At the Black of the Class: Examining the Marginalization of Students of African and Caribbean Descent in Public Schools for Resolutions

By:

Kevin Ufoegbune

A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Copyright by Kevin Ufoegbune April 2017
Abstract

Black students experience hardships within the school system to a greater degree than many other students through the process of marginalization; the study explored this phenomenon to discover remedies. I conducted a literature review that found that Black students have higher dropout rates and are overrepresented in special education. Students are assessed through the disciplines of History and Social Studies which do not incorporate a meaningful Afrocentric voice. Organizations and schools with a majority Black population in North America were examined to discover the ways in which the subjugation could be eliminated. By conducting qualitative interviews, the study gained the perspectives of three educators aware of Black student oppressions. The study uncovered that Afrocentric education and celebrating Black student identities was of extreme importance and that the support of teachers and their awareness of intersectionality is fundamental. The implications are that Afrocentric education can be integrated in public schools and at the core are healthy teacher-parent relationships. Recommendations emerging from this study suggest that revisions to teacher preparatory programs and ministry policies, as well as the strategic recruitment of Black Male teachers will help support steps to change the current system.

Keywords: Black Students, Afrocentric Education, Marginalization, Educators
Acknowledgements

First and Foremost, I would like to thank God who has given me wisdom, strength and clarity in all my endeavors including this project. I am inspired everyday by late Maternal Grandfather whose last words to me were, “do well in school.” I hope this project serves as proof that I kept my promise to you. His wife, my late Maternal Grandmother has motivated me to become an agent of change in the community and I thank her for that. To my wonderful father, I thank you for teaching me the principles of dedication and hopefulness and for your enduring encouragement. I would like to thank my remarkable mother who instilled within me a passion for teaching and perseverance and who has empowered me to celebrate my African heritage – thank you for your guidance and wise words. I must acknowledge my exceptional sister, Tracy who has been there every step of the way during this project and who continues to support me in all that I do, thank you for being an outstanding role model. I would like to express my gratitude to my professor Dr. Rose Fine-Meyer who empowered me to use my voice and who guided me assiduously throughout this research study. You have taught me that systemic change is possible, and I thank you for that. I am also thanking my good friends, colleagues and cohort who have encouraged me during this process. I would also like to thank my wonderful professors, especially those ones that specifically relocated the issues of marginalized students to the forefront for their encouragement these past two years. I would also like to thank Mr. Jason Brennan and the research participants of this study; by speaking with such candor, you have contributed immensely to this study and to progress. To all Black students, particularly my Black Male students considered within this study, change is on its way and your dreams and success do matter. To every child, that I have had the honor and pleasure of teaching, thank you for sharing your light and laughter. You are my future, I work for you and I thank you immeasurably for reminding me us about the importance of hope.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One: Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction to the Research Study and Context</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Problem</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research Purpose</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Research Questions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Subsidiary Questions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Background of the Researcher</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Preview of the Whole</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two: Literature Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction to the Literature Review</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Exclusion of Black Students in History and Social Studies</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Pedagogical Challenges</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Ability of Educators to Access Inclusive Classroom Resources</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Student Access to Inclusive Resources within Afrocentric Schools</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Culturally Sensitivity Afrocentric Pedagogy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Holistically Examining the Social Oppressions of Black Youths</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Examining Black-Focused Schools</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Analysis of Governmental Involvement vs. Non-Governmental Involvement</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 The Black Community Non-governmental and Grassroots Organizations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7.1 Examining Black Publishers and Press 31
2.8 Looking at Materials Produced by Educators 32
2.9 Conclusion 35

Chapter Three: Methodology
3.0 Introduction 37
3.1 Research Approaches and Procedures 39
3.2 Instruments of Data Collection 40
3.3 Participants 40
   3.3.1 Sampling Criteria 40
   3.3.2 Sampling Procedures and Recruitment 42
   3.3.3 Participants Bios 43
3.4 Data Collection and Analysis 44
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures 45
3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths 47
3.7 Conclusion 48

Chapter Four: Findings
4.0 Introduction to Interview Findings 49
4.1 Support of Afrocentric Schools 49
   4.1.1 Student Autonomy & Self-Determination 51
   4.1.2 Concerns over the Cultural Homogeneity 52
4.2 Celebrating Black Student Identity 52
   4.2.1 Societal Oppressions 53
   4.2.2 Black Masculinity in a North American Context 54
4.3 Teacher Support

4.3.1 Inadequate Training in Teacher Preparatory Programs

4.3.2 Teacher Initiative

4.3.3 Parental Support

4.4 Interplay of Intersectionality within Classrooms and Schools

4.4.1 Blackness as a Homogenous Experience

4.4.2 Positionality and Whiteness

4.5 Summary of Findings

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

5.2 Narrow Implications: Professional Identity and Practice

5.2.1 Educators can Implement Afrocentric Education

5.2.2 Healthy and Professional Relationships with Black Guardians

5.3 Broad Implications: The Education Research Community

5.3.1 Systemic Changes are Essential for Success

5.3.2 Separate Schools for Black Students is not Systemic Change

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Mandatory Teacher Education Courses to Enhance Pedagogy

5.4.2 Employment Equity Policies to Hire Black Male Educators

5.4.3 Ministry Initiatives

5.5 Areas for further research

5.5.1 The Inclusion of Silenced Voices is Fundamental
5.5.2 Infusing Afrocentric Education with Diverse Perspectives  72

5.5.3 Black Males in Health and Physical Education and Sports Activities  72

5.6 Limitations  73

5.7 Conclusion  74

References  76

Appendix A: Letter of Consent  81

Appendix B: Interview Questions  83
Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Research Context:

Historically speaking, the Ontario system of public education and specifically the Ministry of Education’s policies surrounding the education of Canada’s pupils have been challenged for not being responsive towards the needs of students of colour (Howard & Smith, 2011). This fact is perceptible within the case of Ontario residential schools whereby Indigenous children were forcibly socialized through oppressive, Eurocentric and ethnocentric mechanisms and abusive and coercive pedagogies in (Nagy & Sehdev, 2012). Even more relevant to this particular study at hand is the fact that segregation was normative to many classrooms in Ontario whereby Black students were separated from White students (McLaren, 2004). Through various policy advancements and events, Canada eliminated the practice of residential and segregated schools however; both oppressive social systems were only removed towards the end of the 20th century (McLaren, 2004). The fact that the state and the province endorsed these detrimental policies whereby students of colour received subpar and detrimental education until recently reflects the fact that systemic discrimination is indeed a current issue within the institution of education in Ontario.

The social oppressions which confront Black students require further attention from the Ontario Ministry of Education and its educators. Such oppressions could quite possibly be addressed and somewhat alleviated through the successful implementation of Afrocentric pedagogy either within special schools, other mainstream public schools or an appropriate combination of both (Amanishakete, 2013). Dr. George Dei of the University of Toronto states that, “Afrocentricity is the study of phenomena grounded in the perspectives and epistemological constructs of peoples of African descent (Dei, 1996).” Black students face a higher degree of
exclusion within the school system as they are susceptible to higher dropout rates, discrimination, cultural barriers and a higher degree of disciplinary action (Milner, 2013).

It can be said that the school system socializes and ultimately prepares children for adult life, therefore, it is highly imperative that Black students and all students gain positive experiences while obtaining their education. Such experiences should advantage and uphold their social, physical, and mental development. Essentially, such students must feel a sense of inclusion within their school classrooms and school environment in order for them to be academically successfully and emotionally well-balanced.

The promotion and celebration of Black students’ ethnic identity is pivotal to their academic success within educational institutions (Amanishakete, 2013). While a greater degree of attention is devoted towards Indigenous-centered discourses within academic disciplines which is of extreme importance, there is little or nonexistent focus on the lives, heritage and social contributions of Back people within the Ontario Curriculum for Social Studies and History (grades one through to grade eight) within the Ontario curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). This suggests that there are unspoken reasons as to why Afrocentric education and discourses surrounding this issue are removed from mainstream discussions regarding educational policies. Positive and meaningful Afrocentric approaches within the classroom must be encouraged and implemented as they can encourage the empowerment of Black students; enhancements to mainstream education can occur through the means of revised educational pedagogies and policies that would encourage Black students to have a strong sense of self-worth which in turn would contribute towards their academic success (Hampton, 2010 p. 104).

There is no particular guide within the curriculum that would prompt or compel educators to either become or remain cognizant of the heritages, cultures and perspectives of Black
students. Research, should account for the reasons why traditionally, comfort levels in conversing about Indigenous student rights appear to be higher than they are for Black student rights. The reasons for the apparent apprehensions are either not explicitly expressed or not fully discovered. If academics, educators and teacher candidates experience discomfort in discussing the ways in which Black students are subjugated and either covertly or overtly discriminated against within education, then the absolution of such treatments will never occur. Therefore, it is paramount that researchers get to the root of the concerns and difficulties experienced by education professionals about speaking about Black student issues.

1.1 Research Problem

The Ontario Ministry of Education upholds equity policies within the public-school system (The Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). Nevertheless, by looking at the curriculum in Ontario, it appears that Black children, their heritages, communities, cultures and ethnicities while they are in grades one through to grade eight, are not explicitly recognized (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). This could translate to the young students feeling a sense of marginalization from curriculum and mainstream school classrooms (Rust, Ponterotto & Blumberg, 2011). This signifies the fact that the issues surrounding their marginalization must be furthered analyzed; one way is through the anti-racism theory and the critical race theory. While examining the exclusion of Black students from the mainstream education system, it is important to critically assess their inclusion within school with a majority Black student population which are established for the administration of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy through a Black perspective. Educators within mainstream and alternative schools for Black children require access to anti-oppressive resources that would advance them within their quest to support their students. It should not be the sole responsibility of African centered or Black-focused
schools to deliver anti-oppressive education through culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy particularly in disciplines such as History and Social Studies. Mainstream public schools must support students and their needs to learn from a variety of impactful perspectives including ones that are culturally relevant to them and that take their community experiences, unique identities and resources into consideration (Thomas, 2014).

In the 21st century, there have been numerous events that have significantly impaired the North American Black community such as the socially and environmentally catastrophic event of Hurricane Katrina and the politics of race surrounding that particular natural disaster. Furthermore, monumental events such as The Ferguson Unrest, and the tragic murder of Treyvon Martin as well as controversies surrounding the death of Sandra Bland have brought the issue of the subjugation and criminalization of young Black people to the forefront of political dialogue in North America. Other relevant issues also include multiracial adoptions and student speakers of African American Vernacular English which are all prevalent matters that have caused the public to interrogate those institutions which render young Black people voiceless while denying their fundamental rights within society. Not only is it imperative that Black students be empowered through gaining knowledge about their pasts, they need to be encouraged and provided with strategies to overcome and navigate through oppressive spaces as they experience hierarchies and are policed by a variety of intuitions that do not directly serve them.

In order to delve deeper into the ways in which Black students experience institutional oppression within mainstream educational institutions and then empowerment within schools established for their cultural needs, the extent to which History and Social Studies disciplines exhibited in the Ontario curriculum are inclusive and/or exclusive of Black students in grades one through to grade eight was analyzed. The present as well as foreseeable challenges that
teachers encounter with respect to administering the disciplines to students through methods that are either Afrocentric and/or inclusive of Black students was assessed in this study. The ability of educators to gain access to inclusive resources, peoples and communities as they attempt to administer culturally responsive pedagogy while dismantling anti-Black racism is also quite pertinent to this discussion. Furthermore, the capability of schools centred around a Black perspective institutions to allow for an inclusive environment for Black students was thoroughly considered. Governmental and Non-governmental organizations were analyzed to better comprehend their absent or passive role in alleviating the plight of Black students.

1.2 Research Purpose

It is undeniable that race and its divisive powers are negatively impacting the academic experiences of Black youths (Milner, 2013). Currently, compared to other racial groups, Black students experience higher school dropout rates and are more susceptible to academic and behavioural punishments (Milner, 2013). In addition, regardless of whether they are streamed into categories that may be marginalized (such as special education) or if they are placed within gifted categories, they can still experience emotional distress as a result of their otherness (Milner, 2013). Black Lives Matter, the international activist movement which cultivated from certain political events such as the killing of seventeen-year-old Treyvon Martin gives support to the fact that there is no better time than the present to support and encourage informed and racially sensitive discussions around the ways in which institutional oppression is impacting today’s young people. Owed to the fact that education is held responsible for equipping young people with necessary skills and knowledge to transition effectively into adult life, it is highly necessary and pressing that we re-evaluate the ways in which education as a commanding socializing institution, impacts vulnerable members of society such as Black students. By taking
an introspective look at our communities and school system, possible changes and positive outcomes can occur. The findings of this study are intended to be beneficial to stakeholders in the education system as advancements within the field of education will have a positive impact on these students who are indeed the future and who have boundless potential to be influential agents of change themselves.

