CHANEL HERBERT

9. VIEWING THE TORONTO EDUCATION SYSTEM THROUGH AN ANTI-RACIST FRAMEWORK

The Systematic Oppression of Black Youth in Toronto Based on Geography, Race and Class

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores intersectionalities and the systematic oppression of Black youth viewed through a critical anti-racist framework. Herbert focuses on how the spatiality of race and class influences the education curriculum offered to youth in high priority neighbourhoods in Toronto. The main discussion centres on the effect of racialized streaming and negative perceptions of Black youth, which results in further marginalization as exemplified by the forty-percent dropout rate, and the continued cycle of poverty experienced by these youth. This study offers a critique of the popular democratic education framework based solutions, juxtaposing them to Afrocentric and anti-racist based solutions and strategies. The hope is to influence curriculum and equity practices and policies in Toronto schooling, to move towards Afrocentric and anti-racist based solutions and strategies.

Keywords: intersectionalities, critical anti-racist, education, curriculum, marginalization, Toronto, schooling, Afrocentric

> *While we may not agree on what constitutes justice, we can recognize injustice when it is done.* (Dei, 2000b, p. 26)

INTRODUCTION

As a recent immigrant to Toronto who completed both primary and secondary education outside of Canada, I have limited personal knowledge of racism within the schools of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). It was only in my final year of post-secondary education in Toronto that I became aware of how dire the situation was for Black students in the city. Even though Black students make up 12 percent of the TDSB population (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015a, p. 3), there has consistently been a 40 percent dropout rate since the 1970s that continues today (Sium, 2014, p. 143). This is above the 33 percent dropout rate in Toronto in 1992 as well as the 18 percent and 31 percent dropout rate for Asian and White students respectively (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008, p. 8). The TDSB

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has done a disservice to Black youth. These youth are subject to injustice resulting from streaming, the absence of relevant or culturally inclusive curricula and the stigma attached to neighbourhoods with high numbers of racialized persons.

This chapter seeks to use statistics, personal stories, and theory to examine the TDSB's policies and practice on equity through an anti-racist framework, specifically focusing on the spatiality of race, racialized streaming and intersections of race and class in the classroom. The focus of this chapter will then shift to the consequences the Black community face as a result of the perpetuation of racist, classist, unequal and disempowering systems of oppression enacted in the education system. Finally, I will offer next steps and solutions so that the Black community can move forward.

THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD'S COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

The TDSB is the largest school board in Canada and boasts one of the most diverse groups of students (Toronto District School Board, 2014a). According to the TDSB, it caters to approximately 245,000 students in 588 schools throughout Toronto, with over 40 percent of their graduates ranking as Ontario Scholars and more than 80 percent of their graduates going on to university or college (Toronto District School Board, 2014a).

The TDSB professes to be committed to equity and social justice and has formed committees such as the Equity Policy Advisory Committee as well as policies and guidelines concerning 'caring and safe schools', gender-based violence and protection and religious accommodations. According to the TDSB, it is dedicated to "creating school learning environments that are caring, safe, peaceful, nurturing, positive, and respectful and that enable all students to reach their full potential". The TDSB asserts that "equity of opportunity, and equity of access to [their] programs, services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for all those whom [they] serve, and for those who serve [their] school system" (Toronto District School Board, 2014b). The board has also created an Equity Foundation which they say aims to "establish the Board's commitment to ensuring that fairness, equity, and inclusion are essential principles of our school system" (Toronto District School Board, 2014c). It is this school board that I will be analysing through an anti-racist framework or lens.

WHAT IS AN ANTI-RACISM FRAMEWORK?

