Is this Black Enough? Provocations and Contemplations
Master of Education Portfolio

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August 14, 2020

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following people, without whom I would not have been able to complete my Masters degree.

My supervisor Dr. Michael Hoechsmann, whose enthusiasm, expertise, and knowledge of the subject matter guided me through the research process. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement throughout this journey.

Gary Pluim, for your willingness to review this portfolio and for your exceptional feedback and advice.

YouthSites Project and UrbanArts who have exposed me to a world of rich and bountiful education beyond the formal schooling sector. Thank you UrbanArts for seeking to provide services and opportunities to individuals who may be excluded from formal education. Thank you YouthSites for highlighting and celebrating these endeavours.

My parents and grandparents who always push me to shoot for the moon, so that even if I miss, I might land among the stars. Thanks Mom, Dad, Grandma MaStell, Grandma Ivy, and Grandpa for your love and counsel, for not only pushing me, but for also facilitating this journey through a culmination of your sacrifices, your fights, your wins and your losses so that I may have the emotional, cultural, and material resources necessary to navigate my way through this life.

Lastly, Romaine, who added balance, joy, gratitude, and positivity throughout this overwhelming but exhilarating time. Thank you for your love and for always being my peace.

Narrative Component

Through my Master of Education studies at Lakehead University, I have aimed to conceptualize intersectional experiences within education while theorizing the outcomes of race in education. As a racialized person who grew up in a neighbourhood that is considered "at risk", I consider my educational experiences to be uniquely situated in a paradox of sorts. Despite the limit-situations presented in my environment, I was able to set myself apart from some of my peers who experienced less academic success, less student achievement, and less life readiness. The ability of some to overcome certain conditions despite their environment, particularly in education, is curious to me. Within this portfolio, I am seeking to explore the relationship between race and education within the Greater Toronto Area. It is my hope that readers will travel with me through this multilayered voyage. Much like a multi-city trip, this portfolio will have a few destinations as a part of our itinerary. We will begin with a literature review that focuses on the identity, power, class and experiences of racialized individuals. It is my belief that this review will lay the foundation for anyone who explores race in education as it introduces readers to the subject matter and engages a critical lens towards social constructs. Next, is a presentation that was shared at an Arts Conference held at the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. This presentation shows the work of the community arts sector, and the ways that this sector addresses educational gaps amongst racialized and marginalized students that formal schooling often misses. Finally, the last item on the itinerary is a series of both academic and op-ed articles. One of the articles in that series was written after on a round table discussion that shared and analyzed the perspectives of Black adults who were former Ontario high school students who experienced the streaming process. These experiences showed the unique perspectives of streaming as racial discrimination, and underscored the

lasting impacts of the streaming process in the lives of young Black adults in the GTA. Through

these pieces, I have curated a variety of sources that aim to paint a clearer picture of the

relationship that exists between race and education. As I unpack the educational achievements

and under achievements of many racialized youth in the school system, please view the

proceeding with the understanding that the experiences shared are not representative of all

racialized peoples. Rather, these are only a few poignant and intimate findings that exist

amongst a plethora of diverse racialized experiences in education.

Firstly, race in education acknowledges that there is a relationship, whether perceived or

definite, between one's race and educational outcomes. In *Ethnic Differences in Educations*

Attainment Among the Children of Canadian Immigrants (2009), authors Teresa Abada, Feng

Hou, and Bali Ram, use the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey to examine ethnic differences in

university education attainment among children of immigrants in Canada. This study found that

while most groups of European and Asian origin (with exception of Filipinos) achieve clear

upward mobility across generations, this was not observed among Blacks (Abada et al., 2009). I

have chosen to explore this relationship to see why certain phenomena occur in the educational

outcomes of racialized students, as well as the outliers that exist among them. The notion that

there is a relationship between race and education comes from my own educational experiences,

the experiences of my peers, what I observe of students who I have met throughout my teaching

placements as a B.Ed student, as well as my teaching experience over the last two

years. Identifying the correlation between race and education comes from the interactions that I

have had with many racialized youths, where they have shared their perspectives with me. In

addition, I have also listened to the perspectives of community leaders who provide alternative

and non-formal education to these youth. In all of my findings, the commonality that existed

amongst high achieving racialized students is their family involvement with school, parental

awareness of the education system (often tied to socioeconomic status), and highly structured

and supportive social networks. These factors then impact our students' understanding of the

importance of education, personal identity, feelings of belonging, self-esteem, and standards that

they set out for themselves in school.

<div align="center">Why is student achievement significant?</div>

In *Deschooling Society*, Ivan Illich explains how society experiences polarization as a

result of the formal education system. Schooling or formal education attempts to grade or rank

individuals in order to qualify and validate their knowledge. The degree, amount and type of

knowledge gained is perceived as valuable and as a result a person whose knowledge has been

certified, has the ability to harness more power than the person whose knowledge is not

legitimized. This creates a dichotomy within society that neglects the vast types of knowledge

that does not "fit" within the grading system. Further still, formal education separates the

"haves" from the "have nots." For example, it becomes increasingly evident that those who hold

wealth and economic power have the choice of whether or not they wish to pursue a private or

public education and formal post-secondary education. Those who do not hold positions of

wealth do not have the same privilege. Illich states that "school has become the world religion of

a modernized proletariat and makes futile promises of salvation to the poor of the technological

age" (Illich, 1970, p.6). For an individual with wealth and economic security, the decision to

obtain a certification will most likely not determine the continuance of their wealth. However,

people who do not wield wealth or economic power, become more driven to attain educational

certification as a means of fulfilling limit-acts, overcoming dominance, and gaining economic progression. Hence, the formal education system grades individuals based on whether or not their knowledge has been validated. As a result, this polarizes our society into the educated and uneducated, which only truly impacts an individual's economic position if they are not already coming from a legacy of wealth and economic security.

