“If They Don’t Offer You a Seat at The Table Bring a Folding Chair”:

Schooling To Produce Equitable Outcomes

For Black Students in Ontario Schools

by

Luther Constantine Brown

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (2023)

Leadership, Higher and Adult Education Department

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ABSTRACT

The persistence of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario is unacceptable. Literature codes this student achievement disparity as the achievement gap, a race binary comparison. This research uses *inequitable schooling outcomes* instead shifting the burden for schooling outcomes to the schooling production systems and structures. Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory in Education (CRT) inform the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The Delphi Technique is the method of the research. Its panel is comprised of six Black youth aged 18-24 who attended K-12 schools in Ontario. The composition of this panel challenges the status quo regarding who carries expertise. This research also supports the notion that achievement based on meritocracy is a flawed concept as it excludes from the matrix of the

production systems and structures of schooling outcomes major elements such as race, gender, wealth, and health. Recommendations from the Delphi panel concerning change include making the Ontario curriculum inclusive, replacing academic streaming with a non-linear K-12 process in which students progress through school based on interest and readiness, prioritizing student belonging, rethinking and replacing the current regimen of discipline and punishment practices with student centered conflict-resolution approach, and funding schools for full inclusion. The panel also re-imagines notions of discipline and punishment suggesting the engagement of a collaborative learning approach.

Key Words: Achievement, Black Students, Delphi Study, Policy implementation, Politics, Poverty

Luther Constantine Brown

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to my parents for their sacrifices, the foundation from which this scholarship has come. Their boldness, agency, and a commitment to a different future, helped my siblings and I to know that giftedness is inalienable, and independent of the unequal distribution of the economic resources. My parents exemplified a deep conviction that our Maker will always make a way. For me the learning continues!

There is a special kind of support for doctoral students that comes from their immediate family, which is unknowable outside of them, support which becomes even more complex when an emergency strikes. I am grateful to Paulette - my wife, and to our grown children; Luther, Kayode, and Zahra for being that unconditional support and care throughout this process.

My enduring gratitude to Miss Dotty, a visionary, a fount of courage, agency and disrupter of the status quo.

I thank the youth who agreed to be the expert members of the Delphi panel for their faith in, and commitment to the process. Their passion for changing schooling outcomes made the research live. I thank them for using the learning from their lived-experiences to shape the conversations and the recommendations they made. Their contribution to the scholarship regarding Black students is invaluable. Community is an important part of my life and work, and there are members of my community-family who have nourished me in special ways along this journey. To you I say thank you, and trust that this work is beneficial to Black students here in Ontario and beyond.

This research is not possible without my thesis supervisor Dr. Reva Joshee who supported the use of the Delphi technique with youth as the experts. I also thank her for acknowledging the need for this research to explore racism, and its intersecting oppressions as key factors in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes within the Canadian context. Much gratitude to Professor Tyrone Howard – UCLA, for serving as External Examiner, and for the feedback he provided – his insights, suggestions, and encouragement. A very special thanks to my thesis committee members, Professor James Ryan, and Professor Ann Lopez, for their critical reading of the thesis, their constructive feedback, and their commitment to rigorous scholarship. My intellectual growth and development have benefited from the experience, advice, and expertise shared. Special thanks to Dr. Coleen Stewart and Dr. Joseph Flessa for their encouragement and support.

I am grateful to be a part of what I consider to be, one of the great doctoral cohorts of the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, here at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. As a cohort we came together at various stages of our professional lives and operated from a broad spectrum of lived-experiences. We navigated the newness of doctoral work, figured out how to work differently with each of our professors, and had some student fun along the way. Some of us have also developed lasting friendships. My learning here at OISE has benefited from the sharing, contestations, class presentations, social justice advocacy, and professors who challenged us to think different.

My gratitude also to the various schools in which I worked, where we have tried to change the schooling production systems and structures to produce an increased measure of equitable schooling outcomes. Thanks for your courage and willingness to work to destabilize status quo.

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To my Grandchildren.

To Black Children's Learning Everywhere.

Journey, Journey on

So from the lessons learned and the tables turned

The victories earned and my heart still yearns

Journey, Journey on

(Jimmy Cliff, 1983)

Chapter 1: Introduction

My focused interest in the schooling outcomes for Black students in Toronto began early in my teaching career here in Canada and helps to contextualize the research. Coming from Jamaica as a teacher, I was accustomed to Black students achieving at high levels. The high school I attended had students from all walks of life including myself a Black student from a small rural district of moderate means. I understand the Canadian and the Jamaican societies operate differently so I am not making direct comparisons. My wonder during those early days here in Ontario was what might be contributing to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes being experienced here by Black students. Today my concern is, unless the schooling production systems and structures are retooled to produce equitable schooling outcomes, the production of inequitable schooling outcomes and the status quo distribution of life-chances will continue in perpetuity for Black students.

Instead of the term achievement gap, where possible I will use the term the production of inequitable schooling outcomes as it serves to highlight the production systems and structures that generate schooling outcomes. The production of equitable schooling outcomes is a framing device I use to shift the narrative away from the notion of achievement gap, which operates in a binary relationship that facilitates concepts of deficiency or superiority tied to race. The achievement gap is produced; it is not rooted in students. Braun, et al., (2021) wrote that the disparities in schooling outcomes are often referred to as achievement gaps which are not represented in the abilities or efforts of students: “these gaps reside within the current capacity of adults, educators and policy makers, to manifest the conditions and practices needed to allow students who have been systemically oppressed to be successful.” (p. 3).

I believe it is important for Canada to understand that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students has negative implications beyond Black students. Bowman et al., (2018) point to the wider negative implications of the production of inequitable schooling outcomes on the well-being of society, noting: “The achievement gap is a problem not only for African American students and their families and communities; it affects the well-being of the entire country.” (p.15). The concerns expressed by (Bowman et al., 2018) are applicable here considering the expression of similar concerns regarding the production of schooling outcome for Black students in both Canada and the US by (Smith et al., 2005). They report that although this phenomenon is the subject of concern in the US and Canada, it has received little empirical scrutiny in Canada. (p. 347).

The binary contained in the notion of the achievement gap, is problematic because it positions the schooling outcomes of Black students using White student outcomes as the standard. I believe such notions fuel pathologies of deficit thinking about Black students. My use of the term the production of equitable schooling outcomes is my way of shifting the focus to the provision of, and the effective engagement of supports, resources, systems, and the simultaneous engagement of structures, and processes that are needed to assure each student has an equal opportunity for success. Such a shift unburdens the student and facilitates their employment of the agency they need to maximize the benefits from culturally relevant schooling practices. When necessary however, I use the term achievement gap because it is the term often used in the literature to address the phenomenon that I have reframed as the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario.

The research is also contextualized and framed by historical patterns here in Ontario (Begin et al., 1995; Hall & Dennis, 1965; Lewis, 1992; Rodney et al., 2018). Commenting on

racism and its impact on the schooling outcomes of Black students here in Ontario, Lewis, (1992), frames it this way: “First, what we are dealing with, at root, and fundamentally, is anti-Black racism. … it is Black youth that is unemployed in excessive numbers, it is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in schools, it is Black kids who are disproportionately dropping-out. (p. 2). The Royal Commission On Learning (RCOL), (Begin et al., 1995), also raised concerns regarding the persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, which sparked a flurry of activities by school districts to address recommendations made. During that time, one local school in which I was a teacher, was in the process of altering its production systems and structures to better serve Black students.

The school adopted as its working model, the principles of Effective Schools (Edmonds, 1979). The principal and other school leaders demonstrated instructional leadership based on the mission of the school which was to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. “All Students Can Learn” became the focusing words of the pedagogical change. There was a climate of high expectations for success throughout the school. Staff helped to facilitate a safe and orderly school environment, and each classroom was expected to monitor and report on student progress on a regular basis. It was also the expectation that students be provided feedback and opportunities to learn. I remember teachers visiting homes of students to support the production of the desired schooling outcomes. That was also one way in which home-school relationships were strengthened.

In concert with the change, the academic achievement of Black students equalled and surpassed the results generally being obtained in the school district, and a more equitable schooling outcome for the entire school was produced. Samater, (1997) acknowledged the results: “… student "benchmark" scores have gone from the lowest in the [district] to an above

system's average. … [The school] focuses on strong academic leadership, high academic expectations, monitoring of students' work, maintaining a safe and orderly school environment and parent involvement.[1]"

The student population of the school at that time remained largely unchanged in terms of its distribution based on demographics. The change in schooling outcomes is attributed to the adjustments that were made in the production systems and structures to better serve Black students. It is noteworthy, and concerning that over 20 years after the change, James, (2020) is reporting that inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students are still present and students are in even greater peril. "Black community members, parents and students have long protested the inequities that have contributed to the social and educational conditions in which they find themselves. Today, the Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, has added yet another layer of complexity to their problems in society … it has exacerbated the racial injustice with which racialized and Indigenous youth must contend." (p. 1). This further helps to contextualize the call for urgent change from the panel. Colin asserts that "The questions asked in this [research] should have been asked ages ago and changes should have been implemented. There is no time like the present to make the necessary changes for the benefit of Black students."

This research is also contextualized by the production of similar patterns of inequitable schooling outcomes in the United States (US), and the United Kingdom (UK). I have therefore engaged literature from the US, the UK, and from other jurisdictions where the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students is being experienced and or studied. Smith et al., (2005) note that Black Canadians share many aspects of the historical experiences of African Americans, including the academic achievement. Gillborn, (2005) makes the connection between

[1] https://skillsforchange.typepad.com/new_pioneers_awards_leade/2010/12/1997-vernon-farrell.html

North America and the UK, regarding the achievement gap. Robinson, (2000), contextualizes further: “No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless, pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment, against privileged victimizers, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow. Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch.” (p. 74). For me, the notion of ‘parallel lines left alone can never touch’, elicits a need for praxis – for practitioners to develop and engage in critical agency to undo the status quo parallel lines, to change the state of being parallel in order to bring about the production of equitable schooling outcomes.

Mayor and Suarez (2019) remarked that “given the overwhelming focus of “achievement gap” studies in the United States on educational differences for racialized students, it was surprising not to find any similar studies in Canada meeting the criteria for this scoping review. While ethnicity is sometimes used as a euphemism for racialization in Canada, only five studies included ethnicity as an independent factor.” (p. 59). My review of the literature also reveals that researchers studying the achievement of Black students often do not overtly place race, racism, and other interlocking oppressions as key contributors to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes.

Much of the available data regarding schooling outcomes for Black students in Canada include reports comparing Black student achievement to that of White students, and comparisons between the number of Black and other high school students in various academic programs of studies (ONABSE, 2013); or on racial inequities in Canadian schools, (C. E. James, 2020). Although there is much Canadian research on the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, there is not enough that is focused on race, racism, and other interlocking oppressions as key contributors to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. In their

scoping study of Canadian research, Mayor and Suarez (2019) also observed that factors such as race, religion, and LGBTQ+ identity, were understudied. (p. 43). Such lack of data on race and achievement, they attribute to what they perceive to be "Canada's avoidance of collecting disaggregated racial data." (p. 60). I believe there is a need for more research focused on how schooling systems here in Canada can persistently produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Desmond Cole, a Black Canadian social justice advocate, comments that "It's hard to even find the words '[W]hite supremacy' in any mainstream publication. … the media has a resistance to validating its own reporting that shows patterns of discrimination against Black people." (Subramanian, 2020). Such avoidance stealthily perpetuates the hegemonic status quo, negatively impacts knowledge creation, and makes it more difficult to frame the production of inequitable schooling outcomes in ways that allow it to be acted on effectively. Delgado and Stefancic, (2013) note that because racism "is an ingrained feature of our landscape, racism looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture." (p. 2). Framing a phenomenon is important in developing the understanding needed to bring about change to that phenomenon. Crenshaw, (2016) reminds us further: "communications experts tell us that when facts do not fit with the available frames, people have a difficult time incorporating new facts into their way of thinking about a problem." (TED, 2016, 03:17).

James and Turner, (2017) consider it problematic when a White racial frame is used to address schooling outcomes for Black students: "poor educational outcomes, rather than causing the educational system to reflect on itself, reinforces and holds in place the White racial frame and the related stereotypes teachers and administrators have about Black students". (p. 65). Ladson-Billings (1998) notes that oppression does not seem like oppression to the perpetrator:

"... oppression is rationalized, causing little self-examination by the oppressor. Stories by people of colour can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism." (p. 14). Critical framing that places the phenomenon within the context of systemic racist practice, helps to make the phenomenon knowable to be acted on.

This research seeks to find ways to produce equitable schooling outcomes. It is one of many studies conducted regarding the production of inequitable schooling outcomes: (Anderson et al., 2007; Barton & Coley, 2010; Dei, 1997; Dei & Kempf, 2013; Dei & Lara-Villanueva, 2021; Gardner, 2007; Gillborn, 2008; Hung et al., 2020; James, 2019; Lopez, 2022). One difference between this research and others before it, is its engagement of Black youth as experts in a Delphi process to generate data and make recommendations for change. In this research the expert panel is the collective authority over data generation considering the iterative process that operated during the feedback/query/loop of the Delphi. Black youth as the expert panel are empowered to propose changes to the schooling systems and structures that formed them. This shifts power over research data to the experts and allows me to participate in the research, as "an active subject responsible for analyzing and posing questions based on the critical dialogue between the experts." (Bellini, 2017) p. 88).

Positionality

Early in my career as a teacher, I realized that schooling outcomes are facilitated through the work of others including teachers, school leaders and other professional support personnel, parents, and the school community, I have also come to know through lived experience and the work of researchers and scholars, that school leaders achieve results through the practice of others. I believe school leadership is a catalyst and a critical element in the production systems and structures of equitable schooling outcomes. A large part of my experience in leadership has

come from observing people respond to challenges by exploring solutions that are entrepreneurial, connected to their lived experience, and functioning to meet the needs that they have identified.

I attended Redwood Primary School, in St. Catherine, Jamaica. It was a formative place of learning for me, it stimulated and nurtured my learning, leadership, and determination. It is where I learned to play as a member of informal teams that were populated based on who was available to play at the time. I quickly figured out that how we worked together as a team was a great predictor of the success we would experience, and that the successes of our teams were correlated to the results we were trying to achieve, and who we had as a team leader. I also learned that if we worked well together, if team members participated well, whether we won or not, we felt good about how we performed together, and were able to figure out what to do next time. When our team did not work well together, or when some members played as individuals at the expense of the team, at the end of the game there were arguments, and even if we won the game, the joy was muted. I also realized that students would enthusiastically align themselves to student-leaders who had a proven pattern of team leadership that worked even with a less than adequately skilled team.

These notions of working together to achieve an established outcome are codified in many texts under headings such as teamwork, and collaborative practice. For example, Goleman et al., (2013) writes: “Leaders who are able team players generate an atmosphere of friendly collegiality and are themselves models of respect, helpfulness, and cooperation. They draw others into active, enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort, and build spirit and identity.” (p. 256). As a newly promoted school Principal, I summoned my student experience of school yard teams, my experiences observing school leadership, and my professional learning to support

my new leadership role. I remembered and engaged the notion that it is important to recognize that our team will be comprised of people who are complex and anticipate that there will be intersectional needs that must be acted on if we expect their fullest participation.

Audre Lorde (2015) reminds us of the importance of understanding and acting on the needs of the team. She writes: “My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restrictions of externally imposed definition. Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as part of my living” (p. 120). I have come to know that especially in the production of equitable schooling outcomes, it is important that leaders recognize the complexities of the people comprising their teams. And “educators must have knowledge of children’s lives outside of school so as to recognize their strengths” (Delpit, 1996, p. 172). The practice of recognizing the complexities of the people comprising the team has continued to serve me well.

I must have been a grade 4 or 5 student, but I remember the impact of a young teacher, a graduate of my primary school, coming back to our school to teach. We were excited to be in her class, partly because we knew her and were proud of her accomplishments, and because she was much younger than the other staff, we were hopeful. I’m not sure what we hoped for, but I know that my classmates and I were hopeful and excited. Our one room school was no longer convenient to house our rambunctious class, so our teacher sought permission to repurpose a storage room as our classroom. We were happy to do the work to help in transforming that storeroom into our classroom. I still remember that experience as one of the highpoints of my elementary schooling. Our class was the only one in the school that had its own classroom. That

newly minted teachers' college graduate changed our school experience and the status quo because she led from where she was.

She was kind and caring, she listened to us and believed in our chances of being successful at school and life. But the leadership of my teacher did more than provide us our own classroom, it gave us a set of experiences that impacted what we thought of school, how we felt about school, and how we experience agency, change, female leadership, and to some extent what we believed to be possible. That she was a caring teacher who taught us as if she was expert at differentiated instruction, working with students in their zone of proximal development, was a bonus. As a reflective professional I am able to see that the experience my teacher created through her agency and work has taught me to recognize and value the impact of the experiences that leaders create. Experience functions to shape the beliefs that we develop and the actions we take, and when leaders help people believe in the possibility of attaining certain results, they often work against the odds to achieve those results. According to Connors and Smith, (2012), if we provide the right experiences people will change their beliefs, creating greater possibilities for success at the results we seek. Leaders need partners who are willing to work with them against the odds to achieve desired results.

I find that the link between school leadership and schooling outcomes is credibly made by Leithwood et al., (2006b), who note that from their research the overall conclusion is that school leaders have a measurable, mostly indirect influence on learning outcomes. However, while the work of Leithwood et al., (2006b) is well respected in scholarship, to me it is problematic that scant attention is paid to race and gender being central to contemplations regarding the role of school leadership in the production of the achievement gap. Such exclusion has ramifications beyond the act itself, it signals a level of unimportance attributed to race,

gender, and their intersectionalities in the matrix of possible solutions to the achievement gap. Collins, (2000) comments on the ramifications accompanying such exclusion. She writes: “Black women’s exclusion from positions of power within mainstream institutions has led to the elevation of elite White male ideas and interests and the corresponding suppression of Black women’s ideas and interests in traditional scholarship” (p. 5). Such exclusion also sustains the status quo power, gender and race relationships and perpetuate the achievement gap. Black women as school leaders bring a different perspective and connectivity to the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. Weiner, et al., (2022) talk to this value of lived experience of Black women to educational leadership: “These principals’ laudable efforts, shaped by their intersectional experiences and identities, often appeared in stark contrast to that of many of their district leaders and White colleagues who, while seemingly more aware and eager to engage in conversations about inequity and racial injustice, did not necessarily link such awakenings to practice”.

My idea of the conceptual- and theoretical- frameworks, and the data gathering process of this research is that they work iteratively to support changing schooling systems, structures, and practices in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes here in Ontario. I also use both frameworks to center Black youth who through their participation in this research are helping to:

1. Produce knowledge to inform the changing of systems and structures to sustainably produce equitable schooling outcomes here in Ontario.
2. Center Black youth using their lived experience, and knowledge of how the schooling systems and structures work, to recommend changes to policymakers, policy actors, and researchers.

3. Further recognize students as experts. According to (Flynn, 2020), students are experts based on the knowledge they have gained from their lived experience, and because they know best "the learning challenges they face … they are experts in the system."
4. Provide data that builds on previous research dedicated to reconfiguring the elements of production that work together in systems and structures to produce inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework guides the choice of literature that I reviewed, helped me to better understand, situate and connect that literature to the phenomenon. I chose Critical Race Theory in education (CRT), and Black Feminist Thought (BFT) because they facilitate the critical analysis of intersecting oppressions that impact the phenomenon. Race and gender are important elements in the production of schooling outcomes, in the collection and analysis of data, and in the recommendations from the research. The lived experience of Black women is also important to the analysis of the research because their children are disproportionately being impacted by the persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes. The educational outcomes of Black students do not exist outside the ambit of the experience of Black women, and Black women cannot reasonably be excluded from conversations to retool schooling to produce equitable outcomes for Black students. BFT is important to this theoretical framework because "Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance … addresses ongoing epistemological debates concerning the power dynamics that underlie what counts as knowledge, and … activates epistemologies that criticize prevailing knowledge." (Hill Collins, (2000, p. 273). For this research intersectionalities such as race and gender are too important to be ignored. BFT therefore serves as my lens to ensure that critical

analysis accounts for the intersectionalities such as race and gender within any matrix of solutions being contemplated to ensure the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

This theoretical framework is important to this research because it advocates the incorporating of Black voice in deliberations regarding changing production systems of schooling outcomes, a key reason for a Delphi panel comprised of Black youth for this research. Ladson-Billings, & Tate, (1995) write: "As we attempt to make linkages between critical race theory and education, we contend that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system." (p. 58). In keeping with the value of the Black voice to the change process, I have engaged Black youth as experts to serve on the Delphi panel, to support data gathering, and analysis, and make recommendations. For me it was important to have the panel be comprised of Black youth as experts because in so doing, the status quo regarding who might be considered expert is interrupted. It is also significant in light of how systemic race and gender hierarchy function to disenfranchise Black youth. I will address this further in the section on the Delphi panel.

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks serve as guides to selecting and responding to the literature and help to contextualize the processing of data from the panel. Most of the available Canadian research on inequitable schooling outcomes is focused on chronicling disparity in achievement. There is, however, a significant body of research that is focused on addressing the injustice of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, its impact on life-chances, and its connections to racism in its various iterations. (Dei, 1997; Dei & Kempf, 2013; James, 2019; James, 2012; James & Turner, 2017; Lopez, 2011; Lopez & Rugano, 2018). According to a government of Canada report on the social determinants of health and health

inequalities: “There is a lack of data on schooling outcomes for Black youth across Canada. Most of the evidence referenced is from research done in Toronto.” (Canada, 2020).

It is also noted by The Public Health Agency of Canada that “Anti-Black racism and discrimination are important drivers of inequalities in education, employment, housing, and other determinants of health for many Black Canadians. However, research on the specific relationships between Anti-Black racism and the health and social inequalities revealed by national survey data is limited.” (Canada, 2020). The above also underscores the need for further theorizing of the production of educational inequity here in Canada. This need for more research directed at the production of equitable schooling outcomes is noted by Mayor & Suarez, (2019), who reported on their difficulties finding coherent research data on Black student achievement because based on their experience:

> the Canadian literature has not uniformly adopted any umbrella term to describe educational inequities, with 39 different terms being used in the reviewed studies. This may potentially limit Canadian researchers’ and educators’ ability to access this information easily and build on previous research. It also suggests that there is a lack of consistent discourse or theorizing about educational inequity in Canada. (p. 55)

I believe there is also an urgent need for research to show the relationship between the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students and the growth and development of our society, and that research focused on the removal of obstacles that hinder, obstruct, or prevent the production of equitable schooling outcomes would also be helpful.
The theories that best support this work are Critical Race Theory in Education (CRT), (Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995), and Black Feminist Thought (BFT) (Hill Collins, 2000).

Black Feminist Thought (BFT)

BFT (Hill Collins, 2000) is a critical social theory and an activist response to oppression. I have chosen BFT as a supporting theory for this research because it is helpful in reframing the phenomenon being addressed, and to "reconceptualize social relations of domination and resistance." (p. 229). It supports broad principles of social justice (p. 31), and it is a valuable tool to support the theoretical-, and conceptual- frameworks as well as the critical analysis, of this research. One important aspect of BFT to this research is its assertion of self-definition as key to individual and group empowerment, that speaking for oneself and crafting one's own agenda is vital to empowerment and self-determination. The analytical tools of BFT facilitate agency to disrupt the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and oppressive systems that produce inequitable schooling outcomes. BFT facilitates agency against the status quo and advocates praxis as a tool – knowing leads to critical action to address injustice. Six features of BFT are of interest to this research: 1. Intersecting Oppression (p. 9) 2. Standpoint Epistemology (p. 19 & 292). 3. Experience produces actionable Knowledge – Praxis (p. 30) 4. Dynamic and Responsive (p. 39). 5. Social Justice (p. 19), and 6. Self-definition. (p. 36)

1. Engaging Intersecting Oppression, is a key aspect of Black Feminist Thought. Collins (1998a,) notes: "On some level, people who are oppressed usually know it. For African-American women, the knowledge gained at intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender provides the stimulus for crafting and passing on the subjugated knowledge of Black women's critical social theory" (p. 9). It facilitates critical understanding of, for example, the use of partial perspectives as universal truths and stereotypes that "form a web in which too many Black people are caught." (James, 2012). Researchers and policy actors, therefore, require tools such as Black Feminist Thought to generate agency and change. Collins et al., (2021) note that "when it

comes to searching for critical analyses, subordinated groups require tools that go beyond simple critique. Critical analysis does not only criticize, but it also references ideas and practices that are essential, needed, or critical for something to happen." (p. 691)

2. Standpoint Epistemology is important to this research because it informs my framing of schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario, from the standpoint of production systems and structures rooted in determinative environments steeped in the multiple oppression of Black people. Like "a social context for the emergence of a Black women's standpoint." Collins (1998a, p. 292), standpoint epistemology helps in the framing of this phenomenon to develop a clear picture to be acted on by the Delphi panel, policy actors, policymakers, and researchers.