Anti-racism is defined as "an action oriented educational strategy for institutional systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression" (Dei, 2000b, p. 27). This approach focuses on the saliency of race and epistemic knowledge of racialized minorities and discredits Eurocentric knowledge and ways of knowing as being the benchmark for validity. It brings into disrepute the notion that all persons have the same socio-economic starting point at birth with the same

level of access to cultural capital. An anti-racism approach acknowledges that society on a whole is wrought with inequalities. This framework seeks to "identify, challenge and change the values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal oppressions" (Dei, 2000a, p. 41). In doing so, anti-racism aims to dismantle Whiteness, White privilege and White superiority; it also works to counter the act of using Whiteness as the baseline or norm by which all others are measured. . In Dei's words, "when Whiteness is destabilized, both the claim to own, possess and be privileged and the claim to normalcy are challenged and resisted, and the right to have a larger share of societal resources is made suspect" (Dei, 2000b, p. 29). An anti-racism framework aims to decenter Whiteness and works towards ensuring a more equitable society on paper and in practice.

Anti-racism, while built on the saliency of race and permanence of skin colour, does acknowledge and incorporate intersectionality into its framework. It "looks at the ways in which racism is related to sexism, homophobia, classism and other forms of oppression and devises plans to deal with them" (Bramble, 2000, p. 109). According to Dei and McDermott, "if identities are linked with knowledge production, then we must speak about anti-racism from our different locations, experiences, histories and identities" (Dei & McDermott, 2014, p. 5).

Viewing the education system through an anti-racist lens involves analysing policies and practices to ensure that they are applied in an equitable format that doesn't privilege one group of students over another. To ensure equitability, it also requires that the curriculum includes varied perspectives, which are to be regarded and treated as equal to one another. In total, the aim of the antiracist lens is to locate inequitable situations that enforce power hierarchies of knowledge and the unequal treatment of students and to dismantle them. It is this framework and lens that will be used to analyse how race intersects with geographic location and class.

According to Dei, "anti-racism work begins when the individual practitioner taking stock of his or her relative power, privilege and disadvantage" (Dei, 2000b, p. 25). It is through this notion that I position myself within the discussion that will unfold about anti-Black practices in Toronto's education system. My own interpretations of both being part of a racial minority and identifying as a Black, Caribbean female immigrant who is educated in Canada, has encouraged me to favour anti-racism as a lens of analysis. Within Canadian society, I am granted privileges as a heterosexual, middle class individual whose post-secondary education was completed in Canada. However, my race, gender and status as an immigrant are grounds on which I have experienced discrimination, especially in the workplace. For example, I had a co-worker who was vying for the position I was holding, question me repeatedly about my immigration status and its expiry. I believe that as someone who has accessed and benefitted from higher education in Canada, it is my responsibility to ensure, as far as possible, that the next generation of Black youth have access to similar or even greater educational opportunities to improve their life chances. It is these sentiments that ground the motivation for the discussions below.

SPATIALITY OF RACE

According to Richard T. Ford (1992), spatial organisation, that is the socially produced organisation of space, is not accidental and has always been a mode of politico-social control and differentiation (p. 117). When applied to racialized groups, spatial organisation becomes a tool used to concentrate and reinforce other dimensions of marginalisation (Price, 2010, p. 153; Woods, 2002; Wilson, 2007). This has long been exemplified by the race and class based polarization of Toronto neighbourhoods as shown in the report by J. David Hulchanski (2006) and in the real estate market by the devaluation of property in areas with a high population of racialized persons. For example, A wealthy neighbourhood can lose its value if there is a high influx of racialised persons. This is often linked to the racist ideas that poverty and violence are a key characteristic of racialized groups and therefore the presence of racialized groups results in a dangerous neighbourhood and it is this perception that leads to devaluation.

It has been said that educational attainment is not a silo but is impacted by intersections of socio-economic class, race, gender and other oppressions and priviledges. It is also dictated by the social capital and economic resources available to students in school, and is usually dependent on the wealth of the school district. Education has long been impacted by space financially as historically, property taxes from both residential and business real estate in neighbourhoods have been used to fund the school boards in Toronto and therefore the schools located within them (Gidney, 1999, pp. 244–245). This has meant that for racialized communities which tend to have low property value and in turn a lower collection of property taxes, that their schools have had less funds allocated to them than neighbourhoods with higher property values, higher income and a closer proximity to Whiteness. Before the amalgamation of the Toronto School Boards, this led to differences in per pupil spending between boards; as spending ranged from $4,723 to $9,148 per student (Gidney, 1999, p. 244). After amalgamation the funding formula and all taxes were transferred to the provincial government who then transferred funds to school boards based on the number of students in the school with the addition of grants for programs such as special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), transportation and declining enrolment. Regardless of the shift to equally ditributed funds, schools in historically white upper class neighbourhoods had already benefited from the infrastructure of previously rich boards and continue to benefit from the current high income population that contribute to the schools' fundraising efforts to make up the difference between what resources the government funds and those other resources they need to create or sustain. According to People for Education, fundraising contributes heavily to the bottom line of schools in high income neighbourhoods as the top 10 percent of elementary schools raised the same amount as the bottom 69 percent combined … [and] the top 5 percent of secondary schools raised the same amount as the bottom 85 percent combined" (People for Education, 2015, p. 14).