Society teaches that education is a vehicle by which students may secure economic and social stability. Society also teaches that social mobility through academic achievement is possible as everyone has equal access to public education (or so it is assumed). The public education system within Western society was deeply rooted in the notion that inequality could be reduced through receiving an education. Horace Mann, founding father of American public-school system of the 19th century, called education "the great equalizer of the conditions of men." Former U.S. secretary of education, Arne Duncan, goes on to question that if this is true, then the inverse must also be true (Duncan, 2018). If academic achievement has the power to elevate one's employment status, economic position, and cultural capital, then the lack of education can and often does inhibit those gains. This is particularly true among groups that have not been able to establish a legacy of such capital prior to any kind or educational achievement.

How can we account for the erosion of education that some students face because of lack of supports or funding in their communities? This is important when assessing the academic achievements of youth who come from "tough" or "at-risk" neighbourhoods. When looking at the population of residents in many of these areas, it is evident that, compared to other

neighbourhoods, there is a much higher immigrant population as well as a higher proportion of racialized or ethnic minority group members. In 1980, educator and author Peter McLaren wrote a book called *Cries in the Corridor,* which was a journal of his teaching experiences in an elementary school in the Jane-Finish area (Ross, 2015). This text highlighted his experiences as a teacher, shed light on the realities of the conditions of classrooms, spoke of the need for better supports and resources for urban schools, and the need to implement a more culturally responsive curriculum. Nearly thirty years later, little has changed. In the book entitled *Life at the Intersection: Community Class and Schooling,* Carl E. James speaks of schools in Toronto and highlights a specific "at-risk" neighbourhood school in the Jane and Finch area. It was observed that many schools in areas such as these "lack the infrastructure as well as the necessary economic and political supports of those in middle-class neighbourhoods, which benefit from the formal and/or informal parent driven fundraising activities that result in greater resources for the students" (Frenetter 2007:12; James, 2012, p.52). Essentially, even if students in such at-risk communities are able to achieve exceptional academic success within their school, they are still at a disadvantage when compared to their middle-class counterparts. More specifically, students who come from a more privileged community and school tend to have access to better academic resources. Also, they tend to have access to a more economically secure home-life which ultimately leads to greater opportunities for academic success and life readiness.

With this said, it is understood that educational success can be a tool used for economic security. It is also understood that many students from marginalized communities do not receive access to exceptional or even adequate education in their neighbourhood schools. How can all

children and youth be expected to excel if they are not given the necessary resources and support? If we know that many racialized and immigrant students dwell in these communities and attend the schools in their jurisdiction, does it not become apparent that they are already placed at a disadvantage when it comes to access to education? Hence, we can see that there are gaps in the educational provisions made by the formal learning sector. I will aim to address these gaps in further detail and explore how the non-formal learning sector is filling the educational needs of many racialized youth from marginalized communities.

Methodology

The methodological approach for this portfolio is pragmatic with a large qualitative base. There is a small amount of secondary quantitative data that was referenced for statistical purposes. The choice to proceed with a pragmatic approach to data collection and research, allowed me to gather primary data from interviews, conversations, presentations and literature, all of which helped to inform my knowledge base. I felt that studying the relationship between race and education needed to draw upon the existing statistical data, but also needed to be accompanied by deeply uncomfortable and intimate conversations with individuals who experienced racialization in schooling firsthand. I have amassed data from (1) researching academic literature for my own literature review, (2) examining youth arts organizations to see the gaps they fill for marginalized youth, and, (3) facilitating a roundtable discussion about experiences with educational streaming. From this I was able to gather and interpret general themes using multiple perspectives outside of my own.

Course Work

Within the course work that I have completed during the Master of Education program, I studied the techniques used in both qualitative and quantitative research. This has helped me with the interview that I held with the facility manager of UrbanArts. I feel that the courses that I have taken have equipped me with the literature and content to pursue this portfolio. With a focus on social justice education, my course work has provided a framework for my portfolio tasks.

The topic of race in education is broad but it cannot be addressed without first exploring race and identity. Identity is significant to race in education, because of how one views themselves in relation to the space they occupy. Identity impacts who we believe we are and how we interact with our world. Often times our identity is largely affected by how society perceives us. Some of the literature that I have gathered concerning the racialization of Black people and thus Black students, is set within an American context. I have opted to use some of this literature because I believe it is still relevant to the relationship between race in education. I believe that the concept of Black identity and Blackness within Canada and the US have profound commonalities even though the experiences and histories of Black people may not be entirely identical. With this in mind, my framing question for my first portfolio task is *how do identity, power and class, and schooling support or infringe upon the formal educational experiences of racialized students?* I hope that this question will help to take a more magnified lens to the broader subject of race in education.

Portfolio Tasks

The first product that I have completed for this portfolio is a literature review. This review is a compilation of literature that sheds light on some of the themes that I believe are imperative to understanding the relationship between race in education. The purpose of this review is to explore the critical themes that impact racialized people in education. Unpacking these themes will assist in our understanding of the overall academic success and underachievement of racialized youth in the Greater Toronto Area. The three main themes that I will explore have been informed by Carl E. James' *Life at the Intersection.* In this text readers can take a deeper look at the correlation between students' or youths' identity, power, and schooling. For this review, the literature collected will endeavour to explore the three main themes of racialized identity, power and class construct, and schooling.

