information about me, the researcher, and in turn participants were allowed to ask and/or have me verify or clarify information. In addition, to the verbal information provided to participants regarding

the research, an information sheet describing the research project including McGill's address, telephone number as well as my dissertation supervisor's name and telephone number were also made available to participants. After this information session, participants were informed that their participation in the research is strictly voluntary and that they reserve the right to withdraw at any time throughout the process. No institutional or social pressures were used to influence or encourage the participation of subjects. Parents were not allowed to coerce their children into participating. I personally spoke with each participant to ensure that their participation was completely voluntary.

In cases where I was contacted by students or parents over the telephone wishing to participate in the study, I briefly described the project over the phone with individual parent/s and gave them the opportunity to determine if they wished to continue with their participation in the project. If they chose not to participate in the research at that stage, no further contact was made with that family. However, if they decided to participate, arrangements were made to meet with the student and parent personally at a time that was convenient to them.

Participants were requested to sign a consent form prior to the interviewing process. In cases where the participant was a minor, I met first with the parent/s to provide information about the research project. Those who agreed to participate were requested to sign two consent forms, one for their child and the other for themselves. If the child was 18 or older, he or she was required to sign the consent form her/himself.

Prior to the actual interviewing, participants were informed that the interviews would be audio taped and that I would be the only person with access to the tapes,

which will be secured in a locked file cabinet. In addition, of vital importance, participants were made aware that the possibility exists whereby they may experience some level of distress or even depression after recalling incidents that may have been painful for them in the past. As such, I provided each participant with my telephone number in the event they decided to withdraw from the study after the interview, or required further inquiry about the study. I also followed-up with telephone calls after the initial interviews to ensure the well being of the participants.

In addition, while conducting this research project, should a situation arise where I, the principal investigator determined that there was a need for immediate intervention on behalf of a student or his/her parent; I secured the services of two community organizations, the Somali Women Centre and the Eagle Centre. Both organizations agreed to intervene and provide services upon my recommendation. If it was determined that intervention was required, the participant/s were informed about the services offered by the participating community organizations. If the participant/s accepted my recommendation for the proposed intervention, they were to select one of the two organizations from which they choose to receive service. Once a selection has been made, the student and/or her/his parent were to sign a written consent form permitting me to make the referral on their behalf.

4.12 Data Analysis

I had the four interviews of the community leaders transcribed by an assistant, while the remainders of the 23 interviews were personally transcribed by me. Initially, I struggled with the decision as to whether or not to transcribe the interviews myself due to the level of emotions that were expressed by the student and parent participants. I

worried about my own emotional stability in re-experiencing the pain associated with the interviews. However, I decided in the end, that despite the personal pain I experienced while interviewing the parents and students, I nonetheless wanted to transcribe the interviews myself. In my quest to represent them to the best of my ability, I wanted to reacquaint myself with their pain. I believed that if they were able live and endure the painful experiences they had previously described, then I should also be able to suffer the discomfort of listening to their pain.

However, the downside to personally transcribing the tapes resulted in bouts of depressed feelings, particularly since I, along with my peers, was personally experiencing many of the systemic inequalities the participants were describing. Nonetheless, as I coded the written transcripts, I became intimately close with the data which enabled me to connect and thread the themes together as I wove my way through the process of analysis. The participants' collective narratives formed and supported the themes that emerged, and I was often surprised of the ways in which their stories connected and revealed the systemic nature of the problems being described. As such, the themes reflected the collective reality of the participants. In the contextualizing phase of the process, I read and reread the transcripts in order to conduct an in-depth analysis. For example, I was able to contextualize this notion of 'back home' amongst the adult participants after several readings of the written transcript. At this stage of the analysis, I was able to connect the themes that emerged in a meaningful way.

One goal I struggled to maintain throughout the research process was to let the data speak for itself. The participants were clear about the issues they were experiencing. Therefore, as the researcher, I did not want to rename my participants'

issues or reconstruct their experiences by taking their terms and categorizing it to mean something else. For example, in conceptualizing the codes as emerged from the data, I remained mindful of the fact that – different terms represent different things to different people and therefore not be regarded as static. The various perspectives through which the codes emerged emanated from specific ideologies and world views – some of which challenge the dominant way of knowing (Dei, 1995). Therefore, I struggled to resist the dominant way of doing research and labelled the participants views as ‘perceived’. Thus the terms in their simplest forms created the codes for the analysis, hence creating the space within which their voice can be heard.

By dealing in voices, we are affecting power relations. To listen to people is to empower them. Before you can expect to hear anything worth hearing, you have to examine the power dynamics of the space and the social actors. You have to be the person someone else can talk to, and you have to be able to create a context where the person can speak and you can listen. That means we have to study who we are and who we are in relation to those we study. If you want someone to tell it like it is, you have to hear it like it is (Reinharz, 1988).

As a Black researcher, I allow and enable participants to tell their own stories, name their own issues, and determine their own solutions. This is made possible by transforming my participants from being labelled ‘objects’ to making them ‘subjects’ of my research project. Generally, those who dominate are seen as ‘subjects’ and those who are dominated ‘objects’. As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, and name their history. As object, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity is created by others (hooks, 1989). In addition, PAR also provided the social and political basis upon which these students and their families could be relocated from the periphery of the educational process to the centre, thus

transforming their existing reality of marginalized stakeholders to that of active, valuable and integral members of the educational structure.

4.13 Concluding Thoughts

This Chapter described the various stages that were used to gather and analyze the data, and the challenges that were present in the field. Most importantly, using the principles of PAR, I described the role of the community research committee that is attached to the project and the Committee's intention to use the dissertation as a tool to lobby for educational change for Black youths who are being marginalized within the system. Thus, the research is enabling community members to take action aimed at correcting the problems affecting their communities. In the process of transforming my participants from being labelled 'objects' to making them 'subjects' of my research project, the following Chapter is dedicated to the students participants. In this Chapter, they will be provided with the space to deconstruct and reconstruct, if necessary, their educational experiences in Ottawa's schools.

CHAPTER 5: STUDENTS' NARRATIVES

5.0 Introduction

Having discussed and formulated my theoretical framework in the previous Chapter, I will now employ a Black feminist/anti-racist perspective to examine the various themes that emerged from the educational experiences of Black youths within Ottawa's educational system. The themes contained in this Chapter attempt to represent the voices of 14 Black students in Ottawa's educational system who consented to participate in this research project. In an attempt to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, fictitious names have been assigned to each participant. Given what is considered among the Black community to be a pervasive silence around various forms of educational inequality in Ottawa, the majority of the student participants expressed the need to be heard and to have the silence around their educational struggles broken. Hence, I have constructed two separate Chapters, in order to give more presence to their voices.

This Chapter focuses on the students' narratives while Chapter 6 focuses on the views of the parents, community leaders and educators. The decision to designate one Chapter to the students was due to my commitment to allow the voices of the student participants to become the central focus of this study. Accordingly, I anchored the Chapter around the narratives of the students in a manner that illuminates their educational experiences while enabling them to speak directly to the reader. Following the issues that emerged from their narratives, I will highlight the various issues that will be discussed in Chapter seven.

To begin, a short biography of the students is presented in Table A below which is aimed at providing the reader with a sense of the speakers' identity in relation to their social location. Also, in attempting to examine the various educational experiences of the participants, given their commonality of race, it was also essential to know the participants' - point of entry into the school system and their current location within the educational process, their place of birth, their socioeconomic background and their gender.

5.0.1 Biography

Table A

Name	Social Class	Gender	Education	Started school	Birth Place
Karen	M - Class	Female	University	Kindergarten	Canada
Sara	W- Class	Female	High School	Kindergarten	Canada
Alain	W/M-Class	Male	University	Grade 1	Africa
Kevin	M - Class	Male	High School	Grade 1	Africa
Charles	W - Class	Male	High school	Kindergarten	Canada
Amos	W - Class	Male	Adult Ed.	Kindergarten	Canada
Solomon	W/M-Class	Male	Dropout	Grade 3	Africa
Ralph	M - Class	Male	High School	Kindergarten	Canada
June	M - Class	Female	High School	Grade 4	Africa
Shane	W - Class	Male	High School	Kindergarten	Canada
Jack	W - Class	Male	Adult Ed.	Grade 7	Africa
Saul	W - Class	Male	University	Grade 11	Africa
Valerie	M - Class	Female	High School	Kindergarten	Canada
Rachel	W - Class	Female	University	Grade 9	Caribbean

Based on the data that was collected, it appears that whether Black youths were born in Africa, the Caribbean or Canada, they shared similar educational experiences.

The student participants identified issues due to racism and stereotyping, the unequal application of zero tolerance policies resulting in systematic suspensions and expulsions, low teacher expectation, ethnic-grading, racial profiling and the criminalization of Black males within Ottawa's schools. The first barrier to be examined is racism.

5.1 Racism in Ottawa's schools – It is here, we see it, we feel it

Karen: At first I did not understand why, and by the time I graduated high school, I could count the kids on one hand - those who graduated. I noticed that there was a problem particularly with the Black males compared to white males. They just seemed to disappear after grade 11. I am not sure if they dropped-out of school voluntarily, or if they were expelled. They just did not graduate with me. I don't know where they are now, or even if they went back to school. Some of them were so smart [04/20/02].

Ralph: Even though teachers say it is not there, there is racism in the schools. The way they look at you compared to the way they look at other students. The teachers expect you not to do good just by the way you dress they look down on you as if you don't belong there. Then when you work hard and show them that they were wrong, they act surprise as if they did not think that you could do it. I would love to change that [03/07/05].

Amos: Racism and stereotyping are going across schools all the time. Stereotypical people are everywhere and teachers are not exempt, because they have this outlook on Black people that they are revengeful, they are angry, they are angry at life. If a Black student approaches a teacher or makes a stupid joke or whatever – the teacher will take that personally right away and say that they are threatened – their livelihood is threatened, their job is threatened. It is already entrenched in people's brain that Black people are different than white people – they're angry people, violent people, people who are up to no good. That's the stereotype that everyone have entrenched in their brains, even Black people themselves. That's what they have been taught, so what else are they going to do [04/31/03].

Sara: Most of the teachers at my school say racist remarks. My teacher was talking about population overload and how we should have world III in India and China because they are the two most populated countries in the world. He also said to a couple of kids that came in late because they had just got back from Africa, and he asked them if they had brought back AIDS from Africa and thought it was funny but no one laughed. I was mad, but I did not say anything [03/15/04].

Saul: Racism played a role in our education. If it was not for that type of discrimination, my friends would have made it to college or university. But they gave up as a result of the racism that they encountered in school [04/08/02].

Emerging Themes

The topics that I have listed below encapsulate the issues that emerged from the students' narratives and represent the various ways in which racism manifests itself in school practices or impacts the learning experiences of marginalized students. For example, students were impacted due to shaming, negative stereotyping, and low teacher expectation. Some students noted that Black males were disappearing in the senior grades and other students were able to identify and link racism as a contributing factor to the dropout of Black males. Also, based on the quotations, students were able to identify the differential treatment, verbal and non-verbal, covert and overt, directed at Black youths at the hands of teachers, compared to their white peers. The major topics that emerged from the narratives were:

- Racism
- Stereotyping
- Differential treatment

These topics will be expanded and discussed in Chapter 7, the discussion Chapter. There may be some overlapping of issues around some of these topics with other categories due to the insidious ways in which various forms of educational inequality manifest themselves through the students narratives. Another form of educational inequality that has an adverse effect on the learning and development of students is around streaming and the lack of guidance at the high school level.

5.2 Streaming & Lack of Guidance

Saul: When I came here I was placed in grade 9. I told them that I had a higher level of education than that and that I was supposed to be in grade 11 or 12. Since I was from Africa, a third world country, they did not listen to me. I did not take any test or anything, between three weeks and a month, when they realized that was not my level, they bumped me up to grade 11 [04/08/02].

Jack: We don't have guidance at school. When I was in the regular high school I did not get the guidance and so they kept me into the general stream. It wasn't until grade 11, when I found out that I could not go to university with general level courses. I always wanted to go to university, but the fact is, my parents were new immigrants and did not understand how streaming works. Some of my friends that are in university, that's how they are there, they had to bring their parents to say 'I want my son to go in the advance stream'. Otherwise they would not have had it. That's how I found out that, that's how you have to do it, I did not know. You are in the dark and what keeps you going is the dream that you have - of what you want to become, right! But as you go on, there is going to be bumps, and there will be downfall, but you pick yourself up again. But when kids don't have the energy to keep getting up, they begin to give up because there is no one there for them. That's when a wrong path don't seem wrong anymore. That's when you know this is wrong but given the lack of choices it just don't seem wrong anymore. You know, you start from grade 8 and there is a big window, with so much choices, careers, dreams and hope for you. But as you go on, certain things would happen to you, and you go down and then certain dreams and career start disappearing. So that vision that you started out with - gets smaller and smaller. By the time you know, there is nothing for you then...that's why some people - they snap, and some people give up. So the kids have to find their own way and make their own mistakes. But schools don't allow mistakes for Black students and that is why we get kick out of school and into the justice system, that's how it is for us [04/23/03].

Karen: I would change the guidance counselors. The guidance counselors don't really guide you. In grade 9 they don't tell you what courses are important for you to take, so kids end up taking general level courses that they believe they can later change to advance level courses, only to find out that they are not able to change to advance level courses. Sometimes in the washroom I would hear conversations of kids taking general level courses, kids that were very, very bright. Kids that I went into junior high with and kids that were even brighter than I was, but they were taking general level courses. They were told by guidance counselors that they could change the courses later on. They were made to believe that they could take the easier courses now and then change to the more difficult advance level courses later on, but later on they find out that that is not the case, like my friend. Many students are deliberately misguided. I never really needed a guidance counselor because I knew what level courses I had to take and the prerequisite because of my parents' background, they were my counselors [04/20/02].

Solomon: My brother wanted to take a math night school course, so he went to the guidance counselor and she said no the course is closed you cannot take it at night school. My brother's friend came in after him and went to the same guidance counselor and she enlisted him in the same course. So he got the opportunity to take the course even though my brother requested the course first. It is sad because I also had similar experiences with this same guidance counselor. The whole point of a guidance counselor is to give direction and give you the courses you need to get to university. She did not help me to reach my potential and there were so many cases that had happen to other people [04/23/03].

Alain: My last year in high school was the worst because I could not get into 'an English' that I needed for university and to graduate. I was kind of panicking because the people that are graduating usually have their classes all settled, so to me I had one more class left, and without this class I would not get into university. I went to the guidance office and the lady told me that she could not help me the classes are full and I explained my situation to her and she said that's not her problem. I saw the Department head said he can't do anything all the classes are full. Then after that I was really frustrated so I went to my mother because she knows the system. She went and talked with the vice-principal and right on the spot he put me in. I had the sense that if it was another person, a white person, they would have put him in [04/07/02].

Emerging Themes

A number of the participants in this study were articulate narrators. As such, I elected to use a few lengthy quotes throughout this Chapter because they were critical and invaluable to the study. Given the denial of racism and other forms of educational inequality in Ottawa schools, the quotes were able to rupture the Board's claim of equality and racial harmony. Most importantly, while I was personally affected by the narratives of the participants, Jack's educational experiences were exceptional and warranted him telling his story, so I gave him the space to have his voice heard. I felt that Jack personifies strength, determination, resilience, and above all leadership, all admirable and desirable qualities that are necessary to overcome the educational barriers which many students have had to overcome. The topics below represent the major themes that will be discussed:

- Streaming
- Misguidance of Guidance Counsellors
- Abuse of power
- Lack of accountability

The issues around streaming and guidance counselors were clearly articulated by the students. Saul, Jack, Alain, and Solomon are working-class kids who were subjected to barriers that either prevented or delayed them from accessing the courses they required. On the other hand, Karen was a middle-class student who did not need the aid of a guidance counselor, because her family was familiar with the system and was able to guide her. Although Karen was not directly affected by the misguidance of guidance counselors, she nonetheless, observed the way her Black peers were deceived, misguided and streamed into lower level academic courses by guidance counselors. The dichotomy existing between the classes that enable one student to advance to university while another is denied the opportunity will be further discussed in Chapter 7. Similar to streaming, it appeared that students who came from families who were economically disadvantaged bore the brunt of educational inequalities, including suspensions and expulsions due to zero tolerance policies.

5.3 Zero Tolerance - Suspensions

Charles: I noticed that if my shirt is not tucked in – they send me home. I bumped into a teacher - they sent me home. There were so many suspensions that I could not have prevented. I honestly believe I could not have prevented them. Stupidness like I got suspended because a teacher said I gave her a ‘look’. A look! A look that she did not like. A look, that she found threatening. And the thing that was crazy about it is that I did not even know this had happened. It’s not like the teacher said okay lets go to the office. I did not even know what was going on. She was talking to the principal while I was in a different class and I got called down to the office. Okay, I go down to the office -I get suspended. The teacher said it was a threatening look. And they are saying they are only going to suspend me and they are not going to get the police involved. I got suspended over ‘A look’ [04/15/01].

Alain: My brother got suspended for a week when he was in grade one. How can you get suspended for so long in grade one? I mean, come on, he is coming out of kindergarten and basically it remained on his record. Most of the Black kids would get suspended, sometimes for no reason. The white kids would be assigned to punishment inside the school after school duties, but the Black kids would be kicked out of the

school. I know many Black kids that have been suspended and got sent to vocational type schools or they get expelled. There was another case where my friend got suspended in high school for a month after being involved in a conflict with another white student. By the time he comes back to school, after a month in a semester system, it is almost impossible to make it up [04/23/01].

Amos: I actually have a friend and he has a problem with tardiness...But all it took was a little bit of buckling down a little bit of talking to his mother anyone who could probably have an influence on him – explain the staying in school system. But no, they deemed it fit to just expel him on his 16th birthday and they had a sarcastic way about it. Because his 16th birthday came about and they said happy birthday ‘XXX’ we have a present for you – it was a letter of expulsion. That was his gift. They said it with a laugh, patting him on his back as they escorted him out of school. So that’s to the point where it has gotten. The school did not call the house, they did not try to talk to his mother, only at the last minute when they were calling to say we are expelling ‘XXX’ only then did they contact his mother [04/31/03].

Emerging Themes

Throughout their narratives, the students recalled various ways in which zero tolerance had affected their schooling. Charles, Amos and Alain described not only their personal experiences but also their observance of the unequal application of zero tolerance policies in their schools. The importance of this section was heightened by the reasons for their experiences as well as the manner in which the suspensions were carried out. For example, administrators are now expelling students on their 16th birthdays which happen to coincide with the ministry’s mandatory age at which a student is not required to be in school. Based on the narratives of Alain, one could infer that students are being suspended at an earlier age, and for longer periods of time, to the point where it jeopardizes their academic success. Charles on the other hand reported that he was targeted, labeled and suffered frequent suspensions to the point where he was suspended because a teacher did not like the look he supposedly gave her. In

addition to the issues mentioned previously, the topics below represent the issues that were extracted from the narratives:

- Exclusion of parents during the process
- Targeting and labeling
- Zero tolerance begins at an early age for Black youths
- Suspensions for Blacks - In-school punishment or no suspensions for whites

The topics that emerged from the narratives around suspensions and expulsions appear to indicate a pattern of systematic extraction of Black youths from the educational system. This pattern of repeated suspensions appears to resonate around differential and unequal treatment of Black youths. Intricately tied to this process of suspensions are the issues pertaining to stereotyping and the criminalization of Black youths.

5.4 Stereotyping & Criminalization of Black youths

Solomon: Black youths are judged to be more violent and aggressive than other people so schools will not second guess before they call the police on them, then the Black person become known to the police and gets a criminal record, but white students don't have to worry about this. Black kids see this but they can't really say anything because we have no voice. I lived in a projects housing for thirteen years where there was lots of poor immigrants and each time two people got into a fight or conflict, the Black man would always be the one to get arrested, and sent to court. It is the same thing I see in school [04/23/03].

Charles: A Black friend of mine was walking with a white friend from a KFC and my Black friend threw his fork on the ground, and the white kid threw his bag on the ground. My Black friend got a \$110 fine for throwing a fork on the ground. The police said the white kid's bag fell on school property so he was not charged [04/15/03].

Amos: I see a lot of kids getting involved with police because of school. A student will get into a situation at school, maybe a fight or so, right away the police are there, right away they are putting cuffs on, put in the back of the car and questioned for an hour or taken to the station, right away they are charged, especially if it is against a white student or a student who is not of color. Now they are victims of the system. I see that a lot and that is how many students get thrown from the school system – it happens all the time. I have never seen this where police is called for every little matter at school. Once

you are in the system the cops never leave you alone – you now become targeted even more. Because the Black male is viewed as an animal, viewed as someone who can't make a critical decision, and the only way he can react is through violence. That's how we are seen by society and teachers. The Black males are violent and have to be controlled, tamed, put into the system, taught a hard lesson, and maybe they will come out better in life – that's not the case but that's what has been going on [04/23/03].

Emerging Themes

The participants above have indicated an increased police involvement in schools. They speak of police presence as an every day normal occurrence in the school experiences of Black males. Solomon pointed out a similarity between the trend in police relations with Black youths in school and police relations with Blacks in the larger community. For example in establishing the link between school and community, Solomon noted that interracial disputes generally end with the Black person being charged. Amos also noted that this process of criminalization is aimed at teaching Black youths a hard lesson with the hope that they become good citizens - the means of teaching such lesson is through the police. So, in addition to the unequal treatment Black youths are receiving from schools, they are also receiving similar treatment from police officers within their school environment. These and other topics emerged:

- Collaboration between police and school
- Conflicts involving Blacks often necessitates police involvement
- Shaming – Black youths must be taught a tough lesson
- Stereotyping of Black youths
- Police relation with Blacks in schools are similar to community

Similar to the application of zero tolerance within schools, the students' narratives show that our civil laws, especially, the punitive ones, are being partially applied to Black youths, particularly, working-class males, in a manner that is consistent with police relations in the larger Black community and with the aim of criminalizing and

labeling them. In addition to the differential treatment and criminalization being described by the student participants, the next theme also focuses on the differential treatment of Black youths in schools that also invariably results in harsher and unequal penalties.

5.5 Differential treatment – Barriers to learning

Sara: We go into class and take our seats and the teachers explains stuff to us and as soon as we ask questions he gets mad and asks how come you don't understand this and it is easy. And this one white kid use to tell the teacher off but the teacher never said anything to him, but if one of us talks he would kick us out of the class and it was like that for the whole class. We are always the ones being kicked out of the class [04/05/03].

June: Teachers are willing to help students, but when Black students go for help they never follow up, unless you go back again, but when a white student go for help the teacher will ask the white student later well how did you do this time or did you fail that test, did you do better, what do you think I could help you with. I don't say much about it, I just kept it to myself [03/07/05].

Charles: If you are to go to an adult high school it mostly Black kids there. Even graduation is being denied to us. White kids can graduate from high school but we must graduate from an adult high school. But I will not go to adult high school, I will stay in this school, I will graduate from this school and not an adult high school [04/15/03].

Shane: The first day I came there I asked to use the bathroom, and like she said no I am not allowed. I said why not, she said you are not allowed. After, this other white kid asked, she let him go, and she knows he skips class. He took about half an hour before he came back [04/08/02].

Amos: We see ourselves coming to school with a hat – we would see another student, maybe of the Caucasian persuasions, maybe of another race, coming to school with the same thing and they just get talked to while the Black students get suspended or expelled. And we notice all of these things and it just get embedded in our brain that – 'hey maybe this is how life is, this is how life is going to be'. So we cant win, there is no hope. So we start doing other things, trying to find other routes in life. I have experienced that also and I know the feeling [04/31/03].

Emerging Themes

Based on the narratives of the student participants, differential treatment is impacted largely by issues around race and class differences. The majority of the recipients receiving differential treatment were students whose families were economically disadvantaged, as evident in other themes previously mentioned. The topics that emerged all indicate ways in which Black students are the recipients of differential treatments which function to negatively impact learning. These topics are as follows:

- Shaming – with the aim of making the student appear less intelligent
- Silencing
- Adult education – Black youths denied graduation with peers
- One rule – Different application - Black and white

A significant view is clearly expressed by participants that a greater value is placed on white students than on Black students as demonstrated by teachers' actions and attitudes. As such, the impact of differential treatment is severe and has contributed to the silencing and shaming of many students. For example, Sara and June are made to feel less intelligent and less worthy of assistance compared to their white peers because they require additional clarifications or assistance from their teachers. In addition, Amos, Charles, and Shane observe the differential treatment they received compared to their peers and are cognizant of the fact that as Black males, should they choose to resist, their acts of resistance will be met with swift disciplinary actions, including suspensions, expulsions, police involvement or all of the above. Most importantly, in addition to the previously mentioned harsher disciplinary actions directed towards Black students, particularly males who are economically disadvantaged, there appears to be an extraction process in place whereby Black males are being funneled from regular high school programs into adult education programs. These forms of

educational inequalities being experienced by Black students has resulted in a learning environment that has become hostile and unsafe for many Black youths in Ottawa.

5.6 School – a hostile learning environment for Black youths

Charles: I know we are supposed to go back and help the younger youths in school, but after we get out of school we just don't want to go back, the memories are so bad. I just can't wait to get out. High school is supposed to be the best years of your life but I can't wait to get out [04/15/03].

Amos: This school system has started to look like a prison sentence because teachers are just waiting for a reason to disregard us – they are waiting for a reason to get us out of the system. We notice it, we see it, we feel it [04/31/03].

Sara: Our teachers don't care about us, and they even tell us. They say we don't care. We are here to teach because we get paid. We are here to teach, if you guys don't want to learn you don't have to, you guys don't have to come to the class [04/05/03].

Emerging Themes

For many students school has become a place where their presence is unwelcome, and they are aware of it. According to Charles, his school memories are bad. He does not think he will return after he is finished, while Amos equates his experiences to that of being in a prison, and for Sara this sense of feeling unwelcome is quite explicit in that she reports the teachers actually say they don't care. Through their narratives, they describe an environment where they work against the clock not knowing when their time will come, fully aware of the lack of tolerance or leniency towards them. So, school is being compared to prison and the need to escape is great. The topics below indicate the themes that emerged:

- School - a place of stolen dreams & bad memories
- School – an unsafe environment - the need to escape
- We are not wanted – we see it, we feel it

The seriousness of the topics expressed above reflects a learning environment that negatively impacts one's ability to learn. Based on the participants' experiences, the topics reflect their claims of inequality despite the official view of the existence of equality in education. Although the potential hostile environment of schooling appears to have mostly impacted working-class students, this next theme impacted both group of student participants, to varying degrees.

5.7 Work twice as hard

Ralph: Teachers don't expect much from us, for sure. My friends talk about it, we are always talking about it. They are always saying that we have to work so much harder just so we can shine and be noticed. White kids are always noticed, even if they are not doing as good as you, so we have to do double what they are doing, just to be equal with them. I just take the opportunity and show them that they are wrong about who they think I am, and that I am just as smart as the other white kids [03/07/05].

Jack: All odds are stacked against you once they see the colour of your skin – more or less they have a predetermine judgment of what is going to happen to you right now and some teachers show more hope or interest in a student that they think is going to make it than someone that they just prejudge who they think is not going to make it. So if they assumed that okay - he is Black he is from this sort of neighborhood, this sort of upbringing, this sort of ethnicity, they are not going to put as much effort. Teachers, I guess, they put effort into where they see effort will go to work, but you can't do that. You have to treat all the kids with the same sort of respect, the same sort of effort, or else you are just basically showing them who you favor [04/23/03].

Saul: I felt in order to get what I really deserve I felt that I had to work twice as hard as my other white class mates. In sports in school and in every thing, and that is what I did. Because the playing field was never equal for me and I saw that [04/08/02].

Emerging Themes

The students reported that they are required to work twice as hard as their white peers to be equal in school. Both Saul and Ralph argued that the playing field in school is not equal and as such must work harder even when they are outperforming their white peers. Jack rationalizes this form of educational inequality as being rooted in racism

because of a negative value placed on Blackness that is based on the perception that Blacks are less academically inclined. He further argues that predictions are made based on factors such as social class and ethnicity, rather than on students' academic performance. Jack's belief was also expressed in the narratives of the other student participants, and was reflected in the themes:

- Low teacher expectation – based on negative stereotype
- The need to prove teachers wrong – Strategies
- Work twice as hard to be equal with white peers

The themes above represented the students' reconstruction of their educational reality. The participants were able to discern that the lowered teacher expectation towards them as Black students revolved around race and class differences. As such, they were also aware that their work was not subjected to an objective measure of evaluation, similar to their white peers, but rather, one based on their identity as Black youths who are considered or perceived to be academically inferior. The next theme, ethnic grading, is the natural progression that not only serves to re-enforce and support the perception that Black students are academically inferior, but also forms the basis upon which such unequal educational practices will be interrogated in the upcoming discussion Chapter.

5.8 Ethnic Grading

Solomon: When you know for sure that you did well and you know for sure that you prepared for an exam or assignment and you still get a bad mark that you can't explain, and then when you go back to the teacher and you try to find out where you went wrong, they would not show me where I went wrong. They just tell you here is your mark, take it the way it is. When you keep seeing it time and time again you begin to think that maybe you are at this level as opposed to a higher level. To go from being an 'A' student in one school, to 60% in another - it breaks your encouragement, it breaks your confidence, and self-esteem. But it was weird because the same thing I would do is the same thing that another white student would do and that person would get a

higher mark than me. Basically there was an incident, I did an assignment in my English class in grade 12 and then, I let a friend copy off my work. We were shocked at the difference in grading we received. It is the student being marked and not the paper. They have placed me into a category at first sight and I could not break out of that category [04/23/03].

Saul: The problem is, some teachers, the moment you enter the class and you talk to them they know the kind of marks they are going to give you in the end. Sometimes I would look at the grades and I would really get mad, you know. Because I know what I have is better than somebody else's, but then again that white person would get higher mark than me. For the Black people it was always the same, always the same, low marks. There were three Black students in that class, and no one had a mark above 70. My worst subject was English, not just for me but for other Black people too. My OAC teacher screwed me up really badly. I went into the exam with a 78 average, and then I came out with a 59%. So I went and talked to him. Because how could I go in with a 78% and come out with a 59%, and I know I did my homework, you know. I studied really hard for it, so I said what happen, and he said I don't know. And he knew very well that I need a 60% to qualify for university. He wanted to screw me up right there. And he would not explain anything to me, he said it was too bad, it was a done deal. I was mad, I said to him, 'you know I need a 60% to qualify for university, why would you give me a 59% knowing very well that I worked really hard throughout the whole course, and I went into the exam with a 78% average, so what is going on?' He said 'too bad'. I have been in that school since grade 11, and in a little time just before I go to university he screwed me up with 1% just like that, I was so surprised, I just could not believe it, the fact it happened still makes me angry [04/08/02].

Emerging Themes

Given the narratives of these high school students, ethnic grading is a very powerful and effective strategy in breaking a student's confidence regardless of whether the student is in an elementary or a university program. Saul and Solomon are two very bright young Black men who had two profound stories to share about the damaging effects of unfair grading practices and its potential impact on one's educational aspiration. Ethnic grading is used here to explain the practice of teachers assigning grades based on one's race and/or ethnicity, based on the 'perceived' stereotypes associated with the individual's race, rather than on the quality and content of the paper.

The emerging themes are:

- Ethnic grading as a means of denying access to higher learning
- Assignment of grades based on race and negative stereotyping
- Impact – shaming, doubting and internalizing ethnic grading

The topics listed above gets to the heart of the issues around ethnic grading. This theme is one of the most damaging features of educational inequality that is aimed at producing the effects described by Solomon. The effect of shaming is a process through which students become discouraged and their self-esteem eroded. Consider the effects of ethnic grading when Solomon, a Black student, authored an assignment and had a white student copy and reproduce an identical assignment. The assignment bearing the white student's name received a higher grade than the assignment bearing the Black student's name. Both Solomon and Saul reported being given arbitrary grades that their teachers were either unable or unwilling to justify. Saul's access to university was seriously compromised due to the low grade he received and which he believed, and continues to believe, was unjustified. Given the negative educational experiences of the Black student participants, it is understandable why the participants are calling for increased racial diversity in Ottawa's schools.

5.9 More diversity in school staff and curriculum

Jack: We need Black teachers. I had a Black teacher, and it was not about color, it was not about being on his side, it was the guidance. You know, you need help with certain things, this is what you do – it was constructive. They see the vision because every kid has a vision, but certain teacher does not see my vision. But a Black teacher will see my vision, he could see a little bit of a struggle if I am not writing properly. If I get something returned by a white teacher they will say it is good, even though they don't know if I work hard on it or if I understand, but for them it is okay. That motivation is not there for white teachers to push Black kids [04/07/02].

Charles: We have all white teachers in our school, but I don't want it to seem like all of them are racist, because there are some white teachers that are on Black students' side even more than some Black people. And they will do anything for Black people. I think we just need more teachers like that. I would also try to get more Black teachers who understand what is going on. Stuff like in class, they will teach us about Hitler, but they won't teach us about Martin Luther King. We are not reflected in the curriculum at all, we are not anywhere close [04/15/03].

Amos: If more students were making it on to higher learning we would have a larger pool to draw from and then maybe we would have more Black teachers in schools. I would love to see more than one Black teacher in a school. It really helps, to tell you the truth. Someone that you can relate to would really help. [04/31/03].

Sara: We need more Black teachers in the schools. Because we only have one Black teacher, I rather them have more Black teachers, because they know how it is for us to go through the school system, but most white teacher don't know anything about us, they just assume. Black teachers can relate to us and how we act, and stuff like that. If my mom was not there the teachers would walk all over me [04/05/03].

Karen: Role models are another thing that I do not see in schools and we as Black students need to have role models. If students see role models they will know that the dream of becoming that person is not impossible. We don't even have to know the person personally, but just to be able to see the person and know that person is a doctor, lawyer or social worker that they can also achieve that dream [04/20/02].

Valerie: We don't see ourselves in school. We have a diverse school but a mainly all white staff, we need to change that. All students would benefit from having a teacher of a different race and culture [04/17/02].