3. Experience and use of Knowledge - praxis, is important to the research because the data collected, the process used to collect the data, and my analysis are all connected to the use of knowledge gained from lived experience. This notion provides the space for different understanding of the schooling production systems and structures to emerge. This resonates with Collins' (1998a, p. 292), notion that "Alternative epistemologies challenge all certified knowledge and open up the question of whether what has been taken to be true can stand the test of alternative ways of validating truth." (p. 271). Engaging knowledge, agency, and action to change the status quo can lead to the invention of new or different ways to produce equitable schooling outcomes. The use of knowledge gained from lived experience by the Delphi panel has been engaged to propose changes to the schooling production systems and structures.

4. Dynamic and Responsive. We continue to live in a society in which the structures and systems facilitate maintaining the status quo. BFT recognizes the complex relationship between oppression and activism and recognize that change does occur as advocacy and agency continue.

To be effective BFT cannot be static. As social conditions change so must the knowledge and practices of advocacy and agency. Knowing this helps us as practitioners to be adaptive to the knowledge, practices and techniques designed to resist interlocking injustices.

5. Social Justice. Framing inequitable schooling outcomes as a social injustice, (Lopez & Rugano, 2018), facilitates agency of education professionals, policy actors and activists to work to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. Hill Collins writes that "when African-Americans, poor people, women, and other groups discriminated against see little hope for group-based advancement, this situation constitutes social injustice. (Hill Collins, 2000). Inequitable schooling outcomes jeopardizes the advancement of the life chances and future of Black students and therefore constitutes a social injustice here in Canada as it does in the US, and the UK.

6. Self-definition. BFT advocates self-definition as key to individual and group empowerment because speaking for oneself and crafting one's own agenda is vital to empowerment, and self-determination. Hill Collins, (2017) writes "Black feminist thought cannot challenge intersecting oppressions without empowering African-American women. Because self-definition is key to individual and group empowerment, ceding the power of self-definition to other groups, no matter how well-meaning or supportive of Black women they may be, in essence replicates existing power hierarchies." (p. 36)

A key argument of Black Feminist Thought that supports my using it as a theory for this research is its reliance on lived experience being important to its epistemological approach. Lived experience as a way of validating knowledge is a BFT response to Western structures of epistemological exclusion or distortion of Black knowledge. Hill Collins, (2017, p 251) notes

that "U.S. Black women's experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge". Collins asserts further that "subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create independent self-definitions and self-valuations and to articulate them through our own specialists. Like other subordinate groups, African-American women not only have developed a distinctive Black women's standpoint but have done so by using alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge." (p. 252). The Delphi panel comprised of Black youth is my way of facilitating their contribution to knowledge-making and support for their independent self-definitions and self-valuations.

BFT as an analytical tool is also valuable to this research because its rejection of treating oppressions as single operators shifts the paradigm from additive models of oppression to intersectional paradigms. Hill Collins, (2000 p. 277) assert "that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice … that structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression." Using the analytic lens of BFT, we are better able to see and act on the slow violence being carried out on Black and other racialized students. The analytic lens of BFT is also helpful in guiding the visualizing of interlocking oppressions at work in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. This facilitates framing the phenomenon to bring about change.

Critical Race Theory in Education

The production of inequitable schooling outcomes in Ontario is demonstrated along racial lines. Analyzing this persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students therefore requires the engagement of the White supremacy which impacts the life chances of

Black and other racialized people. It requires critical agency to challenge its production of inequitable outcomes because it is at the same time, a central production ingredient, as well as the system within which the production of inequitable schooling outcome occurs. White supremacy is the web of political, economic, and cultural systems in which Whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, as well as conscious and unconscious ideas of White superiority and entitlement.

In trying to find ways to talk about the production of racialized schooling outcomes, it became clear that race on its own is insufficient to capture the complex realities of the lived experience of Black people. Racialized lives are lived within a complex web of interlocking oppressions, and in a world where racism seems normal, White supremacy more succinctly frames the lived realities of Black people. Ladson-Billings, (1998) asserts that racism is "normal, not aberrant, in American society" and, "because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (p. 11). Critical Race Theory is therefore one of the analytic tools I have chosen for this research. It provides a frame from which to recognize, analyze, challenge, and disrupt interlocking systems of oppression that work to produce inequitable schooling outcomes. CRT is useful here in Canada because as noted by Dei & Lara-Villanueva, (2021), "Racialized students are subjected to subtle everyday racism from peers and educators alike".

Bell (2004) writes regarding interest-convergence, that "Black rights are recognized and protected when and only so long as policymakers perceive that such advances will further interests that are their primary concern". (p. 1). Ontario parent Charline Grant talks to current notions of interest-convergence here in Canada. She comments, "If there's one thing, I personally have learned throughout this COVID-19 pandemic, it's that policies and procedure can go out the

door and things can happen very quickly when governments are motivated to do it — when other lives are in danger," she said. "But our Black student lives are in danger and it's been in danger for a very long time. And it's hurtful and harmful and traumatizing." (Nasser, 2021). The parent lament "our Black student lives are in danger and it's been in danger for a very long time. And it's hurtful and harmful and traumatizing" is reflective of the observation made by Bell (2004) that: "Throughout the history of civil rights policies, even the most serious injustices suffered by [B]lacks, including slavery, segregation, and patterns of murderous violence, have been insufficient, standing alone, to gain real relief from any branch of government." (p. 1) As a strategy, according to (Bell, 2004b) interest convergence helps us to identify common interests and work towards meeting them. This sometimes manifests in large scale demonstrations such as BLM of 2020. This speaks to the value of engaging interest-convergence, as a strategy and an analytic tool.

Recently there has been much political allegation that CRT is a danger to public education and society. Karimi, (2021) reports that lawmakers in Tennessee and Idaho have banned the teaching of CRT from their public schools' curriculum, and "Parents in Texas are opposing a school district's efforts to combat racism with lessons in "cultural awareness" -- seen by some as critical race theory." (CNN staff, 2021). Although this allegation is rampant, CRT is not a curriculum subject in K-12 schools. In her response to allegations made regarding CRT, Crenshaw, (2021) asserts: "This censoring of all conversation about racism is called racism. That's what this move is really about. It's really not about a theory ... It's about an effort to shut down all conversation about the sources and the reproduction of racial inequality" (CNN staff, 2021). In other words, continue the critical analysis that is helping to ferret out, and interrupting

racist practices and pedagogies infecting elements of the schooling production systems and structures.

Regarding CRT in Canada, The National Post notes that: "…even as critical race theory fills headlines in the U.S., its basic tenets are often misunderstood or misconstrued, merging with a more general opposition to addressing racism and other contentious social issues in American schools." (Blackwell, 2022). "People disagree on the extent to which racism persists as a problem in modern day society. But the fact of racism's persistence is unassailable. And CRT facilitates its identification, understanding, and remediation." (Sealy-Harrington, 2020, p.1). Public rhetoric against CRT is not sufficient to disqualify it from being engaged by this research, considering that the notion of racism being normal, a taken-for-granted societal practice, and that racism impacts every Black child on a systemic level regardless of whether that child has had a personal one-to-one racist experience or not, is sufficient for CRT to be retained as a supportive tool for analysing the phenomenon being addressed.

CRT's recognition that lived experience produces valid knowledge allows racialized and other minoritized voices to shape conversations and decisions that impact their life-chances. This makes it even more important to the theoretical framework of this research. The Delphi panel of this research is an example of engaging the voice of Black youth in the project of change. Another important aspect of CRT that keeps it valuable to this research is the understanding that resolving chronic and persistent interlocking oppressions requires new framing and mechanisms, and that notions of interest-convergence as a way of coalition building and the engagement of flexible solidarity are practices that align CRT with the production of equitable schooling outcomes, the goal of this research.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

During the conception stages of this research, Black Lives Matter was being organically transformed from localized advocacy and activism into a worldwide locally led chapter-based network social movement. It would have been negligent if research of this kind were to ignore the BLM social justice actions, while itself calling for social justice change to the chronic production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. BLM could not be ignored as a source of knowledge from the lived experiences that were publicly unfolding. BLM brought to public scrutiny issues of the systemic oppression, and neglect of Black Lives, and has simultaneously received broad-based local and international popular support, and significant scrutiny. It has generated focused conversations, elicited change through the engagement of flexible solidarity, and to some extent interest-convergence. Hill Collins (2017) notes that "Black Lives Matter has a direct connection to feminism, intersectionality, and to flexible solidarity". BLM states that it "is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black Lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise." (Black Lives Matter, 2020). BLM has demonstrated the latent power of the public knowledge from lived experience, and the value of a multi-access approach to cause social change. This can be of strategic benefit at the grassroots level, and in the academy.

This thesis is organized to present the research idea, its context, supporting material and ideas using chapters including: An outline of the theoretical- and contextual- frameworks, a literature review that positions the achievement gap and its meaning to Black people and the society in general. The review also addresses how the achievement gap is sustained and persists despite being denounced by society and critics. It connects elements of the determinative environment such as school funding, socioeconomic conditions, discipline and punishment,

assessment, evaluation, accountability, school leadership, teacher pedagogy, and education policy as important contributors to the production of the achievement gap. The review also makes a connection between the production of schooling outcomes and the impact of knowledge-making tools such as research, on the production of the achievement gap.

The presentation of the methodology includes an introduction of the Delphi technique and why it was chosen, the importance of constituting an expert panel comprised of Black youth, the panel recruitment and selection process, and the special value of the Delphi technique to the research during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection process using rounds is outlined, and the data is presented according to themes from the rounds in which the data was collected. In order to facilitate transparency, and to acknowledge the contribution of panelists, the raw data from each round was presented in the voice of the panel. The summary of themes from each round are presented along with the questions, and my analysis is presented using themes from the panel data. The literature review is in keeping with the conceptual- and theoretical- frameworks of the research, and there are chapters that seek to frame the production of inequitable schooling outcomes through de-constructing the achievement gap, discussing strategic activism, and connecting politics and power relations to the production of equitable schooling outcomes. There is a discussion chapter and a recommendations chapter to conclude the research report.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to bring into focus ideas, opinions, practices, and contexts within which scholars situate the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. It provides context for the analysis of data from the Delphi panel and provides support for the imagining of interventions to eliminate the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. The literature review is directly related to the theoretical- and conceptual- frameworks, of the research and it seeks to locate and review relevant literature to facilitate better understanding of the phenomenon in order to support ideas to bring about the needed change. The review is organized based on themes to highlight and contextualize how inequitable schooling outcomes are perceived, addressed, and to recognize some proposed solutions. Because this is Canadian research that is focused on changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, finding and using Canadian literature was prioritized. Much of the Canadian literature I found addressed the notion that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes was a social justice concern, (Dei, 1997; Dei & Kempf, 2013; James, 2019; James, 2012; James & Turner, 2017; Lopez, 2011; Lopez & Rugano, 2018). My literature search reveals a need for more Canadian research that is specifically focused on changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

The scarcity of Canadian research on the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Canada, also meant that my search had to look elsewhere for scholarly work, including the US and the UK. Gillborn, (2005) makes a connection between the UK and North America regarding this phenomenon, noting that US literature has paid little or no regard to issues outside North America, and that in the UK “a similar understanding of racism as a multifaceted, deeply embedded, often taken-for-granted aspect of power relations is at the heart

of recent attempts to understand institutional racism in the UK." (p. 485). There is a similar understanding of racism here in Canada. For example, Dei & Lara-Villanueva, (2021), write "Racialized students are subjected to subtle everyday racism from peers and educators alike"[2]

Inequitable Schooling Outcomes

Inequitable schooling outcomes, the phenomenon being studied in this research, has largely been identified in the literature as "the achievement gap", the result of comparing achievement scores between races using the results of White students as the baseline. Understanding how the achievement gap is produced is helpful in the quest to find ways to eliminate it. Gillborn, (2008) notes that "talk of 'closing' or 'narrowing' gaps operates as a discursive strategy to silence calls for radical dedicated action on race equality." And …-Despite the frequency with which Gap Talk appears in official pronouncements, the reality is that deep-level race inequalities are a fundamental and relatively stable feature of the English education system." (p. 9). The deep-level race inequalities raised are also stable features of our Canadian society. "Racism in Canadian schools is well documented. … Canadian schools can be hostile places for Black, Indigenous and other racialized students for many reasons." (Dei & Lara-Villanueva, 2021).

Anderson et al., (2007) explain that most studies and reports on the achievement gap have focused on differences in achievement scores between White and African American students. They also note that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy in the US "…shifted the focus down to the school level and asks how well racial and ethnic subgroups in a given school are performing relative to their [W]hite peers." (p. 548). This is problematic because it officially

[2] https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anti-racism-education-in-canada

reinforces a binary relationship that facilitates notions of deficiency or superiority tied to race, and it fuels a pathology of deficit thinking about Black students. Kendi, (2016) contends that the achievement gap is racist and problematic. He writes: "To believe in the existence of any sort of racial hierarchy is actually to believe in a racist idea. The achievement gap between the races–with Whites and Asians at the top and Blacks and Latinos at the bottom–is a racial hierarchy." (p. 1). For me, using the term producing inequitable schooling outcomes, places the focus on the production systems and structures of schooling outcomes. Such a focus might also reduce the urge to cast schooling outcomes in a race-binary relationship.

The literature supports the notion that to truly understand the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, a fuller picture of this phenomenon must be developed. (Crenshaw, 2016); (James & Turner, 2017); (Hill Collins, (2000). I believe that when we do not clearly name and frame race, racism, and White supremacy as key elements in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, we prevent the formation of the fuller picture from being developed. Without the fuller picture being understood and acted on, the status quo is maintained, ensuring erasure, the silencing of racialized voices, and obstructing change. It is also problematic that there is an entrenched mythology of Canada being largely innocent of racism, and notions that "Canada is located in a peripheral location within Western hegemony and is characterized in national mythology as a nation innocent of racism." (Dua et al., 2005, p.1).

According to Mayor & Suarez, (2019, p. 59), discussions about race and racism are often subsumed under umbrellas such as ethnicity, culture, discrimination, multiculturalism, and are often less overt than in the United States. This perception of race and racism in Canada is important because it provides a window into the Canadian context within which the production of schooling outcomes for Black students occur. Mayor and Suarez, (2019), also talk of the

difficulty finding Canadian data for their research into changing the trajectory of Black student achievement. The difficulty they experienced bears similarity to my experience while conducting this research. They believe this lack of data is partly due to avoidance on the part of Canada: "The ontology of forgetting" (p. 60), which allows Canada to see itself as fair and multicultural, while ignoring pervasive racism … and … the official discourse of multiculturalism makes it difficult to speak of race and racism in Canada." Such avoidance could be understood as a way of maintaining hegemony, power and control thus preserving the status quo.

Much of the material for the literature review is therefore from jurisdictions outside Canada such as the US. Although there are important differences between education practice in the US and Canada, there is much commonality in the underlying principles that guide education practice in both countries. Smith et al., (2005), write: "Black Canadians share many aspects of the historical experiences of African Americans, but there are also important differences. One similarity between these two groups is the persistent academic underachievement of Black adolescents." (p. 347). This persistent academic underachievement is seen by Welner and Carter (2013) as a gap in sustenance, opportunities, and misdiagnosis which leads to ineffective treatment perpetuating the achievement gap. (p. 2).

Hung et al., (2020) advocate reframing the achievement gap as an opportunity gap placing the focus on systemic and structural barriers that prevent opportunities from being equitably distributed to all groups which makes it harder for all groups of students to reach the same level of achievement. Gardner, (2007) notes that the achievement gap exists within a web of social and economic systems that require large-scale shifts in practice, changes to structures, thinking, beliefs, and attitudes to bring about equitable schooling outcomes. This reinforces the need for a multi-dimensional approach to resolutions. Barton and Coley, (2010) note that

effective solutions for the achievement gap require political and national will that includes governments, communities, families, school systems, and private sector working together. Although I am in general agreement with Barton and Coley's broad coalition response, I am concerned that the urgent need to produce equitable schooling outcomes requires immediate, simultaneous, and cumulative actions which cannot wait for all of the parties to come together in some kind of agreement or work around.

According to the OECD, (2011), Ontario was recognized as a world leader for its sustained strategy of professionally driven reform of its education system. The report stated that "students performed well regardless of their socio-economic status, first language, or whether they are Indigenous Canadians or recent immigrants." (p. 65). A paradox plays out when Canada, perceived internationally as a country where racism is limited in its functions to separate, marginalize, and otherwise disenfranchise racialized people, yet analyses of data from its largest and most diverse school district, the TDSB indicates inequitable opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for Black students, contrasted to White students and other racialized students (James and Turner 2017). Obfuscating race data sustains the production of inequitable schooling outcomes because it prevents proposals to facilitate the development of a well-informed frame and a fuller picture, to make inequitable schooling outcome more identifiable, and therefore accessible to be changed in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes. (Crenshaw, 2017)

Howard and Navarro (2016) provide data that is helpful in developing the understanding and meaning needed to frame the achievement gap for action. They have identified that causes of the discrepancy are structural, pedagogical, and a lack of practices that are culturally relevant and responsive. They help to frame the achievement gap in a way that brings accessing knowledge into focus through their concern that Black and Brown students are expected to learn in schools

where content, instruction, school culture, and assessment are often racially hostile, exclusive, and serve as impediments to school success. This is a reminder that knowledge-making is mediated through the successful use of signs and symbols. Fanon, (2008), comments on the accessing of signs and symbols by the Black child in a White world. “A normal [B]lack child, having grown up with a normal family, will become abnormal at the slightest contact with the [W]hite world…” (p.122). In such situation, the belongingness of Black students becomes a concern.

According to OECD, (2018b), “Students’ sense of belonging at school is the extent to which students feel accepted by and connected to their peers, and part of the school community. A sense of belonging gives students feelings of security, identity, and community which, in turn, support academic, psychological, and social development. A lack of connectedness can adversely affect students’ perceptions of themselves, their satisfaction with life, and their willingness to learn and put effort into their studies.” (p. 69). Consequently, critical intervention is required to develop strategies to successfully mitigate the signs and symbols of schooling production systems and structures, and to facilitate student sense of belonging and the production of equitable schooling outcome for Black students. CRT and BFT are valuable partners within the context of racism being normal, the need for advocacy, agency, praxis, and the engagement of interlocking oppressions. I believe that “When students experience leaders from diverse backgrounds, that experience helps them develop a greater understanding of diverse people as human beings who are capable. For students from minoritized populations, a diverse leadership can be aspirational. A lack of leadership that is representative of their culture projects limits on possibilities, reduces aspirational impetus, and by default encourages low expectations, and reinforces or propagates stereotypes.” (Brown, 2018).

Meaning of Inequitable Schooling Outcomes

Inequitable schooling outcomes means dire consequences for Black students because education significantly impacts their life-chances. OECD (2008) notes: "Education plays a key role in determining how you spend your adult life – a higher level of education means higher earnings, better health, and a longer life." (p. 1). For Black students, inequitable schooling outcomes also means living with a shadow belonging (Johnson, 2019). And as Bailey, (2015) writes: "Because education was a vehicle through which Whites later exercised cultural and racial hegemony, when Blacks were finally permitted to be formally educated, they were served an education that was Eurocentric in method and content. Rooted in Eurocentric approaches, current education practices lack cultural relevance for Minorities…" (p. 7). Such Eurocentric education is designed to divest students of themselves, it fractures the notion of belonging, so a shadow belonging emerges. Shadow belonging is persistent and foreboding and it must resist being the shadow, in order for the being to be. Boston and Warren, (2017) highlights the importance of student belonging. They write: "Although sense of belonging is important to the achievement of all students, it is particularly significant for urban African American students who often contend with negative stereotypes and racism that undermine their feelings of being valued in educational settings". (p. 32) The gap also means a persistent shadow belonging for Black students.

An accurate and well-informed sociohistorical frame enables re-imagining the production of inequitable schooling outcomes as a debt owed to students by society. When Lopez and Rugano (2018) frame Black student achievement as a social justice concern, they connected the impact of colonialism, neoliberalism, and globalization to schooling outcomes similarly to Ladson-Billings (2006) who inextricably links inequitable schooling outcomes to society's education debt, which is the result of the over 400 years of enslavement, and its concomitant failure to justly educate Black people. The effects of the production of inequitable schooling

outcomes is evidenced in the distribution of the economic, social and health resources of society. (Holzer, 2016; Lawrence, & Keleher, 2004;Tate, 2008; White, 2007). Houle & Statistics Canada, (2020) report that "the low-income rate for Black children is two and a half to three times higher than that observed for other children. In 2015, low-income status (according to the market basket measure [MBM]) affected 27% of Black children and 14% of other children." (p. 28).

As identified in this review, for Black students the inequitable schooling outcomes means poverty, poor health, reduced life-chances, lack of opportunity, compromised opportunity for wealth building, and a shadow belonging. Pathways to Education,[3] a program born out of the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC) in Toronto makes the local connection between socioeconomic conditions and schooling outcomes: "Decades of international and Canadian research demonstrate that youth in low-income communities face specific socioeconomic barriers that impact their chances of graduating from high school and pursuing post-secondary opportunities in education, training, and meaningful employment". There are important connections between schooling outcomes and socioeconomic status (Caro et al., 2009, p. 579). I believe the achievement gap is produced by schooling practices, systems, and structures; it is not intrinsic to Black students. It is foisted on them through the production systems and structures in their determinative environments. Framing inequitable schooling outcome for Black students as a social justice concern illuminates the detrimental impacts of the achievement gap for Black students and our Canadian society.

[3] https://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/the-impacts-of-socioeconomic-status-and-educational-attainment-on-youth-success/

Sustaining the Gap

This portion of the literature review focuses on some professional practices that are presented in the literature as being effective ways to eliminate, or at least reduce the achievement gap. When these recommended professional practices are not used by the production systems and structures of schooling outcomes, according to their proponents the achievement gap will be sustained. Some are concerned with the impact of race and racism, while others are about framing of the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students and the agency required for the change. Welner and Carter, (2013) express concern about how inequitable schooling outcome is being addressed, likening it to a farmer trying to increase crop yield by regularly measuring and reporting the data. They note that policy actors, policymakers, and researchers "…have measured and documented multiple test score gaps, but we have never mounted a sustained effort to attend to the gaps in sustenance—in opportunities—that must be addressed before we can expect to see meaningful progress." (p. 2) The gap is sustained by such practice.

Based on the literature review, when the following professional practices do not become the culture of schooling, the production of inequitable schooling outcomes will be sustained. These professional practices include culturally relevant and responsive professional practice (Shah, 2016), school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006), teacher pedagogy, and assessment and evaluation (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010), appropriate level of school funding OECD, (2018), and critical framing of how race, racism, and White supremacy impact the production systems and structures of schooling outcomes (Crenshaw, (2016)). Working to close an achievement gap made visible by a racial divide in outcomes, without considering race, racism, and White supremacy as elements in its production, sustains the gap. Justice Ruth Bader

Ginsburg is instructive, she comments: "It's very hard for me to see how you can have a racial objective but a non-racial means to get there", and Martin, (2006), writes that “Solutions to our racial problems are possible, but only if our society can be brought to face up to the massive crime of slavery and all that it has wrought.” This is especially true given the ubiquitous presence and function of race, racism and White supremacy in the systems and structures of schooling and society.

According to Chapman, (2013), common school policies and practices such as tracking, traditional curricula, teacher classroom practices, and student surveillance, “create a racially hostile environment for students of color … These normative school practices inhibit students of color from fully engaging in the school and, therefore, from securing equitable schooling experiences.” (p. 618). The Ontario Curriculum is the foundation on which teaching, learning, assessment, evaluation, and academic accountability are predicated. When the curriculum is considered racially hostile by Black students and community, it becomes problematic and serves as a tool that sustains the achievement gap. It therefore requires critical agency, activism, and intervention in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes. The achievement gap is sustained when for example, as Lion writes that some students “… are often pinned as bad kids who will never be successful which leads them to be suspended or expelled at disproportionate rates. Creating these safe spaces will allow them to flourish academically.”

The achievement gap is also sustained when schools try to teach Black students without knowing who Black students are. Delpit (1996), writes: “We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don't even know they exist?” (p. x11). We cannot completely know the other, but the more we learn the closer we get to the knowledges that are helpful in the production of equitable schooling outcomes. “The Other’s transcendence is the

never bridgeable Otherness of the Other" (Kunz, 1998). This serves as a cautionary marker for people who claim to "know" Black peoples' lived experience. Matthews et al., (2016) encourage policy actors, researchers, and policymakers to deliberately engage in the process of knowing Black students through what they call "the thick of everyday life" (p. 5) in an effort that will engage that which Kunz, (1998) called the never bridgeable otherness. (p. 143) To reach the worlds of other we must take the steps to learn the other in order that we may effectively serve, otherwise we are helping to sustain the gap. Ladson-Billings, (1998) writes that solving problems of racism in schools and classrooms require careful rethinking, and study of race and education, and that: "Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it. We will have to take bold and sometimes unpopular positions." (p. 22)

Funding Schools

Funding is a key to any schooling system and structure. Without appropriate funding for education the gap will be sustained. The OECD, (2018) asserts: "To achieve equity in education, countries should target funding and resources for education to the most vulnerable, … Teachers should have good opportunities for professional development and the right pedagogical knowledge to identify and support students of all abilities, and there needs to be access to and provision of affordable, high-quality early childhood education." (p. 1). Funding schools to meet the readiness needs of schooling professionals helps in the development of culturally competent school professionals who will be better able to recognize, understand and act on nuanced conversations of students in order to support and facilitate their wellbeing.

