

Racism, Privilege and Power: Exploring Black
Students' experience in high school and their transition
to Higher Education, (HE) in Toronto.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for
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By: Jamila Aman

ABSTRACT

My research focused on investigating the underlying reasons and barriers that hinders Canadian students of African descent from graduating from Toronto High Schools (Grades 11 and 12) and to transit to HE in Toronto. Barriers might be socio-economic background of parents, issues related to first generation, literacy level of parents, self-efficacy, poverty etc., that prevent students from transitioning to HE. Racism, discrimination, biases, and microaggressions tactics increase the achievement gap between Black and White students and are analyzed as part of this study (ONABSE, 2015).

My research's aim is to uncover a local understanding of problems in Toronto, explore the achievement gap of Black students and their transition to HE in Toronto.

In this study, I applied qualitative data collection methods. Qualitative methods aim to answer my research questions of 'what,' 'how,' and 'why' of a phenomenon rather than 'how many' or 'how much,' which are answered through quantitative methods (Brikci, 2007, p. 3). I used open ended questions and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. I identified four criteria to select my research subjects: struggling Black students, Black students who dropped out (or were pushed out) of high school, those who are successful and transitioned to HE and teachers and administrators who has experience dealing with Black students. The anticipated challenge was reaching out to Black students who dropped out of high school. I overcome this challenge, with the assistance of one of my research sponsors which is a non-profit institution with a mandate to serve high school dropouts and/or *pushout* students. Pushout students according to School Discipline Support Initiative (2020) refer to "... practices that contribute to students dropping out. This include unwelcoming and uncaring school environment and over-reliance on zero tolerance school policies that push students out of school". My other research sponsors are a high school and an HE institution. The justification for choosing the particular high school was due to the fact that it is serving a high number of Black students. The HE institution I selected, on the other hand, is a well-known Toronto's multicultural HE institution.

I analyzed my data using thematic analysis. The theoretical lens for my study was Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT provided dynamics and clarity to the issue of power and privilege. Quoting (Allen, 2006), López, Erwin, Binder, and Chavez (2018) described CRT as a means to achieve social justice and to examine societal inequalities that became normalized and used in our daily lives. Another amazing value of CRT as outlined by López, Erwin, Binder, and Chavez (2018) as described by (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008) scholars argue that instead of denying racism, it is wise to embrace the facts about racism, power and privilege, and engage in open and honest conversation to achieve equality.

As a Black educator, a mother of a Black student, and through my own lived experiences attending Canadian high school grades 11 and 12, I witnessed firsthand Black student underachievement. Hence, my personal concerns and insight is used as a lens into this research and my research questions are influenced by these identities. My personal and professional biases are reflected in my research, but the biases are minimized by triangulating my research methods and my research subjects; the literature review, my personal lived experience and through continuous personal self-reflection and the interview findings.

Data triangulation allows research transferability, dependability, conformability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data triangulation was possible using data from 20 students 7 teachers and administrator as well as vast literature review and my own lived experience. My personal lived experience was used however through reflexivity in order to address as much as possible bias

Reflexivity helps to bring more critical analysis. Reflexivity involves and increases the researcher awareness of the result on the course and outcomes of study based on the premise that ‘knowledge cannot be separated from the knower’ (Steedman, 1991). Continuous reflexivity contributes an alertness to the research process, as it will allow for continuous self-examination as a researcher. Moreover, it will force attentiveness to the research relationship and the connection between seeing interpreting and knowing.

Growing up in Eritrea, life was good. Unfortunately, when I immigrated to Canada, I was living in poverty; however, I worked 7 days a week while attending post-secondary education to pay for living expenses. I utilized every minute to study, and I was able to finish school. When I

got an entry level job, I worked hard to distinguish myself from the average workers. Soon I was promoted to be an Executive Director of a Canadian not-for-profit. I did not stop there. I completed my master's degree while working and raising a family and now I am a living proof doing my EdD. I am not saying it was or is easy, but hard work pays off. Still in this environment, I had my share of racism and unfair treatment first hand. It did not stop me but made me angry and motivated to work harder to gain knowledge and to be better educated. I had great parents who believed in me, supported me and always lead me to believe that I could accomplish anything if I worked hard, thus I worked hard. The issue at hand, underachievement of Black students can be overcome, we need to find ways to equip them with confidence and hope. Educators like Barton & Coley (2010) and Wixom (2015) argue that the underachievement of Black students is of big concern that is what makes this research vital.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	10
INTRODUCTION.....	12
1.0 Definitions.....	12
1.1 Background of the study.....	13
1.2 Positionality.....	13
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives.....	14
1.4 Research Questions.....	15
1.5 Theoretical Basis/framework.....	15
1.6 Study Design.....	16
1.7 Ethical Considerations.....	16
1.8 Structure of the study.....	17
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
2.0 Introduction.....	19
2.1 Discussion around key terms in the study.....	22
2.1.1 Historical Background and Dimensions of Racism.....	22
2.1.2 Dimensions of Racism in Toronto, Canada.....	25
2.1.3 Contemporary Modes and Patterns of Racism.....	28
2.2 Black students' Experience in High Schools in Toronto.....	28
2.2.1 Teachers as a factor for Students experience.....	29
2.3 Transitioning to Higher Education in Toronto.....	32
2.4. Factors that Influence Educational Achievements starting from Self-efficacy.....	34
2.4.1 Racism and Racial Hierarchy.....	35
2.4.2 Micro aggression.....	35
2.4.3 Privilege.....	36
2.4.4 Academic achievement.....	36
2.4.5 Parental Socio-economic Status.....	37
2.4.6 Self-Efficacy.....	40
2.4.7 Family influence on self-efficacy.....	42
2.4.8 Influence of self-efficacy on performance.....	43
2.4.9 Self-efficacy and goal orientation.....	43

2.4.10	Peer Tutoring	43
2.4.11	Parental Support	44
2.4.12	Parental and Teachers expectation	45
2.4.13	Role Model	47
2.4.14	Interventions.....	48
2.4.15	Small Classes Size	51
2.4.16	Teacher Training	52
2.5	Chapter Summary	53
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS		54
3.0	Methodological Approach.....	54
3.1	Rationale Underpinning the Study.....	54
3.2	Exploratory Research Design	56
3.3	Theoretical Basis	57
3.4.	Rationale and Assumptions Underpinning Research Methodology	61
3.4.1.	Ethical Considerations.....	61
3.4.2.	Positionality and Test of Rigor	62
3.5	Study Objectives	63
3.5.1	Research Questions.....	64
3.6	Samples and Sampling Methods.....	64
3.6.1	Population	64
3.6.2	Sampling Technique	64
3.6.3	Sample Representative	65
3.6.4	Description of Study Participants.....	66
3.6.5	Dropout	66
3.6.6	Struggling Students	67
3.6.7	Transitioned Higher Education Students	68
3.6.8	Administrators and Teachers	68
3.6.9	Research Area	69
3.7	Methods and Instruments of Data Collection.....	69
3.7.1	Data Collection	71
3.8	Data analysis	71
3.9	Evaluation and Justification of Methodological Choices	74

3.10	Chapter Summary	75
DATA PRESENTATION.....		76
4.0	Introduction	76
4.1	Presentation of Key Themes	76
	Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes	78
4.2.1	Lack of Parental Support	80
4.2.2	Poor Teacher-student Communication.....	81
4.2.3	Negative Attitudes of Faculty and Administrative Officers	82
4.2.4	Lack of Positive Role Models.....	84
4.2.5	Absence of <i>Self-efficacy Skills</i>	86
4.2.6	Eurocentric Education System	87
4.2.7	Lack of Supportive Environment.....	89
4.2.8	Unequal Treatment by staff and administration	90
4.2.9	Lack of respect for Black Students	92
4.2.10	Low Expectation of <i>Teachers</i>	93
4.2.11	Poverty' <i>negative effect</i>	94
4.2.12	Racism and its impact to Black Students Academic Success	95
4.2.13	Systemic Racial Bias in Staff Recruitment and the Curriculum	95
4.3	Increase understanding of Black students' needs from an educator's perspective.....	98
4.3.1	Mentoring	99
4.3.2	Institutional Exposure and Environment.....	100
4.3.3	The Impact of School Experience.....	101
4.3.4	Advocacy and Self-Advocacy.....	101
4.3.5	Availability of Skills and Programs	103
4.4	Effective self-help strategies to improve Black students' experiences, increase their retention rate within Toronto Grade 11 and 12 and their transition to HE.	104
4.4.1	Support Groups and Communities.....	104
4.4.2	Time management.....	106
4.4.3	Mentoring	107
4.4.4	Counseling.....	108
4.5	Unique Data:	109
4.5.1	Negative Parental Pressure.....	109

4.6	Chapter Summary	110
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS		112
5.0	Introduction	112
5.1	Challenges of Black students:	112
5.2	Parental Factors	112
5.2.1	Forms of Parental Involvement:	113
5.2.2	Parental Role Modeling.....	113
5.2.3	Staff Recruitment and Racial Bias	114
5.2.4	Faculty and Administrative Staffs' Poor Attitude.....	114
5.2.5	Poor teacher-student communication.....	115
5.2.6	Teachers Low Expectation	115
5.2.7	Lack of Black teacher Models.....	115
5.2.8	Poverty	116
5.2.9	Eurocentric Education System	116
5.2.10	Racism	117
5.3	Understanding Black student's Needs and Supports'	117
5.3.1	Mentoring	118
5.3.2	Environmental Factors	118
5.3.3	Advocacy	119
5.3.4	Role of Extracurricular Activities.....	119
5.4	Improve Black students Experiences	119
5.4.1	Support Groups.....	120
5.4.2	Time Management Issues	120
5.4.3	Mentoring	121
5.4.4	Counseling.....	121
5.4.5	Self-advocacy	122
5.5	Chapter Summary	123
CONCLUSION.....		124
6.0	Introduction	124
6.1	Research Summary	124
6.2	Why my study matters.....	124
6.3	Examining my primary theoretical framework (Critical Race Theory, CRT).....	125

6.4	Research practitioners' recommendation:	126
6.5	Self-recommendations.....	127
6.6	Future Research Recommendation	127
6.7	Study limitation	128
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	130
	Byfield	134
	Appendix A – 1	158
	Aman_J Letter for VPREC Ethical Approval 21-02-19	158
	Appendix A – 2	161
	Authorization Letter High School.....	161
	APPENDIX A-3.....	162
	Authorization letter	162
	Appendix A – 4	163
	Authorization letter - Post Secondary.....	163
	Appendix B – 1	165
	Appendix C – 1	167
	Appendix C – 2	168
	Appendix C – 3	169
	Appendix C – 4	170
	Appendix C – 4	171

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Sincerely

Jamila Aman

Jamila Mahmoud Aman

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Definitions

This section defines the main Key words used in this study- Black students, Racism, Discrimination, Microaggressions, Under Achievement Gap, Struggling Students and Afrocentric Schools.

Black students: In this context Black students refers to students of African descent living in Canada either from Africa or from the Caribbean.

Racism: Racism is defined as “... the concept of racism has come to encompass a wide array of social phenomena, such as systemic inequality, institutional discrimination, internalize stereo types, and racial attitudes”. (Shiao & Woody, 2021, p.1)

Discrimination: Discrimination is treating a person or group of people unfairly or less than other people. In my context it is the unfair treatment of Black students.

Microaggressions: The everyday subtle and often automatic ‘put downs,’ insults and dehumanizing behavior toward Black people. In my research, I am including both intentional and unintentional microaggressions. (Sue, Capodilupo & Holder, 2008)

Underachievement Gap: Problems facing Black students from achieving their educational potential to transition to Higher Education (HE).

Struggling students: In this research struggling students are those with low academic grades in grades 11-12 schools and struggling to transition to HE. Struggling students are those who perform lower than average GPAs, or less likelihoods of going to academic stream courses. (Cohorts; Paul; & George, 2018).

Afrocentric Schools: Schools making efforts to integrate diverse perspectives, experiences, and history of people of African descent into the curriculum, instead of using the dominant Eurocentric perspective.

1.1 Background of the study

The city of Toronto, and Canada in general, is in a critical condition regarding retention of Black students in high school particularly in grades 11 and 12 and in supporting their transition to HE. The underachievement of Black students is frequently reported in daily news media (Saunders, 2016). Black students are not transitioning to HE institutions at an acceptable rate; only 50% of Black high school students proceed to HE (Comrie, 2013). There appears to be a general crisis about retention and transitioning of Black students to HE institutions, in Toronto and, perhaps, across Canada.

In Toronto, in the effort to increase the number high school graduates attending HE education, an Afrocentric School was introduced by Toronto District School Board (TDSB) where the teachers and the administrators are all Black (CBC, 2009). The introduction of the Afrocentric School raised questions among scholars in Toronto. How will students who have attended Afrocentric schools, be seamlessly integrated into HE studies, or does this call for Black-only colleges and universities? From my perspective, the Afrocentric School system does not solve the core issues behind the failure of Black students to transition to HE at comparable rates as other students, and to realize their goals to achieve a college diploma or university degree. However, the evidence indicates that the Afrocentric School is succeeding (Galabuzi (2008). Furthermore, Duncan (2012) states that, indeed, an Afrocentric curriculum would benefit all students, not only Black students. In my personal view, Afrocentric schools and curriculums may segregate Black students without solving persistent societal and institutional issues that require integration of these students into the wider community.

The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (2012) indicates that despite the high enrollment of African Americans in many American HE institutions, Black and Latino students lag behind white students in terms of performance and retention (Aud, Fox, & Ramani, 2010; Fletcher & Tienda, 2010). The issue of Black student underachievement is a Toronto, Canadian, and American issue, as well as global issue (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2009).

1.2 Positionality

As a Black educator, a mother of a Black student, and through my own lived experiences who attended Canadian high school grades 11 and 12, I witnessed firsthand Black student underachievement. Hence, I brought my personal concerns and insight into this research. My

research questions are influenced by these identities. My personal and professional biases impacted my research, but the biases are minimized by triangulating my research methods, my research findings, the literature, my personal lived experience, and reflection.

My own daughter wanted to be a Child Psychologist, she was told consistently that she is not a university material and a guidance counselor in her school pushed her to go the applied studies where it only leads to college not university. We objected and she continued in academic streams. When my daughter was in grade 11 for her practicum she wanted to be in an elementary school or a day care, however, the school Placement Coordinator and Guidance Counselors put my daughter without my consent in one of Toronto's Hotels in the banquet department. She hated it first day as she was serving tea and coffee. It was a constant battle with the school to remove her from the hotel placement to an environment of her choice I was told there are transferrable skills. While there could be some skills could be learned in a banquet hall, it defeats the purpose of having high school students do practicums. The essence of having the practicum is to help them learn about the particular field of their choice and whether they like it or not.

To overcome my personal biases, I used data triangulation. Data triangulation allows research transferability, dependability, conformability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity helps to bring more critical analysis. Reflexivity involves and increases the researcher awareness of the result on the course and outcomes of study based on the premise that 'knowledge cannot be separated from the knower' (Steedman, 1991). Continuous reflexivity contributes an alertness to the research process, as it will allow for continuous self-examination as a researcher. Thus, it will force attentiveness to the research relationship and the connection between seen, interpreting, and knowing.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

- (1) To understand the challenges of Black students in grades 11 and 12 and during their learning journey transitioning to HE.
- (2) To increase understanding of Black students' needs from an educator's perspective.
- (3) To improve Black students' experiences, increase their retention rate within Toronto Grade 11 and 12 and their transition to HE.

My research allowed understanding of problems/barriers faced by Black students in Toronto Grade 11 and 12 that impact their retention and success and their transition to HE. Thus, findings will help institutions to understand the challenges of Black students and the supports needed for students' success, increase retention rates and transition to HE in Toronto.

1.4 Research Questions

- (1) What are the reasons/barriers that hinder Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto?
- (2) What kind of support is needed by Black students to transition to HE, by teachers, parents and institutions like high schools and HE's?
- (3) What are effective self-help strategies are used by Black students for overcoming their barriers and to transition to HE?

According to Munroe (2021) "... data shows that Black students are disproportionately affected by being streamed to the applied track. Black students have also repeatedly described the ill effects of subtle forms of discrimination and anti-Blackness as part of their socializing in classes and hallways. Statistically Black students are treated less sympathetically than their white peers regarding their behaviors' and rule violations and they are therefore continuously over represented in school suspensions.

1.5 Theoretical Basis/framework

The theoretical framework for my research is *Critical Race Theory* (CRT) (Delgado & Stefanic, 1992.) I chose CRT as my research framework because much of my initial conversations with colleagues, my own lived experience, and literature, illustrate racism, discrimination and microaggressions being some of the issues affected Black students.

The followings are key reasons in support of my choice of CRT as my main theoretical framework:

1. May help to pursue inequity in education as a logical outcome of a system of achievement that build in competition.
2. It rejects superiority in the dominant narrative.
3. It rejects historical linkages between educational inequalities and racial operation.

4. It promotes and advocates meaningful outcome that improve racial inequities.

CRT is not without its criticisms. Gillborn (2006) states that CRT as not being an actual theory with a set of its own principles. However, I am convinced by Hernandez's (2016) claim that CRT explores race, ethnicity, racism, and power in student development.

CRT will be further discussed in the literature review section.

1.6 Study Design

I applied qualitative research methodology and design. The reason qualitative research method was used is for its flexibility and suitability to address sensitive issues. There are many advantages of qualitative method including getting deep and rich insight into the issues. (Griffin, 1994).

I conducted my research with three sponsoring institutions which are: a high school, a nonprofit organization and a higher institution.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

The research process ensured that the research questions avoid harm to the research participants and rights of participants were not violated in any shape or form.

No major risks or harm was anticipated in the research. Research questions were crafted to ensure the questions avoid harm to the research participants. It was indicated to the participant information sheet that participation in study was voluntary and that participants have the right not to answer certain questions that they deem inappropriate, and they can drop out of the study at any time with no consequences. However, counselling services will be available to participants in case of need during the study by the two institutions.

Minor discomfort was anticipated not more than that. Minor discomfort could be embarrassment of failure of dropping out of high school or struggling in relation to other students involved in the study. Some might not even experience minor discomfort as they will talk about skills that help them to overcome challenges. In addition, research questions were crafted to minimize the minimal risk that is minor discomfort.

Procedures were in place in case of any adverse effect:

1. Counselling – The high school, and the NGO have access to counselling service if necessary
2. Taking a break will minimize minor discomfort
3. Not to answer any question if they feel discomfort
4. Research participants were informed to withdraw if they feel discomfort at any time.
5. Participant anonymity – knowing no one will know about their business will comfort research participants.
6. Interviews were done in a safe place to allow research participants to feel comfortable.

Yes, the research risk and burdens compared with the knowledge acquired is reasonable. Only minor discomfort was anticipated. However, the benefits outweigh the discomfort by identifying issues that hinder Black students from success. Future Black students, teachers and administrators will obtain important insights with the anticipated knowledge acquired. The study will contribute to knowledge in the City of Toronto that will be of benefit to future Black students and their transition to HE.

1.8 Structure of the study

This research tried to understand the reasons and barriers behind a low retention and transition rate of Black students of African descent in Grade 11 and 12 and their transition to HE. The findings of the research will be of key importance to institutions in Toronto and perhaps nationally who are seeking progressive solutions to enhance retention and transition of Black students to HE.

Section one describes the content of the thesis. Section one outlines the motivation behind the research, research questions, literature review, study design, theoretical lens, methods and methodology used, data collection and data analysis, ethical considerations, plan for impact of the thesis, and research recommendation.

Section two is the literature review. In this section I reviewed the historical background of racism in education, the role of parental socio-economic status in students' educational achievement, self-efficacy, parental support, parental and teacher expectation, role model, interventions, the effect of peer tutoring, the impact of small class size, and teacher training in student achievement. Furthermore, four major sets of theories i.e., hereditary theory, cultural

deprivation theory, cultural advantage theory, cultural conflict theory and structural theory are reviewed.

Section three is the research methodology section. The section describes the research design, the study participants, sample and sampling technic, recruitment criteria, data collection instruments, data analysis method and study limitations.

Section four is the data presentation and analysis section. The Section discuss the key themes, such as parental factors, systemic racial bias, poor teacher-student communication, and etc.

Section five is the discussion. The section presents and discuss the themes identified in Section four, the data presentation and analysis.

Section six is the conclusion and recommendation. This Section summarizes and draws conclusion of the research findings, based on the findings and recommends areas to be addressed to mitigate the issues of Black students' experiences identified in Toronto high schools and their transition to HE.

The next Section is the Literature Review Section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This literature review conceptualizes racism, privilege and power and their effect on Black students' experiences in high school and their transition to post-secondary education. This is followed by historical facts on racism and privilege; parental socio-economic status; self-efficacy; parental support; parent's and teachers' expectations; role model; and the section summary. The knowledge about historical racism may help to explain why, in contemporary times, some individuals perceive racism as more prevalent than others and how certain individuals and groups are not capable of achieving their full potentials due to the overburden impact of it. Given that acts of racism permeate and intersect with many other facets of life, they have an impact on every variable related to selfhood, identity, academic achievement, self-actualization, and happiness. All the aforementioned is conceptualized by Critical Race Theory (CRT).

In this context, Black students refer to students of African descent living in Canada either from Africa or the Caribbean (Gordon, 2008).

The theory that was adopted for this study is Critical Race Theory (CRT) which Matsuda (1991) describe as progressive work. The author credits a part of its development to legal scholars of color who strive to develop a jurisprudence that explains the role of racism in American law and that works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. López, Erwin, Binder, and Chavez (2018) described CRT as a framework used to explain the achievement of social justice and examination of societal inequalities that became normalized and used in our daily lives (Allen, 2006). Another importance of the use of CRT is that it supports the researchers to embrace facts about racism, power and privilege, and have open and honest conversations to achieve equality (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008, as cited in López et al., 2018).

The advantages of CRT in social justice research are enormous because it is fast become the New Civil Rights Orthodoxy in North America (Delgado, 1992). Evidence abounds in the literature that Critical Race Theory is a framework that offers researchers, practitioners and policy-makers a conscious approach to understanding educational inequalities and structural racism to find solutions that lead to greater justice. Also, CRT does not merely document disparities, but

also proffers steps to address them Dixson and Rousseau (2018). In line with this, the arguments of Dixson and Rousseau (2018) justify the adoption of this theory in my study since the theory seeks to: 1) pursue inequity in education as the logical outcome of a system of achievement presided on competition; 2) examine the role of education policy and educational practices in the construction of racial inequity and the perpetuation of normative whiteness; 3) reject the dominant narrative about the inherent inferiority of people of color and the normative superiority of white people; 4) reject historicism and examine the historical linkages between contemporary educational inequity and historical patterns of racial oppression; 5) engage in intersectional analyses that recognize the ways that race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers (i.e., gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status); and 6) agitate and advocate meaningful outcomes that redress racial inequity.(pp. 121-131).

As such, this theory will be used to frame this research and the rationale for adopting it will be further explicated in the methodology section of the study. The dynamism of racism as it relates to other variables in this study further reinforces the need to discuss the related concepts as previous studies have established a pattern of the interconnection of racism and racial hierarchy, hierarchy, privilege, and academic achievement amongst others. Originally CRT was the field for graduate and legal study, however CRT has become a framework for academics. That why I chose CRT to examine educational inequalities in Canada for my study. CRT will be discussed in more details further in the following sections.

CRT is a collection of ideas rather than a single doctrine. CRT is frequently applied to understand how racism may or may not be shaping structures and systems. CRT claims that race is a social contract and does not reflect biological difference between people. CRT implies and examines the ways in which supremacy and racism penetrate systems. CRT is a framework useful for examining inequalities in structures, policies and laws. As well CRT stresses on providing remedies for different outcomes (National Association of School Psychologist, 2020c)

However, CRT according to NASP (2020c) does not:

1. Indicate one group of people or race inferior or superior.
2. Establish racism, discrimination and microaggressions against particular individuals.

3. Make individuals feel negative about their race.
4. Segregate students to imply one group to hate the other. Propagate or support a particular political ideology.

Moreover, Davis (2015) emphasizes the importance of caring conversation of diversity and inclusion with Black students and the support they need to receive from their parents. Parental involvement in school helps to meet students' needs with effective teaching of culturally relevant pedagogy, with teaching in a non-judgmental way, with respect for equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity (Brown & Cooper, 2011). In addition, Yosso (2005, p. 75), claims that "deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education." Incongruence between home and school culture adversely affects learner achievement and education efficiency. Deficient home or cultural background such as the lack of cognitive and linguistic skills and individual learners' aptitude and effort also play a role in determining educational achievement and education system efficiency.

Scholars claim that there is direct linkage between teacher positive behaviors, teacher high expectation and student success (Munoz & Chang, 2007). High expectations from teachers and parents increases student's retention rate (Jeynes, 2013; ONABSE, 2015). As an educator and student, I have witnessed that higher expectations from teachers and parents is a huge factor in student success. When I was young, mediocre marks were never an option for my father. I honestly can say, I worked hard not to disappoint my father in my elementary and secondary school years and that set the stage for me to transition to HE. As a professor, in the beginning of any course I was teaching, I shared my expectation in terms of performance, attendance and behaviors in class. Once expectations were set, high expectations led to my student's success. I have also experienced it with my daughter; once I set expectations, she always worked hard to meet my expectations. Higher expectation is important for all students however, setting higher expectation is more important for Black students as compounded barriers will further increase the under achievement. As Black students are impacted with the many barriers indicated in this study, as poverty, parental educational deficit and the following one absence or presence of role model.