The second task that I have completed is a presentation for the Arts for Education Conference at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). This presentation, which I completed and presented with my colleague and fellow Master of Education candidate, Madison Byblow, was titled *From the Outside Looking In: Putting Toronto Youth Arts Organizations in the Cypher.* I started exploring topics for my portfolio when I did research with Madison for this presentation and another project called YouthSites. The YouthSites project is an SSHRC funded research project from Simon Fraser University which explores and maps arts programming in the non-formal learning sector in three large cities (Toronto, London, and Vancouver). Within this project, I began to work very closely with one of six Local Arts Service Organizations in the city of Toronto, called UrbanArts. Through my work and research with UrbanArts, I was able to see the uniquely structured ways that community arts organizations provide community services that

go beyond arts programming. With that said, the reason that the YouthSites project is so significant to my research is because they examine the creative arts sectors and the particular impact on youth from socially excluded backgrounds including racialized and marginalized youth. This is clearly seen in the impact that UrbanArts has on the community. As YouthSites is a longitudinal study, this project is looking into how programming in the creative and media arts has grown to incorporate a changing role in many communities over the last 25 years. In growing amounts, youth are turning to these programs for out-of-school learning, professional development and other educational experiences. As a result, these organizations are taking on a role to provide more than the traditional arts programming. After conducting interviews with arts organizations and attending many galleries, poetry shows, and art events, Madison and I were able to summarize our findings by focusing our presentation on the works of UNITY Charity and UrbanArts.

The third task that I have completed are three separate articles that were initially intended for scholarly dissemination and community impact. The first article was intended to be an academic article based on my work with UrbanArts. This article entitled, *Non-formal learning sector: What we can learn about student achievement,* was completed after conducting an interview with the operations manager at UrbanArts. I had first submitted this article to ByBlacks.com, an award-winning online magazine servicing the Black Canadian Community. The article highlights the perceptions of leaders within the non-formal learning sector, and how the sector meets the needs of youth within the community. I received a response from the editor giving positive feedback about the content but asking me to rewrite the article in the form of an op-ed, as they do not publish academic articles. Even though this article was not published, it is

my hope that it will act as a point of reference for us to draw upon when we think critically about what the perceptions of organization leaders can tell us about youth participation, attitudes, and behaviours towards education. It also aims to emphasize the ways that the non-formal learning sector addresses gaps in education while exploring how the ideas of organization leaders may influence the services and programs provided to the community. The magazine editor asked me to rewrite the article not only with a new format but also with a new focus. In my second article I attempt to address discrimination and high school streaming, as this is subject matter that community members may find more relevant to what has happened in the province recently.

The second article is an opinion piece entitled, *99 Problems and Streaming is One.* It attempts to unpack the province's recent decision to end Grade 9 streaming into academic and applied courses that was done in an effort to end discriminatory practices in education. This piece that I had written for the magazine, focused mainly on the mechanics and workings of streaming in the education system and the ways in which it hinders the academic and emotional progression of many black students. With this submission, I was advised to focus less on how streaming works, and instead shine a light on the lasting impacts of streaming. This piece, still unpublished, was one step closer to the final product.

Taking this feedback, I went back to the drawing board and decided to have a roundtable discussion with a few of my closest high school friends so that I could get a better idea of how streaming may have had lasting impacts on other Black Canadians. In this particular group of friends, all 8 respondents were Black, first generation Canadians of Afro-Caribbean or African heritage. There were various experiences and perspectives shared in this discussion. We were

able to begin to critically analyze the lasting impacts that schooling left on our identities and self-esteem. We started to unpack how our experience with streaming contributed to our beliefs about our personal and academic capabilities, and how those beliefs have shaped our identities as adults. After the roundtable, I was able to write another op-ed titled *Ontario May be Ending Streaming, But the Damage is Already Done*. In addition to highlighting elements of the roundtable discussion, the opinion piece also includes my own intersectional experiences as I have written from the lens of an educator, a former student, and a Black female who was raised and went to school in an "at-risk" neighbourhood. After the piece was submitted, it was given positive feedback and the editor accepted and published it on their online magazine.

Reflections

Throughout this journey, I collected and analyzed a variety of perspectives as they relate to formal and non-formal education. I have had the opportunity to question the gaps in formal education and to see where formal education may neglect individuals who do not conform to a particular learning style or demonstration of learning. As an alternative to formal education, I have also seen how non-formal education, such as the training and programming facilitated at community centers, help to fill in gaps where youth have not been successful in the school system. In speaking with leaders in the non-formal learning sector (e.g., community art organization managers and facilitators), as well as their participants, it is evident that there is a plethora of reasons that make their programming so successful, particularly amongst racialized or marginalized students. I have had the opportunity to share some of these findings in the presentation *From the Outside Looking In: Putting Toronto Youth Arts Organizations in the Cypher*. These relationships have been further explored as I have looked into the perspectives of

community organization leaders. Seeing what they believe their participants are seeking, and how they feel their programs meet participants' needs, shows us how they are responding to needs. In my second article I have unpacked the attempts that the formal education (i.e., school system) is making to rectify the academic gaps that marginalized and racialized students are facing. During my roundtable discussion, I have analyzed the impacts and perceived impacts that academic streaming has had on the lives and personal outcomes of Black students who attended high school in an at-risk community. The findings of this meeting were the most concerning to me, because for the first time, I saw how many Black people have internalized their streaming experience and how that internalization has impacted their perceived academic or intellectual abilities. As a result, my course work, portfolio research, and portfolio tasks have nurtured my pedagogical approach.