It is imperative that Black academics extract the ways in which education can be made inclusive for Black students, however an objective approach that takes into consideration the experiences, narratives and views of White and/or Non-Black educators and White and/or Non-Black education stakeholders is needed as such perspectives are essential in this matter. Many scholars who research and write about Black students and Afrocentric pedagogy appear to be Black individuals or other people of colour. It is possible that the researchers have undergone similar life experiences and have conducted similar research thus; it is not unexpected that their findings and beliefs were paralleled to each other. It would be problematic, I would imagine, for White and other Non-Black educators to accommodate the needs of their Black students when their own voices are excluded from discussions and research that focus on the obstacles that those students face.

1.3 Research Questions

If Black students in Ontario face a greater degree of marginalization in public education through the systemic racism and Eurocentric ideologies, what are the appropriate solutions for educators to end this particular marginalization?
1.4 Subsidiary Questions:

- From the perspectives of educators, how resistant or keen are education ministries, school boards and school officials to make adaptations to the curriculum and school policies to be more inclusive of Black students?
- Who should hold the responsibility of assisting educators in teaching from an Afrocentric and/or inclusive perspective and how can that particular body(s) be supported and held accountable?
- It can be argued that self-determination within communities is empowering; how can communities that have a stake in the education of Black students be further mobilized to lobby for positive changes within the school system?
- Is there any resistance on the part of teachers of Black and Non-Black educators to administer Afrocentric pedagogy?

1.5 Background of the Researcher

As a young Black Canadian, I received my early education from Ontario public schools and from an early age, I often felt that voices of Black Canadians particularly those of young Black Males were silenced or absent. This is because I believed that disciplines such as History and Social Studies within the curriculum were often supported only by a Eurocentric perspective. I was fortunate enough to come from a family where multicultural and multiracial perspectives were exceedingly valued and celebrated. As a result, I established myself as a community organizer and promoter of multicultural education within the various Canadian and American communities that I found myself situated in. During my undergraduate years, I undertook courses within the areas of Political Science and African History where I was made fully aware of the contributions of people of African descent to North America and the world. Gaining this
knowledge allowed me to feel a sense of empowerment and clarity despite the oppression that I witnessed occurring in racialized communities. I consider myself a force within the area of cultural awareness and multicultural education and media as host and producer of Canada’s first African cooking show, *Flavours of Africa* who has been recognized by the Black Canadian Awards as a Role Model for youth in the country. Given my background and experience, I strongly believe that young Black students would be positively impacted, socially and academically, if they could experience student life through exposure to anti-oppressive and compassionate resources and culturally responsive and relevant pedagogies from racially-sensitive educators and teaching resources. I would like to ascertain ways in which we can further enhance Afrocentric education in order to meet the needs of vulnerable Black students.

There are many monumental learning experiences that have shaped me both as a professional and as an educator. From the beginning of my educational trajectory, I was exposed to counter-narratives by my parents through stories of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela and other notable individuals of African descent who were in and of themselves exemplary agents of change. Through the literature encouraged by my family, I felt empowered as a young child of African descent despite dominant narratives as I could always rely upon the teachings of my parents. My mother and father’s approach and beliefs towards multiculturalism and education had a profoundly positive impact on my identity. It was not until I was an undergraduate student that I acquired more knowledge about my African History and the resilience of Black people in North American within a formal academic context. Before that time, I did not fully understand how exclusion historically operated or how students had been systemically oppressed.
I have a vested interest in anti-discriminatory education and with this acknowledgement, I will continue to be committed towards the cause of anti-discriminatory education as a learner, educator and ally of social justice issues. I believe that we must continue to unlearn oppressive narratives that do not empower students and only appear to function for the preservation of prejudice ideologies. I am committed to the principle of resilience as I navigate my way through spaces. Due to my journey through life as a Black male, I am able to be empathetic to children who have also experienced oppression such as Black and Indigenous students and nonmainstream children who are minoritized by society as I come with my own experiences and my passion for the promotion of diversity and egalitarianism. Furthermore, I feel that teacher candidates must continue to resolve their own biases, understand and come to terms with the ways in which they are privileged and discover methods for authentically promoting diversity not only as educators but also as agents of change. If teacher candidates do not actively represent themselves as authentically progressive and anti-oppressive agents of change as they anticipate moving into classroom spaces which are experiencing and influx of diverse bodies, then they must ask themselves why they have decided to become educators in the first place.

1.6 Preview of the Whole:

To address my research questions, interviews were conducted that were qualitative in nature with educators about their experiences or lack thereof in applying Afrocentric teachings and the responses that they receive from Black students and other individuals. As a professional with a background in the disciplines of Sociology and Social Work who is well acquainted with multicultural education, I consulted my own professional and personal experiences in administrating this alternative way of knowing. I drew upon research that discussed the effectiveness of Afrocentric education in Ontario, Canada and in doing so, I uncovered the
barriers to access that educators and school administrators encounter. Lastly, I analyzed my findings and compiled strategies that will assist in the enhancement of Black students’ experiences of Black students within the institution of education at the end of the study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Within this chapter, the literature around the Ontario curriculum was reviewed and the disciplines of History and Social Studies as they pertain to students in grades one through to grade eight were examined meticulously. Secondly, the study reviewed research and literature that spoke to ideas surrounding the definition of culturally relevant, Afrocentric education. The study examined the social oppressions of Black students in grades one through to grade eight by approaching research and literature which spoke to the reasons why these students are indeed a marginalized group deserving of special attention. In exploring schools with a majority Black student population, Afrocentric schools as well as the experiences of Black students, research was drawn upon that critically analyzed the institutions and their effectiveness in regard to anti-oppressiveness and inclusivity. Throughout this section, recommendations for future research are elaborated upon. Lastly, the literature that speaks to the actions of governmental and non-governmental activity in contributing towards the improvement of the schooling experience for Black students is considered. The final statements contain a critical review of the findings and are situated within the conclusion.

2.1 The Exclusion of Black Students in History and Social Studies

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state that Critical Race Theory informs critical race methodology and the authors of the article argue that research has not been conducted in ways that are empowering or anti-oppressive for people of colour including Black people. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) advocate for the recognition of the unique perspectives, narratives, stories and tradition of people of colour especially within the area of research that has the power to further marginalize them. If we do not conduct research with an approach that values people of colour, research and policy may become biased allowing for racialized people to be oppressed to a
greater degree. Educational policy then must also then address the marginalization experienced by racial groups such as Black Canadians; this is where events such as the creation of special schools, African Heritage Month and employment equity practices of hiring individuals who are Black are ushered in because of inclusive policy making. It is an immutable fact that education has traditionally marginalized Black students as well as some students of colour (Levine-Rasky, 2012).

In terms of the subjects of History and Social Studies, Ontario curriculum documents were reviewed and as a result of this examination, it appears that there is an immense need to critically assess the abilities of the disciplines to be racially sensitive and inclusive of Black students. Academics note that the institution of Canadian public education is historically founded upon Eurocentric values (Howard & Smith, 2011). It has also traditionally maintained an ethnocentric approach (Howard & Smith, 2011). This is evident in the way in which early Canada initially attempted to socialize Indigenous children through the arrangement of egregious boarding schools as they aimed to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultures through the dissolution of Indigenous family life (Nagy & Sehdev, 2012). Adding to this, Ontario also experienced segregation within its school systems which demonstrates the fact that our education system has been solidly built upon institutional oppression (Howard & Smith, 2011).

If one examines the disciplines of History and Social Studies within the curriculum, it becomes evident that the voices of Black people continue to be omitted which is detrimental to young Black learners. For instance, the contributions of Black Canadians to Canada in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century appear to be absent within the curriculum. According to the research, many stakeholders within the Black community such as students, parents and Black professionals within the field of education contend that the mainstream curriculum is not inclusive of Black students to the extent
that it should be (Levine-Rasky, 2012). The Ontario curriculum makes references to Black peoples such as Black loyalists as well as Blacks in early Canada and utilizes the term *African Canadians* (as an example and not a focus) however it does not directly emphasize the experiences of Black people in a comprehensive and contemporary manner (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The discipline documents are highly problematic for Black students as they are forced to partake in a non-inclusive system whereby their narratives are directly discarded. The curriculum does not seem to highlight the contributions that many Black Canadians have given to their country over the years nor did it invite new immigrants of colour into the discourse of the disciplines (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

2.2 Pedagogical Challenges

The Ministry of Education’s Policy/Program Memorandum 119 upholds the principles of equity and social justice as they pertain to students regardless of their unique racial backgrounds (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). PPM 119 stipulates that principals and schools uphold equity in order for academic achievements within their respective schools to be realized (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). This policy responsively situates itself within the controversial discussion of children’s rights as they pertain to race, religious freedom and other focuses (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). It is unequivocally concerned with eradicating systemic discrimination, endorsing inclusive education by guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of nonmainstream children. PPM 119 also sanctions the belief that when students feel an affinity towards their teacher, that alliance significantly impacts their academic success. The policy asks that all publicly funded school boards essentially create an inclusive environment within their schools while drawing upon an inclusive curriculum and the equitable and inclusive education policies that they are obligated to create. The policy also asks that school boards encourage
pedagogical practices that cater to diversity and that the personnel within the school gain access to resources that would encourage them to acquire more knowledge about diversity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The policy also requests that students be able to, “see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, and culture of the school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).”

While one can appreciate the ideologies and approaches contained within this policy, one can also take exception to it for the following reasons. Firstly, the author of this policy, the Ontario Ministry of Education does not directly afford schools the resources that they would require in order to satisfy the Ministry’s vision of inclusivity. This policy places the responsibility for culturally responsive and relevant pedagogical approaches on the shoulders of schools and deflects this responsibility away from themselves as a central body within the institution of education. Secondly, the policy implies that individuals can be forced to authentically adopt principles of diversity simply because they are mandated to do so. As it is the apparent desire of the Ministry that diverse curriculum in Ontario be utilized (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013), it should be this same organization that is tasked with the responsibility to manufacture and promote it.

If the Ministry asks that teachers acquire knowledge on multicultural issues through the lens of racial and cultural sensitivity, then it is the Ministry that should establish courses for the teachers to undertake to achieve this goal. Furthermore, the policy makes no explicit mention of African students, Black students or students of color nor does it explain to the school boards its own accomplishments and responsibilities within the area of inclusivity. Because the Ministry appears to tolerate a traditional Eurocentric and ethnocentric curriculum, it is imbalanced if educators become burdened with the task of alleviating the problems that the curriculum creates.
The policy calls for the obliteration of institutional oppression and yet there is little emphasis within the policy itself or the curriculum on the historical occurrences of residential schools and segregation which have negatively impacted Indigenous peoples and people of colour. After a review of this policy, it becomes quite apparent that the Ministry ought to provide direct support to teachers in their quest to execute effective and inclusive pedagogy.

In reviewing the literature and research that depicted the limitations and barriers that educators face in providing pedagogy to Black students, many realities were discovered. I believe that having a class environment that is free of racial biases is fundamental in delivering culturally responsive material to traditionally marginalized groups. While the Toronto District School Board strongly supports equity through its active policy stating that racial discrimination against its staff members or students is prohibited, like any other equitable policy it does not have the ability to remove biases that are inherently ingrained in the institution of education and the curriculum which it must abide by (TDSB, 1999). The school board’s policy mirrors the policy of many other North American schools however; educators cannot be prevented from holding biases nor can the policy necessarily encourage teachers to enhance their pedagogies and make them more inclusive (TDSB, 1999).

Based on the research, the barriers between Black students and Non-Black teachers could range from biases, fears and anxieties surrounding race (Milner, 2013). In North America, research into the relationship between Black students and numerous educators revealed that Black students are punished to a higher degree compared to their White student counterparts for subjective offences (Milner, 2013). Essentially, effective anti-racist policy should include supportive and anti-oppressive approaches whereby educators who identify as mainstream and/or
Non-Black are fully aware of the cultural and racial barriers that can negatively impact their students.