The presence of a role model for Black students and parent connections with educators (teachers) and their children increase the degree of success of Black students (ONABSE, 2015; Jeynes, 2003). The ONABSE (2015) report highlights that in Toronto racialized individuals are 47% of Toronto population however, there are only 25% secondary school black teachers and only 24% elementary and kindergarten teachers. Racialized definition: “The concept of racialization refers to the processes by which a group of people is defined by race. Processes of racialization begin by attributing racial meaning to peoples identify and, in particular, as they relate to social structures and institutional systems, such as housing, employment, and education” (Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Society).

Louque and Latunde (2014) further argue that the interconnection of families, home environments, schools, and communities impact student’s success. Moreover, Backman and Secord (1968) argue that social class affects education in several ways. Social class often determines where families live and what type of school they attend. The teachers reflect certain social-class values and are apt to treat children from different social classes differently. Thus, educational non-achievement, wastage and inefficiency have social, cultural, and economic roots beyond the school system itself. Upper and middle-class parents generally have positive attitudes towards education. They have higher occupational aspirations for their children, and they provide them with a stimulating intellectual environment which has a strong positive bearing on educational achievement.

2.1 Discussion around key terms in the study

2.1.1 Historical Background and Dimensions of Racism

The history of humankind is replete with instances of racism and this makes it an essential part of the historical study of happenings in the contemporary time, since racism creates an understanding of how contemporary Western civilizations have been tainted by evolving views about race and racism. Blacks have been connected with slavery and inferior roles since the advent of Black slaves in Quebec in 1628, at a time when the race did not initially explain these roles. The underpinnings of racism in Canada and the entitlement conferred on the White race have further cemented their privileges in the country (Allan & Smylie 2015). In Nova Scotia, under Governor de Monts, the first Black person in Canada was recorded in 1605 working as an interpreter (Saney, 1998). Up until the time of slavery's abolition, servitude was predominantly a black situation due to British conquest and subsequent submission to white

authority. Slavery also gave rise to many of the stereotypes applied to blacks, such as the idea of heavy reliance, dearth of initiative, and employment in unskilled labor (Walker 1985). Slavery practices remained in place after Britain conquered Quebec in 1760.

Following the American Revolution, many loyalists travelled northward to what is now the Maritimes, Upper Canada, and Lower Canada, some of whom brought slaves (Whitfield et al. 2016). Lower Canada's slavery system was acknowledged, reinforced, and advanced by the British aristocracy. These political affiliations in the Legislative Assembly or in close relationships among slave owners show how white supremacy in a new system was upheld despite strongholds across racial, religious, and geographical groups. Even though liberal notions of a representative government would, in the 1830s, finally find their way into British North America (Ducharme 2014).

For instance, in substantially all of United States history, racial minorities have had difficulty accessing the country's main sources of economic opportunities due to specific government regulations. Furthermore, racism not only stems from ignorance and hatred, but supremacist policies have had a significant impact on the direction of the history of racist ideologies in the United States of America (Kendi 2017, 9). Furthermore, at a time, even basic things such as the decision on house allocation and the color code for houses in a neighborhood were greatly influenced by race (Walker 1985; Hillier 2005). Even though African Americans make all the appropriate decisions and took effective actions, their fortune was still significantly lower than that of white individuals. African Americans who have higher education typically had less revenue than white dropouts from high school (Hamilton et al. 2015; Darity et al. 2018). The period after the 2nd World War marked a great turn around in the discussion on racism as scholars and the political class realized the urgency and necessity of such discourse.

An eminent researcher, W.E.B. Du Bois, examined racism's political and economic underpinnings and its harmful effects on Western institutions and psyches rather than merely focusing on it as a social issue. Canada's reputation domestically and overseas is influenced by its dedication to racial harmony, acceptance, pluralism, and the protection of human rights (Nkrumah 2021). Racism in Canada is a sensitive and much-ignored topic of academic debate whereas it is a multifaceted activity that has plagued Canada ever since it was established and spread across the nation (Fonseca, 2020). According to Milan & Tran (2004), there are numerous

identifiable minority groups in Canada, many of whom have a longstanding history there. Racism can be traced down the history of Canada. Indigenous peoples were cruelly exploited by colonizers who used racial ideology as justification since they were seen as inferior and described as savages who needed to be subdued and made into a civilized society (Backhouse 1999:5). The 1493 Doctrine of Discovery gave Europeans the power to claim rights to any land if non-Christians lived there and to view the land as being "free to be taken," which was the first legitimate basis for the elimination and eviction of Indigenous peoples from their homes. This was the situation when Europeans first landed on Turtle Island, now known as North America, and said that they were the rightful owners of Indigenous lands (FemNetNorth 2016).

There are underlying moral and ego elements in both contemporary narrative and historical debate on slavery. A different lens by which one can examine one's system is very necessary for the formation of resources and the sense of moral standing (Brown 2006). It is claimed that although contemporary Canadians view the country as one that has always upheld equal rights for all, however, the Indian Act of 1876 and later legislation, agreements, pacts, and accords were means through which the Canadian government incorporated racism in the country's dealings with its Aboriginal Peoples, which persists to this day (Henry et. al. 1995). History shows that segregation has existed since the advent of black Canadians in 1783 and is neither novel nor contemporary nor a consequence of population growth, economic constraints, or cultural disputes. Rather, blacks were, however, associated with slavery and inferior roles in society, as opposed to other racially discriminated groups in Olden Days Canada, such as Jews, Japanese, Native Indians, Chinese, and South Asians, who were marginalized based on language barriers, clothing, family dynamics, and faith. (Walker 1985). In the dearth of an environment ideal for agricultural production, Canadian slavery is perpetually dismissed as "benign" or "internal." All social classes in New France/Lower Canada including the affluent, the working class, and the clergy owned slaves, which included both African and indigenous people, (Gismondi 2016).

Across the world, the rise and fall of "overtly racist regimes" in the 20th century with remnants of apartheid South Africa marked the turning point in racism history (Fredrickson 2015). Despite constitutional amendments that had made African Americans equal citizens, the implementation of segregation laws and restrictions on their right to vote caused them to be treated as socially deprived and downtrodden citizens in the American South. Lynching was justified by

extreme racist propaganda that portrayed black men as ravenous monsters with a thirst for white women. By the early 20th century, these extrajudicial executions were more frequently reserved for black people who were charged with crimes against the color line and finally put to death by torture. In the South, a racist administration prohibited marriage and sexual connections between white people and anyone of obvious African descent through state legislation (Fredrickson 2015).

Due to some white people's frustration that people of color were usurping their legitimate places and superior status, there were numerous violent racist attacks in many parts of Canada in the mid-1970s. According to Henry and Tator (1994), multicultural policies and programs that promote diversity frequently conceal institutional and structural inequity in Canadian democratic structures. As a result, diversity falls short of eradicating racism's ingrained issues. In 2001, the Toronto census metropolitan area (CMA), one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse urban areas in the world, was home to almost half (47%) of Canada's Black population (Milan & Tran 2004). The research on health disparities in Canada indicates that social exclusion is widespread and represents the legacy of prior racial discrimination as well as the reality of ongoing discrimination, so racism's consequences are felt in every aspect of life (OHCHR, 2003).

2.1.2 Dimensions of Racism in Toronto, Canada

Toronto, Canada's largest metropolis, aspires to maintain its global city status and doubles as the country's financial headquarters (Kern, 2005). The dimensions of racism have been either overt or covert, individual or institutional. Oladipupo and Oyekunle (2022) contend that institutional racism tends to refer to the structured discriminatory practices implied in policies or legal provisions and its practical application, such as the prosecution and judicial systems, employment process, housing etc., whereas individual racism refers to the particular act of racism by an individual person and demonstrates the person's racist ideologies, assumptions, and behavioral patterns.

Individual Racism

The way that individuals speak about, view, recognize, and describe race has evolved as a result of the surge in migration, and antiracism movements on a global basis. Researchers viewed racism as primarily an individual issue of observable hatred that might be lessened via intercultural engagement (Allport, 1954). Individual racism refers to how personal preconceptions, biases, and discriminatory practices work together to encourage and maintain inequalities among people from various groups. Individual racism and racial bias are intimately related, according to Jones (1997). Contemporary sociology's shift to viewing racism as predominantly a manifestation of elevated structures, such as social practices, power structures, and institutions, is one significant divergence from past studies. Theories of systematic racism give analytical precedence to the generally accepted policies, policies, and conventions of groups, systems, and institutions rather than using individual racism to describe racial disparities.

Institutional Racism

Stokely and Hamilton (1967) identified institutional racism as both particular and general expressions of racial supremacy, oppression, deprivation, and inequality in organizational structures and environments, such as the workplace or the nation. Even while it can be overt, institutional racism is most often used to describe situations of uneven power when societies or institutions favor one class over another without consciously harboring racist beliefs. One's conscious and unconscious bias, which can be exhibited in both open and covert ways, can lead to racial discrimination (Brigham 1993). One of the many factors that systematically hinder and constrain certain populations in the city of Toronto is the accessibility of housing. Racialization is a lingering aspect of house prices and inequality that goes beyond merely income (Leon & Iveniuk, 2021). Although there is a lack of consistency in the research on institutional racism, it is generally agreed that morphological and structural processes rather than individual acts offer more insightful justifications for current racial disparities. The conceptual framework of segregated welfare systems put out by Bonilla-Silva (1997) highlights that racial hierarchy shapes socio-political and economic systems and how non - racist beliefs sustains these institutions.

Overt Racism

Overt racism is defined as racial discrimination that is visible, audible, and operates as unrepentant manifestations of ethnocentrism and systemic racism. White supremacy historically created overt racism. Overt racism, which still exists across several shapes and manifestations in today's culture, is defined as the employment of overwhelmingly negative or purposely destructive mentalities, concepts, metaphors, and practices targeted at a particular racial group or groups designated non-white or colored. In both micro and macro-level societal structures, overt racism happens in personal and social interactions, social organizations, countries, and foreign affairs. The idea that Caucasians were physiologically and culturally better than other races and had a natural potential to develop and enforce western civilization on others was the basis for overt racism before World War II (Horsman 1981; MacDougall 1982). However, because of anti-racism legislation and regulations after World War II, overt racism has become less acceptable in Western nations such as Canada (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010; Fleras 2017).

Elias (2015) considers overt racism as the deliberate and/or explicitly detrimental actions or views toward a minority group or person due to the color of that person's skin. It is the deliberate endorsement of racist opinions and ideas, which ultimately manifests in the actions and words of adherents. It promotes a supremacist ideology that involves negative attitudes, opinions, and disparaging behaviors toward those who belong to racial groups who are deemed inferior. This, however, encompasses groups, societies, and persons from other cultures rather than being practiced and directed at only individuals. Prejudiced emotions are believed to create a comparable motive drive, including some of the overt displays of prejudice that we have already covered. This need to express prejudice does not necessarily result in the overt use of racial epithets, the commission of hate crimes, or the usage of racist online content. Instead, the impulse to display prejudice is circumvented by psychological constraints to conceal prejudice (such as social norms that forbid it) as well as explanations (such as stereotype-endorsing beliefs, perceived dangers) that allow for the expression of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). In other words, when those who harbor prejudices believe that they can get away with expressing them, prejudice is more likely to be exhibited outwardly.

The environment's overt racialization perpetuates anxiety and leads to a cycle of soaring routine systemic oppression. Hence, overtly racial profiling, which primarily targets young

Black men residing in Toronto environment, appears to make them victims of prison (Crichlow 2014). Overt racism is widely condemned and not accepted in Canadian discourse. However, racism still exists and it indicates that racism is present in social and educational contexts but in a muted manner. These subtle insults hurled at persons of color typically result from an emotional response or unintentional behavior. Slavery continues to have an effect on White attitudes about Black people in addition to having an effect on the mental health and financial well-being of Black people. Because of slavery, many White people still harbor biases towards Black people, which occasionally exhibit themselves in overt acts of animosity. Blacks' positive attributes of athleticism and musical talent, as well as their bad preconceptions of being lazy and dumb, are likely stemmed from notions about Blacks that were common during the era of slavery (Czopp, 2008; Saucier, 2017).

It has occasionally been said that overt displays of racism are obsolete implying that society has advanced past them. Societal social scientists contend that racism has developed into covert and subtle forms as a result of social norms that promote egalitarian views and condemn overt displays of prejudice (Saucier, 2017).

2.1.3 Contemporary Modes and Patterns of Racism

The expression of racism in recent times has been surreptitious even though it is felt by victims. Racial discrimination and its expressions continue to marginalize and dehumanize targets in today's society in many ways, which are regrettable and unsettling. Thus, the manifestation of racism is felt in various forms and particularly played out in particular patterns. Saucier (2017) identifies the following as patterns of the expressions of covert racism: hate groups, hate crimes, police violence, dehumanization, sexualization, racism in language and humor and cyber racism.

2.2 Black students' Experience in High Schools in Toronto

Black pupils understand that achieving high academic standing needs more than just academic excellence; it also necessitates activities that reflect indicators of whiteness. By rejecting success indicators classified as White, they contribute to their own school failure, thereby making them appear inferior (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Color-blind curriculum and predominant white teachers are likely underprivileged faced by racially discriminated against Indigenous students and the reason for their lower High school graduation rate, which was around half that of non-Indigenous pupils (Orlowski 2008) whereas the academic achievement of students is heavily

influenced by the expectations of their teachers (Dunne and Gazeley 2008). Thus, Classroom teachers unconsciously make decisions that have the impact of disguising and reinforcing social and economic inequalities (Orlowski & Cottrell 2019).

Racism is largely responsible for Black children's educational underperformance, according to (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder's (2008) definition of racism is that it is "...a complex ideology composed of beliefs in racial superiority and inferiority and is enacted through individual behaviors and institutional and societal policies and practices." (p. 329) Racial Hierarchy (RH) is therefore a socioeconomic theory that prioritizes some races over others, giving them more benefit and influence in society and this has made societal chances less fair (Racial Hierarchy in America, 2011). Chadha (2020) argues that in order to properly teach students about Black history, culture, and experience, teachers usually lack the subject-matter expertise, lived experience, and knowledge required. Teachers' racism leaves Black students' lived experiences out and untreated when it comes to assessment, methodology, and teaching practices.

Students and some staff regularly refer to certain schools in derogatory and racist ways while Black adolescents, especially Black males, get harsher, more recurrent penalties since they are frequently considered as a danger to the education of their White colleagues (Maynard, 2017). In Toronto in the year 2016, 50% of all dismissals were of black pupils (Chadha et al. 2020). Second-generation segregation is the process of excluding Black students from STEM fields and driving them into non-academic paths (Maynard, 2017). From 2006 through 2011, barely 69% of Black students in Toronto finished high school, opposed to 84% of White students. Just 42% of Black kids applied to higher institutions, compared to over 60% of non-Black pupils (Chadha et al., 2020).

2.2.1 Teachers as a factor for Students experience

There are suggestions that teachers of color experience racism differently than White teachers do, as well as disparities in how they believe racism must be addressed. Because of their cultural identities, teachers of color frequently endure significant workplace stress, which negatively affects their students' academic achievement. Also, Racism, especially anti-black racism, is endemic at the board, administrative levels, and in schools, claims the Peel District School Board (Chadha, Herbert, and Shawn, 2020). According to Hoyt's (2012) argument, racism and oppression require both prejudice and power for a dominating group to exist, which is

sometimes exercised by teachers. Call-Cummings and Martinez (2017) asserted that it was clear that teachers ignored discriminatory behavior even when it was not explicitly racist. It was possible that this made it simpler to justify the behavior by raising questions about the victims' sincerity of feelings.

Although racism today is more subtle, its consequences on its victims do not disappear. As long as members of minority groups are underrepresented in leadership positions and their successes are minimized, misinterpreted, or significantly reduced, racial discrimination will continue. The education of teacher candidates in training programs and support for doing so must evolve. Racial issues require more than just lip service. Despite how frightening these concerns may be, teachers of color should be prepared to deal with prejudice and discrimination when they show up in the workplace. Both instructors and teachers of color should be motivated to improve as practitioners and learn from their errors.

To keep their own biases out of the classroom, teachers of color must be aware of their positionality when discussing racism with their students. Kholi (2014) investigated the "fluid" (p. 384) idea and traits of internalized racism. Teachers of color may create internalized racism in their students as a result of their own experiences with oppressive systems. Because internalized racism is a result of restrictive interactions, teachers may unknowingly instill it in their students. For school boards, hiring more teachers of color might seem like a start in the right direction, but it is not enough to benefit students.

The necessity for school governing bodies and academic institutions to create opportunities for debates and adjustments in policy and curriculum to be more inclusive and equitable was explored by Philip et al. (2017). They also discussed the need for assistance for teachers of color. Varghese, Daniels, and Park (2019) contributed to this debate by underlining the value of building racial forums where widespread consequences of White supremacy in schools would be discussed. The discussion of Whiteness as property and its interplay with White privilege in Vaught and Castagno's (2008) work emphasizes the necessity for structural and systemic reforms to enable transformation and eliminate racist policies and practices at all educational levels through informed teachers.

The use of White privilege to support and maintain racist attitudes is demonstrated by Solomona's (2005) concept of "ideological incongruence" , in which White teachers mistakenly think that employment fairness policies are the reason colored teachers are employed. This has an adverse effect on how teachers of color are treated and how their self-worth is undermined in the working place and among their White coworkers, which eventually has an adverse consequence on children learning.

Students should get fair and equitable treatment throughout their academic pursuits. The efficacy of training when it is framed in culturally pertinent models was examined by Ledesma and Calderon (2015). Due to their identities, teachers of color are usually required to develop or enforce culturally sensitive education. The capacity of instructors of color to serve as role models and create cultural links to learn for students of color is discussed by Villegas and Irvine (2010). The demands of teachers of color to be encouraged by their employers, colleagues, and by the inclusion of school curriculum that is pertinent to many different groups in society are discussed in more detail by Philip et al. (2017).

If teachers are not trained to incorporate inclusive and diverse strategies into their teaching, hiring teachers of color is not the alternative. According to Pizarro & Kohli (2020), because of their presumptive connectedness with the cultural traditions of the victims, it frequently falls to teachers of color to address anti-racist behavior or provide anti-racist teaching. Teachers of color may be negatively impacted by a dearth of diversity in management and teaching because they are often the go-to people for questions about pupils of color. This could set a hazardous precedent because being a person of color does not automatically make one an expert on racial issues in the classroom.

According to Villegas and Irvine (2010), children of color often gain from engaging with teachers of color, which nonetheless necessarily mean that it is due to a similar racial or cultural background. To ensure the representation of teachers of color and, by extrapolation, pupils of color, change must take place at all levels. To guarantee that instruction is contemporary and appropriate to the population, policy changes and curriculum modifications are required. The outcome of a study by Shalini (2021) reveals that teachers of color are impacted by racism in a variety of ways, such as failing to identify racism in themselves, modifying their personalities to fit in with their White counterparts, feeling extreme anxiety in their chosen profession, realizing

the need for structural change in education, feeling secured when racism is overt, feeling exempted by White teachers, and feeling the pressure to represent the cultures of racial minorities.

When these factors are taken into account together, teachers of color experience career-related stress in addition to the demands of their positions. White educators may not be aware of the effects of their ignorance or the need to take into account that they are unwittingly influencing how teachers of color manage the difficulties of the teaching profession, they are nonetheless affecting the perception and their influence on students of race who look up to them for mentorship and inspiration for their academic pursuit.

2.3 Transitioning to Higher Education in Toronto

Inclusion, equity, and diversity not only improve postsecondary education, but they are also necessary for excellence. Inclusive excellence is a prime example of this. Excellence encompasses a university's or college's capacity to teach and innovate, to be aware of diversity and responsiveness in the face of crises, to foster profound inquiry through critical, civil dialogues across heterogeneity, and to support advancement. Compared to the general population, black people in their prime working years (ages 25 to 54) are more prone to have a college education than a university degree. Numerous studies have shown that prejudice may have a variety of unfavorable effects on both native and overseas pupils. For instance, prejudice has been linked to psychological problems (Pieterse & Carter, 2010) despite the fact that racism and academic satisfaction have already been linked negatively (Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010), little is known about the relationship between racism and higher education students' academic performance. (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Also, Black people born outside of Canada have a substantially lower likelihood of having a university education than other foreign-born people born outside of Canada and are between 25 and 54 years old. Black people have a somewhat lower likelihood of being employed, lower employment wages, and higher unemployment rates than all 25 to 54-year-olds, especially those who were born in Canada (Milan & Tran 2004).

Regardless of their academic standing, black high school students are frequently discouraged from attending college and encouraged to pursue vocational training instead (Maynard, 2017). Universities continue to be elitist, largely White dominated across Canada. Only 60% of Black teenagers in Canada said they believed getting a degree or post graduate education was feasible. (Statistics Canada, 2020). There are still obstacles to joining and

continuing in college programs for students whose aspirations for higher education were not dashed by a dysfunctional, harsh public education system (Cameron & Jefferies, 2021). Black students, who live in low-income homes, are handicapped by the geometrically growing cost of tuition across Canada and the persistent emphasis on merit-based enrollment (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Racial stereotypes, racial insults, threats, and even verbal abuse from academics are manifestations of anti-Blackness that students report experiencing on campuses. Most of this is frequently disregarded by the authorities (Bell et al., 2020). A striking reflection of the institution's historical roots may be seen in the structures and sculptures on campus that glorify slave owners and white supremacists (Cameron & Jefferies, 2021). Graduate students who have not been rejected claim experiencing subtle racism from institutions that espouse liberalism, including difficulties in finding supervisors, being dissuaded from engaging in groundbreaking research, and being subjected to higher academic requirements and expectations than White students (Bell et al., 2020).

The place of academics cannot be overemphasized in determining the experience of learners. Despite having a high degree of academic accomplishment, Black academics earn less money than their White counterparts and are significantly likely not to be appointed and granted tenure (Henry et al., 2017). The few marginalized faculty members in a department are usually asked to work on diversity committees and admissions boards in addition to their regular duties of teaching and research. Because of this, black faculty are underpaid for their work and devote less to research and publication, which is still an important measure of academic success and productivity. Additionally, black faculty are responsible for supervising more students and participate in unpaid and exhausting community advocacy and initiatives to benefit the Black community (Gewin, 2020). Higher education institutions are essential in eradicating anti-Black racial prejudice in addition to fully acknowledging the diversity of identities because they support cutting-edge research, creative problem-solving, and passionate knowledge dissemination that enhance genuine equality, fundamental human rights, and effectiveness (Blackett, 2021).

It is critical that immediate, comprehensive, and scientific proof laden struggles and researches increase Black students' access to high-quality learning for the benefit of the upcoming generation of learners (Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994) The inclusion of

Black history in the core history curriculum, which would cover more than just slavery but also Black Canadian heroes instead of American icons like Martin Luther King Jr. and Harriet Tubman, would give the curriculum a truly global perspective and address complaints from students of all races that the PDSB's diversity is not reflected (Chadha et al. 2020).

2.4. Factors that Influence Educational Achievements starting from Self-efficacy

Educational achievement is influenced by *self-efficacy*, availability of role models, parental literacy deficit, parental connection with teachers and the school, home environment and poverty which are also influenced by systemic racism (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) argues that self-efficacy is a factor in student success. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in their own capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance achievement Bandura (1997) also describes that self-efficacy reflects one's confidence in their ability to exert control over their behavior, motivation, and social environment. For example, as a Black student, I faced discrimination, but I felt I overcome and succeeded thanks to self-efficacy obtained from a positive role model in my father. Self-confidence is required from Black students to persevere and succeed in high school grades 11 and 12 and transition to HE. Self-efficacy will be discussed further in more details in section 2.4.6.

Moreover, Davis (2015) emphasizes the importance of caring conversation of diversity and inclusion with Black students and the support they need to receive from their parents. Parental involvement in school helps to meet students' needs with effective teaching of culturally relevant pedagogy, with teaching in a non-judgmental way, with respect for equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity (Brown & Cooper, 2011). In addition, Yosso (2005, p. 75), claims that "deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education." Incongruence between home and school culture adversely affects learner achievement and education efficiency. Deficient home or cultural background such as the lack of cognitive and linguistic skills and individual learners' aptitude and effort also play a role in determining educational achievement and education system efficiency.

2.4.1 Racism and Racial Hierarchy

Most of the Black students' underachievement in education is attributed to racism (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Racism, according to Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, (2008), is defined "... as a complex ideology composed of beliefs in racial superiority and inferiority and is enacted through individual behaviors and institutional and societal policies and practices". (p. 329) Moreover, Racial Hierarchy (RH) is a social concept that places some races above others, giving them more power and advantage in society. RH has created unequal opportunities in society (Racial Hierarchy in America, 2011). Because of racism many Black students experience discrimination in schools. Discrimination is "an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, disability, genetic characteristics, a conviction for which a pardon has been or recorded suspended" (Canadian Human Rights Commission, ND). One of the ways racism is manifested is through microaggressions.

2.4.2 Micro aggression

Micro aggression is defined as the everyday subtle and often automatic 'put downs,' insults and dehumanizing behavior toward Black students. In my research, micro aggression can be intentional and unintentional. (Sue, Capodilupo & Holder, 2008). Racial micro aggression results are significant psychological suffering for Black people. Racial microaggressions according to Sue et. al. (2008) "... result in high degree of stress for Blacks because of denigrating messages: "You do not belong," "You are abnormal," "You are intellectually inferior," "You cannot be trusted," and "You are all the same." Feelings of powerlessness, invisibility, forced compliance and loss of integrity, and pressure to represent one's group are some of the consequences" (pp. 329–336). Discussing about microaggressions in this study is important because microaggressions impacts Black student achievement as indicated by Sue et. Al (2008) and NASP (2009) it results in Black students stress and the stress causes dropping out or struggling in high school and it hinders Black students from transitioning to HE.