Emerging Themes

The need for racial diversity within Ottawa's schools finds unanimous consensus among the student participants. Students noted a number of ways in which the lack of racial diversity has contributed to their negative learning experiences in school. For example, Amos was able to analyze and articulate the ways in which the dropout rate of Black youths in schools impacted university programs such as teacher education programs. He noted that if more Black students were advancing to university then the existing narrow selection pool from which Black teaching candidates are drawn would increase, resulting in greater diversity along racial lines in schools. Other areas that the

students identified as having negatively impacted their learning pertained to the lack of Black role models, as well as the fact that the existing curriculum primarily reflects the dominant group. Consequently, they saw no positive reflection of themselves in school.

Here is a summary of the topics that were extracted from the students' narratives:

- Black teachers to serve as role models - motivation
- Call for racial diversity among teacher/administrators
- Curriculum reflects the white society and history

The topics above reflected the issues around the existing lack of racial diversity as identified by the student participants and is aimed at generating discussions around this theme. The passion with which the students spoke about diversity in school was similar to the manner in which they spoke of the effects and impact of class differences on their education.

5.10 Class and education

Solomon: I feel that class is a major problem. Most of the kids don't want to be on social assistance because kids make fun of you if you are on welfare. If they are on it, they don't say and they go around and listen to the jokes, but deep down in side they are hurting. They want to be in the 'cool' group where the parents have money and educated and nice house [04/23/03].

Amos: Where I am from a lot of my friends are from single homes, single mothers working hard. The mothers are trying to raise their kids, trying to make money to provide shelter for the kids. It's harder on them and when the teachers or whoever sees this they predetermine that this kid is not going to make it. They say why not put more effort in a kid that I see hopes for than someone I don't. I see it in their eyes, I see it in their actions and it just makes me want to leave. To tell the truth, its really hard for us to cope, because you see your mother working hard, you want to make her proud but then the system is bringing you down, your surroundings are bringing you down, you are trapped in two worlds, you are trying to find your own path. Some kids – they find it and say - let me finish school - let me do this for my mom. Some kids just say – what can I do the system already has all strikes against me, why not just fall into the system – that's what is going to happen to me anyway – predetermined future [04/31/03].

Alain: Most parents, although they can't afford it, try to make their kids look good by buying them expensive shoes and clothing and so on, and most kids want their parents to buy expensive stuff because they want to cover it up because they see white kids, or other friends that has the same shoes, but it is mostly a cover-up because it does not matter what you wear [04/07/02].

Rachel: In every high school situation every body wants to be a part of the in-crowd. My family's financial situation played a big part in preventing me from being in the in-crowd. In grade 10 you could see who the teacher would run jokes with or hold conversations with they would be the people who are a part of the 'in-crowd'. That is the worst of my school experience, being poor and going to a middle-class high school. Had it not been for the class distinctions in school, I definitely would have been more open to joining certain clubs and participating more in sports and other extra-curricular activities [04/20/02].

Emerging Themes

Issues around class were identified by the student participants and have become a major theme in this study. Social assistance was one of the primary difficulties students were facing, according to the participants, and was due in part to the unfriendly bantering by fellow students around the stigma attached to welfare. As a result, issues around clothing have become the central and primary focus of this theme. Most importantly, the participants have associated the financial pressure of buying expensive clothing, combined with the isolation and alienation they experience as being linked to their family's class status. The topics below were derived from the narratives above

- Students do not want to be associated with being on welfare
- Single mothers – multiple jobs
- Class impact – alienation and disengagement
- Students struggle to break the cycle of poverty
- Working-class parents' struggle to equalize playing field
- Uniform as a solution – breaking the class barrier in schools

These topics will, to some degree, overlap with several previously identified themes due to the multiplicity of oppressive barriers facing students. For example, Amos noted that because of racism and the working-class status of his Black peers, they

were often subjected to negative stereotyping, resulting in unequal educational outcome. As such, any discussion around these issues must consider their interconnectedness and the ways in which the multiplicity of such issues operate simultaneously to impact educational achievement. The topic that resonated throughout this theme on class differences revolved around clothing. The participants, particularly those from working-class families, made a compelling case for uniforms as a means of addressing the existing class distinctions in schools.

5.11 Uniforms – Breaking the class barrier in school

Solomon: I think wearing uniforms would be better. I actually wrote an essay on uniform and there was a debate on it. Because most kids take lots of time in the morning getting ready because they want to look good, or spend lots of time worrying about what they will wear the next morning instead of getting their homework done, and stuff like that. Students that are poor they would not have to buy shirts they could wear the same shirt, they could have two pairs, just keep washing it over and over. It makes everybody looks equal, because everybody has the same clothes, so if you are walking through the halls you can't tell which one is the cool group and so on [04/23/03].

Rachel: If I had the power to make changes within the educational system, I would try to eradicate the whole importance that is placed on class, so basically to break that down. As teenagers, our whole world revolves around clothing and materialistic things. We are still maturing. We are still in the growing process. I would make uniforms a must. Then we will all appear equal [04/02/02].

June: If I had the power to, I would make sure that we had the connection that we had in elementary school, so you don't have to go to school and feel that you have to impress people with clothes. You could think these are all my friends and be comfortable with them. I feel as if I can't just go to school even in sweats, because someone will say something [03/07/05].

Emerging Themes

The issue of uniforms emerged from the narratives of my working-class participants but was less of an issue for the middle-class participants. The student participants pointed to expensive clothing as an indicator of middle-class status and that

5.12 Parents' role in schools

Karen: Parents need to go into the school and find out what courses they need to have, or to find other resources in the community that will help them to understand. It is important that parents get educated about the system in order to understand the system because the information that students need are not provided to them in the schools [04/20/02].

Jack: You try to speak for yourself, because you know exactly what you want but one voice does not make a difference, you need more voices. Some of my friends that are in university, that's how they are there, they had to bring their parents to say 'I want my son to go in the advance stream'. Other than that, they would have been left in the general stream like me [04/07/02].

Charles: Most Black parents in our school have attitude. The thing about white parents, they know how to talk to people. And if Black parents would go in and not be like – listen, I am tired of you guys doing this to my son and rather say – listen we have to sit down and talk, this I don't like...that works. The calm way works, not yelling and screaming, especially when there is a lot of people. I don't know if it is that they don't know how to talk or they choose not to. They think that to be more aggressive will get them what they want. No matter how many times you go in, going in aggressively is not going to change it either. There has to be a different route. [04/15/03].

Alain: Parent is the main idea of the school. If parents don't stand up, get together and say this is what we need to do – there is no point. Most of the Black parents in my school don't speak English, and others can't take a day off work to go deal with school - they have to work. They have to be out there working, sometimes more than one job, or long hours. But if they don't speak the language, they should get somebody to go in with them, usually there is somebody out there. [04/07/02].

Amos: Parents have to be there, to tell you the truth. I know its hard for single mothers, they have to work, they have to provide for maybe more than one kid – all of those things rolled up in one. I know how it is for them – you know! But they have to try their best to be there for their child. Because once a kid feel like their parents are not there for them they say hey what's the point – why am I doing this – it's not for me – mom or my father doesn't care, I am just going to do whatever. You have to have that faith that your parent will believe in you, see something in you, and you have to be constantly reminded. That is one thing that I know that helps, when you are reminded constantly that you could be something, do something, we believe in you. Those type of encouraging words. I see kids that come from single homes with parents that is very strict and encouraging to them and they make it compared to parents who just give up. You giving up on the child is basically telling him to give up on himself. Because you are the person that they look up to and giving up on the child is not helping the child [04/31/03].

Emerging Themes

The students identified a number of areas that they feel need to be improved where parental involvement at school is concerned. Students are very much aware of the multiple barriers working-class parents are facing but nonetheless argue that parental support is critical to their academic success. They also noted that if parents are limited by language barriers, then they should seek community help and become educated about the system. Most importantly, Alain notes that many Black working-class parents do not have the flexibility to take a day off work to attend school. So, although the student participants insisted on greater parental involvement, they were very cognizant of the multiple intersecting barriers facing many working-class parents. Listed below are the themes that emerged:

- Multiple jobs – no flexibility
- Parents don't follow-up – 'back home' attitude
- Re-education of parents needed
- Standing up, speaking up for children

While the student participants understand the systemic nature of the educational barriers that are working against them in schools, they are also acknowledging that their parents have a role to play in their education. All student participants unanimously agree that parents must begin to represent them in schools and become their voice, or seek an organization or member from the community to represent them. Either way they need to be represented. The next theme describes the lack of voice amongst Black students in Ottawa and the call for action aimed at creating a voice for them within Ottawa's educational system.

5.13 Lack of voice – call for an organization

Alain: I witnessed a lot of incidents of how principals deal with certain students. For instance, if a Black boy fights with a white boy, like I told you before, the Black kid would get a suspension and the white boy would get to continue with his education. Black kids see this but they can't really say anything. No one can stand up and say this is wrong because there is no voice. It just happens, the school is known for it. The problem is not only in one high school, it happens a lot in other high schools such as xy, yy, zy. This has been going on for a while. When you look at youths in the criminal justice and you look at youths in the academic field, there is prejudice, and that is one voice that needs to be heard [04/07/02].

Amos: It is a hard situation when a parent has no voice because a child usually looks up to a parent to take care of these types of situations. When a parent goes into a school to talk to a teacher, the child is routing on the side of the parent to get their point across. When a parent cannot get their point across, not only does it hurt the parent's esteem, but it also hurts the child – the child is now saying - now what do I do, who do I turn to, if my mom or dad can't even get across to these people who do not want to see me succeed. It is a hard situation, because once the child sees that their parents can't do anything – so they wonder who can really help them. If all odds are against me why not just give up – the struggle is too hard. But if you have a parent who is persuasive, a parent who by all means necessary will get their points across – then the child not only looks up to their parents but see a brighter future for themselves [04/31/03].

Charles: We don't fight it, we just take it, and then we will get together and tell each other that 'that wasn't fair – I can't believe this' but we never really do anything about it. We just take it because that's just the way it is, there is nothing we can do about it and no one listens to us anyway [04/15/03].

Solomon: When I talk about voice, I am saying that when these things happen and it is not talked about, it becomes like a ritual, it happens and happens, and the people that get affected are the students. But the students know that there is nobody there for them, to stand up for them - it is pretty hard for them. If people were there then the authority, the guidance counselors, the teachers would take recognition and they would know that there is someone behind them. That there will always be someone in high authority, or community, or social group behind that matter, so it would make things a little easier on us [04/23/03].

Emerging Themes

The students reported that they are feeling disempowered and voiceless within their schools, particularly students who are economically disadvantaged and who also lack strong parental support. Alain argues that there is no one to stand up on their

behalf, while Amos argues that when a parent is unable to effectively negotiate within their child's school, it hurts the child and increases the risk of the child losing hope. Based on the narratives, students are feeling that they are left at the mercy of the schools with no one to speak or advocate on their behalf. As such, they are calling for increased parental involvement or greater community support for parents unable to negotiate within the system on their own. The themes listed below summarize the issues around the need for a greater voice.

- No representation/voice to speak on behalf of Black youths
- Some working-class parents lack power/ability to influence change in school on behalf of their children - impact
- Black students – feelings of powerlessness
- Black presence in school is seen as a means of deterrent for the unequal treatment to which Black students are subjected

These topics reflect insufficient support at the parental and/or community level for students challenged by what they perceive to be an unfair educational system. The lack of voice and powerlessness brought on by the lack of support runs through the entire theme, resulting in the call for an organization aimed at protecting Black students against the unequal and differential treatment they receive in schools. In the interim, the student participants are providing suggestions to younger students who are currently experiencing similar educational barriers.

5.14 Black students' struggle for equal education – how to survive

Jack: Now when a kid tells me I will go to college, I tell them go to university. Honestly, I push them to go to university. The school is telling them to take applied and go to college, and while I can't force a kid to go to university I can provide the information and encourage them to go to university. But it has to be what he wants, because I did not get to choose, my choice was made for me. Now I have to take the long way of getting back my chance of going to university [04/23/03].

June: I would tell them that, as a Black student in high school, you will always be seen as someone that is not going to do too well. You walk to the class, the first day you always have to prove yourself before teachers can accept the fact that you are a good student. So you should not give up easily, you should always try to work to the best of your ability. To tell you the truth, education is all you have, so without education you can't go anywhere in life. So you have to work hard, no matter what, and don't let other people put you down. They think Black kids don't have aim in life, so students, teachers, and even principals accept that and they just go along with it and think that all Black students do is cause trouble. They are just stereotyping us because they may not say it out loud, but they think that we will not do good in school. Kids have to work through stereotypes and racism and prove them wrong [04/07/05].

Amos: Learning from my own mistakes, I would tell Black students never let someone else decide your own fate. Go with a strong mind and strong head. Try to prove these people wrong. They want to see you fail and not succeed just because of your past or maybe because of something going on in your life. I will tell these kids go on with a strong mind and a sound brain – make sure you prove them wrong and make sure you get your education [04/31/03].

Charles: If it is one person, I will tell him to stay strong, but if it is a group I will tell them to stay together as a group and if things happen, to bring it up as a group and don't just let it slide [04/15/03].

Rachel: Basically I would tell them, you are there for one thing and one thing only and that is to obtain an education. So basically just stay focus and if you can get yourself involved in sports then do that or talk to some one of your faith, talk to the leader of your church, of your mosque or whichever religion that you belong to – just talk to someone out there. It's not easy, but you just need to stay focus [04/02/02].

Sara: They need to talk to their parent/s about what is going on at school and not keep it to themselves. They need to let their parents know how they are being treated at school [04/05/03].

Emerging Themes

Using their personal experiences, students have shared what they believe are strategies for surviving Ottawa's hostile educational system. Although, Jack was denied the opportunity to attend university, he now encourages students to go to university despite what school guidance counselors are suggesting. June and Amos are telling students to stay focused, resist the negative image teachers hold of Black

students and prove the teachers wrong by working hard. Charles, Rachel and Sara encourage students to stand up and unite and do not internalize the struggles personally. They recommend students share their educational struggles with a group, parent, church leaders, and not to deal with them on their own. The suggestions being handed down by students who have endured similar struggles in Ottawa's educational system are summarized below:

- Alternate guidance system in opposition to school guidance
- Prove yourself – Prove them wrong - work twice as hard
- Know your rights – Do not let counselors decide for you
- Remain focus – remember your goal – education
- Unite as a group – speak as one – speak up
- Get your parents involved – don't struggle alone

The themes above conclude this Chapter. It was also a conscious decision to close this Chapter with the voices of students sharing their suggestions and advice to fellow Black students who are currently facing issues around racism and negative stereotyping in Ottawa's schools.

5.15 Concluding Thoughts

In examining the narratives, constructing the themes, and preparing for the discussion, I was cognizant of the fact that the issues raised by the students will be viewed with suspicion and will meet with less than honest questioning when exposed to the existing discourse of denial within the sphere of education. Nonetheless, I argue that there was very little room for misunderstanding regarding the nature or severity of the issues or concerns raised by the student participants. The students expressed a need to share their educational struggles with the aim of breaking their silence, and they have done so. They were able to identify the issues affecting their educational experiences in

clear, unambiguous voices. The previously stated themes are consolidated below as follows:

- **Racism in Ottawa's schools – It is here, we see it, we feel it**
- **Streaming & Lack of Guidance**
- **Zero Tolerance – Suspensions**
- **Stereotyping & Criminalization of Black youths**
- **Differential treatment – Barriers to learning**
- **School – as a hostile learning environment – A process of disengagement**
- **Work twice as hard**
- **Ethnic Grading**
- **More diversity in school staff and curriculum**
- **Class and education**
- **Uniforms – A means of breaking the class barriers in school**
- **Parents' role in schools**
- **Lack of voice – call for an organization**
- **Black students' struggle for equal education – how to survive**

The themes reflect the issues that were raised by both working and middle-class students, although many of the themes had a more profound and significant impact on the working-class students. Similarly, the next Chapter will explore the narratives and emerging themes of the parents, community leaders, and educators. The Chapter will be constructed in a similar manner and is aimed at providing the opportunity for the participants to express their concerns using their own voice. I will present and expand the topics that emerge from the narratives of both groups of participants in the discussion Chapter. The aim is to discuss the findings of both groups of participants with the hope of developing further understanding around the issues facing Black students and families within Ottawa's educational system.

CHAPTER 6: NARRATIVES OF PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

6.0 Introduction

In the previous Chapter, the students articulated a series of issues affecting their educational reality in Ottawa's educational system. This Chapter presents the various themes that emerged from the data collection process in relation to the parents, educators and community leaders. An understanding of the issues faced by parents, educators and community leaders is critical to the process of identifying the contributing factors to the dilemma facing Black youths in Ottawa's educational system. In this regard, the aim of this Chapter is not to enter into an in-depth discussion of the various themes but rather to identify and organize the themes as they emerged. Following each section, I provide a short summary highlighting the themes that have emerged, which will also form the basis for the discussion in the next Chapter.

Note that although the narratives expressed by many of the participants in this group may bear a close resemblance to the narratives expressed by the student participants, there was no collaboration between participants, and there were some cases where the parents and student participants did not come from the same household.

A short biography of the parents, educators and community leaders is presented in Table B. The goal of the biography is to identify the speakers in relation to their place of birth, educational background, gender, and migration. Also, in an attempt to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, fictitious names have been assigned to each participant.

Biography

Table B

Name	Group	Gender	Education	Years in Canada	Birth Place
Valerie	Parent	Female	University	10 years	Africa
Francine	Parent	Female	University	15 years	Africa
Bob	Parent	Male	University	17 years	Africa
Gloria	Parent	Female	College	26 years	Caribbean
Iona	Parent	Female	High school	7 years	Caribbean
Diana	Parent	Female	High school	23 years	Caribbean
Adam	Educator	Male	University	26 years	Caribbean
Marie	Educator	Female	College	27 years	Caribbean
Roxanne	Educator	Female	University	30 years	Caribbean
Keith	Community	Male	University	12 years	Caribbean
Sharon	Community	Female	College	15 years	Africa
Horace	Community	Male	University	11 years	Caribbean
Francis	Community	Male	College	17 years	Africa

As shown in Table B, the lowest level of education attained by the adult participants was high school. Years in Canada and post-secondary education did not necessarily result in upward mobility for some participants. For example, although several of the participants were university or college educated, they were struggling economically. Due to racism, although many Black immigrants to Canada possess post secondary degrees, they are generally under-employed (Torczyner, 1997). In an effort to diversify the views of Black parents, I drew participants from many areas in Africa and the Caribbean.

EMERGING THEMES

6.1 Black Youths: Guilty until proven innocent

Educators

Marie: For one thing, if an incident happens in school they are not going to question the Black kid first, they will question the white kid first. Based on what he said the Black kid has to defend himself. It is the exact same thing as the police force. If a Black and a white person have an issue they always ask the white person what happened, and based on what they say they charge the Black person. It is always up to the Black kids to defend themselves. We are guilty until proven innocent, while the white person is innocent until they are proven guilty. That's how it works both in school and in the justice system. Black kids' voice means absolutely nothing in the school system [04/01/08].

Community Leaders

Francis: I have so many stories where incidents happen in the school and the vice-principal say I will investigate and finally what they do is charge the Black kids and let go the other white kid without any suspension. Even before they start their so-called investigation, they will suspend the Black kid to the maximum without even considering the history of the kid. I have so many, many kids who have never had problems with the school system and who were getting good grades but still were suspended prior to the investigation. That means they are guilty without proof or evidence. I have so many files that I can show to prove that evidence is there of the problem we are facing [04/02/04].

Parents

Bob: Black kids are guilty but white kids are innocence until proven guilty and that is even if there is an attempt to prove them guilty. Their guilt will be denied by the teachers....oh he is such a nice kid, and therefore he couldn't do that, until you are able to get all the facts together. Now, on the other hand, your son is guilty so you have to try and be a detective and get the facts and present to them otherwise your kid is doomed. You see the Black and white double standard, where one is treated this way and the other is treated that way. I have observed the way in which the system targets our boys [04/03/28].

Diana: Every time a Black and a white kid get into a fight it is always the Black kid getting suspended. It is not okay when the Black kids hit the white kids but Black kids must take being hit by white kids. The Black kids get suspended while the white kids still get to go to school and learn. I am sick and fed-up of how the school system is treating our Black kids [04/03/05].

Emerging Themes

The general consensus is that Black youths are in an educational system where they are initially considered guilty unless they are able to prove their innocence. This guilty until proven innocent rule to which Blacks are subjected has also been linked to the existing status quo in the larger community in relation to how police officers conduct investigations involving conflicts between Black and white citizens. The topics that emerged were:

- Contradiction between Boards' policies and school practices
- Guilty until proven innocent – Black students' educational reality
- Similar links established between school and larger community
- Black students suspended prior to fact finding investigation
- White student's guilt denied or minimized by white teachers
- Interracial conflict – Black student goes home – white student stays in school

The topics expressed above represent the practice and impact of the burden of guilt that is placed on Black students prior to establishing guilt. Black students are initially viewed as guilty and as such suffer greater suspensions, based on participants' reports. Central to this theme is the encoded message contained within this unequal educational practice, which also reflects the status quo for Black Canadians at the larger societal level. So, at an early age, both Black and white students know that the social location of Blacks is one of subordination and this social positioning begins in primary schooling. These issues will be further developed in the following Chapter. Given the racial context within which the preservation of this status quo exists, it is important to examine the next theme that emerged from the data – racism.

6.2 Racism denied – Racism exists: Two opposing views

Educators

Adam: Racism exists within our educational system but it is a reproduction of the teacher training programs in university. For example, while I was training as a teacher and taking a multicultural course, the professor asked the student teachers why should we teach anti-racist education at the expense of making white students feel uncomfortable. So, because of the discomfort of white students, he was suggesting that teachers should think twice about using an anti-racist framework in teaching. Basically as teachers, we are taught to ignore the damaging effects of racism on non-white students in order to spare the feeling of members belonging to the dominant group. So although we are aware that racism is supported and maintained in many teacher education programs, and reproduced at the lower levels, we need studies like this to validate and give voice to the suffering of many Black students in schools because of the prevailing denial of racism in the Canadian educational system [04/03/19].

Community Leaders

Sharon: As a parent and community leader race is a very difficult subject to talk about with teachers. There seems to be a denial around racism. Many parents feel reluctant to come forward and address issues around racism because they are made to feel it is not real. There is no question that racism exist in the schools, I have encountered that myself so many times. I have six kids that went through the system and they all encountered it; some were able to make it through and others weren't [04/02/07].

Francis: I think most of the people in this country know that racism exist in Canada at every level of government and society including the schools. It is a big issue that needs to be addressed and tackled. I get calls from parents complaining that their kids have been suspended or expelled. When I look, I have piles of files, and what we are dealing with is pure, pure, pure racism. This school system does not treat all its students equally; it's only targeting the Black male minorities. It is a system, which has been created to push out the minority kids out of the school system [04/02/04].

Keith: We can't deny that racism is in the schools, what we need to do is understand the mechanism, how it works and how it functions in terms of institutionalization, its policies and procedures, and how to combat it. But we as African Canadians must first recognize that it is there, and that because of racism often times we have to work twice as hard. So we need institutions that will support us in fighting the system otherwise it is going to be very, very hard for our youths [04/02/07/].

Parents

Gloria: When I was going to school here racism was shown mostly amongst kids – kid against kid. But now-a-days you have many white kids hanging out with Black kids and most of these kids don't really care if you are Black or white. I talk to my children's white peers and they often relate stories about things that they see happening to Black kids that disturb them, so the complaints of racism is not just coming from our kids, it is also coming from white kids. Now most of the racial issues we are dealing with have to do with the teachers and administrators. Our kids are taught that there are two different rules, one for Blacks and one for whites [04/03/05].

Valerie: I went to an open house presentation at my children's school. All the pictures of the students who were making academic presentations were white except for one. Among all those kids only one was Black; something is wrong. There was even a music presentation, and even the students that were singing and the kids playing the saxophones were all white. The entire school open house presentation was white although the school is racially mixed. Where are the teachers? Don't you see, as a teacher, that something is wrong with the picture, why all the kids that, are good white? Yet, I personally know of Black kids that are really bright and are 'A' students that attend the school. Why could they not have a picture that is mixed and balance? So even those students who are bright and intelligent are not there so what does that say about Black students? [03/07/05].

Emerging Themes

Throughout the years, Ottawa school administrators have consistently denied the existence of racism within their schools. Nonetheless, all participants, students, educators, community leaders and parents have maintained that racism does exist in Ottawa's educational system. Many have lived and experienced its effects and are testifying to its reality. Accordingly, participants have expressed a variety of ways that racism is being manifested in Ottawa's schools, as well as identifying other issues that requires attention.

- Targeting of Black youths resulting in unequal and differential treatment
- Suspensions/expulsions due to racism
- Black students must work twice as hard to be equal
- Stereotyping of Black students as academically inferior
- Double standards in rules and policies

Due to the simultaneous effects of multiple interlocking barriers there will be some degree of overlapping and repetition. As a result, some themes consist of recurring issues that should not be separated or disentangled. For example, issues regarding the negative image associated with Blackness emerged repeatedly throughout various themes. My intent is to interrogate these issues in a manner similar to which the participants experience them.

6.3 Stereotyping

Teachers

Roxanne: White teachers always say 'oh you people are so easily high strung'. These are some of the terminology they use with our Black parents like the Somali and some Afghanistan parents because some are dark-skinned. So before knowing who you are, they start talking down to you because you are perceived as too emotional and less intelligent. So sometimes when they don't know who you are and someone like you, Janet, or someone like myself, start talking to them, and call them on what they are saying, they take a double turn and say blatantly 'that's not what I meant'. But you are not stupid you know what they are saying. Sometimes I come out of a meeting and say - my God, am I stupid? That's not what you meant? So how did it come out sounding like that? And then they want me to think it is my misunderstanding [04/01/10].

Community Leaders

Sharon: When I go in as a parent, they see me as just another Somali or African parent. They will not even give me that much attention. You will see from their faces and the way they act and talk to you. As soon as you go into school and they see you with the hijab and this long dress as a Somali woman they treat you just like you are nothing. They will just pass, and not give you attention and not talk to you. But once they see that you can speak English and are educated immediately they will put you in a different class and treat you better. They will change their tone and actions. And that will tell you something, because they know that most of these kids are coming from homes where their mothers do not speak the language and they don't have males in the homes and family [04/02/02].

Parents

Gloria: These teachers need to realize that there are certain things in Black culture and because they don't understand it – it does not mean that it is gang related. If a Black kid wears a head band they are automatically gangster related but a white kid goes into school wearing a long trench coat, Black boots, and long hair, no body sees them as being in a gang or cult because they are just Canadians. They are just white kids dressing the way they dress but our Black kids are not Canadians dressing the way they want. They are categorized as gangsters. Why can't our kids dress the way they want to dress without negative labels. Most of these Black kids know nothing about gangs but these teachers keep pushing it in their heads that if you wear this head band or if you wear this type of clothes you are a gangster. Teachers need to stop instilling in our kids that because they dress and act a certain way and because it is part of the Black culture it is gang related. Because they lack knowledge about our kids and Black culture, they operate and make decisions based on racist stereotypical views of Blacks and it is hurting our kids [04/03/15].

Emerging Themes

The issues identified under stereotyping centered on aspects of the differential treatment parents received during their interactions with their children's school teachers and administrators:

- Lack of understanding about Black culture
- Stereotyping and the negative label attached to Black fashion
- Black parents are initially viewed as less educated and less intelligent
- Black parents who are perceived to be working-class and less educated are treated differently - ignored by teachers, teachers use condescending tone.
- Black parents are placed in class categories based on racist perceptions and stereotypes
- Differential treatment Black students receive is due to the fact that teachers know that the students come from working-class homes

These issues not only highlight the existence of racism, and the various ways it is manifested within educational system, but the themes also illuminate the negative stereotyping that is associated with, and intricately linked to, race and class differences and often operate simultaneously. Most importantly, the themes also demonstrate the power imbalance inherent in an educational system rooted in white dominance, and the

disempowering effect such unequal relation has on Black students whose families are economically disadvantaged.

6.4 Class Issues in Education

Teachers

Marie: Many teachers think Black women have kids by themselves. They are always enquiring if there is a father in the home. Then they make a moral judgment and decide if the home is a good home or not [04/03/16].

Community Leaders

Francis: Many kids have been affected by broken homes, poverty, the school environment, and by a system that has not welcomed them but instead is pushing them out of the educational system. It is pushing them to give up their future because it is not helping to build self-esteem, or self-pride to develop [02/04/04].

Sharon: Another thing that disadvantages these kids in school is being poor. Most of the kids don't want to be on social assistance because kids make fun of you if you are on welfare. If they are on it, they don't say, and they will go around and listen to jokes, but deep down in side they hurt, because the jokes are really about them. They want to be in the 'cool' group where the parents have money and educated and nice homes, and that is something that they are dealing with. As an immigrant woman, I know what it is to be poor, so I have experienced many of the situations that the women in my community are reporting to me. There are parents that get help from the school board and when they can't buy bus passes for their kids, the school will issue bus passes for them but you have to fill out a form. So kids refuse to go and get the forms saying they cannot. They feel embarrassed even for the teachers to see them asking for that form because they don't want the teachers to know that the school board is helping them to get bus passes. So they feel the pressure as students and we feel the pressure as parents [04/02/07].

Keith: Children of families that are middle-class tend to do better in school because their children do not have the barriers in terms of language, culture, religion and they are not stigmatized as being on social assistance. And also in many cases, they are in two parent families so they are not stigmatized as being from a single-parent home. In addition, education is highly valued in their family and in many cases the uncle, aunt, cousin have done very well in school and so it is also expected from the children. Parents who are college or university graduates tend to have a better grasp of the educational system and they tend to understand that education is paramount [04/02/07].

Horace: If a child is having problems and if their mother calls me to go to the school I will go in with the mother and meet with the principal. In most cases, after the meeting, the mother would say "I was treated so differently just because you were there". For some reason just having a male present, this mother was treated in an extremely respectful way which meant that probably some of our working class parents have been intimidated in front of their kids so that pushes them back into hiding [03/05/15].

Parents

Iona: Maybe one or two teachers would communicate with me, others it's like they don't even have time for me, and I could feel it and it made me nervous. I don't think I was accepted and respected as a parent. I wasn't feeling accepted, I wasn't feeling comfortable and I don't think my daughter was feeling comfortable either. I guess it all depends on who you are and how they look at you that determines if you are accepted, and I was just a poor, Black, single mother in a middle-class high school. She was the only Black person in her class, she was really stressed. At one point, I even think she was sick, and you know, it had to do with school, with the teacher...how the teacher dealt with her. They dealt with her differently from how they would deal with the other students. She was aware of it and she was hurting and that made me hurt also. I was hurting and hurting and she wasn't comfortable and it started to affect her. She kept looking back at her school back home, she was so isolated [04/02/02].

Diana: I had a problem once with the school system because I was single at the time with my kids and I find that when you are a single mom they treat you differently because most of the time you are the one going to school. They will ask where is the father, is he in the picture, and you say no. So they just automatically cut you short right there because it is not a two parent family anymore. But now that I have my fiancée, I get better treatment, not much, but a little bit better. We go to meetings together and field trips; if I can't go, he goes. But that was definitely a problem because it was always my signature alone. They don't give you credit or prompts to know that you are trying [04/03/05].

Emerging Themes

Class issues in education, as a theme, generated the second largest discussion among substantive issues in education that are affecting Black youths. Next to the themes on racism and stereotyping, issues around class differences appear to have the most devastating effects on Black youths in Ottawa. Discussions around this theme had a severe and profound impact on me emotionally, as the researcher, during the

interviews. The themes that emerged may seem exhaustive but warrant further discussion.

- Class and marital status, effect and impact-Teachers make moral judgments
- Stigma around being on social assistance
- Black students struggle to avoid class labels
- Pressure of being working-class for both parent and kids
- Children of families that are middle-class tend to do better in school because they are not stigmatized as being on social assistance nor are they marginalized to the same degree in relation to language, race, culture, and/or religion.
 - They have two parent families.
 - Education is highly valued in their family
 - Children are expected to do well academically and advance to higher education
 - Parents who are college or university graduates tend to have a better grasp of the educational system and they tend to understand that education is paramount

The barriers created due to issue of class differences impact both students and their parents. The difficulty here was attempting to categorize the issues, given that many of the barriers operate simultaneously and are intricately tied to each other. The most critical point to remember is that similar to race, class forms the primary basis upon which various stereotypes are built and reproduced to negatively affect the learning experiences of marginalized students and parents. Another significant but divergent theme that emerged was clothing. Although clothing is an aspect of class, I have chosen to address the issues around clothing separately, because of the differing view of clothing between the middle and working-class participants.

6.5 Clothing – Poor kids do not need to wear expensive clothing?

Educators

Roxanne: We need to re-educate some of our working-class parents. Some of our working-class parents feel that if their children look good, dress in the most expensive material, they will be recognized. But, it does not matter what they wear. Nobody recognize them even if they are wearing expensive brand name shoes or a new pair of Nike jeans, that's only a perception. Instead, be there for your child, come into the

school let the teacher know that you are aware of what's going on. Or try to be aware or find some other resource of support in the community [04/02/27].

Community Leaders

Sharon: Being a poor single parent is affecting many parents because most of these parents are on social assistance and they can't afford to buy expensive clothing and shoes for their kids. But when the kids go to school they feel that they have to force their parents to buy for them. It has happened to me. My kids will come to me and say, I need this type of clothes and shoes - and I can't afford to buy for 5 or 6 kids, expensive clothes and shoes - and when I see their friends wearing those type of clothes I really feel bad because I can understand why they are pressuring me to buy for them. Because they want to look the same, they don't want to be different from their peers [04/07/02].