The curriculum does not demand that teachers approach discipline matter through the utilization of an Afrocentric lens (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) within the areas of History and Social Studies in a manner that would be inclusive of Black students although Toronto continues to become highly multicultural and visibly multiracial. Further research can be conducted within the area of academic teacher preparation courses and disciplines to explore the ways in which the needs of Black students are addressed within those course areas. Such preparatory courses and programs must also be analyzed to determine how well they prepare educators in teaching and supporting Black students (Ruiz & Cantú, 2013). African Canadians are mentioned only in a limited way among other marginalized groups in the curriculum. This is not an inclusive action as teachers can ultimately focus on the other groups and still satisfy their obligations to the curriculum.

2.2.1 Ability of Educators to Access Inclusive Classroom Resources

It can be inferred from multicultural case studies that experiencing the pedagogies of a greater number of Black educators within the education system can be beneficial for Black students due to the possible affinity between both parties (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). If teachers have the potential to alleviate barriers in the lives of nonmainstream children then perhaps Black educators who were possibly once faced with and overcame those same barriers could be even more beneficial to the plight of the students (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). Academics Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2010) raised valid points within their interpretation of their research findings and they conversed about the belief that more Black educators equate to more cultural and racial inclusivity among Black students.
Some scholars are cautious about proclaiming that Black educators and their pedagogies could lessen the degree of marginalization facing Black students for fear of sounding subjective and bias. One could argue that they should overcome this uncomfortable hesitation. When students are encouraged to learn about their African heritage and they want to gain insight into what society may hold for them as adults, an educator who is personally familiar with African heritage or Caribbean heritage and the lived experiences of Black people in North America would be of profound significance (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). Therefore, based on the research and literature surrounding this discussion, it is foreseeable that Non-Black educators could face difficulties accessing inclusive resources for their Black students as they may or may not be able to realize which resources are vital and central to culturally aware Afrocentric pedagogy.

As stated, Black students can often feel disengaged within classes in mainstream schools and the absence of Black educators may contribute towards this dilemma (Dei, 1995). Dr. George Dei’s position that having more Black educators may allow for a higher degree of inclusivity and engagement among Black students (Dei, 1995) is quite compelling. There is still a chance that a Black educator may not be concerned with advocating for social justice on behalf of their Black students or even identify with Blackness. Increasing the number of Black educators may not necessarily alleviate all barriers for Black children who feel marginalized because of their various socio-economic, religious and ethnic characteristics as Black people do not belong to a monolithic group based on skin colour (Dei, 1995), however, it may help. The individuals within the Black community are quite heterogeneous and this is a significant fact to consider while looking at the ways in which Black people experience oppression through intersectionality. The research continually alluded to the fact that Caucasian educators had
difficulties in accessing resources because simply put they were not Black educators. What seemed absent in the research were the case studies of how various Non-Black educators overcame pedagogical limitations instead of succumbing to barriers.

Educators can avoid oppressive behaviors to some degree by giving credit to the cultural ideas they incorporate within their pedagogies and by supporting the rights of Black students by encouraging them to express themselves (Solórzano, D, & Yosso, 2002). Incorporating lessons that encompass the shared lived experiences, storytelling and encouraging cultural clothing that allows students to embrace their dual identities in both the private and public sphere would be ideal (Solórzano, D, & Yosso, 2002). Teachers must take the time to learn about their students’ backgrounds and be culturally and racially sensitive towards them. Having open dialogues and discussions on important issues that will raise awareness on oppressive practices happening around the world would also be highly beneficial (Solórzano, D, & Yosso, 2002).

2.3 Student Access to Inclusive Resources within Black Schools

2.3.1 Culturally Aware Afrocentric pedagogy

In this section, literature that defined the concept of Afrocentric pedagogy and how it is ideally established was reviewed. As per research, children who come from unique racial backgrounds should experience the type pedagogy of teacher that would allow them to feel confident and empowered (Deppeler, Loreman, Smith, 2015). Research and narratives also implied that Afrocentric education can only be administer successfully by Black teachers and this could be a subjective premise. Various educators such as Natasha Henry uphold Black History while bringing occurrences such as slavery to the forefront (Henry, 2012). Some researchers and members of the general public might believe that inclusivity in History and Social Studies automatically translates to speaking about the transatlantic slave trade and oppression.
While I strongly believe that Black students can benefit from comprehensive *Black History* in North American terms, I believe that this approach is limiting and confines individuals who are Black within a homogenous group and may also inadvertently promote internalized racism. For instance, many young Black Canadians are the products of Sub-Saharan African immigration as their parents have emigrated from countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana and Nigeria. Simply put, these individuals do not have a strong connection to conventional Black History that primarily centers on slavery in Canada and the rest of North America. Therefore, culturally responsive and relevant Afrocentric pedagogy might not necessarily need to focus on slavery; rather it could be centered on the immense contributions that African and Caribbean newcomers have made to Canadian society and this is what research and literature must continue to highlight. Dr. George Dei (1996) of the University of Toronto theorizes that Afrocentric education is “one means to address the educational needs of specifically (but not exclusively) Black/African – Canadian students.” He states, “I interpret Afrocentricity as the study of phenomena grounded in the perspectives and epistemological constructs of peoples of African descent.” Students should be able to connect to material taught in class; it is irrational that a Black student’s perceived *intelligence or aptitude* would be solely dependent upon on their knowledge and connection to systems that might be exclusive towards them (Dei, 1996).

### 2.4 Holistically Examining the Social Oppressions of Black Youths

Even when Black students are labelled as gifted, their experience as students can be more detrimental than Black students who are not labeled as gifted (Ford, Harris & Schuerger, 1993). In public schools, Black students experience social oppressions such as racism and cultural barriers (Milner, 2013). According to Milner (2013), some young Black students are also impacted as learners due to the socio-economic problems that they face. Black students face
higher dropout rates and have more experience with punishment than white students for the same offenses (Milner, 2013). Collectively, research has demonstrated that regardless of the special education categories that Black children are placed within, they still experience marginalization (Milner, 2013). The research clearly establishes that Black students experience more hardships than White and other Non-Black students however; it made reports about Black students insinuating that they belonged to a homogenous groups and they did not differentiate between social classes, religions, ethnicities or nationalities (Milner, 2013).

The overrepresentation of Black students in special education categories is problematic (Reid & Knight, 2006). Essentially Reid and Knight (2006) have been concerned with is the fact that students of color are often overly represented within special education and as a result of this over-representation they are less likely to attend post-secondary institutions. The over-representation of Black students in this category continues from elementary school into high school (Reid & Knight, 2006). As educators, we understand that high school is a pivotal milestone in the lives of some young people since this is where they will put forward their applications to go to college and university. If students are placed within special education categories, they are less likely to attend post-secondary institutions as they do not gain the education qualifications that would make them eligible for entrance into academic courses (Reid & Knight, 2006). While there are many career options that do not require a university education, if these same Black students had aspirations of university, they would not be able to realize such dreams.

As a Black male educator who often considers his own social location, I believe that the marginalization of students of color within education has detrimental impact on communities of colour. Such missed opportunities in education equate to a loss of representation for people of
color within the realms of education, the justice system, the healthcare system, the government, Canadian politics, the police force, mental health services and any other professional entities that call upon post-secondary educated people. If Black people do not obtain such professional positions, then services offered by those positions will continue to underrepresent their communities. What appears to be lacking in literature and research is the reaction of the parents whose children have been relegated by the operation of special education.

Research should in greater detail, explain how Black people are negatively impacted by the violence of institutional oppression against their will in order to foster empathy within those who consume the research so that they would in turn become more motivated to ally with Black people and other people of color in the spirit of social justice, advocacy and activism. Research and literature also need to elaborate in greater detail about how Black educators who were socialized through a process of Eurocentric education are faced with limitations on just how Afrocentric and culturally responsive and relevant their pedagogy is or can be.

2.5 Examining Black-Focused Schools

Research and literature suggested that there is a significant correlation between the promotion of one’s cultural identity within the classroom and academic success (Rust, Ponterotto & Blumberg, 2011). Much of the narratives, literature and research converse about the concept of Afrocentric schools in Toronto as the idea of their existence was unfolding in Canada however, there does not appear to be a wealth of research that exists around the post-establishment of the Africentric school in Ontario. Thus, there seem to be minimal discussions within research and literature in present day Ontario that take a comparative look at the lives of students in Afrocentric schools and students within the mainstream schools in the province.
Research and literature conversed mainly about the hesitations and interests that the public had in regards to the alternative school (Sadlier, 2011).

2.6 Analysis of Governmental involvement vs. Non-Governmental Involvement

The City of Toronto granted the Ontario Black History Society the opportunity to establish Black History Month in Canada (Sadlier, 2011). The celebration takes place during the month of February each year (Sadlier, 2011). The government also instituted Mathieu da Costa Awards which is a national essay and art competition (Sadlier, 2011). Recognizing Black History Month and implementing an Africentric school as well as equitable school board policies are some of the initiatives that the government has used to help alleviate the oppression of Black people and Black children (Sadlier, 2011). These issues seem to be in response to the fact that Black people and children have experienced subjugation in society.

The current discussions about Afrocentric schools usually stem from whether the initiatives are effective or divisive. One should be critical of the research for not fully forming a position on who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that Black children feel included within Ontario classrooms and other classrooms for that matter. As many societal oppressions, can be alleviated through community and grassroots organization structures, research and literature need to continue to converse about what African and Black communities can do to assist Black students and educators.

2.7 The Black Community; Non-governmental and Grassroots Organizations

The first Torontonian Africentric school was established in 2008 however the pressure for school officials to adopt inclusive education for students of color stems from the 1990s which was brought about by various community organizations and the Royal Commission (Thompson & Wallner, 2011). Within this time period, there was much contemplation given to the idea of
establishing Afrocentric schools as an experiment and a response to the overwhelming marginalized experienced by students who were Black (Thompson & Wallner, 2011). Thomson and Wallner (2011) state the lobbying for an Africentric school lasted over a decade and the implementation of Afrocentric education was only solidified in 2008 after the murder of Jordan Manners, a student whose tragic death in 2007 promoted policy discussions within the TDSB.

Nongovernmental organizations such as African immigrant associations were analyzed and it was revealed that they are supportive protective factors in the lives of Black families and their children (Owusu, 2000). This is because of the social, cultural and financial benefits that they offer to the individuals (Owusu, 2000). These organizations are part of Black grassroots organizations that are established to provide comfort and familiarity to new African Canadians through outreach programs and networking events (Owusu, 2000). Those who belong to the organizations often share the same ethnicity, language, customs and struggles in Canada or alternatively, they can also be the spouses of the members who are African immigrants (Owusu, 2000). The research noted that these organizations can serve as support groups for young children however, it is evident that the groups are more centered around promoting their culture mainly within their own cultural groups (for example, the Nigerian Canadian associations mainly aim to support Nigerians in the Diaspora) and one can understand that community development can be initiated on the part of Black organizations to challenge the status quo in their communities and the education system while alleviating barriers for their children as a whole (Owusu, 2000). Owusu could have included more examples of when the African Canadian grassroots organizations were successful in implementing social change or alternatively, he could have elaborated on why that is not their priority.
Research and literature communicated the value of organizations that served Black students however; it becomes clear that there is a void within organizations that predominantly and directly serve Black students who could advocate for a more inclusive curriculum and pedagogy within mainstream education (Quaye & Harper, 2007). If community-based education initiatives centred on Afrocentric education were activated by the organizations, this would be highly beneficial to Black students (Hampton, 2010). When researchers look at past historical oppressions such as racial segregations in the North America, they draw upon the fact that community-based learning and initiative were fundamental in mobilizing change and social enhancement (Hampton, 2010).

The lobbying by Black parents for an Africentric school in Toronto helped to bring awareness to Africentric education in 2007 (Girard, 2008). This indicates that guardians and grassroots organization can prove to be influential in alleviating the oppressions Black students’ face in classrooms. As per literature and research, they also seem to hold power in their abilities to create new opportunities for inclusivity and enhanced learning in the community.