With that said, as an educator I can see how culturally relevant pedagogy is imperative to the mental health and self-esteem of our students. If either of these elements are neglected, the most vulnerable racialized students do not stand a chance. Race is not a determinant of one's educational outcome. Rather, identity, power, class, and schooling *can* either support or infringe upon the formal educational experiences of racialized students. The way in which educators respond to student needs, will determine our ability to successfully fill in gaps that many racialized and marginalized students face. It is an extraordinary task, and we cannot do it alone. Culturally relevant pedagogy encourages educators and schools to engage with families and surrounding community members, but I believe we can take this one step further. If at all possible, we must engage the non-formal learning sector even beyond our community boundaries to help create opportunities within school, for students who otherwise feel excluded. I dream

about the day when all students can see that they are valuable, regardless of their needs. It is my

hope that the recognition of this self-worth will allow racialized and marginalized students to

hold themselves accountable as they strive for self-determination. It is also my hope that

educators and the larger societal structures will do our part to support them. As I challenge my

own beliefs and unconscious biases, I continue to see that the relationship between race and

education is reflective of, and contingent upon our responsiveness to the needs of our students,

our children, and our communities.

Literature Review

As a social justice educator, social service employee, master's student, and lifelong learner, I realize that there are profound distinctions in the experiences, opportunities and characteristics accompany student academic underachievement and exceptional student academic achievement. In my own reflexive practice and having experience in an "underprivileged", "at-risk", "marginalized" and "dangerous" neighborhood, I often consider the impacts that education has on students who are faced with these environments as a reality of life. On a much wider scale many community members ask how and why this happens, while others make general assumptions about what they think they know. As an educator I how my privileges and disadvantages shaped my opportunities and experiences?

After some reflection I realized that my questions revealed some of my own guilt; guilt for advancing through a school system that seemed to fail my peers; guilt for my unearned privileges that supported my growth and development and quest for knowledge; guilt for feeling that I did not belong. Authors Bridgette J. Peteet, LaTrice Montgomery, and Jerren C. Weeks describe this as impostor phenomenon. Imposter phenomenon or IP, "refers to an internal feeling of intellectual phoniness that is often experienced by high achievers and also occurs among URM (underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities) (Clance & Imes, 1978, Ewing et al., 1996; Peteet et al., 2015, p. 176). This IP is known to contribute to the added societal and psychological pressures that students belonging to ethnic minorities or marginalized groups face (Peteet et al., 2015). Consequently, this phenomenon inspires my research and I will be attempting to explore how the non-formal learning sector nurtures the academic, social, and

psychological well-being of youth – something that seems to be neglected within the formal

learning sector.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this review is to explore the critical themes that impact racialized people in

education. Understanding these themes will assist in our understanding of the overall academic

success and underachievement of racialized youth in the Greater Toronto Area. The three main

themes that will be explored have been informed by the works of Carl E. James' *Life at the*

Intersection. In this text readers can take a deeper look into the relationship between students or

youths and identity, power, and schooling. For this review, the literature collected will explore

the three main themes of racialized identity, power and class construct, and schooling.

Research Question

How do identity, power and class, and schooling support or infringe upon the formal educational

experiences of racialized students in the Greater Toronto Area?

Review of Literature

Identity

To begin, the theme of identity is of significant when considering the formal educational

experiences of racialized students. Identity impacts who we believe we are and how we interact

with our world. Oftentimes our identity is largely affected by how society perceives us. Race is

an example of a societal labelling construct that identify groups of people based on shared

physical and social qualities. Race may become of great significance to one's identity if they

have experienced the direct or systemic effects of racial oppression. Within formal education

racialized students may experience direct inequality or the residual effects of racial oppression.

The literature in this review has explored some of the common themes and possible impacts of

identity on the educational experiences of racialized and black students. Media representations

and stereotypes, "blackness", childhood socialization and psychological impacts of oppression

all impact the identities and educational experiences of racialized students.

  Media Representations and Blackness. Diane Wishart Leard and Brett Lashua explore

the ways in which youth engage with pop culture for self-expression. Oftentimes, many of these

youth have been marginalized and have had narratives and stereotypes placed on them. Popular

culture has empowered many youth to become producers of their own narrative through art and

music. This article covers an inner city close to Edmonton and follows youth and educators who

are trying to reframe the dominant narrative through the process of conscientization (Freire,

1996; Leard & Lashua, 2006). This resource provides many insights to the study of the impacts

of oppression on the identities and educational experiences of racialized youth as it speaks to a

Canadian context and further explores the arts as a means of youth conscientization.

  In the *Anatomy of Racism*, Franz Fanon explores the idea that the identity of "blackness"

in the chapter entitled *The Fact of Blackness* is not initially created by the individual but rather it

is society who imposes this category upon people based on their outer appearance. This

categorization is intended to simplify and alienate the black man as he is restricted to exist within

these confines. I believe that this "fact of blackness" is a key component to understanding the

sentiments of black minoritized groups within North American. Even more so, Fanon's

dissection of this concept can help to position my own study as it pertains to the state of race and

racialized people in education, and school. One extension that I am led to is the experience of

"Imposter Phenomenon" (sometimes referred to as Imposter Syndrome) in and among black students who have successfully entered postsecondary institutions. Since many racialized students have to work harder to prove that they are deserving of their position, the imposter phenomenon comes as a result of feeling guilty for occupying a space that is not characteristic of someone in their position. In addition, despite the similar experience of many other ethnic groups who have been oppressed and still face oppression today, Fanon argues that for many who are often unknown in their actions, their actions and behavior are the final determinant. In other words, for many other minority ethnic groups who have the ability to graduate into the "invisible majority", there is an opportunity to fulfill self-determination and upward mobility as a group. They have the privilege of being absorbed into "Whiteness" and can often go unnoticed in their endeavours. This is not the case for many Black people who are "overdetermined" even before they begin. It is in this, that Black people become visible representatives of the successes and failure of their entire race.