Parents

Valerie: There is a lot of pressure on our children in schools. I hate the fact that the children don't wear uniforms. That is one headache they should not have to go through every single day. To try to look like others. Before, I never had to worry about my children. They never had to come and complain about uniform. They never had to worry about waking themselves up and spending hours trying to get themselves dressed. Now every time school start we have to buy some clothes, no matter how much you try to convince them that they don't need it. They are children, they go out there they get teased, they get looked at and asked what are you wearing - you wear no-name, giant tiger - they feel as if they don't fit in and they want to fit in. When your child is the poorest one in the school it does not help you, and it does not make your child feel good. So you have to go through ups and downs to make sure your child fit in. Why are we doing this? They should not be afraid to be in a certain group or communicate with a certain group just because you are not dressed up like them, or have money like them. School should not be that way. Kids can be pointed out and called projects kids, because they can tell who lives where because they are peers they go together. But even if they are from the projects and they dress like you, at least there is the common way of saying I am just like so and so. No one can come and point me out. They do not feel different from other kids so they can concentrate on learning [04/05/07].

Emerging Themes

As noted earlier, clothing was an important theme that emerged in the data. Although the participants' views on clothing diverge along class lines, clothing remains a concern for both working-class and middle-class participants due to its apparent impact on learning. Most interesting was the differing ways in which class position impacted the views and opinions of participants and the assumptions that were made regarding clothing by the more privileged middle-class participants. These are some of the issues around clothing that were identified by the participants.

- The perceptions that working-class parents place too much emphasis on clothing rather than school
- The rationale behind poor kids wanting expensive clothing
- Working-class parents' struggles in attempting to avoid class stigma and labels for their children
- The call for uniforms in Ottawa's schools

On one hand, middle-class participants argue that working-class parents are putting too much emphasis on clothing. On the other hand, working-class parents contend that their emphasis on clothing is a response to the class pressure their children are experiencing at school. It is also their attempt to minimize the stigmatization of their children due to their working-class status. While diverging views will be developed in the upcoming Chapter, issue around clothing translates in yet another problem for single, working class mothers - multiple jobs. Similar to the diverging views on clothing, a dichotomy exists between the middle-class and the working-class participants' views of multiple jobs.

6.6 Multiple jobs: A means of survival or lack of priorities?

Community Leaders

Horace: I really think more than ever before Black parents have to take a strong ownership of their children's careers and education, which means we have to also learn that probably that extra job that brings in extra money is not as valuable as the time that extra job is taking. We could spend that time with the child. Sad to say even when you do seminars to educate the people, the people who need to be there can't, because they are working. So I have had to sit with parents and tell them that the extra job you work only puts you in a higher tax bracket. So it's still hard for them to see that the extra overtime check is not really going in their pocket [04/06/15].

Keith: The children whose parents might come from a lower class background, who did not finish high school, often times they are struggling with two or three jobs just to make ends meet. And therefore it makes it very difficult for them to find the time to sit down with their kids. Often times, there is language and cultural barriers they are also facing and they just don't understand because they themselves do not have the education. So it makes it very difficult for them to help their kids with their school work

and many times they can't afford a tutor to help their children. So not having that reinforcement in the home makes it very difficult for the child to move on [04/02/07].

Parents

Francine: I am a registered nurse. My husband is doing well, so why should I concentrate on the material stuff and leave our children and their future behind. I have to sit down and make sure his home work is done and that he understood it and then give him other exercises apart from the school work to do. Many people have more than one job and they can't do that. But even if you hire someone to teach the kids, the kids will not get the time and patience like you the parent [04/02/17].

Emerging Themes

Again, the views expressed by participants with regards to multiple jobs can be deconstructed and reduced to class privilege due to the ways in which individual realities are constructed and become absorbed by the invisibility of class privileges. While there may be some validity in the arguments being advanced by the middle-class participants, there are also serious limitations to their analysis. Similar to the divergent views expressed by participants around clothing, a dichotomy exists in relation to multiple jobs, depending on the speaker's level of class consciousness as well as his/her class status. These were the issues around multiple jobs:

- Complexities of multiple jobs and multiple barriers
- Middle-class versus working-class views on work and schooling

Middle-class participants are citing multiple jobs as a contributing factor to the reasons working-class Black youths are lagging behind academically in schools, but is there another piece of economic reality missing from their analysis? Are other factors possibly influencing the need for single working-mothers to be juggling multiple jobs? To what degree do factors such as education level, type of employment, fringe benefits, and job security impact the decision to work multiple jobs in order to meet the cost associated with raising a family? These are issues that must be considered when

attempting to deconstruct the economic reality that leads to the decision taken by many single working-class mothers to work multiple jobs. What was most significant about this theme was that several of the middle-class participants argued that single mothers who worked multiple jobs were creating educational barriers for their economically disadvantaged youths. On the other hand, the working-class participants argued that the educational barriers facing their children were due to the systemic problems existing in the schools and their lack of understanding of how to navigate the educational system.

6.7 Lack of Understanding within the educational system

Educators

Adam: Many Black parents do not understand the educational system and are often intimidated by the teachers and administrators. They tend to stay away because they are treated differently and they know it [04/03/19].

Roxanne: At one school here in Ottawa parents were not coming at all. It appeared that they weren't interested and when homework was sent home the children signed it. But that was because the moms didn't read or couldn't sign because they didn't understand the language, and school system, so kids would sign and bring it back to the teacher. They just did not understand how the system works. When the teacher look and see an incomplete assignment and see a signature that might not look like the child's, they would say, why would a parent do this? The child isn't doing anything. And so it would be a laugh inside the staff room sometimes and it really hurts. Being a Black teacher and to listen to white teachers laugh at disadvantaged Black parents really hurts [04/01/01].

Community Leaders

Horace: Our parents do not understand the educational system and it is creating many problems. Back home you and I might have grown up in the same high school. You may have become a teacher and I something else. Just knowing Janet was teaching my kid, I have faith and trust in you but here it's not the same, but parents continue to have blind faith in the system. We trust the system as if we are back home, so we are busy working and it's almost like you put your kids in the school with blind faith and hope that the school brings up a professional like back home, but it does not work that way here [03/06/15].

Sharon: It is very tough, especially when you are a new immigrant and you don't know how the system works. The teacher in Africa will take the responsibility and educate these kids and he will make sure that they succeed in their education. That's why we just send him to school and the teacher do his job and if there is any concern, like the kid is not doing good, then the teacher will let us know, so we only come in if there are big problems. So when we came to Canada it was totally different, we did not know how the system works and we got no help to teach us about the educational system here, so we just put our kids in the system and that was it [04/07/02].

Francis: The problem that mothers are facing is that their kids are integrating more than the parents. They are learning the language quicker, they are learning the system quicker and the mothers are left behind in the dark. The way the education system work back home is that the teachers played two roles a teacher and parent, so you send your kids to school and you don't have to worry about anything. They will discipline them, teach them and if necessary counsel them. But here the system works differently. They are very good parents and want their kids to be successful like any other parents, but even if they got to the school, and even if they pass that language barrier, but still the school administration is not cooperating and not informing the parents. So, they don't have the knowledge and they don't feel welcome in the schools even if they go there [04/04/02].

Parents

Diane: I don't understand how the school system works and I have no one to tell me what to do. I want someone to help me to help my sons so they don't have to be victims of society [04/03/15].

Emerging Themes

Throughout the quotations, it was expressed that the root cause of the many difficulties Black families face was their lack of understanding of the Canadian educational system. The complexities of language, culture, race, and class differences made integration a much more difficult process for many new immigrant families in the Somali community. On the lack of understanding of the educational system, several issues emerged:

- Lack of understanding about the educational system –
- 'Back Home' - Colonial vs. Free/Inclusive education
- Blind faith and trust in school - a cultural interpretation

The area that all participants agreed upon was that parents did not have a working knowledge of the Canadian educational system, which was to their children's disadvantage. Consequently, the issues that they identified centered on an unfamiliar school system which was often compared to the school system in their ancestral homeland. In many cases, not only did they compare the new system to the old, but they also continued the traditional practices within the new system, which resulted in further difficulties. This lack of understanding created significant damage to the parent/teacher relationship. As a result, participants were all calling for the re-education of Black parents in Ottawa.

6.8 Re-education of Parents

Community Leaders

Horace: Educating our parents is our community's responsibility because the schools will not do it for us and because we in the Black community are the ones who are seeing the results of what is happening to our kids. What is exciting about a study like this is that you are focusing on an area that nobody looks at and two - it is designed to build awareness and empower the community. So until we take our destiny in our hands and basically educate our people, the system is not going to do that. The system is designed to function with or without our involvement, but we are stakeholders and do play a role in the system. I think the community needs to have seminars to educate our parents on how the school system works and what recourse parents have, so that when you can sit down with an educator and you wouldn't have to have an academic battle. The goal is for us to become educated so we can take responsibility and make the system accountable. Our lack of knowledge about the system as Black parents disadvantages our children [04/06/15].

Sharon: Parents also need to be educated so that they can know and understand their rights and the rights of their children and how they can get involved with their kids' education. The women in my community also need to learn English because one of the big problems is the language barrier and that will not go away until these parents get educated. There are some who attempted English as a second language classes for 10-13 years and still cannot speak a word of English. What it is, most of these women came to Canada and did not have formal education back home. In Canada, they are only learning to read and write and in order for them to understand what they are reading or writing in English they have to be able to translate it back to Somali which they cannot

do because they never learnt to read or write in Somali, so they don't have a frame of reference. They want to get the words that they know in their language to be able to translate back into English so that they can learn how to speak the language. When I talk to them they say they would love to learn English, but verbally. This has been the big problem for them [04/02/07].

Emerging Themes

The call for re-education of parents pertains to learning how the Canadian educational system works and the language of instruction. Many Black youths are caught in an educational system in which their parents are not only struggling with cultural, racial, language and class barriers but are also struggling to understand the educational system in which they are involved. As identified in the previous theme, many parents do not understand how the educational system operates. As such, community leaders struggle to find solutions for bridging the gaps among schools, home and the community. Here are some of the possible solutions:

- The re-education of Black parents about the school system is the Black community's responsibility – if we don't who will
- Become literate - become educated - a tool to helping our kids
- The need for parents to learn about their, and their children's rights and responsibilities in Canadian schools
- Taking responsibility and making the system accountable

In examining the participants' narratives the overwhelming consensus is that the re-education of parents is vital to the educational advancement of Black youths. There is a sense that many Black parents do not understand how Canadian schools operate and as such, proceed blindly and hope for the best. Rather, as one community leader stated "what we do not know about the system as Black parents, disadvantages our children" (06/15/04). The main point of this summary is that the call for the re-education of Black parents is seen as an important solution to the existing problem affecting the education

of Black youths in Ottawa. It is seen as a means of empowering parents to speak out and make Ottawa schools become accountable.

6.9 Parents need to speak out

Parents

Gloria: I encourage parents that if your kids come home and they are feeling depressed and if they are hurting because something is going on, go to the school and find out what is going on. It is so hidden that if you don't go and find out you will never get anything done right with your kids. I will always be one of those parents who is always in school speaking up for my kids. If it means I have to be there every day I will be there [04/03/15].

Iona: Parents should not give up on their kids. Stay right behind them and encourage them. As a parent you'll always want to tell them not to give up. Encourage them the best way you can, let them know they can beat it. Educate them about racism. Tell them like it is, so that they will be better equipped to deal with it. Maybe we need to give the youths other people's experiences just to let them know they are not alone in the struggle. If parents don't understand the language and they don't understand the education system it is really hard because for me at that time, I didn't know much and it was really hard for me and my children. But I realized you have to go into the school as parents, because if you don't that would be worst. You have to go in and let them see you. Let them know that your children are not alone. Parents have to be there at all cost [04/02/02].

Bob: Parents must advocate for their children. We have a system where we are targeted and as soon as that kid is targeted there is no justice for him anymore. The only thing that prevents him from being targeted is for you to advocate for him. Because if your child is targeted as a troublemaker, that's it, that's where the problem starts. When he is playing and someone kicks that kid and he responds – he becomes the violent kid. You have to be involved in the life of your children in the schools. We have to be a solid pillar of stone to brace these kids in the system [03/28/04].

Emerging Themes

Upon close examination, this theme projects a surreal type of reality that is difficult to conceive. The topics that emerged from the narratives give the impression that Black youths are in a war zone and that the chances of making it out successfully with a quality education is so greatly reduced that parents must become vigilantes.

There is a sense that Ottawa's schools have become a place of educational struggle for Black youths, particularly males, who are economically disadvantaged. The essence of the participants' narratives is as follows:

- Parental presence in school – Standing up - Speaking out
- Parents as investigators
- It is hidden, they can beat it, they must learn how to deal with it
- Don't give up – stand behind them – be their pillar of stone
- Chart other's journey with racism, so kids know they are not alone
- Education as a struggle
- Black kids are unsafe - targeted

There is a sense that the students need to be prepared, equipped and protected in order to cope and in order to overcome the racial barriers within Ottawa's educational system. Parents are calling for increased parental and organizational voice and increased presence in Ottawa's schools aimed at providing better support and protection for Black students. Most interesting is parents usage of the word 'it' which signify racism. The pervasiveness of racism appears to be so widespread in Ottawa's schools that the term racism is frequently referred to as 'it'. Subtle undertones of hopelessness and despair could be discerned as parents talked about an educational system that appears to be too large to be successfully challenged on the individual level. As such, this next theme explores the need for an organization aimed at giving a voice to the many silenced Black youths and parents in Ottawa's schools.

6.10 The need for an Organization to serve Parent and Students

Educators

Roxanne: I find the educated middle-class Black families are advocates. They are pushers and they will advocate vigorously for their children and they will find alternate routes to see the progress of their children in the educational system. For many working-class parents, they don't have a hope in hell within this school system, sorry. They don't really know where to go because there are not many places out there for them to

get the kind of help they need to successfully fight this system. There is great need for a group or organization that can help these students and their parents. Many of these children are very bright. They just need the push to get through it [04/03/01].

Community Leaders

Keith: Many parents in the school system feel like David against Goliath, so one of solution is that we need a lever. When you are trying to lift a big stone and you cannot do it by yourself you get a lever and the lever will shift the weight and with a dolly pretty soon you can move that big weight. And this is what a strong organization that advocate on behalf of our youths can be, a lever. What it does, it gives those parents a strong sense of confidence, there is someone behind them. There is someone who understands what they are doing. This is why racism has prevailed because we have not created this type of institution to combat racism we just talk quietly about it. We are a community that is comatose and we need to wake up because our kids in the schools need us [04/02/07].

Parents

Bob: We need an organization where the parents can give us permission to go to the school or Board to represent them and say this is the problem we have and document it. We need to have an organization that advocate for parents and children both within the school and justice system and make them accountable. The question is – why are our kids being suspended, suspended, suspended. Why is it the Black kids are bearing the brunt of Zero Tolerance? There is a systemic problem here, we need to present it to them and I think this would be part of the solution [04/03/28].

Vanessa: No one listens to me as a parent, so it is just like our kids, no one listens to them. Maybe if there was someone there, they would listen to our concerns. Maybe then I will be heard, so we parents will begin to fight and so will our kids, we will have a voice, right now there is no voice. We are missing a voice out there. But together we can create a voice [03/05/07].

Emerging Themes

The constant silencing of working-class families within Ottawa's schools has resulted in the need for a collective voice that transcends family origins, language, religion, and class differences. The overwhelming consensus by the participants is that the Black community needs an organization that will advocate and speak on behalf of Black families in Ottawa. The following theme emerged:

- An organization – as a lever for disempowered parents and students –accountability for schools

Implied within this topic is the differential power positions of the middle-class and working-class Black parents. Participants were drawing comparisons between the power of Black middle-class parents to negotiate successfully on behalf of their children and the disempowered Black single, working-class, mother who is treated with scant regard by teachers and administrators. Consequently, the concept of an organization is seen as one means of holding the educational system accountable for all Black students, particularly students whose parents' lack the power and/or voice to negotiate on their behalf. It is this powerlessness amongst Black single mothers, who are economically disadvantaged and facing multiple barriers, that has enabled schools in Ottawa to successfully target and negatively stream working-class Black youths. Which brings us to the next theme: Streaming.

6.11 The Streaming of Black youths

Educators

Adam: Because many of our Black single parents are working multiple jobs, it is very easy for their kids to slip through the cracks and get streamed into low level programs without their knowledge. I was one of those kids who came from a single-parent home who got put into a low stream because they said I would not be able to study at the academic level, and because my mother was so busy working and did not understand the system, they almost succeeded. It is difficult to fight against such a system, but I am living proof that it can be done. Now, so many years later I see the same thing happening to other Black kids, but I am here to make a difference. Many of these kids are so beaten down that it's difficult to make them start believing in themselves again [04/03/19].

Roxanne: Many of these Black kids are not going anywhere in this school system. As Black parents, we tend to tell our children that whatever a teacher says that's it, and we need to change that. Some of the teachers do have biases like – 'hey this one isn't going anywhere so I don't need to do anything with this one' or 'hey, this one', and the

perception this time is, 'will be going somewhere, so I'll put my energies in this one' that's it. The attitude of some teachers is - don't waste time on 'those' kids [04/03/01].

Community Leaders

Horace: Here racism is a lot more subtle and often is the basis for low-level academic streaming because the kids are more diverted into lower academic classes without the parents knowledge. In a way the system plays upon the parents' ignorance [03/06/15].

Keith: There is a tendency among many white teachers that some of these Black kids will not make it. They just look at you and say – you are from a single family home, low income, you just don't have it. So they streamline you. A lot of the kids that I work with are going to schools where once you are finish you are not going to go anywhere because you did not take some of the necessary courses to attend university. They tell them - get your high school diploma and go find a job somewhere. Because if you are a white kid, they will say you can do better, they will push them to take this course, or you need to take these courses to go on, you need to pull up your grades, you need to work a little bit harder. But for Black kids - oh forget it man, single mother forget it. That's the way it is for Black kids that the reality but that's the way the system was built [04/02/07].

Parents

Diana: Guidance counselors should treat every body equally. They should not choose subjects by looking at your face by saying you are from here or there so this is what you can do [04/03/05].

Vanessa: As long as your child pass, and pass is considered 50%, they say that the kid is doing okay and the kids believe them. But is 50% really the mark that will allow the child to go to this college, or this university – no it is not 50%. I find something is wrong here [04/05/07].

Gloria: I have been in this country for 26 years and I have gone through it myself. A lot of kids who have gone through this system will tell you that the guidance counselors don't encourage Black kids to go to university. They don't encourage these kids to be doctors and lawyers. They encourage them into jobs that nobody else wants [04/03/15].

Francine: You have to stand very firmly for your children. When you go to the school, you go to the music class, the art class it is all Blacks and immigrants there. The guidance counselors choose the subjects for them to do, but they can't do that for my children, because we see their reports and we know where they are good and we ask what they want to do in the future and they tell us and we tell them that they have to be good in this and that. We guide them ourselves [02/17/04].

Iona: I think my race, our race, had something to do with how we were treated in school. For instance, from what I gathered, they think certain people don't need to get

certain level of education. Because you're a Black person that mean they do not need to try with you. They encourage your child to not get academics because your child don't need to, they think they can't handle this or they can't handle that, so they are giving your child less [04/02/02].

Emerging Themes

Streaming is a very dominant theme in this research project; it elicited responses from all participants. The message from educators, community leaders, and parents is that streaming takes place primarily on the basis of race, in addition to secondary factors such as class and marital status. The topics around the issue of streaming are presented below:

- The status quo is being maintained in Ottawa's schools
- Prejudging Black students' academic ability
- Streaming – a systemic process that feeds on ignorance
- Race, class and streaming

Throughout the narratives, participants referred to the negative view that many white educators hold of Black students' academic abilities, which has resulted in the negative streaming of many Black youths. Equally as critical to this discussion is the realization that in addition to race, negative streaming also takes place with families that are economically disadvantaged, single, and who lack knowledge and voice within the school system. In addition to the ways in which streaming takes place, participants expressed grave concerns about rebuilding and restoring the eroded confidence of Black youths. It was important for me to understand how middle-class parents avoided the negative streaming of their children, given the fact that streaming takes place on the basis of race. Similar to streaming, issues around the application of zero tolerance, expulsions and suspensions, follows a similar pattern of primarily targeting Black

youths, particularly males, who are economically disadvantaged and whose parents lack voice within the educational system.

6.12 Zero Tolerance, Expulsions & suspensions

Educators

Maria: The other thing I am absolutely sure about is the way they administer suspensions. If there is a fight between a Black kid and a white kid, and if they know for sure the white kid is wrong, there will be no police involved. There will be a suspension on both sides, maybe even equal days in suspensions, but there is no police involved. But when they think the Black kid is wrong or if it involves two Black kids, the police are definitely involved, there is no two ways about it, and that's where I have a big problem [04/16/03].

Adam: The system has changed compared to when I went to school. Back then, we were not considered as academically inclined so we were put into lower streams, but now, they are also being put into the justice system due to the perception that Black youths are aggressive and a threat. As such, there is no tolerance for them, especially if they are male and economically disadvantaged. So they are not just being kicked out of schools now they are also being delivered into the hands of the police by their schools. In my days, the police was never as involved in schools as they are now and it is not that kids have gotten worst, but there is a funnelling of Black males into the justice system by schools. The schools will want to deny it but that is only because there is no accountability within the system [04/19/03].

Community Leaders

Francis: Promoting safe school policy via zero tolerance is not applied equally to all students, first of all. Secondly, kids are kids, especially in high school and colour should not matter. Black kids are no more violent than white kids, kids are kids, but they are facing different problems in the high school system. But the problem we are having as a Black minority in this country is that it seems that zero tolerance is only targeting the Black kids and is not equally applied to every one. If two kids for example have a verbal argument it always targets the Black kids and not the white kids. I have one case here where the kid was suspended for 40 days and it is in writing, a senior high school student who had never had any prior problems with the school or the law. Kids are being suspended earlier now there is one case where a grade six student was suspended from school for three weeks [04/04/02].

Sharon: There is no allowance if you are Black. The incident that my son was involved in was not even in the school it was in the community near my house. So the

school suspended my son by saying that he had the choice of them involving the police or taking the suspension. So although the police was not involved at the time of the incident, my son was told that if the police got involved it would be more severe. They told him that it is zero tolerance, although he was not in school. So he took the suspension [04/07/02].

Parents

Vanessa: A white girl kept harassing my daughter at school and she spoke to the teacher and counselor but nothing was done. So when that person continued, she tried to ignore her but she continued harassing her, so for the first time, she decided to hit someone. She was suspended for three days while the other girl was suspended for one day. Everybody was surprise, because it is not her character but she was being constantly provoked and the school refused to act. My son has also been teased many times but he can only keep quiet for so long. When I report it, the school says everybody gets teased, so they do nothing. When he begins to tease back he is the one getting suspended. So, when he is being bullied and when I go to school they do nothing, but then he get suspended if he does it back. So it is a hard position for me and the kids [03/07/04].

Diana: The problem is when my son gets hit no one sees, but when he hits back, then it is a big uproar and he gets suspended. He was in line, the kid pushed him, no one saw that, but when 'Fred' pushed back, he was sent to the back of the line and then suspended for two days. White kids hit when the teachers are not looking, while Black kids respond to being hit whether or not the teacher is looking [04/05/03].

Bob: Zero tolerance is not fare for these kids. Because being a kid you have to break rules to be a kid in order to grow up to become a full mature responsible adult, including making mistakes. But for Black kids, there is no room for making mistakes. Yet we were not raised that way, we have all made mistakes in our lives until we became adults. the schools are doing this because they know that the Black kids they are dealing with comes from homes where the mother may not speak the language and the mother does not know anything, and she will not follow up with anything that happens to these kids. Zero tolerance usually affects the Blacks, it was meant for them. [04/28/03].

Emerging Themes

This theme can be considered the systemization of both racism and stereotyping that reflects the social/educational arrangement rooted in white supremacy. While the politics around overt racism reduces open display of such behaviour in Ottawa's schools and is generally frowned upon within the wider Canadian society, the strategy and design of zero tolerance as a means of promoting safe schools, has created a subtle form

of racism. Racism, together with stereotyping, has enabled educators to create a profile of character that is considered undesirable and not to be tolerated. As such, the topics identified by participants are intricately linked to issues rooted in both racism and stereotyping, and point to the unequal application of zero tolerance policies. These topics have emerged:

- The systematic extraction of Black males from the regular educational system into the criminal justice system and adult education programs
- Unequal application of zero tolerance policies resulting in suspensions /expulsions
- Black students are perceived to be more aggressive than whites
- No tolerance for poor Black males - No growing up mistakes allowed
- Schools ignore Black students' abuse – Black students must tolerate and remain non-reactive to physical or verbal abuse from white peers
- Black/white conflict = Black suspension/expulsion

The themes above are reflective of the participants' experiences in Ottawa's schools on zero tolerance and suspensions/expulsions. Participants have identified the various ways in which the double standard in zero tolerance rules result in differential treatment of Black youths. In addition, it also appears that suspensions are targeting Black youths at younger ages and for longer periods of time, with no parental involvement leading up to the suspension. The consensus among the participants is that Ottawa's schools are not safe for Black youths and yet they are not permitted to protect themselves from physical harm. As such, zero tolerance is applied in full force against Black kids, particularly males from working-class background, which has created a funneling of Black youths into the justice system. So, Ottawa schools, under the guise of zero tolerance policies, have and continue to engage in the racial profiling of Black youths.

6.13 Racial Profiling and the Criminalization of Black males in schools

Educators

Marie: I find a lot of these kids now-a-days get into the police system via the school system. I have seen police officers show up in school and beat up a Somali kid and no parent was present at the time. Police officers are now able to walk into the schools and take the year books and what they are saying is that they can buy a year book anyway, so its almost as if that makes it okay. But that's not the point, police can come in and look at the kids' picture, they can just walk into the school and get anything. Teachers can accuse kids and those kids will get arrested and processed [04/16/03].

Adam: Black kids are working in a hostile environment but they are not able to react because it is seen as aggression. A Black kid acting out and a white kid acting out are viewed very differently in the school environment. Black males are feared, so to show any signs of emotion is perceived as a threat. Today the police have become the means of correcting Black males acting out in schools, but as Black teachers we are expected to look the other way [04/19/03].

Community Leaders

Francis: I also work with the police and most of the kids in the justice system are coming through the school administration. Most administrators, before the school investigation is finished, or concluded guilty or not guilty they call the police and transfer the case to the police. What they are doing is making these kids criminals rather than addressing the issues. I have a grade 4 kid that they called the police for, so it starts early. Even if a kid has a problem with the school, the school is there to help them and give them counseling. To teach them to be good citizens so that they can contribute to the society in a positive way, but instead they push the kids out of the school system or call the police [04/04/02].

Sharon: When a Black kid does something in school they will immediately bring him in the office or they will call the police officer that is working in the school and then put him out of the school on suspension. The same things are happening throughout the larger Black community because I work with women here in my community and the problem they have is the same problems I have encountered as a mother. It is the same problem that is happening to all the Black kids in the system, but the school system wants to deny it is happening to our kids [04/07/02].

Emerging Themes

Racial profiling in Canada is a serious societal problem facing the Black community today. However, when it enters the realm of education, particularly at the elementary and high school levels, as it is being reported, then it indicates a pattern of

criminalization of Black youths throughout the school system. The criminalization of Black youths in schools is a common thread that runs through this entire research project, and is reflective of the experiences of many Black males within the larger Canadian society. The themes that emerged are:

- School as a hostile environment for Black students
 - Targeting of Black youths - Being pushed out
 - Reacting to racism – seen as aggression
 - The silent struggle against racism and discrimination
- Black students school reality - Being unwanted – Being unwelcome

The consensus among the research participants is that the education system has become a vehicle/pipeline through which many Black youths are entering the criminal justice system. Black youths are working in a more hostile environment but are expected to remain passive and cooperative, according to participants. To resist or to object is interpreted as an act of aggression that threatens the moral fiber of the school environment. As such, corrective measures must be taken swiftly and are usually combined with suspensions and/or police involvement. A critical point that would be discussed is the lack of racial diversity among teachers and administrators in Ottawa's schools. Black teachers who are exposed to the differential treatment of Black youths experience a sense of silence/helplessness due to their own isolation. As such, participants are calling for increased diversity.

6.14 The need for racial diversity among school staff

Educators

Marie: They need more Black people in the school system, such as teachers and more importantly, social service workers that deals with kids on a one-on-one and group basis. The Catholic school Board will not reach that level because you have to be Catholic to work in the school system. A large number of teachers in the Catholic

system are not practicing catholic, they don't even know what communion is, but they will not hire a Black person because most of us are not catholic. So that is one way of excluding Black from within their system. What they say is that we choose to send our kids to the catholic school board and that is right, but we also choose to give the catholic school board our taxes so they are not educating our children for free. All we are asking for is equality in the school system for Black students [04/16/03].

Community Leaders

Keith: Our schools do not reflect our diverse community. We have to make a distinction, because we say that we are multi-cultural and it looks good on paper but in reality it is not seen in the schools, we are not there. I think the reason we are not there is because the structure itself is set up in a way that makes it very difficult for teachers from different ethnic groups to come in. The system is setup to protect itself and does not allow outsiders to come in and participate and contribute even if they are over-qualified [04/07/02].

Parents

Gloria: We would love to see a lot more African Canadian teachers in the school system. We need to see people of your own that you can relate to because it is very unlikely that a Black kid is going to bond with somebody else from another culture, given the experiences with racism. Canada being a multicultural community/society it is so bad to look into the schools in Ottawa and see so few non-white teachers. What message are they sending us that Blacks are not bright enough or educated enough to be teachers? [04/15/03].

Diane: We need more Black teachers, put Somali, Asian, teachers from different cultures, so it reflect the students. All we have is white teachers [03/05/04].

Emerging Themes

Given the fact that Canada is a multicultural country, it does not appear to be an unreasonable demand that schools begin to reflect the students they serve. However, proponents of multiculturalism in education continue to talk about embracing diversity, while maintaining whiteness in the educational system, elementary to post-secondary. Regardless of the educational level, and regardless of the pedagogical rhetoric, the lack of racial diversity and representation remains a problem in Canada. Despite the rhetoric, despite the lack of racial statistics, participants are seeing the contradiction

between policy and practice which is aimed at supporting and preserving white dominance in education. These contradictions are expressed through the following emerging topics:

- Lack of diversity amongst teaching staff, administrators, and social work staff
- Canada's multiculturalism - alive on paper, but dead in practice

In the field of education, diversifying staff has largely resulted in increased representation along gender lines at all educational levels in Canada. Groups such as First Nations and Blacks continue to be underrepresented in all areas of education despite claims of diversity. The lack of racial diversity among the teaching/administrative, and professional staff is clearly visible by walking in any given school in Ottawa or any of the two Boards of education. As one community leader noted, you will see a school with over 60% Black students and a mainly all white teaching and administrative staff [04/07/02].

6.15 Anti-racist/cultural sensitivity training for teachers

Community Leaders

Keith: I don't think teachers are adequately trained. I think some of the teachers may take multicultural sensitivity training courses but that is hardly enough to qualify some of these teachers to teach in these multicultural settings. They are not sensitive to different cultures and different ways of doing things, and so their lack of training contributes to alienation of many Black youths. Also they tend to be judgmental, for example when a single mother goes to a parent teacher there is a condescending way in which they are treated and looking down upon her – like where is the dad, where is the father. Many mothers have mentioned it to me that they feel uncomfortable and that is one of the reasons they do not attend parent/teachers meeting. They will actually ask, is the father in the picture, they ask covert questions, and so the mothers will not attend. They feel embarrassed and don't like the label [04/07/02].

Horace: I think the educational system can be intimidating for working class people, particularly single mothers. So naturally, that which intimidates me I'm going to avoid. Parents don't feel welcomed in their children's school so they stay away [03/15/05].

Parents

Vanessa: More work needs to be done, because most of the teachers are not culturally sensitive, you may know one or two in an entire school that is culturally sensitive and that is a big problem. So there is a need for training to be done there [03/07/05].

Gloria: Many of these teachers need to learn conflict resolution because they do not know how to deal with conflict situations. Most of them do not have that skill, especially when they are working with Black kids. Many of them do not know how to relate to Black kids, they need cultural training to work with Black families [04/15/03].

Emerging Themes

The lack of culturally sensitivity is viewed as another reason for the existence of racial tension between white educators and Black students/parents. The Black participants are indicating that the difficulties being experienced by students and parents appear to be centered on white teachers' lack of understanding towards students who are racially and culturally different. This lack of cultural awareness leads to misinterpretations as well as misunderstandings in cross-cultural relationships as described by the participants. The themes generated here are:

- Cultural sensitivity/cross-cultural conflict resolution training for educators – impact on students and parents
- Eurocentric focus in schools – need for inclusion

The call for increased cultural training is aimed at developing and enhancing good student/parent/teacher relationship despite differences around race, culture, religion, gender, class, etc. Many of the previous difficulties described by educators, community leaders, students and parents, stem from a lack of understanding between the dominant and minority cultures. Such cultural ignorance of students and parents from other cultures results in Black students/parents being ignored, alienated, isolated, intimidated, and/or silenced within the educational system. Nonetheless, despite participants'

concern for their negative educational reality, they have also expressed gratitude towards the teachers, Black and white, who empathized with their educational struggles, and who had become silent witnesses. Despite the difficulties Black parents have and continue to experience within the system, they understand that both white and non-white teachers can and do become subjected to a similar form of educational violence – silencing. The next theme examines the narrative of participants’ experiences with disempowered educators.

6.16 Good Teachers – acknowledging educational inequality

Educators

Roxanne: It was a great sense of isolation for me because to speak out is to risk alienating myself, but even sometimes it became too much. I was told that sometimes you need to not rock the boat to keep the status quo, I was told that by a principal. So I could not say anything, there was no one to say it to [04/01/03].

Adam: I have seen some bad teachers, but I have also seen some great ones. So sometimes you see some Black students who seem to be aspiring and doing well, there are some great teachers in the system that do not care about the race of the students. They care about them, so they will help them, and will take the time and really push them, but unfortunately, those teachers are in the minority [04/19/03].