Another key issue in this study is about how discrimination affects Black student's academic achievement. Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the

extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environment (Gillies, 2008).

Racism and discrimination are factors that contribute to academic underachievement of Black students (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Race, privilege, and power, affects educational achievement differently. Gillies (2008) a British philosopher and historian of mathematics argues that “educational underachievement means a failure to achieve potential, particularly in terms of specific educational outcomes”. In this study underachievement means a failure to achieve potential, particularly in terms of specific educational outcomes. On the other hand, academic achievement or “Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals. Discrimination “.... refers then to inappropriate treatment of people because of their actual or perceived group membership and may include both overt and covert behaviors, including micro aggressions, or indirect or subtle behaviors (e.g., comments) that reflect negative attitudes or beliefs about a minority group” (NASP, p.1, 2009).

2.4.3 Privilege

Privilege, on the other side and according to NASP (2016) is considered as what society grants one unearned advantages based on identity factors like race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, nationality, ability or disability and socio economic class. Privilege is inextricably linked to oppression, because, while systems, social norms, and biases are advantages for some people, there are others who are disadvantaged by those same systems, norms, and biases. Importantly, privilege, like oppression, is intersectional. However I would like to discuss more in depth at this stage the role and meaning of academic achievement in this study

2.4.4 Academic achievement

Hattie (2009) and Spinath (2012) explain academic achievement in a comprehensive and complex systems perspective that includes the factors of individual determination to succeed, home environment, and school support system. According to Kopovie (2014), academic achievement is attained by a level of interest in learning and a positive attitude towards education which is lacking in Black students due to the systemic inequality in the education system. Students’ academic achievement at senior secondary school are influenced by many factors including students’ attitude toward school, interest in learning, study habits, attribution, self-

efficacy and intelligence. According to Firouznia, Yousefi, and Ghassemi (2009) there is a strong relationship between academic motivation and academic achievement. Reeve (2014) posits that academic motivation is more important than intelligence and that motivation is of grave importance to achieve academic achievement. Those with high motivation are likely to achieve higher academic performance. Consistent with Kpolvie (2014), Udoh (2005) added that maintaining academic attainment is linked to educational, psychological and sociological connotations.

2.4.5 Parental Socio-economic Status

Backman and Secord (1968) indicate that social class affects education in several ways. Social class normally determines where families live and what type of school they attend. The teachers reflect certain social-class values and are apt to treat children from different social classes differently. Thus, educational non-achievement, wastage and inefficiency seem to have social, cultural, and economic roots beyond the school system itself. Upper and middle-class parents generally have positive attitudes towards education. Upper class families have higher occupational aspirations for their children, and they provide them with a stimulating intellectual environment which has a strong positive bearing on educational achievement. Cheng and Peterson (2018) argue that there is a great correlation between parents earned income and student performance. Thus, Cheng and Peterson (2018) suggest that the less the parental income the lower the student performs.

Ahmed and Khan (2012) and Ahmad and Anwar (2013) claim that there is tremendous correlation between parental socioeconomic circumstances and academic achievements of students in secondary school. The authors reached a conclusion that a great number of students whose parents have come from affluent families achieved academic success. In comparison, students whose parents came from not well to do families achieved low academic results. Ahmed and Khan (2012) and Ahmad and Anwar (2013) added that students whose parents are of high educational background have increased chance in participating in transitioning to post-secondary education. Their claim was supported by Otula (2007) claiming that education is a partnership of parents, teachers and students and parental role in academic achievement is vital. The Canadian Journal of Sociology (2009) claimed that “Researchers working within the human capital framework assert that highly educated parents have the financial and nonmonetary resources to

invest in their children's abilities early on, including access to information for opportunities and potential downsides to the surrounding environment" (p. 5).

Shizha (2016) claims that "the foundations of education and schooling in Canada are based on Eurocentric views, ways of knowing, cultural capital, and pedagogical practices. Canada is regarded as an open and tolerant multicultural society that is receptive of cultural differences. However, when it comes to education and schooling, multiculturalism becomes contentious and questionable" (p. 2). The Canadian Public school curriculum is based on European based curriculum and is biased towards the ideology of the mainstream Anglo-Canadian culture while disregarding minority cultures. Among the marginalized cultures are the African and Caribbean cultures and their orientation. Years of research have confirmed African and Caribbean students' struggle in school thus, their transition to post-secondary is hindered (James, 2012 & Shizkha, 2016).

As a result of these dominant Anglo-Canadian and Eurocentric curriculum and worldview, Black students are pushed out of the system. ACLU (2008) explain that the following factors contribute to education pushout of Black students (1) poor resources (2) overcrowded schools (3) excessive extreme suspension and expulsions (4) inadequate school support (5) low expectations (6) giving more weight to testing (7) absence of emotional and physical safety (8) limited interventions that does not respond to students individualized needs (9) absence of fair college preparation (10) not accommodating students cultural and linguistic needs.

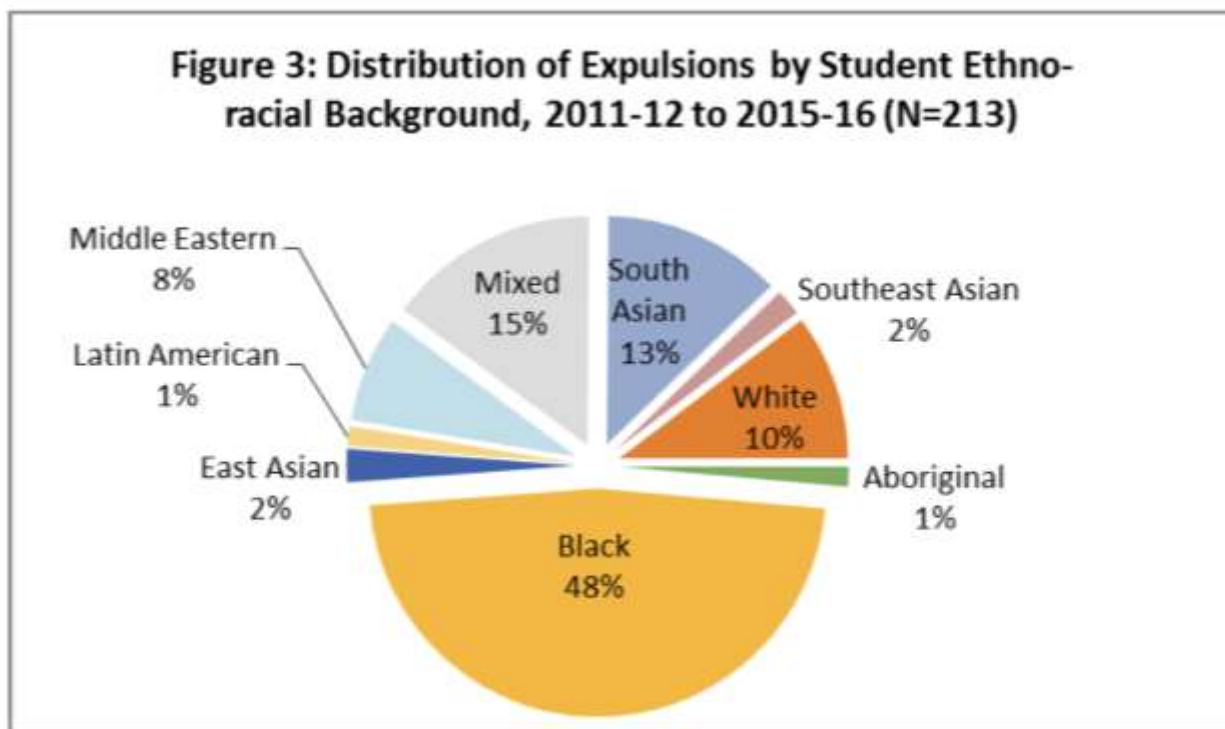
In addition, according to Gleason & Dynarski, (2002) there are numerous risk factors that in combination with each other raise the probability of youth leaving high school early. These factors fall into four broad themes related to *individuals* (e.g., truancy, poor school attitude), *families* (e.g., low-income, lack of parental involvement), *schools* (e.g., negative school climate, low expectations), and *communities* (e.g., high crime, lack of community support for schools), according to the Center for Mental Health in Schools (UCLA, 2007). Some scholars claim that Black students disengage from academic environment to cope with racism. Numerous low-income and vulnerable, racialized students are faced with bias, harassment, intentional and subtle

discrimination within the schools. And the absence of inclusive, equitable and fair treatments contributes to school dropouts (ACLU, 2008).

In general, Black students are in a critical condition regarding retention in high school, particularly in grades 11 and 12 and their transition to HE. Black students are not transitioning to HE institutions at an acceptable rate; only 50% of Black high school students proceed to HE (Comrie, 2013). There appears to be a general crisis regarding retention and transitioning of Black students to HE institutions, in Toronto and, perhaps, across Canada. In an effort to increase Black student's retention and increase achievement gap, Toronto District School Board (TDSB) developed an "Urban Diversity Strategy" to "increase the secondary school graduation rate for all demographic groups to a minimum of 85% in five years." (Toronto District School Board, 2008, p. 2).

According to a study commission by Toronto School Board (2017) data collected between 2011–2016 confirms that Black students represent 12% of the TDSB high school population. Despite the fact that Black students represent 12% of high school population the rate of expulsions for Black students is 48%. All races combined in Toronto District School Board represent 88% and the rate of expulsion is 52%. (*Refer to graph below*)

Figure #1 Distribution of Expulsions by Student Ethno Racial Background



Toronto District School Board. (2017, April). Expulsion decision-making process and expelled students' transition experience in the Toronto District School Board's caring and safe schools programs and their graduation outcomes. Toronto: Toronto District School Board, Research and Information Services.

The preceding sections have considered studies that have established that racism permeates every aspect of the victim's life. It is imperative to consider, at this point that, the effects of racism and prejudice in schools, racial makeup of schools, financial status inequalities, and family historical factors all have a role in the relationship between race and academic success. The following section addresses self-efficacy as it related to academic achievement.

2.4.6 Self-Efficacy

Akhtar (2008) claims that over-all self-efficacy refers to a general confidence in our capability to thrive, but there are many more definite forms of self-efficacy too including academic, parenting and sports. In addition, LaMorte (2016) defines self-efficacy as the

individual's self-confidence in his or her capacity to achieve his or her goals and objectives. Bandura (1997) indicated that self-efficacy is a major factor in student success. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in their own ability to perform in higher standard and achieve educational or any goals. Bandura (1997) contends that self-efficacy affects one's confidence in his/her capacity to self-regulate over their behavior, motivation, and social environment.

Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy "as one of the most influential determinants of motivation and action from a person's beliefs about their ability. Self-efficacy is essentially a student's confidence to perform a task (or perceived competence), and these beliefs have been directly linked to academic performance (see Bandura1997). Self-efficacy beliefs aid in shaping the motivational level of a student, which in turn, translates into specific actions a student makes" cited in (Fong & Krause, 2014 pp. 250-251).

Chohan (2010) claims that self-efficacy is both a motivational to help student cope with stressful conditions and help them to succeed and achieve higher standard. Cohan (2010) claim was supported by Margolis and McCabe (2006) that self-efficacy is a reason for struggling students to become more committed and teachers that encourage self-efficacy among their students achieve steady progress. Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001), underline that self-efficacy results in higher academic performance, more effective personal growth, better in dealing with stress, enhanced health and higher overall satisfaction and higher academic achievement and school retention. Self-efficacy is indispensable to student's confidence to perform a task (or perceived competence), and these beliefs have been directly linked to academic performance (Bandura1997). Self-efficacy beliefs support in shaping the motivational level of a student, which in turn, translates into specific actions a student makes. On the other hand, low self-efficacy results in poor academic performance, less effective personal adjustment, stress and anxiety and school drop-out. Moreover, low self-efficacy leads to low motivation, less self-discipline and low perseverance (Fong & Krause, 2014 pp. 250-251).

Numerous research studies on self-efficacy clarify why students underachieve: for example, personality, self-conceptual, motivational, self-regulatory, social, and environmental issues (Fong et al. 2012). Bandura (1997) suggested four bases that form self-efficacy, i.e. (1) mastery experiences, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) social persuasions, and (4) physiological and affective states.

According to Yaman Köseoğlu (2015), students with high self-efficacy have high academic performance because they resort to effort regulation and thrive, perform well academically because they would be self-motivated. Furthermore, students with high self-efficacy are better able to control their natural instincts when studying difficult material or when they are distracted. Moreover, students with high efficacy when under stress, maintain their self-discipline, uphold their motivation, and adjust their efforts under taxing circumstances. Thus, a high self-efficacy apparently fosters the ability to exert self-control and perseverance. Hence, self-efficacy may be declared as a critical intrinsic source that provides self-disciplined behavior which enables students to remain focused while fulfilling their academic obligations. The next section discusses family influence on self-efficacy (Fong & Krause, 2014).

2.4.7 Family influence on self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) posited that family relationships are the primary source of the initial development of self-efficacy. He suggested that children must acquire awareness of their increasing capabilities across widening areas of function. Parents by default are the primary socializers of children, as they are models of behavior, deliver verbal reinforcements, and help children formulate the ideology of the self. As agents of socialization, parents expose children to social norms, values, and expectations. In line with selection processes, Bandura (1997) suggested parents, guide activities to which children are exposed. Interactions within the family expand the child's repertoire of skills and move the child into a readiness to engage in an increasingly larger social atmosphere. Interestingly, a relationship with parents has been correlated with positive peer relationships in adolescents with increased family support, increasing the likelihood of adolescents reporting peer acceptance (Dekovic & Meeus, 1997).

The study indicated that those students whose parents had higher expectations for their children's academic achievement performed better from the beginning of their academic career and accelerated faster in their academic progress during the transition period of middle to high grades. The children also seek emotional support from parents when they face some difficulty (Fong & Krause, 2014). Given the importance of self-efficacy, it has a huge consequence on academic success. The next section, therefore, deals with the influence of self-efficacy on performance.

2.4.8 Influence of self-efficacy on performance

Bandura (1997) asserts that self-efficacy is a major success factor on student performance. Believing in your own abilities to perform higher has a great impact on academic performance (Cherry, 2017). This claim of Cherry (2017) and Bandura (1997) was also supported by Aktar (2008). Similarly, although self-efficacy and motivation are deeply intertwined, they are two distinct concepts. Self-efficacy is based on a person's confidence in their own ability to realise, whereas motivation is grounded on the person's wish to achieve. Individuals with high self-efficacy frequently have higher motivation (Mayer, 2010).

Mayer (2010) claims that some success gained increases self-efficacy skills and creates a success cycle. On the other hand, if the individual is not successful, it affects the individual's self-worth and decreases self-efficacy and the failure cycle increases. Thus, failure causes the student to decrease their self-efficacy skills and subsequently produces low academic performance, thereby not accomplishing their goals. The section below will address self-efficacy and goal orientation.

2.4.9 Self-efficacy and goal orientation

Fong, Patall, Jones, Zuniga, and Snyder (2012) claim that self-efficacy and goal orientation and goal setting by students increases student success; while the opposite contributes to and causes lack of student success.

Another dimension on self-efficacy is visualization. When individuals visualize that they can perform higher and that increases their self-efficacy skills they can perform higher. Once you can imagine that you can perform you can perform better (Maddux, 2009). Though Maddux (2009) claim that visualization is not easy, but when one masters to visualize it becomes a reality. The next section addresses the role of parental support in academic achievement.

2.4.10 Peer Tutoring

According to Hott and Walker (2012) "Peer tutoring is a flexible, peer-mediated strategy that involves students serving as academic tutors and tutees. Typically, a higher performing student is paired with a lower performing student to review critical academic or behavioral concepts" (p. 1). Peer tutoring is a flexible, peer-mediated strategy that involves students serving

as academic tutors and tutees. The next section elaborates the Peer Tutoring Remediation and its contribution to student academic attainment.

Peer tutoring having a positive academic result both for special education or regular classes (Okilwa & Shelby, 2010); Carter and Kennedy (2006) agree that peer tutoring for regular students and students with disability being an effective method to improve academic performance. Research studies conducted by (e.g., Calhoun, Al Otaiba, Cihak, King, & Avalos, 2007; Kunsch, Jitendra, & Sood, 2007; Vasquez & Slocum, 2012) shows that peer tutoring has the following advantages for academic achievement.

- “It is a widely-researched practice across ages, grade levels, and subject areas
- The intervention allows students to receive one-to-one assistance
- Students have increased opportunities to respond in smaller groups
- It promotes academic and social development for both the tutor and tutee
- Student engagement and time on task increases
- Peer tutoring increases self-confidence and self-efficacy” (p. 1)

According to Spencer (2006) Peer tutoring increases self-confidence and self-efficacy skills. The next section addresses the benefits of Small Classes Size and its benefits to improved student academic achievement

2.4.11 Parental Support

Atkins (2012) and other academics identified parental support being of vital importance to student success of all races. Rhamie and Hallam (2002) presented an interesting angle where immigrant to Canada is selected on the bases of their success thus, children of immigrant parents tend to do well in school. Davis (2015) states that positive and caring conversation of parent with their children manifests student’s success. This compounded with parental involvement in school system allows children to stay on top of their game of success (Brown & Cooper, 2011).

Louque and Latunde (2014) assert that the interconnection of families, home environments, schools, and communities impact student’s success. And absence of these hinders student’s success. Many studies in USA, UK, and Canada show that students claiming that their parents are

their biggest supporters for their academic success (Byfield, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Smith, Schneider and Ruch's, 2005). Ralph (2014) agreed with these arguments and suggests that continuous parental involvement and parents having discussions about school has a strong positive outcome on student achievement.

However, despite many studies showings parental support being vital to student's success, "Some children seem to succeed in school despite living in materially unpromising circumstances whilst others do less well despite a comfortable material environment" (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, p. 24).

Morgan, Leenman, Todd, and Weeden (2013) confirm previous claim that parental negative and biased beliefs may possibly result to academic under-achievement. Additionally, these authors added another dimension that this is only possible in areas where there are limited colleges. The next section expands on the role of parental and teacher expectations.

2.4.12 Parental and Teachers expectation

If a student perceives that his / her teacher expects from him or her poor performance, the student does not make any effort as the student believes he /she cannot perform (Yatvin, 2009). Scholars like McKown & Weinstein (2002a) and Nichols & Good (2004) claim that minority students are more likely to get low teacher expectation compared to White students and the low expectation of teacher widens the achievement gap as students are more likely to adapt to their teachers low or negative expectation. Bamburg (1998) suggest that teachers have different expectation for different students, that expectation creates a substantial impact on student performance. Caruthers (2007) suggest that if an underachieving student performs well the teacher assumes it is an accident or the student cheated, and such students are more likely to be criticized. Lack of nurturing behavior from teachers causes students to achieve even lower than their abilities allow claims (Caruthers, 2007). Atkins (2012) claim that when carrying deep conversations with Black students the students indicated that the education system failed Black students.

Teacher and parental expectation and support impact under achievement or increase achievement Kreider, (2000) argues that:

Type of involvement parenting, providing housing, health, nutrition, safety; parenting skills in parent-child interactions; home conditions to support study; information

to help schools know child communicating school-home/home-school communication volunteering in school help in classrooms/events teaching at home help with homework, help with educational choices/options decision making membership of PTA/governors collaborating with contributions to school the community (p.1)

The Cressida's Science of Education agrees with Kreider (2000) and elaborates further and emphasise that students who get parents support get higher grades, have higher graduation rate, have good attendance, increased motivation, higher self-esteem, lower suspension rate, decreased drug use and are less violent. However, In the same article Cressida's Science of Education article quoted Lawson (2003) who adds another dimension to the argument and claims that teachers and parents have different philosophies about that establishes as parental support, some families have expectations that exceed the child's competences leaving them with low self-esteem and while others never encourage their child to reach their full potential.

Lawson (2003) claims that parental support is very imperative to student's success however, there are many students that excel without any parental guidance. Parental support is important for all students, however, it is more important for Black students as Black students are impacted by factors such as dealing with inequalities, racism, discrimination, micro aggression and absence of parental support will be another hindrance for Black students.

One of the main sources for student success is positive teacher support and guidance (Doll, Zucker & Brehm, 2004). Byfield, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Ryamie & Hallam, 2002; and Schieder & Ruck in their studies in United States of America and United Kingdom argue that parental support as being vital to student success.

Ogbu (1994) asserts that White educators through their race and class prejudices have low expectations and assumptions that are not true of Black students and low-income students; these misapprehensions more often hamper Black student learning. Ogbu (1994) further argues that Black students tend to accept the low expectations and tend to perform poorly academically.

If a student perception is that his / her teacher expects from him or her poor performance, the student does not make any effort as the student believes he /she cannot perform (Yatvin, 2009). Scholars like McKown & Weinstein (2002a) and Nichols & Good (2004) claim that minority students are more likely to get low teacher expectation compared to White students.

Benner and Mistry (2007) in their study of the impact of teacher academic expectations on youth ages 9-16, academic accomplishment of ethnically mixed students of low income the authors concluded that the level of teacher expectations impact academic performance. The authors conclude that the higher the expectations the higher the academic performance. On the contrary, the lower or no expectations of teacher the lower the academic performance of students.

Pros Dei (2010) asserts that having a teacher with high expectations increases students' progress. ONABSE, (2015) report indicates that high expectation from educators and parents increases the achievement between Black students. If a student's perception is that his teacher expects him/her to perform high the student works hard to meet his / her teachers' high expectation (Yatvin, 2009). Pros Dei (2010) states that having a teacher with high expectations increases students' progress.

Hilliard (1992) claims that high teacher expectation is vital to student success or failure:

“The literature on teacher expectations is clear; the images that teachers and others hold about children and their potential have a major influence on the use by teachers of their full range of processing skills. ...It is not the learning style of the child that prevents the child from learning; it is the perception by the teacher of the child's style as a sign of incapacity that causes the teacher to reduce the quality of instruction offered”. (p. 373)

High expectations from parents and teachers are highly likely to increase students' progress. Burgess and Greaves, (2013); Cornwell and Mustard and Van Parys, (2013); and Hanna and Linden, (2012); and Lavy, (2008) added another dimension on Black students' underachievement; the authors claim that the underachievement is not due to poor student performance but is due too biased teacher grading based on gender, race and ethnic bias. The lack of a role model is also a great factor of influence because role models are exemplars that students look up to. The following section will address the importance of Role Model in academic achievement.

2.4.13 Role Model

The absence of a role model has a negative effect on achievement. The ONABSE (2015) report indicated that in Toronto racialized individuals comprise 47% of Toronto population,

however, only 25% of secondary school teachers are blacks and in elementary and kindergarten the percentage of black teachers is only 24. Racialized people are referred to as people of color, which the commission uses to describe the terms racial minority, visible minority, persons of color, or non-White people (Ontario Human Right Commission, ND). The presence of a role model for Black students and parent connections with educators (teachers) and their children increase the degree of success of Black students (ONABSE, 2015; Jeynes, 2003).

2.4.14 Interventions

Afrocentric Schools were introduced to deal with issues affecting Black student's underachievement. Afrocentric Schools are schools making efforts to integrate diverse perspectives, experiences, and history of people of African descent into the curriculum, instead of using the dominant Eurocentric perspective, (Salutin, 2008). Both Canada and America in 21st Century introduced laws to be inclusive and to reduce discrimination and racism. One of the legislative laws that was brought was "Affirmative Action" which aims to give equal opportunity in employment, housing, and many forms of advancement (Popular Issues, ND).

However, there are two basic issues about Affirmative Action; one issue is that black people were disadvantaged in areas of employment, justice, and social participation and thus, they deserve to be given priority to equalize communities. Affirmative Action also applies in educational setting, particularly in the admission of socially disadvantaged individuals to HE. Thus, giving them preferential treatment or support to allow disadvantaged groups to get admission to HE is only fair and equitable (International Journal of Game Theory, 2005).

In Toronto, in an effort to increase the number of high school graduates attending HE education, an Afrocentric School was introduced by Toronto District School Board (TDSB) where the teachers and the administrators were all Black (CBC, 2009). The introduction of the Afrocentric School raised questions among scholars in Toronto. How will students who have attended Afrocentric schools be seamlessly integrated into HE contexts or does this call for Black-only colleges and universities? The Afrocentric School system as argued by Galabuzi (2008) does not solve the core issues behind the failure of Black students transitioning to HE at comparable rates as other students, and to meet their goals to achieve a college diploma or a university degree (Afrocentric Alternative School Support Committee, (2008).

Many don't really understand the meaning of Affirmative Action. Affirmative Action is "... to promote social equality through the preferential treatment of socioeconomically disadvantaged people for historical reasons like years of oppression or slavery" (CNN 2019).

Affirmative Action also applies in educational settings particularly in admission of socially disadvantaged or Black students and individuals to HE. Thus, giving them preferential treatment or support to allow disadvantaged groups to get admission to HE is only fair and equitable (International Journal of Game Theory, 2005).