Space holds just as much power as financial support in determining student outcomes in neighbourhoods defined around racial and class lines, and it is this social-spatial difference that I will be focusing on.

RACE, LOCATION & CURRICULUM CONTENT

According to Dei and Doyle-Wood (2006), "in a post-colonial and/or anti-colonial context, schools must be open spaces that give opportunities to people from non-traditional backgrounds, from the margins, and from the most disadvantaged segments of our communities to realize their goals and dreams" (p. 154). By viewing the TDSB through an anti-racist lens, it is difficult to see the goal outlined by Dei and Doyle-Wood above being the aim of the TDSB considering its oppressive practices of racialized streaming toward persons of low socioeconomic status'. This information is known by some Black parents who, as I will show below, have taken action to ensure that their children escape the discriminatory actions of the TDSB.

I have seen a Black immigrant mother uproot herself from a priority neighbourhood and move to a suburb, with the sole intention of providing greater educational opportunities for her children. I have seen a Black Canadian, move from his parents' home in a priority neighbourhood, while still in post-secondary school to a 'better' neighbourhood in the city so that his child was able to attend a French Immersion school. Both families completed this move regardless of the number of challenges their households would face living on a single income with precarious jobs. In these cases it resulted in families paying more for rent so that their children could have opportunities that living in priority neighbourhoods would have deprived them of, such as better resourced schools and greater access to academic streaming and specialized programs such as French Immersion as well as the removal of the stigma of living in a priority neighbourhood.

In a country that prides itself on equality of opportunities, in one of the richest provinces and cities in Canada, one should question why certain neighbourhoods have better schools or programs than others. It has always been the argument that Black students are disengaged from school because of lack of interest on their part, their teachers' lack of confidence in their abilities and streaming in schools (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997; Sium, 2014). I want to add to that list and argue that Black students are funneled into certain spatial areas of the city which are labelled priority neighbourhoods via systemic, racist contributions to disparities that are manifested in where people can afford to live. This in turn systematically places Black students in petri dishes of schools that label them "at risk" and offer limited academic programs which, at the start of their education, restricts their potential life achievements.

Priority neighbourhoods are usually portrayed in the media as racialized ghettos which are low income, high in crime, have a high immigrant population and are dangerous to the rest of the city. This chapter contends that the municipal government,

via the labour market, actually create and sustain these neighbourhoods through a number of factors:

- Lack of housing options
- Lack of social and economic mobility
- Precarious employment.

LACK OF HOUSING OPTIONS

According to the 2011–12 TDSB Student and Parent Census (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015b), 48 percent of Black parents have an income of less than $30,000 per year and 29 percent of them have an income between $30,000 and $49,999. Both of the above mentioned averages, which reflect the income of Black families, exceed the overall percentage of families, below the poverty line. The overall family income across the TDSB indicates that 28 percent of families earn less than $30,000 and 21 percent earn between $30,000 and $49,999 (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015b). This income disparity consequently limits the housing options available to Black families. This in turn results in low-income families being congregated into priority neighbourhoods.

LACK OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Racialized minorities tend to make less than their White counterparts and tend not to move up the socioeconomic ladder as quickly. As noted in the TDSB 2011–12 Census, the majority of White students (59 percent) had an annual family income of $100,000 while the majority of Black students' families' (48 percent) had access to less than $30,000 a year.