Community Leaders

Sharon: I was at my son’s school and watching a group of grade 6 kids playing basketball and my son was also a part of that group while I was talking to the vice-principal. I don’t know what these kids did because we were standing there watching them and immediately the principal came out and started screaming at them and I was shocked because my son was part of it. And immediately she ordered them to the office. The vice-principal just threw his two hands in the air and said ‘I don’t want to be a part of this, I don’t want to witness this’. He turned, walked away and left. She went to the office send them for their bags put them in her car and drove them all to the area where they lived and dropped them off without notifying the parents. These kids all live in the same area so she dropped them in one place and left them. Some of those kids now are in jail, and they all dropped out of school. So it starts from a very early age for the Black youths, she did not want them in the school. What I have learnt from all this experience, in order for these kids to survive, and for parents to have less stress, you have to be there everyday. And see how your kids are being treated and what is going on [04/07/02].

Parents

Diana: There is one teacher that is really, really nice, and anything that my young boy does rather than sending them to the office where they would get suspended he would call me and tell me to talk to the kids and I would talk to them and tell them to go and apologize to the teacher. They know he cares and they have taken a liking to that teacher as well, and they would apologize although they still get into a little bit of a problem, but they are kids [04/05/03].

Gloria: I have a teacher in the school system and each time I go in to speak up for my kids, this teacher would call me aside and say to me – ‘I really applaud you coming in the school and speaking up for your kids. I wish a lot more Black parents would do what you are doing’. This was coming from a white teacher. She sees that there is something going on in the school system that needs a lot more parent intervention. A lot of the teachers cannot speak out because their jobs are at stake [04/15/03].

Emerging Themes

Throughout the data collection process, I heard many stories about the negative educational experiences of both students and parents. I have also seen the hurt and pain as both students and parents recall memories that they would rather forget. Like any profession, social work, medicine, law, police, etc., there are good professionals, and there are bad ones. Teachers are no exception. Prior to this theme we only heard of the negative experiences. Although there were not many positive experiences, the existence of some good and committed teachers was acknowledged by the participants. The topics that emerged out of the data were as follows:

- Isolation and silencing of teachers – maintain the status quo
- Teaching for the love of teaching
- Old fashion teaching – good teacher/parent relationship
- Acknowledging educational inequality
- Advocacy on the sidelines

Parents and community leaders report that some white teachers are often sensitive to the difficulties being experienced by Black youths within the educational system. However, due to the systemic nature of the problem they are often unable to take action.

Although these teachers' support is not clearly observable by their administrators and colleagues, their support is nonetheless recognized and acknowledged by community leaders as well as parents and students. The topics extracted from the narratives reflected on one hand the isolation and/or fear of potential isolation that some teachers experienced with relation to witnessing educational injustice. On the other hand, the participants' were able to establish a positive teacher/parent relationship with committed teachers whose good teaching practices incorporated the love of teaching as well as their commitment to educational equality. However, due to the problems around cultural preparedness of teachers, and the lack of racial diversity amongst educators, an educational vacuum has been created, resulting in a lack of positive role models in schools for Black youths. Consequently, participants are acknowledging the need for positive role models for Black youths, especially those from working-class backgrounds.

6.17 Role Models – Necessary in building a positive Black Identity

Community Leaders

Horace: We had models back in the Caribbean. We had models of the Black doctors, Black politicians, and Black judges and somehow as a student you can dream, but now you come abroad and that role model is missing. So how do young children then picture themselves as becoming this young doctor, the young judge? [03/06/03].

Sharon: The kids that are getting involved with police are from poor families. Because they are in homes with no role models, with a single mom being the head of the household, who does not speak the language and poor. So they end up getting into trouble because no one is there to educate them about the consequences that they will encounter. So they don't know what will happen until after it has happen. They have no fathers and no Black role models to guide them and the school is not guiding them [04/07/02].

Keith: When I go to school, and I am very observant of this, there are no Black teachers and for children of African decent they need to see images of who they are. Most of the

time the teachers and administrators in our school are Caucasian and it is very hard to talk about multiculturalism the pictures and images in the schools are reflective of the Eurocentric culture which they represent. So, you will see a school with 60% Black students and a mostly if not all white teaching and administrative staff [04/07/02].

Parents

Bob: Our Blackness is not a disadvantage if we don't want it to be. Our Blackness can be a strong solid wall, solid and determine. We must form a Block to support our youths. As long as we don't have that block, then Blackness becomes a disadvantage. We will help our children grow up, and feel good about who they are regardless of the negative images they see of Blackness in society [04/28/03].

Emerging Theme

- The lack of role models in schools and the community

The issues identified by participants resonated around the lack of positive role models in Ottawa and the impact it has on Black youths. Community leaders, parents, and students themselves, have identified the lack of positive Black role models as contributing to the problems of Black youths in school and in the larger community. They have also identified that not only are these youths from homes that are headed by single females but also that their families are economically disadvantaged. While the issues of positive role models are not just limited to issues related to homes headed by marginalized single mothers, it does appear that these families are more greatly affected. The condition exists whereby parents, many of whom are single mothers, and who are also working multiple jobs, are trying to parent and nurture youths into becoming productive and responsible men and women. At the same time, these youths are experiencing negative racial stereotyping rooted in racism with no positive Black role models with which to counter their negative experiences. Rather, their experiences as Black youths, particularly males, is one of discipline and punishment, which leaves

them with the image that Black males are aggressive, less academically inclined, untrustworthy, and lack discipline. The negative image that is portrayed in school and society is often internalized by the youths. Consequently, parents identify a great need for increased Black role models in schools but more importantly, in society at large.

6.18 Concluding Thoughts

The themes expressed above represent the dominant themes that emerged out of the data relating to the educators, community leaders and parents. While the narratives may appear exhaustive, I felt it was important to provide a thorough and representative view of the various speakers. In this Chapter, similar to the previous, it was my goal to empower the participants to speak. More importantly, given the nature of the topic being raised, it was critical for them to name their own issues and deconstruct their lived educational reality in their own words. In order to facilitate this, it was necessary to reduce my own voice in this Chapter and reserve my discussion for the following Chapter. The decision was also founded on the fundamental belief that conducting research within marginalized communities that have historically been silenced *requires* and *demand*s the allowance of space and voice for the participants. So while it is important to analyze and discuss the findings, equally as important is the need to avoid repeating patterns of domination that previously contributed to the silencing of research participants. Having experienced silencing myself, it is my aim to break with tradition and allow my participants to speak. My discussion of the themes that were identified in this Chapter will begin in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.0 Introduction

In chapters 5 and 6, the students, parents, educators and community leaders shared their personal educational experiences and involvement within Ottawa's schools. In describing their educational experiences and involvement, the participants were able to reveal and highlight various contradictions and tensions existing between current educational policies and actual school practices. Gosh and Abdi (2004) argue that schools give mixed messages because stated policies may show objective standards, whereas individual experiences may be those of discrimination (p. 86). In highlighting these contradictions and tensions, the participants' narratives not only reflected their personal experiences, but also represented similar experiences of peers, colleagues and parents in Ottawa's educational system. More specifically, the participants' narratives highlighted tensions and contradictions between school policies and practices that often resulted in the negative school experiences of Black youths. Issues around race and class inequalities in schooling were also a central focal point of the participants.

While participants agreed that the unequal educational practices affecting Black youths were due primarily to racism, subtle and overt, the data also revealed that despite racism, middle-class students were able to achieve their educational goals due to the privilege afforded by their family's class status. For example, the narratives summarized in the previous two chapters indicate that middle-class parents, compared to working-class parents, had the knowledge, resources and power to effectively

navigate their children around many of the educational inequalities facing working-class students.

My primary aim in this chapter is to elaborate on a number of key themes that emerged from my data. The purpose is to illuminate the myriad ways in which the explicit principle of equal educational opportunity, (EEO), upon which existing educational policies and school practices are founded, become grievously distorted and inverted by the racism that inflects the policies and school practices themselves. Needless to say, an understanding of these contradictions is a necessary prerequisite to any educational and/or political intervention that aims to redress policies and practices that negatively impact educational opportunities and outcome for Black youths, particularly working-class youths.

The organization of the chapter is as follows: an examination of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) and Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board (OCCSB), mission statements, guiding principles, and the Boards' antiracist ethno-cultural equity policies; an examination and discussion of the participants' narratives that illuminate the grievous ways in which racism in Ottawa's schools nullify and denigrate the basic principles of equal educational opportunities upon which Ottawa school boards anchor their educational policies; a discussion on the subtle ways in which racism juxtaposed to class can either negatively or positively impact equal educational opportunity and outcome for many Black students and their parents in Ottawa's schools. In addition, I present a dichotomized view of the nature of educational inequalities due to class differences from the perspectives of working-class and middle-class parents, educators and community leaders; and finally, an examination

of the existing tension and contradiction between the Boards' policies and school practices and the multiple ways in which they result in unequal educational opportunities and outcome for many Black youths, particularly working-class youths.

Throughout the chapter, I juxtapose my discussion of the data from my participants with salient excerpts from relevant policy documents, which articulate in various ways the principles of equal educational opportunity upon which school policies are supposed to guide and shape school practices in Ottawa, but which in fact, they fail miserably to do.

Finally, central to the discussion is the close examination of the ways in which both groups of parents, working class and middle-class, lack trust within the educational system, hold similar levels of high expectations towards their children's educational future, share a similar ideology regarding the role of school teachers based on their ancestral homeland, and understand that the educational system in Ottawa disadvantages Black students. And yet, despite these crucial similarities, based on the participants' narratives, class status ultimately determines/influences educational opportunities, access and outcome for Black students.

7.1 OCDSB & OCCSB Board Policies on Equal Education

The mission statements and guiding principles outlined by the two school boards in Ottawa convey a philosophy in favour of and commitment to, the guiding principles of equal educational opportunity and equality educational outcome for 'all' their students. These core values and beliefs are deeply rooted and reflected throughout the OCDSB & OCCSB educational policies. One, therefore, cannot enter into a discussion

of the various educational issues in this study without taking a closer look at both the OCDSB & OCCSB educational system in the image that it has chosen to portray itself.

The mission statements of both the OCDSB & OCCSB states:

- The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board challenges all the students to achieve personal excellence in learning and responsible citizenship within a safe, equitable, diverse and caring environment (<http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca>).
- In partnership with home, parish and community, the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board ensures that the teachings and values of Jesus Christ are integrated in all aspects of school life. By providing the necessary resources for quality Catholic education, the Board supports the development of lifelong learners striving for academic excellence in a nurturing, safe and vibrant community. All individuals are challenged to become responsible and contributing citizens in an increasingly complex and diverse world (<http://www2.ocdsb.on.ca>).

It is critical to note that both the OCDSB & OCCSB school boards emphasized and centred their mission statement on promoting academic excellence and developing responsible citizens in a caring/nurturing environment, while recognizing the diverse nature of the community they are serving. However, based on the participants' narratives, there is a striking divergence between the Boards' mission statements and the actual educational experiences/reality of many Black youths, particularly working-class youths in Ottawa schools.

Consequently, the mission statements have become a crucial factor in developing an understanding about the existing tensions and contradictions between the policies of Ottawa' school boards, the existing school practices, and the actual educational reality of many Black youths in Ottawa schools. As a means of achieving the Boards' mission statements, the Boards have also identified strategies that are also in keeping with the guiding principles of equal educational opportunities. These strategies form the basis

upon which schools are supposed to anchor their practices in order to facilitate and achieve the Boards' commitment to equal educational opportunity and equal educational outcome for 'all' its students. For example, OCDSB notes:

All decisions made by the OCDSB should:

- Support programs and services which challenge all students to achieve their personal best;
- Consider the input of students, parents, staff and the wider community as appropriate through a meaningful consultation process;
- Foster vital and mutually beneficial relationships between schools, the populations they serve and the communities in which they are situated; and
- Be professional, transparent, made with integrity and with respect for all (p.048, S4.2, 1998).

Some of the OCCSB guiding principles states:

- Our Catholic educational communities provide a welcoming, caring, safe and nurturing Christian environment that respects and celebrates the uniqueness of all persons.
- Our Catholic schools in partnership with home, parish and community, contribute to the development of individual abilities for the service of the community, the Catholic Church, Canada and the world.
- Our Catholic schools promote the dignity and value of the whole person and the sacredness of life.
- The Board develops policies to direct human and financial resources at achieving responsible, accountable and equitable education for the well-being of all students (Mission Statement/OCCSB - 19990823 / Web Master).

Here, the guiding principles as outlined by both Boards again center on developing and encouraging students to achieve their personal best through academic excellence. Their philosophy is rooted in the guiding principles of EEO, which center

the student in a learning environment that is caring, safe, respectful, welcoming, and nurturing. The OCCSB has added its Christian focus to the delivery of its programs in a Christian environment that respects and celebrates the uniqueness of all persons while promoting the dignity and value of the whole person and the sacredness of life (OCCSB, 1999). Naturally, the value and belief system that is intricately enmeshed within these principles are also reflected throughout the two school boards policies that govern and guide the delivery of the educational program in Ottawa. As such, I will identify the relative policies that address or apply to the specific issues that were identified by the participants.

Since the issues around racism were the predominant themes throughout the entire research, I believe it is fitting to begin with an examination of the two Boards' policies regarding racial equality in schools under their jurisdiction. The objective of the existing antiracist and ethno-cultural equity policy in OCDSB is aimed at promoting equity of access, treatment and outcome for all learners, regardless of racial and/or ethno-cultural background (p.098, 2001).

As mentioned before, similar to the mission statements and guiding principles, of both School boards, the objectives of their antiracist policies are also clearly defined along the lines of equality and equity in terms of opportunity, access, treatment, and outcome. Implicit in their message is their position and commitment to social justice along the lines recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, pertaining to discrimination on the basis of ability, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. They have laid out a plan that clearly establishes the guidelines and procedures to facilitate the achievement of such goals. For instance OCDSB states:

- In order for all students to have an equitable opportunity to maximize their learning potential, student evaluation, assessment and program placement decisions shall be biasfree, and parents /guardians shall be involved throughout the process.
- The Board is committed to providing guidance and counseling that fosters and promotes equity for all students, is sensitive to the needs of all students, and is free of racial and ethno-cultural bias.
- The Board is committed to providing an educational environment and a school system free of racial and ethno-cultural harassment and discrimination. No expressions of racial or ethno-cultural harassment by staff, students, trustees, parents and visitors shall be tolerated.
- The Board is committed to working in partnership with all racial, ethno-cultural and Aboriginal groups to provide curricula which reflect, in an equitable way, the experiences, perspectives, values and achievements of Canada's diverse society. In addition, the Board shall promote educational practices that provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to appreciate our common humanity and reject prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.
- The Board...is committed to fostering an environment that will enhance learners' intellectual functioning, and their ability to communicate in a diverse society by providing appropriate and effective support programs and resources for language learning, cross-cultural awareness and understanding (p. 098, 2001).

These sections of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) antiracist and ethno-cultural equity policy form the core of their directives, thus creating the framework in which an equal and quality education within Ottawa's diverse community is to be provided for all students.

In a similar vein, the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board (OCCSB) seeks to protect individuals against any form of discrimination that contravene the Ontario Human Rights code through similar antiracist and ethno-cultural equity policy. It states:

1. The Board shall recognize that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and, as such, all people have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness
2. The Board shall refuse to tolerate all manifestations of discrimination on the basis of ability, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation
3. The Board, in co-operation with other groups, shall facilitate the development of mutual awareness, understanding and appreciation among all diverse groups.
4. The Board shall commit to the development, implementation and review of practices designed to eliminate and/or prevent discriminatory barriers in the day-to-day operation of its schools and in the various workplaces it provides.
5. The Board shall recognize that, in order to ensure equal access and opportunity for the achievement of their full potential, students from cultural and linguistic minority groups may require special consideration with respect to: a) reception, b) assessment, c) placement, d) programming, evaluation, e) monitoring, f) meaningful communications with parent/guardians
6. The Board shall recognize the rights accorded to the individual by the Constitution of Canada, the Charter of Rights, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, and shall commit itself to the belief that all doctrines and practices of racial superiority are morally reprehensible and socially destructive. Such practices are unacceptable to the Board.
7. The Board reaffirms its commitment to develop and promote racial harmony among its students, staff and the community, and shall provide education that is antiracist and multicultural and promotes ethno-cultural equity (OCCSB, 2004).

As shown by the policies mentioned above, both school boards have developed clear guidelines which form the basis for creating the practices and policies within the school environment to ensure equality for all. Importantly, the mission statement, the guiding principles, and the antiracism and ethno-cultural equity policies existing in Ottawa's school boards are grounded in the rights of individuals as enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and protected by the Ontario Charter of Human Rights. Critically, their

goal of developing good citizenship and active participation in a diverse and democratic society is modeled through their policies which have, at the core, a safe, nurturing, welcoming learning environment where respect, equal treatment, human dignity and positive guidance abound. My aim is to expose the contradictions between the actual school experiences of the participants and the practices of an educational system whose ideology recognizes the equality of all its students and encourages them to strive towards attaining their full potential through academic excellence.

7.2 Racism, Stereotyping & Criminalization in Ottawa's Schools

Students At Risk

I can hear your low whispers
I have seen that silent gaze so many times
I can read your mind
What am I supposed to do?
Scream at the top of my voice to let the world know,
Know that I am a poor and marginalized student at risk?
I know the pressure is mounting for me to leave. I do not want to leave
I want to make something out of myself
But I guess I have to leave because I have been failing all my courses
Why can't anyone see my bleeding heart? My broken dreams? My dried up tears?
I thought the schools were for all of us
I thought there was something like, yes, like equal opportunity for all
Mrs. T sent me out of class the other day because I was sleeping during her history class
How could I tell her I slept because my history was excluded from her teaching
and that my years of waiting weighted heavily on me?

By: Njoki Nathani Wane, (Iseke-Barnes & Wade, 2000).

This powerful poem written by Njoki Nathani Wane has successfully captured the sentiments of the majority of the Black working-class student participants in this research project. It mirrored their educational experiences that convey pain, shame,

exclusion, hopelessness, silencing, degradation, alienation, broken spirits and most of all the slow erosion of their dignity by an educational system that continually makes claims of equality for 'all' students. In my attempt to gain entry into their world of schooling, I asked each student participant to take hold of my hand and walk me through a typical day of their schooling as they experience it. I did not expect or anticipate the level of overt racism that marred these journeys.

7.2.1 Overt Racism due to Stereotyping and Differential Treatment

Despite the policies that explicitly denounce and discourage racism within the two school boards in Ottawa, many of the student participants have observed various forms of subtle as well as overt racism in their classrooms and the wider school community in general. One such student is Sara, a grade 10 student attending a Catholic high school, whose school experiences conflicts sharply with the core values of her school. For example, Sara noted that her teachers make overtly racist comments with no considerations for the students and provided examples of the level of racism they are being subjected to in their every day school experiences. In her experience with overt racism, Sara stated that her teacher, in front of the entire class, asked two Black African students after their recent visit to Africa if they had brought back AIDS to Canada with them. In another class, the teacher told the students that World War III should take place in India and China because they are the two most populated countries in the world. Gosh and Abdi (2004) noted that the process of education forms identities and self-concept-positive in some and negative in others. It empowers some through

affirmation and disempowers others through experiences of racism and sexism, or both (p. 173), as well as class differences.

Sara was not expressing doubt as to whether or not racism existed, because there are no gray areas in Sara's mind. She was extremely clear about the overt nature of the racism she and her peers were experiencing in their school life on a daily basis. As Sara described her outrage at having to be exposed to such overt expressions of racism from a teacher in front of her white peers, she said that she thanked God that her classmates did not find it as funny as the teacher thought it to be. Sara and her Black peers were not only 'shamed' as individuals, the racial group to which they belonged, was also under attack and its members linked directly to AIDS. Sara noted, "I was mad, but I did not say anything. It happens all the time and the Principal is saying that you can't talk back to the teachers, so we must just sit and take it" (Sara, 2004). Although Sara experienced an attack on her sense of dignity and group pride, she was unable to address or challenge it within the school due to the existing code of silence. Mark Proudfoot, a Black university student also shares Sara's experience with silencing and stated:

We feel silenced because of the negative responses we receive when we threaten the complacency of those who usually do not look like us. We are silenced by the contradictory messages we get, when we are told out of one side of the mouth that we belong, while the other side of the mouth tells us "to be quiet." No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow (Proudfoot, 1996).

As noted previously, a Catholic education is guided by Christian values which are at the core of its existence and commitment to teaching – "Our Catholic schools promote social and moral responsibility as a response to the call of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church for justice and peace....Our Catholic schools *promote* the 'dignity' and

value of the whole person and the sacredness of life" [emphasis added], (OCCSB, 1990). Yet the teaching practices of Sara's teachers did not reflect or demonstrate a commitment to the core Catholic Christian values underpinning the schools in which they teach, rather they illuminated the existing contradiction between policy and practice.

In another example, Charles, a grade 12 student, noted that although his basketball team only has two white players, each year one of the two white players is consistently awarded player of the week and ultimately most valuable player. Charles noted that they ignore the fact that the white players rarely play and that it is the Black players who take them to the championship and win the games. In Charles' view, the most glaring aspect of this racism can be discerned from the fact that the school has won the championship year after year because of the Black players, yet the Black players are not considered valuable players. Charles also explains that year after year the Black players stand in shame as they watch one of the two white players get the award and recognition instead of the Black players. Carrington (1983) makes the argument that teachers have a tendency to view Black students stereotypically, "as having skills of the body rather than skills of the mind" (p. 61). So while Black students possess the physical strength to win the game, they appear to lack the mental skills required to develop the strategies necessary for winning the game. Similar to Sara, the overt racism Charles experience in his school is also clear and leaves no interpretation in his mind.

7.2.2 Covert Racism due to Stereotyping and Differential Treatment

In addition to the overt form of racism experienced by some students, the majority of the students reported a more covert form of racism that sends a clear message that they are not equal. This subtle form of racism, they report, is very prevalent in Ottawa's schools and can be directly linked to the dropout rates of Black students. For example, Shawn a first year university student noted, "Racism played a role in our education, if it was not for that type of discrimination, my friends would have made it to college or university" (Shawn, 2004). June is a grade 12 student who explained that while racism sometimes affects her ability to learn she often tries to ignore it and talks to her parents about it when it gets to a point where she is unable to continue ignoring it. Ralph, a grade 10 student, described the subtleness of the racism that he and his peers experience as Black males. He argues that teachers expect the worst from them and are generally surprised when they do well. He also argues that just by the way teachers look at them compared to how they look at other students, one is able to tell how they are viewed by these teachers and so racism is the usual topic of break time discussion among his peers. After conducting a classroom study on the interactions between teachers and students Kailin (2004) reported:

I saw how Black students were often marginalized, ignored, feared or stereotyped in school. As I began to talk to other children of color and their families, I was disturbed by what they have to endure to get an education....I saw the covert or subtle manifestations of racism that subverted their education, much of it coming from the very adults who were entrusted with their education and "enlightenment"- their administrators, counselors, and teachers (p. 3).

The overt and covert forms of racism being experienced by the students and their peers have also been confirmed by the parents, educators, and community leaders

through their direct experience with the schools or through their involvement with the community. For instance, many of the adult participants described a system where Black students are consistently labeled and stereotyped, creating a hostile environment in which to learn. One of the most common complaints of the parents, educators and community leaders is that when Black kids are being hit at school by their white peers, teachers generally do not take actions to protect them. However, when the Black student is pushed to the point of reaction, then the student is severely disciplined, while his/her white peer goes unpunished. Gloria expressed her frustration with consistently having to battle racism in her children's school. Racism that attempts to attach negative labels to her children - she noted:

When things happen at school most of the time the teachers don't want to hear the Black kid's side of the story. They are automatically wrong. Black kids are trained not to lie so these kids get nabbed with all the blames while the white kids go unpunished. I always tell the teachers that for every action there is a reaction, if a white hit a Black kid and the Black kid go to the teacher and say 'oh miss this kid hit me' the teacher responds that 'oh just ignore her, just ignore him'. The second time - 'oh he is just having a bad day'. Now the third time these Black kids are starting to react and hit back. What happens, that kid sent to the office and become labeled as an aggressor, as a fighter, and in most cases they get suspended and I really don't think that is fair (Gloria, 2004).

Gloria's experiences within the educational system are not isolated, they rather establish a pattern that has also been observed by other members of the Black community.

This differential treatment being described by the police and by white educators against Black kids is not new; rather it represents the existing status quo in Ottawa's schools. Black youths are facing a system where all aspects of their Black identity within the school community are being viewed negatively. Consequently, dressing Black has now become another reason by which Black youths, particularly working-class males, are targeted, labeled, and stereotyped despite antiracist and ethno-cultural equity policies within the two School boards in Ottawa.

7.2.3 Dressing Black – Imagery Linked to Deviance, Drugs and Gangs

Due to racism, the devaluation, and the degradation of Black youths within the educational system, many Black youths feel rejected and alienated within the white school culture, and thus, have begun to embrace a style of dress that they believe represents and positively affirms Blackness. However, similar to the negative stereotyping attached to the verbal and non-verbal behavior of many Black youths, wearing head bands, baggy jeans, oversize shirts and timberland boots has also been met with severe criticism and negative stereotyping by many white educators. Black youths choosing to dress in this 'Black' fashion are being labeled drug dealers, or gangsters. One parent argues convincingly that white kids are allowed to wear long trench coat and long hair and they are not subjected to negative stereotyping or become labeled as being involved in a gang. She further argued that she may consider white kids with tattoos, wearing long Black trench coat, long Black boots, and punk hair styles as racist, but white teachers will view them as Canadian kids going through a phase, whereas Black kids wearing a head band and baggy pants is being viewed as gangsters by the same white teachers and administrators.

The notion here is that through positive stereotyping, white kids being described by this parent are being viewed by white educators as experiencing developmental growth, whereas Black youths, who wear Black designer/urban clothing as an expression of Black culture are assigned a label of deviance and must be corrected. In addition, due to the negative perceptions of Black youths held by many educators, attempts have been made to prevent white youths from hanging out with Black youth.

One student noted that a white teacher noticed a white student hanging out with a group of Black students. She told the students not to hang out with the Black kids because they are bad. The teacher later made a follow-up call to the student's home informing the parent that her daughter was hanging out with a group of bad kids. What the teacher did not know was that the girl's parents personally knew the kids who were being labelled and stereotyped as 'bad'. Community leaders, parents and students complain about the 'bad kids' label that is often attached to Black youths without any justification. For instance, Charles, a high school senior, described a school community where there is no tolerance for Black students. He noted that:

The school has some hidden book, this is my theory! They have a hidden book of what they call 'bad kids' and what they call 'good kids'. Now when you are a Black kid, you come in and they watch you closely, but after the first incident, the first thing wrong they put you in that 'bad' book - just because you done something wrong, you just made a name for yourself. Because it happened to me in grade 9 - it stuck with me. But maybe if it would have happened to me this year then my past years would not have been that bad (Charles, 2004).

Based on the school experiences of Charles and his peers, Charles has developed a theory about the existence of a 'hidden book' that targets and labels students as either 'good or bad'. According to Charles' theory, depending on the label that has been affixed to you, it will determine which book you are placed in, which in turn determines how you are treated, and the privileges and opportunities you are afforded in school. Unfortunately, Charles, similar to his peers, knows that the white kids generally go into the 'good' book while working-class 'Black students' like himself is often recorded into the 'bad' book.

The educational experiences of Black youths as described by the participants show a real contradiction between the existing policies, guiding principles and mission

statements of the two school boards, and the actual educational practices of teachers and administrators in Ottawa Schools, as per the participants' narratives. Educators have used these policies and principles as the basis for rejecting and denying claims of racism and discrimination made by Black youths in Ottawa schools. There is a false sense of protection and fairness that has been created by the Boards' existing educational ideal, which is supposed to be rooted in equality, equity, and antiracist practice. A disparity exists between the theory and the practice, as far as the realities of the Black students are concerned.

7.2.4 Racism in Ottawa's Educational System - Fact or Fiction

Although Ottawa, like many Canadian cities, has become very multicultural and multiracial, and despite existing educational policies championing claims of diversity and equality, there continues to be resistance in acknowledging the presence of racism within the educational system. This culture of resistance can be understood in relation to the power imbalance between the dominant and minority groups. Thus, the perception that racism does not exist in Ottawa's school as Dei (2000) argues, is a failure to see and recognize 'difference' as a site of power imbalance (p. 302). Rather than focusing on whiteness as a site of dominance, the gaze is turned to the racialized 'other', as a site of deficiency, thus the need to assimilate non-white minority students (Giroux, 2004; Neito, 2004; and McLaren, 2000). Accordingly, the power inherent in white dominance is made invisible within the field of education. As a result, the impact of racism on minority students' education remains unacknowledged by individuals who benefit from the existing status quo. Neito (1996) argues that:

People who have power or who benefit from current power relations are not likely to be in the forefront of changing those power relations. The fight against racism has been led by those who suffer most from their effects. It is difficult for those who are hurting from racism to put racism "in a positive light" so as not to offend or "turn off" those who do not want to see it (p. 203).

Even when the evidence of racism appears to be pervasive throughout the system, explicit in nature and indefensible by any means, it is nonetheless downplayed and minimized as isolated. This consistent denial serves to not only undermine the students, their parents and the community leaders' claims of racism and differential treatment in Ottawa's schools, but it is also aimed at nullifying such complaints. One participant stated, "As a parent and community leader, it, [racism], is a very difficult subject to talk about with teachers. There seems to be a denial around racism. So many parents feel reluctant to go forward and address this issue" (Sharon, 2004). In another example, after reporting an incident involving racism in a local school to the media, the reporter investigated the allegation and was informed by a representative from the Board involved that, **"If such situation happened, it is isolated"** [Emphasis added], (Ottawa Citizen, 2003). Either way, based on this administrator's response, no corrective measures are necessary. By her rationale, 'if' it did happen, which is questionable in his/her mind, it was isolated, thus, no action is required. The question one must then ask is - when do we as a society and as responsible educators stop labelling problems of 'systemic racism' as 'isolated incidents'? For instance, as in the case in Ottawa, according to Henry et al, (1998),

When racism is shown to exist, it tends to be identified as an isolated phenomenon relating to a limited number of social deviants, economic instability, or the consequence of 'undemocratic' traditions that are disappearing from the Canadian scene. This discourse resists the notion that

racism is systemic and inherently embedded in Canada's cultural values and democratic institutions (p. 26).

Due to this consistent denial of racism by educators and administrators in Ottawa, many parents and students have become silenced and are reluctant to raise issues pertaining to racism in schools, particularly when they result in differential treatment and the marginalization of Black youths. This denial of racism is so pervasive that one educator noted that in her school the teaching staff was instructed by the administrator that if any Black student alleges racism at any white teacher, it is cause for suspension. She noted that although it was unwritten and not an official school policy, it was nonetheless in full force within the school. This unofficial policy is intended to be a means of deterring students from raising issues of racism within the school (Interview, 2004). In such instances, the individual advancing such claims is made to believe that s/he is the problem and labelled as such. Either way it results in the silencing of parents and students who are already facing multiple interlocking barriers. According to Fine (1991)

Silencing signifies a terror of words, a fear of talk....Those students, particularly low-income students....typically pay a price. They may be sent off to a psychologist for assistance, classified as insubordinate, seen as cause for suspension, or labeled (Fine, 1991).

It is critical to remember that the official Board policies provides the framework within which its member schools are to provide a safe, nurturing, and welcoming learning environment to 'all' students, and where such students are encouraged to excel academically. However, this existing 'unofficial internal' policy contravenes as well as contradicts the Board's existing policies. In opposition to the existing educational arrangement, and in arguing in favor of an antiracist framework in education, Dei

(1998) noted that antiracist work implies a commitment to helping children identify the symptoms and causes of racism and supporting their efforts to challenge it. Most importantly, he pointed out that it must be recognized that such efforts will be met with resistance, but that children must be equipped to deal with that resistance (p. 202).

This resistance against racism in schools is essential because within the antiracist framework anti-racist education presumes that racism is not an individual struggle, but that it can only be challenged effectively through informed, collective action (hooks, 2003; Giroux, 2000; McLaren, 1995; Neito, 2004; and Sleeter, 1999). Most relevant to the discussion is the reality that the racism Black youths are experiencing in schools is being manifested in various forms. One such form is made visible through the application of zero tolerance policies in Ottawa schools. The research participants have all identified zero tolerance as not only targeting Black working-class males, but these youths are being subjected to a high rate of suspensions and expulsions under the guise of zero tolerance policies with the aim of providing 'safe' schools.

7.2.5 Zero Tolerance for Whom?

Despite claims of educational equality by the two school boards in Ottawa, zero tolerance appears to be a major concern for the majority of the research participants. Based on the narratives, Black youths appear to be bearing the brunt of zero tolerance policies in Ottawa's educational systems. The claims being advanced by the research participants are extremely serious in nature and must be examined in relation to the existing policies of the two school boards in Ottawa. Ottawa Carleton District School Board policy on safe schools states:

- The Board believes in *positive, constructive discipline* intended to create and maintain an orderly, co-operative learning atmosphere in all schools. Disciplinary practices shall be fair and consistent with the basic assumptions underlying a democratic society. It is also the Board's objective to teach self-control, self-respect, self-discipline and respect for others and for property, to help prepare every young person for a satisfying and productive adult life.
- The Board believes that *there should be continuing communication, consultation and co-operation among students, parents, staff and community*. Behavioural expectations and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour should be clearly enunciated in a positive manner to everyone in the school community. Principals shall review at least annually school safety and school climate with the school council, [emphasis added] (OCDSB, 3.3, 2004).

According to the OCDSB policies above, discipline is to be positive and constructive and continuing communication between students, parents, staff and community appears to be an important aspect of the Board's philosophy towards achieving a safe school environment. In addition to the policy mentioned above, the OCDSB has also developed specific directives from which I present a few lines as follows:

- Our teachers and school staff maintain order in the school and *hold everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behavior*;
- Our schools work to maintain and strengthen relationships with the school community and our community partners.
- The Board does not tolerate physical, verbal (oral or written), sexual, or psychological abuse; bullying; or discrimination on the basis of race, culture, religion, gender, language, disability, sexual orientation or other attribute.
- The Board *encourages schools to use conflict resolution programs and other preventive programs and intervention measures* to develop positive attitudes and acceptable behaviour.