Appropriate level of funding is also needed to procure professionals who will make connections between student well-being and graduation rates and who will disrupt stereotypes –

breaking the stereo-cycle of seeing Black boys only as athletes and rappers and therefore be better able to encourage them to develop all-round to facilitate the goals of students. School funding is also needed for staff professional learning to support the schooling goals of students. Appropriate levels of school funding also support equitable distribution of and access to technology. Funding is an important aspect of the production systems and structures that will support the production of equitable schooling outcomes. Lack of funding will sustain the gap.

Discipline & Punishment

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2003), reports "based on interviews with lawyers, a school board trustee, community workers, youth, parents, and academics from the Black community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), that discipline policies have always had a disproportionate impact on Black students". (p. 1) And that until relatively recently:

> The total absence of statistics on race … make it impossible to determine with any certainty whether the application of discipline in schools is having a disproportionate impact on racial minority students .... (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003)

Discipline and punishment of Black students is a concern of this research. The Ontario Human Rights Commission, (2003), also notes that, unlike the US and the UK, school boards and schools in Canada rarely, if ever, collect statistics on the race of students who are suspended and expelled – at least not in any systematic way. (p. 1).

The Toronto and Peel District School Boards are two districts in Ontario that collect some elements of demographic data regarding race. When Szekely and Pessian, (2015) tried to report on discipline and punishment of Black students in the Durham District Region School Board (DRDSB) they were unable to get data from the district. They, however, reported that there is a similar pattern of disproportionate discipline and punishment for Black students in both

the Peel and Toronto school districts. The Ontario Human Rights Commission, (2003) provides data that supports their reporting. “Many interviewees believe that the increased suspension and expulsion of students are having a broad, negative impact on the student, his or her family, the community, and society-at-large. The most commonly identified elements are negative psychological impact, loss of education, higher drop-out rates, and increased criminalization and anti-social behaviour.” (OHRC, 2021). In a socially just society, knowing that such disciplinary practice leads to diminished life-chances for Black students (OECD, 2008), should incentivize action to replace current discipline and punishment practices, with conflict-resolution approaches that centre student learning, well-being and building community, and produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Assessment, Evaluation & Accountability

The Ontario Ministry of Education sets the standards for education delivery in the province. It expects education practitioners to engage in assessment and evaluation practices and accountability systems that use differentiated instruction, timely descriptive feedback, and provide the support needed to produce equitable schooling outcomes. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Differentiated instruction engages contexts and the determinative environment to build support for instruction and learning. This I believe conflicts with the ideals of meritocracy to which society largely subscribes. The notion of “meritocracy—rewarding individuals on the basis of intellectual ability—has been widely accepted as the ideal, and social inequities have been seen as breakdowns in its functioning.” (Wexler, 2021).

Meritocracy is antithetical to the principles of differentiated instruction, and the assessment and evaluation advanced by the Ministry of Education. The notion of schooling outcomes based solely on intellectual ability is flawed (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Such

standard not only ensures that race inequalities continue, but it also presents them as fair and just. Assessment tools that do not account for race, racism, White supremacy and socioeconomic conditions in their construction, administration, and analysis when used with Black students are problematic, and will produce flawed data. I believe that schooling outcomes are produced, therefore schooling production systems and structures must include interlocking oppressions in the matrix of production factors in order to produce desired schooling outcomes.

Considering that disparity in schooling outcomes is largely delineated along racial lines, the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO), the provincial education assessment tool is problematized because it does not account for race and other interlocking oppression in its assessment or reporting matrix. It therefore becomes somewhat unhelpful as a tool for changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students and can be perceived as a status quo reproducing engine. (Bowles & Gintis 2001). Society accords benefits or costs based on notions of conformity to the norms it establishes in the meritocratic system. When schooling outcomes are perceived as student achievement while the role of the society and its systems, structures, resource distribution, are not sufficiently accounted for, the production of inequitable schooling outcomes will persist.

Dei (1997) writes from a frame that problematizes the notion of the norms of society that mainstreams some students and marginalizes others on the basis of race and behaviours. This is important in a society where accountability, rewards and costs are mitigated through lenses such as meritocracy, patriarchy, and White supremacy. He writes that students who act differently from the mainstream, or even look different are considered non-conformists in a schooling system that is expected to "legitimize certain hegemonic and ideological practices, while delegitimizing others." (p. 20). For racialized students, being classified as conformists based on

whiteness, can mean replicating a position of marginality. And when Black students do not conform, under meritocracy, they pay a cost which could mean, for example, being pushed out of school (Dei & Kempf, 2013), suspended, expelled or streamed out of academic programmes.

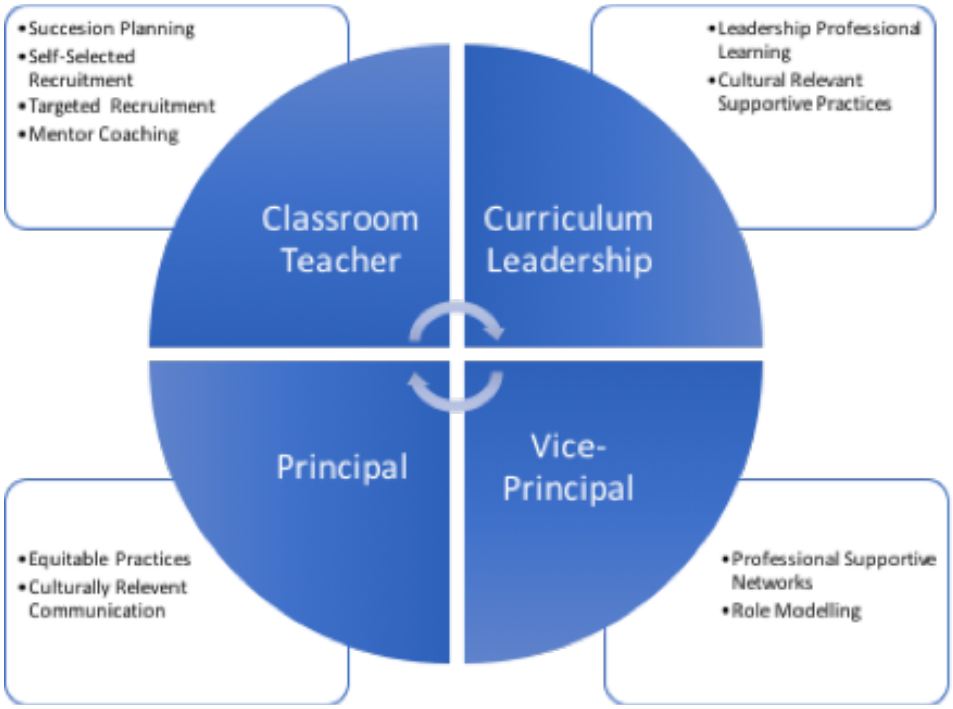
School Leadership & Teacher Pedagogy

Strong correlations exist between school leadership and student achievement. (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, Pont et al. (2008). It is problematic when school leadership is guided by deficit thinking regarding Black students, therefore the contributions made by school leaders to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes must be interrogated, reimagined, and challenged. Flessa (2009) addresses the problematic of deficit thinking when practiced by school leadership. He finds that faith placed in the principalship as key change agent is problematic when there is alignment with prevailing deficit thinking regarding urban communities, the role of schooling, and their attitudes about poverty. He writes: "Remedying principals' deficit frameworks is a prerequisite for school improvement and will require selecting, preparing, and supporting principals differently; it will also require making visible the systems of belief that obstruct connections between urban schools and communities." (p. 334). When deficit thinking frames the production of schooling outcomes, the achievement gap is sustained.

It is also widely acknowledged that the principal's impact is mediated through other professionals. Pont et al. (2008) write: "The overall conclusion emerging from the more than 40 studies considered in these reviews is that school leaders have a measurable, mostly indirect influence on learning outcomes. … School leaders influence the motivations, capacities and working conditions of teachers who in turn shape classroom practice and student learning." (p. 34). Both teacher practice and school leadership are therefore key contributors to the production

of schooling outcomes. My experience of education leadership studies here in Canada, is that there is little focus specifically on leading for Black student achievement. It was not a focus during my principal qualification training, (PQP), nor was it a focus during my supervisory officer's preparation (SOQP) courses. My need to better understand the change required in order for schools to produce equitable outcomes was supported through in-service professional learning sessions at the TDSB in areas such as culturally relevant and responsive teaching as proffered by education thought leaders such as Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), and (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

My review of the literature identifies teachers as the greatest of school effects on student outcomes (Opper, 2019; Pont et al., 2008). Teacher practice therefore becomes problematic within the context of what (Lipsky, 1969) calls the Street-Level Bureaucracy. Teachers, as street-level bureaucrats, have wide discretion over curriculum delivery, assessment and student well-being. According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats often adjust their "… work habits and attitudes to reflect lower expectations for themselves, their clients, and the potential of public policy. Ultimately, these adjustments permit acceptance of the view that clients receive the best that can be provided under prevailing circumstances." (p. 504). When normalized practices of racism, and White supremacy are accounted for in Lipsky's notion of work adjustment, it is reasonable to adjudicate such teacher practice as problematic and life-altering for Black students. Framing inequitable schooling outcomes must therefore focus attention to the role of teacher practice and pedagogy in its production.



(Brown, 2018)

The good news is that principals and vice-principals indicate a willingness to interrupt the status quo in order that greater diversity is achieved in district leadership. Some of the recommendations of the research are presented below. (Brown, 2018)

Education Policy

In Ontario, public education occurs within the context of the neoliberal framework of our society, which determines the boundaries within which education policy decisions are exercised. This is also the context in which the production of inequitable schooling outcomes and its accompanying pressures for change occur. Large scale education change is often sought through policy development and implementation. According to Anderson and Jaafar, (2003), some significant changes in education policy have occurred since 1995, including the establishment of the EQAO, the Ontario College of Teachers, (OCT), the Fewer School Boards Act (1997) which reduced the number of boards from 129 to 72, and the Education Quality Improvement Act, which centralized control over education funding. In 1997 The Ontario Curriculum was

implemented. It defined subject specific learning outcomes, and standards by grade level, as well as a new standardized report card. (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003) These changes follow a pattern noted by Harris & Herrington, (2006), in which large scale education change within a neoliberal framework is often focused on: "content and time standards, government-based accountability, market-based accountability, and resources/capacity." (p. 4).

Leithwood et al. (2003) critiqued the education policies implemented between 1995 and 2003, noting that the school system became "a harsh environment for less advantaged and diverse student populations" (p. 7). They recommended that the province should "make a much stronger and less ambiguous commitment to strengthening the public school system in Ontario, emphasizing excellence and equity." (p. 12). However, none of the policies they proposed explicitly addressed the social cohesion, quality of life, or diversity issues they identified. Instead, in keeping with Canadian norms regarding race and equity, they punted. "References to equity goals linked to gender, racial and cultural differences, were replaced by the idea that equity could be achieved by holding teachers accountable for the achievement of all students to the same high academic standards." (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003).

There were no mechanisms in place to ensure such accountability, society therefore missed the opportunity to specifically address the needs of Black students who were erased by the policy proposal. Such erasure highlights the need for research, such as this, which specifically address the needs of Black students from the standpoint of Black youth. Regarding large scale market led reform, Ryan, (2016) observes that "While some initiatives may well have produced a few success stories, most market inspired reforms have not succeeded in, for example, lessening achievement gaps." (p. 88). Dei & Kempf (2013) question the limits of policy as a tool for change: "We have to ask difficult questions about the limits of policy to effect real

change as far as equity and educational outcomes for marginalized students are concerned." (p. 165).

Policymakers must also recognize that apart from the impact of street-level bureaucrats on policy implementation, framing of policy development and implementation to address the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, must not only include the impact of racism and other interlocking oppressions, it must also consider the notion of the policy web (Joshee & Sinfield, 2010). This contextualizes and frames the limits of policy development and implementation and points out that policy cannot be understood in isolation. Since: "No policy text enters a void; it becomes part of a field that is already filled with texts and discourses. That field can only be fully understood by examining related policy texts and discourses that exist at all relevant level of policy-making." (p. 56) I believe that in addition to understanding how the policy might fit into the web it is joining, education policy must be developed based on a fuller picture from a well-informed frame that includes the impact of race, racism, White supremacy, and meritocracy in its development.

Conclusion

Conducting this literature review within the context of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the research allowed me to engage the material from a critical research standpoint. Reading in this context also allowed me to better frame questions, theorize from the data and develop arguments to challenge the status quo. It has also helped me centre the arguments scholars make and bring them together in conversation to facilitate my analysis of panel data. Critically engaging the literature in light of both the conceptual and theoretical frameworks helped me to see the society as an important factor in the production of schooling outcomes. This approach to the literature review facilitated how I used my understanding of the

production of inequitable schooling outcomes to propose a shift from student achievement based on principles of meritocracy to schooling outcomes as a produced entity.

It also bolstered my thinking that schooling outcomes are produced by the schooling production systems and structures, and it exposed the lens of meritocracy as a marker of schooling outcomes as flawed. It has also become clearer that framing a problem for it to be acted on must be prioritized to support the expectations of praxis advocated by both BFT and CRT in Education. One of the most impactful gifts of the literature review to this research is that both the theoretical and the conceptual frameworks assert that speaking for oneself and crafting one's own agenda is vital to empowerment, self-definition and self-determination. It also provided me the support for choosing Black youth as the Delphi panel and helped me recognize how the panel added to known scholarship based on their lived experience.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework asserts that meritocracy is a flawed lens through which to view schooling outcomes and that producing equitable schooling outcomes for Black students is good for the students, their communities, and our society. Wiederkehr et al. (2015), state that "Evidence clearly indicates that merit is not the only determinant of school success … the belief that, in school, success only depends on will and hard work is widespread in Western societies despite evidence showing that several factors other than merit explain school success". (p. 1) When schooling outcomes are perceived as student achievement, students' success is deemed to depend on the will and hard work of the students who are judged as responsible for the outcomes despite evidence that show otherwise. The strategic role of society in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes is often neglected under the gaze of a meritocratic lens. The society plays an important and strategic role in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes

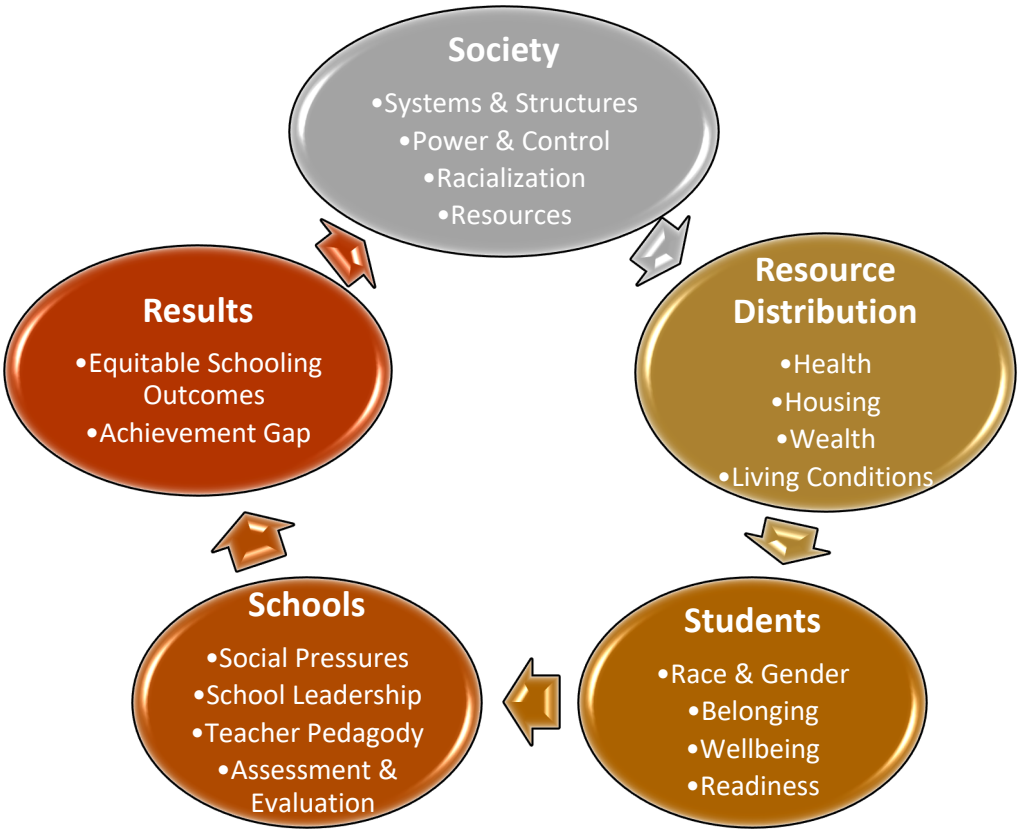
through its systems, structures, resource distribution, allocation of power and control, racialization, and pedagogical practices. (Allais, 2016)

The Ontario Ministry of Education funds the systems, structures, and supports such as curriculum and pedagogical expectations to support the production of schooling outcomes. These supports and funding are highly dependent on what the sitting government recognizes and prioritizes to be critical elements of the schooling production systems and structures. Solomona et al. (2005) talk to one example when a change in government occurs. "Notions of equity, diversity and anti-racism practices have been largely marginalized as important sites for consideration within educational spheres. … has resulted in the elimination of programs designed to provide minoritized students with the additional support and resources to enable them to compete effectively within the educational and employment markets." My belief is that sustainable production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students requires a conscious effort to understand this phenomenon from different standpoints, and through different lenses.

I have fashioned this critical conceptual framework to assert that inequitable schooling outcome is not natural. It is produced by schooling production systems and structures that do not sufficiently account for or make the necessary adjustments to mitigate the inequity in access, and opportunity that comprise the prevailing systems and structures. Schooling is comprised of many elements working together in systems and structures that are dedicated to producing schooling outcomes. Collins Dictionary notes that "a system is a way of working, organizing, or doing something which follows a fixed plan or set of rules." (Collins, 2023) I call this organizing the schooling production system because it is a precisely designed mechanism guided by policies and protocols to engage professional practice, use personnel including teachers, principals, vice-principals, classroom-, and other support- professionals to produce schooling outcomes. These

elements of production are brought together and organized in systems and structures for the production of schooling outcomes. I use the term production to focus attention on the notion that schooling outcomes are produced, they do not just happen naturally, and to note that inequitable schooling outcomes are the result of carefully orchestrated production systems and structures that must be re-tooled in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes.

Figure 1



This conceptual framework as represented in figure 1, also helps to clarify concepts at the centre of the research, guides the thinking and development of a fuller picture in order to know, understand, to raise questions, and to critically analyze the research data. Much of current schooling practice is premised on helping students overcome obstacles, while the obstacles largely remain in place. Based on my history, scholarship, and my lived experience, I assert that the operating system of our society is built on a foundation that is characterized by hooks as a

"White supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2004, p. 1). It is on this foundation and operating system that the persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students occur, here in Canada, in the UK, and in the US. Based on the literature review, and my lived experience, one way to approach the production of equitable schooling outcomes is to engage Critical Race Theory in Education (CRT), Black Feminist Thought (BFT), and knowledges gained from the analysis of movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) to inform critical analysis, agency, and activism in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes here in Ontario.

Chapter 3: Methodology

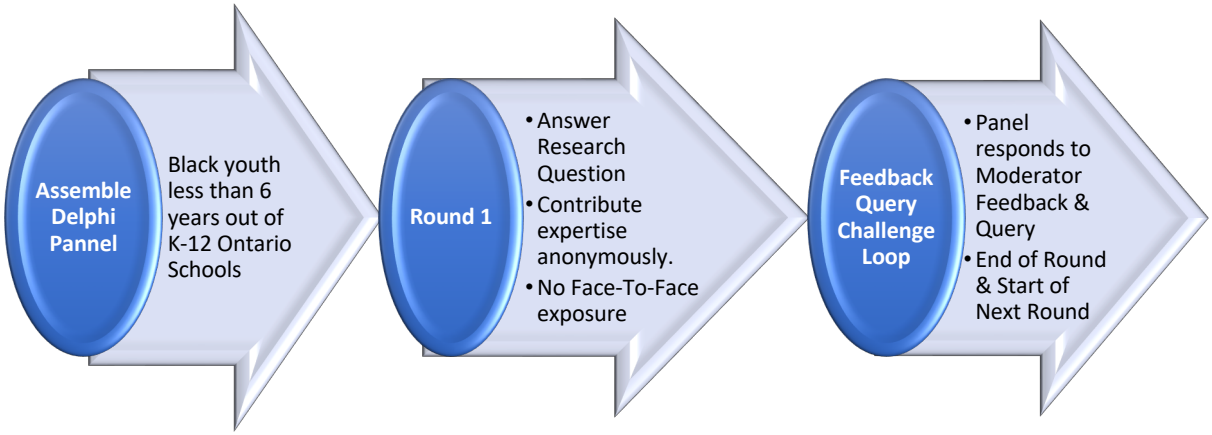
What is a Delphi Study?

A Delphi study is a research project in which a specially selected panel is engaged to deliberate on a topic and make recommendations. The panel is chosen based on their expertise and other attributes. The researcher uses the Delphi technique to engage the panel of experts remotely. The panelists do not meet face to face, instead their deliberation occurs virtually. For this research the panel participated using the SurveyMonkey platform. I used a series of moderator questions, the independent panel responses, and moderated feedback to bring the panelists together in conversation with each other over several rounds. Each round involves further questioning from the moderator based on responses from the previous round as well as questions from the moderator seeking clarity or challenging panel responses. I shared the independent responses with the panel so that they can respond to or expand ideas raised in the conversation. The Delphi is a multistage or multi-round iterative data gathering process specifically structured to facilitate information sharing, and to collect and process arguments and opinions from the Delphi panel.

It is a process in which panelists respond to questions and prompts designed to encourage critical thinking in their responses, determine the most important issues, and directly engage the data analysis process. (Hasson, 2000). The Delphi is designed to make effective use of informed intuitive judgment by engaging the same experts throughout the duration of the Delphi process (Helmer, 1967; Profillidis & Botzoris, 2019). For this study, the Delphi panel was comprised of Black youth who attended Ontario schools for their K-12 education. I chose the youth as experts based on their lived experience as students, and because I understand lived experience to be a

knowledge maker. I therefore engaged the Black youth who served on the Delphi panel as the experts or "informed advocates". (Keeney et al., 2001). The methodology comes to life in this research through the main instrument of the research - the series of questions posed and responded to during the feedback/query/challenge loop of each round. The process of rounds was like virtual panel discussions conducted using SurveyMonkey[4] as the facilitating platform.

Figure 2: The Panel & the Delphi Process



Why the Delphi?

During the early stages of planning this research, I contemplated multiple approaches to data collection. Reflecting on my professional practice, reminded me that listening to students, parents, and colleagues provided me with significant credible data that could not be ignored, and that students brought a powerful perspective to the discourse of producing equitable schooling outcomes. I used the Delphi technique instead of other methods such as the interview, or a focus group, because the Delphi is a reliable method of collecting and analysing data from group-work without the added pressures and the dynamics of face-to-face contact. Bellini (2017), writes "As a methodological approach it was so successful that it was applied to other disciplines … A

[4] https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/enterprise/?utm_source=momentive

Delphi study creates dialogue among a group of experts in a structured environment either through emails, letters, or an online forum such as a chat room." (p. 98). I also chose the Delphi technique because I believe that a different approach to the research will lead to new insights that are useful in mitigating the phenomenon. Walter & Andersen, (2016), remind us as researchers that: "Research standpoint is arguably the most important determinant of a research project's methodology". The Delphi technique was chosen instead of other data gathering forms, because the rounds process of the Delphi technique allows the expert panel to engage in nuanced and in-depth conversations and reflections on the production of equitable schooling outcomes. I also chose the Delphi technique because the panel entered their data digitally. As a result, the accuracy of their quotes did not need verification.