The lack of housing options and social mobility can also be attributed to the fact that a large number of racialized minorities are immigrants to Canada. It has been found that foreign-born visible [racialized] minorities are disproportionately disadvantaged with regards to income and occupation (Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013, p. 419). That is, racialized immigrants usually have low-income jobs which can result in a reliance on cheap housing options and little social mobility. The country sustains this trend among immigrants via racial discrimination in the job market and the lack of foreign credential recognition (Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013, p. 420). Immigrants, depending on their financial status, usually do not have the money to send themselves back to school resulting in them being concentrated in low-skilled and low-income jobs.

Lack of housing options and *precarious employment* assist in making priority neighbourhoods home for many racialized immigrants and lack of social mobility and racial discrimination constrain their social mobility options.

In a study done by Parekh et al. (2011) they communicate that school stratification is a neoliberal 'market driven tactic to ensure that only those the market see

eligible for future economic contribution are granted access through training and higher education opportunities" (p. 252). Their study focused on the availability of vocational focused programs, full academic course selections and French Immersion in secondary schools based on their geographic location. The study also found that programming opportunities varied according to the income of the neighbourhood. Wealthy neighbourhoods were more likely to have French Immersion, full course offerings and Gifted programs. Lower income neighbourhoods, which are for the most part racialized neighbourhoods, offered more special, vocational and basic education programs (Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011, pp. 261, 274–275). The disparity is not only in the course offerings but in the dropout rate. The dropout rate in wealthy neighbourhoods was 2.6 percent, while lower income neighbourhoods' dropout rate was three times higher at 8.3 percent (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008, pp. 6–7). Parekh et al. (2011) also found in their study that "students from the poorest 25 percent of Ontario households are more likely than other students to be in schools that offer special education to a high proportion of students" (p. 273). This is directly related to the higher number of Special Education courses available in low income areas and speaks to the streaming occurring in schools which pushes low income and often racialized youth into programs, such as Special Education, which fail to lead to post-secondary education. This is best exemplified in the TDSB statistics which show that Black students who comprise 12.6 percent of the student population make up 30 percent of its students enrolled in Special Education (Toronto District School Board, 2013b)

The TDSB has not adequately addressed the aforementioned areas of concern to ensure that students in low income racialized neighbourhoods have access to programs that could lead to less disengagement, higher graduate rates, higher post-secondary enrollment and greater opportunities for social mobility. The information therefore suggests a presence of anti-Black racism as most neighbourhoods where this discrimination takes place are predominantly Black. Although there is systemic discrimination against other racialized groups, a comparison between the racial composition of neighbourhoods in the TDSB system, as shown in their 2011–2012 Student Parent Census, and the locations of the Gifted, French Immersion and full course offerings show that East and South Asians also benefit from advanced program availability in their residential areas. This demonstrates that Whites are not the only ones benefiting from anti-Black racism and it is truly the proximity to Whiteness that allows these two other racialized groups to advance at the expense of Black youth.

RACIALIZED STREAMING

According to McCreary et al. (2013), "critical scholars of education have long argued [that] schools are sites of cultural and social reproduction that legitimize broader social stratification" (p. 255). They argue that the streamlining of students into professional, vocational and technical programs further separate and subject

students into streams that are representative of "deeply spatially structured roles within capitalist regimes, while the spatial segregation and relining of schools further perpetuates inequalities" (p. 255). One of the ways this is done is via racialized streaming.

Racialized streaming refers to the act of directing students of colour to specific academic streams based on their real or perceived level of compentency. Prior to 1996, students in Ontario had three choices 'basic', 'general' and 'advanced'. These streams were dismantled as it was argued that they were "biased in terms of gender, socio-economic class and cultural background" (Robertson, Cowell, & Olson, 1998, p. 693). The present curriculum available to students gives them the choice between applied, academic and locally developed compulsory, with options in limited number of schools such as the Gifted program, French Immersion, the Advanced Placement Program and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011, p. 256). However, research has found that

> the [old] streaming process…still exists to an extent in Ontario through Grade 9 Program of Study courses. That is, students take a majority of their Grade 9 courses in only one Program of Study including Academic, Applied, or Locally Developed [Compulsory]… [with] the distribution of the Program of Study levels closely resembl[ing] the old Advanced (Academic), General (Applied), and Basic (Locally Developed Compulsory) system. (Brown, Newton, Tam, & Parekh, 2015, p. 2)

As shown above via statistics in Parekh et al's (2011) article, low income and therefore a large number of racialized students have limited access to advanced, Gifted or French Immersion programs based on their residential location and the mainly basic and vocational focused curriculum being offered in their neighbourhoods (Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011, pp. 272–273, 275).