The statements above represent a few directives provided by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board aimed at maintaining a safe and effective learning environment for all its students. Similar to the antiracist ethno-cultural equity policies, these policies

represent an educational ideal that has remained at the theory level for many Black students. At least, it has not yet been achieved with the participants of this study. Their testimonies show major gaps between the written policies and their educational experiences in schools that fall under the jurisdiction of the OCDSB.

On the other hand, the OCCSB states in their policies that:

- The Board recognizes that all members of the school community enjoy rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In recognition of this fact, ***the Board shall treat all with justice and maintain an environment where conflict and differences can be addressed with respect and civility.***
- ...It is the Board's aim to encourage a "safe schools environment" through the provision of ***appropriate early and ongoing intervention measures*** and, when deemed necessary, the administration of disciplinary action in accordance with The Education Act.
- The Board shall Endeavour to ***assist students through curricula and skills-based training to handle conflict and/or anger*** in an effective and non-aggressive manner (OCCSB, 2001).

In similar ways, both the OCDSB and the OCCSB safe school policy call for early and ongoing intervention aimed at correcting student's behavior prior to disciplinary action. This and their commitment to be '*fair*' to '*all*' students, forms the background against which the implementation of schools' policies and practices, as reflected in the experiences of the participants, must be interrogated. As a starting point in this discussion, I begin with the most recurrent issue that has been raised in the interviews - that is the concern that Black youths are guilty until they prove themselves innocent within their schools.

7.2.6 Guilty until proven innocent – Black students' reality

There have been many reports that Black students are being suspended at the allegation stage, prior to investigation and without proof of wrong doing, while their white peers suffer less consequence, if any at all. The participants' narratives also confirmed these reports. The consensus within the Black community is that Black youths are in an educational system which views and considers them guilty unless they are able to prove their innocence. Despite the well-known principle of law, "innocent until proven guilty", and despite the boards claim to be fair and just to all their students, the participants consistently reported that Black students are first considered guilty which is not the case for their white peers. The voices of the students, parents, community leaders, and Black educators were loud and clear about the targeting of Black youths, particularly working-class males, in Ottawa's schools:

- Black kids are guilty but white kids are innocence until proven guilty;
- Every time a Black and a white kid get into a fight it is always the Black kids getting suspended;
- Even before they start their so-called investigation, they will suspend the Black kid; the white person is innocent until they are proven guilty, that's how it works both in school and in the justice system;
- The white kids would be assigned to punishment inside the school - after school duties, but the Black kids would be kicked out of the school." (2004).

Based on the narratives, it is clear that the boards' ideal of maintaining a learning environment where conflict will be addressed in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of students while being equitable in their corrective actions contradicts the actual experiences of the participants and larger community's view of the status quo in

Ottawa schools. The participants consistently argue that the burden of proof lies with Black youths and their ability to prove their innocence.

In sharing their school experiences, the participants also identified and established a comparative link between the existing status quo in schools and the larger Canadian society. For example, it was noted by both students and parents that in conflicts between Black and white individuals in Canadian society, Blacks are generally viewed as the aggressor or guilty party. This sense of inequality is a result of the continued societal stereotype that Blacks are dishonest, aggressive, and untrustworthy, thus less credible. The participants further argued that similar to the status quo in schools, an automatic presumption of guilt is generally applied to the Black person within the larger community, which then places the burden on him/her to establish his/her innocence against their white counterpart/s. Thus the 'innocent until proven guilty' rule is generally not applied to Blacks. Instead "guilty, until proven innocent" appears to be the order of the day for Blacks.

Today, this sense of societal inequality is rooted in the race and class stratification of society and the power imbalance inherent in such arrangements, which is also being reflected in education. Most importantly, it is essential that the history of group relations be considered in relation to the power afforded to minority groups within the dominant society. Kailin (2002) argues that one must critically analyze the role of class and capitalism and the relations of domination in the social construction of difference along race, class, and gender lines (p. 56). Therefore we cannot ignore the historical nature of relations between Blacks, as a subordinate group, and the dominant group. Similar to other studies conducted in the United States, (Johnson, Boyden, & Pittz,

2001, and Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000), the participants also report that when zero tolerance is applied as a means to addressing Black/white conflict in school the end result is that Blacks receive more frequent suspensions or expulsions than their white peers. The Black parent is then required to play investigator in order to exonerate his or her child. However, despite the success of clearing the child's name, the student has already been stigmatized and has suffered the hurt and humiliation of serving an unjust/unfair suspension. He/she was initially presumed to be guilty and disciplinary actions had been prematurely invoked or applied.

The establishment of innocence after Black students have suffered wrongful suspensions is of little significance or of little comfort to them, as was the case involving a Black male student who got suspended after playing with a white female peer. The teacher, after observing the frown on the female student's face, inquired as to what was wrong. The student responded that it was Jason without providing any further details. The teacher, unbeknownst to the two students, and without seeking further information regarding the incident, reported to the office what she perceived to be an unwanted act of aggression by the Black male towards the white female student.

This administrator, without any investigation and without speaking to either student suspended Jason. The father noted, "My question to this principal is – why did you not get all the facts together before you sent my son home" (Bob, 2004). Only after Jason got suspended and his father got involved was an investigation conducted. The investigation revealed that they were only playing with each other, and that the white female student was completely unaware that the teacher had reported the incident which

resulted in Jason's suspension. The father reported that the female student felt extremely hurt because their playful encounter resulted in Jason's suspension.

Contrary to the Board's policy, the treatment or application of zero tolerance toward this student cannot be considered equitable, either in principle or practice, given that he was never questioned. He had no voice in the matter, thus, there was no opportunity for him to influence the outcome. He was presumed guilty of some infraction and thus automatically suspended. A report by Ralph Martin of the American Bar Association revealed that "Unfortunately, zero tolerance, as practiced today, is not rooted in theories of pedagogy or child or adolescent development. It teaches children nothing about fairness, and often creates injustice" (Ralph C. Martin, II, 2001). The message being sent by schools to Black youths is that they are aggressive and innately violent, therefore must be disciplined. Often, due to racism and the unequal application of zero tolerance, this disciplinary measure involves the police. Solomon (1992) argues that the school's top-down imposition of control, bolstered by external forces such as the police, demanded student conformity but got instead student resistance, alienation, and distance (p. 92).

7.2.7 Racial Profiling, and Zero Tolerance

The research participants expressed their belief that the unequal application of zero tolerance is intricately linked to and intertwined with racism in that white youths do not bear this same burden of proof that is required of the Black youths, nor does zero tolerance affect white youths in the same ways and to the same degree as Black youths. Parents reported throughout the research that even when the white kid is found to be

guilty, the guilt is excused or denied by teachers because the white kid is perceived to be a good kid. As one parent noted, "the white kid may not be required to prove his innocence because he is considered a 'good' kid" (Diane, 2004). This notion that 'whiteness' equates to *goodness* and 'Blackness' equates to *badness* is a value-laden label that is subtly and continually reinforced in society through the use of generally accepted symbolic language. For example, terms and labels such as: black sheep, black book, black listed etc., are all negative in meanings and usages.

The research participants' narratives reflected an awareness of the 'good/bad' label that is assigned to Black students in their schools by teachers and administrators. It appears that greater tolerance is shown to students who are considered 'good' while zero tolerance is swiftly applied to students who are considered to be 'bad'. Black youths understand that the negative image associated with their Blackness significantly influences the differential treatment they receive. For example, the students noted that they were being suspended for trivial incidents for which their white peers would not have been suspended. Incidents include things like not having a shirt tucked in the pants, speaking out about issues pertaining to racism, or for looking at a teacher in a way that she 'perceived' to be 'threatening'. The participants' claims regarding the excessive nature of their suspensions is not a unique problem facing the Black community in Ottawa, rather a pattern of excessive disciplinary actions towards Black youths have also been established across Canada (Dei, 1995; Solomon, 1992; Brathwaite, 1996).

Given the Boards' antiracist and ethno-cultural equity policy, it is difficult to understand how the subjective interpretation of a Black male student's look, can be

deemed threatening to the degree that the student has to leave the school in order for a white female teacher to feel safe; particularly, a student with no history of aggression or violent behaviour. What message is being sent to this, and other Black male students – that any white person can propagate claims of fear and immediate harsh disciplinary action will be taken against them? What defense did this Black, working-class, male student have against this white teacher and administrator within an educational system that is rooted in white supremacy? In interrogating the power imbalance existing within the relationship between this Black male working-class student and his white female teacher, it is critical to then highlight the tension and contradiction in such unequal power relations in order to understand the dilemma facing Black youths in Ottawa.

Based on the teacher's 'perceived' fear of this Black male student, she had the power to have him suspended from school. He on the other hand, lacked the power to argue successfully in his defense, due to his gender, race and class marginalization within the teacher/student relationship. The student made a persuasive argument during the interview in that his look is the only one he has got and therefore it did not warrant the basis for suspension. Besides, given the historical nature of the negative imagery attached to Blackness, should this imagery that is rooted in racism form the basis to discriminate and further marginalize non-white students within schools?

Despite the antiracist and ethno-cultural equity policies adopted by the boards, the schools' practices appear to be adhering to the principles of assimilation and conformity rather than antiracism. McMahon (2003), noted that an approach to teaching that incorporates critical pedagogy and antiracist multicultural strategies provides opportunities for all students to feel engaged with their schools and that one aspect that

is often overlooked, while focusing on the 'other' is the role that 'whiteness' as a descriptor, group identifier, and symbol of power and privilege play within our schools (p. 269). As a result, based on my understanding of antiracist education, there can be no reasonable justification for suspensions based on the negative perceptions and subjective interpretations by white teachers and administrators of Black students' verbal/non-verbal behaviour, and body language, particularly working-class males. According to Gordon et al, (2000).

When discipline code define punishable behaviour in subjective terms, such as 'disrespect' or 'defiance of authority' how the code is applied often depends on how individual teachers and administrators interpret students' behaviour. Too often that interpretation is affected not only by a student's objective behaviour but also by differences of race and ethnicity (Gordon, Piana, and Keleher, 2000).

Despite the repeated suspensions suffered by many Black students, zero tolerance appears to have advanced to a new level. Under the guise of 'zero tolerance' Black working-class youths are being expelled when they least expected it – on or just after their 16th birthday.

7.2.8 The Systematic Extraction of Black Youths via Zero Tolerance

Policies

- The incident took place about a month prior to his birthday but only one of the kids, the Black kid, later got expelled from school due to the same incident after he had served his suspension and returned to school. The whole period before his birthday he was in school. As soon as his 16th birthday hit – they expelled him right away and that was the reason for his expulsion.
- His 16th birthday came about and they said happy birthday "Mark" we have a present for you – it was a letter of expulsion. That was his gift. They said it with a laugh, patting him on his back as they escorted him out of school.

- We are 16, we are not adults. Why should we go to adult high school? A lot of people I know got expelled right after their 16th birthday. One kid showed up for school in September and was told you are expelled - he turned 16 over the summer holidays. If you are a Black kid they are quick to send you to adult high school.

In many working-class, immigrant communities in Ottawa, there is a significant visible population of Black youths within the community who are 16 years of age or over but who are not in regular attendance at school. Community leaders are reporting that based on reports gained through continuous meetings within their respective communities, Black males are being expelled on their 16th birthday or just after without any warnings, and often after only one incident within Ottawa's schools. For instance, an educator tells a student "we have a present for you" on the day of his 16th birthday – an expulsion letter was handed to the student as the school's present to the student. The student received a pat on the back as the administrator escorted him out of the school. In a similar situation, a grade 11 student who had celebrated his 16th birthday over the summer holidays showed up for school at the beginning of the school year and is told you are no longer a student in this school you have been expelled. So, rather than being in a regular school program where they will be able to graduate with their peers, these students at the age of 16, are being forced to choose between an adult education program or no education.

It is critical at this point that we remember the Boards' policy on treating everyone with 'respect and dignity'. What about the rights of these students to be educated? If these students' presence in the school community posed serious safety concerns to the general school community, what intervention was taken by the schools to avert the expulsion of these students? More importantly, why wait until their 16th

birthday before action is taken to protect the staff and students? Many students look forward to their 'sweet 16th birthday', however, for many Black working-class male students, their 16th birthday meant the day their education ended.

The extraction of 16 year old Black working-class males from the regular high school system also coincides with the age at which mandatory education ends as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education guideline. Most importantly, under the existing educational arrangement, the funnelling of working-class Black males out of the high school system by administrators indicates a serious systemic problem that will ultimately lead to the undereducation of a significant cross-segment of the Ottawa's Black community. Neito (1999) argues that educational failure does not develop out of the blue, but is created partly through school policies and practices that in a very real way illustrate what a society believes its young people deserve (p. 201).

The critical point here is that the undereducation of Black working-class youths will also have considerable social and economic impact on their future ability to become self-sufficient and economically stable which are also necessary conditions for breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving upward social mobility. Despite claims of valuing diversity, educational equality and equity, and despite existing antiracist policies, Ottawa's schools, by virtue of their every day school practices, are denying Black working-class students their rights to self actualize. Critical to the discussion is the reality that Ottawa schools are not currently being held accountable for the unequal application of zero tolerance policies.

7.2.9 Zero Tolerance and the Lack of Accountability

Important to the discussion is the lack of educational statistics along racial lines to support my participants' claims regarding educational inequality and the harsher disciplinary actions that were being leveled at them. Currently, there is no evidence in Canada, unlike the United States, which shows that African students are over-represented in the use of corporal punishment and expulsion, and they are underrepresented in the use of milder disciplinary alternatives (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Skiba and Peterson, research finding was also consistent with my own findings in that the working-class participants complained more frequently about the unequal suspensions and expulsions between them and their white peers. For example, a common theme throughout the research by all participants was that Black youths suffer greater out-of-school suspensions compared to their white peers. The seriousness of this claim means that not only are Black students suffering more frequent suspensions, but these frequent suspensions are taking place out-of-school rather than in-school. Therefore Black students are more frequently removed from the learning environment, including classroom instructions, compared to their white peers. In corroborating the student's observations, one parent noted that the Black students get suspended while the white kids still gets to go to school and learn (Diana, 2004).

The lack of race statistics has made it possible for educators and administrators to maintain the status quo, while avoiding accountability for racial disparity in school discipline. So while school boards advocate an equal educational system, they have not been pressured to account for disparity in school discipline along race and economic lines. The ability to examine the level of existing equality, or the lack thereof in Ottawa

schools, is currently not possible. As a result, members/leaders of the Black community are unable to establish the full impact of zero tolerance from an official statistical base, whether through the Ontario Ministry of Education, individual boards in Ottawa, or through Statistics Canada.

It is my position that such educational statistics are necessary to show the extent of any existing racial disparity in school discipline and the impact such disparity can have on the future economic prosperity of Black/non-white youths. Today, despite the lack of racial statistics, members of the Black community are seeing the physical evidence of Black school-aged youths hanging out in the community instead of being in school. Whether or not the statistics exist to confirm the existence of a systemic problem, the community to whom these children belong live with the constant visual reminders regarding the educational plight of their youths.

Another concern expressed by community leaders is that not only are the expelled youths not being educated but they are also at increased risk of getting into delinquent activities that can negatively impact their future. As such, the existing status quo within the current education system has resulted in Black parents, community leaders, and students, being silenced, alienated and left to establish and prove their claims of educational inequality without statistical data. On the other hand, due to the white dominance inherent within the school system and the power associated with it, school officials in Ottawa do not feel the need to establish proof negating claims of educational inequality. Instead, the boards have opted to deny claims of such inequalities, and based on the previous narrative, school administrators are now able to instruct white teachers to suspend Black students who raise issues of racism against them. So similar

to the other forms of educational inequality previously identified, racial disparity in school discipline is also another form of inequality for which there is no accountability. This then places Black students, particularly working-class males, in the path of increased targeting, labelling, and harsher disciplinary actions.

One of the more troubling characteristics of the zero tolerance approach to discipline is that a disproportionate number of the students at risk for a range of school punishments are poor and Black (Skiba and Peterson, 1999). Contrary to the Boards' policies that encourage intervention measures, open communication with parents, students, and community, Black youths are silenced, suspended/expelled, and their issues nullified. As one student noted "we have no one in the system, we have no voice, we, are at their mercy" (2004). Another student states "This school system has started to look like a prison sentence because teachers are just waiting for a reason to disregard us" (2004).

These students' analysis of schooling is one whereby they are restricted from full participation due to their subordinate position within the larger school community, hence their feelings of isolation and exclusion within the dominant structure of schooling. Equally as important to the discussion around harsher and more frequent disciplinary measures, reports are also pointing to a possible pattern whereby Black working-class males are being criminalized due to zero tolerance policies.

7.2.10 The Criminalization of Black Youths

This discussion around the Criminalization of Black youths can be considered an expansion of suspensions or expulsions in that the participants reported that the decision to suspension and/or expel Black youths, especially working-class males, is often accompanied by police involvement. For example, through the numerous narratives generated by this research and through my professional involvement at the community level, there appears to be a high incidence of police involvement in schools, and it also appears that Black males from working-class background are the primary targets of such police involvement. Similar to my research findings, the literature also supports the claims of increased police involvement with Black youths in schools. In his study, Solomon (1992) found that suspensions of Black youths often involved the police. For example, one of his participants noted: "For every little thing the V.P. calls the police....Say he tells you to leave the school building on suspension and you try to talk to him, he threatens to call the police to remove you. He doesn't even want to hear what you want to say" (p. 89).

The concerns expressed by community members are that increased police involvement with Black youths leads to their racial profiling and criminalization within the existing educational/social arrangement. For example, Charles noted: "The police know all the Black kids in my school because they come into our schools and go through our year book. So when they see us on the streets they know who we are, they call us by names" (2004). One educator also confirmed Charles' claim in that "through police/school joint intervention to promote safe schools, the police have access to our year book and student information but it is the Black kids that they generally target"

(2004). The educator further argued that this arrangement makes it easier for the police to profile Black kids within the community. In addition, Solomon (1992) also found similar findings in his Toronto study and noted that:

The construction of the 'fear' of crime by black youth is used as a justification to police them in schools. Policing them in the classroom also aids with identifying and monitoring black youths on the streets (p. 90).

The unanimous consensus of participants is that due to negative stereotyping and unequal treatment, the educational system has become a vehicle/pipeline through which many poor Black males are entering the criminal justice system. For example, students are reporting that as Black males they are viewed as violent and have to be controlled, tamed, put into the system, and taught a hard lesson (Amos, 2004). But Amos is not alone in his analysis of how schools have constructed and reinforced negative images of Blackness. The literature also supports his analysis. According to Hopkins (1997), many Black males are required to enroll in school and participate in a school culture that deems them invisible except in negative terms. He further noted that Black males are not oblivious to the pervasiveness of negative imaging and stereotyping placed on them by society at large and in turn by the public school (p. 64), (see also, James, 1998; Brathwaite, 1996; Neito, 2004; McLaren, 2000; Solomon, 1992 and Kailin, 2004).

However, the negative imagery associated with Blackness is not a current phenomenon and must be located within a historical context. For instance, the 1810 version of the Encyclopaedia Britannica referred to Blacks in the following terms:

Vices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race [people of African descent]; idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness, and intemperance, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law,

and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience. They are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man left to himself (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1810 edition, vol. XIV, p.750, in Jordon & Weedon, 1995).

This negative imagery of Blacks as described in the Encyclopaedia Britannica has its historical roots in the attempts by capitalists to justify Black slavery. Most critical to this discussion is the reality that there have not been significant changes since 1810 in the imagery of Blacks, particularly working-class males. McLaren similarly argued that just as the term negro became an immutable mark of difference and naturalized the political arrangements of racism in the 1960's so too is the term Black being refigured in the white dominant culture to mean criminality, violence, and social degeneracy (McLaren, 1989). Over three centuries of the entire machinery of North American society being employed in the establishment and propagation of this aggressive image of the Black male, is difficult to correct, especially when individuals with the mindset from the past continuously reinforce this image through an educational and justice system that is rooted in white dominance.

Today, the educational experiences of Black youths, particularly males, in Ottawa's schools are burdened with the negative images and stereotyping associated with Black maleness, which often results in unearned consequences. For example, a five-year-old Black male child took a candy from his teacher's desk without her permission. In an attempt to discipline the child, the teacher not only brought the child to the principal's office but the school administrator called the police. Here you have a five-year-old child like many five-year-old children who have succumbed to the temptation of taking a candy without permission. But in this case, this young Black male needed to have been taught a 'hard' lesson. This young child, although he did not

commit a violent or vicious crime, was made to come face-to-face with a white male police officer - over a candy. Based on the action of the teacher and administrator, it appears that this child's action was interpreted as an indicator of future criminal tendencies. Thus, an extreme intervention measure was necessary to swiftly correct his behaviour.

What impact will this experience have on the development of the self-esteem of this young Black male? Especially, when the majority of reports about the low self-esteem of African-Canadian children are associated with the school environment where their primary experiences are those of marginalization (Roberts-Faiti, 1996). The next question that comes to my mind is - would this white teacher and administrator have taken the same action had it been a white male child? Would the police have even responded? - Very relevant questions, I think.

In another example, two youths went to KFC and walked back to school eating their lunch. The Black male threw his fork on the ground and was fined \$200.00 for the infraction. However, although his white male peer committed a similar infraction by dropping not only his fork, but also his entire empty meal package on the ground he was not fined. The white police officer justified not charging the white male by saying that the white kid's package fell on school's property and not on public property. How can we as a society justify, condone, sanction or validate, in a manner that makes sense, the action of these police officers who found it fitting to ignore the fact that these two kids contravened the civil code equally. What message does this unequal application of the law send to both youths, and youths in general - that in this society, each law has two versions, one for Blacks and another for whites?

Students in the study were able to link the imbalance of power inherent in white dominance within the school system and the larger society. For example, one student noted,

I lived in a housing project for thirteen years where there were a lot of poor immigrants and each time two people got into a fight or conflict, the Black man would always be the one to get arrested, and sent to court. It is the same thing I now see in school (Solomon, 2004).

Again, this student's analysis of the criminalization of Black working-class males in school is also correct and was corroborated by a police officer.

In conversation with the officer, he noted that the inaction of teachers and administrators in schools are resulting in Black youths being charged with criminal assault charges. He further noted that each time they were called to a school due to a fight, they engaged in a practice of flipping a coin before responding to the call. Officers would then place bets as to whether it was a Black or White kid being charged. He informed me that there was an established pattern whereby the Black kids were generally the initial victims of abuse but because of the school's inaction towards protecting Black students, especially males, the situation would escalate to the point where the Black youth was forced to defend himself, generally against a white male student. Once the Black student responds physically, and the white student reports it, the police are automatically called. The officer explained that once they arrive at the school and an assault has taken place, regardless of how long the Black student's abuse went unchecked, the Black student has to be charged. In closing, he noted that due to the frequency of the calls, officers no longer wanted to bet on the Black kids because they were losing their money - they knew each time they responded it was a Black kid being charged (Anonymous, 2002).

So the criminalization of Black youths by the justice system is no longer situated at the community level, rather, it has now advanced within the educational domain with the blessing and support of school teachers and administrators under the guise of zero tolerance aimed at promoting 'safe schools'. Today - many Black community leaders argued that despite tense relations with the police, many more young Blacks are injured in the classroom now than on the streets (Henry, Tator, Mattis, Reeves, 1998). It is critical to also note that while race is the primary factor by which various manifestation of educational inequality takes place, class status appears to have become a factor that mitigated the impact of such inequalities. As a result, 'class' became the primary factor that determined the level and degree of racism and its various manifestations to which students would be subjected. Thus working-class students, particularly males, bore the brunt of the unequal educational treatment, compared to their middle-class peers.

7.3 Class Issues in Education

In analyzing the narratives around the educational experiences of the student and parent participants, issues involving class differences were among the more dominant themes that emerge out of the data. It became very apparent that issues around class had a tremendous impact on not only the relationships between Black students, their peers, and educators, but it also impacted the relationship between parents, teachers and administrators. The narratives of both working-class and middle-class groups of participants accentuate the educational reality that despite the commonality of race, differences along class lines predetermined one's educational experiences within Ottawa's schools. As such, schools help to reproduce and maintain class distinctions,

because most working-class children, as a result of their educational and social experiences, tend to remain in their class of origin (Curtis et al., 1992). Although both groups of students reported various forms of inequalities within their schools, whether through direct personal experience or through observation, the greatest impact of such inequalities was on students who were economically disadvantaged and male.

Similar class differences were also observed amongst the two groups of parents. While both group of parents had similar educational aspirations for their children, the working-class parents experienced greater struggles surmounting the educational barriers facing their children in school. For example, the participants reported that they were experiencing racism and differential treatment on two levels. *First*, Black parents, males and females, were experiencing multiple interlocking barriers due to racial, class and ethnic stereotyping. They argued that once you are Black you are presumed to be poor and treated in an undignified manner and this sentiment was echoed by both middle/working-class parents. For example, one participant noted,

Social class is everywhere. You can't avoid, so I ignore it. I will not let it control my life or my actions. I inherited a brand new car, and so I would drive the new car in the summer and the old one in the winter. When I drive the new one, I am a pimp, when I am driving the old car, I am a welfare bum, I can't win...This is what our kids go through and this is what we Black males also go through in society (Bob, 2004).

Stereotyping regarding class stratification is also experienced in schools much like in the larger society. One community leader noted that while standing in the office in her child's middle class school and although she was the first parent in the office, the vice-principal served all the white parents who arrived after her and pretended that she was an invisible person standing at the counter. She stated: "As soon as you go into school and they see you with the hijab and this long dress as a Somali woman they treat

you just like you are nothing, they will just pass, and not give you attention and not talk to you” (Sharon, 2004).

These social class groupings combined with racial differences has in turn resulted in the alienation and exclusion of many working-class Black students from social activities and clubs at school. June, a grade 11 student noted that she wished high school would be like elementary school where no one cares about who you are or your social class. Rachel, a first year university student noted that had it not been for the class distinction in her school she would have joined more social clubs and activities. She also noted that teachers were much more interactive and jovial with the middle-class students. Based on the students’ narratives, students do not want to be labeled as poor or portrayed as kids living on welfare. Kids are not just concerned with their image amongst peers; they are also concerned with how they are being perceived by teachers and administrators because of the differential treatment and stigmatization.

Second, Black single, female parents, in addition to class, racial and ethnic stereotyping were also subjected to differential treatment due to moral judgment about their marital status. For example, the participants reported that white teachers consistently stereotyped and viewed Black single mothers as promiscuous and always assuming that there are no fathers in the home of Black students, especially if they are economically disadvantaged. One parent noted, ‘many teachers think Black women have kids by themselves’ (Gloria, 2004). Another parent noted that the negative treatment she received as a poor single mother improved after the teachers became aware that she had a partner, she stated: “They will ask where is the father, is he in the

picture, and you say no. So they just automatically cut you short right there because it is not a two-parent family anymore” (Diane, 2004).

This parent is not alone in her analysis of the differential treatment she received because of her single status. Rather, her experience is also reflected in other participants’ narratives. According to Keith, a community leader,

White teachers tend to be judgmental towards Black women. So, when a single mother goes to a parent teacher interview there is a condescending way in which they are treated and looking down upon her – like, where is the dad, where is the father (Keith, 2004).

In the situations being described by the participants, Black females are made to feel devalued and of low morals. In attempting to develop an understanding around this phenomenon, one has to examine this imagery of Black women within its historical context. For example, the sexualization of Black women together with the imagery of Black women being manual labourers and nurturers has its historical roots in Slavery. A history that the dominant group wants to forget and a history that Blacks are often afraid to talk about within a dominant discourse.

In a recent conversation with a small group of post-graduate students and one pre-service teacher, we were discussing the lack of Black Canadian women in the doctoral program. In response to our observation, the pre-service teacher stated that Black women are not in the doctoral program because they are at home having babies (Anonymous, 2005). While the impact of the comment sent shock waves through our bodies, we welcomed the comment itself. This pre-service teacher lacked the savvy of knowing that it was politically incorrect to voice such a belief. Nonetheless, we were eager to engage in dialog because we knew that her comment was not isolated. The participants’ narratives were also reflective of the general attitude and belief many

educators held towards Black women. Thus the imagery of Black women's promiscuity has remained in popular culture today and continues to permeate all facets of society including the field of education.

The Black woman's existence in North America and Europe was economically based. Her role was to do manual labour, mate, breed and replenish the slave stock. It is this historical aspect of Black women's existence that creates discomfort when we begin to deconstruct the negative imagery of Black women and men. We must begin to ask - what is the basis for assuming that a White woman with children is married, but a Black woman with children is single, and that her children is a result of multiple partners? But before we can attempt to answer this and other questions, we must be prepared to revisit history in an honest way despite all its discomfort (Giroux, 2004, hooks, 2004, Davis, 1987).

Regardless of the basis for the differential treatment of Blacks in the educational system, be it Black women's marital status, racism, classism and/or ethnic differences, discrimination based on these grounds contravene the Boards' policies which are grounded in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. Despite these various policies aimed at protecting individuals' rights in schools, the stigma created by the differential treatment in Ottawa's schools has resulted in many Black working-class families trying to escape the label of 'working-class, or worst - project/welfare' labels. One means of deflecting this image is by wearing expensive clothing.

7.3.1 Clothing – A means of avoiding ‘class distinction’ in schools

The research participants consistently articulated differing views around the issue of clothing. This divergence around clothing not only exists along class lines but also remains a concern for both working-class and middle-class participants. On one hand, middle-class participants argued that working-class parents are putting too much emphasis on expensive clothing, and not enough time is being invested in school related activities. While on the other hand, working-class parents are responding to the class pressure their children are feeling at school and are attempting to minimize the stigmatization of their children due to their class status. For example, parents who are struggling economically argue that they do not want their children to be isolated, or labeled as welfare children. Sharon, a community leader noted that kids make fun of you if you are on welfare. If they are on it, they don't say and they go around and listen to the jokes, but deep down in side they are hurt (Sharon, 2004). Therefore, working-class parents' struggle is one of attempting to create a level playing field whereby their children can feel as equal as the next child and thus not become singled out, labeled, alienated or develop low self-esteem.

As a solution to avoiding the stigma attached to working-class status, both students and parents have identified school uniforms as a possible contributing solution to the problem. They argue that uniforms would reduce the pressure on economically disadvantaged parents who feel the need to purchase expensive clothing and shoes aimed at minimizing the alienation and exclusion their children are experiencing due to the stigmatization of being project or welfare kids. It stands to reason that oftentimes the poor are more addicted to excessive consumerism because the powerful messages in

media and in our lives in general suggest that the only way out of class shame is conspicuous consumption (hooks, 2000). Thus, buying expensive clothing is one means of deflecting the stigma and shame associated with being poor.

The use of uniforms would then enable working-class parents to re-allocate resources that would normally be spent on clothing to other areas of education such as tutors or other learning aids/support. More importantly, disadvantaged Black kids would not be as readily identified along class lines, which would greatly reduce the stigmatization and thus, suffering that many students endure because of their working-class status. The reality is, while in school, every student, Black or white, wants to feel equal. The working-class student is no exception. As Solomon stated, "I think wearing uniforms would be better....Students that are poor they would not have to buy shirts they could wear the same shirt, they could have two pairs, just keep washing it over and over. It makes everybody look equal" (Solomon, 2004).

On the other hand, middle-class participants feel the emphasis should not be on clothing, rather, as one educator noted, parents may be placing too much emphasis on expensive clothing for their children and not spending as much time on working with the kids, or going to school. The complexity of the multiple interlocking barriers facing working-class parents does not appear to be fully understood by the middle-class participants. They also did not appear to have an awareness of the ways in which the invisibility of their class privileges were being taken for granted. Most importantly, they did not understand how, in large and small ways middle-class, upper-class, and wealthy black people can create lifestyles that enable them to minimize contact with harsh racism (hooks, 2000).

As such, their analysis, while well intended, reflected a 'privileged' perspective on the educational challenges facing working-class families, especially those headed by single mothers. Nor did they fully understand the stigma attached to working-class students, and how these parents and their children were subjected to more frequent bouts of racism due to their class position in an educational system rooted in white dominance. For example, a middle-class student living in a middle-class neighborhood whose parents are professionals may enjoy shopping in thrift shops and going to school wearing second hand clothing and not feel labeled or stigmatized by her/his peers. Her/his peers and teachers know her/his class status, so what she/he chooses to wear is a matter of choice, a matter of being 'cool'. She/he has nothing to prove because she/he will also be able to join the ski club, golf club, and travel club, etc. While the working-class student knows that her/his parent/s is not able to meet the expenses associated with such school activities and thus will not be able to participate. Therefore, clothing becomes a means of maintaining a positive self image. June noted that:

If I had the power I would make sure that we had the connection that we had in elementary school, so you don't have to go to school and feel that you have to impress people with clothes. You could think these are all my friends and be comfortable with them (June, 2004).

As stated above, despite financial constraints, working-class students feel a greater pressure to fit in and be accepted among their middle-class peers as well as within the larger school population. This need to feel equal often translates into dressing in a manner aimed at mitigating class differences in order to fit in and avoid being labelled working-class/project kids. So in facilitating their children's attempts to avoid marginalization in schools, combined with the other multiple interlocking barriers facing working-class parents, they are often required to work multiple jobs. hooks

(2003) noted that although all Black people know that regardless of your class status, you will suffer wounds inflicted by racism, relative fewer Black people know intimately the concrete everyday ways class, power and privilege mitigate this pain, allowing some Black folks to live luxuriously despite racism (p. 98). Similar to the diverging views on clothing, a dichotomy also exist between middle-class and working-class views of multiple jobs.

7.3.2 Multiple jobs: A means of survival or disposable income?

Similar to the divergent views of clothing, a dichotomy exists between the views of middle-class and working-class participants in relation to multiple jobs. For example, the views of some middle-class participants toward working-class single mothers working multiple jobs were very rigid and one dimensional depending on the individual's level of class consciousness. Class consciousness as meaning an individual's awareness of the various ways one social position in a society stratified by race and class privileges those who have versus those who don't. In other words, those who have adopted the mainstream view that the economic plight of the Black masses as being cause by a lack of skills, will, and know-how and not by systemic exploitation and oppression (hooks, 2003).