However, the evidence indicates that the Afrocentric School is succeeding as an Afrocentric curriculum would benefit all students, not only Black students CBC (2009) and Duncan (2012). Michelle Hughes claims that she has sent all three of her children to the Afrocentric school in Toronto and she praises the teachers and the Afrocentric curriculum for increasing her children's self-confidence while making her life simpler as well in an article written by Christopher Mulligan/CBC, 2009). According to Galabuzi (2008) Afrocentric schools and curriculums segregate Black students and it does not solve persistent societal and institutional issues that require integration of these students into the wider community. Duncan (2012) claims that Afrocentric curriculum is beneficial to all, and thus it should be incorporated in the public-school curriculum. Duncan (2012) states that an Afrocentric curriculum would benefit all students, not only Black students. The following quotation resonates with me;

"What's wrong with a separate Afrocentric or "black-focused" school in a public system — as the Toronto board recently approved? Well, no one should be reduced to a category. I've learned this especially from Black students. Those from the Caribbean say they never thought of themselves as black, in a central or existential way, till they came here and were labelled. That is not the sort of thing a public education system should reinforce". (Salutin, 2008, p. 25).

The Afrocentric School is an alternative provision to the education system which pushes out Black students. Education System Pushout refers to:

“Practices that contribute to students dropping out. These include unwelcoming and uncaring school environments and over-reliance on zero tolerance school policies that push students out of school. Historically, factors (e.g., suspension, expulsions, and systemic inequality) that result in school pushout have disproportionately impacted students of color, students from low-income families, LGBT students and students in the juvenile justice and alternative education settings. Research demonstrates that the dropping out of school that is a product of pushout has severe and lasting consequences for students, schools, and communities. Students who are pushed out experience diminished academic opportunities and social alienation. They are pushed into substandard alternative schools and GED programs, which may compromise future academic and job success.” (p. 7, ACLU, 2008).

Pushout is attributed to:

“Lack of adequate resources and overcrowded school

- Overreliance on punitive measures, such as suspensions and expulsions
- Lack of adult support for students
- Low expectations
- Overemphasis on high stakes testing and test preparation
- Lack of physical and emotional safety at school
- Poor or limited teacher training and support
- Inadequate curricula and interventions that fail to individual or special education needs
- Lack of effective and equitable college preparatory and career counselling services
- Lack of cultural and linguistic competence
- Lack of parent, student, family, and community participation in school decision making
- Little or no academic mentoring and support for students
- A history of systemic racism and inequality” (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020)

The next section will discuss small class size and its advantages in improving students' academic achievement.

2.4.15 Small Classes Size

Bowman-Perrott and colleagues (2007) claim that small class size is an effective way to improve academic performance of students, allows teachers' pay special attention to individual students and easily monitor progress. Also, Woods (2015) argues that smaller class size improves grades for learners, improves learning and high achievers learn more. It also enables learning to be spread-out broadly among students. In addition, he contends that students in smaller classes are more likely to transition to post-secondary education than students in large classes and learners would be able to get more individualized feedback. Likewise, smaller classes would be beneficial for minorities and low achieving students. According to Education First (2020), there are 10 main benefits of small class sizes:

1. Each student gets noticed
2. Better results
3. Learning is enhanced
4. Teachers can teach
5. Classes become a community
6. Opportunities to participate
7. Focus on learning
8. More feedback
9. Students and teachers can work one-on-one and
10. Ideas are shared" (p. 1)

The next section will address the importance of teacher training in relation to academic achievement.

2.4.16 Teacher Training

Teacher training is an important factor to increase student academic performance (Okilwa & Shelby, 2010). It is believed that professional development can impact teachers' classroom practices immensely and results in enhanced student academic achievement when teachers become intentional and focused on: (1) learning style of students (2) instructional practices that are particularly related to the subject matter and how students learn and (3) enhance teacher skills and mastery of content of the subject matter Opfer and Pedder (2011). Opfer and Pedder (2011) further add that professional development results in improved instruction and enhanced student learning. Effective teachers have a direct influence in enhancing students' learning. Effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning, but also their work results in increased students' achievement. Successful teachers demonstrate the following key qualities.

- "Have formal teacher preparation training;
- are caring,
- Fair and respectful.
- Hold high expectations for themselves and their students
- Dedicate extra time to instructional preparation and reflection
- Maximize instructional time via effective classroom management and organization
- Enhance instruction by varying instructional strategies, activities, and assignments.
- Present content to students in a meaningful way that fosters understanding
- Monitor students learning by utilizing pre and post-assessments, providing timely and informative feedback, and re-teaching material to students who did not achieve mastery and
- Demonstrate effectiveness with the full range of students' abilities in their classrooms regardless of academic diversity of the students" (Darling-Hammond, pp. 1- 44, 2000).

The recognition that each individual perceives oppression and prejudice differently and that we must take into account everything that might alienate individuals makes a consideration of the overlapping manifestations of racism an important dimension to study. This intersectionality of racism cuts across the gender, physical ability, sexual orientation and beliefs of a learner.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In a nutshell various literature indicate that self-efficacy; having a role model; small class size; racism; discrimination and microaggressions; poverty; parental connection to school, high expectation from educators and parents; and heredity affect the achievement gap of Black students and their transition to HE.

Racism, discrimination, and privilege pushes out Black students from the education system and result in, disengagement and educational underachievement. Moreover, various issues contribute to Black students' under-achievements such as, parental socio-economic status, lack of self-efficacy skills, parental support, parental education level, parental and teacher expectation and ineffective teacher training and preparation and the absence of a role model are all factors that impact student academic achievement. Some interventions like the Afrocentric schools, small class size, effective teacher training, and peer tutoring can mitigate underachievement and disengage.

The theory that was used in this study to examine Black students' experiences in high school and their transition to HE is mainly CRT. However, it is complimented by theoretical framing such self-efficacy, theory of educational achievement, and a wider conceptualization of issues pertaining to racism.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.0 Methodological Approach

The section reports the methodological approach employed in this study. Other sections covered include the study rationale, research design, research questions, samples and sampling techniques, methods and instruments of data collection, data analysis methods, research ethics, positionality, and section summary.

This study adopted the qualitative research method. This research methodology is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and to further explore the perspectives and attitudes of Black students towards school retention and transition to HE. To overcome the shortcomings of quantitative research, qualitative research is more flexible and allows the researcher to identify values, ideas and beliefs (Gaille, 2018). Qualitative research allows study participants to reflect and express opinions and thoughts in their own words (Griffin, 1994). Qualitative research seeks to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions in answering the main and research questions.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that "Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.2). In addition, another objective of qualitative research is to "...understand the social reality of individuals, groups, and cultures as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it. Thus, people and groups are studied in their natural setting" (McLead, 2019, p. 3).

With regards to my study, using the qualitative methods provided depth and rich insights into the issues faced by Black students which could provide unique perspectives on the topic. Qualitative research methodology helps in understanding the social realities of Black students' struggles, hindrances, successes, and how they feel them, live them, and respond.

3.1 Rationale Underpinning the Study

This section details the importance of the research methodology applied, the choice of the research questions and the main reasons behind them, the rationale for the samples and sampling

techniques, the different data collecting instruments and finally how the data is collected and analyzed. The review section explains the educational lifestyle of students in Canada. It further explores the comparison between the Black and White students' perception and right to education. Using a case study design, this approach allows me to find out more about participants' perceptions of culture and belief systems. By perception, I mean a primary source of knowledge that cannot easily be doubted. This has been a significant factor in determining the educational attainment or school completion of especially the Black students, who have limited confidence in themselves.

An earlier study showed that against the high proportion of African Americans in many American HE institutions, many Black and Latino students reportedly lag behind the white students in terms of performance and retention (Kristen, 2016; Aud, Fox, & Ramani, 2010; Fletcher & Tienda, 2010). Across different contexts, Black students have under-achievement in their studies either in Toronto, other regions, or globally (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2009). Canada and America are similar in terms of issues faced by Black students.

This study aims to understand the reasons for struggling Black students in grades 11 and 12, dropouts, and the reasons for those who transitioned to higher education in Toronto. I worked with three types of key institutions: a high school, a non-profit organization, and a Higher Education (HE) institution. The rationale for choosing the high school was as it dealt with a high number of Black students struggling in class. I chose the non-for-profit because it helped and supported Black students who dropped out of school and learned why they did not succeed. Finally, I selected HE institution because it serves a high number of Black students who transitioned into HE, and this can help me to understand success reasons. The first two groups helped to understand the challenges and barriers in Black students' success, while the third group assisted in knowing the competencies, self-efficacy, survival skills, and support systems that enabled Black students to transition to HE and succeed.

Also, in understanding the rationale, the first research question seeks to identify the reasons/barriers that hinder Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto. As a researcher, this question is essential for participants to answer since there is a need to hear diverse opinions from the participants who have faced this experience one time or the other. The second question wants to know what kind of support Black students need from teachers, parents, and institutions, to transition to HE. This question allows participants to share their views based on experiences and to reflect how it has impacted their educational pursuits and

school completion. The final question asks to explore what effective self-help strategies might be used by Black students to overcome barriers and transition to HE. In creating this question, I would expect Black students to stand and speak for what they need to survive and progress educationally. Given the foregoing, my research will attempt to understand the reasons and barriers behind a low retention rate of Black students of African descent in Grade 11 and 12 and their transition to HE. The research findings will be of relevance to key stakeholders and other academic governing bodies on identifying and addressing barriers to Black students' retention and transition to HE.

3.2 Exploratory Research Design

This section explains the specific characterization of qualitative methodology that was used in carrying out the study: the research design. It captures the overall module of data collection and analysis and interpretation. This study adopted the exploratory qualitative research design. The exploratory research design is useful in gaining an increased understanding of a phenomenon, uncover details about an unfamiliar concept, illuminate how a phenomenon is manifested, or provide primary information about a concept that has barely been explored and documented. When this design is employed in a study, the objective is usually either to explore an area where little is known or to carry out an investigation of the possibilities of undertaking a particular research study (Swaraj, 2019; Stebbins, 2001; Hunter, McCallum & Jacqueline, 2018). Swaraj (2019) identified that the purpose of the exploratory design is to achieve at least one of the following: generate new ideas; increase the researcher's familiarity with the problem; make a precise formulation of the problem; gather information for clarifying concepts; or determine whether it is feasible to attempt the study. More so, the exploratory design helps to gain new insights and discover new ideas around a subject of enquiry.

This design is suitable for this research which explored Black students' experience in high school and their transition to higher education in Toronto, in relation to racism, privilege and power because research of Black students' experiences in higher education in relation to their transition to higher education in Toronto is budding. In particular, the exploration of this phenomenon within an interplay of the contexts of race, privilege, and power is novel. While research in the field of Black studies may seem common, not many scholars have situated their investigation within these contexts. Also, as qualitative research that this study is, the exploratory design is appropriate the

design tends to focus on data that are collected through highly flexible and unstructured methods of data collection (Swaraj, 2019).

In using this design, I ensured I follow the three steps that Selltize et al (1959) suggested. They are: the review of pertinent literature; an experience survey; and the analysis of insight-stimulating cases. I began my exploration by studying and reviewing relevant literature comprising books, journal articles, and reports. I was able to glean and take note of clues (which served as leads) and variables from this process about the experiences of Black students in high school with respect to racism, power and privilege while they transition into higher education. This first step was followed by informally interviewing Black students who have experienced the phenomenon under review. This helped in gaining insight and different preliminary perspectives into the phenomenon and the various research possibilities, including the nature of data I would get, they kind of questions I would ask the research participants, the degree of flexibility of the questions, and the facilities and other research materials and resources persons that might be helpful in exploring the phenomenon. The third step I followed in using the exploratory design was to carry out an intensive study of specific stimulating experiences of Black high school students in selected schools within an unexplored area in Toronto.

3.3 Theoretical Basis

This study explored the experiences of Black students in grades 11 to 12 and their transition into higher education from the perspective of educators, and the measures that can be taken to improve this transition. The theory that would suitably frame and undergirds this study and provide further understanding of the phenomenon of interest in this study is the Critical Race Theory (CTR).

Critical Race Theory

CRT will provide dynamics and clarity to the issue of power and privilege. With the early work of Derrick Bell, an African American, and Alan Freeman, a Mite, both of whom were highly frustrated by the sluggish pace of racial reform in the United States, critical race theory (CRT) emerged in the middle of the 1970s (Delgado, 1995). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explain that a group of activists and academics working to understand and change how race, racism, and power

are related make up the CRT movement, which examines many of the same concerns that traditional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses address but puts them in a wider context. The goal of this intellectual movement, which focuses mostly on the US context, is to comprehend how white supremacy is sustained and reproduced as a social, cultural, and political reality (Garza & Ono, 2016).

CRT does not lay emphasis on the dominant role of social class inequality. Instead, its emphasis is on the racial dynamics of social inequities and the political process (Gillborn, 2013). It builds majorly on the ideas of two earlier movements: radical feminism and critical legal studies. The core underpinnings of the liberal order, such as equality theory, legal justification, enlightened rationality, and impartial constitutional law norms, are called into doubt by CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Although it emerged among legal scholars, today, it has grown to become an interdisciplinary framework such that it is being applied in such fields as sociology, education, and communication. The fundamental assumptions of CRT include: the expression of racism in everyday discourse and practice by much or even all of society; that racist thought and practice are historically and contextually specific; and that traditional thinking, which is grounded in liberalism, advanced in universalism, and formal equality, both of which advantage dominant cultures and disadvantage marginalized ones, is racial and racist (Flores, 2009). The six main tenets of CRT are as follows: (1) the notion that race is socially constructed; (2) the idea that racism is normal and not abnormal; (3) the idea of a convergence of interests; (4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling; and (5) whiteness as property; and (6) the critique of liberalism.

The first tenet of CRT is the social construction of race. This tenet believes that race and races are a result of social connections and cognition. Races are social constructs that society creates, alters, or discards as it sees fit. They are not inherent, objective, or fixed; they have no biological or genetic reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This principle is based on the observation that, over time, "race" has been defined, assessed, and experienced in significantly different ways across and within societies (Lantz, 2021).

The second tenet of CRT is the notion that racism is normal and not aberrational. As such, racism is omnipresent in society (Lantz, 2021). This means that racism is the ordinary experience of most people of color. The ordinariness of racism means it is difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The key idea here is that racial inequality

continues to be perpetuated even in the absence of overt acts of racism because differing racial access to resources, opportunities, benefits, and burdens is ingrained in many areas of our institutions and legal/policy frameworks (Lantz, 2021).

The third tenet, the idea of interest convergence, emphasizes the political and power aspects of achieving racial justice (Gillborn, 2013). It is the most important tenets of CRT that explains how policy is changed or made through a process that balances White elites' interests against the risks of inciting minoritized communities to rebel (Ladson-Billings, 2014). It means that the dominant population will support any policy or practice considered to be anti-racist only when they will benefit from it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Counter-storytelling is the fourth tenet of CRT. Counter stories are the individual, collective narratives or stories of people of color (Delgado & Villalpando, 2002). Counter-stories are a resource that both exposes and critiques the dominant (male, white, heterosexual) ideology, which perpetuates racial stereotypes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Through it, the existing gaps in knowledge and ways of thinking are filled. This tenet explains that while racism persists at the structural and macro levels of society, it is crucial to pay attention to and comprehend the lived experiences of individuals in order to comprehend how racism affects individual results (Lantz, 2021).

The fifth tenet of CRT is whiteness as property. According to Harris' (1993) theory, whiteness is regarded as property under US law since the term "property" encompasses not only tangible things but also anything to which a person has assigned value. According to Harris (1993), whiteness is defined as legal status of a person as free, while blackness is defined as slavery. The four rights of whiteness as property, according to Harris (1993), are: (a) the right to disposition; (b) the right to use and enjoyment; (c) the right to status and property; and (d) the right to exclude.

The concepts of color-blindness, the impartiality of the law, and equality for all are the foundation of CRT's sixth tenet, which is a critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This tenet, in addition to preserving whites' power and strongholds within society, enables whites to feel deliberately irresponsible for the struggles and challenges people of color experience every day (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010).

As explained above, the core tenets of critical race theory (CRT) are: the notion that race is socially constructed; (2) the idea that racism is normal and not abnormal; (3) the idea of a convergence of interests; (4) the idea of counter-storytelling; and (5) whiteness as property; and

(6) the critique of liberalism. This theory is adopted as one of the theoretical frameworks because of its relevance to this study. It was used to analyze how race and racism directly and indirectly affect Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in the study context. CRT, through the lens of race, provided an understanding of educational inequalities and structural racism in finding solutions that lead to greater justice. Creswell (2007) explains that the use of CRT in research put race and racism as the main focus throughout the research process and challenges research texts and worldviews. The tenets of CRT served as a guide in the analysis of data to achieve the objectives of this study, namely: (1) identify the reasons/barriers that hinder Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto; (2) explain the kind of support needed by Black students to transition to HE, by teachers, parents and institutions like high schools and HEs; and (3) examine effective self-help strategies used by Black students to overcome their barriers and transition to HE. These objectives are in agreement with the three objectives of CRT namely which are to: 1) present stories about discrimination from the viewpoint of people of color; 2) argue for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously acknowledging that race is a social construct; and 3) to deal with other matters of dissimilarity, such as sexuality and class, and any injustices experienced by communities (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

The first and second tenets of CRT, the ideas of race as a social construction and that racism is normal and not abnormal, will provide an understanding of racism and its manifestation within the Canadian educational context and its structural impact on the educational attainments of Black students. This understanding will help to identify the kinds of support and self-help strategies required by Black students to overcome their barriers and transition to higher education. The fourth tenet, the idea of counter-storytelling, will help in analyzing the educational climate in the study context. This will help provide an understanding of Black students' narratives involving marginalized experiences and how colleges can make necessary changes and become inclusive. The fifth tenet, whiteness as property, explains faculty and administrative staff attitudes towards Black students. Bondi (2012) explains that the right to use and enjoyments holds that white people can use their whiteness to focus on their needs and perspectives, ignoring racially minoritized people's needs and perspectives because they are not expected to know these.

3.4. Rationale and Assumptions Underpinning Research Methodology

My research questions dictate the use of qualitative research methodology and exploratory research design. Qualitative data collection is flexible and more suitable to address sensitive issues (Griffin, 1994). This methodology helps the researcher to reinforce the seriousness of the issues faced by Black students. There are many advantages of qualitative method including getting deep and rich insight into the issues faced by Black students that could provide unique views. Qualitative research methodology and the exploratory research design are common in the field of social sciences and education (Hunter et al, 2018; Stebbins, 2001; Swaraj, 2019). To further explicate the rationale for using the exploratory research design in answering the questions for my research, Stebbins (2001) opined that the design fosters a research approach that is broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, and prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations, leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life. This is consistent with the purpose and intent of this study which seeks to create an more understanding of the reasons or barriers that hinder Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto, explain the kind of support needed by Black students as they transition to higher education, and explore the effective self-help strategies used by Black students for overcoming their barriers and to transition to HE.

Through this methodology and design, I was able to explore the intersection of racism, power and privilege as contexts that shape the experiences of Black high school students in Toronto as they try to survive Grades 11 and 12 and advance to higher education, thereby creating new thinking and developing new perspectives of the phenomenon from the experiences that the students shared. This corroborates the view of Reid-Searl and Happell (2012) that a qualitative exploratory design allows the researcher to explore a topic with limited coverage within the literature and allows the participants of the study to contribute to the development of new knowledge in that area.

3.4.1. Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are protocols and procedures to follow when researchers need to collect either primary or secondary data for a study. This involves following several guidelines provided, and this is to ensure a high level of transparency and ethical principles applied during

the research project. For this study, based on ethical review protocols, I ensured to obtain an up-to-date version of the consent letter template and then adjusted it to reflect this specific research context and participants. A consent letter is required to participate in the interview, and participants are informed of their right to withdraw at any point within the interview. This letter also states the interview will take place at a convenient time for them outside of school hours, and most importantly, this letter highlights that their confidentiality will be always respected, together with their identity in front of other people.

The research instruments for my study were crafted to ensure the questions would not harm the research participants. The (email) letter of invitation to invited research participants indicated that participation was voluntary and that participants had the right not to answer certain questions that they deem inappropriate, and they could drop out of the study at any time with no consequences. Consent forms were obtained before collecting data. Consent forms aimed at ensuring that participants' information such as name and institutions/organizations supplied during the research was held in confidence and will not appear in any report or publication of the research so that it will not be possible to identify anyone in the study. Paper data collected was stored in a locked cabinet, and electronic data was stored in a password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher. Conflict of interest was non-existent as institutions and students are all new to me. Also, as a qualitative researcher, I further ensured that ethical issues related to conflict of interest, especially if the researcher is an insider, were considered. In my case, I am researching institutions that I have not worked at, thus, my connection to students

3.4.2. Positionality and Test of Rigor

While I understand my personal and professional biases could impact my research, the biases will be minimized through reflexivity, triangulation with the findings and the literature.

The criteria for testing rigor and achieving triangulation which my study, being qualitative research, used are credibility, transferability, and dependability. These are alternative forms of validity and reliability used in testing rigor in quantitative studies.

Credibility, an alternative of internal validity emphasizes the need for qualitative researchers to explore multiple possible accounts of a social reality in order to justify the acceptability of their findings (Bryman, 2012). In this study, I triangulated my findings from data

collected through interviews and observations with reflexivity and the literature. Reflexivity helps bring more critical analysis and increases researcher's awareness of the result on the course and outcomes of study based on the premise that "knowledge cannot be separated from the knower" (Steedman, 1991). Continuous reflexivity contributes alertness to the research process, as it will allow for continuous self-examination as a researcher. It will also force attentiveness to the research relationship and the connection between seeing, interpreting, and knowing. In a bid to make my study credible and to triangulate my findings, I constantly engaged reflexivity alongside validating my results from the literature.

Qualitative studies usually require an in-depth study of a phenomenon, thereby requiring small sample size consisting of participants characterized in distinct ways (Bryman, 2012). For qualitative researchers to achieve transferability criterion, an alternative of external validity, they are expected to produce 'thick' description of the phenomenon. This I did by providing rich and detailed accounts of the experiences of Black high school students with respect to surviving Grades 11 and 12 in Toronto and transitioning to higher education. In particular, bearing in mind the interconnectedness of students and teachers/administrators, and how their perspectives could integrate with each other, I ensured that I sifted the transcripts carefully, drawing out typical and atypical themes, subjecting them to reviews and critiques, and triangulating them accordingly. This way, I gained clear understanding of all perspectives and counter-perspectives and provided detailed description of the experience of each participant.

Finally, I ensured dependability, the alternative to reliability in quantitative research, by adopting what Bryman (2012) described as the *auditing approach*. I did this by keeping complete records of all phases of my research, ranging from problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts and recordings to data analysis files. I subjected these for vetting. For instance, I randomly selected two participants from the four groups and sent them the transcription to ensure that what I captured was accurate.

3.5 Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- (i) Understand the challenges of Black students in grades 11 and 12 during their learning journey and transitioning to HE;
- (ii) Increase understanding of Black students' needs from an educator's perspective; and

(iii) Improve Black students' experiences, increase their retention rate within Toronto grade 11 and 12 and their transition to HE

3.5.1 Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the reasons/barriers that hinder Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto?
- (2) What kind of support is needed by Black students to transition to HE, by teachers, parents and institutions like high schools and HE's?
- (3) What effective self-help strategies are used by Black students to overcome their barriers and transition to HE?

3.6 Samples and Sampling Methods

This section describes the population of the study, the technique for selecting participants, the sample size and specific descriptions of the study participants.

3.6.1 Population

The population for this study includes high school dropouts, higher education students who had successfully transitioned, struggling high school students in school but currently experiencing barriers to achieving good grades and then also students who were successful in academic work. In addition, experienced administrators and teachers currently working in various schools were part of the sample.

3.6.2 Sampling Technique

I used purposeful and random sampling techniques for different participants. Glesne (2001) posits that purposeful sampling "...leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p.44). From the dropout group, I randomly chose seven Black students of both genders. From the struggling group of students in grades 11 and 12 high schools, I randomly selected seven gender mix students in their final year of study. From the non-

profit organization whose mandate is to serve grade 11 and 12 Black student dropouts, I selected seven students with the same gender mix.

Also, I randomly selected six administrators/faculty from the three institutions, who had experience dealing with Black students. The recruitment invitation indicated inviting only those with experience dealing with Black students'. Two administrators/faculty each from respectively the high school and the non-for-profit organization and three administrators or faculty from the HE institution were randomly selected.

In conclusion, I have interviewed 20 Black students of different genders, two administrators and five faculty members. The rationale behind the choice of each of these groups relates to different purposes and reasons: the first group was chosen to understand the reasons why Black students in grades 11 and 12 drop out or were pushed out before completing their studies. The second group was chosen to understand why Black students in grades 11 and 12 are struggling and need support during their studies; and the third group was chosen to understand how Black students managed to transition from high school to HE. I selected the teachers and administrators because they had experience dealing with Black students and understood their perspectives pertaining to the issues affecting Black students in both high school and HE.

3.6.3 Sample Representative

The sample size of my research are 27 participants. The reason for choosing a sample of 27 was due to the fact that in a qualitative study a sample of 25-30 is usually appropriated for collecting enough and reasonable qualitative data as stated by (Mason, 2010 & Dworkin 2012).

The total number of research subjects are 27 composed of:

1. Black students who have dropped out of secondary school above the age of 18 in grades 11 and 12,
2. Black students in Grades 11 and 12 who were struggling above the age of 18, and
3. Black students who already enrolled in HE and transitioned.

Teachers and administrators who have experience dealing with Black students.