Authors Richard Hatcher and Berry Troyn examine how young children view race. They critique how past researchers have neglected certain understanding of the process of racialization. In their discussions with children in school classes, they realized that most had anti-racist views, but children also acknowledged that other children could have racist beliefs. One young boy of Afro-Caribbean descent stated feeling that he should go back to his own country even though he was born in the UK. This shows a clear feeling of exclusion. This was confirmed by two white children who admitted telling students to go back to their own country. I think this text sheds light on important conversations with children about race that may help educators understand how students treat each other beyond the classroom walls. I think it is also important to note that this text is from the UK prior 1993.

Psychological Impacts of Oppression

In Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* chapter four begins with a quote from Aimé Césaire, "There is not in the world one single poor lynched bastard, one poor tortured man, in whom I am not also murdered and humiliated" (Fanon, 2008, p. 64). In this chapter Fanon challenges some of the psychoanalytical claims that Monsieur Mannoni makes regarding colonization as peoples of colonized nations. Mannoni seems to represent many that try to characterize the colonizer-native relationship and minority inferiority complexes. Fanon challenges Mannoni's claim by saying that the psychological state of colonized people did not exist from childhood, and thus did not exist pre-colonialism but rather, is a result of the trauma inflicted by colonialism. A second major theory of Monsieur Mannoni that is confronted by Fanon in this chapter is the idea that "an inferiority complex connected with the colour of the skin is found only among those who form a minority with a group of another colour (Fanon, p.73). Fanon argues that if this were entirely true, the European colonizer within the colonies would, as the minority based on skin colour, would feel inferior, "Although the colonizer is the 'minority,' he does not feel he is made inferior. Hence, Fanon argues that the internal inferiorization of a colonized people is not a natural occurrence based on one's skin colour but rather a system where it is "the racist who create the inferiorized" (p. 73).

Imposter Phenomenon. A final theme that relates the psychological impact of oppression on the identity of many racialized students is Imposter Phenomenon. The article entitled *Predictors of imposter phenomenon among talented ethnic minority undergraduate students* by B. J. Peteet, L. Montgomery, and J.C. Weekes, (2015) shares data and research from colleges and universities in the USA. It focuses more closely on the academic achievement among

underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities. What are the social pressures that talented Black youth face? The pressure that this researcher explores, connects to the idea that pressure can lead to trauma which may impact the psychological and emotional well-being of the individual. Furthermore, various factors can contribute to poor academic performance including cognitive, affective, and behavioural factors and the imposter phenomenon. These finding are highly impactful to the theme of identity because it provides some insight into the significances of how racialized student view themselves in relations to their peers as well as the psychological pressures that accompany much of these feeling of inferiority.

Power, Privilege and Class

Power, privilege and class are another theme that impacts the educational experiences of racialized students. Economic, social and cultural capital all influence one's access to resources. Within this theme, readers may consider the experiences of minority groups, as well as the impacts of Orientalism, white privilege, oppression, power, and socioeconomic status and the influences on the formal education or racialized students.

Voluntary and involuntary minorities. In the article *Voluntary and involuntary minorities: a cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education,* author John Ogbu explains "ecological theory" as the environment of people and the way that minorities see their world and behave in it. This theory has two parts. One is the way minorities are treated in education, policy and pedagogy (the system), and the other is the way minorities receive and respond to schooling as a consequence of their treatment (community forces) (p. 158). In explaining the differences in school performance, Ogbu differentiates between minority groups. Voluntary groups came to North American to seek a better life while

Involuntary groups were conquered or enslaved or refugees escaping disasters in their home country. Different minority groups face different challenges. For example, involuntary minorities have a different reference point than voluntary minorities. Involuntary minorities can only compare themselves to their status quo or white middleclass Americans counterparts. They have no "back home" stories to refer to. They are not leaving their home country to grasp a better life because essentially this is the "better life." How does this manifest itself in education? On page 179, authors talk about the need to treat students as individuals and that teachers should avoid placing general expectations on a group of students because of their minority status. Teachers can work with the community and school to build trust and culturally responsive education (p. 180) which will ultimately empower students especially racialized minority students.

Orientalism. In Edward W. Said's, *Orientalism* (1995), he analyzes the concept of "Orientalism" in which he describes as the "tradition of Occidental literary and scholarly interest in countries and people of the east." In Said's critique and analysis of the imperialistic views that have nurtured the orientalism of peoples and things of the East, it is seen that without this critique, there may be a continued dehumanizing objectification of people that originate from Asian, Middle Eastern and African regions. With orientalism, comes the acceptance, whether consciously or subconsciously, that there is a divergent discourse that harness the way in which colonial powers deal with the "Orient" socially, economically, and politically (i.e. treatment of the Middle East). This is beneficial to my study as it helps to conceptualize how colonial powers currently act to "other" peoples from other regions of the world for political and economical gain. If this exists as such on a macro level, how is this transmitted on a micro or local level within the education system?