In many instances, some participants were unable to see the ways in which their own class privileges afforded them the opportunity that they took for granted. For example, one middle class parent argued that she stays home while her husband works, in order to help her children with school. She noted that she has given up many of the material comforts which were the price she paid for staying at home and ensuring that

her children succeed academically. Another community leader noted that working multiple jobs puts you into a higher tax bracket, rather than provide extra resources, therefore working-class parents are not gaining the benefits from working multiple jobs. Both arguments were against the practice of working-class parents working multiple jobs. Some say that they should work less and stay home to help their kids with school.

These middle-class views regarding the economic plight facing single working-class mothers I labelled 'privileged' because they represent a viewpoint of the privileged class; a class that is able to transcend racial boundaries, despite white dominance. For instance, Iona is a single working-class parent who works long hours in order to care for her two children. Francine, on the other hand, also has two children, but she and her husband are university educated holding professional designations. Her husband earns enough to support the family making it possible for Francine to forego her professional career to stay at home and care for her children. Iona, on the other hand, cannot afford such privileges because she is the sole supporter for her children and due to her lower level of education, her earning potential leaves much to be desired.

In addition, while both Francine and her husband are able to tutor the full scope of their children's education, Iona, in comparison, is unable to tutor her children due to her limited level of education. Most importantly, due to her lack of economic resources, she is also unable to afford a tutor for her children. So despite similarities in race, Iona, unlike Francine, is facing multiple interlocking barriers due to their class differences. It is also these differences that privilege one group of students over another, despite commonality in race. This point was also highlighted by one community leader in that,

The children whose parents might come from a lower class background, who did not finish high school, often times they are struggling with two or three jobs just to make ends meet....Often times there is language and cultural barriers they are also facing and they just don't understand because they themselves do not have the education. So it makes it very difficult for them to help their kids with their school work and many times they can't afford a tutor to help their children (Keith, 2004).

So, living in a two-parent family home where both parents are professionals, educated and have access to resources, is markedly different from a home that is headed by a single female who is economically disadvantaged and working multiple jobs in the service industry due to her limited education.

Critical to the discussion is also the argument that multiple jobs often places one in a higher tax bracket. In attempting to deconstruct this statement, I attempted to examine this issue within a class context. First, can we truly compare a working-class parent working two minimum wage jobs to a professional working two jobs at her/his professional rates/salary? I will argue that a professional working an extra job aimed at greater disposable income versus a working-class, single mother working two or three minimum wage jobs to keep food on the table and a roof over her children's head is vastly different. It must also be recognized that her multiple minimum wage jobs does not offer job protection or the health benefits that many professional job packages offer its employees. Therefore she is required to pay for her children dental, prescriptions, eye ware, etc. and most importantly, she does not qualify for personal/family sick or emergency leave. In addition, any time lost due to personal illness, or due to responsibilities associated with raising children, represents a loss in income for these mothers. So while two professional parents may decide to forfeit one job in order to facilitate the other parent remaining in the home to provide for the family, one cannot

and should not equate that privileged position with the position of a working-class mother whose labour is being exploited, thus requiring her to work multiple jobs in order to meet her family's daily needs. She simply does not have the same degree of privilege as her middle-class counterpart.

Nonetheless, the fact that a parent is uneducated and economically disadvantaged should not be the reason her/his child does not achieve his/her full academic potential. To ensure the academic success of their children, based on the research findings, economically disadvantaged parents rely primarily on the educational system to provide an education that will enable their children to achieve their full academic growth. Instead, the interlocking effects of race and class inequalities within education have become the reasons many working-class youths are streamed in lower level academics.

7.4 Equality on paper - Contradiction between Policy and Practice

The Ontario secondary school program is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they will need to lead satisfying and productive lives in the twenty-first century. The program will prepare students for further education and work, and will help them to become independent, productive, and responsible members of society (Ontario Ministry of Education, Program and diploma requirements, 1999).

Despite the previously mentioned board policies and the Ministry's statement, the negative streaming of Black students has been an age old problem in Canada (Solomon, 1992; James & Brathwaite, 1996 and James, 1995; and Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC), 1994). In this research, issues around streaming have been one of the dominant themes that emerged.

In analyzing the narratives around the educational experiences of my 28 Black participants, it appeared that there is usually an initial attempt by educators to stream

Black students in low level academics. Streaming has become a systematic process that is made possible by withholding information regarding course selection, and/or the level of study required to successfully advance to the post-secondary level. Therefore, unless you have attended a post secondary institution in Canada, many parents may not understand that students must select courses at the advanced level in high school if they plan on accessing post secondary studies. Unfortunately, many working-class parents, particularly those who are recent immigrants often lack understanding about the process of streaming and believe that once their children enter high school they automatically have access to post secondary studies. Important to them is the reality that their children will have the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty by achieving higher education. One student noted that his parents gave up everything they had to immigrate to Canada in order to give them, a chance at a better life, but it did not work out that way because they did not understand the school system in Canada, so they got streamed in low level academics (Jack, 2004).

Consequently, this systematic process of streaming has a tendency to feed on the ignorance of working-class students and their families which, in turn, makes them a prime target for negative streaming. As a result, their working-class children are often streamed into low-level academic programs based on the recommendation of their elementary school without their full knowledge, or without their understanding of the impact such placement can have on the future career aspirations of their children (Dei, 1995; Oaks, 1985; Neito, 2004; Kozol, 1991; and Fine, 1993).

On the other hand, many middle-class parents are able to pre-select the courses their children will require in order to successfully advance to university. Therefore,

administrators, teachers, or guidance counselors, are not given the opportunity to negatively stream their children. Karen, a first year university student, noted that her parents were her guidance counselors and that they guided her through high school. However, she observed how her peers were disadvantaged because guidance counselors deliberately misled and streamed them into low-level academic courses because their parents were not able to guide them in a similar manner as her parents.

Karen's peers were misled into believing that they could begin with the easier general level courses in grade 9 and 10 then advance to the academic courses later on in grade 11. Naturally, they jumped at the opportunity to take the easier courses at the beginning of high school and later advance to the more difficult university preparatory courses in their senior year. However, Karen's peers realized in grade 11, like many other Black students who were streamed in low-level academics, that they needed to have taken advanced level courses at the grades 9 and 10 level in order to automatically advance to the grade 11 academic courses.

7.4.1 The Systematic streaming of Black youths - Killing of Dreams

Many Black youths enter high school with dreams of attending university or college. However, for many working-class youths, grade 11 is the first point of realization that higher learning was no longer an option for them - their dreams of attending university were "stolen". Their dreams were 'stolen' not because they were academically inferior, but because they were never given the 'real' opportunity to achieve those dreams. Rather than being given the opportunity to choose, the decision was made for them. This idea and notion of stolen dreams was exemplified by Jack as

he recalled his painful memories of the ways in which his dreams were stolen while also reflecting on the stolen dreams of his peers. He noted:

[Y]ou start from grade 8 and there is a big window, with so many choices, careers, dreams and hope for you. But as you go on, certain things would happen to you, and you go down and then certain dreams and careers start disappearing. So that vision that you started out with - gets smaller and smaller. By the time you know, there is nothing for you (Jack, 2004).

Similar to Jack and many other Black youths, the stories of stolen dreams have become common place in Ottawa's Black community. Stories of the systematic streaming, ethnic grading, denial of relevant courses, the deliberate misguidance and/or the withholding of relevant course information from Black youths have become a common educational practice in many schools despite claims of equality. For example, Solomon dreamed of attending medical school, and worked hard through to grade 11 maintaining mostly a grade 'A' average. However, his family relocated to another area of Ottawa and although he was given permission to remain in the high school where he was enrolled, he was no longer eligible for bus supplement because he was not within the school's boundary. Due to his family's financial situation, Solomon, was force to attend his new area high school; a high school he described as having a sizable non-white immigrant student population and a school with a reputation within the Black community of being overtly racist towards Black students. With tears in his eyes, Solomon noted that he was forced to transfer in his senior year to his new high school against the strong advice of a teacher who had previously taught at his new high school. Throughout the interview he kept repeating that at first he did not understand why the teacher did not want him to go there.

Once Solomon transferred, he noted that he quickly found out why his previous teacher did not want him to attend his new high school. However, he said that he kept hoping things would change and told himself, he just had to work even harder. But, no matter how hard Solomon worked, this once high achieving student was never able to achieve a grade past 60%. Within the two year period, grade 12-13, Solomon dropped out of school three times. As Solomon reconstructed his educational journey, occasionally fighting away tears, he noted that of the small number of students belonging to his ethnic group in his previous high school, he was the only one to have not completed high school or advance to university, although he was considered to be one of the most promising.

In addition to Solomon, Alain's dream was almost stolen during his last semester of high school. Alain, a senior graduating student was denied a compulsory course, that happened to have been his last credit to complete his graduation requirement, and most importantly, the course that was also a prerequisite for the university program for which he was seeking acceptance. Yet, he was denied access to the course by his guidance counselor who was fully aware that if Alain did not have access to this required course, it would result in him not graduating, and gaining access to university.

Alain only accessed the course after he brought his mother in to see the vice-principal who immediately registered him into the course. More troubling is the fact that Alain was a senior graduating student who was missing one credit for his application to university, yet he did not have the voice or power to access this course on his own. The question one must ask is why was it necessary for Alain, and other Black students to

bring their parents into school in order to access courses and streams that are necessary for them to realize their academic dreams and future career aspirations?

Jack also noted, “Some of my friends that are in university, that’s how they are there, they had to bring their parents to say ‘I want my son to go in the advance stream’. Otherwise they would not have had it. That’s how I found out that, that’s how you have to do it, I did not know” (2004). Why should Jack, Alain or any other student be denied access by guidance counselors to an education that *‘the student’* is requesting within his/her full rights and that *‘the student’* determines is necessary for him/her to achieve his/her full academic potential and advance to university? It appears that these ‘independent’ actions of school guidance counselors have contravened the educational rights of these students as stated by the ministry’s guideline, which states that the responsibilities of guidance counselors are:

Guidance counselors play a central role in the assessment and placement of students, and in helping them to enhance their self-esteem and relationships with others. They assist students in developing high expectations for themselves and appropriate educational plans, and provide support with life-skills training, pre-employment skills development, career orientation, exploration, and planning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 3.7 Guidance and Counseling).

In addition to the ministry’s guidelines, the OCDSB noted that all school decisions are to “make students the primary focus and recognize and value the diversity of its community by ensuring equity, accessibility and fairness of learning opportunities” (p.048, S4.2, 1998). In keeping with the spirit of equal educational opportunity, the OCCDSB also noted that “Our Catholic schools encourage academic excellence for all students while recognizing individual capabilities, personalities and needs” (Mission Statement / OCCSB - 19990823 / [Web Master](#)).

Despite the spirit in which the Boards' and the Ontario Ministry's guidelines are written, the educational experiences and reality of these and other Black students are contrary to the notion of equality, equity, access, and fairness being declared by these policies. For instance, it is very difficult to understand how the systematic streaming and inhibiting of academic advancement of Black students by guidance counselors could be interpreted as being promoting academic excellence, being fair, or helping to promote and enhance positive self-esteem in Black students, as stated in the above guidelines by the OCDSB, OCCDSB and the Ministry. Can these guidance counselors' actions help Black students develop 'high levels of expectation' within themselves, when the underlying message inherent in their actions say - 'I don't think you are able to achieve success at the academic level'? According to the participants, many school guidance counselors' actions are motivated by racial stereotyping that views Black students as academically inferior, therefore, their actions are demonstrative of the 'low level expectations' they themselves harbor towards Black students, which was acknowledged by the Ministry's statement below:

There is evidence that many Aboriginal and other racial and ethno-cultural minority students have been inappropriately streamed into programs with low expectations. The programs in which students are placed may have a significant impact on students' future career aspirations and their long-term quality of life (Ontario Ministry of Education, 3.6 Student Evaluation).

Regardless of the low expectation educators have of Black students, social class was the factor that determined which student was successfully targeted and streamed in non-academic program. As a result, the students from middle-class family backgrounds who were of university age had a smooth and successful transition towards beginning their post-secondary journey. On the other hand, their working-class peers suffered

tremendous barriers during the process, or were continuing their struggle to complete the high school requirements in order to qualify for university/college entrance.

In addition, the research also revealed an important difference between middle-class and working-class parents with regards to streaming. Many middle-class parents have either attended university here or abroad. Consequently, they have a fairly good grasp of the process involved in advancing from high school to post-secondary study. In contrast, many working-class parents may not have achieved a level of education comparable to their middle-class counterparts. Nonetheless, they expressed similar educational and career dreams and aspirations for their children to those of middle-class parents. For example, the goal of many working-class parents is that their children will have the opportunity to access an education that will enable them to break the cycle of poverty. Their strategies for ensuring access to such education is by working hard, often multiple jobs, to provide for their children's economic needs.

They believe that taking care of their children's basic economic needs will create the conditions and personal motivation necessary for learning. In turn, their children are expected to work hard in school in order to succeed academically and achieve upward social mobility. Once working-class parents have met what they believe is their parental responsibilities, and their children are motivated to learn, this strategy then places enormous trust in the school system and relies heavily on the integrity and fairness of teachers, similar to the educational system in their homeland, often referred to as 'back home'.

It is critical to note that in deconstructing the educational realities of Black students, community leaders as well as several parents have identified a 'back home' reference used by immigrant parents in the way they relate to and interact with the Canadian educational system. As such, it is essential to deconstruct this notion of 'back home' as it relates to the educational plight of Black youths in Ottawa's school system. It is also relevant to illuminate the ways in which this 'back home' mentality of parents together with an inherently unequal educational system forms the basis for much of the negative streaming affecting working-class Black youths.

7.4.2 Streaming made possible due to parents' lack of understanding

A consistent theme emerged from the narratives which identified that many parents' lacked understanding of how the Canadian educational system is structured and operates, particularly at the high school level. It became clear during the interviews with parents, educators, and community leaders that there is a very serious gap between what parents perceived to be the role and responsibility of teachers in Canada compared to their understanding of the role and responsibility of teachers in their traditional homeland. As such, there was a consistent referencing of 'back home' throughout the interviews. It was also very clear that parents' understanding of the role of educators as referenced to 'back home' was intricately linked to the conservative view of education. For example, Hirsch argues that each child is to be taught what he or she needs to know therefore educators have a duty to supply children with what they 'sorely need' (Hirsch, 1999). Thus, the role of education within this framework is removed from the parents and their cultural communities, and placed in the hands of specialized educators who know what knowledge is recognized, valued and is to be taught to children.

As discussed earlier in chapter two, this view of education does not value indigenous knowledge. Education is organized around the colonizer's knowledge and language and superimposed on colonized groups by devaluing and replacing their indigenous ways of knowing. One such example of this type of educational arrangement that comes to mind is the history of Canada's First Nations people and residential schooling. In attempting to "civilize" the 'natives', First Nation's children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in residential schools with the aim of teaching them what they 'sorely need' to know. To accomplish this, the roles of teachers and parents were redefined, made distinct, and then superimposed on native parents and children. These newly sculpted roles were also rooted in European values while devaluing native/traditional cultures and values. Most importantly, the students within this schooling arrangement were expected to honor, respect and obey the teacher like his/her parent.

Similar to the colonization of Canada's First People, the colonization of Black Africans by Europeans and North Americans resulted in the role of education being assigned exclusively to the teacher, with no parental involvement. Within a Caribbean and African context, a tremendous degree of trust evolved between the community and the schools, because, although the curriculum and schooling were organized around European standards, the teachers were Black. Therefore, teachers were respected and trusted and high expectations became the norm. Only when a break within the teacher/child relationship occurred would the parent be contacted. In such cases, the teacher would often consult with the parent on the appropriate corrective action to be taken with the student. Due to the level of trust invested in the parent/teacher

relationship in their traditional homelands, many parents entrusted the well-being of their children entirely to the schools.

In many third world countries, '*back home*' as it was often referred to by participants, it was quite possible for a working-class parent to hope and expect that through education their child/ren would attain a level of education that far exceeded their own. Within this tradition, it was believed that if you worked hard, you could be whatever you wanted to be. Therefore, working-class parents could envision 'my little doctor, my little lawyer' etc., and as parents, they often laboured twice as hard to ensure that the economic means was provided for their children to achieve an education that can ensure the actualization of their dreams. As noted in chapter 6, one Caribbean community leader states:

Even back home you and I might have grown up in the same high school you may have become a teacher and I become something else. Just knowing Janet was teaching my kid, I have faith in you but here it's not the same. Now....we are too busy working, it's almost like you put your kids in the school and with '*blind faith*' hope that the school brings up a professional '*like back home*' [emphasis added] (Horace, 2003).

Community leaders from Africa noted:

The way the education system worked '*back home*' is that the teachers played two roles - a teacher and parent, so you send your kids to school and you don't have to worry about anything. They will discipline them, teach them and if necessary counsel them [emphasis added] (Francis, 2004).

It is very tough, especially when you are an immigrant new to the country and you don't know how the system works. Because '*back home*' in Africa, we use to send kids to school and the teacher would do his job, we just '*trust him*' and there was nothing to worry about. So when we came to Canada...we just put our kids in the system and that was it....and when there is any concern, like the kid is not doing good, then the teacher will let us know...but the bigger role is usually the teacher. We only come in if there are big problems [emphasis added] (Sharon, 2004).

Again, through colonization, people of African descent were trained to believe in the knowledge and superiority of teachers. They were trained to believe that 'the teacher', and not the parent, knows what is best for the child, thus this relationship demanded total trust and loyalty on the part of the parent. Today, many parents continue to believe in the colonial mentality that once children's essential needs are met, then the conditions for learning has been created, thus the parent has fulfilled his/her role and the educating of the child is to be left to the teacher. Whether one is from the Caribbean, or Africa, this colonial mentality around the role of the teacher/parent relationship was transported to Canada and applied to the role of Canadian teachers. As a result, the educating/teaching of the children continues to be entrusted to the teachers, by immigrant families, similar to the practice of education in their previously colonized homelands.

This notion of blind faith and trust is critical to understanding the plight facing many Black families, because parents, particularly working-class parents, continue to lack understanding within the Canadian system. Their approach to the Canadian educational system is similar to their approach 'back home'. They have entrusted the role of educating their children to the teachers, unquestioningly. Not understanding the implication of various educational streams, generally, they unquestioningly accept suggestions and recommendations that often place their children in low-level academic streams; streams that deny them access to an education that would enable them to achieve their full academic potential and achieve upward mobility.

Today, the philosophy of inclusive schooling is centered on parental input and involvement. So, Black parents are now being invited to participate in an educational

system where their input is essential to facilitate their children's academic growth. Parents are expected to be visible by spending time in the classroom, helping children with homework, serving on school committees, attending school trips and various other activities. However, Black parents coming from former colonized cultures are not prepared or informed on what their new educational responsibility entails, particularly if they are facing multiple interlocking barriers along linguistic, class, cultural and racial lines. For example, an educator noted:

At one school here in Ottawa parents were not coming at all. It appeared that they weren't interested and when homework was sent home the children signed it. But that was because the moms didn't read or couldn't sign because they didn't understand the language, and school system, so kids would sign and bring it back to the teacher. They just did not understand how the system works (Roxanne, 2004).

Based on the research findings, many Black parents face multiple barriers, including a lack of understanding about the educational system as noted previously. As one community leader noted, "The problem that mothers are facing is that their kids are integrating more than the parents. They are learning the language quicker, they are learning the system quicker and the mothers are left behind in the dark" (Francis, 2004). Indeed, the parents are being left behind with no training on what 'an inclusive' educational system looks like, how it differs from their previous system and their role in the new educational structure.

For instance, if parents do not receive phone calls from their children's teacher, then they assume that their children are doing well in school and there are no scholastic concerns. Remember, this was how it worked 'back home', so when they receive their children's term report and the child is failing a subject, they become outraged because they were unaware that there was a problem at school. In an attempt to show their

displeasure, they often refuse to sign the report card. In turn, a parent not signing a report card is interpreted by the teacher as the parent lacking interest in the child's schooling. The relationship between the parent and the teacher is further strained and the child is caught in the middle. One leader noted, "the mother refuses to sign the report card in protest, the child goes to school and the teacher is asking for the report card repeatedly, out of frustration and embarrassment, the child then signs the report card without the parent knowing" (Sharon, 2004).

Consequently, working-class parents' involvement in schools continue to be marginal in some cases because they think that is what is expected of them and in other cases, they feel unwelcome and alienated due to language, cultural, class and racial differences. On the other hand, teachers often mislabel and misread working-class parents' lack of involvement as an indication of lack of interest. Based on the narratives of the teacher participants', many teachers do not understand the impact of multiple interlocking barriers on working-class parents. As a result, the Black community in Ottawa is now faced with an educational system where the relationship between teachers, administrators and parents are maligned with distrust and misunderstanding to the detriment of many Black youths of African/Caribbean decent. One leader noted

[B]efore I used to blame my kids saying 'oh you are the one who is not doing the work, you are the one who is giving problem not listening to your teacher. And it is because I still had that mentality of 'back home' but now I see differently and I really feel sorry for them to be in that type of learning environment (Sharon, 2004).

Given the racial and class inequalities inherent in Ottawa schools, many Black parents now understand that the blind faith and trust that they had in their educational system 'back home' is not applicable to the Canadian educational system. Nonetheless,

they are in a quandary as to what measures are needed to correct the situation facing Black youths, particularly working-class males. Brathwaite noted, “we need to serve as ‘guardian angels’ for our children and to keep watch over them. Who is better placed than parents (in a moral sense) to assume this role? (Brathwaite, 1996). The parents, community leaders, and educators have spoken and they have identified Ottawa schools as a hostile learning environment, as such, they have begun to ‘keep watch’ over the Black youths in Ottawa.

7.4.3 School as a hostile environment

In keeping watch, the participants’ overwhelming consensus is that there is validity in Black youths’ claims that their teachers don’t care about them and that they are often subjected to differential treatment along racial and class lines. School, for many Black youths, has become a place of miseducation, pain, abuse, stolen dreams, disillusionment and bad memories. There is no misunderstanding around the students’ feelings in regards to the education they are receiving in Ottawa area high schools, or the prevailing attitudes their teachers harbor towards them. One student noted that her greatest desire is to become a lawyer, but expressed sincere doubt that the education and her learning environment will enable her to actualize her dream. She noted: “our teachers don’t care about us and they even tell us” (Sara, 2004).

Having reflected upon the words of this student, the major question we must ask ourselves as educators is – have we stopped ‘caring’ about our students? How do we envision nurturing, developing, and preparing our youths for democratic citizenship in the educational system being described by these participants? A citizenship that entitles them to full and equal participation in society’s social, political, and economic

structures despite race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion etc. More importantly, should teachers be allowed to tell their students that they don't 'care' if they learn? Is that not the role of a teacher – to educate 'all' students equally and to care if their students are learning? hooks argues that caring teachers are always enlightened witnesses for our students. *Since our task as teachers is to nurture their academic growth, we are called to serve them* [emphasis added] (hooks, 2003).

"We are called to serve them", is also reflected in not only the Ministry's mission statement but also in the OCCSB and OCDSB mission statements and guiding principles. It is my position that in serving our students we are called to prepare a nurturing, caring, safe, welcoming, and friendly learning environment in order to promote academic excellence. Consequently, there is a real dilemma when students enter Canadian classrooms and are being told 'I don't care if you learn', "I am here because I am getting paid" (Sara, 2004).

Critical to the discussion is this notion of 'enlightened witnesses' to which hooks referred. I will argue that teachers such as the ones being described by the participants are rather 'unenlightened' witnesses. The interpretation of 'enlightened witnesses' that I will embrace is one whereby teachers understand the inherent stratification of social groups along racial, economic, religious, and cultural lines and the ways such stratification works to either privilege or disadvantage certain groups. Enlightened teachers have developed awareness and maintain a critical consciousness of the many ways in which 'whiteness' favors and privileges members of the dominant group. 'Enlightened' educators have also developed critical awareness and understanding of the significant impact multiple barriers have on non-white individuals when

interlocking barriers such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability operates simultaneously to further marginalize students who have been historically disadvantaged.

Having this awareness enables educators to intervene on behalf of students in an attempt to equalize a system that often operates to further marginalize them. For example, one working-class parent noted that when her sons misbehaved in school, rather than sending her sons to the office, knowing that they would be suspended their teacher calls home and requests her assistance. The strategy being used by the teacher is one that engages the parent, while developing and modeling a caring and nurturing relationship with the student. She further noted that her sons love and respects this teacher because they know he cares about them. On the other hand, an unenlightened teacher would have discarded them by sending them to the office for suspension.

One of the most difficult aspects of this project was enduring the transference of pain as the students expressed and described their school experiences:

[H]igh school is supposed to be the best years of your life but I can't wait to get out (Charles, 2004).

This school system has started to look like a prison sentence, they are waiting for a reason to get us out of the system (Amos, 2004).

[H]ow can we fight such a system, we are at their mercy (Sara, 2004).

For these students, school represents a place of struggle, an unsafe learning environment where they are not welcome, where they are just waiting to be discarded. The dream of using education as a tool in breaking the cycle of poverty by attaining a level of education that surpass their parent is becoming doubtful for those in school, and a lost and stolen dream for those that have already been pushed out. Students like Alain and

Jack were explicit in their statements and beliefs that they were rejected by their educational system because of racism and negative stereotyping. Unfortunately, Alain gave up the battle and continues to struggle with the lost of dignity, shame, and humiliation that he suffered during his last two years in high school. On the other hand, despite his pain and continued struggles to deal with the educational injustices that he was also made to endure, Jack continues to struggle to achieve his parents' dream, which has also now become his dream, of attending university.

Like all members of subordinated groups who must cope with the negative stereotypes imposed upon them in practically all circumstances where dominators rule, African Americans have suffered and continue to suffer trauma, much of it the re-enactment of shaming (hooks, 2003).

hooks has successfully captured the essence of the continued suffering Black working-class students endure when they experience the kind of educational experiences that the student participants have continually described throughout this research project. Another area of intense frustration that the student participants expressed was in relation to the view that they are academically inferior, thus they are required to consistently work twice as hard to be equal with their white peers.

7.4.4 Working twice as hard – due to low teacher expectation

Low expectation by white teachers of Black students was a common educational experience that was shared amongst the participants. The student participants made an impressive argument against an unequal educational system that not only challenges them to consistently prove that they are academically and intellectually equal to white students but forces them to work twice as hard as their white peers to maintain academic

recognition. They also argued that even when they do establish their intellectual and academic abilities, rather than being encouraged to improve on their achievements, they are frequently viewed with suspicion and continue to be treated as academically and intellectually inferior students by teachers, guidance counselors and administrators, despite their hard work.

The literature also supports the claims being made by participants that many white educators have low expectation of Black students because of racism, (Solomon, 1992, Dei, 1995; Brathwaite & James, 1996). According to the Ontario Ministry of Education "It is important that teachers have high expectations of all students. Racial and ethno-cultural biases and stereotyping may influence teacher perceptions and expectations of what students are capable of achieving. In turn, such expectations may influence students' expectations of themselves (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1992). Nonetheless, despite the Ministry's ideals, low teacher expectation towards Black students remains a problem for many Black students, especially student from working-class families.

One high school senior provided a perfect example of the inequality existing in Ottawa's high schools. He noted that after receiving a math grade of 75% the teacher congratulated him on this wonderful achievement. However, his white friend who also received the exact grade in the course was told by the same teacher that his grade was not good enough and was counseled on how to improve his grade in order to increase his chance of gaining access to university. The student noted that the teacher informed his friend that 75% was not good enough to compete at the university level so he needs to work harder to improve the grade. The student questioned why his white teacher

considered his grade of 75% to be good enough for him a Black student, but the same grade was not good enough for the white student (2004).

The student felt that this teacher did not expect him to advance to post-secondary studies at the university level. Therefore, attaining a grade of 75% in math far exceeded the low expectation his teacher held of him, thus, no further encouragement was necessary. However, given that post-secondary studies was a natural and expected progression for the white student, it was necessary to counsel him in a manner that will increase his chances of gaining acceptance to the University of his choice, which meant improving his 75% grade. This student realized that he must work two times harder than his white friend because they are not equal, based on the message that was conveyed to him by his math teacher.

It is also important to note that despite class differences, both working-class and middle-class students felt they were being subjected to low teacher expectation. Karen is a middle-class, first year university student who noted that as Black students, teachers assume that you are not bright so you have to work hard from the first day you enter the classroom (Karen, 2004). Karen's voice also reflected the voices of several other participants:

"When you work hard and show them that they were wrong, they act surprise as if they did not think that you could do it"

"You walk to the class, the first day you always have to prove yourself before teachers can accept the fact that you are a good student"

"Work hard no matter what and don't let other people put you down"
(2004).

This need to consistently prove their academic worth has been a recurring theme that has emerged throughout the narratives of both groups of student participants, although

working-class students suffered the greatest impact. Consequently, Black students report that they were saddled with burden of achieving their academic goal in an environment of low teacher expectation.

Class status was a significant factor in determining the ability of students to successfully withstand low teacher expectation. Middle-class students were less affected by low teacher expectation and were able to deflect such attempts to undermine their intellectual abilities. Many middle-class parents report that they understand and are aware of the destructive ways in which the educational system attempts to erode Black students' self-esteem and academic worth. Therefore, they provide the necessary external support that reinforce and reaffirm their children's confidence and academic worth. One parent noted:

We sit with our kids, we know what they are doing in school and we know how they are doing. We know our kids better than the teachers, so they cannot tell us about our kids' academic abilities, we tell them (Francine, 2004).

On the other hand, many working-class parents lack the voice and power to provide a similar support base for their children. This is not because working-class parents are less attentive to the educational needs or struggles of their children. Rather it is due to the fact working-class parents, particularly those who are facing multiple interlocking barriers, are often disempowered, often lack understanding of the educational system, and often lack the skill to effectively negotiate on behalf of their children within the school system. In contrast, middle-class parents have the knowledge, power and resources to advocate successfully and/or take any action that they deem necessary to achieve their desired outcome.

One working-class parent suggested, “As a poor Black parent I would encourage them, all I can do is encourage them, and tell them not to give up, they can do it, they might be poor but they can fight it, they can beat it” (Iona, 2004). The words of this economically disadvantaged, single mother represent her strategy in her attempt to combat the destructive effects that racism and low teacher expectation have on her children. She, like many other working-class Black parents often feel overwhelmed, alienated and powerless because they are often unable to successfully challenge and/or influence their children’s school. In addition to low teacher expectation, Black students also report unfair grading and evaluation by white teachers.

7.4.5 Ethnic Grading

The term ‘Ethnic Grading’ was developed during my Masters program when all the Black students received the same grade. At that point I referred to what we had experienced as ‘ethnic grading’. Today, throughout this research project, the student participants consistently complained about the unfair grading practices of teachers aimed at undermining their intellectual abilities and requiring them to consistently prove themselves. Several participants noted that teachers have a tendency to assign a mental grade to Black students on the first day of class by just looking at them and lowering their level of expectation towards them. Ethnic grading is used here to explain the process whereby teachers assign grades based on one’s race and/or ethnicity rather than on the quality and content of the paper/assignment. It is also important to note that English related writing assignments that allow students to express their varying worldviews appear to be areas of great contention. It is through these types of writing

assignments that teachers are able to erode the confidence and lower the self-esteem of Black students.

The premature evaluation and negative attitude towards Black students' academic abilities has its roots in racism and negative stereotyping, which in turn results in low teacher expectation. The belief that Black students' are academically inferior is later transformed into action through ethnic grading, which off course produces a student with academically inferior grades thereby continuing to propagate the view held by some, that Black students are academically and intellectually inferior. Students, particularly Black working-class students, learn very early in their school life that they have little chance of successfully overturning the lowered grades and so, more often than not, they do not seek re-evaluation of their work. Even if they do, it often yields no results, but rather an attempt is made to justify the grade. According to June, "If I had the power to change things it would be the way teachers assign grades to people, just the first day you enter the class" (June, 2003). As noted earlier, this is especially true in courses where subjective interpretation provides room for teachers to use differences in styles, values, and voice to legitimize and justify the lowered grades they assign.

Given the subjective nature of English related courses, teachers are able to use their personal values/views, style and differences in expressing ideas, to lower minority students' marks. It is important to note that we all view the world through different lenses due to our differing experiences, and as such, we also often express our view of the world differently. Many Black students, elementary to post-graduate, are expected to not only share the world view of the dominant group but also express those views in similar terms and language, otherwise it is considered sub-standard. As a result, there is a

constant revision of the expressed written work of minority students, and in cases where no revision is necessary, the student is suspected of not being the original author. Either way, it results in lowered grades. According to Solomon, "Basically, it is the essay writings that really got to me. Because before I had done a lot of essay writings but in grade 12 I think they expected you to do a different style. I am used to a different style of essay writing and different teachers have different style of writing" (Solomon, 2004). In addition to Solomon's experiences, I recently spoke to a graduate student who had her mark lowered primarily because the professor did not like her analysis or the voice used to express her findings. This graduate student who was an English major with a 4.0 GPA was subjected to having to restate her written work in a voice that reflected the views of the white professor who was evaluating the work.

The pain this graduate student experienced was also similar to the pain many of the students shared with me. Often, although Black students are aware of ethnic grading, they lack the voice and power to challenge such grading system. Consequently, this strategy of breaking students' confidence and self-esteem through ethnic grading is generally effective. Solomon noted, "[t]hey just tell you here is your mark take it the way it is....to go from an 'A' student in one school to 60% in another it breaks your encouragement, it breaks your confidence, and self-esteem (Solomon, 2004). Like Solomon, many students in school, particularly, students who are economically disadvantaged, succumb to the devaluation and marginalization of such a process and give up. Their fight to challenge ethnic grading in their high school is a difficult and lonesome struggle.

7.4.6 Black students provide evidence of ethnic grading

Based on the narratives, many Black working-class students are often left with no option but to devise a means of attempting to validate their suspicion that teachers are subjecting them to unfair grading practices. One such means was explained by Solomon who allowed a white friend to copy his assignment because this friend had not done the assignment on schedule.