I chose the Delphi technique because it has robust support from research as being an effective tool for facilitating a group of individuals working anonymously together to solve complex problems. (Baker et al., 2006; Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Habibi et al., 2014; Helmer, 1967b; Keeney et al., 2001; H. A. Linstone & Turoff, 1976; Maxey & Kezar, 2016). The structure of the Delphi technique provides anonymity, iteration, controlled summary and feedback, as well as an embedded communication process that reduces the potential for dominance by any one panelist. (Habibi et al., 2014; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi technique enables group-work without face-to-face contact. It was an excellent data gathering tool for this research because of its built-in effectiveness to safely collect data during the COVID-19 pandemic that struck Ontario and greatly restricted social contact and required strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

Considering that education change is often sought through policy development and implementation, it might seem logical that this research should have engaged a Policy Delphi,

however its scope is incongruent with a Policy Delphi. Maxey and Kezar, (2016), note the main purpose of the Policy Delphi is to draw out opposing views about problems and expose a range of policy alternatives. Although this research is not seeking to address a specific policy, its findings are developed to inform policy decisions impacting the production of equitable schooling outcomes. This Delphi engages experts in a collaborative process of data generation and analysis geared to developing recommendations to change the schooling production systems and structures, and to produce equitable schooling outcomes. Baker et al., (2006, p. 61) note "Experts provide an accessible source of information that can be quickly harnessed to gain opinion. They can often provide knowledge when more traditional research has not been undertaken."

Additional Considerations

For me this choice is also significant because of how systemic race- and gender-hierarchy function to disenfranchise Black youth. Ryan & Rottmann, (2007) noted that "societal institutions consistently disadvantage some communities more than others." And that … "The most obvious of these structures are those associated with gender, race, class, and sexual orientation; sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia…" My choosing Black youth to serve as the experts on a Delphi panel is an effort to interrupt such practice of exclusion and bring to the academic discourse obfuscated lived experiences of Black youth in their own voice. This composition of the Delphi panel interrupts the status quo regarding who might be considered expert and engages Black youth in a praxis to expose knowledge that is useful in framing of the phenomenon so it might be acted on to produce equitable schooling outcomes.

Regarding who qualify as expert for a Delphi panel, Keeney et al., (2001), wrote defining expert to mean " … a group of `informed individuals' or someone who has knowledge about a

specific subject" (p. 196). Black students, including those who did not complete high school, have a deep understanding of the pros and cons of the schooling production systems and structures because they lived it. Black students therefore bring expertise that is an asset to the process of designing the best possible education system, since they can talk from their lived experience as the experts telling their own authentic stories. (Flynn, 2020). The panelists of this research responded to the questions posed using lenses fashioned by their lived experience as Black students, and members of society, to provide nuanced responses to the Delphi questions.

Panel Recruitment

For this research, I sought the opinions of Black youth who have expressed an interest in or are concerned about how schooling systems might be changed to produce equitable schooling outcomes. Panelists were recruited through my network of community partners, using the snowball approach, a recruitment flyer, (Appendix 1) and word-of-mouth. The recruitment process was constrained by COVID-19 protocols, possibilities for social interactions, youth response to the call to participate, and time. After the OISE research protocols were met and the recruitment process yielded sufficient candidates, further screening was conducted to ensure proficiency in their communication and technical skills to engage in the research process. Recruits also completed a demographic survey which included an expression of their interest and commitment to the research process, willingness to participate and maintain involvement until the process is completed, and their reasons for participating.

The invitation to participate in the research (Appendix 2) sought to include Black youth who were less than 5 years out of school who meet at least 3 of the following attributes: from working- or middle- class family, LGBTQ+, attended specialized high school, are out of school, in college/university, apprentice, vocational education, student with disability, and students who

attended applied or academic high school programmes. The youth who volunteered were in college or university. They self-identified as high school graduates and stated the high school programme in which they participated. No other social identity markers were revealed by the panel. As a critical researcher, guided by the conceptual- and theoretical- frameworks of this research, I recognize that the composition of this panel did not include the broader mix of Black youth with the attributes sought, and that there are several plausible factors that might have contributed to the makeup of the volunteer pool from which to select the panel. This includes the breadth and timing of recruitment, concerns regarding COVID-19, and an unwillingness to self-identify personal social attributes.

A key reason for using Black youth as the panel is to challenge the prevailing hierarchy that makes it difficult to hear the voices of Black youth. Ladson-Billings, & Tate, (1995) talk to the importance and value of voice: "As we attempt to make linkages between critical race theory and education, we contend that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system. Delpit argues that one of the tragedies of education is the way in which the dialogue of people of color has been silenced." (p. 58). This research is one way to disrupt that paradigm. My own lived experience allowed me to expect that the panel would bring great value to this research. Considering that Black student or youth voices are not the norm in contemporary research it means that their perspectives are not typically accessible through conventional research. (Maxey & Kezar, 2016). Selecting Black youth as the expert panel is also a way to counter the created silence, as well as to challenge the "traditional definitions of who carries expertise" (Fine et al., 2012).

Choosing Black youth to be the experts of the Delphi panel is also my way of adding the voices of Black youth to the academic conversation, and the scholarship pertaining to the

production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario. It is important to note that Black youth are rarely given the opportunity to talk about and provide recommendations for changing schooling outcomes for Black students. In particular, the opportunity to participate as a collaborative team discussing and providing their opinions in a forum that could potentially have an impact on the schooling production systems and structures built on the foundations of White supremacist notions.

After the recruitment phase of the research, I began our collaborative process using a Zoom audio call with the panel to discuss the research purpose, methodology, the technology to be used, and the commitment that was required. I used the Zoom audio call to facilitate anonymity. Our meeting provided an opportunity to hear the initial opinions, and concerns or questions of panelists. We also agreed on the need to respond in a timely manner and the importance of reflecting on the summaries and comments from the other panelists when responding to the questions that I posed. The panel reaffirmed their commitment to the research project because they thought it was important to them and to Black students after them. This was the first time both the panel and I were participating in a Delphi study, and we felt that it was the wise choice considering the restrictions that were being enforced because of the COVID-19 pandemic that was taking hold here in Canada. At the end of the meeting, it was clear to me that the panelists were vested in the value of the research, and that they were committed to participate in this process.

Following the meeting, participants were sent the link for responding to the Round 1 Question: What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools? The panel was asked to answer the question as completely as possible, using point form, paragraphs, sentences, or phrases. As the

researcher the first hurdle was behind us and we had begun our academic relay of question-and-answer baton passing through the rounds. We had initiated the feedback/query/challenge loop of the Delphi process to pose questions, make connections to existing literature, and to seek clarification from the panel with a view to generating data for analysis and to guide recommendations to be made by the panel.

The Delphi Panel

This Delphi panel was comprised of six Black youth aged 18-24 who attended K-12 schools in Ontario. The demographic breakdown is as follows: Four are female and two are male, they are all from working- and middle-class families, and at least one parent of each panelist graduated university. One panelist completed both academic and applied courses in high school, another pursued the International Baccalaureate Program. Four panelists were in full- or part-time employment, one went to a specialized high school, three attended high school outside their neighbourhood. Two of the recruits were new high school graduates. Ten youth participated in the recruitment phase of the research, however, four were unable to participate beyond recruitment due to the time commitment required to serve on the panel. The panel was comprised of students who have had favourable educational outcomes despite a system that was not sufficiently supportive of them as Black students. Their schooling outcomes, however, do not negate the value of their contributions to the research because their contributions are anchored to their lived experience as Black students participating in the K-12 schooling systems and structures here in Ontario.

Throughout the report pseudonyms are used to identify each panelist in the research because I believe that youth being able to self-identify is important and consistent with the notion that "self-definition is key to individual and group empowerment" Hill Collins, (2017) (p.

36). At the start of the data collection process, I asked the participants to choose a pseudonym by which they wished to be identified throughout the research. These pseudonyms protect their privacy, provide anonymity, and allow the panelists to identify themselves in the text of the research through quotes and other attributions. The following are their chosen pseudonyms: Akua, Alias 1, Colin, Lion, Peanut, and Penelope. These pseudonyms affirm the voice of the youth and cultivate authentic connectedness to the research. To me it is significant having Black youth who have for 13 years, navigated K-12 schooling systems engage their expertise and talk from their vantage points regarding changes that are needed to the schooling systems and structures in order that equitable schooling outcomes are produced. The expertise developed through their lived schooling and community experience is outside the knowledgebase of teachers, school leaders, policy actors, and policymakers. This makes their participation especially valuable to the data generating, gathering, analysis and the knowledge making process.

Keeney et al., (2001) state that it is more useful to select those who are willing to engage in discussion because they "are more likely to become and stay involved in the Delphi." (p.196). Penelope stated that "It is an important initiative that I wanted to support. Taking into consideration my own lived experience, I would like future generations to have an education that nurtures their needs and skills rather than tear them down." Peanut participated in order to "provide my insight on how the school system that raised me can do better for other students like myself - Black, low-middle class socioeconomic status." Akua said, "I find it interesting". Alias 1 said, "I would like to participate in this research because it provides me, as once a Black student myself, the opportunity to express my thoughts on the schooling system surrounding

Black individuals and their educational experiences." Lion said, "I was asked to participate". and Colin participated to: "share my high school experience."

Each panelist experienced the schooling process as Black human beings – female, male, and all of the other intersectional identities they embody. Regardless of their schooling outcomes they are qualified to respond to the research question as Black students who have navigated schooling systems and structures here in Ontario. The level of schooling outcomes of the panel does not negate the systemic disenfranchisement that occurs for Black students. Panelists responded from the point of view of their lived experience as Black students in concert with the schooling outcomes they have experienced. They also articulated, out of their experience, how they believe schooling production systems and structures ought to be retooled to produce equitable schooling outcomes as the norm.

The Delphi Process

The Delphi technique requires that the panel be comprised of experts that function in anonymity. Hanafin, (2004), argues that the Delphi technique is time consuming, labour intensive and there is concern regarding consensus and anonymity: "… anonymity may lead to a lack of accountability because responses may not be traced back to the individual. In addition, it has been suggested that a consensus approach can lead to a diluted version of the best opinion and the result represents the 'lowest common denominator'." (p. 12). I am not concerned about the consensus critique because consensus, a positivist notion, was not sought by this research. Anonymity, however, is important to this research. The notion of accountability connected to anonymity raised by (Hanafin, 2004) is not a concern to me. The responses are anonymous to the panel, however, I know the identity of each member of the panel. Therefore the reasons presented in critique of the anonymity of panelists do not apply here. Goodman, (1987) writes:

"The obvious advantage of guaranteed anonymity is that it encourages opinions which are true and not influenced by peer pressure or other extrinsic factors." (p. 730).

During the data gathering and analysis phase of the research, I paid attention to how the panelists connected their responses to their lived experience, and I made connections to the literature review, noting the nuanced difference between panel and the literature I reviewed. I also analyzed the incoming data to identify emerging patterns and insights, which were used to formulate follow-up questions and comments for the panel during the feedback/query/challenge loop of each round. The incoming data was also placed into categories that were further refined to create themes to support the telling of the data story. During this data gathering process, I followed a simple pattern: 1. I ask the question. 2. Panelists respond to questions based on the guidelines given. 3. I summarize panel responses according to emerging themes. 4. I asked the panel to suggest corrections to my summaries thus reducing possibilities for misinterpretation and reduce the power differential between myself and the panel. 5. During round two and subsequent rounds I presented a summary of the emerging themes, along with the individual response of the panelists with a follow-up question. And 6. Panel responses were collected and analyzed.

This process is repeated over the rounds of the Delphi in which the panel engages in real-time data analysis. Panelists used my summaries, and the comments from other panelists to inform their responses during the feedback/query/challenge loop. Merriam and Tisdell (2015), wrote "… data analysis is best done in conjunction with data collection." The figure below is a graphic representation of the Data gathering process used in this research.

Between rounds I emailed to each panelist a digital link to the survey questions housed on the SurveyMonkey platform. The panel was asked to answer the questions as completely as possible using point form, paragraphs, sentences, or phrases.

The following is presented to show how the research methodology was operationalized. It shows for example that the round one question, responses, and my feedback are connected to the round two question and engages an iterative process that makes for a fuller exploration of the question. Notice also that the round two question is directly linked to the round one responses and themes, and that the themes are directly from the panel responses. I call this part of the Delphi process, the feedback/query/challenge loop because it is here that researcher feedback, challenge or query are connected to the panel responses, themes, and the follow-up question.

The process went as follows: For the opening question I asked them to respond to the question: What do you think needs to be changed by schooling systems, in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario? I then analyzed panel responses to uncover and summarize the emerging themes. These themes were then presented to the panel with the follow-up question.

Both my summary and the follow-up questions are included here.

My summary of themes:

> Ensure equitable practices; End academic streaming; Ensure effective pedagogical practices. Revise Curriculum to make it racially inclusive - Teach Black world history

throughout the school year; Black wellness - pay attention to the black student voice; provide culturally competent school counsellors; understand the connection between student wellness and graduation rates; create safe spaces for students so they can flourish; disrupt stereotypes; fund the programs that are needed, and the professional learning to support student growth and development; equitable distribution of, and access to technology; prioritize Black student belonging.

The follow-up questions that I posed for the round were:

1. What would these changes look like in schools? and

2. In what ways do you see these changes as being helpful to Black student achievement?

This is the pattern of reporting I have engaged throughout the data gathering process of the research.

This is also where the panel becomes engaged in nuanced and deeper conversations and reflections as they respond to the question of the round. This loop is also one of the aspects of the Delphi technique that sets it apart from using a one-time interviewing, or surveying participants for data collection, because the Delphi technique provides panelists multiple opportunities to agree with, rebut, or otherwise engage in real-time the ideas presented by other panelists. For this research, during the loop, panelists were given each other's responses along with the themes emerging from the analysis of panel data to support a fuller conversation.

This process brings a different value to the research since panelists can respond to each other as if in face-to-face group deliberations. This process also brings about a richer data set than might have been generated by conducting a one-time interview or surveying of participants without the opportunity for researcher follow-up. Considering that this is the process followed throughout the research, it also allows for the collection of data that is connected to the lived

experience of each panelist contextualized by the themes and conversations that occurred before the specific round within which the panel is responding. The Delphi technique afforded the panel opportunities to engage the research question from their multiple perspectives consistent with face-to-face conversations without the groupthink.

For me as a critical researcher, one concern that has surfaced regarding the use of the Delphi technique with Black students is its relationship to military research. This is a concern arising because military research has a negative and clandestine history of racist, inhumane, oppressive, and unjust treatment of Black and other racialized people. (Dickerson, 2015). I needed therefore, to be assured of its appropriateness as a tool for this research. I have found no disqualifying evidence regarding the use of the Delphi technique as a research tool, and there is robust support for the technique being effective in facilitating a group of individuals working anonymously together to solve complex problems. (Baker et al., 2006; Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Habibi et al., 2014; Helmer, 1967b; Keeney et al., 2001; H. A. Linstone & Turoff, 1976; Harold A. Linstone et al., 1975). I chose this methodology because its process facilitates engaging the panel in real-time data collecting and analysis that grounds the development of hypotheses, and theories helpful in the production of equitable schooling outcomes. And because of its embedded communication process that reduces the potential for dominance by any one panelist. (Habibi et al., 2014; Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

The data collection and analysis began early in the Delphi process, as incoming data from the panel was analyzed to identify emerging patterns and insights which were used to formulate follow-up questions and comments for the panel during the feedback/query/challenge loop of each round. I found the feedback/query/challenge loop especially helpful in the data analysis process because the panel was able to participate in the real-time data analysis that occurred. In

their seminal work, Merriam and Tisdell (2015), affirm that "Category construction is data analysis", and that "… data analysis is best done in conjunction with data collection." The data collection and analysis during rounds is a part of its process, ensuring that themes are grounded in the voice of the panelists.

Chapter 4: Findings

To begin the research and to outline its parameters the panelists were convened to discuss the research purpose, methodology, the commitment required, and the technology to be used when responding to the research questions. This was an important first meeting because participants were able to ask questions, vocalize concerns and express their willingness to participate and commit to the research project and process. During this first coming together it was clear to me that we were cautious, expectant, and intrigued as we were meeting each other for the first time as researcher and panelists. I was happy as my lived experience as a radio host/moderator and a school principal helped to make the meeting successful. As Black youth they were excited to be a part of this study and hoped that the research would help to generate the needed change. Some expressed being proud and felt special to be a part of this research. They all expressed the belief that based on their lived experience they had something important to share. After the meeting I sent the panelists the link to begin the first round of data gathering. They were asked to respond to questions on a round by round basis using the collaborative process of the Delphi technique.

Round 1

The question posed in round one was: What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools? Based on

my analysis and coding of the round one data, the following themes, and recommended change to facilitate the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students have emerged:

1. Ensure culturally relevant pedagogical practices to meet the needs of Black students.

Lion writes: "I believe in order to have more successful Black boys within the schooling system there needs to more focus on closing that education gap … there needs to be a part of the curriculum that teaches students about Black history and the importance of the Black struggle. Students not only face racial discrimination and disparities from the schooling system but also from the students with in it. In order to make Black students excel at higher rates all aspects of the schooling system have to be in their favour." Akua wrote "I think we need to take a good look at the academic streaming in Ontario. A lot of Black students get left behind because of this". Penelope notes that "Sometimes, teachers and other supports tend to generalize and make assumptions about students and their experiences, which are often rooted out of racism and prejudice. Teachers are quick to point out flaws and shortcomings in Black students rather than finding out what is the source of potential conflict or demonstrating their understanding and support."

Colin asserts "There needs to be a more open academic structure for grade 9/10 students. Grade 9/10 students need to be able to smoothly transition into the appropriate university/college level that they plan on pursuing. This would be necessary due to the common push from elementary school teachers encouraging certain groups of students to pursue lower academic levels, that may make the students transition to their necessary level much harder. The current structure requires students to redo each course in the preferred level before being able to advance in that new level." Peanut calls for "1. More Black faces on textbooks. 2. More Black persons,

inventions, history in curriculum. 3. More funding into schools of Black neighbourhoods to ensure resources are up-to-date".

Alias 1 advocates "Changes to the curriculum that is more inclusive of Black History, meaning that more historians are learned about, and Black History is not only prioritized in the month of February. Less division in the level placements of students, especially in secondary school (i.e., Academic, Applied, Locally Developed. Importance placed on observing the learning strategies of students and not basing their learning abilities on race. Having all resources needed accessible for the enhancement of education in all students, not selected students. More guidance/support systems accessible for students (i.e., Black students) to advise them and guide them to the many opportunities that are out there that they may not be well aware of or may not feel they can achieve on their own. Having a diverse community not only amongst students but also amongst the faculty staff. Keeping discipline fair to enforce equality for all. Bringing awareness to black students to show that they have the potential for success as well, just like all other students". I believe this is a call for the ministry of education, and school districts to provide culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, a curriculum that is inclusive of authentic history of Black peoples and meet the funding and resource needs of schools.

2. Prioritize student wellness and belonging.

Lion writes, "Black children often feel as if they are not seen or heard at school. They are often pinned as bad kids who will never be successful which leads them to be suspended or expelled at disproportionate rates." And "As a Black child who chose not to go to a specialized program because of the fear of people thinking I do not belong and having a safe and non-bias classroom is of the upmost importance." Penelope writes, "Often times, students like myself have to be extremely self-motivated to complete and meet expectations because we lack that

motivation and encouragement from our authority figures. I think there needs to be more education on Black history in Canada; the lack of awareness regarding Black figures in Canada can pose as additional barriers."

The need for Black students to be extremely self-motivated in order to successfully access schooling, or Black children feeling as if they are not seen or heard at school, and choosing not to go to a specialized program because of the fear of not belonging, or of an environment that is racially unsafe, produce significant stressors that negatively impact student wellness and belonging. Johns, (2016) writes that the stress of racism affects learning development and "the physiological response to two sources of race-based stressors leads the body to pump out more stress hormones in Black and Latino students: Perceived Discrimination: The perception that you will be treated differently or unfairly because of your race." And "Stereotype Threat: The stress of confirming negative expectations about your racial or ethnic group." (p. 15).

Penelope also writes that "Teachers and students who lack cultural and historical knowledge can continue to perpetuate bias and discrimination in their teachings and lessons. … The Black experience is year-round, and students are forced to navigate the world of academia, sometimes feeling as such [– tokenized]" and "For me personally, seeing Black teachers and employees have always been a motivation for me to succeed as I've had that visual representation to inspire me but to also demonstrate that pursuing and obtaining higher paid and ranking positions are tangible for marginalized communities". Catering for student wellness and belonging therefore includes providing culturally competent school counsellors, disrupting and dismantling stereotypes, ensuring the use of inclusive curriculum that values the authentic histories, worth and contributions to the building of society by Black peoples because the Black experience is year-round and multi-dimensional.

3. End academic streaming

Lion tells of the limiting impacts of academic streaming on Black students. “They may not be acceptable into higher forms of education or even be able to get into another school (high school or elementary). School programs like the gifted or science program more black students need to be pushed into doing these programs.” Colin suggests that the ending of academic streaming would include changes that “would make the current school system look more like an environment where students can be confident in their future and have just as big of an optimistic view as any other student.” And that “changes will be helpful to Black students in diversifying our reach as a community. Our students would be in positions to learn and advance their skill sets to hopefully one day create a path and opportunities for future generations of youth, whether it’s through employment or mentorships.”

Akua writes “Stop academic streaming of students. This type of system often leaves behind [B]lack students.” … “I think the ending of academic streaming would look like students being put in classes at random. I also think it would look like students can get into courses and not have their opportunities limited.” Penelope writes, “the level of your courses dictate your opportunity to pursue post-secondary education. A potential solution is to disregard the course levelling and provide all students the same education, skills, and support that you would provide an ‘academic’ class. Under this, students would be taught the same standard of quality education and students who need additional help, would be given it. Students need encouragement and motivation and often times, people are not aware of the cultural significance and implications of not having that support and reassurance. Subjects like math and science are immensely important and students should be pushed to excel in them, just as you would push them to excel in sports and other forms of physical fitness.” This is, I believe, a proposal for democratizing the

schooling production system, a proposal for a multi-access education delivery system that is rooted in student interest, readiness, and needs.

Round 2

In this and subsequent rounds, panelists engaged my summary to inform their response during the feedback/query/challenge loop. The themes/categories presented here are based on my analysis of panel response to the question "What do you think needs to be changed by schooling systems, in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario?". The round 1 summary/themes are:

> Inclusive curriculum, academic streaming, pedagogy - teacher practice to address gaps in areas such as mathematics, differences in male/female achievement, the role of guidance and counselling, the need for respecting diversity in school, the provision of appropriate human and material resources, inclusive staffing - teaching, support staff, and school leadership, discipline and punishment, advancing and supporting Black excellence, and school funding as a way of resourcing schools to support Black student learning.

The panel was asked to consider the above, when responding. The question for this round was: Based on your responses and the themes, I would like you to talk a little about: 1. What would these changes look like in schools? and 2. In what ways do you see these changes as being helpful to Black student achievement? Based on my analysis and coding the following themes emerged from the round two data:

1. Teach Black history year-round. Use inclusive resources.

The notion of inclusive curriculum raised by the panel in round one was expanded during this round. Alias 1 raised the issue of Black history being taught year-round in schools and notes the values that accompany such act. "Teaching Black history throughout the school year, and

broadening history course content can make Black students feel as if Black success is valued in their communities, and encourage them to follow the footsteps of ancestors" - Alias 1 also offers actions to address the lack of Black history being taught year-round in schools, and suggests the organizing of workshops for Black youth frequently to address the issue, and to get their opinions which gives Black students a voice." Peanut also addresses the need for curriculum change to ensure the teaching of Black history year-round and ensuring consistent use of "newly published textbooks and other resources that promote diversity. The resources used should be representative of how diverse of a country that Canada is. … young kids of colour should be able to see persons who look like them in the material they're learning in schools."

Penelope advances the notion that the history taught be inclusive of the agency and grit demonstrated by Black people as they contributed to the development of Canada under harrowing circumstances: "Having an inclusive curriculum demonstrates to students that their history is important. There is a tremendous sense of pride in Black culture and history to see the resilience and success of a group of people that have experienced so much trauma. Inclusive curriculum, and greater awareness of Black history is validation for Black communities that they are important, and their stories are worth knowing." Penelope's comments show that the teaching of Black history is more than simply sharing knowledge. This act of curriculum inclusion can foster Black students' belongingness, and the development of postures often assumed by people whose history is normalized in curriculum, and society. Postures such as being 'normal', self-confident, being self-assured, not being suspect, and not having to prove one's beingness.

2. Funding to implement programs that promote student success.

Funding appears in the panel data as part of the foundation supporting the production systems and structures that produce inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. The

panel advocates changing school funding to promote programs that support student success in curricular and extracurricular areas. Peanut writes: “The funding can also ensure that learning equipment (e.g., microscopes, projectors, gym equipment, technology) are all up-to-date … And arguably more importantly, with students from White-dominated neighbourhoods. This is important to ensure that the students from White neighbourhoods are not given an unfair advantage when it comes to post-secondary learning later on. If they are the only ones using up-to-date modern equipment, then it will be easier for them to adjust to post-secondary instruction … Boost confidence of Black students - Level the playing field between Black students and White students.”Adequate funding is critical to leveling the playing field, to meet the diversity needs the panel describes, as well as to change the schooling structures and systems to enable the persistent production of equitable schooling outcomes.