The sample of my research was 27 participants in total: 20 Black students with a gender mix and 7 teachers/administrators. The criteria for selecting were (1) Black students who have dropped

out of secondary school above the age of 18, (2) Black students in Grade 11 and 12 who are struggling above the age of 18 and (3) Black students who are already enrolled in HE or transitioned. The first two groups will aid understanding of the challenges, barriers, survival skills, while the third group will explore the competencies, support systems and other reasons for success in transitioning to HE. My research subjects came from three different institutions who have different mandates. From Grade 11 and 12 high school I selected seven gender mix students randomly in their final year of study who were struggling.

From the non-profit organization whose mandate is to serve Grade 11 and 12 high school Black students' dropouts, I selected seven students. From the university, I selected six students who have been successful in transitioning to HE. Criteria for selection of multicultural teachers and administrators with experience in dealing with Black students and an understanding of their challenges and supports provided to help those who succeeded. The selection for administrators and teacher was on a random bases and they were respectively administrators and teachers. Glesne (2011) posits that "purposeful sampling...leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 44).

3.6.4 Description of Study Participants

The participants sampled for this study were dropouts, higher education students who had successfully transitioned, struggling students in school but currently experiencing barriers to achieving good grades and then also students who were successful in academic work. In addition, experienced administrators and teachers currently working in various schools were part of the sample. The different groups of participants involved in the study were:

1. Dropouts and pushed out Black students in secondary school
2. Struggling Black students currently in secondary school
3. Black students who transitioned to post-secondary
4. Teacher and administrators

3.6.5 Dropout

A dropout is described as a student who withdraws from school before completing a course or class of study. Thus, dropping out of school is the process, rather than a decision taken at a point

in time defined as leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential (Asunción, Juan, Beatriz, Joel & Francisco, 2016; De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot & Den Brink, 2013). Early scholars characterized dropping out as the result or symptom of other problems that have their origins from much earlier years (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Several factors were identified to contribute to students dropping out of school grouped into:

- Student-related factors: academic ability; extracurricular activities, peer-related characteristics, presence of social support (model, guardian)
- Family-related factors: socioeconomic status, parental school check-in, parents' interest in and help with school tasks, parents' educational level
- School-related factors: type of school, school curriculum, school support system
- Community-related factors: location or residence, the neighborhood of family residence, presence of community library and other facilities (De Witte, 2013)

Some studies have also found rural-urban differences as a determinant for rates of school dropouts and likely causes of dropping out (Jordan, Kostandini & Mykerezi 2012; Strange, 2011). According to the U.S National Center for Education Statistics (2020), the dropout rate for Asian 16 to 24-year-olds of (2%) was lower compared to their white peers (4%), Black (6%), Hispanic (8%), Pacific Islander (8%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (10%). In addition, the dropout rate for white students was significantly lower than that of other racial/ethnic groups except for Asians. On the other hand, there is a higher likelihood for males than females to drop out of school across all races - white (5% vs. 4%), Black (8% vs. 5%), Hispanic (10% vs. 6%), Asian (2% vs. 1%), and for two or more other races (6% vs. 4%).

While an earlier report in 2012 (The Daily, 2014) indicated, the high school graduation rate was 89% in Canada; however, students from low-income households are less likely to complete high school compared to their more advantaged peers with gaps that can reach 15% (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Furthermore, in the rural areas, there are higher dropout rates than in urban parts of Canada, with boys more likely than girls to drop out (Statistics Canada, 015

3.6.6 Struggling Students

This describes a student who has trouble in school and learning. It can be defined as someone who needs extra support or needs to work harder at tasks compared to others to achieve

success in school. Research shows there are multi-layered reasons why students struggle in school, this could be because of inability to understand, lack of interest in topics of learning, traditional teaching and learning methods and student home life (Perander, Londen & Holm, 2020; Blaauw, 2016; Lois & Todd-Meyer, 2015; Ali, 2012).

Among other factors that contributed to student's poor performances were – schooling system inequity, limited funding, inadequate staff personnel /overburdened teachers, and limited support for students to integrate into the school for good academic and social life balance (Lombard, 2020).

3.6.7 Transitioned Higher Education Students

This study describes students that have successfully transitioned to higher educational levels. According to McDonough (2004), features that influenced students transitioning to higher education includes:

- College preparatory curriculum that challenged students.
- College culture that included high academic standards.
- Known formal and informal communication related to college choice and transition.
- Have devoted staff to help students successfully transit to college and HE.
- Have devoted student advisor and counselor for those students transitioning to college and HE

3.6.8 Administrators and Teachers

Evidence has shown that how well teachers and school administrators perform largely influences the quality of education of a student (Aslanargun, 2015). In this study teachers are conceived as someone who has a certain knowledge base that is certified and helps students to learn in school by imparting knowledge to them and setting up a situation in which students can learn effectively. On the other hand, educational administrators work in schools, they perform administrative duties that ensure that students and staff in the institution have a safe and good learning environment. The high school's administrative officers also include the principals, vice-principals, and counselors. Other functions might include overseeing logistics, students and faculty's schedules, disciplinary actions, continuous evaluation of programs and curriculum. They also ensure teachers have the equipment and resources necessary to deliver an educationally effective curriculum.

3.6.9 Research Area

The retention of Black students in high school, particularly in grades 11 and 12, has become a forefront issue in the country as there is limited support to ensure school completion and smooth transition to HE (Saunders, 2016). Black students are not transitioning to HE institutions at an acceptable rate; only 50% of Black high school students proceed to HE (Comrie, 2013). There appears to be a general crisis regarding the retention and transitioning of Black students to HE institutions in Canada, including in Toronto.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB), in order to increase the number of black high school students who graduate and attend HE education, introduced an Afrocentric School where all teachers and administrators are Black (Galabuzi, 2008) . However, this strategy met with criticisms among scholars who asked how the students that attended Afrocentric schools would integrate into HE studies, or would this imply having for Black-only colleges and universities? Thus, the Afrocentric School system does not solve the core issues behind the failure of Black students to transition to HE and realize the goals to achieve a college diploma or university degree compared to non-Black students. Despite this, the evidence indicates that the Afrocentric School is yielding promising results, as Duncan (2012) reported that an Afrocentric curriculum would benefit all the students, not only Black students.

However, in my personal view, Afrocentric schools and curriculum segregate Black students, and it does not solve persistent systemic (societal and institutional) issues that require integration of these students into the wider community.

3.7 Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interview guides. The interview guides aimed to examine participants' perspective on transitioning to HE for example, and causal factors that could (dis)enable them. The questions on the instruments were open ended. Open ended questions allowed participants to express and to expand beyond the limited question. Thus, it became imperative for me to use one-on-one interviews to collect qualitative data. One-on-one, personal semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed me to elicit deep information about

the problems and barriers limiting Black students' achievement in Grades 11 and 12 and their transition to HE.

More so, I used individual semi-structured interviews because I wanted to explore the views, experiences, and beliefs of my participants on the specific subject under study. I believe the interviews provided me with a deeper understanding of the phenomena that I researched. I also believe personal interviews are appropriate for exploring sensitive topics where insights are needed from individual participants (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Before the interviews were conducted, all participants received information sheets on the research (Appendix A) and signed an authorization letter (Appendix B) together with a consent form (Appendix C). Participants were informed of interviews being recorded. I interviewed the 27 participants individually; I took notes and recorded their responses. I randomly chose three interview transcripts, one for each of the three groups and presented them to the participants to ensure accuracy of data collected.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. For the interview guides, I prepared four sets of open-ended questions, for each group of research participants and related follow up questions depending on their responses. The sets are:

1. Questions for high school dropouts or pushed out Black students assisted.
2. Questions for struggling Black students in grades 11-12.
3. Questions for Black students who transitioned to HE successfully.
4. Questions for Administrators/Faculty who have dealt with Black students.

The Open-ended questions allowed me to gain deep information about Black students' experiences in grades 11 and 12 and HE. Primary data was collected from past and present students, faculty, and administrators.

In addition to the interview guides, I used observation schedule to collect some relevant data. During the interview, I took notes and recorded them to have a balanced means of getting all the required information from the participants. Maynard (2006) explains how the conversation analysis approach interacts with observation of the participants in addition to the words that are spoken and watching for signs, cues such as facial expressions, stalling or bluntness to cover for certain feelings that the participants have. The schedule guided my noting of the participants'

laughter, smile, and anger during response to questions. Also, some environmental activities at the time of the interview were also noted. For example, greetings during the interview session, automobiles passing, sounds and discussions from passers-by, were seen to have influenced some the pattern of answering the questions by some participants. This and more were things I took note of and formed part of my data.

3.7.1 Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to continue with face-to-face interviews; thus, eighteen interviews were collected via Zoom online platform and one via telephone. During the Zoom interviews, it was easy to observe the body language of participants, like in face-to-face settings. However, for the telephone interview, it was impossible to get facial expressions and other body languages. Nevertheless, for the remaining eight face-to-face interviews, I observed non-verbal expressions and body language in participants. Dropout/push-out students responded to 11 questions (appendix D); struggling students, transitioned students, and faculty and administrators responded to nine questions (Appendix E, F & G).

Before undertaking the semi-structured interviews, I piloted the interview to ensure that the questions were clear to the audience and posed in the right way and to observe if my questions made sense to students, teachers and administrators. I piloted the interview questions with five students and one teacher and used the feedback collected from participants to improve the questions. I collected data from 20 Black student participants: five faculties and two administrators. I decided to interview more faculty because they had more direct contact and lived experience than administrators with Black students.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis involves evaluating the data collected using different approaches. In this section, I explain how I analyzed the qualitative data to generate a meaningful evidence-based understanding of Black students transitioning to higher education, those struggling in high school and those who dropped out from grades 11 and 12. I started off with the analysis of data with the content analysis. This involved the categorization and discussion of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences that appear in the transcripts. This form of analysis is common in qualitative

research, and it includes approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo, Kääriäinen, et al, 2014).

Content analysis is achieved by breaking down data into concepts that describe the research phenomenon by creating themes, concepts, a model, a conceptual system, or a conceptual map (Cavanagh, 1997; Elo, et al, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I carried out this analysis by implementing the description Hsieh and Shannon (2005) by engaging in a subjective interpretation of the content of text data that I collected through the systematic classification process of coding and identification of themes and patterns. This led to the second phase of analysis which involved thematic analysis (TA), using the inductive approach.

While conducting the TA, I coded the groups of participants for easy identification. The emerging themes I developed were further categorized into sub-themes. These sub-themes gave clearer understanding of the themes generated from the research questions. In TA, coding and theme development were generated from the data content (Gibbs, 2007 & Gibbs, 2010). Thematic coding is a means of qualitative analysis, which involves recording or identifying passages of text that are connected by a common theme or idea allowing you to index the text into themes and therefore establish a framework of thematic ideas (Gibbs 2007). TA is flexible and it was applicable to my research questions about Black student's experiences. Themes were grouped and classified, and connections and comparisons were made once the detailed themes were illustrated. Teachers and administrators provided some meaningful data from an outsider perspective. Thematic analysis involves coding and closely examining the data to identify broad themes and patterns. During the interview, I took notes alongside the recordings in order to have a balanced means of getting all the required information from the participants.

The thematic analysis was followed by discourse or contextual analysis, which entailed studying communication and meaning the participants shared in relation to their social contexts. Context is important in qualitative research, and it is on this basis that I related participants' experiences with their socioeconomic, educational, and cultural and environments. In doing this, I analyzed data that I garnered through observation and also deployed the use of another technique called the Listening Guide (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006). I listened carefully to identify the stories of the participants, the values, and feelings that they shared, and how these reports are in tandem with reports by other participants. This further supported my triangulation of data in

some way. This method of analysis was consistent with the concepts of horizontalization, and thematic portrayal explained by Moustakas (1994). Horizontalization is looking at the experiences with equal value and thematic portrayal is clustering those meanings or horizons into core themes. This method helped me to see if there were patterns to the stories and experiences of the participants or if the story was an isolated incident that is if there were inter-contextual experiences in their accounts. This can be especially salient when working with marginalized populations and possible discrimination trends.

After the data had been collected and following a thematic procedure for analysis, I had to re-edit the responses to avoid any confusion or incomplete statement. This also required placing some of the quotes, removing incomplete statements, and not allowing biases that do not align with the question. I also double checked the transcripts against the research questions to bring uniformity in the questions across all interviews. I randomly selected two participants from the four groups and sent them the transcription to ensure that what I captured was accurate. This was part of the auditing approach (dependability criterion) that I employed as one of the trustworthiness criteria for testing rigor and triangulating data. I regrouped the participants into themes and read the participants' responses to my question individually at the time data was collected. I identified common themes, trends, and narratives. From the analysis, I identified themes from the responses, and from which different sub-themes also emerged. (*Metrix Display on page 64*)

Participants in each category diverse opinions and perspectives to questions asked from the interview guide. These were summarized into themes based on personal experience, close relatives, or community events. A higher proportion of the participants stated that racism is a major barrier to Black students transitioning to higher education. Others include discrimination, hardship, and lack of support. Also, opinions of participants geared towards academic and financial support in responding to support needed for transitioning, while the support was further broken down into advocacies and a better curriculum. However, most participants responded positively to parental, teachers and administrators' roles on Black students transitioning to higher education.

3.9 Evaluation and Justification of Methodological Choices

My choice for the qualitative methodology for a study that explored the intersection of racism, power and privilege as contexts that shape the experiences of Black high school students in Toronto as they try to survive Grades 11 and 12 and advance to higher education was suitable. This is because qualitative research allows a researcher to elicit the why's and how's of an experience. This is not the same for quantitative research. However, the major limitations of qualitative method are that it is time consuming to collect data and more time consuming to conduct the analysis. Also, there are ambiguities due to the notion of human perceptions because different things can have different meanings for individuals. More so, the researcher must go physically to collect data and it can be costly in terms of time and commitment (Creswell, 1994). Despite its disadvantages, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, as it is important to use this methodology for a study that is focused on lived experiences of the research participants. I was willing to make necessary efforts to get my desired results.

In using this methodology, there was need to use the exploratory design as it afforded me the framework to unearth information that were not quite common in the research space. Also, given the sensitive nature of the phenomenon, the exploratory design helped in creating new thinking and developing new perspectives of subject of racism, privilege, and power in relation to the experiences of Black high school students in Grade 11 and 12 in Toronto, including their experiences of finding spaces in higher institutions of learning.

The use of CRT in framing the study was also deemed appropriate as the theory accommodates the three objectives of the study. The first and second tenets of CRT, the ideas of race as a social construction and that racism are normal and not abnormal, provided a clear understanding of racism and its manifestation within the Canadian educational context and its structural impact on the educational attainments of Black students. This understanding helped to identify the kinds of support and self-help strategies required by Black students to overcome their barriers and transition to higher education. The fourth tenet, the idea of counter-storytelling helped in analyzing the educational climate in the study context. This helped provide an understanding of Black students' narratives involving marginalized experiences and how colleges can make necessary changes and become inclusive.

The fifth tenet, whiteness as property, explained faculty and administrative staff attitudes towards Black students. None of the other theories that were reviewed namely, hereditary theory,

cultural deprivation theory, cultural conflict theory, and structural theory could holistically explain the three objectives of the study as did CRT. The critical component of CRT also reinforces the need to adopt the framework for the study as it emphasizes the need to interrogate hegemonic discourses and the experience of dominance and structural and institutional discriminations that Black high school students face. CRT also connects easily with the exploratory design as well as with the analytical approaches of the study, that is, the content, thematic and discourse analysis.

3.10 Chapter Summary

In this section, I presented the introduction to the research method and methodology of my study. Qualitative research was utilized, and data was collected using the Case Study method. Individual interviews were conducted to collect data with open-ended questions. 27 research participants were interviewed from three institutions. A high school, a not-for-profit organization and an HE one. There were compelling reasons why I chose the institutions presented. The high school was chosen as it deals with a high number of Black and struggling students in Toronto. This allowed an insight to learn the issues that cause Black students to struggle. The second institution was a not-for-profit organization; this institution was chosen because it deals with a high number of Black students that dropped out from grades 11 and 12. The dropout/pushed out students helped me to gain deep understanding of what were the causes that led to the drop out and to get insight about the necessary support system. The third institution or HE was chosen to get insight about the self-efficacy skills and issues that lead to the success of Black students that are successful despite all adversities. The faculty and administrators from the three institutions also added insight to the success and shortcoming of Black students within their respected institution.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as the theoretical lens to interpret and analyze data, and the reason was that, not only because previous studies conducted on the issue of Black students utilized CRT (Dixson & Rousseau, 2018), but also that the framework helps to contest hegemonic discourses and discriminatory practices against minority groups. Interviews were recorded, notes were taken during interviews and randomly three cases were chosen to share with research participants to ensure that data collected was accurate. All three confirmed the accuracy of the data. Data was analyzed using content, thematic and discourse analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter reports on the data collection and provides evidence-based reports on data analysis. The beginning of the section gives the participants' demographics and a summarized view of different themes identified in the study. The central aspect of this section focuses on presenting the analysis of findings analysis of the research questions and uses excerpts from the interviews to justify each narration. The final part of the section explains the implication of the findings on the educational level of Black students in higher education. The results and findings in this study apply mainly to a specific population of Black students in schools and universities, namely the Dropout, Struggling, and Transition students. Other participants are the teachers and administrators who played significant roles in students' ability to complete school and transitioning into college or HE and on the consequences on their population.

The next section will present key themes of the study findings.

4.1 Presentation of Key Themes

Different themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data. The themes covered different factors that contributed to the high reported rate of school dropouts reported among Black students and the protective factors towards school completion and transition to college or HE. These themes are presented in Table 4.1. The themes were defined based on the participants' opinions to questions from the interview guide. They were summarized based on personal experience, experiences of close relatives, or community events. After identifying the key themes, I grouped some identified factors into sub-themes for easy analysis, reporting and comprehension. The key themes include barriers to Black students graduating/transitioning; support for Black students' learning experience; and students' self-help strategy for those transitioning into HE. For each of these 3 key main themes some sub-themes were identified and discussed in the section;; moreover each of these theme has been attributed to student, teacher/administrator and highlighted with a different color in the table (orange for themes belonging to students and light blue for themes related to administrators/teachers). I also explored the relationship and overlap of the themes and the most reported by different study participants (presented in Table 4. 2).

Coding: Codes used during Data Collection and Data Analysis

The following codes are used in this data analysis.

Table 4.1 Codes used to capture and analyze data

Codes	Group	Gender
S1 – S8	Struggling Students	60% Male 40% Female
D1 – D6	Drop out Students.	80% Male 20% Female
T1 – T7	Successfully Transitioned students.	50% Male 50% Female
AT1- AT6	Administrator and Teacher	30% Male 70% Female

1. “S” is used to identify Struggling students in Grades 11-12. An additional number 1-7 is used next to “S” to identify individual students’ comments. E.g., S1, S2, S3, S4 S5, S6 and S7.
2. “D” is used to identify high school drop-out students. The above additional number next to the letter “D” is used to identify individual high school students. D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6 and D7.
3. “T” is used to identify students who were successful in high school and who successfully transitioned to post-secondary. 1-6 is used additionally to the “T” to identify individual students’ comments. T1, T2, T3, T4, T4, T5 and T6.
4. “AT” is used to identify administrators and teachers, a number next to the letter “AT” is used to identify participants from this group AT1. AT2, AT3, AT4, AT5, AT6 and AT7.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes

<i>RQ1: To understand the challenges of Black students in grades 11 and 12 and during their learning journey transitioning to Higher Education</i>		<i>RQ2: To understand the kind of support needed by Black students in order to transit to HE by teachers, parents and institutions</i>	<i>RQ3: To identify self-help strategies used by Black students for overcoming their barriers for to transition to HE</i>
	Barriers to Black students graduating/ transitioning	Support for Black student learning experience	Students Self – help strategy
Student	Lack of parental support	Mentoring	Support Group and Community
	Poor teacher-student communication	Institutional Exposure and Environment	Mentoring
	Poor Attitudes of Faculty and Administrative Officers	Advocacy	Time management
	Lack of Positive Role Models	Parental support	Counseling
	Absence of Self-efficacy Skills	Availability of Skills and Programs	
	Eurocentric Education System		
	Lack of Supportive Environment		
	Poverty		
	Racism		
Teachers and administrator	Racial Bias in Staff Recruiting and in the curriculum	School experience	Counseling
	Unequal Treatment	Availability of skills and program	

Administrator	Poverty	Self-Advocacy	
	Racism		
	Lack of respect		
	Low expectations of teachers		

Table 2 tried to understand challenges of Black students in grade 11 and 12, the kind of support needed, and the necessary self-help strategies for overcoming barriers. The Table shows emerging themes and sub-themes drawn from the analysis of different interviews of participants. Per each of the research question posed, main sub-themes have been identified and they have been presented in the above table according with the student, the teacher and with the administrators' view. Overall, every research question have been reasonable represented with answer from all the three type of respondents, although research question n.1 displays more views than research question n. 2 and 3. In the sections here below all the sub-themes found will be analyzed and discussed one by one.

The themes will be further discussed in detail.

4.2 Understand the challenges of Black students in grades 11 and 12 and during their learning journey transitioning to HE.

Research Question 1: What are the reasons/barriers that hinder Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto?

While it is essential to identify common barriers or reasons that hinder Black students from surviving the grades and transitioning into Higher Education institutions, it is important to reiterate that this research question is only looking at exploring the study phenomenon from the perspectives of 27 Black students, administrators and teachers that participated in this study. The

reason for using a sample of 27 was because in qualitative study a sample of 25-30 is appropriate for collecting reasonable and interesting data as stated by (Mason, 2010 & Dworkin 2012).

This study explored Black students' experiences in high school and the factors that impact their transition to higher education. A structured in-depth interview guide was used to elicit information from participants. The thematic analysis highlights that the participants perceived some factors to facilitate the successful pursuit of transitioning to higher education from high school, while others were noted as barriers. As found in the study, the common barrier issues that the participants shared included parental factors, systemic racial bias in teacher recruitment/curriculum, poor teacher-student communication, poor attitudes of faculty and administrative officers, lack of positive role models, poor self-efficacy skills, unequal treatment, lack of respect, Eurocentric education, low expectation, lack of support, poverty, societal influence, generational disconnect and racism. These commonalities were apparent in the themes and sub-themes of the data and were all identified. I will discuss all these sub-themes one by one in the next section.

Factors that hinder Black students success and progress in grades 11 and 12 and their transition to HE

4.2.1 Lack of Parental Support

Data showed that a lack of parental support adversely affects Black students from surviving Grades 11 and 12 and transitioning to HE in Toronto. A struggling student highlighted some of the reasons why this may be so.

“For many black kids, parents are working, working class and they don't have time to get involved in their children's education. They don't participate in school activities and follow up with their children. And they don't attend parent-teacher interviews, or school council or any school activities”. (S2)

“Parental engagement for sure every year in my High School, my parents will engage me in questions like how are doing in your High School? The grades I was getting if I needed

help or not ... I was told that school is very, very important because of that I decided that throughout my four years I had a positive mindset and I set up my goal that I want to graduate from my school, and attend a specific university and to try to attain a specific career...". (T4)

The next section addresses the issues of poor teacher–student communication and its negative impact on students’ success

4.2.2 Poor Teacher-student Communication

Khan et al., (2017) argued that effective communication is an important skill that teachers must possess to transmit education, manage classrooms, and encourage students on to successful careers. The absence of effective communication skills can reduce students' chances of success both in school and outside it. Many of the participants reported that they lacked effective communication from many of their teachers and that this affected their academic success as well as their completion of high school. The excerpts in the following paragraphs show the views of some of the participants in respect of how poor teacher-student communication constitutes a barrier to Black students’ survival in high school and transition to HE.

“...barriers that hinder students from graduating from high school are many, for example students experience a lot of bullying by teachers, students against Black students, and then there is always discouragement mostly by the teacher.” (D2)

Another participant gave a positive response of how a teacher’s effective communication supported them usefully in becoming a better student. They said:

"Only one or two teachers had influence on me I can specifically remember my physics teacher who always wanted to pressure me to do extracurricular activities outside of school, things like playing soccer or doing some specific things outside of school... those teachers who helped me and gave me advice beyond high school". (T6)

Barriers to academic development and success are constructed when teachers profile their students and issue negative comments. Krampen (1987) correctly argues that negative perception and

comments play adverse roles in the results of low performing students. Limited support, negative rebukes, and remarks from teachers that portray students as dumb reduce the students' self-esteem and zeal to complete high school. As seen in the quotation below:

“My teachers are ignorant about why I am not doing well. They think I am lazy and don't work hard. What they don't understand is, it's them who are making it difficult for me and other black and brown students. They don't ever try to understand me and see that I am not lazy or a troublemaker at all.” (S8)

Although, this poor attitude and communication of teachers could cause result in a setback for some students, some other students respond positively by working hard to succeed even with minimal or no support, as seen in the excerpt below:

"I remembered back in grade 12, my teacher was really shocked. I was doing excellently well; I can remember she said: Carlos (invented), you are doing well. I told her I wanted to go to the university; I wanted to do great things in my life. She was like okay; I can see how well you are working, and I am going to help you. She would ask me any question. This was the same teacher who said I wasn't going to go to the university when I was in grade 10. You can decide to prove them wrong." (T7)

Faculty and administrators also constitute barriers to Black students' success and some of the themes that emerged from data in relation to this are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

4.2.3 Negative Attitudes of Faculty and Administrative Officers

Findings of this study shows that many Black students receive poor services and weak support from faculty staff and from administrative officers relative. Aside from non-teaching staff, the high school's administrative officers also include the principals, vice-principals, and counselors. Administrative officers mostly occupy the positions to support the students, especially the out-of-class supports, such as guidance and counseling. Participants reported a lack of support from administrative officers in the school, mostly due to being black. She said:

When a study participant who had transitioned from a high school to a higher institution was asked if administrative officers had influenced her success, she responded that no support was received from the administrative officers when she was in the college.