White Privilege. In this article, Peggy MacIntosh explains that many people in privileged and over-privileged positions will often work to promote the rights of members of oppressed groups, but not at the expense of their own advantage. Many are taught that racism is something that put certain groups of people at a disadvantage but are not taught that white privilege is a form of racism that put white people at an advantage. With this one can consider the fact that society seems to be more outraged and inclined to fight to maintain someone's unearned privileges, than they are to fight for the advantages of oppressed people who have never had an opportunity to obtain those advantages for themselves or their families. In the context of race in education, this article speaks to the readiness gaps that many students who are categorized as "marginalized" face at school and within their communities. Culturally relevant education should therefore be at the helm of our efforts to provide opportunities to students who would otherwise not be provided with them.

Race and Oppression. In the chapter entitled *Racism* within the book *Is Everyone Really Equal?* Authors Sensoy and DiAngelo look at race as a specific form of oppression. The author clearly contextualizes racism within the North American context as "white racial and cultural prejudice and discrimination, supported intentionally or unintentionally by institutional power and authority, and used to the advantage of Whites and the disadvantage of people of Color" (p. 96). Understanding the impact of white racial and cultural prejudice is important especially within education because of its impact on racialized students. Since race is a concept that is a fluid social construct it is imperative that educators understand its historical roots that continues to empower systemic form of oppression in USA and Canada.

Furthermore, in the chapter *Oppression and Power* Sensoy and DiAngelo explain both phenomena as two concepts that are imperative to understanding the impacts of race in

education. This chapter discusses what oppression means within society. It describes a set of policies, practices, traditions, norms, definitions and explanations (discourses), which function to systemically exploit one social group for the benefit of another social group (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 39). This serves as a basis for understanding how race is socially stratified within society. One's perspectives can open up to see how multiple forms of oppression exist in society and institutions. How then can this be examined within education? From this chapter, the prevailing question of internalized dominance, internalized oppression, and cultural hegemony leads to further insight (p. 49-50).

Power Dynamics within Institutions. Michel Foucault describes the way that power is utilized in modern institutions. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he discusses the particular ways that institutions such as prison and school use power to control behaviour. He explains Bentham's Panopticon was a building constructed with a tower in the centre, with wide windows that open to the inner side of the ring. Within this central tower there is usually a supervisor who can have the full advantage of seeing the other rooms within the ring. Each individual in this space is confined to a room or cell with divisions that prevent contact between certain individuals and "he is seen but does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault, 1979). Foucault goes on to say "The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order" (Foucault, 1979). The impact of this design enforces isolation and a consciousness of permanent visibility in which the prisoner or student understands that all actions are under surveillance. Older school buildings, especially those built during after the industrial revolution, often utilized the Panopticon blueprint. This is concerning for formal education because it how many school

systems where regulated. One may ask how deeply embedded is the formal education system in the Panopticon framework and do the does the idea of using discipline and visibility as a tool by which to control and regulate student's behaviours still exist within its epistemology?

Socioeconomic status. Stuart Hall discusses the concept of black cultural politics. In this, he identifies the "'black experience' as a singular and unifying framework based on the building up of identity across ethnic and cultural difference between the different communities" (p. 441). It appears regardless of ethnic or cultural identity; the black experience supersedes it. This is interesting within a British context which is similar to the Canadian context (and more specifically Toronto) because of the immigrant and cultural groups represented. The black experience therefore applies to all people who are assumed to be Black regardless of their culture or ethnic background. He discussed the efforts on black to come into representation within culture originally started with black as the objects and rarely the subjects as a result they were limited to stereotypes and misrepresentations. This is further exemplified by political discourses that place Eurocentric critical culture theory in focus.

<div align="center">Schooling</div>

Curriculum. In *Notes on Understanding Curriculum as a racial Text* (1993), William F. Pinar critiques the fact that cultural conservatives and those that seek to maintain a rigid cultural identity have and continue to fail to acknowledge that American culture has distinct African and African American elements. In its own right, it can be argued that American culture is African because of the influence African cultural that was transplanted in the Americas during slavery. Many can come to understand that African culture, or at least elements of it, are absorbed and adapted into both Canadian and American mainstream culture via Afro-Canadian and Afro-

Caribbean influencers. This text allows readers to ask, if North American culture has adapted

these elements on such as grand scale, why are we failing to acknowledge and reflect them

within our curriculum? Surely if these elements have been adapted within the culture then those

of African descent may recognize or be familiar with the appropriated elements. This could

suggest that some cultures are worthy of being integrated within formal educational frameworks

while others are merely sufficient to cultural appropriation. Inevitably, it brings awareness to the

fact that many existing educational frameworks within North America are based on a specific

cultural hegemony that neglects to acknowledge the validity of diverse ways of knowing and

epistemological knowledges that are revered in other cultures.

      Reading the World. In Paulo Freire' 1985 interview, *Reading the World and Reading

the Word*, Freire discusses that the act of reading is not merely reading words. Every act of

reading requires a pre-reading of the world around us – a reading of reality. Our written language

and verbal communication also determine a type of reading of reality that is imperative to

literacy. The role of the teacher comes into play as one who must maintain a passion to know the

world, to be curious and wondering. As an educator who is studying race in education, this work

may inform the analysis of the relationship between cultural hegemony and counter hegemony

particularly regarding language use and acquisition. This is significant because of the impact it

may have on the world, our realities, and the realities of others. Within the scope of language

and more specifically, language in Canada, the ability to read and verbalize the written word is

relevant to the perceived superiority of standard forms of English and French. By comparison,

non-standard forms of English and French spoken among second language learners, immigrants,

or youth subcultures are often deemed as inferior. In a school setting the hegemonic framework

the dominates the use of English often requires that students employ the standard language and its conventions to meet basic academic requirements.