Penelope writes of the need for staff to be aware of who their students are. “Students need encouragement and motivation, and often times people are not aware of the cultural significance and implications of not having that support and reassurance. … Diverse hiring and recruitment, cultural competence, and humility training and overall compassion and championing your students need to be key principles to consider when wanting to become an educator … Teachers and students who lack cultural and historical knowledge can continue to perpetuate bias and discrimination in their teachings and lessons.” As a researcher, I find this to be important because notions of culturally relevant and responsive professional learning have just received an upgrade. This upgrade includes humility, compassion, and advocacy, as key principles of professional practice. This is a call for educational professionals to consistently engage Black students as human beings, to serve them with compassion and humility, and to be their advocates. Such professional practice requires persistent engagement of positionality on the part

of education professionals. This positionality is a critical understanding of power relationships and conceptualizations in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. It is also critical to look at how the identity of educational professionals might influence and bias their understanding of Black students. It also helps education professionals mitigate, with integrity, the schooling practices, intersecting oppressions, othering, and power distribution that Black students navigate daily.

Penelope writes further that "Students need encouragement and motivation, and often times people are not aware of the cultural significance and implications of not having that support and reassurance." This is helpful in mitigating what Lion identifies as "Black children often feeling as if they are not seen or heard at school", and it helps education professionals "pay attention to the Black student voice." Lion also references the connection between funding schools and gender, the problem of stereotyping, and the need for professional learning as key intersecting attributes to be addressed in the work to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students: "Fixing the way funding is used for Black students will also improve their academic achievements … When proper funding is put towards giving the teachers a proper training to provide them with a better education you will see more Black students have more academic achievements, and there will be less pressure on them playing sports in order to be successful."

Lion writes: "… the gap in mathematics and achievement between Black boys and girls could be changed by having specialized programs for them, and training for teachers to help recognize when these programs are needed for the specific child." This is asking education professionals to engage differentiated instruction in culturally relevant ways in order to meet the needs of Black students. Lion writes further that "Black children go through a very specific

experience during school so training school counselors on how to deal with these issues that may arise will also benefit the children. Also having more Black guidance counsellors to help with issues that cannot always be taught would also create a safe place for the children. Lastly putting more funding into Black children's academics instead of only funding into sports will also improve their chance at closing the achievement gaps." When Lion wrote "issues that cannot always be taught", I believe it signals the need for professionals to be able to make culturally relevant and authentic connections with students in order to understand and meet their needs. Penelope also talks to this need: "Having someone who can identify with your unique experiences and cultural background can make a huge impact; they understand and are more sympathetic to your circumstances. They understand that any issues extend beyond the students and can be reflected through intergenerational, family history and shared experiences of trauma."

Resource and staffing are tied to school funding. Schools are not funded equally or equitably. Penelope observes that "Many schools with large minority populations are not afforded the same funding opportunities and privileges as more affluent schools with majority [W]hite populations. The majority of funding should be allocated to underfunded schools to provide teaching supplies and resources as well as inclusive support services for youth."

3. Rethink and revise the practice of discipline and punishment .

The notion of discipline and punishment is addressed from multiple angles by the panelists who express that it is unfair, debilitating, and has significant negative impacts on the life-chances of Black students. Lion raises the disproportionality in the administering of disciplinary measures and its production of significant negative impacts on Black students: "Black children never get the same long-term effect from any form of punishment as other races of children … are not seen or heard at school. They are often pinned as bad kids who will never

be successful which leads then to be suspended or expelled at disproportionate rates." Lion also notes that discipline and punishment even if similar, are experienced more severely and in longer lasting ways by Black students than nonblack students who "may be negatively affected for the rest of their lives from a suspension or an expulsion". Alias 1 asserts the need for "Keeping discipline fair to enforce equality for all." And the systemic practice of targeting Black students for suspension and expulsion and its accompanying long-term effects such as the school-to-prison pipeline and academic streaming are commented on by Penelope who writes: "These practices are inherently discriminatory and are rooted out of prejudicial views and existing bias. The school to prison pipeline is perpetuated by practices like this, police presence in schools and through the process of streamlining youth to specific course levels (i.e., locally developed, applied or academic)."

4. Re-imagine Guidance and Counselling.

The centrality of the need for appropriate guidance and counselling to the production of equitable schooling outcomes was introduced in this round by the panel. Alias 1 calls for mandatory guidance counselor visitations to be a requirement for students: "Regular guidance and counselling for students that is involuntary, to ensure information is being spread about the opportunities out there for all / this will guarantee that those lacking the ability to voluntarily seek opportunities are given the chance to receive it" This is to include students "seeking to participate in specialized programme such as the International Baccalaureate (IB)". This guidance function also reduces streaming and as Akua notes "students can get into courses and not have their opportunities limited.". This could also be a source of motivation that helps students meet expectations for the next steps on their academic journey.

I believe this is an expanded notion of the role of guidance counsellors. It is tied to the need for Black students to learn how to successfully navigate schooling choices. Such professional practice helps students to better understand the long-term implications of the schooling choices made at the beginning and throughout their high school journey. It also allows students to see how the choices they make impact what becomes available to them. This expanded role of guidance and counselling helps students to make choices to facilitate their interests, preparedness, and schooling outcomes. One change implication for the guidance programme is the need for students to understand from the elementary years that the choices they make at any stage of the schooling process are impactful on the futures being created.

Lion talks about the impact on Black students when education professionals do not know Black students enough to facilitate choices that meet their needs. “A lot of the guidance and counselling done for Black students are not in their benefit but what is most convenient for the counsellor. What is beneficial for them is usually very heavily based on their stereotypical beliefs of what Black children are or what they are capable of. Eliminating that racial bias while counselling Black children will get more Black children going to colleges and universities or even graduating high school. More Black guidance counselors should be the goal.” This lack of knowledge of Black students on the part of education professionals implicates the schooling outcomes of Black students. Lion shares the experience and value of teachers working as a community. “Having a Black community of teachers that were always there for anything I needed whether it was educational or personal”. Peanut also wrote about the support and value of teachers in community, noting that: “The majority of teachers were willing to put in extra time to facilitate such programs. All in all, my school felt like a true community. We had a very diverse group of students and staff to make everyone feel as welcome as possible.”

Round 3

Round three provided me with an opportunity to collect data on a broad range of topics in a condensed timeframe. As this was the last opportunity for panelists to interact with each other's data during the research, I used a mini-survey format to collect data on a wide range of topics identified in the literature as being important to the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I also asked questions that sought to collect more in-depth responses from the panel in other areas. Both the mini-survey and the open-ended questions provided the panel the opportunity to engage the feedback/query/challenge loop as in prior rounds. The practice of sharing the summary/themes from the previous round is continued here. The round 2 summary/themes include:

> Inclusive curriculum in which the teaching of black history is normal, not an add-on or an elective; end the current academic streaming system; equitable distribution of, and access to technology; equitable staffing; funding to implement exceptional programs focused on equitable schooling outcomes for Black students; re-imagine and reform the practice of discipline and punishment; and re-imagine and reform the roles of guidance and counselling.

During this round the panel responded to the five questions presented below.

1. Based on your schooling experience and the themes from this exercise, what are the first two changes you would make to schooling in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students?

Alias 1 proposes "Inclusive curriculum", and "changes in the roles of guidance and counselling". Akua "would like to get rid of academic streaming that we have in place and have diversity quota in terms of teachers and staff". Penelope would "End Academic Streaming", and

"Ensure Equitable Practices (e.g., Staff, texts, supporting material)". Colin would "End Academic Streaming" and ensure "Equitable distribution of, and access to technology". Peanut would ensure "immediate change of resources and staff to include Black faces" and "more funding to implement exceptional programs to promote student success – programs include academia, physical education, after-school programs, etc.". Lion would ensure "teaching Black history" and reforming the practice of "discipline and punishment". During this round, I did not ask the panel to explain their responses as they are broadly supported by others given throughout the research. Regardless of the reasons for their responses however, a clear picture emerges of the priorities they have identified for changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

The next question that I asked the panel sought to hear their thoughts regarding the change they were hoping to bring about. To encourage precision and focus the panel was asked to use a limited number of words or a phrase representing that change.

2. I asked the panel to write the 5 words/phrase that they think could change schooling outcomes for Black students:

Lion wrote "If they don't offer you a seat at the table bring a folding chair". I believe this to be a profound statement of agency, voice, inclusion (I will not be erased) and a self-confidence that announces … I'm here! Peanut chose the following words "Inclusiveness, friendly faces, funding, humanizing". Colin chose the following "equality, opportunity, diversity, trust & support.". Akua chose "Inclusion, diversity, anti- Blackness training, cultural sensitivity". Penelope offers "cultural competency, humility, and responsibility". And Alias 1 offers "intentional inclusiveness in the classroom". I believe their words connect the dots to the changes they have proposed for professional practice earlier in this text and point to the need for

staff to acknowledge their common humanity with their students. Their words also generated themes centred around; agency, voice, inclusion, community, being human, equal opportunity, culturally relevant professional learning, trust, and support for Black students. The themes show a pattern that runs throughout the data generated by the panel.

3. Next, I wanted to hear from the panel about one aspect of their schooling journey that was impactful on their schooling outcomes, so I asked: Please name/describe one thing that your school did that helped your academic achievement.

Alias 1 noted "A few mandatory guidance counselor visitations for students in the specialized program (IB)" was helpful. Penelope wrote "In my high school, we had an Indigenous Studies course which was extremely pivotal in my choosing to pursue the Social Science and Humanities field in Higher Education. While I would've loved a Black History course, it provided me the opportunity to learn about a group of people and their culture that I knew very little about. It encouraged and motivated me to be an ally and to also push despite the many cultural barriers and discrimination I may experience". Akua wrote "There was one teacher who was more socially aware about issues who would really go to bat for the Black students. This really improved my experience". Colin noted that in school "They had an open mind to me as a student and gave me a fair chance without any pre-set biases." Peanut wrote, "My High School had many before- and after-school programs to make our school feel more like a home. At such programs, I was able to connect with other students to work hard towards our goals. Whether it be academia, music, sports, etc. The majority of teachers were willing to put in extra time to facilitate such programs. All in all, my school felt like a true community. We had a very diverse group of students and staff to make everyone feel as welcome as possible". And Lion wrote that

"Having a Black community of teachers that were always there for anything I needed whether it was educational or personal."

Lion's notion of "community of teachers", Peanut's "My High School had many before- and after-school programs to make our school feel more like a home" and "my school felt like a true community" are indicators of the impact realized in academic and social aspects of schooling by Black students. It seems to me as well, that when schooling professionals operate as a community to support students, benefit accrues beyond academic outcomes, they expand to include supports for student well-being, social development, and the building of community. This is also another way of understanding collaborative practice and opens a window into how we might understand communities of learners impacting the experience and the production of schooling outcomes of Black students.

I sought the opinions of panelists regarding how certain attributes contributed to their schooling outcomes. I used a list comprising attributes from Same et al. (2018) and panel data:

> Culturally Competent Teachers; Teacher-Student relationships; High expectations of Black students; Extra-Curricular Academic Coaching; Assessment to help students succeed (Assessment for Learning; Grade-specific instructional focus in math; Homework linked to student needs; Culturally Competent Guidance Counsellors; Racially diverse school leadership, teaching, and support staff; Black History, and people in the Curriculum and its supporting texts. I have arranged the attributes according to counts per attribute. The chart shows the importance the panel attached to each attribute.

Relative Importance of Selected School Effects to The Delphi Panel	Ranking
Racially diverse school leadership, teaching, and support staff	1
Culturally Competent Teachers	2
Teacher-Student relationships	3
Black history, and people in the curriculum and its supporting texts	4
Culturally competent guidance counsellors	5
Extra-curricular academic coaching	6
High expectations of Black students	7
Homework linked to student needs	8
Assessment to help students succeed (Assessment for Learning)	9
Grade-specific instructional focus in Mathematics	10

During this round I also asked the panel to use their schooling experience, and the information shared during this research to make two recommendations to the Ontario Minister of Education for changes that would produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools:

4. Based on your experience and the information shared during this exercise, what two recommendations would you make to the Ontario Minister of Education for changes to the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools? Include supporting evidence – Make your case to the Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education.

Penelope recommends Extra-curricular Academic Coaching and Culturally competent teachers. Colin calls for the ending of the current academic streaming system and train staff to be more open minded to our potential. Peanut calls for the implementation of school resources (e.g.,

textbooks) with Black faces on them, and a curriculum filled with Black history as well as White history. And ensuring that proper funding is available for students of Black neighbourhoods to greater their chances of success for the future. Lion recommends a curriculum based on the Black experience, and teacher training on how to support Black children. Alias 1 recommends that the Minister should:

> Carve out opportunities that force Black students to want to make the most out of their education, given the incentive of having a caring and culturally competent adult supporting their future paths. … Help make the Black community feel important to society by bringing Black History into the curriculum not only during the recognized month but all year round. This will show commitment to recognizing that the culture in the school is diverse and deemed important.

Akua wants the Minister to stop academic streaming of students, because this type of system often leaves behind Black students. And to ensure inclusion with a diversity quota when hiring for staff and teachers because representation is key, and this will make a huge difference for students.

Round 4

The prominence in the literature of role models being important to the production of schooling outcomes for Black students, (Gibson, 2004; Government of Alberta, 2020; Johnson & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Ryan, 2009; Solomon, 1997), sparked my asking the panel to comment on the importance of role models to Black students. I asked the panel:

1. How important do you think role models are to the schooling outcomes for Black students?

Alias 1 wrote "Role models are important to the schooling outcomes for Black students by giving a visualization of success. Seeing role models, especially those who identify as Black,

achieve many valuable career paths can provide these students with incentives towards their future. It can also hinder the stereotypes that assumes Black people are not able to attract and have successful careers". Peanut writes that it is "Very important. More specifically when the role models are also Black individuals. It's always beneficial when someone can look up to someone who looks like them. Many times, we see Caucasian faces displayed at high levels in society. Black students need to know that they can be people in these positions too." Colin states that "Role models are an extremely important factor to the schooling outcomes for Black students. The minds of young people will always be easily persuaded by those that have been able to achieve success, so if all that's being promoted are sports and music and crime then that's what our youth will gravitate to."

Regarding the value Akua would assign to the importance of role models to schooling outcomes for Black students, Akua notes that role models "on a scale of 1 to10, I think it's a 10. It's very important to see people that look like you and be able to relate." Penelope notes "Role models and mentorship are incredibly important especially for groups that lack representation." And Lion writes "Black children are always lacking role models whether it's in media or the real world. It is important for them to see themselves in people who look like them. So that they can believe they can achieve whatever they want. In a society where people are constantly belittling them, there needs to be support from other Black people in the community to uplift them." Lion brings into the conversation the complexity of the lived realities of the negative depictions of Black peoples in real terms and in fictionalized narratives. Lion also identifies the need for supporting adults who are professionals that are culturally competent and caring advocates of the needs of Black students. The following is the summary/themes that have emerged from my analysis of the panel data:

Role models are extremely important; role models foster student belonging; Black community members as resource operating within their expertise bring new value and knowledge to the schooling system; Black community members as educational resource provide a counter narrative regarding the worth of Black peoples to society.

A key function of Black role models in the schooling production system is the expertise they embody and share, and the counternarrative they provoke regarding the value of Black people to society as well as being a source of support for Black students.

Another area of exploration for this research is the perceived impact of policy on the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I wanted to hear the opinions of the panel regarding the importance of policy to the production of schooling outcomes for Black students. Support for this line of query comes from: (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003; Cerna, 2013; Diem et al., 2014; Fine et al., 2012; Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Gillborn, 2005a, 2008; Joshee, 2007; Levinson et al., 2009; Lipsky, 1969). To provide additional contextual frame for my questioning, the panel was informed of a range of day-to-day schooling practices that are impacted by policy including: attendance, discipline-suspension, expulsion, exclusion, streaming, sports, arts, science, clubs, trips, academic support, special education, gifted, accommodation, human sexuality, to available school programs. Panelists were asked:

2. What should policymakers consider about Black students when they are creating and implementing policies?

Akua talks about the need for policymakers to re-imagine policies regarding discipline and punishment especially because “Black students are disproportionately affected by these.” Penelope notes that “there are unique cultural experiences and behind every behaviour and/or attitude”. Colin notes that policy makers should take in consideration factors that determine how

attendance occurs for some students when policies are designed, citing that for example “many students might have a younger sibling(s) that their parents cannot attend to or drop off for many reasons. As well as the days missed leading to suspensions because many students struggle to pay for transportation and may have to choose between a bus fare for work or school.” Alias 1invites policymakers to understand “Home situations, financial situations, Access to information and Learning styles.”

Peanut calls on policymakers to “Make sure that the policies are realistic with the culture of the students.” as “Many of the policies today are written by upper class white people. Schools’ need to make sure that these policies are realistic with the culture surrounding Black students. Lion states that “Policymakers need to understand the imbalance in society that puts Black children at the bottom of the race hierarchy.” And that "it is easy to act under the guise that a student may be problematic rather than searching for the cause and having to rectify that you as an educator etc. are part of the problem. Policymakers need to do more research on academic success and race and take those factors into consideration when creating policy”. This to me is the panel asserting the need for policymakers to know the demographic they serve, and to provide culturally relevant and responsive professional learning for education professionals to facilitate equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. The following themes emerged from my analysis of the responses from the panel:

> Policymakers need to re-imagine policies regarding discipline and punishment; discipline and punishment disproportionately affect Black students; “Black students are unique diverse, classrooms are to be made safe for the engagement of race and racism; schooling professionals must be competent in using critical theories to effectively engage race and racism; schooling systems are to ensure specialized programmes such as International

> Baccalaureate (IB), gifted, and other such programmes are easily accessed by Black students; that culturally relevant and responsive supports are in place for the well-being of Black students; policy often deeply affects Black students in discriminatory ways, policymakers must center race, racism, and White supremacy as factors to consider in the development and implementation of education policy.

These themes help us recognize the importance of policymakers using the lens supported by critical theories to guide development and implementation of policies that meet the needs of Black and other racialized students.

The panel positions guidance and counselling as consequential to the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students based on their experiencing the role of guidance and counselling in advising and steering students regarding academic, career choice decision-making, and other aspects of schooling all of which are impactful on the life-chances of Black students. I wanted to explore further their thinking regarding the role they envisioned for guidance and counselling, so I asked: What changes should be made to the role of Guidance and Counselling? Alias 1 responded, "more initiative to make guidance and counseling accessible but more crucial in the development of students - Focusing more in assisting all students find possible career paths based on their interests through regular meetings, workshops, etc.", Lion notes that "A lot of the guidance and counselling done for Black students are not in their benefit but what is most convenient for the counsellor … Eliminating that racial bias while counselling Black children will get more Black children going to colleges and universities … More Black guidance counselors should be the goal."

Akua wrote, "I think all Guidance Counsellors should have a diversity training. This will help them better service Black students." Penelope noted that "Counselling needs to be more

culturally sensitive and aware. Growth often comes in part due to nurturing and understanding environments." Colin calls for culturally responsible and responsive professional practice in which guidance counsellors "support students in what they want to achieve and not push them down another less productive path out of their own lack of faith in the student." and Peanut asserts that "it's good to have substantial representation of Black guidance counsellors."

Based on my analysis and coding of panel responses, the following themes have emerged:

> Guidance counsellors are to be culturally relevant and responsive practitioners; faculty must be trained to effectively accommodate Black students; more initiative to make guidance and counseling accessible and helpful in the development of students; focus more in assisting all students find possible schooling and career paths based on their interests through regular meetings, workshops, or other professional learning methods. Develop culturally relevant relationships with students to inform professional practice to meet student's needs.

The panel is clear that guidance counsellors are important to Black students successfully progressing through the schooling process. Guidance counsellors are perceived as gatekeepers of the path to schooling beyond high school because of their advising role in areas that are impactful on the life-chances of Black students. I will discuss this further in the Discussion chapter. As a researcher, I am aware that there are always other questions to be asked on any topic, therefore I sought their opinions on:

3. What other areas we should have explored in the interest of producing equitable schooling outcomes for Black students?

Akua wrote, “Another question that I think is good is how to better incorporate diversity teaching in classrooms. I would have said to make sure that it’s a safe space and that teachers are able to teach things like critical race theory without restrictions.”

From my analysis and coding of panel responses the following themes have emerged: Issues faced by Black children are complex including mistakes made by school staff; systemic racism is a concern; normalized mistreatment of Black students by schooling system; policy deeply affects schooling outcomes; using my knowledge from lived experience can cause education change to ensure the success of future Black students; developed clearer understanding of factors that impact schooling outcomes for Black students; there is a sense of urgency for change in schooling production to benefit Black students. Policy development and implementation is complex and often discriminates against Black students.

4. I also wondered about what panelists might have learned from their participation in this Delphi process.

Colin writes “I've learned that there are a lot of scenarios where the current education system doesn't align well for Black youth and how much work there actually needs to be done in order to level the playing field.” Peanut notes that “That there are many flaws in our school system. The questions asked in this research should have been asked ages ago and changes should have been implemented. There is no time like the present to make the necessary changes for the benefit of Black students.” Lion writes that “The systematic racism in the schooling system has normalized the mistreatment of Black students.” Akua states “I learned about just how deeply policy affects and often discriminates against black students.” Penelope states that “Got to learn about some different factors affecting Black students in the education system.” And Alias 1 records “I learned that my understanding of how the school system is towards Black

students is valuable in the sense of helping to communicate the changes needed to ensure the success of future Black students”

Chapter 5: Analysis

One observation I made early in the data collection process is that the responses provided by the panel reflect the intersectionality of the attribute being addressed resulting in some data categories emerging in multiple rounds. In this chapter I present my analysis of the data from the research in relation to the literature review, the conceptual- and theoretical- frameworks, as well as my learning from conducting the research. I have organized the report according to the themes that are the result of refining the categories from the rounds. The feedback/query/challenge loop was especially helpful because the panel was able to participate in the real-time data analysis that occurred during the rounds to generate the panel data that undergird this research. Merriam and Tisdell (2015), affirm that "Category construction is data analysis", and that "… data analysis is best done in conjunction with data collection." The Delphi technique includes data collection and analysis during rounds as a part of its process, ensuring that themes are grounded in the voice of the expert panelists. The panel was also able to suggest corrections to my summaries during rounds thus reducing possibilities for misinterpretation and reduce the power differential between myself and the panel.

I have organized this chapter according to the themes with suggestions for mitigation in the voice of panelists. The six themes from the data include the following: 1. Targeted funding for full inclusion, 2. Academic streaming and access, 3. Inclusive curriculum and belonging, 4. Discipline and punishment, 5. Guidance and counseling, and 6. Equitable schooling outcomes. Ableism as a theme did not come directly from what is included in the data, it came about because of what was missing, and a realization that Black students with disabilities were excluded from the process. Crenshaw (1989), speaking to the exclusion of Black women from the conversation for change, said: "These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by

including Black women within an already established analytical structure." (p. 140). I believe that principle holds as well when applied to the exclusion of Black students with disabilities from the conversations about changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Funding for Full Inclusion

The literature identifies inadequate funding as a key contributor to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, and panelists express their understanding of the impact of inadequate funding on Black students. Peanut asserts the need to "Ensure proper funding is available for students of Black neighbourhoods to greater their chances of success for the future". And Penelope points to the need for targeting funding to meet the needs of racialized populations: "Many schools with large minority populations are not afforded the same funding opportunities and privileges as more affluent schools with majority White populations. The majority of funding should be allocated [to] underfunded schools to provide teaching supplies and resources as well as inclusive support services for youth." This need for targeted funding is also reflected in a report from People for Education that points to inadequate demographic data being used to perpetuate underfunding of schools. "Currently, we lack all the information we need about our students, and in many cases, we are relying on out-of-date census data to identify where targeted funding is needed." (People For Education, 2020). The Auditor General has also called for a full review of Ontario's education funding formula to ensure that "it is based on student need, up-to-date evidence, and reflects the impact of geographic and demographic realities." (People For Education, 2021).

Ladson-Billings, (1998), underscores the importance of school funding to Black students in light of social and other interlocking oppressions that determine resource distribution and other practices of systemic and structural racism. She writes:

> Perhaps no area of schooling underscores inequity and racism better than school funding. CRT argues that inequality in school funding is a function of institutional and structural racism." And that "Without suffering a single act of personal racism, most African Americans suffer the consequence of systemic and structural racism. (p. 20)

One point of this conversation regarding the need for targeted school funding is that when people operate within systems and structures constructed on racist frames, the consequences of racism are being realized. This is true even when the operators are not themselves deliberately being racist. Lived experience for Black peoples makes it knowable that systemic and other forms of racism are operating here in Canada, and that racism impacts schooling outcomes for Black students in ways that are similar to those expressed by Ladson-Billings (1998). Newman-Bremang, (2020), writes, "politicians who say Canada does not have systemic racism like the U.S. are 'whitewashing' Canadian history." As such, they are underscoring the need for policy actors to be deliberate about intervening to support the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

The panel has identified the need to fund schools equitably, and the OECD, (2018) highlights this need by asserting: "To achieve equity in education, countries should target funding and resources for education to the most vulnerable" and "Teachers should have good opportunities for professional development and the right pedagogical knowledge to identify and support students of all abilities, and there needs to be access to and provision of affordable, high-quality early childhood education." (p. 1). Appropriate levels of funding are also required to

meet the panel recommendation for a non-linear way of progressing through schooling – a way to reimagine the practice of discipline and punishment. Funding is also needed to procure culturally competent school professionals who will recognize, understand and act to facilitate student wellbeing, make connections between student wellbeing and graduation rates, and who will disrupt stereotypes, and encourage all-around student development. A lack of funding will sustain the production of inequitable schooling outcomes.