2.7.1 Examining Black Publishers and Press

The Africentric School in Toronto opens its doors to all students of any racial identity, ethnicity and culture and while it visibly supports Afrocentric education, it is bound to the restrictions of the Ontario curriculum as a TDSB run institution (The Star, 2009). It is at the discretion of the educator as to the degree of Afrocentricity they will include within their pedagogy and they must rely on their own Afrocentric materials to teach. It appears then that there are numerous opportunities for Black publishers to produce more materials under the trillium list to support Africentric schools and mainstream schools that have Black students.
Research should call into question why a limited number of Black publishers are creating content that could ultimately appear within the trillium list.

2.8 Looking at Materials Produced by Educators

Matthew R. Morris (2015) a grade five educator within the Toronto District School Board theorizes about Black Male students and the education system in particular when he states: The burden of schooling makes it hard for Black males to succeed because society only reads us through limited ideologies of what a Black male can be. Black boys should embrace their culture: their style of dress, the way they talk, the swagger they embody, the music they listen to, the things they choose to enjoy, and still be able to work hard at school and try to succeed without having to experience a conflict of identity (Morris, 2015).

Morris then goes on to state, “teachers see a Black Male with his pants sagging and assume that he doesn’t care about school. This is the conflict that Black Males face in school that is unlike any other body (Morris, 2015).” The insistence of Morris, a Black teacher himself, that the marginalized identities of Black Male students be remedied gives authority to the belief that Male teachers of African descent may have an affinity towards Black students and could quite possibly help them to navigate through the school system (Morris, 2015). An underlying premise that becomes visible is that Black Male teachers may have experienced the same pressures and burdens in school (Morris, 2015). Essentially, it appears that Morris would be in agreement with Dei that the representation of teachers of colour specifically Black Male teachers would not only be beneficial but necessary towards the development of young Black Men within the school system. Therefore, Morris’ position on Black students in the school system is validated through pertinent scholarship. Educators can enhance the self-esteem of children then
by being a present force and representing themselves in ways in which their non-mainstream students can relate to.

The opinions of Matthew R. Morris and George Dei are further affirmed by the position of Dr. Kmt G. Shockley. Shockley (2007) implies that what educators can promote in terms of cultural responsive and relevant pedagogical approaches to Black students is a healthy and relatable self-identity while understanding their own community and culture. Such teachers who exercise this culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy are successful in teaching Black students (Shockley, 2007). Considering the views of the scholars, it is evident that teachers who align themselves purposefully with Afrocentric schools, Black-Focused Schools and Afrocentric pedagogy are better able to assist Black students who hold their racial identities and cultures as matters of extreme importance (Shockley, 2007). Having Black teachers who identify with the oppressions and racial distinctiveness of their students is beneficial to children. Nevertheless, the perspectives of Non-Black educators and the ways in which they experience teaching their Black students are crucial. It is important that the research community hear narratives of Non-Black and specifically Caucasian teachers that appropriately facilitate their students from a purposeful Afrocentric lens and yet literature and research seemed to omit or disregard such narratives.

Dei (1996) offers us a portrait of what may occur in Afrocentric schools by highlighting upon what has been absent from the curriculum of public schools in Toronto. He notes that students have raised issues with the fact that they are not taught by Black teachers and that their heritages, their histories, narratives and community achievements are excluded from mainstream curriculum – these are issues that Afrocentric schools can remedy (Dei, 1996). Dei brings to the forefront pertinent pupil narratives within his research. It would be ideal to also hear narratives from Black students from differing social classes and priviledges (Dei, 1996).
As Black students have felt discouraged and disempowered from establishing their own cultural societies and identities in school, it can be inferred that they may in fact have a greater chance of advancement towards inclusion within Black-focused schools as the primary focus shifts onto them (Dei, 1996). Educators within these institutions would be able to foster hospitable environments as they align themselves with these schools in order to deliver Afrocentric pedagogy (Dei, 1996). Through the means of Afrocentric education, students can incorporate their cultures, families and community members into their learning and are assessed on social and academic levels (Dei, 1996). The students and the stakeholders of their learning can affect change within such schools and educators are held accountable for their pedagogies (Dei, 1996). Dei also suggests suitable recommendations for teachers and school systems to enhance their Afrocentric pedagogies. I would have also appreciated hearing more about his position on what Black youths can do to lobby for change within their communities (Dei, 1996).

Dei articulates that Afrocentric education will not only be beneficial to Black students but also mainstream students as it will allow for a more culturally sensitive environment (Dei, 1996). Afrocentric education offered by Toronto is a remedy that addresses the high dropout rates of Black students who do not feel that they can be engaged within ethnocentric environments that do not acknowledge their unique heritage, perspectives or approach learning in inclusive way (Dei, 1996). This is an accurate position to take as previously, Canada had not devised a plan to address the decline of Black academic success in its schools (Dei, 1996). It would be ideal for scholars to inform the public as to why education stakeholders and the public raised issues with the implementation of Afrocentric education yet apparently remained silent in previous years when the issues of Black academic struggles were raised.
Within the currently running Africentric Alternative School, the pedagogy of the educators is still governed by the TDSB curriculum which is not in itself, Afrocentric or Africentric (The Star, 2009). Teachers at the school are still bound by the same goals, benchmarks, EQAO testing and goals as other teachers within the TDSB jurisdiction (The Star, 2009). Certain events such as a Martin Luther King Day and other school-created holidays where students can actively celebrate their ethnicities and unique racial backgrounds take place and are facilitated by teachers (The Star, 2009). Research demonstrated that many of the parents who enrolled their children in the Africentric School found their children to acquire a sense of belonging and structure in their lives (The Star, 2009). They found that the teachers allowed their children to be enthusiastic and nurtured in safe environment where they could be unified and visible (The Star, 2009). Teachers within the school were able to have their students dress in uniformed clothing with African designs which further fostered a sense of belonging (The Star, 2009). Educators were further empowered to support Black children heterogeneously as they could teach not only about African heritage but about African heritage in the Diaspora and North American heritage as it pertained to Black students (The Star, 2009). Research did not indicate the cases of educators exceeding expectations as they pertain to being inclusive of Black students.

2.9 Conclusion

Literature and research were reviewed as they pertained to the administration of History and Social Studies disciplines and their inclusion or exclusion of Black students in grades one through to grade eight by critically examining the curriculum and challenges associated with pedagogy within this area. The abilities of educators to incorporate resources within their pedagogies and classroom approaches to allow for an inclusive and convivial classroom for
Black students was examined critically. Lastly, literature and research was reviewed to determine the ways in which Afrocentric school systems propelled Black student academic development.

Within the findings, it was revealed that Black students are highly marginalized within the public-school system in Ontario. Their oppression can be alleviated through pedagogical approaches that are culturally responsive and relevant and exercised by educators who can identify with the students of colour as well as supportive Black-Focused school systems (Deppeler, Loreman, Smith, 2015). Numerous educators may face barriers in ensuring that Black students are fully included within the classroom due to the fact that the curriculum omits the heritages and perspectives of Black students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). In assessing governmental and non-governmental involvement in the lives of Black students, many truths are exposed. Firstly, governmental action over the past few years has included the introduction of Afrocentric education in Toronto (Thompson & Wallner, 2011) and grassroots organizations that support such government actions do indeed hold a great deal of influence that should be drawn upon by oppressed groups to incite change (Owusu, 2000). The perspectives of Non-Black educators need to be included within the discourse to ensure that all parties are involved within the process of healing the system as active agents of change. The Ontario Ministry of Education must be charged with explicitly considering the views and perspectives of Black students in order for such unique views and perspectives to be transported the forefront.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the research methodology associated with the study which examines the ways in which Black students are marginalized in public education and it elaborates upon the reasons why such methodological approaches were utilized. This chapter begins by detailing the specific qualitative research approaches taken and subsequently, the primary method of data collection. The participants of the research study as well as their backgrounds and relevance to the research purpose will also be acknowledged. The sampling criteria which details sampling procedures shall also be highlighted upon. The methods of data analysis shall be discussed within this chapter and afterwards, it will acknowledge the pertinent ethical issues with which this study was faced with. Lastly, the apparent assets as well as the inevitable limitations of the study will be conversed about before concluding this chapter.

3.1 Research Approaches and Procedures

In order to ascertain the scholars, research findings and academic discussions and opinions surrounding the research study, a comprehensive literature review was accomplished in chapter two. Within Chapter two, research findings were accumulated and analyzed and both the researchers and research were either commended or criticized through educated observations and vigilant examinations. Ontario Policies and curriculum documents were also evaluated within Chapter Two for their abilities to be culturally responsive and racially sensitive instruments for Black students from grades one through to grade eight. The applicable and existing research and literature as well as the policies and curriculum are all directly connected to the research purpose at hand.
In supporting the research purpose, semi-structured face-to-face interviews occurred with three educators who taught between grades one to grade eight; such educators had experience teaching Black students. The semi-structured interview is the most common type of interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured interviews allowed the study to incorporate narratives and perspectives of individuals whose voices were not previously amplified in research and literature. Through the individual interviews, the study was able to extract more personal, professional and social connotations from the educators who situated themselves as active socialization agents within the lives of their students and who were directly related the study (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

It was imperative as the study continued that research remained extremely qualitative, as qualitative research is an ideal way to comprehend the perspectives, personal experiences, values and biases of individuals (Gibson, 2004). Black students experience institutional oppression and the study employed semi-structured, qualitative interviews to obtain the insights and lived experiences of educators who teach these children. Putting this motive into perspective, simply deriving numbers and statistics would not have been beneficial or justifiable (Gibson, 2004). As the study was interested in establishing intervention mechanisms within the classroom to help educators teach and empower Black students effectively, qualitative research was an invaluable asset to the construction of such mechanisms.

Giving a voice to individuals who may not be viewed as commanding authorities of change, bureaucratically speaking is a profound experience. Such individuals include White educators that teach Black students who experience school difficulties and oppressions. This study has been able to fulfill this necessity through the means of qualitative research as it incorporated their interviews within it. By way of conducting a literature review in the preceding
chapter, the comprehension of the position of policy makers and educational institutions that control the education of Black students became possible. Through the interviews, the knowledge and perspectives of teachers was brought to the forefront. One can understand their attitudes, opinions and beliefs through the mechanism of interview studies. As a researcher, it is important to reflect on the relevance and appropriateness of the interviews (Mays & Pope, 2000). Perhaps the interviewing process itself which explicitly requested the involvement of educators manifested as an empowering and reflective process that will encourage those particular agents to make additional improvements in the scholastic lives of Black students as well as other students. Furthermore, the qualitative process has allowed for a more informal approach and optimistically speaking has translated into genuine and candid information (Gibson, 2004).

### 3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary data collection tool of the research study is the semi-structured interview which was conducted on three individuals. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that are prevalent within qualitative research and are employed to assist researchers in understanding the rationale for certain human actions and behavioral tendencies as they explore the feelings, attitudes and personal experience of the research participants interviewed (Harvey-Jordan & Long 2001). Semi-structured interviews were incorporated into the study due to the richness and depth of information that they provide; a participant in a semi-structured interview could speak passionately and honestly since they were provided with open-ended questions that are directly related to their own lives (Harvey-Jordan & Long 2001). Through semi-structured interviews, participants who were directly connected to the research problem could add value to the research purpose (Harvey-Jordan & Long 2001). After the interviews, the findings (transcripts) were delivered back to the research participants for their approval which enhanced the validity of the
research study as the research content had been verified (Harvey-Jordan & Long 2001). Gill, Plumridge, Khunti & Greenfield (2012) agree that semi-structured interviews are the most effective way for a researcher to gather information from their participants. Individual interviews are the most utilized method of collecting data within qualitative research (Noble & Smith, 2013). A researcher can format interviews that directly support their research problem and research purpose. Studies demonstrate that people of colour including individuals who are Black, are receptive towards opportunities to participate in research if they are valued and personally approached by the researcher themselves (Gill, Plumridge, Khunti & Greenfield, 2012). They are also more willing to make collaborations within the research if they believe that in doing so, they will obtain potential benefits and if this potential is communicated to them effectively (Gill, Plumridge, Khunti & Greenfield, 2012). With this information in mind, it became highly logical that the participants within this study would be consulted through semi-structured interviews.