Pedagogy. In *Confronting class in the classroom. Teaching to transgress (1994,* p.177-190), bell hooks discusses how class is more than materiality but also rooted in biases that inform and shape pedagogical processes and social norms in the classroom. Quiet appropriate demeanor is often revered as traits belonging to the upper class, while emotional outbursts and loudness are seen as traits belonging to the lower classes. As a result, there is a preoccupation with maintaining traits that are seen as belonging to the upper class. This is something for educators to consider and question how class biases effects the classroom and pedagogical practices.

In *Teaching to transgress* (2014), bell hooks speaks of Paulo Freire and Thich Nhat Hanh as the teachers who have influenced her and who also brought new concepts to what it meant to be a teacher at that time. The concepts she discusses revolve around a progressing and holistic pedagogy where there is a mutual student teacher recognition of both parties as complex knowledge sharers. Teachers are therapists and as such must be actively committed to reflexivity and self-healing, self-actualization practices that begin from within.

Deschooling. Ivan Illich challenges the school system as we know it in *Chapter 2: Life in Schools* of the text entitle Deschooling. He states that one of the major facades of traditional school and education is that learning is the result of teaching. Schooling occupies must of our time leaving little time to learn in other contexts. This not only places more strain on the teacher who must wear many hats, but also nurtures the assumption that there is a secret to every bit of life that more be taught to us in a formal setting. He states that the only way to subject humans

to authority is to differentiate between the ages and for teachers to commence the authoritarian stance over school children. He proposes that the new age of education will "break apart this pyramid" as we strive for a more egalitarian way of sharing knowledge through four distinct channels: Reference Services to Educational Objects, Skill Exchanges, Peer-matching, Reference Services to Educators at Large.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Areas for further review would be to explore more resources bases in action research approaches such as the chapter on Community Approach to Schooling by Carl E. James. It is important that when presenting a review of literature such as this, there are accounts of solution driven themes that are shared and narrated. Further research in the areas of schooling as a response to oppression, motivating factors for education, and alternative or informal schooling will also help to provide a more holistic view of the educational experiences of racialized youth. In addition, considerations of action research done on educator's experiences with empowering racialized students could also help to inform this study.

Finally, the purpose of this review is to explore the critical themes that impact racialized people in education. Understanding these themes will assist in our understanding of the overall academic success and underachievement of racialized youth in the Greater Toronto Area. For this review, the literature collected will explore the three main themes of racialized identity, power and class construct, and schooling. Hence how do identity, power and class, and schooling support or infringe upon the formal educational experiences of racialized students? It appears that media representations and stereotypes, "blackness", childhood socialization and psychological impacts of oppression all impact the identities and educational experiences of

racialized students within education that often leads to psychological pressures whereas power, white privilege and class constructs lead to reduced opportunities and access to resources. Lastly formal school and the current frameworks surrounding education seem to neglect and omit the validity of other cultural knowledges and ways of knowing within formal curriculums. This is significant because this implies that other cultural understandings, knowledges, and ways of knowing are invalid or inappropriate for formal curriculum within North America.

UofT Arts Conference Presentation Proposal

Title: From the Outside Looking in: Putting Toronto Youth Arts Organizations in the Cypher

Presenters: Madison Byblow (mabyblow@lakeheadu.ca) and Elesha Daley (edaley@lakeheadu.ca), Lakehead University. This presentation is based on the archival and qualitative research done with the Youth Sites SSHRC funded project.

Bio: Elesha Daley resides in Toronto, Ontario. She obtained an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of Toronto followed by a B.Ed. from the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. Having attended high school in an "at risk community," she has witnessed the benefits that community arts organizations offer.

Bio: Madison Byblow hails from Alliston, Ontario. She obtained her Honours Bachelor of Arts in English at Nipissing University and her Bachelor of Education from Lakehead University's Faculty of Education. Madison engaged in community arts programs throughout her childhood and young adult life, and they were a central part of her upbringing.

Conference Theme: Arts for Inclusivity, Equity, and Justice OR Arts for Community and Culture

Presentation Style: Research Presentation

Summary: YouthSites is a project studying youth arts organizations offering free or low-cost programming to marginalized young people and young people living on the margins in Toronto, Ontario, Vancouver, British Columbia and London, England. We study the sector over time (1995-2015), and view these organisations and the work they do as part of urban infrastructures, providing essential, but often unacknowledged youth services. Our research includes focus groups with facilitators, artists, cultural workers, and with young people where we discuss their experiences and what drives them to do this work. We also attend the organizations' programs and special events. We've organized this presentation around an idea we encountered at a youth arts festival: a cypher. It's a hip-hop dance space in which there is a circle of supportive community onlookers, and dancers who are ready go into the middle to share their expertise. This presentation seeks to treat our Toronto case study organizations as participants in the cypher. Just as the dancers in the cypher are all dancing hip-hop, but doing it in individual ways, the youth arts organizations all do powerful and unique work. Keeping in mind the major challenges that exist across our three city sites, and some that are different because of context, we will share key ideas revealed by our research. Ultimately, we hope to shed more light on this entire sector and the support that these organizations provide for Toronto's youth, in order to positively impact youth and community development locally and globally.

Conference Presentation Script Outline - Arts for Community and Culture

INTRODUCTION:

M: Hello and welcome. My name is Madison Byblow, and I am a Masters of Education student at Lakehead University and an Ontario Certified Teacher.