"I can categorically say now that the school Administrators did not have positive influence. The reason being that they are always busy, and they have other things to do. So, every time I tried to approach them ... well I was not always satisfied with the assistance per say they gave me ... and so because of that, I just knew that going to the Guidance Office or the Principal or vice principal's office was not going to be helpful." (T3)

Lack of help from teachers and administrative officers on what to do, when and how to do it, results in the Black student's loss of interest in continuing with school.

Among the factors that contribute to this disconnect between administrative officers and Black students is racial profiling (using race as grounds of crime suspicion), according to MacDonald & Fagan (2019), compared to white students, Black students would most likely receive no support or wrong advice from a counselor in high school.

"I remembered that I had an economic advisor who will always waste my time because I remember each time, I asked her a question she will be like you know you can always take a year off to sort it yourself. I made up my mind that I was not going to ask a question but tell my friends to repackage and ask these questions." (T4)

"I remembered that when I was in grade 9 and 10, my teachers were always thinking like oh you are going to finish and go to college ... they tell me you know I think you should go to college, and I remembered that something just pokes to me right there. I didn't recover ... I could remember that I really want to prove that, knowing that I want to get better with my life ... I wanted to succeed in class ... Basically, I was the only person in my class that used to be top. I was always proud of myself. I think what made me successful in school was that the drive of wanting to be better for myself and to prove other people wrong and that also to make parents proud helped me transition to university." (T1)

Earlier studies (English et al., 2016; Stevens et. al, 2018) argued that racial discrimination (which is an act of being treated differently from others because of involvement in a race) in school leads to depressive performances and impedes black and colored students' academic performance. Some of the experiences covered those mentioned by participants which include discriminatory attitudes, racial bias from many teachers and administrative officers with little or no support provide little when requested:

“The school’s teachers/administrators they've already made up their minds that this Black student is not going to succeed. So, they kind of push them towards academic, academic studies which does not take them to post-secondary, which does not take them to university. It can only take them to technical schools or community colleges” (S2)

“I knew that I could never do well because I was always put down if I speak to a teacher, they will say, who asked you, don't speak up and I say, but you asked me a question and I'm answering the question and they continue to tell me to be quiet.” (S2)

“I knew I was not going to succeed because they wouldn't let me, they wouldn't let me and if I do a paper equally with other children, mine will get the bad grades and the other kids will get a better grade.” (S2)

While academic staff teach students in the classroom, the performance of students is often impeded by non-academic circumstances. Thus, administrative staff are as crucial to the success of Black students' academic pursuits as the academic staff.

Besides the situational and institutional barriers that the findings show as presented in the preceding paragraphs, there are also barriers that are psychological or dispositional, relating to the impact of lack of positive role models for Black students as presented in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.2.4 Lack of Positive Role Models

Among the challenges which participants identified as militating against Black students quest for academic fulfillment, is the lack of positive role models. Findings of the study revealed most participants do not get someone who is worthy of imitation, or someone who could support them. As highlighted by one of the participants:

“Wish they can hire more black teachers and administrators to act as our role models. I’m sure that they at least will not treat us unfairly and they will support us and help us to succeed.” (S8)

Another participant stressed the importance of role modeling to Black students by stating that:

"One of the reasons I will say is "role models," having people that are around them that can show them the straight path, what I mean by that is that, it is easy to say don't do this, and don't do that, that is not the type of role model I am talking about ... the type of role model that be there for them as much as they can ... to let them know that it is okay, these are the steps to take to make you successful in life." (T5)

Role models will go a long way to influence the success of Black students by providing support and helping them achieve academic excellence required for a successful academic career. A common role model mentioned by some participants is the parent. A participant mentioned the low educational attainment of most parents of Black students affected the educational performance their children, as they often have no one to look up to, especially within the primary circle of influence which is the home. While on the other hand, one participant linked her academic performance to her parents' modeling. She stated:

“My mom's level of Education was high school. But she had always had dreams of going to university. She was born in Bermuda and then she came here. So, she came here to do Higher Learning, but she didn't end up continuing. So, for her, that kind of made it imperative that her children would go to university. So, my sister and I, we ended up going to university. But that was not because she went to university, but it's because she valued University education”. (T4)

According to Tan (1995), black minority students often seek role models that transcend academic life but importantly affects the after-school life who necessarily do not have to be of the same race or ethnicity.

"... you see those kids who are not involved in gangs or violence and who are still struggling in high school, those people are the people that I am talking about, those who need assistance and understanding of where I need to go, who do I approach for help to get to a certain level ... those lack of models I believe are one of the barriers that prevent Black students from graduating from high school..." (T1)

In addition to the above mentioned barriers, the next section presents the absence of self-efficacy skills in black students in grades 11 & 12 and the impact of this in their transition to HE.

4.2.5 Absence of *Self-efficacy Skills*

Students who believe and accept that they can achieve success in their academic pursuits would most likely complete high school.

"Well, I just felt bad thinking of school, the fighting with teachers to respect and all, just to leave me alone, made me to drop out. You know, school became threatening environment. It was better for me to leave. No one can bother me and suspend me and treat me unfairly the way I decide I go about my life. It's better that way". (D4)

"That should not come from parents but a drive that should come from the student. That is the only way they will succeed, and for that to happen, the self-resilience will, of course, must be built... I think those are the skills needed, although they are not into the school curriculum. Teachers will not teach it in school. So, it must come from inside ... this process of self-efficacy, self-resiliency absolutely will help... I strongly believe that as one of my philosophies, this self-efficacy, motivation and hard work all begins earlier in high school as early as age 6, 8, 7." (T6)

While it is acknowledged that the school curriculum often does not equip students with this set of soft skills, however, there is a consensus among participants that such skills can be learnt outside the university walls through after school and mentorship programs.

"Having programs that can also schedule teachers like I don't know, like after school, like the school club, like stamp clubs that enables student's creativity, Science and technology is very important as well...." (T2)

"That's the only way they will succeed and for that to happen the self-resilience will, of course, have to be built there are some skills I believe for sure that Black students can receive from mentorship programs for mentors, so you know the drive has to be there. Excuses may come as to why and why this will not be happening, and as a result, success is not going to come as it ought to." (T4)

The next section presents the effects and negative influences of Eurocentric education system to Black students in Toronto schools.

4.2.6 Eurocentric Education System

Though it might be challenging to develop an inclusive education system that considers Afrocentric experience, Afrocentric knowledge provides multi-centric education for all students (Dei, 1996).

There is white dominance at all levels of the educational sector, hence, decision-making regarding how the system operates, the curriculum and mode of teaching are naturally more likely to meet the needs of white students while overlooking the peculiarities of black ones, which negatively affects Black students' performance in school.

For instance, some participants revealed that:

"The barrier is rooted in the colonial education system. An education system that does not cater for Black students. So therefore, Ontario has approximately 80% of teachers that identify as white. So, we know we are dealing with... white dominance, white decision making, and you often find this in every school board, the general percentage breakdown, where you find that the majority are white teachers, they oversee all levels of the education system and how it is run. Therefore, the main barriers are lack of understanding of Black

students, the negative bias in stereotypes has continually fed into society that is regurgitated in education.” (T3)

Likewise, more participants explained that:

“The curriculum is taught by teachers because again, if we look at it in a few situations, we have like 67 percent of teachers being white. So, I think white teachers tend to teach from, you know, from the face of white normal activity. So even sometimes when the curriculum is different or there are opportunities to add diversity and inclusion, as well as anti-racism approaches, its being done through a lens or a stance of power and privilege.” (AT2)

“I think for a lot of Black students they don’t see themselves reflected in the curriculum. If they don’t see themselves represented in who’s teaching them, it makes it difficult for them to identify with education itself and the need to be successful, right.” (AT4)

“Even the curriculum like the language arts curriculum, that very broad curriculum where teachers can bring any book to support, meet those expectations but again, teachers teach from their own lens and the majority of them are white teachers who do not have a race equity lens, so they thought they’re only teaching from their own white Eurocentric perspective but that’s a huge problem with regards to equity, diversity and inclusion is not being manifested within the classroom, within the curriculum, within planning, within assessments, within programming in any shape or form.” (AT1)

In response to their idea on the educational system, some of the participants explained that even administrators should be conscious that their decision is not just for whites but for people of different races, cultures, and other peculiarities. There should be equal opportunities for all students to choose the learning trail that is best for them. This is reported in the quotations below:

“There is a need to ensure that the education system is inclusive for all. Even the education explains the curriculum that is very Eurocentric, and as a result our students, Black students in particular find it very difficult to engage in the material because they don’t have a point of reference where they see themselves reflected, nor is the material really relevant

or interesting to them, so we know that in order for our students to be critically engaged, there's should be a lot of project based learning..., we need to have a co-constructivist point of view in the classroom we need to make them agent of their change and do their things project based so they have the autonomy to choose their learning pathway.”(S2)

4.2.7 Lack of Supportive Environment

Lack of a supportive environment is another major factor. This unsupportive environment results from a lack of support from school administrators, teachers, peers, and even the students' immediate society. While in school, some Black students do not have the courage to seek counsel from school administrators simply because they do not have an established relationship with them. For instance, a respondent stated that:

“If there was no more diverse teaching staff and administration because I can't really relate to them either. I don't feel like I can just easily go up to them and talk to them.” (T2)

The lack of support in addition to marginalization could reflect negatively on Black students' performance. In some cases, the students lose interest in academic activities and are forced to withdraw from school. Regarding this, two participants shared:

“Whenever I go to my teachers for help, I don't get any extra help ... I'm not getting any support from my teachers or my administration, I'm being brushed off ...they kind of discouraged me.” (S3)

A respondent I interviewed expressed his mind that:

“I don't feel like they made my learning important as opposed to other students. He also explained that the first problem is that the schools are not capable of accepting Black students equal to non-Black students... Black students are always marginalized, and they are not given enough opportunities to succeed... Many of them don't come back to school. It's probably what happened to me. They don't come back to the school anymore because of the marginalization and because of the treatment and because of the mistreatment of schools.” (T1)

The unsupportive environment experienced by Black students is not limited to the teachers; in some cases, the parents are not there to offer the necessary support to their children need. As we know, educational achievement of students has been associated with parental engagement (Sylvestre, 2018). Students who have parental support have positive academic outcomes (Smith, 2000).

While describing what helped to get good grades and transition to higher institutions, one of the transitioned students shared how parental engagement provided the needed support to achieve his academic achievements.

A participant who was transitioning to higher education explained that:

“Don't stop what you start, finish. It was what my mum was telling me and definitely yes, she was there, emotionally, financially and spiritually all the way, she was supporting me.”

(T1)

Other participants who experienced the opposite also reported that:

“...parents are working-class for many black kids and don't have time to get involved in their children's education. They don't participate in school activities and follow up with their children. And they don't attend parent-teacher interviews, or school council or any school activities ...when no one is supportive of this kid, then they fall between the cracks. They don't do well, and they just drop out. We don't have anyone to help us with the homework that's been assigned.” (S6)

Beyond the aforementioned factors poverty was also identified as a hindrance to Black students' academic success. This is presented in the next section.

The following section presents how low expectations of Black students lead to negative impact and hinder their progress

4.2.8 Unequal Treatment by staff and administration

One of the major barriers that hinders Black students from succeeding in high school is unequal treatment. They get stricter penalties or punishments for their wrong doings compared to their White counterparts and this sometimes lead to loss of valuable time that could have

contributed to their academic growth. Studies have identified that Black students get racial microaggressions in schools which are characterized by racial jokes and verbal comments, segregated spaces, and unequal treatment, etc.

“Black student gets suspended for almost anything... For the young black girls, we’re told we have attitude or are argumentative if we stand up for ourselves when we feel like we’re being treated unfairly. I personally have felt this heavily while I was in school. I would always be made to feel like I deserve to be treated this way.” (S8)

History has also explored how black student Black students who had attended White schools in the past were given less preference than their white counterparts. Some of them had had to drop out while some had to face the rigor and consequences, still bearing the stigma. However, as statistics show almost a counterbalance in the rate of black and white students in high school and higher education, there are still some gaps that need to be filled, especially when students are transiting from one level to another.

In view of this, some participants explicitly described how unequal treatment is given to Black students for the same input/activity. Some participants reported:

In interviewing some participants, they explicitly mentioned how unequal treatment is given for the same input/activity. A respondent reported that:

“We know that Black students are expelled and suspended at higher rates than any other group, you know with the white child committing the same act and that child will not be pushed out of school, neither suspended nor expelled in any shape or form. Also, the relationships that are built between Black students and their teachers. And sometimes there’s like that lack of seeing Black students for their true humanity. So, we know, you know, statistically Black students are over-punished and over-served in schools.” (T2)

“Sometimes some teachers are biased when it comes to race and to certain students, sorry they would treat them differently from how they treat other students...” (S3)

“Well honestly, I just couldn’t take it anymore. It was too much to handle. I was fighting a whole system, I am only one person and I have no power, it’s just, I am fighting a system that was too much for me to deal with”. (D4)

The next section highlights lack of respect by teachers and administrators for Black students.

4.2.9 Lack of respect for Black Students

Some teachers and school administrators do not stop at disrespecting Black students but further go on to treat them harshly. These experiences build up in the students’ mind and eventually result in low self-esteem.

According to George Herbert Mead’s idea of the “looking-glass self”, psychologists perceive that one’s self-image is majorly derived from how one is viewed by others – family, friends, schools, and the larger society (Mead, 1967). Hence, when those views are negative and unfriendly, people tend to internalize them, and this leads to low self-esteem and eventually failure. In respect of this, some of the participants reported:

“Those offices’ staff are not capable of communicating with respect to kids who have been suspended. So, they kind of put them down. That put down when it’s repeated over and repeatedly, it gets into somebody’s head and kids don’t return back to school.” (D3)

“There are always reminders that associates blackness with failure. Logically we know it is not true but internally, I am sure it is affecting us. It is not fair to be treated like that...” (S1)

“Black students especially black boys have always been viewed as problematic. It seems like teachers are told/prepared to control them before anything even happens. Black student gets suspended for almost anything. If they speak, they are told to be quiet and if they are quiet then they are told to have no motivations. If first suspension is for one day, the second suspension becomes 2 day and the third suspension goes to 3 days and so on. This is frustrating and many black students like are struggling. Or the young black girls, we’re told we have attitude or are argumentative if we stand up for ourselves when we

feel like we're being treated unfairly. I personally have felt this heavily while in school. I would always be made to feel like I deserve to be treated this way". (S8)

4.2.10 Low Expectation of Teachers

A teacher's perception of his/her student crucially determines the kind of expectation, relationship, and interaction with such student (Williams, 2012

This negatively impacts their performance. Poor performance becomes a norm for the Black students, and they lose the desire and instinct to gear up their efforts towards improvement. In support of this, a participant stated that:

"...you have the low expectation of educators. And so, you have it, the teacher is not expecting much, you know, you learn how to deliver down. So, I think that it is a factor. A teacher further corroborated this finding by explaining that "there was this view that Black students and low-income students are not as educated, not as smart and there are lower expectations of them. So, you could see that in the programming, in the courses available at the high school level, while there should be a lot of push to college, rather some are pushed to the street." (S1)

Also conveyed from this issue of low expectation, some guidance counselors were reported to encourage Black students to settle for less rather than try to understand their challenges, recommend solutions, and support them to overcome such challenges. For instance, some participants stated that

"...we were faced with a racist and discrimination system where a lot of teachers and a lot of guidance counsellors instead thinking you need to support this kid; they stream the kids to apply for classes or they tell the kids don't take academic classes which limits them to go to university later". (D2)

“I know a lot of people from my high school who were streamlined into vocational courses, even though they didn't necessarily want to, but they were pushed towards it. I did notice a lot of the Black and brown students were kind of encouraged to take vocational Courses, applied courses. Yeah. So, they streamlined them into college rather than University”... (AT3)

The following section addresses the impact of lack of support by teachers and administrators towards Black students.

4. 2. 11 *Poverty' negative effect*

Data show that due to their low financial status, average Black parents are forced to work for longer hours to cater to their family's needs. In this process, they deny their children of quality time that could have been spent on tutoring and mentoring them.

A participant explained:

“Poverty plays a role because if both parents are not working, they cannot provide the support that will help the children such as the after-school programs. Also, because of poverty, some Black students have to combine work with academics. Hence, they have lesser time to study, lesser time to relax which cumulatively negatively affect their academic performance.” (S1)

Some of the students have experientially reported that many of them have had to combine schooling with working to meet financial responsibilities, and that this impacted their academic performance negatively.

The section below presents the impact of racism towards Black students.

4.2.12 Racism and its impact to Black Students Academic Success

Racism is unequal treatment based on racial identity (Shiao & Woody, 2021). The data generated from this study indicate that the participants' were treated differently and discriminated against based on their racial identity. The findings showed that racism from the perspective of the participants include factors such as unequal treatment, low expectations, and lack of support for Black students.

Although participants shared different experiences of racism in relation to high school and other social contexts, findings showed that their academic performance were largely adversely shaped by disabling racial treatments. They Reported that:

" ... sometimes racism in the high school level, and sometimes students are systematically relegated to the lower schools like essential, the applied school and discouraged to aim high in their educational pursuit." (D4)

"Sometimes some teachers are bias when it comes to race and to certain students, sorry they would treat them differently from how they treat other students..." (S3)

In justifying their points, some of them, based on experiences, explained the different issues around racism. Two of them reported:

"I feel like I've experienced racism from my teachers... I'm not getting any support from my teachers or my administration, I'm being brushed off..." (T5)

"They are faced with racist and discriminatory system where a lot of teachers and a lot of guidance counselors instead thinking you need to support this kid. They stream the kids to applied classes or they tell the kids to go to you know don't take academic classes which helps you to go to university later." (T3)

Moreover, the following factors further present how racial discrimination and bias impact Black students educational progress

4.2.13 Systemic Racial Bias in Staff Recruitment and the Curriculum

The findings of this study revealed that there is a lack of representations both in teachers' skin color and the academic curriculum, and that this impact many Black students' academic performance and progression to higher education. Equitable representation in the classroom is an essential component in development and academic success of students. Egalite et al., (2015) reported a significant relationship between student performance and the teacher's race. Some of the participants in this research avowed that lack of diversity in teacher representation makes them feel less represented. They noted:

"Another thing I think can hinder Black students is you looking around and not seeing a representation ... I think all my teachers have always been whites ... You know I never had a black teacher, so, I could not look unto them. In a sense, I was like, I did not have representation. In a way, it does not give a representation in our community and in teaching. And you are like always having this impression that is an exurbia" (T2)

"It should be hiring Black, more Black teachers, and more Black administrators, more black principals and more black superintendents. You know, the hierarchy of the education system is all white. You do not see any black Achievers, it's just a white hierarchy" (S4)

"You know, I'm talking about teachers, administrators, you know, there's just a lot of politics. It's a lot of politics, for small mistakes, Black students are suspended, ridiculed and made fun of, we have no choice than to drop out. It's easier to drop out and just work. Life as a Black student is difficult. You know, it's better to drop out at least to have peace of mind. I feel very, very bad that am not in school. I feel bad when the non-Black students graduate and go to the university. It's hard for the black child in this country". (D4)

The absence of representation in the classroom in a society where Blacks are in the minority further aggravates feelings of isolation. An earlier study that evaluated the school boards in Ontario reported whiteness and lack of teacher diversity which caused less representation and significantly affected Black students' performance in schoolwork (Abawi, 2018). The view of Participant S4 that *"lack of representation doesn't give a representation in our community and in teaching"* (S4) shows that the students perceive a separation between the school environment, schoolwork, and the socio-cultural realities of the community. The lack of self-identification with the learning environment with regards to the teaching of the curriculum negatively affects the learnings of

Black students. In the same vein, as seen in the below excerpts in the subsequent paragraphs, some students struggle with learning as they often cannot relate to some curriculum contents.

"One thing I think could also impact the Black students ... is about having to self-identify with your learning environment. What I mean by that is that some students are like what are we going to do, what are we going to see every day, they don't identify themselves with that. (I: does it have to do with the curriculum?) I think so ... when they read the books, a typical story of this and this, many of the writers communicate what the blacks are not able to relate ... but with more diversity, we are going to lean" (T3)

"Also, there are not enough black teachers; the majority of the teachers are white. In a school of 75 Percent Black students, the teachers and administrators are all white. You may see one or two teachers here and there but there aren't enough black teachers." (S2)

Many of the Black students perceived some curriculum contents to lack diversity, hence the difficulty to relate and understand it. The lopsided ethnic leaning towards whiteness among teachers coupled with lack of diversity in some contents of the curriculum contributes to the high rate of school dropouts among Black students in Toronto. A participant (Transition student) noted that all through the schooling days, she has only been taught by one teaching assistant who is Black. In her own words:

"I can remember that even in the university, I only had a teaching assistant (T.A) that was Black. I can really say I related so much with her ... it kind of gave me this break-in barriers and awkwardness, I learnt better, I could ask questions freely and do not have this feeling that is he going to perceive me as a dumb person by asking that question. That also had a great impact on me." (T1)

Stereotypical profiling of Black students contributes to the failure and drop-out rates of many Black students from high school Parks and Kennedy (2007). One of the participants from my study backed up this claim by saying *"There are always reminders that associates blackness with failure..." (S3)*

Another participant stated:

“Honestly I hope that em.. People like you would come to help Black students. I hope you are going to be a black teacher to help stop the discrimination and unfair treatment. We need more black teachers to help the little Black students to do well in school and finish high school. That’s just my own input and suggestion. Yeah”. (D4)

Parks and Kennedy (2007) further noted that teachers’ prejudgment and stereotypical racial profiling (safety, security or public protection relying on race, color, and ethnicity) of students affect their performance in and out of the classroom. They noted that it limits teacher-student interaction and reduces students’ confidence in the teacher's ability to help them.

The excerpt above further affirms this perspective whereby the participant noted she feels more at ease approaching the T.A and had no fear of asking for help because they share the same ethnicity. Another participant also noted the lack of diversity among teachers and in the school curriculum makes Black students struggle to relate with teachers and fully grasp what is taught. Thus, a system that embraces teacher diversity would reduce the stereotypical profiling of Black students and provide the support needed to enhance competencies and skills to graduate and achieve academic feats.

The next section addresses the support needed by Black students to transition to HE

4.3 Increase understanding of Black students’ needs from an educator’s perspective

Research Question 2: What kind of support is needed by Black students to transition to HE, by teachers, parents and institutions like high schools and HE’s?

From the data analysis, enabling factors include Mentoring, Exposure and Environment, Experience, Advocacies, Skills and Priorities, Programs, Time management, Unity and Encouragement. While it may be challenging to have a full grasp of all the factors that provide the level of support needed by Black students to transition to higher education; gaining insight from the perspectives of the students and those of the influencers including parents, guardians and teachers would help to provide rich understanding of the nature and type of support that Black

students need to transition successfully to HE. These factors are discussed thematically in the subsequent The following sections address the above stated supporting issues one by one.

4.3.1 Mentoring

Positive mentoring has been continuously identified to influence change. Mentorship increases the students' learning process to integrate into higher institutions both in theory and practice (Kerstin & Gunilla, 2017). Although a teacher noted that mentorship is a positive predicting factor, it is also difficult to get someone who would be committed and consistently willing to take up becoming a mentor without a break. Some of these reasons could be based on disparity in the race or community background, as mentioned in this excerpt.

"it's really difficult finding a teacher one can trust to be a guide and a mentor, binding an Affinity space, you know, join groups of 30 groups that reflect their Heritage, their background, their intersectionality because we've got Black student groups, Muslim student groups, you know, you've got those different groups and different intersectionality and also to that teacher too what I always suggest as well to the students, I encounter, I always get them to complete basic personality, learning intelligent test, like a multiple intelligence survey because I want students to know who they are as learners because a lot of students don't know why they're learning." (AT2)

In understanding the educational pursuits of Black students and their ideologies to higher education, the characters of the mentor, how they assist and motivate them through education is very important. This is further reflected in one of the quotations by an administrator.

"I also think that to find a mentor, they need to find somebody who looks like them, who they see, and they want to be like, you have to find not just one mentor but several mentors...learn from them so they could have the motivation to finish high school, I think it's very important... If you want to go to college, go through a college counselor, go to a college conference, go to a college workshop or information section." (AT5)

This is another student with negative family support untended I believe.

The next section addresses environmental factors that impact Black students' success.

4.3.2 Institutional Exposure and Environment

Studies have shown that varying components of social change such as environment, technology, social institutions, and population influence students' willingness to transit to higher education (Van Dither, Dochy & Segers, 2011) Leveraging teachers' and guidance advice provides the best and appropriate environmental and positive exposure for students to have adequate learning and the willingness to pursue higher education. This would enable them to understand societal values, components in them and how it factors before they make decisions on educational learning.