3.3. Participants

As one was ethically and logistically unable to confer with entire populations, establishing a study sample was an essential phase of the research study (Reybold, Lammert & Stribling, 2012). The proceeding sample of participants is equally connected to the research purpose and they align with specific expectations of sampling criteria. There is imperative methodological reasoning behind the decision to include the participants as interviewees in the research.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

As this study is concerned with the ways in which Black students find themselves regulated by and within public education, the following criteria was developed to help answer the research queries:
1. Teachers had experience teaching Black students of Sub-Saharan African descent and/or Afro-Caribbean descent.

2. Teachers had received their teaching credentials and qualifications from a Canadian Institution and/or were in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers or another body that regulated teacher qualifications.

3. Teachers were presently employed and physically working and taught between grades one and grade eight.

4. Teachers were Black or Non-Black; coming from various backgrounds possessing a multitude of characteristics (male, female, different religious affiliations, and various socioeconomic statuses). For research purposes, they were asked to self identify.

5. Educators were employed as teachers for at least a year before the first interview took place.

Short and discerning samples are often incorporated within qualitative research (Reybold, Lammert & Stribling, 2012). The participants interviewed had experience teaching Black children in their schools. It was asked that teachers had experience training to become educators through Canadian universities as such institutions and their abilities or lack thereof to prepare teachers for race issues in education were also called into question towards the end of this study. It was also requested that teachers were certified by the Ontario College of Teachers or another governing body to ensure that teachers with international experience were also represented. The educators had at least one year of experience to ensure that they had adequate familiarity in teaching Black children for them to have insight to provide during the interview.

Furthermore, educators who were presently employed within an Ontario schools or a Public school for Black children in North America and who had experience teaching between
grades one to grade eight were also desired. This was because the information derived from their answers was current and relevant information and that the grades they taught were indeed the grades of interest within the study. Although at least one educator had to be of Sub-Saharan African descent or Afro-Caribbean descent and a Black educator, the racial backgrounds of the other educators could be Black or Non-Black. This was to ensure that the study continued to explore issues from a multicultural and multiracial lens. This study is directly looking at the institutional of Black students in the realm of education thus, it was not necessary for the study to become overly concerned with the additional social characteristics of the educator interviewees.

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures and Recruitment

The method in which a researcher includes research participants in their studies is directly connected to the research purpose and research problem and therefore a random sample was drawn upon (Marshall, 1996). Utilizing a random sample is the finest way for one to sample individuals within the pertinent population and make important generalization although, random samples come with their own inherent limitations (Marshall, 1996). The sample population consisted of three individuals as this number is in accordance with the regulations of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto who granted authorization for this study to be completed through the aforementioned means (Marshall, 1996). This was also the ideal number of participants that yielded relevant inferences (Marshall, 1996). There are three types of methods for selecting a sample population for a study, convenience, judgment and theoretical (Marshall, 1996).

A convenience sample occurs when the most accessible participants are selected for the qualitative study (Marshall, 1996). A judgment sample is the opposite of a convenience sample and this type of sample seeks out the most pertinent and beneficial research participants.
A theoretical sample involves establishing theories from present day research results and selecting samples to analyze (Marshall, 1996).

This study selected a sample population through a combination of judgment and convenience sampling. Due to the restrictions of this particular research study, a convenience sample helped satisfy the basic requirements of locating a sample population. In the spirit of convenience sampling, participants significant to the research study and most accessible were sought after because the study was limited by time restrictions (Marshall, 1996). The limitation with convenience sampling is that it is the most approachable and obtainable research participants that the researcher can interview if the researcher cannot postpone the interview process (Marshall, 1996). In regards to the judgment sampling approach, I also located research participants who benefit and advantage my research study (Marshall, 1996).

3.3.3 Participant Bios

1. Mrs. Nnenna Kanayo is a Black teacher born and raised in West Africa. She also received her education and teaching degree in West Africa before coming to North America and gained experience as an educator in her country of origin teaching Black students. Kanayo teaches at a school with a majority Black student population.

2. Mrs. Joan Ellis is a Caucasian teacher born and raised in Ontario, Canada. She has been employed as a teacher for 15 years working in an Ontario public school. Passionate about social justice, she has experiences teaching Black Students incorporating an Afrocentric perspective. She received her Master of Arts degree from the University of Toronto (Institute of Child Study, OISE) and teaches at a Public School.

3. Mrs. Sade Williams is a Black Haitian-Canadian educator with 23 years of teaching experience. She teaches Grade 3 at a public school and she has experience teaching Black
students within that setting. She has experience implementing Afrocentric education and creates her own Afrocentric materials to teach all her students. She is aware of the social oppressions of Black students.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Analyzing data is a fundamental stage within qualitative research (Noble & Smith, 2013). When examining the data, the transcripts were analyzed and compared and the texts of each semi-structured interviewed were examined to avoid the risk of fragmenting data (Noble & Smith, 2013). The transcripts were studied for commonalities and areas of contrast. Quite specifically data analysis is the process whereby data is made meaningful, rigorous and comprehensible after it has been examined, assembled or reconstructed (Noble & Smith, 2013). The data that emerged was analyzed and was instrumental in giving meaning to the study (Noble & Smith, 2013).

The researcher’s approach to data analysis as it pertains to this research study includes the transcription of semi-structured interviews and the researcher situating themselves within the data to gain vital information that would support their research purpose (Noble & Smith, 2013). Data analysis is the process whereby data is organized, theorized, polished; it occurred after the interviews took place and it was a very imperative stage (Noble & Smith, 2013). Data analysis provides more insight into the studied phenomenon as it is involved with extracting connections from the data and it relies on the research to convey to the public why such connections were important (Noble & Smith, 2013).

The study established visible patterns and themes within the data to bring insight to the phenomenon at hand (Noble & Smith, 2013). There was attention paid to null data because the research purpose deals with subject matter deemed controversial and educators interviewed may
have been compelled to silence some of their opinions because they may have wanted to represent themselves as neutral or even unopinionated. In a study, such as this, what the participants were reluctant to say was still considered because their omitted speech answered questions in terms of the ability of educators to feel comfortable in addressing race related issues and culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy within the classroom.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

It is fundamental that researchers recognize ethical dilemmas that they may encounter in their research from the onset of their study to its finish (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson, 2012). Informed consent and the minimization of harm are paramount ethical principles in qualitative research studies (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson, 2012). Nevertheless, what constitutes ethicality and what constitutes harm differ subjectively between researchers. Fundamentally, a research study will always face ethical dilemmas and it is important for the researcher to discover ways in which he/she can mitigate them (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson, 2012). A researcher conducting qualitative research must remain trustworthy to the research participants and must carry out good practice during the conduction of research (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson, 2012).

To limit the ethical dilemmas that may result from the interviewing process, the research participants remain protected through a variety of rights and considerations that are upheld because of their affiliation with this research study. Through a consent form, research participants were made aware of the purpose of this study, their rights and obligations as well as the ethical implications of the research study. The research participants’ identities and personal information are concealed and protected through the use of pseudonyms. The interviewees were
not obligated to remain in the study against their will. They were granted the right to clarify and modify or remove any statements that they had voiced.

Due to the fact that this research study involves contentious matters such as racism, anti-racism, children and cultural sensitivity, it was anticipated that the interview questions could create a sense of uneasiness or even anxiety as strong emotions might have been evoked. The preceding rights and considerations for the interviewee allowed the research participants to remain anonymous and not be judged or reprimanded for their statements, beliefs, opinions and values. As they were given the right to clarify, modify and remove any statements that they articulated, they had the ability to ultimately censor themselves and monitor their own speech which is empowering and just.

The schools and the students of which the participants are affiliated with are not identified. There are no known risks to participation within this study because it is mainly the students within the study that experience marginalization and oppression in the classroom and not the educators themselves within this context. The audio recordings (and the data collected from each interviewee) will remain password protected on a laptop and cellular phone for five years until they are ultimately destroyed. Interviewees were made aware of the fact that they will be audio-recorded when they will give their consent by signing the consent letter.

Ethical practice to the greatest degree possible has been maintained in this research study. An interviewer is to remain thorough and honest in their relationships with research participants in order to uphold ethicality as well as the dignity of the interviewees (Ethical principles in the conduct of research with human participants, 1973). A healthy and professional relationship between both parties is significant to the research study at hand (Ethical principles in the conduct of research with human participants, 1973). The agreement between the researcher and the
interviewees was clearly articulated and the commitments within the agreement have been honored while member checks were permissible all throughout the process (Ethical principles in the conduct of research with human participants, 1973).

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

A chief strength of the methodological approach is that it promoted a profound understanding of race issues within education as educators provided insight into their pedagogical practices and experiences through the semi-structured interviews (Baumbusch, 2010). Policies, politicians and governing bodies within education are often consulted and conversed about when discussions of student oppressions arise. It is sensible that the voices of educators who either uphold or dismantle the values and agendas of policies and expectations of those governing bodies be heard (Baumbusch, 2010). The high degree to which the research participants were protected enhanced the qualitative research study as the participants could speak with anonymity and candor about controversial issues while maintaining their sense of authority.

An immovable methodological limitation within the qualitative research is that a focus was placed only on a small sample as a microcosm to extract meaning and understanding about the phenomenon at hand. Thus, one cannot generalize the results of the study to the overall populations of educators and furthermore, the positions of the interviewees may then be viewed as isolated cases. On the other hand, while one may be unable to make a generalization on the entire population of educators, the insight that the research participants provided can be viewed nevertheless as important considerations. Since the educators themselves were vital sources of information and that individuals create their own realities; their opinions and experiences still indeed constitute truths. The length of time that is allotted to this research study is limited;
studying the phenomenon extensively overtime could instead result in an even more meaningful and comprehensive study. Within this study, literature and case studies were reviewed and educators, not persons under the age of eighteen were interviewed. As the study was directly concerned with the treatment and academic success of Black students, this study was negatively impacted because the interviewing of these children was restricted; such interviews would have provided extremely significant information to the research study as they are the population of which this study is most concerned with.

3.7 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the methodological approaches of the study were elaborated upon. Insight into the reasons why those approaches were selected were all validated by research and literature. Subsequently, past and present research approaches as well as procedures were discussed. The chapter elaborated upon the instruments of data collection and the rationale for employing such tools as a semi-structured interview which gave profoundness to the topic as a whole. The method in which sampling criteria and sampling procedures were established was discussed allowing the reader to understand the theoretical approach towards selecting various research participants. Furthermore, insight as to how the data extracted was analyzed was provided. The ethical review procedures that emphasized the rights and freedoms of the research participants were presented as well as the methodological limitations and strengths of the research study as an entire body.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction to Interview Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the qualitative interviews are explored further. The three educators who were interviewed expressed their knowledges and perspectives on the marginalization of Black students in education as they navigate through the public-school system. Four distinct themes are highlighted upon in this chapter which have emerged as a result of the relationship between the findings of the semi-structured, qualitative interviews and the findings within current literature and research which was analyzed in earlier chapters. The four distinct themes are: 1) Support of Afrocentric Schools; 2) Celebrating Black Student Identity; 3) Teacher Support and 4) Interplay of Intersectionality in Classrooms and Schools. The subthemes elaborate upon the discrepancies in responses between the different educators as each educator provided their own individual perspective. The three participants as well as the schools of which they work in remain anonymous and are safeguarded through the use of indistinguishable pseudonyms. The three participants interviewed were Mrs. Nnenna Kanayo, a Black teacher of West African descent and two other female teachers that taught at mainstream public schools; Mrs. Sade Williams a Black, Haitian-Canadian and Ms. Joan Ellis, a White educator.

4.1 Support of Afrocentric Schools

All the participants clearly demonstrated their lack of support for Afrocentric schools. They did however express their beliefs in the importance of Afrocentric education in public schools and they related their experience of implementing it within their pedagogies. Shockley (2007) states that educators who affiliate themselves with Afrocentricity are better able to assist Black students and celebrate their identities. This notion may support the idea that the educators did indeed have a vested interested in assisting Black students as they claimed. The opinions of
the two educators who taught in mainstream public schools believed that such establishments did not alleviate racism or marginalization. Instead they believed that multiracial environments in which diverse school bodies work together within the spirit of anti-racism were most ideal.