Panelists provided reasons tied to their lived experience to support their calls for equitable funding: Penelope notes that, “Many schools with large minority populations are not afforded the same funding opportunities and privileges as more affluent schools with majority White populations. The majority of funding should be allocated to underfunded schools to provide teaching supplies and resources as well as inclusive support services for youth.” Peanut urges: “ensure proper funding is available for students of Black neighbourhoods to greater their chances of success for the future.” Lion makes the point that “when proper funding is put towards giving the teachers a proper training to provide them with a better education you will see more Black students have greater academic achievements, and there will be less visits to the school office because of disciplinary concerns.” Colin also points to the need for funding to develop culturally competent pedagogical practices so that staff will “be more open minded to our potential.” Akua highlights the need to “ensure inclusion” by hiring diverse staff to meet student needs. “Representation is key, and this will make a huge difference for students.” Alias 1 notes as well that “Having all resources needed accessible for the enhancement of education in all students, not selected students”. And Lion writes, “Lastly putting more funding into Black children’s academics instead of only funding into sports will also improve their chance at closing the achievement gaps."

As shown in the quotes from the panel there is much correspondence between panel data and the literature. The data from the panel underscores the impact of funding on the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students and provides a variety of ways to address the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, including funding to support professional practices, provide material- and human- resources, and support accountability for growth and development. The panel data adds local lived experience to the solutions offered in the OECD, (2018) report which states: "To achieve equity in education, countries should target funding and resources for education to the most vulnerable, … Teachers should have good opportunities for professional development and the right pedagogical knowledge to identify and support students of all abilities, and there needs to be access to and provision of affordable, high-quality early childhood education." (p. 1). This affirms the expertise of the Delphi panel and emphasizes the need to act to retool schooling to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Academic Streaming & Access

This theme reflects the concerns of the panel that the production systems and structures work together to disenfranchise and disadvantage Black students. The panel observed that Black students were disproportionately streamed out of courses that lead directly to colleges and universities, and the academic choices that become possible during high school are the result of K-8 schooling. Peanut notes that "… elementary school teachers encouraging certain groups of students to pursue lower academic levels" is problematic. Access to education beyond high school is typically filtered through the school guidance counsellor who is considered by the panel to be the gatekeeper of education access beyond high school. Academic streaming is seen to be perpetuated by the practice of school professionals such as guidance counsellors, who use their power and authority to influence the choosing of applied- over advanced courses by Black

students. Lion writes: “A lot of the guidance and counselling done for Black students are not in their benefit but what is most convenient for the counsellor. What is beneficial for them is usually very heavily based on their stereotypical beliefs of who Black children are, or what they are capable of.” Streaming therefore helps in pushing students out of school, and frustrating timelines for entering tertiary institutions.

Peanut challenges the status quo by proposing a responsive and non-linear way to progress academically through the schooling process stating: “There needs to be a more open academic structure for grade 9/10 students. Grade 9/10 students need to be able to smoothly transition into the appropriate university/college that they plan on pursuing”. Akua yearns for a time when “students can get into courses and not have their opportunities limited”, proposing that “the ending of academic streaming would look like students being put in classes at random” as “this would help Black students get on the same playing field as other students. This would allow them to widen their options after graduation. It would have a great effect on the types of careers that Black students can enter.” Penelope considers academic streaming to be an “immensely important topic considering that sometimes the level of your courses dictates your opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.” Colin states, “They should end academic streaming so that students can navigate to where they truly need to be, without being penalized.”

Human stories from the panel provide support for the notion that academic streaming disenfranchises and curtails the life chances of Black students. For example, Colin shares that many students discover the need to upgrade to academic courses to meet continuing education goals after successfully pursuing non-academic courses. These students must contend with limited access to academic course upgrade during the summer due to restrictions such as the number of courses that can be taken per student during a summer. “A student can end up facing a

summer with an overload of course that need to be upgraded, which will directly lead to a late graduation date due to lack of time in a 2-course summer. Students may also feel the social pressures of being behind in that situation or overwhelmed to even finish causing many to drop out." It is also difficult for students to switch from applied to academic programmes as outlined by People for Education: “once students have selected courses, there appears to be less support for student transfers from one program of study to another.” (Hamlin & Kidder, 2015 p. 4).

Penelope suggests that “a potential solution to streaming is to disregard the course levelling and provide all students the same education, skills, and support that you would provide an ‘academic’ class. Under this, students would be taught the same standard of quality education and students who need additional help, would be given it.” Colin broadens the call for change, implicating K-8 education as the headwaters of academic streaming because it is during K-8 that some “teachers encourage certain groups of students to pursue lower academic levels, that may make the students transition to their necessary level much harder.” The revocation of streaming called for by the panel is also an act to democratize K-12 education allowing students multiple routes, entry points, and timelines to access their futures without penalty. One hypothesis regarding de-streaming is that it could result in students being able to exercise authentic choice in programming that opens access to college, university, and a variety of after-high-school possibilities. De-streaming would reduce student stress, support student wellbeing, prevent students being pushed out of school, and improve the life chances for Black students.

Inclusive Curriculum, Wellness & Belonging

Since at least 2006 The Ontario Curriculum, grades 1-8, (Ministry of Education, 2006) has included antidiscrimination education in the Language Program that: "affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. … Antidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship." (p. 28). There is, however, no mention of race, racism, or White supremacy, in the curriculum text although it is generally known that they factor greatly in our society. Lewis, (1992) reminds us that in Ontario, "what we are dealing with, at root, and fundamentally, is anti-Black racism. … it is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in schools, it is Black kids who are disproportionately dropping-out" (p.2). And in March 2022 a statement on the Prime Minister of Canada's website states: "As part of the Government of Canada's ongoing commitment to combat all forms of anti-Black racism," we are "developing a whole-of-government action plan to eliminate systemic racism, address inequities in the criminal justice system, and improve the social, health, and economic well-being of Black Canadians."

As a society it has been publicly acknowledged since at least 1992 that systemic racism, and in particular anti-Black racism is problematic. There is agreement between the panel and parents and community regarding the need to revise the Ontario curriculum centering on racial inclusivity. And as recently as in 2020, the community has called for "an amendment to the Education Act and to fully decolonized curriculum, with the experience of Black Canadians woven throughout all curriculums from kindergarten to Grade 12" (Francis & Ngabo, 2020). Yet in a society comprised of interlocking systems of oppression, unequal power distribution, and

White supremacy, and where our knowing-doing problem persists, I argue that bold and unflinching agency is required for change to occur, and that to be racially inclusive, as the Delphi panel asserts, the revised curriculum needs to include the agency, resilience, activism, and the broad array of contributions to the building and development of our Canadian society, by Black and other racialized peoples, told from their perspectives.

The Ontario Curriculum is the foundation for curricular on which teaching, learning, assessment, evaluation, and academic accountability are predicated. It gets its authority from the Ontario Education Act, (Education Act, R.S.O. 1990) which states that: "All publicly funded schools in Ontario are required to use The Ontario Curriculum which outlines the curriculum requirements and specific learning expectations throughout each of the elementary and secondary school years." (OASDI, 2022). It therefore becomes problematic when the curriculum, which is the core of the structure of schooling, is considered to be racially hostile due to normalized daily professional practice and pedagogical concepts that do not serve Black students well. Chapman, (2013) identifies that common school policies and practices such as tracking, traditional curricula, teacher classroom practices, and student surveillance, "create a racially hostile environment for students of color in majority [W]hite suburban schools. These normative school practices inhibit students of color from fully engaging in the school and, therefore, from securing equitable schooling experiences." (P. 618). Unlike Chapman who seems to locate the need in suburban schools the data from this Delphi identify that the practice is not confined to White suburban schools, and the TDSB, an urban school district, reports that "Systemic and individual acts of anti-Black racism have become normalized and are therefore sometimes difficult to identify, address and prevent." (TDSB, 2020).

The panel advocates promoting student belonging through curriculum change, as the curriculum does not explicitly include their stories – the achievements by racialized or otherwise minoritized students or their communities in its references. Alias 1 wrote: "Help make the Black community feel important to society by bringing Black History into the curriculum not only during the recognized month but all year round. This will show commitment to recognizing that the culture in the school is diverse and deemed important, and significant." Any revised curriculum, therefore, should be inclusive of the agency, resilience, activism, and the broad array of contributions to the building and development of our Canadian society by Black, and other racialized peoples to be told from their perspectives.

The data from the research shows that inclusion of such history is much more than the act of inclusion itself. It is about engaging the humanity of students and fostering a sense of belongingness. Peanut comments, "Teaching Black history throughout the school year and broadening history course content can make Black students feel as if Black success is valued…" And, in their publication Towards Race Equity in Education, James and Turner, (2017) record the need to "Ensure that textbooks and other educational materials reflect historical facts accurately as they relate to past tragedies and atrocities, in particular enslavement, so as to avoid negative stereotypes." (p. 19) This concern of the panel regarding student belonging, and the society's understanding of Black history is also echoed by Robinson, (2000), who wrote "… Racial problems cannot be solved, racism cannot be arrested, achievement gaps cannot be fully closed until Americans–*all Americans*– are repaired of their views of Africa's role in history." (p. 16). [italics in original]. I believe that assertion is also applicable in our Ontario context.

Panel data also shows that student belonging is complex and is impacted by multiple interlocking factors and therefore must also be understood and acted on using a multi-axis lens.

The panel is of the opinion that many schooling practices cause students to feel that they do not belong in certain courses. Lion tells of making a choice based on fear of not belonging: "As a Black student, I chose not to go to a specialized program because of the fear of people thinking I do not belong". Student belonging is therefore more than a discourse, it is also about how the humanity of students is impacted, and what results from that impact. When the goal of schooling is the production of equitable schooling outcomes for all students, acting on the knowledge that student belonging impacts the production of schooling outcomes should be sufficient to require mitigation, however the data demonstrates otherwise. It is therefore important for policymakers, policy actors, and researchers to recognize and act on the knowledge from literature and from the panel, that student sense of belonging is correlated to schooling outcomes (Boston & Warren, 2017).

Black student belonging, according to the panel, will be facilitated when curriculum change is inclusive of the agency, resilience, activism, and the broad array of contributions to the building and development of our Canadian society by Black and other racialized peoples, and when culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy become the culture of schooling. Penelope points out that "Holding more events on Black History (beyond February) and Black youth-centric programming is extremely important so that Black students do not feel tokenized." The panel calls for the remaking of the Ontario Curriculum to be inclusive of the authentic contributions of Black peoples to the growth, history, and development of Canada, and the world. The panel expects the changed curriculum will be supported by culturally relevant and responsive professional practice, and resources that positions Black students as valued members of the society. Alias 1 recommends immediate change that is inclusive of Black culture and history, noting that such change would help to "make the Black community feel important to

society by bringing Black History into the curriculum not only during the recognized month but all year round." Curriculum change that is inclusive of authentic Black history is much more than the act of inclusion, it is engaging the humanity of Black students.

The concerns for inclusion raised by the panel regarding human belongingness has long been an accepted phenomenon (Maslow, 1943). And according to Boston and Warren, (2017), "a high sense of belonging has been positively associated with high academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and school satisfaction, whereas a lack of a sense of belonging is associated with depression, anxiety, alienation, and loneliness, leading to decreased academic motivation, engagement, and academic achievement." (p. 27). Data from the panel suggests that when students feel they belong, they become optimistic about their future, stereotypes matter less, and they can become free to pursue their interests and engage their talents outside of negative systemic restraints. Peanut talks to this sense of belonging considering lived experience, the relationships experienced, the available programs, and a school environment that feels welcoming: "My High School had many before and after school programs to make our school feel more like a home. At such programs, I was able to connect with other students to work hard towards our goals. … All in all, my school felt like a true community. We had a very diverse group of students and staff to make everyone feel as welcome as possible".

This aligns well with Dukynaitė and Dudaitė, (2017) who comment that "the sense of school belonging means that the child is willingly involved in school life, maintains contacts with the community (both teachers and students) and feels supported, assisted, understood and respected. (p.51). Lion talks to what happens when the feeling of belongingness is lacking: "Black children often feel as if they are not seen or heard at school." Colin notes that "These changes would make the current school system look more like an environment where students

can be confident in their future and have just as big and optimistic view as any other student." Panel data shows that student belonging is complex and linked intersectionally to multiple schooling practices. The panel also expressed concerns that many schooling practices cause students to feel they do not belong in certain courses, or programmes based for example on curriculum content, pedagogy, isolation, the racial makeup of the class or the location of the program or course. As James and Turner (2017) note, gifted and other such programmes are often located away from neighbourhoods populated mostly by racialized people.

The panel calls for the remaking of the Ontario Curriculum to be inclusive of the authentic contributions of Black peoples to the growth, history, and development of Canada, and the world. The panel expects the changed curriculum, will be supported by culturally relevant and responsive professional practice, and resources that positions Black students as valued members of the society. Alias 1 recommends immediate change that is inclusive of Black culture and history, noting that such change would help to "make the Black community feel important to society by bringing Black History into the curriculum not only during the recognized month but all year round." Penelope points out that "Holding more events on Black History (beyond February) and Black youth-centric programming is extremely important so that Black students do not feel tokenized."

The Ontario Curriculum is the standard upon which the production of equitable schooling outcome is based. The curriculum is mostly normal for Ontario's White population because its references, imagery, story, focus, and positioning are anchored in Whiteness. It does not overtly encourage belonging for Black and other racialized students through inclusion or reference, therefore the panel advocates the promoting of student belonging through curriculum change, to include stories and achievements by racialized or otherwise minoritized students, or their

communities in its references. Human belongingness has long been an accepted phenomenon. (Boston & Warren, 2017; Maslow, 1943). Johnson, (2009) notes that "the general theory describes belongingness as a psychological need that plays a vital role in the transmission and internalization of values and cultural norms." (p. 101). Data from the panel suggests that when students feel they belong, they become optimistic about their future, stereotypes matter less, and they can become free to pursue their interests and engage their talents outside of negative systemic restraints. Colin wrote that the school could become:

> an environment where students can be confident in their future and have just as big of an optimistic view as any other student. Students would be more comfortable stepping out of the stereotypes that have been pre-set for the community. There would be more students striving to challenge themselves in areas dominated by other races and a much higher level of trust in our capabilities when doing so.

Belonging therefore is more than a discourse, it is also about how the humanity of students is impacted, and what results from that impact. When the goal of schooling is the production of equitable schooling outcomes for students, the imperative is to act on the knowledge that student belonging influences the production of schooling outcomes and requires mitigation.

Discipline & Punishment

Schools are places set apart for student learning and growth, including learning from conflicts. Penelope notes that "there are unique cultural experiences that are behind every behaviour and/or attitude. It is easy to act under the guise that a student may be problematic rather than searching for the cause and having to rectify that you as an educator etc. are part of the problem. Policymakers need to do more research on academic success and race and take those factors into consideration when creating policy. It is helpful to students when schooling

systems ensure there is learning, relationship building, and growth from behaviours considered to be problematic. “Teachers are quick to point out flaws and shortcomings in Black students rather than finding out what is the source of potential conflict or demonstrating their understanding and support.” The panel raises concerns regarding Black students being disproportionally disciplined in Ontario schools, and that the school to prison pipeline is real, and its flow should be ended.

Discipline and punishment are not stand-alone issues, they are tied to complex intersectionalities within the determinative environment, and there is human toll attached to each incident. There is also a special resilience demonstrated by Black students that allows them to function within a society in which the practice of discipline and punishment is discriminatory to them and is normalized in schools and in society. To address this unfair practice, solutions must be developed using equitable, fair, and just practices, that are educational for all. Schools are also to be acknowledged as places set apart for student learning and growth which includes learning that assures and affirms the humanity of all students. Learning through a problem-solving process is pedagogy that is valued by critical researchers, policy actors and policymakers. The panel calls for rethinking the practice of discipline and punishment currently employed because it is disproportionately meted out to Black students. Alias 1 calls for “keeping discipline fair to enforce equality for all”. And Penelope calls attention to the lens currently being used to frame and dispense discipline and punishment. “…there are unique cultural experiences behind every behaviour and/or attitude. It is easy to act under the guise that a student may be problematic rather than searching for the cause and having to recon with the reality that you as an educator are a part of the problem.”

The panel supports the rethinking and replacing of the current practice of discipline and punish with a conflict-resolution approach in which school and student work cooperatively, and

collaboratively to resolve conflicts and promote growth and creative thinking. Discipline and punishment are also tied to multiple interlocking factors; therefore, change must be engaged using a multi-axis approach. Based on the panel data and the literature reviewed, solutions must be developed within a framework that centers on student wellbeing, growth, and development, using equitable, fair, and just practices that are educational for all. It is helpful to students when schooling systems ensure there is learning, relationship building, and growth from behaviours considered to be problematic.

The panel raises concerns regarding Black students in Ontario schools being unfairly targeted for suspension and expulsion. Penelope notes that "These practices are inherently discriminatory and are rooted in prejudicial views and existing bias. The school to prison pipeline is perpetuated by practices like police presence in schools and through the process of streamlining youth to specific course levels (i.e., locally developed, applied or academic)." The school to prison pipeline is also problematized by Salole and Abdulle, (2015), who write: "racialized youth are disproportionally disciplined in school, have higher dropout rates and are disproportionately incarcerated." (p. 5). This pattern and results of discipline and punishment are also reflected in the comments of Ruck and Wortley, (2002). They noted that racialized students are much more likely than White students, to perceive discrimination, unfair teacher treatment, school suspension, encounter school authorities, and police at school, and that: "Multivariate analyses revealed that such perceptions are particular strong for Black students." (Abstract)

This disproportionality of Black youth encountering discipline measures is what Desmond Cole references when he said: "If you set up a system of punishment—in the workplace, in a school, the prison system itself—and Black people are in the mix, they will be disproportionately punished." (Subramanian, 2020). Society uses its frameworks of charges,

courts, trials, and detentions including jails, and prisons to respond to, and manage people who are accused of violating society's norms. Discipline in schools parallels society's way of dispensing discipline and punishment. Knowing that such disciplinary practice leads to diminished life-chances for Black students, should incentivize action to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. It should also provide information to help frame current discipline practices as constituting a social injustice. Such a frame can allow for cognition and agency by policymakers, policy actors, and researchers to act to replace the current discipline and punish practice, with conflict-resolution approaches that center on student learning, wellbeing and building community.

The panel understands as well that negative discipline practices are fed by various tributaries. Alias 1 calls for "keeping discipline fair to enforce equality for all", and Lion puts it this way, "Teachers need to be properly trained on how to deal with Black students' needs. Whether it is social or educational, Black students go through unique experience within the schooling system and teaches have to be prepared on how to actively and efficiently deal with them, in a way that does not traumatize the students." Penelope talks about the need for cultural competency to include humility and compassion as key principles, and notes that "there are unique cultural experiences behind every behaviour and/or attitude. It is easy to act under the guise that a student may be problematic rather than searching for the cause and having to recon with the reality that you as an educator are a part of the problem." Akua points out that "Black students are disproportionately affected." One take away from this conversation regarding discipline and punishment is that it impacts Black students in several ways that diminish their life chances and produces trauma that impacts their sense of belonging in schools, and the production of equitable schooling outcomes.

Re-Imagining Guidance & Counselling

The panel produced much data addressing the importance of Guidance and Counselling to the production of equitable schooling outcomes and argues for the re-imagining of the role of guidance and counselling. Lion writes "A lot of the issues Black children face at school are not a simple mistake made by teachers of the school board. The systemic racism in the schooling system has normalized the mistreatment of Black students. … Black students go through unique experience within the schooling system. Teachers must be prepared on how to actively and efficiently educate them in ways that do not traumatize them." Black students experience life and school differently than others as a result of the structures and mores of society. I wanted to hear more about how panelists understood the role of guidance counsellors, so I asked: Based on responses, guidance and counselling seems to be important to schooling outcomes for Black students, what changes should be made to the role of guidance and counselling?

Penelope noted that "Counselling needs to be more culturally sensitive and aware. Growth often comes in part due to nurturing and understanding environments.". Colin stated that "Guidance counsellors need to support students in what they want to achieve and not push them down another less productive path out of their own lack of faith in the student." Akua writes: "I think all guidance counsellors should have diversity training which will help them better service Black students." Colin calls for culturally responsible and responsive professional practice in which guidance counsellors "…support students in what they [the students] want to achieve and not push them down another less productive path out of their own lack of faith in the student". Peanut notes that "it's good to have substantial representation of Black guidance counsellors."

Lion asserts a relationship between racism and the schooling outcomes for Black students, stating that the elimination of racial bias in counselling Black students "will get more

Black students going to colleges and universities or even graduating high school." And that Black students experience life and school differently than others as a result of the structures and mores of society: "Black students go through unique experience within the schooling system. Teachers must … educate them in ways that do not traumatize them." I reprise the comment about belonging from Alias 1: "Help make the Black community feel important to society." These statements help to add the human story to the inequitable schooling outcomes being produced by our schooling systems and structures. They also confront the results of the K-12 guidance and counselling programs pointing to incongruency with the needs of the Black student.

According to Creating Pathways to Success, (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) the vision of the Ontario Guidance and Career Education is to create Pathways to Success[5] in which "all students leave secondary school with a clear plan for their initial postsecondary destination, … with confidence in their ability to implement, and revise or adapt, their plan throughout their lives as they and the world around them change. This vision sees students as the architects of their own lives." (p. 8) The statement implicates student choice as the driver in the student/guidance and counselling relationship. However, in this relationship the guidance counsellor is largely seen by the panel as a professional who often lacks the cultural competence, and who wields enormous power, influence, and authority to define paths leading to the living standards and life chances of Black students. The panel points out that there are systemic obstacles, and a disconnect between the performance of guidance and counselling and meeting the needs of Black students. This disconnect impedes the practice of the "choice agency" implied in the vision statement. The panel argues for the re-imagining of the role of guidance and

[5] http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/creatingpathwayssuccess.pdf

counselling to advance and support Black excellence, and to effectively eliminate stereotypes and other practices that perpetuate inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Equitable Schooling Outcomes

It is broadly accepted that education is a strong predictor of how students grow to live as adults (OECD, 2008, p. 1), therefore the persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes constitutes a social injustice, because society through its education systems and structures, puts in jeopardy the health, livelihood and future of marginalized demographic groups. The problem of this research is to determine the change required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario. From its deliberations the panel has identified that the production of equitable schooling outcomes requires the simultaneous multi-axis engagement of the schooling production systems and structures, to ensure each student has an equal opportunity for success. There are some novel systemic and structural recommendations from the panel, however, the equitable practices proposed by the panel are not novel. They are already available to educational practitioners, they are however inconsistently used. This exposes a knowing doing problem (Edmonds, 1979; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000), and the need for new accountability systems centred on the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

The panel calls for a shift in how schools and schooling might be organized, structured, and practiced. Linear progression through K-12 schooling would be reimagined to allow students multiple routes, entry points, and timelines to access their futures without penalty. This would also impact how tertiary institutions operate. Such change could benefit from the use of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Artificial Intelligence (CRRAI), other technologies, and notions of Just-In-Time or On-Demand education to produce equitable schooling outcomes. This

is also a way of ensuring accountable implementation of programmes/policies such as the Ministry of Education's Differentiated Instruction (DI) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Although teachers are trained to differentiate instruction, inconsistent application exemplifies the gap between having knowledge, and using knowledge. Differentiated instruction engaged from the standpoint of intersectionality, in order to serve students with disabilities who are Black, must become central to retooling schooling.

Change efforts must respond to the complexities that Black students with disabilities encounter daily while accessing K-12, and next level schooling. Brown (2020), writes regarding the denial of the legitimate request for academic accommodation made by a Black student at a tertiary institution. The request was denied with comments such as the student was "using accommodation as a free pass, and for "not wanting to work as hard as the rest of the students," and that "[the student] should not worry, the test would not be hard" (p. 38). This experience reflects the use of racial profiling and stereotypes including being lazy, being a cheat, and not being trustworthy. It seems as if the professor operated from ableist- and racist- lens in framing and serving the Black student. Although this scenario requires critical analysis beyond the scope of this research, the narrative serves to inform us as researchers, policymakers, and policy actors of the level of disenfranchisement and hostile schooling practices that must be changed in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students during and beyond K-12 schooling.