The two identical assignments that were written by Solomon, a Black student, received two very different grades. The lowered grade was assigned to Solomon, the Black student who authored the papers, while the white student who duplicated the assignment received the higher grade. Solomon confirmed at that point that 'it is the student being marked and not the paper' (Solomon, 2004).

Previously, Solomon could not understand how he dropped from being an 'A' student to a student who could not earn a grade pass 65%. After Solomon's experience with his peer, he noted that he then realized that no matter what quality assignment he produced, it would not receive a fair assessment because he was a Black student. He did not understand how two identical assignments could have received such variance in grades. The most painful aspect of his ordeal, was that his white peer walked away with a top grade while he had to accept the low mark.

Solomon's case is not isolated. In a similar example, a grade 13 student noted that after repeatedly getting low marks from her English teacher and after repeated failed attempts to have the teacher clarify how she could improve future assignments, the frustrated student turned in an assignment without her name affixed to it in an effort to see what mark she would receive. Similar to Solomon, this student also noted that

she was unable to receive a mark past 65% until she handed in an unnamed assignment. The assignment received a mark over 90%, at which point the teacher would not return the claimed assignment to the student claiming that she had not handed in an assignment. The student was forced to describe the assignment in detail in order to convince the teacher that the assignment belonged to her (2003). Ethnic grading is a serious educational problem at all levels of the Canadian educational system. Whether an elementary student or a doctoral candidate, ethnic grading has substantial emotional and psychological impact on the student.

7.4.7 Impact – shaming, doubting and internalizing ethnic grading

Ethnic grading is a very powerful and effective strategy for breaking a student's confidence and lowering his/her self-esteem. Whether a student is in an elementary, high school, bachelor or doctoral program, assigning them the lowest grades reinforces the stereotypical notion of Black inferiority. Unless students have external support from parents, family, community members, or peers, they are at risk of succumbing to the messages that they are academically inferior. Students who have experienced ethnic grading often experience shame and eventually become de-motivated and disengaged from the educational process. Having been personally subjected to this type of grading system, I was able to not only connect to the words of the participants, but also to the personal '*shaming*' one experiences when one is the recipient of such grading.

'Shame' is a term I encountered while reading bell hooks' book titled Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope, in which she states that "One of the ways racism colonizes the minds and imaginations of black people is through systematic shaming" (hooks, 2003). In analyzing the narratives of the participants, many of the students had

began to internalize the shame associated with ethnic grading and to some extent they also began to self-blame. One such example is Solomon:

I went from a supportive system to a system where what you get is what you get. You can complain and do this and that but the matter is you are still that person. And that broke my confidence, and I withdrew eventually. My last two years of high school was very destructive for me. My spirit was broken and I was stuck. I was in a world pool taking courses dropping courses and so I withdrew from high school. This happened at the end of grade 12 and OAC that was the changing period of my life. I was no longer motivated and so basically it was hard to concentrate. I would take 60% of the blame for failing because I was not motivated anymore and I experienced problems concentrating. To go from being an 'A' student to not getting what you expect to get, it breaks your encouragement it breaks your confidence, and self-esteem (Solomon, 2004).

Solomon exemplifies bell hooks' notion of shaming in that he goes from being an 'A' student for three years in a middle-class high school to becoming a failing student in the first term of his new high school that had a reputation of being racially intolerant. Solomon entered his new high school in grade 12 and dropped out three times before finally withdrawing permanently. He described being left behind and feeling ashamed. He noted that:

The first time I went to the principal and told him I wanted to withdraw and basically the principal encouraged me. I was looking to get 80% and not 50's and that was really hard since I was used to getting good grades. When you withdraw the first time from the last year of high school it is really disheartening. I dropped out three times in my OAC year (Solomon, 2004).

Coming from a system where he received support to a system where he was encouraged to dropout had a profound effect on him, from which he was unable to recover. Although he initially began to blame himself for his academic demise, as he began to reflect back and deconstruct the differences in his school experiences between the two schools, he realized that despite his hard work he was unable to break the ethnic grade barrier that was laid out for him. According to hooks, "When educators evaluate

reasons some students fail while others succeed they rarely talk about the role of shame as a barrier to learning” (hooks, 2003).

Eventually, the effects of ethnic grading got to this once high achieving student, he felt ashamed and isolated with no where to turn. He felt that he was letting his parents down. Solomon had worked hard over his high school years to become a role model to his younger siblings, but most of all, because he wanted to become a medical doctor. That dream was stolen from him. So after dropping out three times, he said that he finally accepted that his dream was gone and that he could not longer attend medical school, so he withdrew for the last time.

7.4.8 Ethnic grading as a means of denying access to higher learning

While gathering the data, this concept of ‘shaming’ became clearly evident as many of the other working-class student participants described their educational experiences through lowered voices, and often shaking their hung heads. Similar to many of the participants, Saul was also subjected to ethnic grading through his schooling. Saul’s teacher knew that he needed a minimum of 60% in his English course, and although he worked hard to surpass his already 78% average, he nonetheless completed his final course examination and earned a 59%.

Saul also encountered multiple levels of shaming due to the fact he came originally from Africa. When he first entered his high school, an immediate assumption was made that he was unable to speak English. So rather than him being placed in grade 11, he was placed in grade 9. Today, Saul feels that being Black and coming from a third world country, he was viewed as academically inferior which motivated the

decision to place him in grade 9 instead of grade 11. However, unlike Solomon, Saul had a community resource person who understood the system and was able to guide him despite the multiple barriers he faced. As such, he successfully advanced through the system and eventually gained access to university. Nonetheless, Saul remained very angry that he was made to endure these educational experiences and states that he fully understands why his Black peers did not survive. Saul attributed part of his success to the fact that he arrived in Canada as a senior student,

When I came here to this country I was matured, I had a strong sense of identity, compared to my friends in a lot of ways. So being put down put all the time, I sort of accepted it as a way of how this system works. It's a reality, that's how it is going to be. I told myself I don't care. I am just going to go through it, just like that. When I saw the situation, I just started working twice as hard, just to move on (Saul, 2004).

As a new immigrant, Saul accepted being put down all the time because he recognized that the problem was systemic. So unlike his peers, he did not internalize the problem since his sense of self had already been developed prior to entering the Canadian school system. Saul's self-esteem did not become eroded, because he was only exposed to this inequality and differential treatment for only two years, compared to his peers and many other Black working-class students who have had to live their entire educational experiences being devalued and constantly reminded that they are intellectually inferior and do not belong. According to hooks (2003) and also existing in Ottawa's educational system is the concept that,

[E]quality is achieved because Black children go to the same schools as their white peers, therefore they have access to all that is needed to be equal and free. Such thinking denies the role that devaluation and degradation, or all strategies of shaming, play in maintaining racial subordination in education (hooks, 2003).

Although both middle-class and working-class participants do have access to education, their access is not equal since the treatment they receive differs along race, gender, and class lines. As such, despite the fact both groups of participants were Black, the working-class student participants, especially the males, were more greatly impacted by the various forms of educational inequality existing in Ottawa's educational system. According to Grant and Sleeter, as teachers, we can guarantee that all students will have their identities shaped partly by their race, social class and gender; and all of them will grow up in a society that is still in many ways racist, sexist, and classist. You are the only one who can guarantee what you will do about that (Grant & Sleeter, 2003).

Many of the racist, sexist, and classist ideology that Grant and Sleeter talks about is often reproduced, perpetuated, and reinforced in Canadian classrooms through ethnic grading and other forms of educational inequality that are designed to send a message of academic inferiority to the minority student. Thornhill (1984) noted that "Visible-minority students are exposed to discriminatory educational practices which, like a multitude of timeless voices, tells them loudly or softly that they are intellectually, emotionally, physically and morally inferior" (p. 205). It is these educational practices that the community must begin to address. Parents, students, community leaders, and educators are calling for better teacher training/preparation for pre/in-service teachers.

7.5 The need for Ottawa schools to racially diverse

The overwhelming plea from participants was one for greater racial diversity amongst the teaching and administrative staff within Ottawa's schools. Given the racially diverse student population in Ottawa schools, it does not appear to be an

unreasonable demand that schools should begin to also reflect the diversity of the students that they serve. Enlightened Black teachers are needed who will care, nurture, and serve as role models and who can relate to the struggles being experienced by Black youths, especially students from working-class background. Using hooks and Thomas, I frame my meaning of 'enlightened' Black teachers to mean those:

- who will feel the need to humanely confront and challenge conservative peers,
- who will have the skills necessary to forge a vision of solidarity in ending domination
- who do not act in collusion with the status quo
- who do not betray their people in order to maintain their status and public image or by pretending that they know best and are best positioned to protect the collective public good of all Black people irrespective of class (hook, 2004).
- who will not need proof that the problems of racism and unequal power are present in schools
- who understand and acknowledge the persistence of stereotypes and prejudices (Thomas, 1993).

It is felt that with more enlightened Black teachers, particularly Black males, there will be greater empathy for the negative stereotyping and labeling being suffered by Black students, especially economically disadvantaged students. Dei argues that in an environment of resistance, teachers, administrators and students must critically discuss race and oppression, and link theory to lived experience (Dei, 1998). This is not to say that white teachers lack the ability to critically discuss race and oppression, but I am arguing that the current 'whiteness' in Ottawa schools reinforces white dominance in education and thus preserve the status quo. Most critically, it is also this hegemony

that must be disrupted in order to break down the level of resistance within Ottawa schools. This resistance prevents teachers from recognizing, for example, the extent of racism faced by Blacks and other minority students (Solomon, 1995; James, 1995b; Blair, 1994 in Dei, 2000).

Another reality facing the Black community in Ottawa is that currently there is not one Black social worker located in either of the two school boards to address the growing racial concerns of Black students despite their increasing numbers in Ottawa schools. One educator noted, "They need more Black people in the school system, such as teachers and more importantly, social service workers that deals with kids on a one-on-one and group basis" (Marie, 2004). This gap in cultural services deprives Black students of an avenue for voicing their grievances of educational inequality within their schools.

Early intervention measures are seriously limited and/or hampered when schools do not make non-white/Black health and social services workers, available to their non-white/Black students. Since racism is being denied by white educators in the educational system, how can Black students who are experiencing issues around racism be expected to confide and disclose racial incidents to these same white educators who deny its existence? If teachers or health professionals are unable to connect to marginalized students, then students who are already isolated and alienated will become further marginalized despite the Boards policies that are aimed at providing an open and welcoming learning environment. The great need for understanding and connection was also exemplified by Adam, an educator, in his statement that "It is difficult to fight against such a system, but I am living proof that it can be done. Now, so many years

later I see the same thing happening to other Black kids, but I am here to make a difference” (Adam, 2004). Solomon, 1996 supports the call for a diverse teaching and administrative staff in that,

Representative role models from various racial and ethno-cultural groups serve not only as examples of accomplishment and curriculum with pertinent cultural and cognitive strategies that may lead to higher functioning of students of colour (Solomon, 1996 in Brathwaite & James 1996).

As noted by Solomon previously, Adam’s presence as a teacher now serves not only as a role model to non-white students, but his presence also has an impact on the curriculum he presents and the strategies he uses to engage and motivate marginalized students. Adam has repeatedly emphasized that by virtue of his own educational struggles to gain an equal education he is now able to become a positive role model to other Black students, particularly those who are being marginalized by the system because of race and economic differences. He also noted that many of the students are so beaten down it is difficult for them to start believing in themselves again (2004). The point is, he is able to advocate on behalf of, motivate and encourage marginalized students because he has been there, he knows what it is to have been beaten down and viewed as academically inferior. He also knows what it feels like to become disengage from an educational system that does not value him.

Equally as important to the discussion is the participants concern that, similar to having access to Black teachers and staff, there is also a need for diversity within the school curriculum.

7.5.1 Lack of diversity – Towards an inclusive curriculum

The cry for an inclusive curriculum is born out of the need for Blacks and other visible minority people to be reflected in the curriculum. A European focused curriculum, whether at the elementary or post-graduate level, in the face of a diverse student body, is a means of validating, recognizing, and affirming the contribution of Europe to the exclusion of other non-white, non-European groups. According to Henry et al, educational practices that maintain Eurocentric biases and ignore the histories and contributions of racial-minority groups are maintained by a value system that allegedly emphasizes fairness and equality for all students (Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees, 1998).

The maintenance of a white focused curriculum has resulted in Black students' alienation, exclusion, and devaluation. Charles, a senior high school student noted, "[T]hey will teach us about Hitler, but they won't teach us about Martin Luther King. We are not reflected in the curriculum at all, we are not anywhere close" (Charles, 2004). Yet, despite the fact that they are taught about the holocaust, they are not being taught about the quota limiting the access of Jewish student to Canadian universities, nor the many holocaust survivors that were initially rejected from Canada. In a 1938 memo written by Prime Minister Mackenzie King he stated,

We do not want too many Jews, but in the present circumstances we do not want to say so. We do not want to legitimize the Aryan mythology by introducing any formal distinction for immigration purposes between Jews and non-Jews. The practical distinction, however, has to be made and should be drawn with discretion and sympathy by the competent authorities, without the need to lay down a formal policy (Dirks, 1977 in Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees 1998).

There is an attempt to discard any aspect of Canadian history that threatens to unveil this 'false' untarnished image being portrayed by Canada both nationally and

internationally. Charles, like many other Canadian students, did not know about Canada's involvement in the slave trade of Black Africans; they do not know about the plight of the First Nations people and the residential school system; they did not know about the abuse suffered by many Asian Canadians despite their contribution to Canadian railways and mines; nor were they taught that South African apartheid system was modeled off Canada's policies for Canada's First Nations People (see Fleras, 2000; Frideres, 1990 in Li, 1990; Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees 1998). These are only a snapshot of the wealth of information that is available about our great country and information that is being denied to our students. Rather, they are made to feel that Europeans were the only significant contributors to the creation and building of our great nation.

It is only now that I am into university that I know about the contribution of many non-white people not just in Canada, but all over the world. If students know that Blacks have made great contribution to the development of North America and Europe they would have a better sense of who they are. They would have a sense that they are valued and are important to the development of Canada (Karen, 2004).

Karen's statement reflects the voice of the participants in that they do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Denying the history of many non-white, non-European groups is to deprive these groups of their rightful place in Canadian history and ultimately deny their future generation/children the pride, dignity, sense of belonging and most of all deny their sense of Canadian identity. The educational system has maintained and perpetuated the common perception that Black people were either non-existent in the development of Canada, or only arrived in Canada through recent migration from the Caribbean and Africa (Bristow et al, 1994, in Kong, 1996, in Brathwaite & James, 1996).

7.6 Concluding Thoughts

The issues discussed in this chapter represent the various themes that emerged from the narratives of students, educators, community leaders and parents. The themes identified the various manifestation of racism and its pervasiveness throughout the educational system and also the subtle and not so subtle ways in which racism works to negatively impact Black students, particularly working-class males. Issues of class differences also represented another dominant theme that surfaced to form a key component of the many interlocking barriers facing working-class youths. In various ways, these themes identified concrete contradiction between the policies of the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, and the Ottawa Carleton Catholic School Board and the students direct educational experiences.

The participants, in describing their educational experiences, provided both overt and covert examples of incidents involving racism, differential treatment, ethnic grading, and the unequal application of zero. They were also able to establish convincing arguments about the ways in which the educational inequality that they were facing in schools resulted in their shaming, alienation, isolation, criminalization, and their systematic withdrawal from schools while they are underage. Most importantly, students, parents, community leaders and educators were able to establish similar patterns of unequal power inherent in the dominant/minority relationship, which resulted in the differential treatments of both Black parents and students, particularly families from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, parents argued overwhelming that many of the negative stereotyping they received were connected to their class status. As such, despite the Boards' claims, they were not treated equally,

with respect, nor given a voice in decisions affecting their children's well being. It is my intention to use the information provided by the participants to support recommendations and future directions for Ottawa schools which will follow in the next chapter on personal reflections and recommendations.

CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Looking back - moving forward

Having examined the educational experiences of Black students within the educational system in Ottawa, and having analyzed the narratives from parents, educators and community leaders, I derived a clearly expressed view that Black youths are facing educational inequalities on multiple levels. Many of the areas identified by the research participants mirrored my own experiences at different levels of involvement within the field of education – as a parent, a student, and as a community activist. I believe I was even more privileged having experienced both the working-class and middle-class reality. This was at once intriguing yet disheartening. On one hand, I was privileged to be able to connect to the working-class parents because of my history and the similarity within our struggles to overcome the educational barriers aimed at denying our children access to an equal, quality education. On the other hand, having achieved upward social mobility, I also connected with the middle-class parents in that we shared the knowledge, power, and privilege that are associated with middle-class status, which is often necessary when negotiating within the educational system.

In addition, being a community worker, I have also served as a race and cultural consultant on numerous cases involving unequal educational practices and/or policies. As such, I was able to relate to the views being expressed by the community leaders and educators. Additionally, and very importantly, I connected with the student participants, since the educational barriers/struggles they and their peers faced were

identical to some of my educational experiences and those of my Black peers at the graduate and post-graduate levels. In other words, we at the graduate and doctoral levels were also experiencing issues around access, isolation, alienation, ethnic grading, unequal/differential treatment, the devaluation of our work and academic abilities, hostility in the learning environment, shaming, negative stereotyping, and most importantly, the sense of not being wanted.

Having personally experienced many of the educational barriers the participants described was emotionally and mentally trying for me. Coupled with my knowledge and experiences, these revelations brought on the realization that the educational inequalities being experienced by Black high school students were not only in existence at the elementary and high school level but was part of a cycle of educational inequality that extended through tertiary level educational institutions.

Most Canadian educational institutions of higher learning do not need a sign in front of their buildings to indicate that they are Eurocentric, patriarchal and, thus, systematically oppressive institutions. The environment, culture and organizational life in many western institutions provide enough experiences to allow non-western individuals to reach such conclusion (Dei, 1996).

Thus, the struggle to succeed at the graduate and postgraduate level was not an individual struggle but rather, a group struggle that was similar to the struggles being described by the high school students and which served to illuminate the pervasive and systemic nature of racial inequality within the field of education - elementary to tertiary.

Coming face to face with the realization that many of the educational struggles that I had experienced many years ago with my own children still existed was very depressing to me. In fact, in many cases, schooling has gotten worse for many working-class Black students. One educator noted – in my days, the police were never as

involved in schools as they are now and it is not that kids have gotten worst, but there is a funnelling of Black males into the justice system by schools (Adam, 2004).

My struggle to accomplish the very difficult task of breaking the Black youths' silence at the high school level is somewhat ironic, given that my peers and I were also struggling with similar issues at the graduate and post-graduate levels. However, the recommendations being brought forward are in response to the major concerns that were highlighted by the participants, which include:

- the frequent suspensions and expulsions of Black youths
- racism
- streaming
- the hostile nature of schooling
- Black students having to work twice as hard and being subjected to ethnic grading
- lack of diversity
- class issues
- re-education of Black parents
- establishing an organization for disadvantaged youths and their parents

My first recommendation will focus on the need for greater accountability within the educational system. The lack of statistical data will be the primary focal point at which I will begin.

8.2 Zero Tolerance and the lack of accountability

The students, parents, educators and community leaders have identified frequent suspensions and expulsions as one of the major educational inequalities facing Black youths in Ottawa schools. The participants purport that the unequal application of zero tolerance policies often results in unequal educational outcomes because of the criminalization, and/or frequent suspensions and expulsions of Black youths, especially working-class males. Participants assert that there is clear, observable, physical

evidence of school-aged Black youths, who ought to be in school, loitering during in-school-periods of the day in pockets of the community.

Despite this physical evidence and despite complaints from the Black community, the two school boards in Ottawa continue to deny claims of racism and differential treatment that are manifested by the frequent suspensions and expulsions of Black students. The problem is twofold. *First*, there is a lack of empirical research around zero tolerance and the application of such policies along racial lines within a Canadian context. The Black community's claims of racial disparity in school discipline are being dismissed by educators precisely because the empirical data needed to support such claims has not been collected. However, I would argue that the absence of collected data does not and should negate the existence of racism or other educational inequality, nor should it justify the reason such claims are being dismissed.

Although the Black community do not have access to the data with which to compile the necessary comparative statistics, the evidence, nonetheless, is visible within the community for all to see. Despite the availability of demographical data, the Ontario Ministry of Education, the two school boards in Ottawa and Statistics Canada have all opted to gather statistics around gender but not about race/ethnicity. *Second*, the omission of such data from routine statistical data collection, be it a deliberate ploy or a misguided decision, has to this point provided the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Boards in Ottawa, a certain legitimacy/boldness to deny claims of racially motivated mistreatment of Black students and the protection from accountability for practices associated with differential treatment, the unequal application of zero tolerance policies and the resulting suspensions or expulsions.

In my judgement, at the very least, the qualitative evidence about racism I have presented in this dissertation demonstrates the political need, and the ethical justification, for collecting the appropriate statistics. The continued failure to do so represents a political failure since the Black students, parents and educators are unlikely to establish democratic legitimacy of their grievances without access to relevant statistical evidence. It represents an ethical failure because the lack of statistical evidence obstructs the achievement of fundamental values such as personal liberty and social equality. Therefore, my recommendations are as follows:

8.3 Recommendations

1. Establish a provincial and/or national reporting system whereby each school board is responsible for gathering statistics on the number and frequency of in-school/out-of-school suspensions or expulsions, by a number of factors. Annual and quarterly reports must be produced.
 - Annual suspension and expulsion reports should contain the student's race, gender, and disability. Although Table A examines only race, it can be constructed to include the above mentioned factors similar to Table B. See table A & B.
 - Quarterly reports should include a supplementary table for each school showing students who have suffered multiple suspensions, their age, in/out of school suspensions and grade level of students. See Table B.
2. For each incident requiring the police involvement at school, a report should be constructed with data such as the student's grade, age, race, gender, and reason for police involvement, e.g. weapons, drugs, threats etc.
3. For each expulsion report the student's race, gender, age, grade, and reason for expulsion should be provided.
 - A supplementary report should also be available for students who have suffered previous multiple suspensions. This report should list intervention measures taken to retain students prior to expulsion.

- For students being expelled from the regular program and being transferred to adult education programs, add an additional column reporting the reason for the transfer.

Although it is recommended that school boards report annual statistics for all schools within their jurisdiction, quarterly and supplementary reports, should contain statistical data for individual schools. In doing so, trends will be easily detected and educators will be able to apply early intervention and/or corrective measures.

Table C below was extracted from a research project that was conducted by Gordon et al (2000), which showed the school suspension and expulsion rate by race in several cities in the United States.

Table C

	<u>Suspension & Expulsion Data by Race</u>						
	African American	Latino	Asian/PI	Native American	Other	White	
Austin, TX Students	18%	43%	2%	0%	0%	37%	All
	36%	45%	0%	0%	0%	18%	
Susp./Exp.							
Boston, MA	55%	23%	8%	0%	0%	13%	
	70%	19%	2%	1%	0%	9%	
Chicago, IL	53%	33%	3%	0%	0%	10%	
	63%	27%	1%	0%	0%	8%	
Columbia, SC	78%	0%	0%	0%	2%	20%	
	90%	0%	0%	0%	1%	9%	
Denver, CO	21%	50%	3%	1%	0%	24%	
	36%	45%	2%	1%	0%	16%	
Durham, NC	58%	4%	2%	0%	0%	36%	
	79%	2%	0%	0%	0%	18%	
Los Angeles, CA	14%	69%	7%	0%	0%	11%	
	30%	58%	3%	0%	0%	8%	
Miami-Dade County, FL	33%	53%	1%	0%	0%	12%	
	48%	43%	0%	0%	0%	8%	
Missoula, MT	0%	1%	2%	3%	0%	94%	
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Providence, RI	23%	46%	1%	1%	0%	21%	
	39%	45%	3%	0%	0%	13%	
Salem, OR	1%	10%	3%	1%	0%	84%	
	4%	22%	3%	2%	0%	69%	
San Francisco, CA	18%	24%	43%	1%	0%	14%	
	56%	19%	13%	1%	0%	11%	ERASE, 2000

The report revealed that Black and Latino students were more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their white peers. In addition, according to the report, Blacks were also suspended or expelled in numbers disproportionately greater than any other group (Gordon, Piana, Keleher, 2000) see also (Nieto, 2004; McLaren, 1994; Fine, 1998; Oaks, 1988). If adapted to the Canadian context, Table C above would enable Canadian educators and/or stakeholders to evaluate developing trends or disparities in the application of school discipline, similar to the United States. It would also enable educators to further examine the nature and degree of the problems that are contributing to these disparities. Based on the Boards' policies, intervention measures could then be employed in an effort to assist at risk students or groups who have been identified through the process.

In addition, this report would also become an internal check to ensure that teachers and administrators do not apply zero tolerance policies with partiality or unequally based on racial profiling or negative stereotyping. In other words, educators would be held accountable for continued racial disparity in school discipline because comparative suspension statistics from each school board in each city would be available to educators and stakeholders alike and will be open to public scrutiny. For example, in my attempts to envision how Table C above could be adapted in a manner that could expose any trends of racial disparity in school discipline, I redesigned Table C. Table D below represents the supplementary suspension report for Windsor School Board and includes factors such as total student population, total suspension, race, grade, gender, in-school versus out-of-school suspensions and most importantly, the

percentages of students in each group that have served multiple suspensions. See Table D below.

Table D

ABC High School, Windsor Board of Education
Supplementary Suspension Report, Fall 2004

1

Students		Suspensions			Suspensions by						
Group	Total	Total	In	Out	Gender M F	Grade 9 10 11 12	Multiple				
African Canadian	9%	35%	0%	100%	80% 20%	26% 30% 34% 10%	35%				
Asian	10 %	2%	50%	50%	100% -	100%	0%				
First Nation	9%	22%	10% 90%		70% 30%	25% 40% 25% 10%	10%				
Spanish	6%	20%	25%	75%	85% 15%	30% 45% 20% 5%	50%				
White	66%	21%	85%	15%	95% 5%	45% 50% 5% 0%	20%				
Other	-	-	-	-	- -	- - - -	-				

This supplementary report uses the total number of students and total suspensions by group per term and provides additional information not contained in the annual report. In other words, the supplementary report provides additional group by group data such as the percentage of students who have suffered multiple in/out-of-school suspensions, their grade level, their gender and most importantly their racial

¹ Table D above has been adapted and expanded from the ERASE, 2000 table. It offers the possibilities of the ways in which statistics can be gathered in a manner that is inclusive and at the same time transcends the bounds of race. I felt it was important to show the possibilities of detecting disparities across intersecting lines such as race, gender, disability, grade levels etc. Most importantly, the goal is to detect at an early stage trends of repeated in/out school suspensions and the grade level of students. The possibilities offers a means by which to identify students who are at 'at risk' of dropping out of the system. The ultimate goal is – retention through early intervention.

background. A similar table can also be used to track trends in expulsion patterns as well as the rate of students being criminally processed due to school related incidents.

The statistics provided by these tables will enable educators to identify:

- Gender and/or racial disparity amongst groups in regards to school discipline
- Existing racial and/or gender disparity in the introduction of students to the justice system, via schools
- Ethno-cultural/racial group that appears to be at-risk
- Existing racial and/or gender disparity in regards to the degree of instructional time being missed due to out-of-school suspensions
- Racial and/or gender disparity in the expulsion of students from regular school program and into adult education
- Individual schools and school districts with the highest disparity in the application of school discipline
- Grade levels where the greatest impact of the unequal application of zero tolerance policies are felt
- Indirectly identify teachers or administrators who pose the greatest risk to students with regards to the partial administration of discipline

In addition to the suspensions, expulsions, and criminalization of Black youths, the research evidence also suggests that racially motivated differential treatment is a major area of educational inequality affecting the educational outcome of many Black youths. It is essential, that educators and/or stakeholders be able to track trends and patterns of racial inequality in Ottawa schools, given claims of educational and racial equality by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the various school boards. Ethnic grading was another theme that was identified by the participants. Ethnic grading together with the lack of effective educational guidance has resulted in negative streaming, and differential treatment due to overt/covert racism. The following proposed recommendations are aimed at responding to the individual problems identified.

8.4 Recommendation for Ethnic Grading

4. Establish a standing committee at the Board level, whose sole responsibility is to reassess/re-evaluate assignments that are in contention, particularly when those assignments are subjective, and employ a cultural analysis.
 - Each review team should consist of three members of the larger community and one employee of the Board. However, the Board representative should not be allowed to vote on the decision regarding the re-evaluation of the assignment.
 - Committee members should be racially and culturally diverse and be allowed to operate independently and without influence from the Board.
 - Information regarding this committee, the process and procedures in accessing this service must be made available to students during the information session at the beginning of grade 9. This information should also be contained in each school agenda.
 - The committee's activities are to be recorded in relation to number of reviews and decisions taken after each review. The data can then be used to measure the quality of teacher evaluation, especially when teaching students with diverse views due to differences in race and culture.

8.5 Recommendations for lack of guidance & negative streaming

5. Establish a formal investigative and review committee at the Board level whereby guidance counsellors can be held accountable for actions that run counter to the Ontario Ministry of Education and school boards' goals of providing all students with equal educational opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. This body should have the power and authority to correct the action of guidance counsellors by changing the educational plan of students who have been negatively streamed or who have been unfairly denied required courses for accessing university/college study. The ultimate aim is to retain economically disadvantaged/marginalized students desiring to attend university or college by providing them with equal educational opportunity and the access to actualize their academic aspirations. Consequently, the immediate goals of this process is to ensure that:
 - Students, particularly working-class non-white students, at the start of their high school program, clearly understand the implications and impact on future career choices of not taking advance level courses.
 - Black/non-white students must be provided with every opportunity to take university bound courses starting in grade 9.

- Non-white students in the academic stream who are experiencing difficulties should be given added support where necessary to achieve their academic aspiration.
 - Black/non-white working-class students are not being streamed against their wishes into low level academics due to lack of information or by having received incorrect information.
6. It is recommended that Board representatives of this committee be diversified along racial, cultural, and gender lines.
 7. It is recommended that Board representatives of this review committee hold scheduled information sessions in each high school during the second term of grade 9 and midway through the first term of grade 10.
 - The aim of these two sessions is to inject an intervention strategy by offering students, prior to grade 11, the opportunity to alter and/or change their educational stream from non-academic to academic which will enable them to advance towards university/college study.
 - Most importantly, newly arrived Canadian students who may have made an incorrect program choice, will have an opportunity to alter their career decision during the second stage of the information session and prior to grade 11.
 8. Students or their parents who feel that they are not being serviced by their guidance counsellor in a manner that will enable them to reach their full academic potential due to issues of racism or other forms of educational inequalities, will have the option to schedule an appointment with one of the Boards' representative/career specialist.
 - Appointments for students to meet with the school/Board's representative/career specialist should be made in the school's main office.
 - Students/parents will also have the opportunity to file an official complaint against the school guidance counsellor with the representative/career specialist.
 - After meeting with the student and/or parent, the representative will be able to either adjust the student's educational plan based on her/his career goal or refer the case to the review committee for investigation and decision.
 9. I recommend that the review committee be responsible for compiling the frequency of complaints and decisions taken in resolving complaints, including those that

remain unresolved. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of guidance counsellors and the nature of complaints being levelled against individual guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors will be held accountable for actions contrary to Ministry/Board's policy.

8.6 Recommendation for addressing issues of racism

The study has not only established the presence of racial inequality and class discrimination in Ottawa schools, it has also illuminated the need for racialize statistics that will demand corrective actions on the part of school boards. To reiterate, the fact that evidence in the form of race statistics does not exist in Ottawa does not mean that no evidence of racism exists. Rather, the lack of statistics represents a political problem in that politicians, the judicial system and citizen groups can and do use statistics in order to 'legitimize' claims about issues such as the ones highlighted in this study. As a result, marginalized communities, such as the Black community in Ottawa, who wishes to politicize the educational plight of Black youths, are at a disadvantage due to the absence of racial statistics. While statistics can be useful to track systemic inequalities and become a critical tool in designing useful and detailed responses to these inequalities, the lack of statistics, however, should not be required in order to establish the existence of racism.

Racism in Canada is subtle, and the subtleness of racism in Ottawa's schools is veiled by antiracist educational policies. Nonetheless, despite these antiracist policies, the educational system is rooted in white dominance, which is reflected its educational arrangements and practices. Despite claims of systemic racism in Ottawa's schools by members of the Black community, Board administrators maintain that claims of racial harmony and tolerance. Nonetheless, the issues of racism that were identified by

participants are troubling and must be taken seriously. The research revealed that Black students, particularly working-class students, are often forced to learn in hostile and unsafe learning environments due to racism and its various forms of manifestations. Students are also complaining that they are not allowed to speak out about the racism they are faced with. This creates a culture of silence and fear amongst Black youths.

10. I recommend that a special task force be set up at both school boards in Ottawa to examine:

- Possibilities of working collectively with University Faculties of Education in developing strategies to attract and increase the number of non-white students to teacher education programs, which is aimed at increasing the pool of pre-service non-white teachers. The goal here is to increase racial diversity at all levels in Ottawa's schools.
- Possibilities of working collectively with Faculties/Schools of Social Work and Faculties of Education to develop a specialization for social work students interested in working in the educational system.
 - The aim here is to adequately prepare social work students who are planning to practice social work in schools. Students would be required to take courses in education, e.g., issues in multicultural/multiracial classroom, educational research, to name a few, educational policy etc. The ultimate goal is to infuse the educational system with highly trained specialized educational social workers.
- The nature and prevalence of differential treatment due to racism in Ottawa's high schools.
- Existing mechanisms allowing Black/non-white students to address racism in their schools without reprisals or negative labels
- The need for diversity amongst teaching/non-teaching, professional – social workers, nurses, psychologists, etc., and administrative staff.
- The degree to which Black youths are being expelled on or just after their 16th birthday due to incidents for which they have already served suspensions.