Mrs. Nnenna Kanayo, the educator that was interviewed at a school for Black students of African descent that drew upon Afrocentric pedagogy expressed a strong, personal lack of support for Black Focused Schools which are established to help Black children progress academically in a safe space. The school that employs Mrs. Nnenna Kanayo draws upon the same curriculum as other surrounding public schools, the greatest discrepancy between Kanayo’s school and mainstream public schools is the fact in Kanayo’s school, the educators, other staff members, and students are purposefully Black. The teachers’ lack of support for such schools seems to challenge and yet support the research of Rust, Ponterotto & Blumber (2011) who state that there is a significant correlation between the promotion of one’s cultural identity within the classroom and academic success. The participants challenge the idea of such separate schools however they support Afrocentric education that is made available to all students without them going a designated institution to receive it. They challenge the research because, they disagree with Afrocentric and Black-Focused Schools however their views support the research because they uphold and practice Afrocentric education.

4.1.1 Student Autonomy & Self-Determination

Kanayo, the only teacher born in the African continent among her co-workers felt that her school had become a mere ‘dumping ground’ for parents as opposed to an effective institution that would ensure the academic success of Black students while promoting their emotional wellbeing and identities. She stated that the underachievement of Black students was not the result of them having been marginalized by the curriculum. Rather, she felt that their failure to
perform academically was the result of their deliberate behavioral choices of those students as well as an overwhelming lack of positive parental involvement of such children’s parents. What seemed evident from the responses of the educator was that while the school celebrated various African cultures and customs, she believed that it was not effectively managing student behavior and low academic performance. In considering race, Kanayo drew comparisons between Black students that she had taught in Sub-Saharan Africa and Black students in North America explaining that despite the lack of resources in some African classrooms (in comparison to some Western classrooms), Black African students overcome their own barriers and are successful, thus she implicitly stated that success was a choice that some Black students and their parents were not making; Kanayo states:

“Having worked, here, we are making things difficult – ask any teacher that has taught here or any substitute teacher, they refuse to come here! At times, we find it difficult to get supply teachers into the school. What is the problem? It is the students’ behavior, how the students behave here. Do you understand my point? It is the way they behave! All boils down to – my class, I find it very difficult for the kids to keep quiet and let me teach them. I have taught in predominantly White schools, when I go there I don’t need to raise my voice, the students are quiet.”

Research shows that Black students benefit academically when they are taught by individuals who, like themselves, are Black people (Dei, 1996). Furthermore, it also informs us that Afrocentric education is beneficial to the academic progress of Black students. Educators’ unfavorable opinions of school systems that are Black-Focused and/or are centred around Afrocentricity do not automatically translate to an aversion towards Afrocentric education (Dei, 1996). All the educators interviewed agreed that Afrocentric education was important however,
they offered different perspectives as to how they administered it. They also spoke candidly about the barriers they experience as educators teaching Black students. Kanayo’s frustration and discontent with her school might give rise to the need for more research around the ideal school, teacher-student relationships and classrooms that would be ideal in ensuring the academic progress of Black students.

4.1.2 Concerns over the Cultural Homogeneity of Afrocentric and Black-Focused Schools

Public school teacher Ms. Joan Ellis felt that Afrocentric and Black-Focused schools only served students who were already receiving Afrocentric education outside of those institutions from their guardians. Both Ellis and Williams raised concerns that were centered around the fact that they believed that the children enrolled in such schools would only gain culturally and racially homogenous experiences and would not be able to experience and absorb other cultures outside of their own. Their apprehensions also come from worries about how the students would fair outside of such protective environments. Ellis, a self-identifying White educator commented on the fact that a Black school that she knew of enrolled many students that were Black but not of direct African descent which she felt might be problematic and counterproductive as Afrocentric pedagogy may not be a solution for students who may not identify culturally with Africa but are simply deemed as people of African descent.

4.2 Celebrating Black Student Identity

The Educators believed in the promotion and celebration of the cultural and racial identities of Black Students. It was expressed by Ms. Joan Ellis, the only Caucasian participant, that implementing multicultural literature made students feel a sense of inclusivity in the class and she believed that a sense of pride was positively impactful and could be influential in,
“reducing roadblocks in academic success.” Williams as a Haitian-Canadian woman also talked about the difficulties that culture shocks presented to newcomer Black families and their children arriving to Canada. All educators conversed about the importance of encouraging and celebrating those narratives. Their beliefs about the importance of celebrating Black student identity and this action’s connection with academic progress affirm the position of Amanishakete (2013) who states that the promotion of the ethnic identity of Black students is pivotal to their academic success.

4.2.1 Societal Oppressions

It is quite evident that all three educators interviewed agreed that Black students experienced societal oppressions because of their uniqueness as visible minorities in society. Such oppressions that were touched upon included being stereotyped as well as stereotype threat as these participants believed that other educators and members of society held stereotypical views of what the students’ present and future lives looked like as well the children’s capabilities. The three research participants believed in the notion that the dominant class oppressed Black students and their unique cultural and racial identities. Kanayo did acknowledge the fact that the curriculum was biased and supported a mainly Eurocentric perspective and not the lived experiences of visible minorities presenting an obstacle for Black children. Nevertheless, she felt that this did not account for the reason why some Black Students are not progressing academically. Williams expanded upon the fact that some Black students who come from homes with a lower socioeconomic background would often come to school hungry and/or without adequate attire during the winter season. The educators of public schools discussed the ways in which they felt that some Black students experienced isolation within that school as a result of being visible minorities.
4.2.2 Black Masculinity in a North American Context

As a White Teacher, Ms. Joan Ellis noted that it was easier for her to connect with Black Male students in kindergarten and grade one as the boys appeared to be more open to having a cordial teacher-student relationship with her. She noted that the relationship would be altered around grade three when the Male children would appear to have ‘shut down’ and thus, shut her out. She stated that she felt that young Black Males are faced with different societal pressures; the pressure to conform or adjust to a new society if they were immigrants or the pressure to confirm to societal expectations of Black masculinity which may perpetuated by older brothers and the media. Ms. Sade Williams would most likely agree with Ellis’ opinions about the experiences of young Black Male students in society. In speaking about Black masculinity, Williams says:

We tend to associate people like you know oh young Black Boys – problems, violence, attention problems. No, no, not really it may be the story of one child, but it’s not every child so be open minded, don’t assume anything. They [white educators] approach the child with preconceived notions and they don’t give the child a chance. So, I keep saying, keep your mind open.

In speaking about her male students, Kanayo referenced an apparently common ambition of theirs – playing professional basketball for the NBA. She stated that she has let them know that she does not believe that such an ambition is realistic due to limited positions on the Raptors team and that as visible minorities, she believed that having an education was fundamental. It could be possible that young Black Males are only seeing themselves in roles that are traditionally or stereotypically filled by men who resemble them physically and racially speaking (media portrayals of African American and Black Canadian men and Black athletes). Such
imagery and possible pressure to confirm to such images could also be causing a disconnect in mainstream and nonmainstream classes of which the students find themselves within.

Morris (2015) has stated that some educators see Black Male students representing themselves in nonmainstream ways and then assume that they are without any academic interests. This in turn could influence interactions between educators and Black Male students in school. As stated in Chapter Two, Morris is most likely to agree with Shockley (2007) who explains that culturally responsive teaching approaches are those that consider the community and culture of students that they are attempting to connect to. Perhaps Kanayo although a Black educator herself, does not relate to the culture of the Black Males within her class or their interests and self-identity as Black basketball players. Because teachers in Ontario are predominantly White and Female in public schools such as Ellis’ and Female in Kanayo’s school, teachers may not know how to approach or handle the topic of Black Masculinity because of racial and gender differences.

4.3 Teacher Support

4.3.1 Inadequate Training in Teacher Preparatory Programs

Although they discussed the ways in which multicultural perspectives were evident in their teaching degrees, the educators identified a clear lack of training from their respective teacher preparatory education. Such university programs did not prepare educators such as themselves to help alleviate the marginalization of Black students specifically. The educators received their teacher preparatory degrees from Canadian post-secondary institutions with the exception of Mrs. Nnenna Kanayo who received her teacher education in West Africa and had taught Black African students in Sub-Saharan Africa previously before educating students in North America. The other two educators agreed that their university programs did not adequately
prepare them for work with nonmainstream children, specifically Black students. They felt that programs did not equip them with pedagogical strategies to help reduce the marginalization that the students experience in education and that the academic plight of Black students was not conversed about in any of their teacher preparatory classes.

4.3.2 Teacher Initiative

Dei (1996) informs us that when the perspectives and epistemology of people of African descent are included in a discipline, Afrocentric education is achieved. It becomes evident through the teachers’ examples that they did indeed include Afrocentric education within their pedagogy. All teachers expressed the fact that they had taken it upon themselves to administer what they believed was Afrocentric education as they drew upon culturally responsive and relative pedagogy. It became evident that their initiatives were a response to a lack of support in this area by stakeholders within education (administration, the Ministry of Education, the community). The educators voluntarily gave examples of the ways in which they drew upon their own resourcefulness to celebrate the racial and cultural identities of Black students without being summoned to do so. Their examples of culturally relevant pedagogy all appeared to be subjective, self-initiated and well-meaning. Kanayo reported that she was undertaking courses within the area of anti-racism and Ellis stated that it had been merely ‘implied’ that individuals entering the field of education were sensitive to racial differences and that there were no specific courses that dealt with this particular topic. Howard and Smith (2011) explain that the Ontario curriculum is founded upon Eurocentric principles and values – this would explain why the teachers feel reliant upon their own initiative to include an Afrocentric perspective into courses within the classroom.
Kanayo reported feelings of frustration because she felt that she had tried within reasonable limits to teach and support her students as a teacher through her self-initiated Afrocentric pedagogy. As she says, she introduced a specific language spoken in various regions of West Africa to the students, as well as African folklore and culture into school subjects. In speaking to the educators as they recalled self-initiated instances where they administered Afrocentric pedagogy to their pupils, various realizations are manifested. The teacher-initiated Afrocentric pedagogical strategies appear to be implemented by involved educators that recognize the societal oppressions and cultural deficits facing their Black students.

Kanayo explained that her school had been established with the idea that the Black educators would also serve as role-models building healthy and positively impacting relationships with Black students and she felt that she had yet to experience those hoped-for relationships. Kanayo did not make mention of the cultural makeup of her classroom; it appears highly unlikely that her entire classrooms comprised students who had specific cultural connections to the West African language that she was teaching them. Teacher-initiated strategies within the area of Afrocentric pedagogy that directly reflect the ethnicities of the students in those classrooms appeared to be highly subjective in nature and drawn from the lived experiences of the teachers. As a Black Female teacher in a public school, Ms. Williams stated:

For me, it’s been a personal journey to be quite honest. I do things, I create things, I look for resources and I share with other staff members that’s what I do. I know that the board has something called Black History something and there are a lot of resources readily available. It’s great but sometimes it’s not always applicable or something you can really use or modify really. So yeah that’s what I do, and I encourage all Black teachers to do the same.
4.3.3 Parental Support

What became evident through the qualitative interviews was the idea that the educators could not have open, honest and healthy dialogue with Black parents regardless of their own self-identified race. To reiterate, in Chapter Two, it was discovered that Black parental involvement proved beneficial in the struggle to implement Africentric education in Ontario, Canada (Girard, 2008) and that through activism, parental voices helped bring attention to the marginalization of students of sub-Saharan African and Afro-Caribbean descent. Thus, we can infer that parental involvement is an important factor to consider.

Ellis talked about how she and her colleagues were afraid as White teachers to present any discomfort or agitation to Black parents for fear of being labelled as racists. In terms of Black student behavioral issues, she stated that at her public school, many Caucasian educators were hesitant to discipline Black students when they deemed them to be misbehaving because they felt that they would be racially discriminating against the students thereby upsetting both the children and their guardians. Ellis stated that she was not as comfortable talking about race issues with Black parents as she was with her White colleagues. She felt that if she could have amicable conversations with Black guardians while feeling supported in giving them her insights, it would be beneficial in helping Black students that she encounters in her teaching. Meanwhile, Williams expressed both positive and negative experiences in her encounters with Black parents:

You know what’s funny – two extremes either they’re completely on your side like, ‘Oh my goodness finally, one Black teacher!’ Or, it could be, you’re suddenly the enemy. I have very extreme experiences, sometimes, it’s interesting, some truths a White teacher will tell a Black parent, and they will take it. Coming from me they’re suddenly against[sic]! Or, ‘you’re not really Black, you’re White.’ And I’m like, not really,
because suddenly, they perceive you as judgmental, or [sic] snob, your nose is up in the air and I’m like no, I’m down to earth sista. But you know they don’t see it that way. And so, two extremes, either they embrace you or they feel like you’re the enemy, you’re not with them.