The panel also makes direct human connections between factors impacting the production of inequitable schooling outcomes and the future of Black students. I believe such linkages and understanding, and the connecting of humanity to schooling production systems and structures frame the production of equitable schooling outcomes as, inseparable from the professional practice and the human side of the day-to-day production of schooling outcomes.

The findings of the panel reveal a resemblance to research data from the literature review, with one significant difference. The data points raised by the panel regarding the production of inequitable schooling outcomes are connected to the human costs of the findings. This is living data from the panel that was able to engage the research question and tell their stories of the phenomenon, from inside the phenomenon. It is now up to us, researchers, policy actors, and policymakers to act on the data from this Delphi panel of youth whose expertise as revealed by the data, belies deficit notions regarding Black youth.

Notions of interest-convergence, and flexible-solidarity, mentioned earlier in this report, should incentivize policymakers, policy actors, and researchers to act with dedicated resolve to produce equitable schooling outcomes. A key outcome of this research is hearing from the Delphi panel how they perceive the schooling system should be changed so that it produces equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. Many of the equitable practices proposed by the panel are currently in the pedagogical toolbox of educational practitioners, however they are inconsistently used. The recommendations from the panel are also nuanced, because they make direct human connections between pedagogical practices, the wellbeing, and future of Black students. This human connection is helpful in providing a more fulsome link between equitable practices and human value. The panel advocates that culturally relevant professional practices, school funding to support racial diversity, curriculum and pedagogical support through texts that promote racial diversity, inclusion and truth telling become the culture of school districts. Lion asserts that “In order to make Black student excel at higher rates all aspects of the schooling system have to be in their favour” and “Teachers need to be properly trained on how to deal with Black students’ needs.” Colin notes the need to build trust, and to “Train staff to be more open minded to our potential.” because “That level of trust being brought in would raise the

confidence of many to approach classes as an equal that can answer questions, and achieve anything that the other students can."

The need for equitable representation as an aspect of the production of equitable schooling outcome is also asserted by the panel in the call for the engagement of Black individuals as role models, noting that they have a diverse range of experience and expertise to share, that they bring a perspective to the education process that only they can, and students will see them as exemplars they can emulate. Peanut also advances the need for equitable representation through the notion of role models from the perspective of representation in the curriculum and support material, writing that, "young kids of colour should be able to see persons who look like them in the material they're learning in schools." Ryan (2009), addresses the importance of representation, and its impact regarding race and power on student perception, writing that:

> Current representational arrangements send messages to both [W]hite and non-white students; they learn from the hierarchies that they observe in school and elsewhere. … They learn that [W]hite people are better suited to occupy positions of authority in their communities, and furthermore, that this racial inequality is natural and normal. … these arrangements can alienate students of colour from the education process and sabotage their motivation. (p. 2)

Both racialized and White students learn from the current representational arrangements and from the hierarchies they experience in school and elsewhere in the determinative environment.

The value of role models to the production of Black students schooling outcomes is also reiterated by Turner, (2015), who writes in a report from The Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators that: "Black educators also have an important symbolic impact on a racially diverse

student population. In the face of persistent negative stereotypical images from news and entertainment media about Blacks, the presence of Black educators in Ontario schools helps to counter these messages. Their presence as competent, caring professionals also sends a strong message to both Black and non-Black students that African Canadians are much more than what is portrayed in the media and that they have a place in Canadian society." (Turner, 2015) This corresponds with Colin's assertion that role models are extremely important to schooling outcomes and that when public information, popular culture, and media promote skewed and stereotypical messages and images of Black people in sports, music, and crime "that's what our youth will gravitate to. There needs to be more diversification in terms of our heroes and where we can go in life."

Another of the themes coming from the data that finds support in the literature, (Tembo, 2021; Turner, 2015) is, schools need to facilitate student belonging, provide culturally competent staff, and use culturally relevant and responsive professional practices to meet the needs of Black students. Regarding student belonging, Akua comments: "There was one teacher who was more socially aware about issues, who would really go to bat for the Black students. This really improved my experience." This exemplifies professional practice that value student belonging, and representation needs. The panel is also clear that when students feel they belong they become optimistic about their future, stereotypes matter less, and they become free to pursue their interests and engage their talents outside of negative systemic restraints.

Colin notes that if students feel they belong they "would be more comfortable stepping out of the stereotypes that have been pre-set for the community" and "There would be more students challenging themselves in areas that can be more beneficial for the community as a whole, than the traditional paths have been commonly taken." By calling for schools to attend to

Black student voice, disrupt stereotypes, facilitate student belonging, and engage the Black community as a learning resource, the panel has connected the value of student voice, equitable practices, and agency to the production of equitable schooling outcomes. Consistent inclusion of the community as a learning resource serves as strategic exemplars of Black excellence, fosters community engagement, and helps to foment an invaluable partnership in the production of equitable schooling outcomes. The panel data indicates an inseparability between professional practice, and the human side of the day-to-day production of schooling outcomes, which must not be missed or ignored. The panel wants districts to ensure accountability for professional practice tailored to meet the needs of Black students, as well as the normalization of culturally relevant, appropriate, and responsive pedagogy to assure the persistent production of equitable schooling outcomes. In light of the panel responses, the literature review, and the theoretical framework of this research, panelists were asked to rank selected schooling practices, adapted from the data they generated, and data from (Same et al., 2018), based on the level of importance to the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. Their composite ranking is presented in figure 4,

Figure 3

Racially diverse school leadership, teaching, and support staff	1
Culturally Competent Teachers	2
Teacher-Student relationships	3
Black history, and people in the Curriculum and its supporting texts	4
Culturally Competent Guidance Counsellors	5
Extra-Curricular Academic Coaching	6
High expectations of Black students	7
Homework linked to student needs	8
Assessment to help students succeed (Assessment for Learning)	9
Grade-specific instructional focus in math	10

Based on my analysis, there seems to be a balance in the ranking of the chart items. The top half seems to be more connected to the sociocultural practices of schooling pedagogy. This ranking could indicate that although all of the elements are key, there is an important co-dependence that exists amongst the elements since schooling does not operate without either half of the table elements being engaged. I believe that the top half of the table points to the importance Black youth have assigned to student belonging as an element of the production of equitable schooling outcomes, since the school effects that are ranked in the top half can be understood to be effects that support student belonging. According to Allen, (2019) student belonging is supported by school factors such as: 1. Encourage positive relationships with teachers and school staff, 2. Create a positive peer culture of belonging, 3. Value learning, 4. Take proactive steps towards mental health, and 5. Don't neglect parents. And that "A sense of

belonging at school can support students through a particularly vulnerable time when they are forming their identity, developing psychosocial skills and being influenced by their peers.”.

For me, it was important that Black youth comprised the expert panel because in so doing the status quo regarding who might be considered expert is interrupted. Their inclusion also affirms their belongingness. The data produced by the research aligns with prior research findings, regarding school effects, policy development and implementation and their impacts on the production of equitable schooling outcomes. This affirms the expertise of the panel as revealed in the data. The panel engaged the phenomenon from inside the phenomenon as Black students and as members of the society outside of school, and the panel data produced were not generalized, they were personal to Black youth and their experience. I believe it is significant that Black youth comprised the panel in light of how systemic race, and gender hierarchy function to exclude, erase, marginalize, and disenfranchise Black youth.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Ableism

To me, it is problematic when the accountability systems of the schooling production systems and structures are not held to account regarding their roles in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I believe that the accountability systems used in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes contribute to the persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I also believe that when researchers and other policy actors do not explicitly include accountability systems as an important contributor to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, the development of new knowledge to support the production of equitable schooling outcomes is stymied. Researchers and other policy actors therefore could be understood to be complicit in the perpetuation of the production of inequitable schooling outcomes.

My experience of the omission of Black students with special needs from the panel is that as critical researchers, it is important that we center the notion of ableism and its intersectionalities as attributes that must not be ignored in our work. bell hooks reminds us that as policy actors we must be alert to the "interlocking systems of domination that define our reality". One of the most significant learnings for me, is that this research did not specifically address the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students with disabilities because Black students with disabilities were not included on the panel of experts. It is through critical analysis using BFT and CRT that this exclusion was identified. I believe this is a reminder to us as critical researchers, that we must be vigilant and rigorous at all times regarding intersectionalities. Kres-Nash: (2016) writes "Racism and ableism are often thought of as parallel systems of oppression that work separately to perpetuate social hierarchy. Not only does this way

of looking at the world ignore the experiences of people of color with disabilities, but it also fails to examine how race is pathologized in order to create racism." (p. 1).

As a result of the exclusion, it is my belief that there is need for research from a critical standpoint, specifically geared to meeting the schooling needs of Black students with disabilities – Research for example to answer the question: What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students with disabilities in Ontario schools? Our understanding of interlocking oppression, intersectionality, and the use of umbrella terms help us to better understand the need of deliberate inclusion. When the term Black student is normalized to exclude Black students with disability from the conversation it is problematic and is a form of erasure and obfuscation. It is noteworthy that the material from the literature review tended to use umbrella terms such as: Black student, student, and other such terms that do not overtly account for the intersectionalities occurring within the umbrella.

Systems and Structures

There are three significant contributors to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes that I would like to bring into focus, because they cannot be ignored in the work to eliminate the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. They are patriarchy, meritocracy, and White supremacy. They constitute a formidable interlocking system of oppression, and they are foundational to the systems, structures and practices of daily living, and schooling here in North America. They are systemic, structural, ubiquitous, somewhat autonomous and are everywhere together. They operate through common tools including curriculum, pedagogical practices, achievement standards, resource distribution, and employment practices. They also function through elements in the determinative environment including socioeconomic life, wealth distribution, health, housing, and communication.

Regarding patriarchy, Batton and Wright (2019) state that "feminist scholars have long argued that patriarchy affects the structure and organization of society as well as the lived experiences of men and women." (abstract). Facio (2013) notes that patriarchy is among "the earliest structures of domination, subordination and exclusion" which is still operating today as part of a basic system of domination. As a society, our organizing systems and structures, and our belief systems such as meritocracy, order, governance, and access, are hardly perceived as patriarchal because these structures and practices appear normal. Patriarchy in practice is a form of supremacy, it structures social interactions and individual rewards, and functions effectively as part of a team comprised of racism, White supremacy, and neoliberalism. Patriarchy is ubiquitous, powerful, and reliable. It sets up unequal relations of power, gender and race which are deeply embedded in organizational practices and structures of society. The world around us reflects the organizing principles of patriarchy in action. Schools also reflect this hierarchical structure.

Critical reflection on our lived experience helps us understand that patriarchy is a most powerful and enduring system of inequality, and that it is often missed because it is a part of everything. It seems as normal as the wind, the effects are felt and seen, while it remains unseen. As a society, our organizing systems and structures, and our belief systems such as meritocracy, order, governance, and access, are hardly perceived as functions of patriarchy because these structures and practices appear 'normal' – it's just the way. This reinforces for me, that the already established analytical structures must be retooled to produce equitable outcomes, and therefore that the researcher, policymaker, policy actor and change agents must use a lens that reflects the intersectionality of lived experience without subordinating racialized people in order to address the phenomenon. (Crenshaw, 1989).

Meritocracy is a pillar of current schooling practices such as assessment and evaluation, it structures power relations, it plays a key role in distributing economic and social justice and social positioning. These are elements that each play important individual roles in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes and are quite impactful through their interlocking relationships within the umbrella of meritocracy. From the standpoint of equitable schooling outcomes, I see meritocracy as problematic as a schooling practice because it frames how schooling professionals can think about and educate Black students. Meritocracy also operate on a framework that ignores or discounts interconnected factors that contribute to the production of inequitable schooling outcomes. The normalized use and acceptance of meritocracy in society helps to sustain the status quo. Wiederkehr et al., (2015) write "The belief in meritocratic ideology is the belief that, in a given system, success is an indicator of personal deservingness—namely, that the system rewards individual ability and efforts" (p. 1).

White supremacy is also a dominant and embedded force in society that determines the rules of power and inequality along racial lines in western societies including Canada, and the US. Stone, (2012) talks about its embeddedness and state of being normal in society. She notes that "skin color has been so deeply ingrained into our ways of organizing society and relating to each other that we can never be free of colour-based assumptions". We take them so much for granted that we are not even conscious of them. What we call "color blindness" is often unconscious acceptance of a status quo in which it is normal for [W]hites to have easier access than [B]lacks. (p. 395)". This taken-for-grantedness is important for critical researchers to engage, because the practice of White supremacy in schools is often embedded in the operating systems and structures and may not always be overt. A critical work therefore is to detect and act to thwart its function and realize the production of equitable schooling outcomes.

Power Relations & Change

The panel has called for the Ontario curriculum to be made racially inclusive. This could require policy, system, and structural changes. Reimagining and changing systems and structures, especially ones that have been normalized or entrenched require the mitigation of power and power relations. We know that these power relations, and social positioning play out in the day-to-day production of schooling outcomes, and although our society affirms that all people are equal, it simultaneously fails to dismantle the structures, practices, and systems that support the status quo race, power, and gender unequal relationships. Historically, education for Black people in North America has been aligned with the power structure, therefore it has never been on an equal footing with that of White people. It is within this context of unequal power relations, and hegemonic social positioning that inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students are produced.

King, (1991) writes that change requires the systems and structures be dismantled for the status quo to be undone, and that the "elimination of the societal hierarchy is inevitable if the social order is to be reorganized; but before this can occur, the existing structural inequity must be recognized as such and actively struggled against." King affirms the need to frame the phenomenon to make it more identifiable and accessible to be acted on. Our lived-experience tells us that power relations are not static, and that large scale change is usually complex and often resisted. Hill Collins, (2000) notes that when people resist the status quo in a power relationship, the dynamics in that power relationship changes, and the way that change manifests itself depends on the nature of the resistance, and on the other parties involved, and that: "As people push against, step away from, and shift the terms of their participation in power relations, the shape of power relations changes for everyone." (p.275). Power relations are demonstrated in

many forms. Schooling outcomes for Black students are impacted by how power is distributed and practiced within the school hierarchy – principal, education professionals, students, and parent communities.

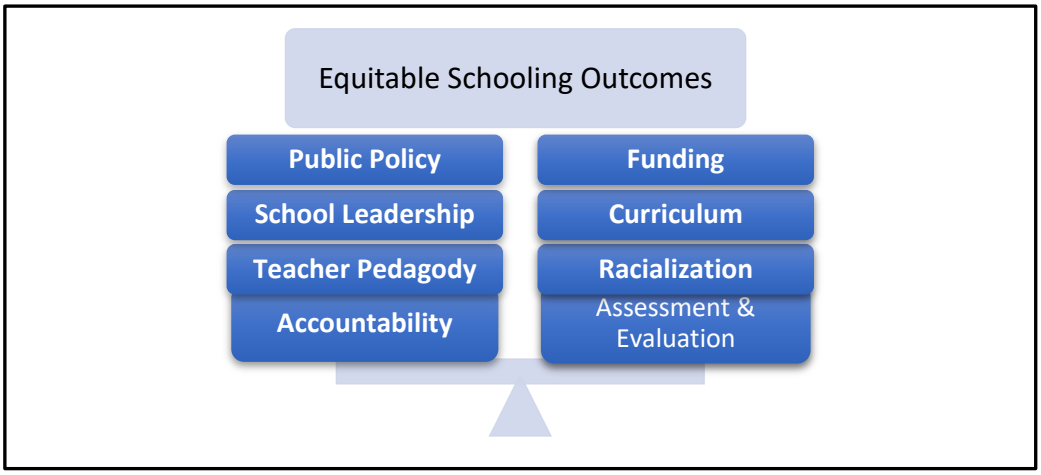
Power relations, social positioning, and the use of power are demonstrated when for example "gifted programs tend not to be placed in schools located in low-income neighbourhoods or neighbourhoods with a high proportion of racialized students. As such, many students who have been assessed and identified as gifted are required to travel out of their neighbourhood to attend the gifted program. … families and/or students made the decision to remain at their neighbourhood school." (James & Turner, 2017). It is also demonstrated when students use their power to resist practices or to seek fairness and they are disciplined. For example, when the systems and structures of schooling are perceived by students to be unfair or oppressive and they assert their agency and resist they are often suspended, pushed out (Dei & Kempf, 2013), or otherwise disciplined. Or when the status quo power relationship between the police and a Black person is challenged by the Black person, the result is often detrimental or lethal for the Black person. Critical research identifies the need for agency and activism to procure the consistent production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario.

Western societies were constructed to meet the wealth and status needs of White people through subjugation of people who it racialized. And it is the foundation on which our education systems and structures are built. Society continues to affirm that all peoples are equal, while simultaneously resisting the dismantling of structures, practices, and systems that maintain the status quo race, power, and gender relationships. Henry, (2021) notes, however, that "Even after the enslavement of Black people in Canada was abolished (1834), the segregation of Black

people was continued and justified (through ideas of racial inferiority) many years later". (p. 1). And currently the practice of unequal education for Black students in Western education systems continue to meet the ends for which the education system was built. This is evidenced by its year-over-year production of inequitable schooling outcomes that maintains the status quo, and might be one explanation of its deep-rooted resistance to the production of equitable schooling outcomes. (King, 1991b), asserts that "the existing structural inequity must be recognized as such and actively struggled against." (p. 139)

Strategic Activism & Agency

Changing the production of inequitable schooling outcomes requires that the flow of key drivers of the production of equitable schooling are maintained. Data from the panel indicates that key drivers include public policy, school leadership, teacher pedagogy, accountability, funding, curriculum, racialization, and assessment and evaluation. The literature review identifies the economy, and critical research as means to knowledge, are also key drivers of the production of equitable schooling outcomes. When the key drivers are strategically distributed, the production of equitable schooling outcomes is facilitated.



Whenever the value of any of the factors in the relationship changes, the dynamics also change and can destabilize the production of equitable schooling outcomes. Critical agency, and strategic

activism are required to ensure the balance, and to sustain the production of equitable schooling outcomes.

Ryan (2016) notes that many social justice-minded leaders in contemporary schools engage in forms of strategic activism. “They are forced to do this because of the pervasive resistance to social justice practices. Before taking action, these leaders take into account any likely opposition to their social justice agendas.” (p. 91) Strategic activists must understand how power operates within their organizations in order to prudently select their course of action. Strategic activists must also pay attention to the impact of the violence being perpetuated on Black students through societal and schooling practices. Clandfield et al., (2014), assert that “…Streaming is a form of institutionalized violence” (p. 261). This violence is carried out over time, for example throughout K-12 schooling.

During the literature review I discovered the notion of slow peace. It offers a lens through which to frame agency and respond to the slow violence, such as academic streaming, occurring in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students throughout K-12 schooling. Fisher (2021) observes that we are conditioned to identify violence in its most obvious form, for example, “a knee pushed into a neck” is most obvious or spectacular violence, or a mob storming the Capitol…” Slow violence, however, happens over the course of years or even decades. And it is “…nowhere near as visceral as the type described in news headlines and in courtrooms, that is called "slow violence", this is harm and damage that plays out over years or decades.” (p. 1).

While I agree with Fisher that “a knee pushed into a neck” is a most obvious or spectacular violence, based on an intersectionality frame, I believe it to be simultaneously slow, and attritional violence. Think about the variety of injustices, the stereotypes, racial animus, and

profiling that George Floyd had to overcome in order to live to be 46 years old, then witness the performance of attritional violence that was performed using a knee on Mr. Floyd's neck, as spectacular violence in the public eye. Nixon (2011) describes slow violence as attritional violence. He writes: "By slow violence I mean a violence that grows gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (p. 2).

Slow violence to me, is another way to cognize and make knowable the impact of the schooling process on Black students. Joshee (2019) notes that: "The precepts of slow peace encourage stepping back to understand the taken-for-granted practices that contribute to various forms of slow violence, with particular attention to the ways in which those practices are embodied in the work we do as educators, researchers and policy actors." (p. 3). Slow peace is the antidote, it operates within the context of ahimsa – a practice of doing no harm in thought, word, or deed through the engagement of slow peace. (Joshee, 2019). Ahimsa and slow violence should be explored further considering that a single-axis framework is insufficient to unravel the production of inequitable schooling outcomes.

Politics & Schooling Outcomes

Electoral politics is important to schooling outcomes here in Ontario because schooling is under the jurisdiction of provincial governments which are elected. Elections determine which governing philosophy guides education policy, funding, and schooling practices. (Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2). The prevailing politics determines the education priorities of the province and how education change is carried out. As noted by Cerna, (2013), "politics affects origins, formulation and implementation of public policy especially when significant changes are involved … and "that reform is political". (p. 14). According to The Council of Ministers of

Education, Canada, (CMEC, 2001), provinces use legislations to foster desired schooling outcomes by exercising their jurisdiction over "curriculum content, the extent of school funding, professional training and accreditation of teachers, methods and standards for testing students, school hierarchical and administrative structures, constitution of school boards, and the design and distribution of teaching materials." (p. 13). One of the major decisions confronting policymakers is how to privilege Black student schooling outcomes in a climate of neoliberalism, White supremacy, and meritocracy.

Chapter 7: Conclusion & Recommendations

At this point in the report I will review the process I used when making connections of the conceptual- and the theoretical frameworks to the findings and recommendations of the research. I will also comment further on attributes of the Delphi panel, notions of Black Excellence and Joy, the contribution to research and practice of this work and my thoughts on continuing and furthering it. Throughout this conclusion I will include supporting text from literature and panel data, and I will re-establish the assertions of the conceptual framework as a way of contextualizing the connections being made. I will present the recommendations made by the panel to the Ontario Minister of Education and talk to the need for more Canadian research focused specifically on the production of achievement equity for Black students. I will also assert the importance of Black scholarship being included in the dataset supporting decision-making regarding education change and the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

The process I used followed a simple pattern. The conceptual framework which is the infrastructure guiding the research is used to bring important elements such as the literature review and the theoretical framework together in conversation about what constitutes relevancy to the research. Working within this context with CRT and BFT as theoretical and analytical supports provided me with critical tools to frame, analyze, and understand statements from the panel with praxis in mind. Each theme that emerged from the panel data was subjected to analysis using the tenets of CRT and BFT in order to facilitate follow-up during the feedback/query/challenge loop. This process allowed for rich data to emerge following each round. The iterative process also grounded the themes and recommendations of the research in the data. I believe that connecting the conceptual- and the theoretical frameworks to the findings

and recommendations provides a way for readers to see how the connectedness of the elements and people of the research worked together in generating the rich data of the research.

To re-establish context, the conceptual framework of this research asserts that meritocracy is a flawed lens through which to view schooling outcomes. I believe the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students is good for the students, their communities, and our society, and meets a social justice end. When schooling outcomes are perceived as student achievement, the success of students is deemed to depend on the will and hard work of the students who are judged as responsible for the outcomes despite evidence that shows otherwise. Society as a strategic and indefatigable component in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes, is often neglected when meritocracy is used as a lens to view schooling outcomes. The conceptual framework also asserts that the Ontario Ministry of Education which funds the systems, structures, curriculum, and pedagogical expectations is itself an element in the production of schooling outcomes.

Working within this context with CRT and BFT as theoretical and analytical supports have made it easier for me to frame, analyze, and understand statements from the panel with praxis in mind. Each theme that has emerged was subjected to analysis using the tenets of CRT and of BFT. As the researcher I would check the emerging themes to see how they align or differ from the tenets of both BFT and CRT to facilitate follow-up during the feedback/query/challenge loop. This allowed for rich data to emerge following each round. To further contextualize the connections between the supporting theories, the analysis and the data, it was valuable to understand the assertion by CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998) that “racism is “normal, not aberrant, in American society”. It made clear the connection between panel calls for agency and change to racism and other interlocking oppressions. Both CRT and BFT are clear that race on its own is

insufficient to capture the complex realities of the lived experience of Black people. Uncovering the agency, challenge, and change advanced by the panel coheres well with what Howard and Navarro (2016), call "the scrutinizing of the insights, concerns, and questions students of color have about their educational experiences …which serve as "a framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality" (p. 25).

Let us look briefly at the process I used to make connections with key elements of the research. Take the theme *prioritize student wellness and belonging.* Lion writes that "Black children often feel as if they are not seen or heard at school" and "a Black child who chose not to go to a specialized program because of the fear of people thinking I do not belong and having a safe and non-bias classroom is of the upmost importance", and Penelope writes that "Often times, students like myself have to be extremely self-motivated to complete and meet expectations because we lack that motivation and encouragement from our authority figures. … the lack of awareness regarding Black figures in Canada can pose as additional barriers". Wellness and belonging as a theme emerged from panel contribution from an Outsider position. It demonstrates their agency, conviction and rejection of exclusion and marginalization.

Collins, (2000) talks to the complex importance of *not belonging* to establishing the significance of belonging to both the individual and to society. "As the "Others" of society who can never really belong, strangers threaten the moral and social order. But they are simultaneously essential for its survival because those individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries. African-American women, by not belonging, emphasize the significance of belonging." (p. 70.) This complexity is captured by the panelists as they not only call for change, but they also articulate the quality of the desired change. Peanut asserts that "newly published textbooks and other resources … be representative of the diversity of Canada.