One of the students I interviewed elaborated more on it explaining that:

"... being successful comes from the environment ... the school that I went to before wasn't that great, I was hanging out with the wrong crowd of people, but once I switched school, and I was in a better environment, I really had to do what was best for me, and it was beneficial to be able to have the support and people who care about people who wanted to help me and wanted to see me do excellently and me." (T2)

Despite many Black students' difficulties, a supportive environment and continuous encouragement will positively influence higher educational pursuits and bring positive academic results and relevance to society. Another participant stated:

".... just an encouraging statement would help a lot like it would go a long way ... encouragement and patience". (S1)

The section below addresses Black student's experiences and how it plays a vital role in learning

4.3.3 The Impact of School Experience

Black student's experiences of culture, discrimination, and racism or a lack thereof played vital roles in supporting or deterring them from learning appropriately. Such experience impact them differently compared to their white counterparts as a result of

One of the teachers, explained how this concern is expressed by the students and the people teaching them. Teachers and students suffer and not be successful because of limited institutional support. He stated:

“Furthermore, we feared our experiences being told that we cannot be successful and these other ideas that we're suffering alone, not understanding that this is the experience of many individuals who look like us, who sound like us or behave like us. And how we push against that is to know that between ourselves, we have power in numbers. I always say... go through a village, and you have to build your village outside of yourself, which will give you access to a network.” (AT2)

The following section presents the vital role advocacies play to help Black students to succeed in grade 11 & 12 and their transition to HE.

4.3.4 Advocacy and Self-Advocacy

Advocacy is an activity that is used to influence decisions with economic, social, and political institutions. Using advocacy frequently has remained a forefront measure to achieve solidarity in the rights and privileges of citizens within a given community or group (Fredriksson & Tritter, 2017).

One of the drop-out students I interviewed reported:

“I feel as though Black students should not accept the bare minimum; I feel like they should be fighting for the extra help they should be advocating as well as they should be speaking with each other in regard to the struggles that they're all facing” (D1)

A recent study (Wood et al., 2021) on 'Exploring advocacy practices for interpersonal violence survivors on college campuses' reported that campus advocacy helped build on the students' existing rights, focusing on empowerment, resource provision, and providing social support during college experience.

A call was made for a public hearing to explain how Black students could be helped to navigate the existing unequal treatment in the education system. In my interview with one of the students, he explained how some of the students do not have the opportunity to speak up because of their limitation in their environment. Also, another student noted the importance of advocacy and emphasized the need to change narratives of not self-advocating emanating from culture and society. Two participants further shared:

“If they gave the option and opportunity to the students who maybe did not understand what they were taught ... I feel as though they made time to take those students aside and break down the Lesson plan in a way that they would understand and provide all the extra support that they need out even if it is outside of the classroom ... I feel as though that would have ensured success.” (T2)

“I would really encourage Black students to think about self-advocacy as not being rude. I think so often we're taught within our own cultures that, you know, we should not question authority, we must respect our elders, but I think that we have to kind of shift that narrative. So that Black students understand that self-advocacy is self-empowerment, it's not something that should be shied away from.” (T5)

In an interview with one of the dropouts, he explained that:

“I feel as though Black students should not accept the bare minimum. He feels like they should be fighting for the extra help they should be advocating as well as they should be speaking with each other regarding the struggles that they are all facing.” (D3)

By giving a further comparative analysis, I discovered that even the teachers were not left out in advocating for self-speaking on one's interest. The teacher explained that he would encourage Black students to think about self-advocacy as not being rude.

“I think so often we are taught within our own cultures that; you know, we should not question authority. We must respect our elders, but we have to kind of shift that narrative. So that Black students understand that self-advocacy is self-empowerment, it should not be shielded away from.” (AT5)

The following section addresses skills and programs that support students to succeed.

4.3.5 Availability of Skills and Programs

In advancing pathways for better learning outcomes, it is essential to motivate students to learn different skills and enroll in different school programs. The students also need to help themselves by understanding how important they need different skill sets to improve their performance. In my interview with them, I understood that the availability of different skill acquisition programs was limited, and the support received by Black students was minimal—however, some students mentioned that they have figured out and prioritized skills that would support their educational level.

Some of the participants explained that:

“I think, it would really help because, you know, as a teacher you know, you have, you have your relationships with your students, but when you do extracurricular activities with them, you build a different type of relationship. When you have a different level of influence over that student in terms of really encouraging them and supporting them outside of the classroom, it's outside of the curriculum. So, I think those programs are so important. There need to be multiple programs like that. They should really be in every single school.” (AT1)

The next section deals with some effective self-help strategies used by Black students to overcome barriers.

4.4 Effective self-help strategies to improve Black students' experiences, increase their retention rate within Toronto Grade 11 and 12 and their transition to HE.

Research Question 3: What are the effective self-help strategies used by Black students for overcoming their barriers and to transition to HE?

Black students face barriers that make it difficult for them to achieve academic success and also transition to university or college. This research question highlights the individual efforts and resources of the students towards academic success and successful transition to higher education. In my study, participants shared effective self-help strategies to improve their school experiences, overcome barriers, and transition to higher education. The themes identified here are support groups, mentorship, time management, counseling, and self-advocacy. The data in support of these themes are presented in the paragraphs that follow.

4.4.1 Support Groups and Communities

One primary self-help strategy to overcome barriers and transition to higher education is having a network of support groups of colleagues sharing similar educational challenges and the same goal of transitioning to higher institutions. A network of support groups refers to students with the same issues, concerns, and shared experiences that turn to each other to share coping strategies, get empowered, and have a sense of community. One of the higher education students interviewed explained how students need to take responsibility in creating support groups. He said that:

“We can find, and form groups like themselves, people who are struggling, people who want to succeed and do it together because when people come together and unite and do things together, it is better than when they do it individually.” (T6)

Also, another participant said:

"I think once they figure out what their goal is after High School, they need to do all the research possible to figure out how they need to, what they need to do in order to get to the goal they want to achieve, but I think finding out like that angle is the biggest hurdle. Also, making a community for themselves, so that they know if one of their friends is falling behind, they can help them." (T4)

In addition, this perceived peer support associated with support groups is identified to be linked with students' motivation and engagement in learning activities and their performance (Dupont, Galant & Nils, 2015). The participant further shared:

"I think if students made more of a community within themselves inside the high school, they could make and guide each other towards finding resources. Also, a teacher backed up what the student reported when he said there is the need to develop critical communities of like-minded friends for them to have someone to tell them things to do from a critical view." (T2)

When I further probed the importance of community as a support group, one of the teachers explained that Black students need to build their communities. He said:

"I think that the Black students need to make community connections because you are not going to get everything from the school. Sometimes you go to a school and maybe will not connect with anybody, maybe you don't really have a safe space to go to in that school with either friend, a guidance department at MIT and even your teachers, or maybe there's a team or a club that you are interested in." (T1)

One of the administrators backed up the student's argument on the importance of support groups for educational learning. The administrator shared:

"So, again, it is imperative to connect with community organizations that can also help you. Not everything will come from the school. I know that they're like united... all these

different programs and groups that are black focused. And get support from community-based organizations to support them with their homework and assignments." (AT2)

The subsequent section presents data that highlight the importance of time management as a self-help resource that can lead to Black students' success.

4.4.2 Time management

Time management focus on setting priorities, reducing time spent on non-priorities and the final implementation of goals (Almarri, 2019).

. A study by Macan (1990) explained that students who perceived control of their time would have greater evaluations of their performance, greater work, and life satisfaction, with less tensions and stress that might surround their activities. One of the higher students, during my interview said:

"...figuring out how to stay on top of all of their responsibilities in school, outside of school, organizing their time-to-time management would be the best way to achieve better performance." (T5)

Effective time management is associated with greater academic performance, academic success and higher educational outcomes (Adams & Blair, 2019).

In my interview with the students, they explained how time management had helped them before and how it could help even after school.

This was reported by one of the teachers who stated:

"I think once they figure out what their goal is after High School, they need to do all the research possible to figure out what they need to do and how they need to in order to get to the goal they want to achieve, but I think finding out from that angle is the biggest hurdle. Figuring out how to stay on top of all of their responsibilities in school, outside of school, organizing their time from time to time is a good time management skill to have." (T3)

The next section addresses the role of mentoring in overall student performance.

4.4.3 Mentoring

Mentoring involves informal transmission of knowledge, social values, capital, and psychological support the protégé needs as relevant to work-in-progress (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015). Mentorship could be explained as a step further into self-help strategies, which Black students perceived as helpful for transitioning into higher education. Some of the teachers and administrators shared that mentorship is important in ensuring academic success and sustainability of Black students.

One of them said that:

“Mentorship for Black students with experienced Black professionals and senior students is to mentor the younger students. So, they could navigate the High School successfully. I think there need to be more opportunities for tutoring services and providing mentorship to struggling students.” (AT2)

In this study, participants emphasized the need to have mentors in caring, supportive adults in the school system who identifies with Black student's struggles and challenges, guidance, advocate on behalf of students' academic and non-academic needs, pass on knowledge, share experience, reinforce positive academic performance and student behavior, provide a background for more sound judgment, and establish friendship. Two administrators advocated for proper mentoring skills and platforms for students to express themselves and to take up the responsibility to find a suitable mentor that would guide them. One of the administrators said:

“I would encourage Black students to find that black caring adult in the building.” Furthermore, of course, ideally, if you can find a black educator, that would be the first stop.” (AT6)

Another educator who has experience with Black students also expressed saying:

“I think to find a mentor, they need to find somebody who looks like them, whom they see, and they want to be like, you have to find one mentor but several mentors...learn from them so they could have the motivation to finish high school, I think it is very important.” (AT2)

The study, shows that both the teachers and students shared the view of enlisting the help of an adult who is in the school system and can be trusted as a mentor just like the counselor,

teacher, or even senior students in providing guidance for student's success and transitioning. One of the teachers mentioned: *It's really finding a teacher I can trust to be a guide and a mentor, binding an Affinity space.*” (AT1)

In explaining the opinion of students as to what they consider with their guidance, he said:

“I think if you are in a school and you can find that that caring adult who is black like you, maybe you can say, hey, okay, I see this black teacher, I do not have a course with them, but I know that they are part of this club, or I just know that they are open to having a conversation.” (S2)

The next section presents the importance of counseling to lead to academic success.

4.4.4 Counseling

Engaging the expertise of counselors who provide efficient guidance was another effective self-help strategy that was highlighted for Black students to transition to Higher Education. Counselors support students directly in their academic life to foster, promote, and increase interpersonal competencies and academic achievement (Shaterloo & Muhammadyari, 2011). Counseling improves the experiences of students needed to overcome barriers and successful transition to university or college.

Participants believed lack of proper counseling hinders students from attaining their potential in school. Two of the teachers interviewed emphasized the role of counselors in assisting student's performance by noting.

“We need to have counselors who counsel and provide more understanding to the child. We know that many students are streamed into pathways where the possibilities of future aspirations are limited by lowering their employment expectations. Teachers and guidance counselors need to work together.” (AT2)

“We need to be educated on how you support a student versus our first suggestion to have a student removed. Look, if we do not think that they have the ability, the first thing we do is send them to the guidance counselor and their parents and pressure them to go into a different stream, when what we should be doing is focusing on what are the ways I can help the student to reach potential.” (AT3)

Some of the students also that counselling is an important strategy to achieve more success. One of the drop-out participants agreed that it is good to have someone who can counsel and encourage students to build academic self-confidence, which is imperative to Black student's academic success and transition to HE.

"My guidance counselor is very supportive and would celebrate my little successes along the way, and so if I did well on a test or if I did well on an exam or an assignment, she would celebrate." (T4)

The views of these participants show that counseling has a positive impact on the academic performance of students. These self-help strategies identified from the data generated for this study are consistent with existing literature (Devi et al., 2013), that shows that counseling has a positive impact on the academic performance of students.

The next section presents the need f

The final part of this section is the section summary.

4.5 Unique Data:

There were three pieces of unique data, namely negative unnecessary parental pressure; transitioned student unique experience and very strong impact of bad experience as a result of discrimination and racism.

4.5.1 Negative Parental Pressure

Morgan, Leenman, Todd, and Weeden (2013) state that unnecessary pressure produces negative impact on students' academic achievement. Data from one student confirms that though parents were engaged in child's school the pressures produced negative impact. The student shared:

"My parents are supportive in a way that they keep me grounded to do my schoolwork, to read books, to feed me, and clean my clothes, and stay out of trouble. My parents are pressuring me to become a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer. It doesn't matter to them that that is not what I dream of becoming. My parents don't even know how much I am

struggling to stay in school and that everyday becoming more difficult with no one on my side.” (S7)

4.6 Chapter Summary

The data presentation section reports on data collection and provides evidence based report on data analysis. I presented the data and identified the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data in line with the three research questions for this study. The themes covered are parental factors; systemic racial biases, poor teacher-student communication; lack of positive role model; absence of self-efficacy skills; unequal treatment, lack of respect; low expectation; lack of support, poverty; and mentoring. Furthermore, the themes were developed in into themes and sub-themes. I presented the key themes that were generated from different participants in the study.

Moreover, I provided a metrics display generated themes with the participants and gave a summary of their responses to each generated theme. The interviews were analyzed based on objectives. Each objective has its own different themes, which were first explained and then backed up by excerpts from the data transcripts. Some of the themes have more than one quotation and this was needed to corroborate responses from other participants.

It is important to mention that the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic posed significant challenges which affected this research study. The data collection method changed from physical to virtual meetings using online platforms such as Zoom which had its disadvantages as it posed privacy issues. Also, there were the issues of anonymity, confidentiality, and conflict of interest in data collection. Notwithstanding, the identified challenges were addressed while conducting the research. Additional efforts and resources were invested in order to organize participant’s interviews in the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

I can safely conclude that CRT may play an important role in education of Black students, challenge the status quo in the education system, serves as a framework to eliminate societal injustices, and challenges the argument that the race issue in the education is an isolated incident.

The next section presents the discussion on the key themes; the challenges of Black students; parental factors impacting students' educational achievement; racial biases; teacher student communication, poverty; racism and the role of mentoring in student success or hindrances.'

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

5.0 Introduction

This section discusses, analyzes and interprets the findings of the study. The section also situates the findings of the study within existing literature that are relevant to the data and to the research questions. It also provided the researcher's perspective on the themes that emerged from the analysis of data and connections are made to critical race theory, which is the theoretical framework adopted for the study. This discussion is executed on a theme-by-theme basis.

5.1 Challenges of Black students:

Challenges of Black students in grades 11 and 12 and during their learning journey transitioning to higher institutions include parental factors, systemic racial bias in staff recruitment, curriculum development, poor attitudes of faculty and administrative officers, lack of positive role models, absence of self-efficacy skills, unequal treatment (racism), lack of respect, Eurocentric education system, low expectation, lack of support, poverty as well as racism. The next section is about parental factors.

5.2 Parental Factors

The study found that parental factors can be a causal factor to either positive or negative academic outcomes. Parental engagement could serve as a motivating factor that can help students in developing a positive mindset towards learning. Parental engagement helps students identify the need to set great academic goals as well as the need to be diligent in working towards the goal.

The data showed that because most of these parents are minorities (Black), they probably suffer gender-pay gaps, therefore, they engage in extra work in order to make ends meet. This is consistent with the argument of critical race theory (CRT) which sees whiteness as property, that is, the right to use and enjoyment; the right to status and property; the right to exclude; the lack of color-blindness; the partiality of the law; and inequality that exists in social and economic spaces. This impels people (parents) of color to work double the hours of their White contemporaries to earn half the economic and social privileges. This consequently affects the amount of time parents in this category spend with their Black children who are in high school and who need academic

support. Despite motivation and role modeling, parental factors can also influence students' academic performance through other pathways such as moral and financial (Hanif & Alwi, 2019). The lack of parental financial and moral support impacts student's self-efficacy which may subsequently affect student achievement and the transition to HE.

5.2.1 Forms of Parental Involvement:

Parental involvement includes checking of studies, discussion about social life in school, frequent contact with teachers, encouragement to participate in co-curricular activities and non-involvement of children in family disputes. Financially, parents can also help their children by not involving them in the discussion of financial problems, the bearing of college expenses, and provision of pocket money, gifts, and cash prizes.

The kind of economic and social reality that these bring have adverse impact on the children of Black parents who are victims of such economic structure. This impact further constitutes barriers capable of hindering such children from transitioning into HE. A study by Topor et al. (2010) found that parental engagement plays a greater role in students' academic performance. As well the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children affects student's self-efficacy skills negatively. CRT shows that the education system may not be favorable and accommodating the needs Black student's success.

5.2.2 Parental Role Modeling

Aside from parental engagement which might come in the form of role modeling, motivation, financial and moral support, the findings also support that parents' socio-economic characteristics (such as educational status) might also be another possible challenge for Black students.

This study found that students tend to use their parents as standards for setting their own academic goals. This often works out fine for white students but not for many of the Black ones whose parents are not well educated. A study by Norsuhaily, Ibrahim & Mudassir (2017) indicates that students from parents with high educational qualifications perform better than their counterparts from parents who have low or no formal education.

This finding in the context of the black versus white can also be explained by the fact that white parents have good knowledge of how the education system works and can easily help their wards navigate the system while many of the black parents have poor knowledge of the system

offering little or no help to their wards. The inability of Black parents navigating the education system shows social injustice that CRT tries to address; that may impacts subsequently the academic achievement of Black students and their self-efficacy skills.

5.2.3 Staff Recruitment and Racial Bias

As CRT argues racism plays an important role in education system. For example in this study racial bias in staff recruitment is identified. Many students in this study complained about the low recruitment of Black teachers as well as difficulty in understanding the available white teachers properly. This study found that many Black students have no or very few teachers to identify with in terms of color/race and as a result, are disinterested in attempting to understand and relate with the available white teachers. As a result, they face a major challenge that limits their chances of transitioning to higher educational institutions results in lack of self-efficacy

Lack of adequate diversity in the Canadian education sector put Black students in a situation where their academic activities are entirely separated from their socio-cultural realities. Hence, these students begin to struggle and eventually have lower chances of transitioning to higher education.

5.2.4 Faculty and Administrative Staffs' Poor Attitude

This study found poor attitudes of faculty and administrative officers as another challenge hindering Black students from transitioning into higher education. It was discovered in this study that principals, teachers, and counselors who are meant to assist in directing and mentoring students. They generally present themselves as too engaged when approached by Black students for such purposes. In other instances, administrators get fed up with Black students who have special needs as they might have been approaching them for help more frequently. In both cases as found in this study students are discouraged from directly approaching school administrators for necessary help. While some of these Black students still struggle to seek necessary help indirectly through their friends, others tend to keep their problems to themselves and therefore face challenges in navigating through the academic system. This is another example of racism, discrimination and microaggressions identified by CRT stating that the notion that race issue is not an isolated incident but a systemic issue.

This implies that the impact of school leadership, administrators and counsellors on student outcomes is often moderated by other factors such as the school environment, classroom procedures, and most importantly the quality of teachers. However, lack of necessary support from these administrators creates challenges that might limit Black students' chances of transitioning to higher education and their self-efficacy skills

5.2.5 Poor teacher-student communication

Another set of factors that were identified as hindering Black students from transitioning into higher education is the teacher-related factors – Poor teacher-student communication, lack of respect from the teachers and low expectations. According to Williams (2012), a teacher's perception of his/her student crucially determines the kind of expectation, relationship, and interaction with such students. Hence, a teacher's negative or poor perception of his/her student could limit the students' chances of succeeding. As argued by Williams (2012), Song (2012) and Khan, Khan, Zia-Ul-Islam & Khan (2017) students are motivated to strive for success when they receive positive affirmations and words of encouragement from their teachers and vice versa.

5.2.6 Teachers Low Expectation

Some teachers have low expectations of their Black students and often deny them the same level of support and respect which they accord to other kids. This might play down on the student's level of self-esteem as well as academic performance. Evidently, struggling Black students in this study complained of being brushed off by their teachers whenever they seek any extra help. This setback is however not peculiar to the teachers alone, it sometimes comes from counsellors and other administrators as well.

5.2.7 Lack of Black teacher Models

The Toronto Afrocentric School is a great example that having a Black teacher role model increase graduation rate (Galabuzi, 2008).

The study further stated that students tend to respond positively to demographically similar role models/mentors through lifted motivation and personal expectations. However, findings from this study revealed that Black students in Canada lack access to necessary black role models who can motivate and uplift their expectations.

In view of poor teacher-student communication, low teacher expectation, and lack of Black teacher models, it is expected, as described in the first tenet of CRT, that Black students will be stereotyped and socially constructed as inferior and failures. As shown by the data generated and analyzed in my study, this naming and labeling limit the chances and opportunities of Black students in the selected high schools in Toronto. Analysis of data showed that Black students lack mentors, usually unmotivated, and have lower odds of transitioning into higher education when compared to the White counterparts. Data also showed that absence of role model for Black students increases their degree of success of ONABSE (2015) and Jeynes (2003) also corroborated this.

5.2.8 Poverty

This study found that Black students often combine work with academics as the price for being poor. Consequently, these students have lesser time to dedicate to academic works and therefore have a decreased chance of transitioning into higher education. In another way, financial difficulties may as well hinder black parents from providing their needy children access to tutors who can help develop their capacity. The extent to which poverty influences students' performance is better captured by Lacour & Tissington (2011) who described poverty/financial difficulty as the extent to which an individual does without necessary resources. Hence, financial difficulties remain a major barrier to Black students many of whom are from middle- or low-income households. Poverty may impacts the self-efficacy of both Black students and their parents and subsequently impacts students' academic achievement.

Annie of Casy Foundation (2017a) state that Black students face educational barriers that causes the achievement gap than white students; Black students are more likely to live in poverty and have less access to fresh and healthy food, faced with environmental hazards as well less opportunity to community programs and less opportunity to receive assistance or help for their family needs which negatively affects achievement.

5.2.9 Eurocentric Education System

Similar to the findings by Okusolubo (2018), the data from study also identified that the Eurocentric education system is another limiting factor negatively impacting Black students' chances of transitioning into higher education. As a result of white dominance in the Canadian education sector, decisions and educational programs are subconsciously designed to meet the

needs of the white student, with little or no consideration for the black. Owing to white dominance, negative bias in stereotypes has continually been fed into society. Findings from this study show that such movies, related books, and others create difficulties for Black students who often find them demeaning. The Afrocentric School is a primary example that indicted that Black students perform well when educated in the context of Afrocentric rather than Eurocentric education system. CRT indicated that it is vital to eliminate systemic racism within the Eurocentric education system.

5.2.10 Racism

This study discovered that the challenges posed by racism cannot be over-emphasized. The fundamental assumption of CRT is that the expression of racism in everyday discourse and practice in society is historically and contextually specific; and the educational system in Toronto helps to reproduce this menace. For those who live in a predominantly white society such as Canada, race becomes a crucial factor that must be considered in everything they do. Oftentimes, racism against Black students often comes in many forms such as unequal treatment, segregation, low expectations, and verbal rebuke. Taking unequal treatment as an example, participants from this study reported that Black students are being suspended and expelled at higher rates compared to whites.

This study also found that many Black students are being discouraged from aiming high in their educational pursuits just because of racial stereotyping (Lankin, Maloney, and Ryder, 2016). Black students are often relegated to lower schools such as the essential and the applied schools. Black students get little or no help when they need it, they are rather being brushed off just because they are Black. Findings here show that racism is the bigger challenge hindering Black students from transitioning into higher education and therefore should be given maximum attention.

The section that follows addresses the second research question of the study related to understanding Black students' needs.

5.3 Understanding Black student's Needs and Supports'

The second objective aims at increasing the understanding of Black students' needs from an educator's perspective. In further discussion, the data from the study explains the role of mentoring, exposure and environment, impact of experiences, advocacies, skills, and programs. It also reports the positive influence of mentoring on Black student's education. Some of the teachers

and administrators have explained how this factor has been very useful to curtail academic challenges and enhances Black students self-efficacy skills

5.3.1 Mentoring

Data indicated that Black students did not receive the needed mentoring from teachers, administrator and faculty and that attributed to dropping out and struggling. Mentoring involves the relationship that exists between the school and student, between the teachers and the students and between the student and student, who could be programmatic or administrative in nature and process (Gershenfeld, 2014).

Mentoring is a catalyst for positive influence in educational or academic space and is an important factor in determining student performance (Fox, et. al 2010).

The data indicated that Black students described that discrimination in mentoring process from their counsellors, the pattern of mentorship given to them was different from the ones given to other race in the school. Mentoring has a positive influence on psychosocial benefits and better success. From the analysis in this study, the administrators also explained that the role of mentoring is attributed to getting students a better chance of success and transition. In addressing this, the administrator understands how to transit mentoring strategies to the target beneficiaries and meeting their various challenges in school.

5.3.2 Environmental Factors

Data confirmed that environmental factors such as school culture, peer, family ties, etc. cause a change in student-teacher/administrator relationship, which aids their willingness to either transition or drop out. Based on race or color, people are denied access to residence in a community or for those who stayed, are being frustrated by racial misconduct in the area. These factors are also narrowed to education to cause students reaction to how they are being treated in the environment, most especially by the administrators/teachers. As some students expressed the advantage of how it is successful based on the benefit and support of people around, some others debunked it, stating the non-care attitude in the environment they find themselves in.

One of the teachers said that there is a need for students to develop themselves, exposing themselves to different skills and give themselves time for their academics which forms a major part of their experience from school to outer space. This implies that high self-efficacy is a major factor in student academic success.

5.3.3 Advocacy

Data findings confirm that one of the factors flagged for measuring success in a student's education is tied to advocacy... Information from the different participants' summarizes that students have a deliberate self-role in advocacy, thereby improving fundamental rights of students on schooling in Canada. Wood et. al (2021) summarized the role of advocacy on building citizen's rights and privileges, which also builds their competence in advocating for social support in schools. Students' involvement in advocacy could bring self-belief systems and self-empowerment, which is a major catalyst for reaching their full potential.