Kanayo held that her school was being viewed and used by parents as a ‘dumping ground’ or ‘daycare centre’ where they would merely drop their children off and allocate the sole responsibility of the education and facilitation of their child or children to the school. The teachers all conveyed their belief that parents needed to be actively involved within the scholastic lives of their children which they felt was not always the case. Williams was understanding of the fact that some Black parents experienced their own marginalization within their adult lives as some of them were coping with a lower socio-economic statuses and other societal pressures. Kanayo expressed her frustration with student behavior in her Black-focused school; she stated that when she informs students that if they misbehave, their parents would be contacted, the students often responded by saying, “My mom doesn’t care.” She expressed her concerns and disappointments with the overwhelming lack of support that she received from parents who she says refuse to instill within their children, the importance of education. She reported that parents have also withdrawn their children from the school altogether. Research informs us that Black educators help to eradicate the marginalization experienced by Black students in the public-school system (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010), however Kanayo’s experience shed light on the fact that more discussions need to occur surrounding the ways in which these Black teachers are supported or marginalized themselves. This matter will also be presented in Chapter Five.
4.4 Interplay of Intersectionality within Classrooms and Schools

The two Black educators, Ms. Sade Williams from a public school and Mrs. Nnenna Kanayo from a Black-Focused school expressed their desires to assist Black students knowing the oppression that they face. Kanayo voiced her feelings about the ways in which her presence as a Black educator in a homogenously Black classroom was seemingly unappreciated and unwelcomed to her surprise. As stated earlier, Williams talked about difficulties she experienced with other parents of students (particularly mothers) who were also Black and Female stating that there was often an unforeseen disconnect between herself and them.

4.4.1 Blackness as a Homogenous Experience

Both Williams and Kanayo expected their relations with Black students and Black parents to be highly positive and understanding at both ends since both adults were Black educators. Although Williams was somewhat mindful of the fact that diversity existed within Black communities, both her and Kanayo’s assumption did not fully consider intersectionality and the idea that Black people are indeed a heterogenous group. Another factor for the disconnect could also include internalized racism.

What this means is that race might not unite two people in solidarity if they experience racism, discrimination and life differently than each other because of their differing social locations. The Black Community comprises many diverse individuals with different socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities, histories, nationalities, languages, genders, disabilities, experiences and so forth. Through intersectionality, individuals of Sub-Saharan African and Afro-Caribbean descent are still capable of discriminating amongst each other while also experiencing racism from varying degrees; Black people experience different social locations and are by no means monolithic.
An issue further explored in Chapter Five is the way in which intersectionality affects Black educators and Black students. Kanayo clearly articulated barriers facing her relationship with students and their parents. She could not fathom the disrespect that she was receiving from the students as a Black educator. Perhaps what she overlooked was the fact that there were generational and heritage differences between herself and her students.

Perhaps factors such as a class were causing conflict within the relationship as the educators are presumably middle class individuals and were unquestionably educated by Canadian standards and possibly privileged in other areas as well. If the students are racialized and come from lower Socio-economic backgrounds, it could be possible that both themselves and their guardians/parents experience discrimination and life differently than these Black educators who may not experience the same hardships that they endure. This could quite possibly further explain why some Black educators cannot adequately connect with some Black parents and students.

4.4.2 Positionality and Whiteness

Ms. Jane Ellis who teaches in a public school believes that as a Caucasian woman, the racial difference between herself and her Black students may act as a barrier to them having successful teacher-student relationships. Ellis states:

I don’t know what it’s like to be Black. And I think on the other hand I grew up in a household where social justice was really important and I mean, I knew the word prejudice when I was six, we lived in a small town in Ontario and I knew people around me that were prejudiced.

Although she contends throughout the interview that she has made a commitment to social justice education as well as culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy throughout her
career as an educator, she also clearly stated how she felt that despite her willingness to assist Black Students who needed the support, she was ultimately limited to some degree by being a White Female educator. She expressed possible solutions for alleviating the marginalization of particularly Black Male students in particular:

…A Black teacher, a Black friend of the family, or a social worker or a big brother from the Big Brothers program, it would be more effective coming from them than me as a white chick. I don’t know if that’s right or wrong but sometimes I feel that would be helpful to have more role models to say this isn’t the way you have to go there’s so many different ways you could go. I mean you could dress like you’re going that way but, the kind of shutting down and the defiance and the swagger.

Ellis’ statements reinforce the assertion that Black students require educators with similar social locations and experiences as them. Such ideal educators would clearly have a genuine desire to be their role models, have experienced their oppression and uphold their ambitions while supporting their education (Maylor, 2009). Such role models would also be incorporating an Afrocentric perspective in appropriate and effective ways into their pedagogies (Maylor, 2009).

4.5 Summary of Findings

Following the semi-structured, qualitative interviews of three research participants, four major themes developed. The four themes were; 1) Support of Afrocentric Schools; 2) Celebrating Black Student Identity; 3) Teacher Support and 4) Interplay of Intersectionality in Classrooms and Schools. Through their responses in the qualitative semi-structured interviews, it became evident that the three educators were invested in the academic progress and wellbeing of Black students. The research participants demonstrated a clear lack of support for Afrocentric
and Black-focused schools. On the other hand, all three educators promoted and implemented Afrocentric education within their pedagogies and believed in its benefits. The educators were all cognizant of the importance of acknowledging the cultural and racial identities of their students and having knowledge of the social oppressions that created barriers in their lives.

By the act of conveying their lived experiences, sentiments and perspectives, each educator articulated the ways in which they drew upon their own initiatives in attempts to remedy the marginalization facing Black students through Afrocentric education and other supports. They also indicated the ways that their teaching was negatively impacted by a lack of support from various bodies that are connected to the lives of students (for example their respective schools and parents of their students). Through their reflections, they assisted in some ways in answering research queries of the study. By racially self-identifying, the educators intentional or unintentionally exhibited their understanding of how intersectionality and their own positionality impacted their pedagogies. The Black teachers seemed not to consider intersectionality in reflecting on their difficulties in dealing with some Black parents and students while the sole Caucasian educator recognized her social location as a possible barrier that unfortunately subdued her ability to adequately support Black students. Areas that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Five are parental involvement, parental values surrounding education, and the ways in which educators can be better supported. Intersectionality and the way it operates in the relationships between Black students and Black teachers is also discussed in the subsequent chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

Black Lives Matter, the international activist movement continues to gain momentum and interrogate institutional oppression which has caused Black youths to have inadequate access to justice, hence the reason why this study is relevant. The way in which Black students in the 21st century continue to be oppressed through public schooling has been established. To ascertain the way in which this marginalization can be eliminated or at least lessened to some degree, this study looked at the educators’ capacity to obtain and incorporate inclusive materials and approaches within their teaching. This study also focused on the availability of inclusive resources for students in Afrocentric and Black-Focused schools while critically examining the efficiency of such establishments. The study also explored the role of Non-governmental organizations as well as the materials produced by educators in promoting the academic success and inclusion of Black students.

After conducting a literature review, the study informed readers about its methodological approach and then conversed about the findings from the semi-structured and qualitative interviews. In this final chapter, the implications of the study are elaborated upon. Recommendations are presented to educators and readers, precisely those who have a desire to explore the ways in which they can support oppressed Black students in the public-school system as they grapple with a curriculum that might not necessarily reflect them. The chapter is organized by the usage of themes and subthemes.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

In the preceding chapter, four themes (which were accompanied by subthemes) were identified after the qualitative interviews of the three educator research participants had been
analyzed. 1) Support of Afrocentric Schools; 2) Celebrating Black Student Identity; 3) Teacher Support and 4) Interplay of Intersectionality in Classrooms and Schools are the four themes that emerged. The three research participants provided examples of the way in which Black students are oppressed by society and by socialization agents within the institution of education and they provided examples of how they implemented Afrocentric education and other pedagogical tactics in their classroom to assist students. They opposed the idea of Afrocentric/Black-focused schools and felt that Afrocentric education could be initiated in public schools, available to and for the benefit of all students regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Many significant insights were revealed in this study. The educators felt a lack of support from stakeholders in the education system, such as the parents and guardians of the Black students that they teach, who they consider marginalized. Intersectionality and differing social locations have influenced the research participants’ pedagogies although the Black educators did not explicitly acknowledge it. The sole Caucasian educator interviewed, Ms. Joan Ellis openly conversed about how she felt that her gender and race might be impacting relationships between herself and her Black Male students. It has become clear that parental involvement in the lives of marginalized students is crucial and that parental values surrounding education must be explored further. The way in which intersectionality influences teacher-student relationships is factor of extreme importance.

5.2 Narrow Implications: Professional Identity and Practice

5.2.1 Educators can implement Afrocentric Education

While research has suggested that Black students can benefit academically and emotionally when they are taught through an Afrocentric lens, the perspectives of the participants within this study suggest that designated schools do not have to be the only option to
ensure that Afrocentric education is administered meaningfully and through a method that promotes racial tolerance. They believed that the cultural practices that occur within Black-focused schools and Afrocentric schools could occur in mainstream public schools. Incorporating Afrocentric education within the curriculum might alleviate the need for isolated school systems and would augment the learning of all students. This is especially true since such schools often draw upon the same curriculum as other public schools in their area but incorporate an Afrocentric perspective – other schools could then easily take the same actions if educators were given the knowledge and understanding to undertake such a task.

One can see that incorporating Afrocentric knowledge is achievable even when educators have no connection themselves to Africa or Blackness. Integrating Indigenous ways of knowing is often achieved by promoting the lived experiences of individuals as they are invited into classrooms to give their perspectives to students. Educators could take the same actions by calling upon community members and Black role models to be present in their classroom. It is important that in the 21st century that classrooms are not only labelled as multicultural and multiracial; instead, they should be racially tolerant when this is indeed achieved. Prisons themselves, for example, are multicultural and multiracial sometimes because of the racialization and systemic oppression of nonmainstream bodies and the criminalization of individuals with lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

5.2.2 Healthy and Professional Relationships with Black Parents and Guardians

It is imperative that educators have professional relationships with the parents or guardians of the Black students of whom they teach regardless of the race or gender of the teachers. A concern that was articulated by all three research participants was that dialogue between themselves and the parents could be tense at times and that opportunities where they
would be able to speak with a degree of openness about a student did not occur. If a parent or guardian has a healthy relationship with their child’s educator, they can better support their child and possibly help to reduce racial biases by challenging inequities and by being an active ally for their child. Having a better connection with their child’s teacher would allow a parent/guardian to be more aware of the marginalization occurring in school spaces and they could work with the educator to reduce it by making the educator more conscious of their cultural and racial background and by holding the educator accountable for fostering a safe space for their child that is free from racial biases and ethnocentrism. Quite possibly, through healthy relationships, Parents and educators could co-create criteria that would ensure that a child feels culturally, racially and ethnically represented and successful in the classroom.

5.3 Broad Implications: The Education Research Community

5.3.1 Systemic Changes are Essential for Success

Decisions made by school officials and universities as to which individuals and what education courses are valued in the school system and teacher colleges occur which oftentimes (directly or indirectly) discriminate against groups of people who would benefit from those courses and from being valued themselves. The teachers interviewed spoke to the insufficient education they received within the area of teaching and facilitating Black students. This indicates that even Non-Black teachers who have a genuine desire to guarantee that Black students are not marginalized might be hindered from becoming valuable allies because of limited knowledge as a result of their teacher preparatory programs. Such programs do not give them the knowledge of why Black students are oppressed in the system of public education, how to impart Afrocentric education and how to be heedful of racial biases towards children and how to work effectively with nonmainstream parents. Educators and teacher candidates might be encouraged to be
culturally and racially sensitive towards visible minority students however, if they are not provided with a deeper understanding of how and why these children are oppressed in the education system, and if they are not provided with the tools in teacher preparatory programs to combat such oppression, then the institutional and individual oppressions which permeate the realm of public schooling will endure. Systemic change must occur in governmental policies that regulate education and in university programs that educate and groom teacher candidates.