To truly understand what the implications for streaming are, we must first define the purpose of each stream and how that impacts students' outcomes. According to the TDSB the aim of the academic stream in grades 9–10 is to "develop students' knowledge and skills through the study of theory and abstract problems with the emphasis on theory and abstract thinking as a basis for future learning and problem-solving" (Toronto District School Board, 2016). The applied stream is defined as the "focus on the essential concepts of a subject and [the] develop[ment] [of] students' knowledge and skills through practical applications and concrete examples" (Toronto District School Board, 2016). The Locally Developed Compulsory stream has "been developed to meet students' education needs not met by the existing provincial curriculum" (Toronto District School Board, 2016).

Each grades 9–10 stream leads to grade 11–12 preparation courses – the college preparation, university preparation, the college/university preparation or the workplace preparation courses. The college preparation courses "emphasize concrete applications of the theoretical material and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills" (Toronto District School Board, 2016) and the university

preparation courses "focus on the development of both independent research skills and independent learning skills". The university/college preparation courses are "designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for specific programs offered at universities and colleges (often referred to as mixed courses)" and the locally developed courses are "designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the expectations of employers, if they plan to enter the workforce directly after graduation, or the requirements for admission to certain apprenticeship or other training programs" (Toronto District School Board, 2016).

The academic stream offers the most options to students exiting grade 10 as it gives students the option to take any of the four types of preparation courses, whilst the applied stream gives access to all courses with the exception of the university only preparation courses. The locally developed compulsory stream only leads to workplace preparation courses. Racialized students are funnelled out of academic and applied streams. Less racialized students are able to move on directly from high school to post-secondary education. This has implications for their future job prospects and earning potential as those with post-secondary education generally earn more money. It also means that if students who have completed the locally developed compulsory stream want to enter and complete post-secondary education, they have a longer and more expensive journey to get there as they will have to take bridging courses, then university or college courses. In some instances students will have to take an even longer, more expensive route by completing bridging courses to college before being eligible to move on to university. This results in less earning potential as well as higher expenditure on post-secondary education due to time and money spent on bridging programs.

Given the commitment to equity the TDSB proclaims to have, and the educational and economic reprecussions, one would wonder why racialized streaming is still allowed to occur. One would also question why the TDSB is not held more accountable for its policies and actions. The TDSB's own *Equity Program Advisory Committee* questions whether the TDSB is answerable to its own policies and advocates for the creation of a "mechanism to monitor the implementation of policy" (Equity Program Advisory Committee, 2015). It is this lack of accountability in racialized streaming that I hope to tackle below.

RACIALIZED STREAMING AND THE TROUBLING LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN STREAMING

The systematic failure of Black students in Toronto can be traced to the streaming of youth into basic / locally developed compulsory courses in high school. The basic level high school diploma does not lead directly to college or university but instead leads students to graduate with diplomas that have limited mobility. This practice of distributing basic level high school diplomas raises the following questions and concerns.

Why is the TDSB disseminating a high school certificate that does not put high school students in a position to pursue further studies after high school? Why are Black students being directed to this basic level diploma? That is, why are racialized youth more likely to access basic level programs than academic or applied program streams? This was exemplified in a 2013 TDSB Program Study Overview, where it was found that although there were only 4.1 percent of students enrolled in the basic stream in the school board, Black students, who comprise 12.6 percent of the TDSB student population, made up 29.3 percent of the basic level program population. White students, on the other hand, which make up 28.3 percent of the TDSB student population make-up 26.5 percent of students in the basic level program population (Toronto District School Board, 2013a). This also begs the questions, why does the TDSB insist on providing a program stream whose dropout rate in one year was three times higher than the dropout rate of the university bound academic stream? (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008, pp. 8–9). Why is the TDSB not being held more accountable for this disproportionate allocation of basic level diplomas to Black youth via the special education program? Why does 'special education' for Black youth have to carry a negative connotation? Why are we not considered 'Gifted'?