- The committee members should be racially diverse and have no personal or professional connection to either of the school board administrators or its member schools.
- Given the lack of trust towards teachers and administrators by Black students, it is critical that where possible, minority students communicate with members/representatives of their own cultural or racial background. In other words, trust must be gained if students are expected to break the silence and have a sense of safety to speak freely and honestly without fear of reprisals.

In addition to establishing the nature and prevalence of racism in Ottawa's schools, it is also essential for students and parents to have external support and means of addressing racism at school. Participants have identified one means of achieving such a goal and that is through the establishment of an advocacy organization.

8.6 Establishing an educational advocacy Centre

Throughout the research both parents, students, community leaders, and educators have described an educational system where Black working-class students and parents have no voice, and as such are often subjected to differential treatment due to racism.

11. I recommend that a centre be established with the following aims:

- Provide training and information workshops for parents who do not understand the educational system in Ottawa
- Advocate on behalf of parents and students who lack voice within the educational system on issues such as suspension/ expulsions, racism, differential treatment etc.
- Provide guidance and career counselling for high school students
- Become a link between the school, home, police and community
- Develop and maintain a data base tracking suspensions/ expulsions, police involvement at school, and issues of racism and educational inequality
- Represent community interest on school boards and committee

- Provide workshops aimed at developing positive relationships between educators and Black parents/students. Address cultural issues/misunderstandings between schools and community.

Establishing an organization as per my recommendations above is aimed at 1) providing a voice for disadvantaged students and parents, 2) educating parents and students who do not understand the educational system and 3) support parents and students who need assistance to negotiate the educational system in which they are participating. In addition, such an organization has the potential to create a bridge between the Black community and schools, in that educators and community members can address issues affecting the educational experiences of Black youths in Ottawa's schools.

8.7 Concluding Thoughts

The recommendations presented in this Chapter address the concerns that were highlighted by the research participants and reflected some of their suggestions in regards to racism, lack of educational statistics, lack of guidance, establishing an advocacy organization for Black youths and parents and ethnic grading. One of the major concerns is the lack of educational statistics along racial lines. As a result, racism, negative stereotyping, and differential treatment often resulted in frequent suspensions/expulsions and unequal educational outcome. Despite the evidence, educators continue to dismiss and/or deny educational inequalities and inequities in Ottawa's schools.

The need to begin tracking trends and patterns in school discipline and practices that negatively affect the quality of education Black students are receiving, has been established by this research and must be addressed. The call for empirical research is a

necessary and essential one, given the lack of educational statistics along racial lines and given the claims of educational equality by both the Ontario Ministry of Education and the two School boards in Ottawa. I maintain my position that before we can establish claims of educational equality, we must first attempt to create an educational system where students are able to have a voice and be heard. A system that is safe, diverse, equal, equitable, and caring to 'all' students. Most importantly, we must ensure that our educational system can be held accountable to the community it serves. To preserve the existing educational arrangement as it now exists is a means of supporting the subtleness and pervasiveness of racism within Ottawa's schools. It also sends a clear message that the educational experiences described by the participants are frivolous and lack credibility. Rendering those who are economically disadvantaged to remain silent and accepting of the status quo.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.0 Conclusion

This study investigated the educational experiences of Black youths in Ottawa's schools. The goal was to interrogate the impact of intersecting factors such as race and class on the educational experiences of both working-class and middle-class Black youths in Ottawa's educational system, using a Black antiracist feminist perspective. In addition, I sought to develop an understanding of the ways in which issues such as race and class impacted the relationships between parents and educators/administrators. As a result, it was also essential to gain the views and perspectives of parents, educators and community leaders. The contributions of educators and community leaders were especially significant and became a central part of the study due to their close connection with the students, parents, and the schools.

During the data collection stage of the research, many of the student and parent participants asked me to break the silence and expose what was happening to them in Ottawa's educational system. So, in addition to my primary goal of developing an understanding of the educational experiences of Black youths, a secondary goal was to break the existing silence around their educational reality. With this secondary goal in mind, Chapters 5 and 6 were used to give voice to the students, parents, educators and community leaders in a bid to expose the racism and unequal educational practices they have been subjected to in Ottawa's schools.

Fleras and Elliott (2002) noted that education has three explicit functions: to impart knowledge and skills; to prepare individuals for citizenship and employment; and to foster intellectual development (p. 200). If these three functions form the bases upon which the policies of the various school boards are built, then the practices based upon these policies need investigation since participants' were able to expose and highlight various contradictions and tensions existing between current educational policies and actual school practices. Their narratives reflected personal experiences and accounted for the experiences of their peers, colleagues, and parents in Ottawa's educational system. Many negative experiences highlighted tensions and contradictions between school policies and practices that exposed the ways in which unequal practices resulted in unequal educational outcome for Black youths, particularly youths from working-class backgrounds. The narratives show that because of unequal school practices, the working-class student participants' educational reality was one that resulted in underdeveloped skills and stunted intellectual development/growth, neither of which prepared them for higher learning, good citizenship and employment aimed at achieving upward mobility.

These unequal practices were illuminated by examples of exclusion, negative stereotyping, streaming, ethnic grading, the unequal application of zero tolerance policies that resulted in frequent suspensions and expulsions, and the criminalization of working-class youths. There were explicit references to instances where unequal and racist school practices came in direct contravention to and/or inverted school boards' policies that are aimed at fostering a learning environment which is nurturing, safe, caring, and welcoming to 'all' students in order to promote academic excellence. Thus,

it appears that by nature, schools support democratic values in theory even as they oppose them in everyday practice, as well; they encourage learning, but do so from within structures that inhibit learning (Sleeter, 1991, cited in Fleras and Elliott).

My reflective interpretation of the data revealed an educational system which requires Black students, especially working-class students, to learn in an unsafe, unfriendly, uncaring, unwelcoming, and often hostile learning environment that is neither equal nor just. As one educator noted:

Black youths are often perceived as violent and a threat. As such, there is no tolerance for them, especially if they are male and economically disadvantaged. So they are not just being kicked out of schools now they are also being delivered into the hands of the police by their schools (Adam, 2004).

Despite claims of equality in educational opportunity, access, and outcome, by the OCDSB and the OCCDSB, the data shows a dichotomy between the Boards' educational ideal and the actual unequal and differential school practices Black youths and parents are often subjected to because of race and class differences. Issues around race and class inequalities in schooling became a central thread through the data. Clarity was given to the ways in which differences of class status was used to silence one group of participants but with less effect on the other group. I was able to develop an understanding of how racism was often mitigated by middle-class status. In other words, class and race differences when intertwined can create a positive shift for middle-class Black students, which served to lessen the impact of differential treatment due to racism in schools. On the other hand, I was also able to understand how the working-class status of marginalized Black youths often provided the conditions upon which racism flourished in Ottawa's schools. For example, the research revealed that

working-class participants often lacked resources, knowledge, and power to negotiate within the system. This is due to the fact that the ideological and social order is reproduced in schools almost without the public being aware of it let alone debating the results. As such, power and culture are linked, so, the very inequities that education promises to purge are in fact perpetuated through schooling (Fleras and Elliott, 2002).

Consequently, they were repeatedly exposed and subjected to differential and unequal treatments in schools, with no effective recourse. This resulted in the forfeiting of rights by many students and parents, who became passive participants in the educational system. The outcome for them or for those who refuse to accept the status quo by becoming vocal is an unjust one, because vocalizing creates an opportunity for the school to ignore or discard them. Fleras and Elliott (2002) argue that anything in education that veers outside this Anglo-centric framework is dismissed as irrelevant or inferior, and punished accordingly (p. 196).

Thus, middle-class students, unlike their working-class peers, were afforded a more equalized version of educational opportunity and access, which provided them greater educational opportunities necessary to achieve equal educational outcome. So, although both groups of Black students reported experiencing racism initially upon entering high school, the middle-class status of one group of student participants appeared to have deflected any further attempts to subject them to differential treatment while working-class student participants reported more frequent and consistent differential/unequal treatment, due to both overt and covert forms of racism.

In a similar vein, I also interrogated the degree to which the school experiences of parents varied due to patterns of differential treatment that can be directly or indirectly attributed and/or associated to class differences. For example, the narratives summarized in Chapter 6 indicated that middle-class parents, unlike working-class parents, had the knowledge, resources, and power to effectively navigate their middle-class children around many of the educational barriers facing Black students. However, despite the ability of the middle-class participants to navigate the school system on behalf of their children, they also reported having first-hand experience regarding the pervasiveness of racism and unequal school practices existing in Ottawa's schools.

While the adult participants did agree that the unequal school practices affecting many Black youths were due primarily to the subtle and overt forms of racism, it became even clearer that despite racism, the power gained through middle-class status enabled middle-class students to achieve their educational goals within a system that initially disadvantaged all Black students, with the working-class student unable to deflect the effects of such unjust treatment.

However, although there were many similarities between middle-class and working-class adult participants with regards to the inequalities faced by Black parents in Canadian schools, the privilege resulting from middle-class status often played a significant role in relation to their ability to help their children to achieve academic success despite systemic racism. Their awareness of the educational system and their knowledge of their rights within the system seem to afford middle-class parents a reduced chance of being disregarded by school authorities. Because of the often invisibleness of class privileges, some of the middle-class adult participants often made

unfounded assumptions about working-class parents. For example, there were instances where middle-class parents displayed an inability to see beyond their own class privilege. The divergent views that emerged among middle-class and working-class parents, educators, and community leaders were in respect to issues around schooling strategies, clothing, and multiple employment. So, despite the commonality of race, class differences became the dividing factor in the analyses of the issues facing Black students and parents.

Finally, the lack of educational statistic along racial lines emerged as a serious educational challenge facing members of the Black community in Ottawa. The lack of such statistical evidence disadvantages the Black community in that the two school boards in Ottawa consistently deny the existence of racism within their schools, and rather refer to explicit examples of overt racism as '*isolated*' incidents. On the other hand, school board officials will not accept claims of systemic discrimination coming from the Black community without statistical evidence, which leaves the community in a no win situation because although the Black community sees the physical evidence of systemic racism in the numbers of school aged Black youths in the community who were extracted from schools and/or became criminalized through schools, especially youths from working-class backgrounds, they are unable to establish a legitimate claim due to the absence of Statistics. Further, the Black community is not able to establish the pervasive nature of racism and/or the degree to which school practices invert the Ministry's and school boards' policies.

It is my reflective interpretation of the data that despite the principles of equal educational opportunity underlining existing educational policies at both the Ministry

and Board level of the educational system, the conditions necessary to achieve equality in educational opportunity, access, and outcome do not presently exist in Ottawa's schools. Based on the research data, there are students who are being consciously and maliciously denied the equal educational opportunity that is necessary to achieve their full academic potential or equal educational outcome. Consequently, education has become a site for reinforcing social inequality and cultural uniformity, (Dei, 2000, Fine, 1983, and Fleras, 2000). In this way equal opportunity is denied for some Canadians (Fleras and Elliott, 2002). For example, throughout the Chapters I juxtapose my discussion of the data from my participants with salient excerpts from relevant policy documents, which articulate in various ways the principles of equal educational opportunity upon which school policies and practices are supposed to be based, aimed at producing equal educational outcome but which in fact, fail miserably to do so.

It is important to note that due to the lack of educational statistics along racial lines, both the OCDSB and the OCCDSB have been able to continue chanting rhetoric of educational equality and equity for 'all' students while turning a blind eye to the racism existing within their schools. In doing so, they have chosen to ignore the voices of the students, parents, and the community it serves. Let me bring to the attention of the school boards and to all those who are quick to use the absence of statistics to dismiss/deny claims of inequalities in schools that this absence of statistics begs the question - where is the proof that all is well? The Boards have so far avoided any attempts at being held accountable for the unfulfilled educational needs of Black youths.

The education system in Ottawa can simply no longer continue to chant claims of equality and equity while ignoring racism in schools. The educational system must

come to grips with the fact that racism is something that is historically created, symbolically expressed, and institutionally embedded at various levels in society (Giroux, 1994), including education. As such, schools need to recognize that racism is not an individual problem - it is lodged squarely in the policies, structures, practices, and beliefs of everyday life. Therefore, schools need to examine closely both school policies and the attitudes and behaviors of their staff to determine how these might be complicit in causing academic failure (Nieto, 2002). Only then will schools be able to not only equip both teachers and students with the analytic tools to critically examine the origins of racist ideas and practices, (Fleras and Elliott, 2002), but will also create a safe learning environment whereby all youths can challenge and resist the structural forces that continually reproduce social oppression and inequality (Dei, 2000).

Ottawa's educational system, as it currently stands, do not have the necessary conditions upon which to mount claims of equal educational opportunity, access and outcome for 'all' students. It is my position that the necessary conditions that must be present in order to achieve equal education, requires that 'differences' along the various lines must be recognized and acknowledged within the context of its relation to power and domination as it exists in schools and society (Dei, 2001). As such, 'difference' as it relates to the racially different 'other' must not be relegated to the role of romanticizing the 'other' by the dominant group, as seen in the various forms of multicultural education that is celebratory in nature. Instead, education should move beyond the material aspects of culture - the foods, the festivals - to examine the more controversial dimensions of culture (Lee, 1985). However, it appears that regrettably, education and schooling seem incapable of taking 'differences' seriously, and instead

are designed to perpetuate existing power structures by securing a docile and stratified workforce (Fleras and Elliott, 2000).

Therefore, in order to disrupt the existing status quo in schools, collective action is crucial to the development of an educational system - where racism can be discussed frankly, and where it can be resisted effectively (Thomas, 2000, cited in Iseke-Barnes, & Wane, 2000). Only then can honest and genuine efforts be made to begin examining the ways in which school practices disadvantage some students while advantaging others. Given that the location of centre/margin is a power relation, Dei, (2000), if such investigation is to be based on equality and equity, then it is important that community participation be at the heart of such investigation. Such examination will create an environment where honest and open dialog can begin to take place with groups who have historically been located on the margins and excluded from active participation in the schooling process. In other words, parent and local community knowledge of "what works" are a valuable, yet untapped resource for improving schools, Dei, (2000), therefore, it stands to reason that the communities being affected the most and who also lack power can now make valuable contribution to the solution finding process.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu-Lughod, L. (1991). Writing against culture. In Satzewich, (1998). *Racism & Social Inequality in Canada*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.
- Alba, B. (1990). Ethnic identity: The transformation of white America. In Kailin, J. (2002). *Antiracist Education: from Theory to Practice*. New York. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Agnew, V. (1996). *Resisting Discrimination: Women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women's Movement in Canada*. Toronto: Univeristy of Toronto Press Incorporated.
- Alladin, I.M. (1996). *Racism in Canadian Schools*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada, Ltd.
- Altrichter, H.; Posch, P.; & Somekh, B. (1993). *Teachers Investigate their Work*. London: Routledge.
- Banks, J., & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bissondath, N. (1994). *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*. Toronto: Penguin Books.
- Black Learners Advisory Committee, (1994). *Redressing Inequity – Empowering Black Learners*. Nova Scotia: Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data.
- Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Brathwaite, K. (1996). Keeping watch over our children. In Brathwaite, K. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadians*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Brathwaite, K. (1996). Our Expectations of the Education of African Canadians- Now and In The Years Ahead. In Brathwaite, K. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadians*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Bireda, M. (2000). *Eliminating Racial Profiling in School Discipline*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

- Brandt, G (1986) *The Realisation of Antiracist Teaching*, Lewes, Palmer. In Kailin, J. (2002). *Antiracist Education: from Theory to Practice*. New York. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Bristow, P. et al (1994). *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up*. In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Carrington, B. (1983). Sports as a side track. An analysis of West Indian involvement in extra-curricular Sports. In Solomon, R. P. (1992). *Black Resistance in High School: Forging a Separatist Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Curtis, B.; Livingstone, D.W.; & Smaller, Harry. (1992). *Stacking The Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class Kids in Ontario Schools*. Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves Education Foundation.
- Dei, G. (1996). *Anti-Racism Education Theory and Practice*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Dei, G., (1995) . *Anti-Racism Education*. Toronto. Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data.
- Dei, G. (1995). *Drop Out or Push Out? The Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School*. Toronto: OISIE
- Dei, G. (1996). Listening to voices: Developing a pedagogy of change from the narratives of African-Canadian students and parents. In K. Braithwait and C. James (eds.) *Educating African-Canadians*. Toronto: Our School OurSelves.
- Dei, G. (1998). The politics of Educational Change: Taking Anti-Racism Education Seriously. In Satzewich, V. (1998). *Racism & Social Inequality in Canada*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.
- Dei, G. J. S.; James, I. M.; Karumanchery, L. L.; James-Wilson, S.; Zine, J. (2000). *Removing the Margins: The Challenges and Possibilities of Inclusive Schooling*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Dei, G. J. S., and Calliste, A. (2000). *Power, Knowledge and Anti-Racist Education*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing
- Dei, G. J. S. (2003). Schooling and the Dilemma of Youth Disengagement. In McGill Journal of Education. Volume 38 Number 2 Spring (2003). Montreal.

- Deyhle, D., & Swisher, K. (1997). Research in American Indian and Alaska Native Education: From Assimilation to Self-Determination. In Nieto, S. School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective?
- Dirks, G. (1977). 'Memorandum to Mackenzie King.' In Canada's Refugee Policy : Indifference or Opportunities? In Henry, F.; Tator, C.; Mattis, W.; & Rees, T. (1998). *The Colour of Democracy*. Toronto: Nelson.
- Dua, E., & Roberston, A. (1999). *Scratching the surface: Canadian anti-racist feminist thought*. Toronto: Women's Press.
- Fields, A. B., & Feinberg W. (2001). Education and Democratic Theory – Finding a Place for Community Participation in Public School Reform. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Fleras, A. & Elliott, J. L. (1992). *Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada.
- Fleras, A. & Elliott, J. L. (2002). *Engaging Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada*. Toronto. Nelson Thomas Learning
- Fleras, A. (2001). *Social Problems in Canada: Condition, Construction, and Challenges*. Toronto: Prentice Hall
- Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. In Nieto. S. (2004). School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective. In Banks, J. A., & Banks, M. C. (2004). *Multicultural Education Issues and perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Frideres, J. (1990). In Li, P. (1990). *Race and Ethnic Relations in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Freire, P. (1998). Banking education. In H. Giroux & D. Purpel (Eds.), The hidden curriculum and moral education In Howe, K. (1997). *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Fine, M. (1991). Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban Public High School. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Fine, M. (1993). Apparent Involvement: Reflections on Parents, Power and Urban Schools. New York: Teachers College Record.
- Friedan, B. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1963

- Gay, G. (1995). Educational Equality for Students of Colour. In Banks, J. A., & Banks, M. C. (2004). *Multicultural Education Issues and perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Giroux, H. (2000). Insurgent Multiculturalism and the Promise of Pedagogy. In Duarte, E & Smith, S. (2000). *Foundational Perspectives in Multicultural Education*. New York: Longman.
- Giroux, H. (1994). Insurgent multiculturalism as the promise of pedagogy. In D.t. Goldberg (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: A critical reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gordon, R., Piana, L., & Keleher, T. (2000). Facing the Consequences: An Examination of Racial discrimination in U.S. Public Schools. California. ERASE
- Gordon, V. (1987). *Black Women, Feminism and Black Liberation: Which Way?* New York: Third World Press.
- Gosh, R. (2002). *Redefining Multicultural Education*. Scarborough: Nelson Thomson Learning.
- Gosh, R. & Abdi, A. A. (2004). *Education and the Politics of Difference: Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Grant, C. & Sleeter, C. (1991). Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in the Classroom. In Banks, J., McGee Banks, C., (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey. John Wiley & Sons.
- Grant, C. & Sleeter, C. (1999). Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Grinter, R. (2000). *Multicultural or Antiracist Education? The Need to Choose. Foundational Perspectives in Multicultural Education*. The Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. New York
- Gunew, S. (1991). *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.
- Henry, A. (1994). The Empty Shelf and other Curricular Challenges of Teaching of Children of African Descent – Implications for Teacher Practice. In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Henry, A. (1989). In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.

- In Henry, F., Tator, C., Mattis, W., & Rees, T. (1998). *The Colour of Democracy*. Toronto: Nelson.
- Herberg, D.C. (1993). *Frameworks for Cultural and Racial Diversity*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Hirsch, E. D. (1988). *Cultural Literacy*. In Dunn, S. (2005). *Philosophical Foundations of Education*. Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Hirsch, E. D. (1996). The schools we need & why we don't have them. In Dunn, G., (2005). *Philosophical Foundations of Education: Connecting Philosophy to Theory and Practice*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Hirsch, E. D. (1999). Why Core Knowledge Promotes Social Justice. Common Knowledge. In Dunn, G., (2005). *Philosophical Foundations of Education: Connecting Philosophy to Theory and Practice*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston MA: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Where we stand: class matters*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2000). Overcoming White Supremacy: A Comment. In Duarte, E. M. & Smith, S. (2000). *Foundational Perspectives in Multicultural Education*. New York: Longman.
- Hopkins, R. (1997). *Educating Black Males: Critical Lessons in Schooling, Community, and Power*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Howe, K. R. (1997). Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hull, G. (1997). "Research with Words: Qualitative Inquiry." [On-Line]. www.gse.harvard.edu/~nxsall/fob/1997/hull.htm
- Igoa, C. (1995). The Inner World of the Immigrant Child. In Nieto, S. (2004). School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective. In Banks, J. A., & Banks, M. C. (2004). *Multicultural Education Issues and perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- James, C. (2003). *Seeing Ourselves: Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Culture*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

- James, C. (1996). *The Possibility of Play: Black Youth, Athletics and Schooling*. In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- James, C. (1998). "Up to no good": Black on the Streets and Encountering Police. In Satzewich, V. (1998). *Racism & Social Inequality in Canada*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- James, C. (1990). *Making It: Black youth, racism and career aspirations in a big city*. Oakville: Mosaic Press.
- James, C. (1995b). Multicultural and anti-racism education in Canada. *Race, Gender & Class: An interdisciplinary & Multicultural Journal*, 2(3), 47-48.
- Jordon, G., & Weedon, C. (1995). *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race & The Postmodern World*. London. Oxford: Blackwell Press.
- Kagawa-Singer and Chung (1994), by James, C. (2003). Seeing Ourselves: Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Culture. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.
- Kailin, J. (2002). *Antiracist Education: from Theory to Practice*. New York. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Kemmis. (1982). cited by Anderson, G.L, Herr, K., & Nihlen, A .S. (1994). *Studying Your Own School: An Educator's Guide to Qualitative Practitioner Research*. California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Kincheloe, J. & Steinberg, S. (1995). *Thirteen Question: Reframing Education's Conversation*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Kirby, L.and McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience, Research and Social Change: Methods from the Margins*. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Kivel, P. (2000). "I'm not white"; "I'm not racist". In Iseke-Barnes, J. & Wane, N. (2000). *Equity in Schools and Society*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage Inequalities*. New York: Crown.
- Kymlicka, W. (1998). *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Reflections in Canada*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka, W. (1991). Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Rights. In Howe, K.R. (1997) . *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling*. New York. Teachers College Press.

- Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural Citizenship*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Kymlicka, W. (1989). *Liberalism, Community and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- , T., Ward, R. (1994). *Multiculturalism and education: diversity and its impact on schools and society*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Lee, E. (1985). Letters to Marcia: A teacher's Guide to Anti-Racist Education. In Fleras, A. and Elliott, J. L. (1992). *Multiculturalism in Canada*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada
- Li, P. (1990). *Race and Ethnic Relations in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Lorde, A. (1994). Age, race, class and sex: women redefining difference' In H. Crowley and S. Himmelweit, *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Lynch, J. (1987). *Prejudice Reduction and the Schools*. London. Cassell.
- Marable, M. (1983). How capitalism underdeveloped Black America: Problems in race, political economy, and society. In Kailin, J. (2002). *Antiracist Education: From Theory to Practice*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- May, S. (1999). *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.
- Maykut, P. & Morehouse, E. (1994). *Beginning qualitative Research: A Philosophical and practical guide*. London: The Falmer Press.
- McCarty, T. (2002). A Place to be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling. In Neito, S. (2004). School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective. In Banks, J. & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons
- McLaren, (1989). *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Longman.
- McLaren, P. (2000) White terror and oppositional agency: Towards a critical multiculturalism. In Duarte, E. M. & Smith, S. (2000). *Foundational Perspectives in Multicultural Education*. New York: Longman.

- McMahon, B. (2003). Putting the Elephant into the Refrigerator: Student engagement, Critical Pedagogy and Antiracist Education. *McGill Journal of Education*. 38(2) 257-71
- Miner, B. (1995). Taking multicultural, anti-racist education seriously: An interview with Enid Lee. In D.P. Levine, R. Peterson, & R. Tenario (Eds.), *Rethinking schools*. In McMahon, B. (2003). Putting the Elephant into the Refrigerator: Student engagement, Critical Pedagogy and Antiracist Education. *McGill Journal of Education*. 38(2) 257-71
- Neito, S. (1999). Critical Multicultural Education and Students' Perspectives. In May, S. (1999). *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.
- Neito, S. (2004). School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective. In Banks, J. & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons
- Neito, S. (2004). Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education. In Banks, J. & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons
- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. New Harlem, CT. Yale University Press
- O'Neill, O. (1976). Opportunities, Equalities, and Education. Theory and Decision, In Howe, K. (1997). *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy and Schooling*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Overall, C. (1998). *A feminist Reflections from Academia*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, Ltd.
- Ottawa Citizen. (2003). City. "Education as an impossible dream". (October 18).
- Perry, T., and Fraser, J.W. (1993). Freedom's plow: Teaching in the multicultural classroom. In Kailin, J. (2002). *Antiracist Education: from Theory to Practice*. New York. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Proudfoot, M. (1996). Access? Sure, But into What? In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Radwanski, G. (1987). *Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

- Ravitch, D. (1990). Multiculturalism: E pluribus plures. In Howe, K.R. (1997). *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling*. New York. Teachers College Press.
- Reich, R. (2002). *Bridging Liberalism and Multiculturalism in American Education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Reinharz, S. (1988). The concept of voice. Paper presented at Human Diversity: Perspectives on People context, June 8, University of Maryland, College Par, MD
- Richards, J. R. (1980). The skeptical feminist: A philosophical inquiry. In Howe, K.R. (1997). *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling*. New York. Teachers College Press.
- Roberts-Fiati, G. (1996). Effects of Early Marginalization on African Canadian Children. In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Ryan, W. (1972). Blaming the Victim. In Neito, S. (2004). School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective. In OBanks, J. & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons
- Schlesinger, A. M., Jr. (1992). *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a multicultural society*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Seidman, K. 2001. Slavery Ignored In Quebec: Montreal Gazette, Montreal, Quebec
- Seidman, I.E. (1991). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sleeter, C. (2000). Multicultural Education, Social Positionality, and Whiteness. In Duarte E.M. & Smith, S. (2000). *Foundational Perspectives in Multicultural Education*. New York: Longman.
- Sleeter, C. & Grant, C. (1988). Making Choices for Multicultural Education. In Ward, R. (1994). *Multiculturalism and education: diversity and its impact on schools and society*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Solomon, R. P. (1992). *Black Resistance in High School: Forging a Separatist Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Soto, L. D. (1997). Language, Culture, and Power: Bilingual Families and the Struggle for Quality Education. In Neito, S. (2004). *School Reform and Student Learning: A Multicultural Perspective*. In OBanks, J. & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Thomas, B. & TV Ontario (1993). Anti-racist education (selected readings and resources) In Iseke-Barnes, J. & Wane, N. (2000). *Equity in Schools and Society*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Thornhill, E. (1984). Fight Racism Starting with the School. In Henry, F.; Tator, C.; Mattis, W.; & Rees, T. (1998). *The Colour of Democracy*. Toronto: Nelson.
- Tierney, W. G. (1993). The college experience of Native Americans: A critical analysis. In L. Weis & M. Fine (Ed.), *Beyond silenced voices*, In Howe, K.R. (1997). *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling*. New York. Teachers College Press.
- Toronto Board of Education (1988). Education of Black Students in Toronto Schools: Final Report of the Consultative Committee. In Brathwaite, K.S. & James, C.E. (1996). *Educating African Canadian*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Muszynski, Alicja (1991). What is Patriarchy? In Jesse Vorst et al. (eds.), *Race, Class, Gender. Bonds and Barriers*. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Wade, N. (2000). Student at risk. In Iseke-Barnes, J. & Wane, N. (2000). *Equity in Schools and Society*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Young, I. M. (1990a). Justice and the politics of difference. In Howe, K.R. (1997) . *Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity: Social Justice, Democracy, and Schooling*. New York. Teachers College Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT

Researcher: Janet M. Haynes, Ph.D. Candidate
McGill University,
Department of Integrated Studies in Education
Education Building, 3700 McTavish Street, Room 244
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1Y2
Phone: 514-398-4525

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Integrated Studies in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. I am currently conducting a research project in the Ottawa area titled: **The Impact of Race, Culture, and Class On The Educational Experiences of Black Students in Ottawa**. My research seeks to determine if Black students' race, culture, and/or social class impacts the level and/or quality of the education they receive - if so – how and to what degree?

I plan to interview 12 high school students between the ages of 14 – 20 and their parents. The project is aimed at providing you and your child with the opportunity to discuss your family's educational experiences in a manner that is safe and confidential. The information that is collected will be compiled in a final report and community members, including participants, will have access to this report.

Each interview will be tape-recorded and will take approximately one hour per participant. The location and time of interviews will be arranged at the convenience of both the student and her/his parent. Upon the completion of each interview, the audiotapes will be secured in a locked cabinet and no person other than myself will have access to them. In addition, I will also be the only person analyzing the tapes for results. In addition, the identity of all participants will remain confidential, and each student, including the parent, may withdraw from the research project at any time during the process.

In discussing past experiences at school, particularly experiences that are painful, participants may experience feelings of sadness or even depression during or after completing the interview. It is my intention to do a follow-up with participants after their initial interview in order to ensure no harm has resulted due to their participation in this research project. However, should students or parents experience depressive feelings prior to my follow-up contact they are encouraged to contact me immediately at 613-729-8152. I will meet with participants to discuss the situation and give recommendations and/or referrals.

Thank you for considering my request for your family's participation in this research project. For further information regarding this study please contact me at 613-729-8152.

Sincerely
Janet M. Haynes, PhD. Candidate

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

THE IMPACT OF RACE, CULTURE AND CLASS ON THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN OTTAWA

Dear Janet Haynes,

I, _____, have read the attached letter of consent or the attached letter of consent was read to me and I understand the risk, the nature and purpose of my/our participation in this research project to be undertaken by you in Ottawa. It is my understanding that I/we are free to withdraw from this project at any time during this research process without any penalty or prejudice. I also understand how the data will be used and that confidentiality will be maintained throughout this research project.

Please check one:

- ☐ Being the parent/legal guardian of a minor, I freely give my permission for both my child and I to participate in this research project.
- ☐ Being of legal age, I freely give my permission to participate in this research project.
- ☐ I do not give my permission for my child and I to participate in this research project.

Name of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) _____
[Please Print]

Name of Student Participant _____
[Please Print]

Date _____

Signature of Participant or Parent(s)/Guardian(s) _____

Appendix C

REFERRAL CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Janet M. Haynes, PhD Candidate
Graduate Student, McGill University
Department of Integrated Studies in Education
Education Building, Room 244
3700 McTavish Street
Montreal, Quebec
H3A 1Y2
Phone: 514-398-4525

Name of Student Participant _____
[Please Print]

Name of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) _____
[Please Print]

I, _____, have participated in the research project titled:

The Impact of Race, Culture & Class on the Educational Experiences of Black

High School Students in Ottawa, and freely give the researcher, Janet Haynes,

permission to release/refer my name to:

_____ **for the purpose of securing educational
services for my child/ren and/or myself.**

Date _____

Signature of Student or Parent(s)/Guardian(s) _____

Appendix D:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Who old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. Take me on a mental tour of your world in school – What is it like?
4. What are the 10 best and worst things about school?
5. What are your best and worst subjects?
6. Tell me about your teachers?
7. If you have or had the power to make changes within your school – what would you change? Why?
8. Do you feel your race and/or culture has had an effect on your experience in school? If so – how and why?
9. What career would you like to pursue after high school?
10. Do you feel your present education will enable you to achieve your goal? Why or Why not?
11. What role do you feel parents should play in their children education and/or school?
12. Have you ever been suspended? How many times? Why and for how long?
13. What educational stream/level are you in? Did you choose that stream? Do you understand why you are in that stream?
14. Do you understand the different streams or levels in schools? If so can you explain them?
15. Do you have a learning disability?
16. Have you ever been tested for a learning disability?
17. Do you feel your social class has affected your education?
18. Do you believe racism is a problem in Ottawa's schools? If so, explain?
19. Have you ever been involved with the police?
20. What role did your parent/s play in school?
21. If you had to give parents advice on helping their children in school – what would it be?
22. If you had to give other students advice on school – what would you tell them?

Extra Questions for Student who have Dropped Out of School

Why did you leave school?

Do you plan on going back to school? If so, what have you done to try and re-enter school?

Do you have a juvenile record due to a school incident?

Parents

Can you describe your experience with your child's school?

Do you attend parent/teacher interviews? If no, why not?

Do you feel your race, and/or culture, has affected your child's education? If so, explain?

Do you feel your social class has affected your child's education? If so, explain?

Do you have any concerns with the education your child is receiving? If so, explain?

Is there anything you would like to see changed about the educational system? If so, what and why?

Do you believe racism is a problem in Ottawa's schools? If so, explain?

Community Members

Do you have concerns about Black youths within the educational system? If so, explain?

What changes and/or improvement would you envision for our educational system?

Do you believe racism is a problem in Ottawa's schools? If so, explain?

Teachers

What are your perception of Black youths and their parents in school?

Do you have concerns with Black youths within your school? If so, explain?

Do you have concerns regarding Black parents' in school?

Do you think race, and/or culture, affects students' experiences in Ottawa's school? Explain?

Do you think class affects Black students' experiences in Ottawa's schools? Explain?

What changes if any, would you like to see within Ottawa's schools?

What changes if any, would you like to see among Black parents in Ottawa's schools?

What changes if any, would you like to see amongst Black youths within Ottawa's schools?