5.3.2 Separate Schools for Black Students is not Systemic Change

The status quo remains the same when student difficulties are not directly addressed and rectified in ways that ensure systemic change. It is important for education stakeholders to reconsider the reasons for separating Black students from Non-Black students. The school system maintains the status quo through this method of othering children. Governmental bodies that regulate education must facilitate systemic change. The specific reasons for the establishment of such schools has been elaborated upon in preceding chapters. White educators often view the schools of which they teach in as inclusive and find that the ideas behind Black-Focused schools to be exclusive. This was brought to light during the interview of Ms. Joan Ellis who as Non-Black educator voiced her concerns about Black-Focused schools as they might possibly promote segregation.

It can be said that policies that promote separate schools are not substantial enough and do not eliminate systemic oppression (Gulson & Webb, 2016). Even if the schools effectively administer Afrocentric pedagogy, they cannot overcome the barriers that systemic discrimination present to them. The curriculum which some Black-Focused schools must follow for instance must still adhere to a marginalizing curriculum that does not support Black students. Effective
change comes from the dismantling of institutional oppression and not exclusively from the purge of individual racism alone.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Mandatory Teacher Education Courses to Enhance Pedagogy

Education departments within universities that offer teacher preparatory degrees should establish and offer courses to teacher candidates that centre specifically around teaching Black children and other nonmainstream children. An issue that was raised by all the research participants interviewed was the fact that the marginalization of Black students was not a focus during their education degree programs and therefore, they were relying upon their own ideas and initiatives in supporting these students. This alludes to the fact that institutional oppression is prevalent even in education programs as courses preparing educators to work with Black students and other oppressed students appear nonexistent. One must think critically about the message sent to teacher candidates about which bodies are to be prioritized and what information is valued.

Through courses that address Afrocentric education and the marginalization of Black students, the teacher candidates could become more aware of positive and negative stereotypes that impact Black students and this would in turn allow them to be more conscious of stereotype threat and not to perpetuate it. If the courses modeled effective ways to incorporate Afrocentric pedagogy in the classrooms, this would be extremely beneficial as it has been proven that Afrocentric education can create positive experiences for Black students (Dei, 1996). If educators were initially taught how to implement Afrocentric education within their pedagogies, there might be less of a need to designate and marginalize Afrocentric education by placing it only in special schools. Within these courses, teacher candidates would also confront all biases
and be made aware of their own social locations and how they impact interactions with their students, parents and other school bodies. Although these actions are encouraged in certain anti-discriminatory education courses, it would be ideal if teacher candidates performed these actions in longer course or throughout their teacher-education programs. A course that teaches educators about supporting marginalized children cannot be relegated itself by extreme reduced scheduling. The onus of providing safe spaces to facilitate the education for Black children and ensuring that they have opportunities succeed academically is not the sole responsibility of teachers or even schools, it is the responsibility of institutions such as the Ministry of Education in Ontario to reduce structural barriers which are clearly visible.

5.4.2 Employment Equity Policies to Hire Black Male Educators

School Boards should hire Black Male teachers who have an interest in assisting Black students overcome systemic barriers presented to them in public education. In being aware of their own social locations, these professionals could be well equipped to deal with Black masculinity in the classroom. These hiring practices should be clearly articulated and made known to people seeking these positions. It should be clear to Black men who enter undergraduate programs in Ontario that these school Boards have employment equity policies that actively encourage their employment so that these postsecondary students consider undertaking a teacher preparatory program after graduation; the school boards could actively recruit these professionals. This recommendation although ideal, may even be foreseeably unfeasible; if Black Males are already marginalized in public education and are overrepresented in special education it may be hard to envision an abundance of potential Black Male educators. This problematic suggestion connects back to the detrimental impacts of institutional oppression.
The inclusion of men who are Black educators could inspire new programs within elementary school that support Black Male students and Black masculinity. For instance, a program called *Black Boy Joy* named after a social media hashtag made popular by American musician, Chance the Rapper (Chancelor Johnathan Bennett), could incorporate Black and Non-Black mentors, professionals, counsellors and historians to speak to the children about their cultural and historic backgrounds and offer emotional support and guidance. These professionals could make their way in and out of schools supporting the wellness of Black children and Black Male students in particular.

**5.4.3 Ministry Initiatives**

The Ministry of Education should actively respond to the marginalization of Black students in many ways. Teachers have mentioned that they need more support in ensuring that Black students are not marginalized in their classrooms. The Ministry could provide support in this area by making revision to the curriculum to make inclusions for Black students particularly within the area of Social Studies and History; this would constitute systemic change. The Ministry of Education might consider creating initiatives that would encourage Black parents to become more involved in the education of their children. Such initiatives might develop progress reports and monthly meetings that are more suitable to the schedules of the parents as opposed to solely relying upon parent-teacher interviews and telephone calls. These initiatives could also invite Black parents into the classroom to be co-leaners and even co-facilitators. If this were to happen, perhaps the rapport between educators and parents would be strengthened allowing for a greater degree of understanding and comradery. Guardians must be involved in the learning processes of their children as active allies. This could lead to a reduction of biases and reduce the marginalization of Black students.
5.5 Areas for Further Research

5.5.1 The Inclusion of Silenced Voices is Fundamental

Researchers must include the perspectives of both White and Non-Black educators who work with Black students for their candid perspectives and experiences to be ascertained. This study was limited in the number of participants it could include however, it would have been extremely advantageous to this study if more of the voices of Non-Black educators, who are a majority within the teaching field in Ontario, were incorporated. If this study were to be expanded, Black student voices would also be incorporated to understand their own perceptions of how they are marginalized in education, and to ascertain their individual education and life aspirations. This would overcome the limitations mentioned in Chapter Three. Guardians’ perspectives about the marginalization of their children and as well as their own desires and wishes would also be incorporated to gain a fuller picture.

5.5.2 Infusing Afrocentric Education with Diverse Perspectives

The way in which Caribbean and African American perspectives, histories and ways of knowing can be incorporated within Afrocentric education must also be considered. This is especially imperative especially to areas such as Toronto where an overwhelming number of Black students who are marginalized are of Caribbean descent. Initiatives such as African Heritage Month from the Toronto District School Board could also include material that is culturally relevant to students with Caribbean backgrounds. How to effectively infuse these ways of knowing requires an additional extensive study.

5.5.3 Black Males in Health and Physical Education and Sports Activities

This study was particularly concerned with the disciplines of History and Social Studies however, a deeper look into other disciplines such as Health and Physical Education, and how it
may perpetuate the marginalization of Black Male students in particular, would be an important research consideration. If Black Males are overrepresented in extracurricular sports activities and excessively supported in Health and Physical Education, it is important to consider what message this may send to them about their other course subjects and about their identities and bodies. One could delve deeper into these issues in a more meaningful way to understand how racial and gender stereotypes interact with the school system and if the school system pressures and socializes Black Males to become athletes while simultaneously discouraging them from succeeding in school.

5.6 Limitations

As was argued in Chapter 3, a major limitation of this research study was that it could only include three research participants who were educators, and therefore, it could not account for the voices of Black students, Black guardians or individuals responsible for regulating education. The study would have also benefited from the qualitative and semi-structured interviews of school principals and professors, particularly those professors who teach teacher preparation courses within education faculties as well as the deans of those faculties. By not hearing from these stakeholders, questions remain as to how systemic change within the institution of public school education can flourish.

At the micro level, it is still unclear as to how some guardians feel about the marginalization of their children and what change they would like to see that would ensure that this epidemic of oppression is resolved. Hearing first-hand accounts specifically from children about how they experience school life and marginalization could lead to further solutions that would eradicate the oppression facing them or at least allow for more ways to think critically about the problem and conceptualize it. Although the research participants only constitute a
small sample which prevented the study from using the results of their interviews to make generalization on the entire population of educators, their narratives, lived experiences and knowledge have made it possible for the study to identify further areas of research, make recommendations and draw attention to problem areas as well as possible solutions.

5.7 Conclusion

This study specifically explored the ways in which Black students particularly in elementary school and mostly in Ontario are oppressed by the institution of public education and how this oppression could be eliminated. Research and literature was explored within the area of History and Social Studies curriculum, pedagogical resources, Afrocentric and Black-Focused schools as well as Governmental and Non-governmental organizations. This study interviewed educators connected to the issue at hand. What was discovered from those qualitative interviews was the importance of celebrating Black student identities, the importance of Afrocentric education, as well as the support of educators. The interplay of intersectionality was also found to be a significant occurrence since this study is centered on the social construction of race.

Educators do have agency to mitigate the oppression that is faced by Black students as well as other students. Narrow implications involved with professional identity and practice are that educators can implement Afrocentric education independently, and that they need to have healthy and professional relationships with Black parents and guardians whose children are marginalized. Boarder implications are that systemic changes are crucial for the success of Black marginalized youths in the public-school system to occur and that separate schools for Black students do not necessarily equate to systemic change. As a result of the study’s implications, recommendations are put forward.
Firstly, teacher preparatory programs should have mandatory teacher education courses that are centred around anti-racism, anti-oppression and Afrocentric education to enhance teacher pedagogy. Secondly, school boards where Black children experience oppression should actively hire and retain Black male educators through policies of employment equity to support Black masculinity. Thirdly, education ministries must put forward initiatives that support Black parents as well as teachers in the spirit of systemic change.

Areas for further research include but are not limited to the integration of silenced voices such as Black students and their guardians as their narratives are indeed invaluable in these matters. It is also important that we come to comprehend the ways in which Afrocentric education and Caribbean Perspectives can either co-exist together or independently as they pertain to teacher pedagogy. Another area of concern that comes to light, which was not explored within this study, is the way in which Black Males are involved in the discipline of Health and Physical Education and in extra-curricular sports activities. If such students are overly privileged in these areas to the detriment of their academic success in other courses because of positive and negative stereotypes, this would require further investigation. This chapter also acknowledges the limitations of the research study such as a limited sample size which could be overcome in a further study. Considering the institutional oppression that numerous Black students encounter, the findings do suggest that the process of systemic change is arduous, however, quite possible, and requires the strengths and perspectives of all education stakeholders regardless of class, gender or race.
References


Child welfare: An Africentric perspective. (1992). *Choice Reviews Online*


Canada: Natural Heritage


Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2013). Qualitative data analysis: a practical example. Evidence-Based


Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Dear: ______________________________,

My Name is Kevin Ufoegbune and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on ways in which Black students are marginalized within education. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have experience teaching Black students. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60-minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded.

The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Kevin Ufoegbune

Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Rose Fine-Meyer
Contact Info: rose.fine.meyer@utoronto.ca
Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Kevin Ufoegbune and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________

Name: (printed) ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to uncover the ways in which students of colour are included and excluded within education for the purpose of my Master of Teaching Research Paper. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on your own pedagogy, experiences, beliefs and opinions. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. How long have you been working as a teacher?
2. What race and ethnicity do you identify with?
3. Where and when did you receive your teaching credentials and qualifications?
4. What grades do you currently teach?
5. How many years of experience do you have teaching students of African descent?

Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs

6. What is your understanding about the difficulties and oppressions that Black children face as students in the classroom and in society?
7. What is your belief about alternative schools as they relate to Black children who experience academic, social and psychological problems at school?
8. What is your understanding of Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 as it relates to diversity within the school board and your role as an educator?
9. What is your understanding of the difficulties that educators face when attempting to teach Black students in a method that is both culturally and racially sensitive as well as effective?
10. How comfortable are you in speaking publicly about race related issues within education?
11. How important is it that we take into consideration the cultural perspectives of Black students when we teach them?

12. How important is the inclusion of the cultures and histories of Black students to their academic success within the classroom?

Teacher Practices

13. How does your racial background impact you in teaching Black students?

14. How are your teaching strategies and approaches changed when teaching Black students experiencing difficulties?

15. What is your experience in dealing with parents who have students of colour within your classroom?

16. What might racism and marginalization against Black students in your classroom mean to you?

17. What are your experiences of racism in your class or at your school

Supports and Challenges

18. How does your school and/or school board assist you in obtaining resources that will help you teach and facilitate students of colour?

19. How has your teacher’s college or university prepared you in your work with students of colour?

20. Which course(s) have you taken or plan to take that will assist you in teaching and facilitating students of colour and are these courses self-initiated or mandated by your employer?

Next Steps

21. What advice do you have for beginning teachers that may feel disconnected from the issues that Black students may experience?

Thank you for your time and considered responses.