As a public institution managing the future of the largest city in the nation, one must seriously begin to question the TDSB as to why it offers a certificate that limits students' educational and employment opportunities after graduation. As racialized tax payers, the Black community should be questioning why their taxes are supporting the education systems in wealthier neighbourhoods that have better offerings, while their children are left to vocational, basic and special educational streams. If the TDSB is truly an equal opportunity education provider, one must ask why the program offerings being made in low income racialized neighbourhoods are different from the offerings in the wealthy ones.

The most troubling part of this scenario is the targeting of Black youth for the Individual Education Plan (IEP). According to Bairu Sium's 2014 research, teachers rush to label Black students as "special education students" without any real evaluation. According the Ontario IEP Resource Guide (2004) no specialized knowledge is needed to add an IEP to a student's file, transition back into mainstream is not a requirement and the IEP travels with you from elementary school to secondary school. This document is the leading cause of Black students being streamed into the basic level and the use and consequences of this form is not being clearly communicated to students or parents. As seen in the example given by Sium (2014, pp. 89–94), parents are given the idea that the IEP is a temporary document used by the education system to provide remedial support to students who need it until they can be put back into mainstream classes.

There is also the concern of how a child can be placed in a special education class without any known physical or learning disabilities. It can be contended that the TDSB should be held educationally accountable for placing students in special education when it is unwarranted. Until accountability is demanded, the TDSB is likely to continue implementing policies and practices that limit opportunities of

Black children, especially those whose parents and guardians do not understand the educational system. If unchecked or unchallenged, Blacks will continue to be disproportionally impacted in a negative way.

The final concern to be interrogated concerning race, location and curriculum context relates to the chasm between the 'special' programs dominated by White students versus the 'special' program dominated by Black students. There are serious issues with an education system that is designed to oppress Black students by pushing them into a special needs education stream, which suggests a deficit framework. On the other hand, this system has found a way to give a leg up to White, middle class youth, and racialized youth with a closer proximity to Whiteness, by making advantageous academic streams such as Gifted programs and advanced placement programs more accessible to them. These streams can even be seen as a two time advantage as White, middle class youth already profit by accessing schools with more resources than those available in poor, racialized neighbourhoods. According to Andre-Bechely, 'middle-class parents have long fought to maximise educational advantage for their children by choice in ways that have excluded non-middle-class and non-White children' and "are increasingly concerned to ensure that their children get the opportunities necessary to ensure their social reproduction" (Butler & Hamnett, 2007, pp. 1163–1165). Sium puts it succinctly when she states "Middle-class parents are demanding more and more resources and receiving them while working class and those with double strikes against them, like African-Canadians, get stop-gap solutions that do not deal with the root cause of their problems" (2014, p. 160). There is no more systematic proof of the racism that dwells inside the streaming system as this practice of disadvantaging Black lower income students in favour of White middle class students. Given this analysis, the question remains as to why this state of affairs has been allowed to continue.

Unfortunately the systematic structure of the TDSB concerning streaming, lack of accountability and program of study availability are not the only barriers racialized students have to face. In priority neighbourhoods where race, class and space collide, the intersections of race and class can also pose a barrier in the classroom.

INTERSECTION AND PERCEPTIONS OF RACE AND CLASS

Teachers' perception of a student determines much of a child's educational future to the point that it appears to be more important than the child's actual academic abilities. One situation has really brought this to light for me. In the Fall of 2015, while attending a guest lecture about the effect of class on education, a White university professor confessed that she refused to allow her son to wear his favourite shirt too many days in a row, even if it was clean, as she knew teachers would assume a negative perception of him based on how many times he wore the same clothes to school. Given how Whiteness is given preference in this Eurocentric society, if this was a concern for a White university professor, one is inclined to question how much more scrutiny a Black child would have to endure in the same situation.