… If they [White students] are the only ones using up-to-date modern equipment, then it will be easier for them to adjust to post-secondary instruction to which all equipment is up-to-date. Boost confidence of Black students - Level the playing field between Black students and White students." This to me is an example of the panel's rejection of the otherness and the marginalization they experienced. Analyzing panel comments in light of CRT also reveals the agency and clear contestation of systemic encumbrances being faced. It also supports the prioritization of student wellness and belonging as a theme of the research data. This correlates with my engagement of the calls from CRT for: "scrutinizing the insights, concerns, and questions students of color have about their educational experiences" … which "serves as a framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality". (Howard & Navarro, 2016) p. 25.

Comments from the panel such as the ones following cohere well with the notion of the work of community othermothers. (Collins, 2000) "This community othermother tradition also explains the "mothering the mind" relationships that can develop between African-American women teachers and their Black female and male students. … this relationship goes far beyond that of providing students with either technical skills or a network of academic and professional contacts. … this "mothering the mind" among Black women seeks to move toward the mutuality of a shared sisterhood that binds African-American women as community othermothers. … Community othermothers' participation in activist mothering demonstrates a clear rejection of separateness and individual interest as the basis of either community organization or individual self-actualization. Instead, the connectedness with others and common interest expressed by community othermothers model a very different value system, one whereby ethics of caring and personal accountability move communities forward."

In this regard, Akua noted that “There was one teacher who was more socially aware about issues who would really go to bat for the Black students. This really improved my experience”. Lion stated that “Black children are always lacking role models whether it’s in media or the real world. It is important for them to see themselves in people who look like them so that they can believe they can achieve whatever they want … Teachers need to be properly trained on how to deal with Black students’ needs whether it is social or educational, Black students go through unique experience within the schooling system and teaches have to be prepared on how to actively and efficiently deal with them”. Colin writes of the importance of “Having a Black community of teachers that were always there for anything I needed whether it was educational or personal”. Penelope asserts that “Having someone who can identify with your unique experiences and cultural background can make a huge impact; they understand and are more sympathetic to your circumstances … and … seeing Black teachers and employees have always been a motivation for me to succeed".

In this concluding paragraph I wish to acknowledge that the entirety of this research project is centered around the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I believe that Black student success is good for the students, their families, their communities and our society. The research process that I used serve to showcase the excellence Black youth can bring to the knowledge creation table of the academy. I also sought to engage Black youth as the Delphi panel so as to engage the panel in the academic knowledge production process and to present to academy the quality data that is produced. This also serves to identify the lack that is, when Black youth are excluded from official knowledge making processes. The recommendations from the panel are grounded in the data and are geared to the production of equitable schooling outcomes. Equitable schooling outcomes for Black students is Black

excellence, and it serves to produce joy. According to Dictionary.com, (2022) "The term *Black excellence* refers to a high level of achievement, success, or ability demonstrated by an individual Black person or by Black people in general. … *Black excellence* is often used in the same contexts and in similar ways as other positivity-focused terms like *Black joy"*.

One additional note about the panel. It is comprised of youth belonging to the group labeled *Generation Z.* At the outset panelists expressed high confidence in their skills to engage the technology needed to effectively participate in the research. I noted the seeming ease with which they participated in the Delphi rounds and recognize it is a gift and a bonus to the research because according to McKinsey & Company, (2023) they are "part of a new wave of "inclusive consumers" and socially progressive dreamers. Generally speaking, Gen Zers believe in doing their part to help stop the intensification of climate change and to establish greater equity for all. More than any other generation, Gen Z collectively demands purpose and accountability, the creation of more opportunities for people of diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, and rigorous sustainable and green practices." I believe that is in line with the sense of being unafraid to state their ideas for producing equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario.

I believe that responsible research benefits the participants, the community, research practice, and society. One of my goals is sharing the research report so it might be engaged in community, and by researchers, education leaders, policymakers, politicians, by the panel, and others who influence change in education. I invite you as a consumer of this research to recognize that the value of Black youth to the knowledge production chain is confirmed. We used a rigorous and collaborative process to search for solutions to the persistent production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

Continuing & Furthering This Work

1. I believe that this research has identified that there is need for further studies to explore the notion of schooling outcomes as a produced entity.
2. Based on the data from this research the notion of race and racism as critical elements in the production of inequitable schooling outcomes should be explored to identify ways of mitigating their impact on the production of inequitable schooling outcomes.
3. The data invites further exploration of discipline and punishment because current systems are disproportionately impacting the life-chances of racialized students. One avenue of exploration might be the notion of a re-imagined system of addressing infractions by students in ways that are collaborative that would allow communities to learn together.
4. Another area of exploration that I would propose based on the data from this research is multi-axis pathways of progressing through the schooling process including the use of Culturally Relevant and Supportive Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Recommendations

The panel has made five recommendations to the Minister of Education of Ontario for changes to the schooling production systems and structures to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. The recommendations are in the form of letters from each panelist addressed to the Minister. The letters are in the appendix below. The recommendations include 1. Abolish and replace academic streaming, 2. Prioritize student belonging, 3. Use student centred conflict resolution, 4. Fund public schools for equitable schooling outcomes, and 5. Make the Ontario curriculum racially inclusive. The following are the recommendations with supporting information:

1: Abolish and Replace Academic Streaming

Academic streaming exacerbates inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students, has a marked negative impact on their life-chances, and is a social justice concern. (C. E. James, 2012; A. Lopez & Rugano, 2018a). The Delphi panel through its data, calls for the abolishment of the practice of academic streaming, and instead for the development and use of culturally relevant and non-linear ways of meeting curricular expectations and facilitate equitable student progression through schooling. To effectively make this change, schooling production systems and structures must undergo critical and rigorous analysis – consulting the brutal facts as asserted by Collins, (2001 p. 88): “It is impossible to make good decisions without infusing the entire process with an honest confrontation of the brutal facts.” This notion coheres well with what Dei and Kempf, (2013 p. 166) identify as “having the courage to face the future with all the tools offered by our past, with an unprecedented tenacity in-service of educational and social justice for all.” The recommendation therefore is that academic streaming be replaced by a culturally

relevant and non-linear process, of progressing through schooling. This non-linear process centers the interests, and goals of Black students while meeting curricular expectations.

2: Prioritize Student Belonging

Panel data shows that student belonging is linked intersectionally to multiple schooling practices, and that some schooling practices cause students to feel they do not belong. Lion did not attend a specialized program “because of the fear of people thinking I do not belong”. Lion’s story resonates with the findings of James and Turner, (2017) who reported that in their study “Examples were shared of Black students withdrawing from gifted programs and returning to their home school because of their experiences in gifted classrooms.” (p. 44). This provides support for the panel data and the notion that intersectionality of factors impact student belonging and must be considered when trying to meet belonging needs.

According to Lee and Shute (2010), a sense of belonging is strongly correlated to academic accomplishment. They write: “Feeling proud of one’s academic accomplishments, as well as a sense of belonging or identification with the school, are also considered important indicators of emotional engagement" and “that academic achievement is strongly associated with certain aspects of student engagement." (p. 5). Booker, (2006) reminds us of the importance of student belonging to the production of equitable schooling outcomes, noting that: “for African American adolescents, issues of school belonging, identification, and engagement are critical to academic performance and successful completion of high school. Allen (2019) writing regarding student belonging notes that “How strongly a student feels like they “belong” at their school can shape their life, well into adulthood.” The literature review and the Delphi data tell us that student belongingness is fostered when culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy are the culture of schooling. And that belongingness is facilitated when the curriculum is inclusive of the

agency, resilience, activism, and contributions of Black and other racialized peoples to the Canadian society.

The recommendation from this panel is that Black student belongingness be prioritized to facilitate the persistent production of equitable schooling outcomes. This is important to the life-chances of Black students.

3: Use Student-centered Conflict-Resolution Instead

The panel calls for rethinking discipline and punishment as is currently practiced in schools because it is disproportionately meted out to Black students and has severe negative impacts on their life-chances. Suspensions and expulsions often lead to inadequate academic achievement, and "School failure penalises a child for life" resulting in "lower initial and lifetime earnings, more difficulties in adapting to rapidly changing knowledge-based economies, and higher risks of unemployment."(OECD, 2012, p. 3). Student-centered conflict resolution is helpful in what Alias 1 calls "keeping discipline fair to enforce equality for all". Penelope points out that the lens currently being used to frame and dispense discipline and punishment are not student centered as they often exclude the "unique cultural experiences behind every behaviour and/or attitude." Penelope also notes that it is easy for staff "to act under the guise that a student may be problematic rather than searching for the cause and having to recon with the reality that you as an educator are a part of the problem." The practice of discipline and punishment in schools, mirrors those of the wider society and therefore maintains the status quo production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students. The recommendation therefore is to replace current unfair discipline and punishment practices to engage student-centered practices in which school and students work cooperatively and collaboratively to resolve conflicts, promote growth, creative thinking, and develop a community that centers on student wellbeing, and development.

4: Fund Public Schools for Equitable Schooling Outcomes

The OECD, (2018) notes that "To achieve equity in education, countries should target funding and resources for education to the most vulnerable." Peanut and Alias 1, both note the need for greater funding for schools in Black neighbourhoods "to ensure resources are up to date.", and to make life-chances greater for Black students. Ladson-Billings, (1998) notes that school funding often demonstrates how racism in society impacts the funding of public schools. (p. 20). The panel recommends that schools are funded for full inclusion to provide the human, textual, and other supportive resources needed for student wellbeing and learning and provide culturally relevant and responsive competent school professionals to disrupt stereotypes, encourage student all-around excellence, and engage the connections between student wellbeing and graduation rates to better the production of equitable schooling outcomes.

People For Education, (2020) also addresses the importance of adequately funding public education noting that "Investing in children results in increased productivity, higher income, better health, more family investment, upward mobility, and reduced social costs." The panel engages funding from the standpoint of student well-being, access to equitable learning, the provision and ready access to learning materials, to include texts, technology, and culturally relevant pedagogical practices. The recommendation from the panel is that public schools are to be funded to produce equitable schooling Outcomes for Black students.

5: Make the Ontario Curriculum Racially Inclusive

The Ontario Curriculum must be revised to make it racially inclusive because it is the foundation on which teaching, learning, assessment, evaluation, and academic accountability are predicated. It should therefore be inclusive of all Ontarians to facilitate learning connections, incorporate the lived experience of Black and other racialized students, and foster student belonging. The new

Ontario mathematics curriculum (Ontario, 2020) acknowledges the need for relevant and real-life connections to everyday life. "…there will be relevant, real-life examples that help connect math to everyday life". Incorporating real-life situations into instruction make content easier to understand, and real-life examples of lived experiences can be used as a basis for new learning. It is, however, not clear regarding how the notions of relevant, real-life examples will materialize, or whose life experiences will populate the curriculum. The call from Alias 1 to "Help make the Black community feel important to society by bringing Black History into the curriculum not only during the recognized month but all year round" reinforces the need for the curriculum to be racially inclusive.

There is also a need for more Canadian research focused specifically on the production of achievement equity for Black students. Although there is enough evidence to inspire action, gaps continue to exist in the data supporting direct intervention to retool the production systems and structures to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. A similar need for focused knowledge from research to support effective reparative actions exists in health equity as reported by Canada Public Health: "While there is enough evidence to act, there are many remaining gaps in our current knowledge that must be addressed to better inform broad action and monitor progress toward health equity for Black Canadians." (Canada, 2020).

Considering that research is an integral part of the knowledge making cycle, it is concerning that in Canadian research canons, there is not enough research that centers race as one of the means of production for schooling outcomes for Black students. Voices of Black scholarship are required for a complete analysis of the educational system (Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995). It is important for Black scholarship to be included in that dataset supporting decision-making regarding education change. This inclusion assures Black researchers equal

billing at decision-making tables and is central to the process of fashioning the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. This inclusion reduces the likelihood of data being missed because of the narrow canon from which policy makers draw data and serve the public-facing inclusion and equity stance of Canada to the world. To me this means that the power circle in Ontario's education and academic research leadership needs to deliberately centre Black scholarship for general inclusion in the data base impacting policy and Black students.

Appendix 1. Letters to Minister of Education

Changing Schooling Outcomes for Black Students
Researcher: Luther Brown, OISE - University of Toronto
Email: luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
Phone: 416.799.0162
Supervisor: Professor Reva Joshee,
Department of LHAE.

August 26, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce,
Minister of Education,
5th Floor, 438 University Ave,
Toronto, ON
M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Lecce,

I am a recent past student of K-12 education here in Ontario. I am a member of the Delphi panel for this research study conducted at OISE - University of Toronto. The panel was asked to respond to the question: What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools?

I chose to participate in this research because I am concerned about the achievement gap being experienced here in Ontario, and it is an important initiative that I wanted to support. Taking into consideration my own lived experience, I would like future generations to have an education that

nurtures their needs and skills rather than tear them down. I believe that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students can be changed.

I live in Ajax and I attended high school outside my neighbourhood. I would like to share with you one thing my high school did that helped me succeed, and I am hoping it will show you one impact of culturally responsive and relevant practice for Black students:

In my high school, we had an Indigenous Studies course which was extremely pivotal in my choosing to pursue the Social Science and Humanities field in Higher Education. While I would've loved a Black History course, it provided me the opportunity to learn about a group of people and their culture that I knew very little about. It encouraged and motivated me to be an ally but to also push despite the many cultural barriers and discrimination, I may experience

I will also share with you five words which to me exemplify changes that will help in the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I hope you get a sense of how, as a Black student, I experienced K-12 schooling here in Ontario. The five words which to me exemplify changes are: Cultural Competency, Humility, and Responsibility.

I am also asking that you accept these two recommendations for change to the schooling production systems, and structures here in Ontario schools, so that Black students will consistently experience equitable schooling outcomes:

1. Provide Extra-curricular Academic Coaching.
2. Ensure Culturally competent teachers.

Yours Truly,

Penelope (Pseudonym Used)

Changing Schooling Outcomes for Black Students

Researcher: Luther Brown, OISE - University of Toronto
Email: luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
Phone: 416.799.0162
Supervisor: Professor Reva Joshee,
Department of LHAE.

August 26, 2021

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M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Lecce,

I am a recent past student of K-12 education here in Ontario. I am a member of the Delphi panel for this research study conducted at OISE - University of Toronto. The panel was asked to respond to the question: What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools?

I chose to participate in this research because I am concerned about the achievement gap being experienced here in Ontario, and because I find it interesting. I believe that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students can be changed.

I live in the Jane & Finch Community and I attended high school outside my neighbourhood. I would like to share with you one thing my high school did that helped me succeed, and I am hoping it will show you one impact of culturally responsive and relevant practice for Black students:

There was one teacher who was more socially aware about issues who would really go to bat for the Black students. This really improved my experience.

I will also share with you five words which to me exemplify changes that will help in the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I hope you get a sense of how, as a Black student, I experienced K-12 schooling here in Ontario. The five words which to me exemplify changes are: Inclusion, Diversity, Anti-Blackness Training, Cultural Sensitivity.

I am also asking that you accept these two recommendations for change to the schooling production systems, and structures here in Ontario schools, so that Black students will consistently experience equitable schooling outcomes:

1. There needs to be a part of the curriculum that teaches students about Black History and the importance of the Black struggle. Students not only face racial discrimination and disparities from the schooling system but also from the students within it. In order to make Black students excel at higher rates all aspects of the schooling system has to be geared to meet their needs.
2. Teachers need to be properly trained on how to deal with Black students' needs. Whether it is social or educational, Black students go through unique experience within the schooling system and teaches have to be prepared on how to actively and efficiently deal with them in ways that do not traumatize the students.

Yours Truly,

Akua (Pseudonym Used)

Changing Schooling Outcomes for Black Students

Researcher: Luther Brown, OISE - University of Toronto
Email: luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
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August 26, 2021

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I chose to participate in this research because I am concerned about the achievement gap being experienced here in Ontario, and I participated in this research because it provided me, as a recent Black student the opportunity to express my thoughts on the schooling system regarding Black individuals and their educational experiences. I believe that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students can be changed.

I live in Etobicoke and I attended a specialized high school. I would like to share with you one thing my high school did that helped me succeed, and I am hoping it will show you one impact of culturally responsive and relevant practice for Black students:

I attended mandatory Guidance Counselor sessions for students in the specialized program (IB). This was helpful to me because it provided me with contextual and other information so that I could navigate the programme successfully.

I will also share with you five words which to me exemplify changes that will help in the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I hope you get a sense of how, as a Black student, I experienced K-12 schooling here in Ontario. The five words which to me exemplify changes are: Intentional Inclusiveness in the Classroom.

I am also asking that you accept these two recommendations for change to the schooling production systems and structures here in Ontario schools, so that Black students will consistently experience equitable schooling outcomes:

1. Ensure school resources (e.g. textbooks) with Black people equitably represented in them. The curriculum should be inclusive and engage Black History that is authentic.
2. Ensure proper funding is available for students of Black neighbourhoods to make their life-chances greater.

Yours Truly,

Alias 1 (Pseudonym Used)

Changing Schooling Outcomes for Black Students

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Email: luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
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August 26, 2021

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Dear Minister Lecce,

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I chose to participate in this research because I am concerned about the achievement gap being experienced here in Ontario, and to share my high school experience. I believe that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students can be changed.

I live in Agincourt and I attended my neighbourhood high school. I would like to share with you one thing my high school did that helped me succeed, and I am hoping it will show you one impact of culturally responsive and relevant practice for Black students:

My school had many culturally competent staff who had an open mind to me as a student and gave me a fair chance without any preset biases.

I will also share with you five words which to me exemplify changes that will help in the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I hope you get a sense of how, as a Black student, I experienced K-12 schooling here in Ontario. The five words which to me exemplify changes are: Equality, Opportunity, Diversity, Trust, and Support.

I am also asking that you accept these two recommendations for change to the schooling production systems, and structures here in Ontario schools, so that Black students will consistently experience equitable schooling outcomes:

1. End academic streaming so that students can navigate to where they truly need to be, without being penalized. A student can end up facing a summer with an overload of courses that need to be upgraded, which will directly lead to a late graduation date due to lack of time in a 2 course summer. Students may also feel the social pressures of being behind in that situation or too overwhelmed to even finish causing many to drop out.
2. Train staff to be more open minded to our potential. This would allow for more bright minds to be recognized before being written off as a bad student. That level of trust being brought in would raise the confidence of many to approach classes as a equal that can answer questions and achieve anything that the other students can.

Yours Truly,

Colin (Pseudonym Used)

Changing Schooling Outcomes for Black Students

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Email: luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
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August 26, 2021

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M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Lecce,

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I chose to participate in this research because I am concerned about the achievement gap being experienced here in Ontario, and to provide my insight on how the school system that raised me can do better for other students like myself. Black, low-middle class socioeconomic status. I believe that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students can be changed.

I live in Rexdale and I attended high school outside my neighbourhood. I would like to share with you one thing my high school did that helped me succeed, and I am hoping it will show you one impact of culturally responsive and relevant practice for Black students:

My High School had many before- and after-school programs to make our school feel more like a home. At such programs, I was able to connect with other students to work hard towards our goals. Whether it be academia, music, sports, etc. the majority of teachers were willing to put in extra time to facilitate such programs. All in all, my school felt like a true community. We had a very diverse group of students and staff to make everyone feel as welcome as possible.

I will also share with you five words which to me exemplify changes that will help in the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I hope you get a sense of how, as a Black student, I experienced K-12 schooling here in Ontario. The five words which to me exemplify changes are: Inclusiveness, Friendly Faces, Funding, Humanizing.

I am also asking that you accept these two recommendations for change to the schooling production systems and structures here in Ontario schools, so that Black students will consistently experience equitable schooling outcomes:

1. Implement school resources (e.g. textbooks) with Black faces in them. And have a curriculum filled with Black history as well as White history.
2. Ensure proper funding is available for students of Black neighbourhoods to greater their chances of success for the future.

Yours Truly,

Peanut (Pseudonym Used)

Changing Schooling Outcomes for Black Students

Researcher: Luther Brown, OISE – University of Toronto
Email: luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
Phone: 416.799.0162
Supervisor: Professor Reva Joshee,
Department of LHAE.

August 26, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce,
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Toronto, ON
M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Lecce,

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I chose to participate in this research because I am concerned about the achievement gap being experienced here in Ontario, and I was asked to participate. I believe that the production of inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students can be changed.

I live in Brampton and I attended my neighbourhood high school. I would like to share with you one thing my high school did that helped me succeed, and I am hoping it will show you one impact of culturally responsive and relevant practice for Black students:

My school had a Black community of teachers that were always there for my needs, whether it was educational or personal.

I will also share with you some words which to me exemplify changes that will help in the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students. I hope you get a sense of how, as a Black student, I experienced K-12 schooling here in Ontario. The words which to me exemplify changes are: If they don't offer you a seat at the table bring a folding chair. (Be inclusive - Inclusion will happen)

I am also asking that you accept these two recommendations for change to the schooling production systems and structures here in Ontario schools, so that Black students will consistently experience equitable schooling outcomes:

1. There needs to be a part of the curriculum that teaches students about Black history and the importance of the Black struggle. Students not only face racial discrimination and disparities form the schooling system but also from the students within it. In order to make Black students excel at higher rates all aspects of the schooling system has to be in their favour.
2. Teachers need to be properly trained on how to deal with Black students' needs. Whether it is social or educational, Black students go through unique experiences within the schooling system and teachers have to be prepared on how to actively and efficiently deal with them in a way that does not traumatize the students.

Yours Truly,

Lion (Pseudonym Used)

Appendix 2. Recruitment Letter & Flyer

March 9, 2021

Dear XXXXX,

I hope that all is well with you and your family, and that you are staying Covid-19 safe.

As you may know, I am working towards my Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. I am therefore asking for your help to find seven Black youth to participate in my research.

The youth should be no more than 6 years out of high school - they would have left high school between 2015 and 2020 and meet at least two of the attributes listed on the accompanying Flyer.

They will be asked to respond to the following question based on their lived-experience: ***What do you think needs to be changed by schooling systems, in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario.***

As Black youth, they are the experts who will determine the changes that are recommended by the research. They will also be contributing to the scholarship regarding the production of equitable schooling outcomes for Black students here in Ontario.

The research will be conducted online using digital tools. Once per week, over a 4-to-6-week period, they will be asked to respond to a follow up question.

Please share the attached information with the youth that you are recommending.

Thank You.

Luther Brown.

A Research to Change Schooling Outcomes for Black Students

Black Youth

Less than 6 years out of High School?

Have Your Say!

Take part in this research

From the Black Youth perspective …

What change is required of the education system in order to achieve equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools?

The Issue:

Inequitable schooling outcomes for Black students persists regardless of decades of research, and policy implementation here in Ontario.

Much of the research concerning student achievement use Black students to provide information, rather than as experts. This research centres Black Youth as experts.

This research will also use the Delphi technique to hear from Black Youth regarding the changes they think are needed for the school systems to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Location

Participate Online using digital tools such as Survey Monkey, Google Forms, Messaging, Zoom, etc. Using phone, tablet or computer.

Are you eligible?

- Black Youth less than 5 years out of school, and at least 3 of the following attributes:

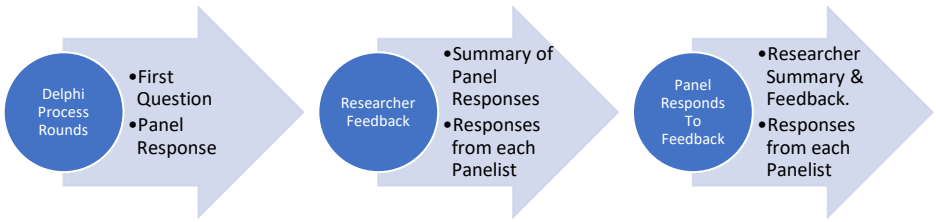
- Working Class | Middle Class | LGBTQ+
- Specialized High School | Out of School
- In College/University | Apprentice
- Vocational Ed. | Student with Disability
- High School Applied / Academic program.

- Contact Luther Brown, Researcher (Ph.D. Candidate)
- luther.brown@mail.utoronto.ca
- 416.799.0162

The Delphi Technique

- The Delphi technique is a research process in which the panelists anonymously respond to questions from me as the researcher. The researcher summarizes their responses and shares the summary and follow up questions for the panel to respond.
- Round 1: The panel answers this open-ended question:

  What change is required of the education system in order to produce equitable schooling outcomes for Black students in Ontario schools?
- After the Panel responds to question 1, the researcher will present a summary of their responses, along with the individual responses to the panel for their feedback.
- Round 2: When the Panel responds to question 2, the researcher will present a summary of their responses, along with the individual responses to the panel for their feedback.
- Round 3: When the Panel responds to question 3, the researcher will present a summary of their responses, along with the individual responses to the panel for their feedback.
- The process repeats 3 or 4 times.



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