5.3.4 Role of Extracurricular Activities

Malik (2017) claims that activities that students engage in after school hours or outside the classroom are acknowledged as extracurricular activities. Malik (2017) further adds that extracurricular activities are confidence booster, strong bodies make strong minds, increase time management skills, increase punctuality and broadens students' social connection. School administrators and teachers have always supported extracurricular activities away from school subjects. This has aimed for better learning outcomes and helped start educational balance confirmed by data findings. In a summary, skill sets have helped students learn more, better program their developmental priorities, and improve their general performance (Huang & Chang, 2004). The study identified that Black students who are engaged in extracurricular activities tend to have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy skills; which may have a positive impact on academic achievement.

The following section looks at the third research question on how to improve Black students' experiences.

5.4 Improve Black students Experiences

The third objective was to improve Black students' experiences, increase their retention rate within Toronto Grade 11 and 12 and their transition to Higher Education. This part discusses the implications of the findings that emerged from the data that responds to the research question on the effective self-help strategies used by Black students for overcoming barriers to their academic success and successfully transitioning to Higher Education.

The self-help strategies identified in the data are support groups, time management, mentoring, counselling, self-advocacy, and advocacy for better learning. Examining the challenges of Black students in grades 11 and 12 to successfully transition to Higher Education such as parental factors, systemic racial bias in staff recruitment and curriculum development, poor attitudes of faculty and administrative officers, lack of positive role models, absence of self-efficacy skills, unequal treatment, lack of respect, Eurocentric education system, low expectation, lack of support, poverty as well as racism. The self-help strategies identified are critical to achieving the objectives of this study, which is to improve Black students' experiences, increase their retention rate within Toronto grade 11 and 12 and their transition to Higher Education.

5.4.1 Support Groups

The data from participants of this study communicated the need to have a network of support groups where Black students going through the same educational challenges, concerns, and common experiences and having the same goal of transitioning can come together as a community to provide support. The need for a network of support groups may stem from the perception that Black students see little congruence between their educational experience in their predominantly white schools with their Eurocentric curriculum and their cultural and racial background (Rovai, Gallien & Wighting, 2005; Hale-Benson, 1986). Hence, coming together as a community is to augment and strengthen their learning process as Black students. Also, the participants may find the need for support groups among themselves important because of the absence of necessary support from family, teachers, and school administrators.

5.4.2 Time Management Issues

The data from participants of this study also noted the importance of time management in their approach to transitioning to HE. In as much as Black students' face structural and economic challenges, barriers to their academic achievement and transitioning to Higher Education could also stem from their personal inefficiency such as poor planning and procrastination which inadvertently can lead to poor academic performance. Students generally, apart from attending classes, completing assignments, and studying for examinations, have other daily routines of lifestyle to create balance between academics and extracurricular activities. In addition, some Black students might need to combine jobs to their already busy academic schedules due to low socioeconomic status of the family.

However, data indicated finding time to do all this might be challenging hence the need for good time management skills. Participants opined that once they can do proper planning and stay organized, they will be constantly aware of their responsibilities and activities needed for transitioning to Higher Education. Similarly, time management is significantly positively correlated to the academic achievement of secondary students (Payel & Saradindu, 2021).

5.4.3 Mentoring

Analysis from a study that examined the extent to which students adopted the idea that having mentors of their own race and gender matters revealed that having a mentor of one's own gender or race was felt to be important by many students, especially women and students of color. Students who had a mentor of their own gender or race reported receiving more help (Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby & Muller, 2011). This finding agrees with participants' perception of having an adult in the school system who can identify with their realities as Black students.

Another theme that emerged from the data addressing self-help strategies for successful transitioning is mentoring. The need to have mentors in caring, supportive adults in the school system who can identify with Black students' struggles and challenges, provide guidance, advocate on behalf of students' academic and non-academic needs, pass on knowledge and share experience, is another form of support with a different relationship dynamic from the support groups. This mentor-student relationship involves someone more experienced providing guidance to the less experienced person and it is based on trust (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019).

5.4.4 Counseling

Counseling is helping someone assess a situation from all sides, consider all options, and allowing people to decide for themselves which option is the best for them (Ramakrishnan, 2006). Participants of this study emphasize the importance of receiving counsel that will aid their transitioning. A lot of times the students do not have information or ideas to work with, so they focus on classes and school activities that are not relevant to their transitioning. To ensure successful transitioning and increased retention rate, Mentors and counselors recommend to be engaged in the school process. As literature has shown, mentorship and counseling has a positive effect on student's academic performance and outcomes (Guhan, Krishnan, Darshini, Abraham & Thomas,).

5.4.5 Self-advocacy

As defined in the literature, self-advocacy is the ability to communicate one's needs and wants and to make decisions about the supports needed to achieve them (Daly-Cano, Vaccaro & Newman, 2015; Stodden, Conway, & Chang, 2003). Many students are alienated, uninvolved, and discouraged by school and are given little or no control over decisions that affect their education (Harris, 2008). The participants of this study advocate for speaking up on their self-interests which includes requiring their teachers, administrators and the school in general for better learning experience and improved curriculum as a prerequisite for academic success and eliminating barriers to transitioning which correlates with researches that shows self-advocacy skills are related to academic performance and successful adaptation to college (Adams & Proctor, 2010; Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Hadley, 2006; Murray, Lombardi, & Kosty, 2014; Thomas & Wehmeyer, 2005).

Students speaking up for their self-interest could involve communicating publicly, assertively, and honestly. This might be a challenge for Black students as they might not have the skills to communicate or might be intimidated by a dominant group to address their self-interest properly or they might be passive about it because they feel requesting for a better learning system is beyond them and they should just go along with the school system in place.

In view of research questions two and three that focused on the needs of Black students and the resources and strategies they tapped into in overcoming the barriers that racism brought in their pursuit of academic success and transition to HE, CRT provides important arguments that strengthen the findings. The first and second tenets of the theory explicate the idea of race as a social construction and that racism is normal to those who benefit from it. This provides an understanding of racism and its manifestation within the Canadian educational context and its structural impact on the educational attainments of Black students. This understanding creates the consciousness in Black students to be responsible for their own success as the system seemed to have been clogged by racial discriminations and stereotypes; a situation that created gaps in relation to mentoring, supportive family and school environment, extra-curricular activities, and advocacy.

This understanding helped the Black students in my study revert to self-help strategies that they identified for themselves to overcome their barriers and transition to higher education. For

instance, they identified school staff who positively influenced them and developed mentoring relationships with such. Through this relationship and the counseling experience they had, they engaged in counter-storytelling, a core element of CRT, through which they provided counter-narratives of the racialized stereotypes that they had experienced. They engaged in self-advocacy, since the institutional ones had been affected by racism. They also created their own support groups and positively induced their own personal qualities by improving their time-management skills, knowing fully well that such will improve their task completion and efficiency. Analysis of data showed that this could provide an understanding of how Black students' counter-narratives of racial marginalization, stereotypes and discrimination and self-help strategies can induce necessary changes to high schools in Toronto in becoming inclusive. The next section summarizes the section.

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this section, I explained the objectives of the study and I discussed the analysis and findings of each research question. In discussing this, I provided a synthesis of the themes with critical race theory. In doing this, I infused the elements/tenets of the theory within the discussion of research question one, being the section that provided contextual data in the study, and thereafter synthesized the discussions of research questions two three after the discussion of both sections. I connected the findings of my study with existing literature.

The results of analysis of data were further explained in line with what other researchers had reported. While interlinking the findings with CRT, I accentuated my perspective of racial stereotyping and discrimination and how power and privilege advantage Whiteness and adversely affect Blackness in high school.

The next section is the conclusion, it deals with the summary, recommendations, and limitations.

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

The conclusion section includes a summary; why this study matters, examining the appropriateness of the theoretical framework (CRT); recommendations, future research areas and the study limitation.

6.1 Research Summary

Data confirmed that Black students face compounded general issues such as poverty; parental education deficit; lack of parental support etc. Data indicated as well that Black students face additional barriers because of their race that includes ongoing discrimination, racism, and microaggressions.

However, data from the transitioned students indicated that despite the discrimination, racism and microaggressions some students performed high academic achievement. In my view those who transitioned had factors that helped them to succeed despite racism, discrimination and micro aggression because they had enabling factors such as high self-efficacy skills, had great motivation, good time management skills, and parental support.

We cannot change the world overnight but we can change the systems that were created to oppress certain groups of people. Thus, my recommendation includes the learnings from the transitioned students that we need to increase the self-efficacy skills, time management, parents support, enhance the schools environment to provide after school programs to support Black students succeed academically. The next section will address why my study matters.

6.2 Why my study matters

My research titled Racism, Privilege and Power: Exploring Black students experience in High School and Their Transition to Higher Education, in Toronto.

Retention issue of post-secondary institutions is a global concern. However, the uniqueness of my research lies on the actionable activities to increase retention of Black students and educational leadership (Burger, Webber, and Klink, 2007). Scholars like Barton & Coley (2010) and Wixom (2015) claim that under achievement of Black students being of grave concern for society. The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (2012) indicated that despite the

high enrollment of black African Americans in many American post-secondary institutions, black and Latino students lag behind white students in terms of performance and retention. Koster (2010) as well describes in the study that racism is ingrained in our society and even in children in kindergarten and primary schools. The section below examines the appropriateness of my theoretical framework and it discuss further the research overall findings.

6.3 Examining my primary theoretical framework (Critical Race Theory, CRT)

Critical Race Theory was used as my primary theoretical lens for this study and to examine the findings. The limitation of CRT remains its overemphasis on race and no other issues as confirmed by (Gillborn, 2006; Hernandez's, 2016) studies. The data from the research participants of all the three groups of research participants, i.e., high school dropouts, struggling students and transitioned student claimed that they experienced racism, discrimination and microaggressions.

Consistent with (Reynolds, Sneva; Beehler, 2010) claim that while Students' in the three research groups' experience discrimination, some students disengage from academic environment to cope with racism while others still succeed. This proves that CRT cannot be used as standalone theory to examine my research topic. Factors like motivation, social engagement, social cognitive variables, self-efficacy skills, family support despite the existence of racism contributed to student success. Though, all three groups, teachers and administrators agreed that racism plays a role in hindering some students from obtaining academic achievement while for some, racism motivated them, and they worked harder to achieve their academic goals.

Underachievement of Black students is attributed to many factors, i.e., racism, discrimination, microaggressions, poverty and lack of parental involvement. Parental education deficit is another reason that is attributed to Black students' underachievement as stated by cultural advantage theory (Schwartz, 1971; Vernon, 1982, cited in Lee, 1991). There are other numerous reasons which indicate the major cause of an achievement gap, but these are not conclusive reasons for the underachievement.

According to Oakes (2005) cited in Atkinson (2010) the absence of tracking makes it difficult to find conclusive reason for underachievement. Tracking is defined by Atkinson (2010) as dividing students in groups by race and tracking them over a specific period of time. Claims by Oakes (2005) and Atkinson (2010) indicate that there is no conclusive reason for the underachievement of Black students. However, there are many reports (Casy Foundation, 2017a)

and scholars indicate that the underachievement of Black students are conclusive. The next section addresses research practitioner's recommendation.

6.4 Research practitioners' recommendation:

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made in order to both better support straggling and drop-out students and to help those transitioning into the HE system:

1. Develop a positive counseling and welcoming system for Black students.
2. Enhance Black Student self-efficacy skills through various types of support mechanism.
3. Set up a system of Peer Tutoring to increase Black students achievements.
4. Embark on stronger efforts to eliminate racism, discrimination and microaggressions from high school. Approaches are underway to achieve this, for example: (i) the current government for the first time in history provided apology to all Black people experiencing racism and discrimination and called 2015-2025 the decade of people of African descent. Grants were given for education, research, employment among other things. However, there was no tracking mechanism to study the effectiveness of the various initiatives (ii) Anti-racism secretariat was developed to initiate programs and services for Black people again no tracking mechanism (iii) Toronto District School Board (TDSB) developed an "Urban Diversity Strategy" to "increase the secondary school graduation rate for all demographic groups to a minimum of 85% in five years." (Toronto District School Board, 2008, p. 2). More can still be done to remedy the impact of racism in high school.
5. Hire and train more Black teacher as this will make the school environment more diverse and accommodating to all themes of learners. As well to play a positive role model for Black students.
6. Facilitate ways and means to increase and engage parents with school system.
7. Advocate for inclusive educational environment where Black students are welcomed and nurtured,

8. Recommend mentoring systems for Black students in order to increase student retention and transition to HE.

6. Include a curriculum that includes Afrocentric educational issues.

6.5 Self-recommendations

. I will share my findings with my colleagues to improve institutional practices to assist Black students.

Some of my future work as a result of this study will include activities to increase Black student's self-efficacy skills (Bandura, 1997). This work could be conducted on one-on-one or as a group of Black students doing activities to increase self-efficacy skills during lunch and learn hour. Self-efficacy and motivation is one of the ways to increase retention of students in high school and ensure their transition to post-secondary (Chohan, 2010; LaMorte, 2016). Since there is so much funding for Blacks in Canada the timing is perfect to seek funding to pay for lunch and learn session to empower Black students to progress academically. Inviting scholars to provide some self-help strategies and empowering students will allow me to perform my job better.

6.6 Future Research Recommendation

My recommendation is to conduct future research to track the progress made on the effectiveness of the Canadian Federal government initiatives to combat racism and discrimination will be of great benefit to society in general and to Black students in particular.

- Create support group for those who felt discriminated and don't know how to advocate for themselves
- Empower parents;
- Work with school parent committees or one-on-on with Black students or as a group.
- Help them transition especially for those struggling students.
- Enhance their self-advocacy skills

(1) Personally conducting further study or advocating for further in-depth study on Black students

(2) Convening conversations with colleagues regarding some of the challenges of Black students

(3) Advocacy work with wider connections to raise awareness and encourage other practitioners to conduct similar research

(4) Supporting Black students in their journey, convening conversations, acting as role model guiding and supporting

(5) Supporting parents of Black student in Parent Councils.

The next section presents the study limitations and conclusion.

6.7 Study limitation

In the process of conducting this research I paid careful attention not to let my opinion and perception influence my participant's responses. Regardless of this and some other precautionary measures that I took, this study is limited by lack of quantitative evidence and small sample size. In this study, I interviewed 27 participants, part of which were successful students, struggling students, school dropouts, teachers, and administrators. The reason why I include these various participants is to allow me to gather diverse and wide-ranging insights into the experiences of my study population (black people). However, it can't be ignored that a sample size of 27 is very small to be representative of the entire Black Canadian population.

Additionally, this research is purely qualitative and so frequencies are not assigned to participants' responses. This makes it impossible to statistically measure the degree of certainty for the results. Hence, findings from this cannot be extended to the entire Black Canadian society, although it can be compared with the case of some other educational realities dealing with Black students. Also, because of the scope of the research, it was time consuming to perform the data collection and analysis process at once as it took several weeks to transcribe and

edit. It was also difficult for me to meet the participants who were willing to be interviewed as it was based on their consent.

In conclusion I am extremely pleased that I chose an issue that is very personal and useful to my teaching practice. It was not easy but very rewarding. My journey just started to a new direction of a lifelong commitment to help Black students succeed.

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Appendix A – 1

Aman_J Letter for VPREC Ethical Approval 21-02-19



Dear Jamila Aman		
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.		
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)	
Review type:	Expedited	
PI:	Dr Lucilla Crosta	
School:	HLC	
Title:	Racism, Privilege and Power: Exploring Black students experiences in high school and their transition to Higher Education, HE in Toronto.	
First Reviewer:	Dr. Dr. Yukhymenko then Dr. Janet Hanson	
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Dr. Hickman	

Other members of the Committee	Dr Marco Ferreira, Dr. Lucilla Crosta, Dr. Mary Johnson, Dr. Jose Reis Jorge, Dr. Greg Hickman		
Date of Approval:	21 February 2019		
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:			
Conditions			
1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.	

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc>.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analyzed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

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Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.

Kind regards,

Lucilla Crosta

Chair, EdD. VPREC

Appendix A – 2

Authorization Letter High School

Authorization Letter = High School

Ref / Student #: 18 0713 Date: Sept 13 / 2018

Re: Research Title, Racism, Privilege and Power: Exploring the Achievement gap of black students and their transition to Higher Education in Toronto

Dear Sir / Madam

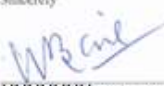
This is to confirm that XXXXX High School is giving authorization in support of Jamila Aman research titled Racism, Privilege and Power: Exploring the Achievement gap of black students and their transition to Higher Education in Toronto. We received the request from Jamila Aman we are enthusiastic to partner and engage as we want to benefit from the findings of the study to help our black students at XXXXX High School.

Thus, we have made a strong commitment to support Jamila Aman's research by giving access to space, documentation access to students at XXXXX High School

Jamila Aman will be supervised by qualified personnel. We don't have a formal ethics process, thus consider this our authorization.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me at +XXXXXXXXX via telephone or email at contact:XXXXXXXX@highschool.com

Sincerely


XXXXXXXXX M. Sc. M. Phil
Principal

XXXXXXXXXX Toronto ON, XXXXXX Ph: (XXXXXXXX) Fax: (XXXXXXXX)

Appendix A – 4

Authorization letter - Post Secondary

From:

Sent: January 24, 2019 10:46 PM

To: xxxxxxx

Subject: Re: Question re: xxxxxx student looking to recruit student participants for doctoral research

Hi XXXX

Thanks for the email and sorry about the delay in responding.

There is no process for the University to give permission to a doctoral student to approach students to get their permission to be part of a research project. There is no one here who can give institutional approval from

to gather information from our students because no one at xxxxx gives institutional approval for research.

She is free to contact students from the university if she wishes. I am sorry but we cannot give institutional approval for any research conducted at the university. I hope this helps.

XXXXX

From: xxxxxxx

Sent: January 24, 2019 2:37:18 PM

To: xxxxxxx

Subject: Question re: non-

[Redacted]

Student looking to recruit student participants for doctoral research

Dear XXXX,

I'm writing to follow-up on my message from Monday, originally sent to Lara and Michele and then on to you. I've pasted the content again below:

I've been approached by a Canadian doctoral student doing her degree at the University of Liverpool. She is connected with xxxxx , an organization that xxxx has supported for a number of years. Her research is on the experiences of Black youth in secondary and higher education in the GTA and she wants to try to recruit approximately 57 students at xxxxxxx. Her institution requires some form of institutional approval from xxxxxx, either on letterhead and by email from someone authorized to do so. The approval does not need to state that anyone at xxxxxx will be responsible for facilitating or otherwise overseeing this recruitment of participants, just that she can try to find participants from amongst our students.

Is this something that your office can provide?

Many thanks,

XXXXXXXXXXXX



Appendix B – 1

University of Liverpool – Ethics Authorization Letter

Authorization Letter

I, Jamila Aman, am enrolled in the Doctor of Education (EdD) Programme at the University of Liverpool in partnership with Laureate Education.

I entered the programme in order to develop doctoral-level depth of knowledge and research skills across areas in higher education such as higher education management, innovative approaches to educational leadership, decision making, as well as ethics, social responsibility, and social change. As an EdD student I am required, as part of my programme, to undertake research projects to fulfil the requirement of Doctor of Education.

In the context of my research in the EdD programme, I hereby request authorisation to access organisational data and facility use. This also includes authorisation to conduct an interview with students and employees of the organisation about the organisation's policies, programmes, and practices. I have included with this letter a Participant Information Sheet which outlines in greater detail the nature of the current research project I am required to complete for the EdD programme.

I appreciate the opportunity to engage in research. Please contact me and/or the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool with any question or concerns you may have.

My contact details are: Jamila Aman

The contact details of the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool are:

LOREC at liverpooethics@liverpool-online.com or myself at the above coordinates?

Sincerely,
XXXXXX

.....

EdD student

Appendix C – 1

Interview - **Questions for High school Dropout students**

1. What are, in your view, the barriers that hinder Black students from graduating or leaving High School?
2. Why did you decide to leave or drop out from high school? What (reasons/people) influenced this decision of yours?
3. How do you describe being successful in this experience?
4. Describe what you think would have made you successful at school, to enable you to get good grades and graduate from high school.
5. Did parents have a role in your school experience? Did teachers have a role? Did school administrators have a role? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion) - Who was not helping? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion)
6. Did Parental educational level play a role in your school experience? And Parental economic background? Curriculum? (How and why? Follow up questions if necessary) – What was not helping? (Follow up question, if necessary, how? Why?)
7. Who/what from the above, in your view, could be improved for helping students to be successful and graduate from high school? (Follow up question Why?)
8. Do you think that Black students currently receive the necessary support to transition to HE? Why? If not what kind of support do Black students need to graduate from High School and to transition to post-secondary education?
9. What should Black students do to help themselves to graduate from high school and to transition to post-secondary?
10. How do you think your identity as a Black student affected how you saw yourself as a student? And how did it affect how others see you? Do you think that this may have had an impact on your success at school? Please explain?
11. Do you have anything else to add regarding the topic of our discussion?

Appendix C – 2

Interview Questions - for grades 11/12 students struggling

1. What are, in your view, the barriers that hinder Black students from graduating or leaving High School?
2. Describe what you think would help you to be successful at school, to enable you to get good grades and graduate from high school?
3. Do parents have a role in your school experience? Do teachers have a role? Do school administrators have a role? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion) - Who is not helping? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion)
4. Do Parental educational level play a role in your school experience? And Parental economic background? Curriculum? (How and why? Follow up questions if necessary) – What is not helping? (Follow up question, if necessary, How? Why?)
5. Who/what from the above, in your view, could be improved for helping students to be successful and graduate from high school? (Follow up question Why?)
6. Do you think that Black students currently receive the necessary support to transition to HE? Why? If not what kind of support do Black students need to graduate from High School and to transition to post-secondary education?
7. What should Black students do to help themselves to graduate from high school and to transition to post-secondary?
8. How do you think your identity as a Black student affected how you saw yourself as a student? How did it affect how others see you? Do you think that this may have had an impact on your success at school? Please explain?
9. Do you have anything else to add regarding the topic of our discussion?

Appendix C – 3

Interview Questions - for HE students

1. Describe what you think made you successful at school, to enable to you to get good grades, graduate from high school and to transition to HE?
2. Did parents have a role in your school success? Did teachers have a role? Did school administrators have a role? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion) - Who was not helping? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion)
3. Did Parental educational level play a role in your school success? And Parental economic background? Curriculum? (How and why? Follow up questions if necessary) – What / who was not helping? (Follow up question, if necessary, How? Why?)
4. What are, in your view, the barriers that hinder Black students from graduating from High School?
5. Who/what from the above could be improved for helping students to be successful and graduate from high school? (Follow up question Why?)
6. Do you think that Black students currently receive the necessary support to transition to HE? Why? If not what kind of support do Black students need to graduate from High School and to transition to post-secondary education?
7. What should Black students do to help themselves to graduate from high school and to transition to post-secondary?
8. How do you think your identity as a Black student affected how you saw yourself as a student? How did it affect how others see you? Do you think that this may have had an impact on your success at school? Please explain?
9. Do you have anything else to add regarding the topic of our discussion?

Appendix C – 4

Interview questions - for teachers in High School

1. What are, in your view, the barriers that hinder Black students from graduating from High School?
2. Describe what you think would have made them successful at school, to enable them to get good grades, graduate from high school and to transition to HE?
3. Did teachers have a role in your view in their school success? Did parents have a role? Did school administrators / teachers have a role? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion) - Who was not helping in your view? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion)
4. Did Parental educational level play a role in your view for their school success? And Parental economic background? Curriculum? (How and why? Follow up questions if necessary) – What was not helping? (Follow up question, if necessary, How? Why?)
5. Who/what from the above could be improved for helping Black students to be successful and graduate from high school? (Follow up question Why?)
6. Do you think that Black students currently receive the necessary support to transition to HE? Why? If not what kind of support do Black students need to graduate from High School and to transition to post-secondary education?
7. What should Black students do to help themselves to graduate from high school and to transition to post-secondary?
8. How do you think identity as a Black student affected how they saw themselves as a student? How did it affect how others see them? Do you think that this may have had an impact on their success at school? Please explain?
9. Do you have anything else to add regarding the topic of our discussion?

Appendix C – 4

Question for - Administrators / Faculty in Post-secondary?

1. What are, in your view, the barriers that hinder Black students from graduating from High School? What helped students to transition to HE?
2. Describe what you think would have made them successful at school, to enable them to get good grades and graduate from high school and transition to HE?
3. Did school administrators / faculty have a role in your view in their school success? Did teachers have a role? Did Parents have a role? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion) - Who was not helping in your view? (How? Why? As follow up questions during the discussion)
4. Did Parental educational level play a role in your view for their school success? And Parental economic background? Curriculum? (How and why? Follow up questions if necessary) – What was not helping? (Follow up question, if necessary, How? Why?)
5. Who/what from the above could be improved for helping Black students to be successful and graduate from high school to transition to HE? Why?
6. Do you think that Black students currently receive the necessary support to transition to HE? Why? If not what kind of support do Black students need to graduate from High School and to transition to post-secondary education?
7. What should Black students do to help themselves to graduate from high school and to transition to HE?
8. How do you think identity as a Black student affect how they saw themselves as a student? How did it affect how others see them? Do you think that this may have had an impact on their success at school? Please explain?
9. Do you have anything else to add regarding the topic of our discussion?