In Sium's (2014) book *How Black and Working Class Children Are Deprived of Basic Education in Canada*, which focuses primarily on education in Toronto, she states teachers viewed lower social class as a barrier to education. Social situations such as "living in public housing, being from single parent households and not having parent(s) who could help them with their school work" (p. 115) were all presented as reasons for the low performance of Black students. In her ethnographic study she found that the teacher whose classroom she was studying tended to use home situations as a reason not to challenge her students academically. For example, she let a Black male student sit in her grade five classroom and underperform at a grade two level in mathematics, grade three level in spelling and grade four level in other areas because his father left the family recently and the mother was on welfare (Sium, 2014, p. 116). Instead of offering academic support to the child so that he could improve in his academics, this teacher chose pity and negligence as a means of response. This teacher has chosen in the same context to ensure that the other children in the class who are at the required level have the information they need (Sium, 2014, p. 116). In priority neighbourhoods where there is public housing and a higher number of welfare recipients, students experience greater discrimination of this kind.

If Canada is a truly 'colour and class blind' society situations such as living in public housing or being from a single parent family should not have had any effect on the teacher's treatment of this student and other students under her care. It also takes a special kind of unconscious anti-Black sentiment to reason that a student in a disadvantaged situation should be even more disadvantaged 'for their own good'. In an education system which 'prides' itself on being multicultural and inclusive, one wonders why it is not mandatory for teachers in the TDSB to take instruction on anti-racism, which advocates for a holistic view of students, in order to prevent these situations from occurring in classrooms. It is these setbacks that contribute to dropouts, push-throughs and a reoccurring cycle of poverty in Black communities.

WHY IS SYSTEMATIC RACISM BLATANTLY ALLOWED IN CANADA?

This chapter has provided information that questions the TDSB's commitment to equity and has argued that the TDSB is systematically discriminating against racialized bodies. A question that must be asked is 'why has this been allowed to exist and continue?' Frances Henry and Carol Tator (1994) coined the term 'democratic racism' as an explanation for the blatant racism allowed in a society that appears to value inclusivity and multiculturalism. The authors define democratic racism as "an ideology that permits and justifies the maintenance of two apparently conflicting set of values" (p. 1). On the one hand, there are values of "fairness, justice and equality" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 3) and on the other "attitudes and behaviours which include negative feelings about people of colour" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 3). Out of this desire to seem fair and equitable comes the inability to deal with race and racism.

One of the consistent issues I have faced in Canada is the inability to name race in any social context and to be allowed to name my race. For example, I have a White

co-worker who becomes very offended when I refer to myself as Black. I find it problematic that as a racialized person, a non-racialized person has determined that they have the authority to tell me how they would prefer for me to define myself. Yet, this same co-worker would insist that she is tolerant of everyone.

This idea of practicing racism "unconsciously" is very much Canadian as it gives White Canadians an excuse when caught in a racist act to behave as though they are unaware of their offense. This form of democratic racism in the education system usually leads to a call by well-intended persons for democratic education. Democratic education is the notion that we should work to address all areas of social justice inequality in an equal manner. However, I agree with Dei and argue that in those instances where race is lumped in a group with all other oppressions, race is more likely to be discarded and unaddressed.

It is for this reason that I believe that the anti-racist framework is the optimal lens for looking at the TDSB as it is a holistic system that "enjoins us to deal with differences that extend beyond race, gender, class and sexuality to issues of language, culture, religion and spirituality" (Dei, 2001, p. 144). It therefore encompasses all the aspect of students that make up their educational experience.

PERPETUATION OF CYCLES OF POVERTY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

The racism prevalent in academic streaming in elementary schools as it relates to IEP's and in secondary schools with the streaming of racialized youth into basic or locally developed compulsory courses leads me to consider the consequences of streaming and educational disenfranchisement on the Black community. The Black community has been subjected to special education classes from at least the 1980's until present (Sium, 2014, pp. 94–95) and this has left an indelible mark on a community which is predominantly working class. To put in perspective how damaging this process of streaming has been on the Black community, it means that there has been nearly forty years loss of increased socioeconomic gain in the Black community. Forty years of lost opportunities, wasted potential, and the reinforcement of the 'dominance' of Whiteness. It also means that persons streamed through the basic level have also become active members of the working class or underclass and in turn their economic opportunities have had diminished economic and educational benefits for themselves and their future generation.

NEXT STEPS & SOLUTIONS

In discussing this topic with my peers, questions have come to mind such as why such disruption has been allowed in the Black community. I question why Black families have not migrated to other neighbourhoods? Why Black students have not requested to be transferred to schools in 'better' neighbourhoods? Why are Black parents not more aware of the situation? And what do we do next?

In response to these questions, our gaze should first be redirected to remove responsibility from the oppressed in these circumstances and instead focus on the oppressor. It is the Eurocentric capitalist society, which has created situations of racial discrimination which has contributed to lower paid jobs, limited access to higher skilled jobs, and has discriminated against foreign credentials of highly skilled immigrants who entered the country as skilled workers.

Secondly, is it unfair that parents who have been made aware of the educational bias in the range of programs made available at their schools and would like to transfer their children to better school, now have to navigate an annual application process with no guarantee of placement? This especially presents a challenge for parents for whom English is not their first language. Even if the application is successful and the student has been relocated to a school in a 'better' neighbourhood, the family is now obliged to shoulder the additional $112 monthly transit fee to attend the school outside their residential area.

Cultural understanding is also paramount. Black communities in both the Caribbean and continental Africa have a culture that trusts the judgement and good will of educators and the education system with their children. It is common culturally to see the teacher as the 'third parent'. It is this trusting nature that the Eurocentric education system has exploited the most. The Black community must educate other Black parents so that this cultural understanding does not become our downfall.

Next, I advocate using small acts and big acts in the Black community to subvert the power of the TDSB and the practice of streaming. Voices of both the other racialized bodies and that of dominant bodies need to be incorporated in the discussion regarding streaming and should form allyships with the Black community to dismantle this barrier. The Black community must educate Black parents, especially new immigrants about the dangers of streaming; advocate for discontinuation of basic level diplomas and demand accountability from the educational boards in the General Toronto Area (GTA) as it relates to the streaming of intelligent, capable children into needless special education streams. Finally, we must advocate for the TDSB to utilise the research being done regarding education theories and studies and implement policies based on well-balanced research. Studies have shown the imbalance in educational outcomes for years and the TDSB has acted slowly to implement the radical changes that need to be made if students in low-income areas are truly to have an 'equitable education'.

The most unfortunate thing would be if the community stood by and allowed another 40 years to go by before our community has a chance to grow both socially and economically at a higher rate than present.

CONCLUSION

It has long been thought that education is the great equalizer. The idea that one can "pull up his/her bootstraps" via education and hard work and rise in the social ladder

has become a fallacy in the Black community when our educational rights are being undermined. The reality is, what others deem a class struggle is not simply such, but it is a fight that encapsulates race by the very nature of a class being assigned to certain races. That is, as a Black person in Canada one is associated with poverty, crime and deviance. With that stigma attached to that particular race, the way in which social institutions treat Blacks as individuals and as a group is very much coloured by a deficit based mentality regarding the negative perceptions of class, intelligence and gender attached to Blackness by the White dominant. This chapter has sought to highlight how Blacks are viewed in the education system and the negative consequences of racism, classism and socio-spatial organisation in the city of Toronto. It posits that it is only by utilising anti-Black racism that one is able to locate the main disruption Black bodies bring when entering spaces and institutions that were not created or intended for them.

Based on the discussion above, this chapter contends that it is an education system's responsibility to expose educators to multiple ways of knowing and that includes creating a multi-faceted view of youth of all races, especially when it relates to Black youth. It is envisaged that advocating for the use of an anti-racist framework through which policies, teachers and systems in general operate, will result in a very different education system. A system which will result in the dismantling of White supremacy; a system that will allow for true equity, a system that views Blackness as intelligent, resilient and capable.

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