E: Hello everyone. My name is Elesha Daley and I am a Masters of Education student at Lakehead University and an Ontario Certified Teacher. Madison and I both work for school boards within our local communities.

E: Our presentation today is part of YouthSites, a SSHRC funded, longitudinal research project. The project researches and examines community arts organizations within the non-formal youth arts learning sector of Toronto, Vancouver, and London. Specifically, YouthSites works with organizations that provide services for youth from socially excluded backgrounds. We map the youth participation in out-of-school arts learning and investigate the structural relationship between the development of this sector and the changing role and meaning of creative education.

M: Elesha and I have been involved with YouthSites since June of this year. We have worked with a number of organizations in Toronto that are a part of the non-formal youth arts learning sector. Today, we will highlight two of those organizations, UrbanArts and Unity Charity. As teachers, we are outsiders looking in on the non-formal youth arts learning sector to consider the unique and powerful contributions that these organizations make within the community. For this presentation, this is how we have positioned ourselves in relation to the concept of the cypher.

M: Without further ado, welcome to the cypher.

VIDEO.

M: We have organized this presentation around the idea of a cypher, which is a concept we encountered this summer at a community arts festival. A cypher is a hip-hop space in which there is a circle of supportive community onlookers and dancers who are ready to go into the middle to share their expertise.

E: For the purposes of our presentation, we are considering the cypher as the non-formal youth arts learning sector, and the organizations as participants within that cypher. Each organization makes unique and powerful contributions to the cypher as they interact with youth and one another in the community of Toronto.

E: The first organization we will highlight today is UrbanArts. Formerly known and founded as Arts York in 1989, UrbanArts has developed into a community arts organization that focuses on

arts programing for youth in Toronto. UrbanArts enhances Toronto neighborhoods by engaging youth in community development through the arts.

M: The second organization highlighted here today is UNITY Charity. UNITY Charity is an organization that focuses on mental health strategies for youth through hip-hop culture. Founded in 2007, UNITY engages with youth in in-school and out-of-school settings, fostering community, artistic development, and positive mental health strategies.

M: So, how might these organizations function as a cypher for community arts and culture in the non-formal youth arts learning sector of Toronto?

E: These organizations step into the cypher to do something unique for community arts and culture through two key ideas.
- Knowledge Exchange and Cultural Capital
- **We are going to share three claims that we have witnessed through our research that demonstrate how these organizations step into the cypher to provide youth with unique opportunities to exchange knowledge and build cultural capital.**

E: Through the Graffiti Transformation Project and more recent Mural Project, UrbanArts engages youth in reshaping spaces with their own art. UrbanArts gives youth a platform to exhibit their art and take accountability for their community spaces by creating murals that represent stories of diversity and community. Prior to the project commencement, youth, professional artists and community members come together to collaborate on mural designs. Once a plan and mural location is decided, youth participants are provided with basic employment skills training. Finally, youth and facilitators begin painting murals, incorporating images that encourage diversity and community development. Youth may utilize the acquired skills in society and life. Inevitably, this enables youth to build cultural capital.

M: UNITY Charity creates spaces where knowledge and experience are exchanged intergenerationally, removing the teacher/student power dynamic, cultivating a community.

M: UNITY Charity has two program streams for participants, ENGAGE and INSPIRE programs. Centered around mental health strategies for youth, UNITY's programs address tough conversations head-on. By using hip-hop culture as a way to express stress, artist facilitators open the floor up to the youth to develop in and out-of-school community conversations about mental health. Youth and facilitators exchange stories and experiences with one another. Ultimately, this is where knowledge exchange happens.

E: UrbanArts develops youth art programs in response to youth needs. They provide a space for youth to interact with each other and the facilitator, using technology to develop their own products. UrbanArts runs a mobile and in-house program that allows youth to produce their own beats with the use of digital audio workstations and software. Facilitators are experienced beat makers and music producers that support participants during the creative process. This provides youth and facilitators the opportunity to share ideas, techniques and musical styles while creating a final musical product. These products may then be presented during a summer community arts festival that showcases their musical products to the community, professional music producers, and artists. Not only does this encourage a network of knowledge sharing within the sector but it ultimately allows youth to have the opportunity to build cultural capital.

M: So why is this relevant? Our presentation has focused on two key ideas that are developed within the cypher of the non-formal youth arts learning sector. These are key ideas that we have witnessed as researchers with the YouthSites project. First, these organizations provide *art for culture* by helping participants develop cultural capital such as marketable skills. Second, these organizations provide *art for community* by allowing a mutual knowledge exchange among participants, facilitators, and community members.

E: Our intention is to shed light on a community that is sometimes overlooked. By way of it being non-formal, this sector of education is often viewed as supplemental to in school learning; however, these organizations bring much to the table than just arts education. Organizations in this sector develop engaged citizens who gain the skills to interact with the world and community around them. This is made meaningful through art for community and culture.

M: We hope you leave today considering what part you play in the cypher. How does the organization you work with, the art you create, or the work that you do contribute to the cypher of the non-formal youth arts learning sector?

M: Thank you so much for coming today and taking an interest in a sector that contributes widely to the success of youth and the urban infrastructure of Toronto. If you have any questions about the YouthSites project or any organizations involved, the principal investigator of YouthSites is Stuart Poyntz in Vancouver, with Michael Hoechsmann in Toronto and Julian-Sefton Green in London. We hope you enjoy the rest of the conference and have a great day.
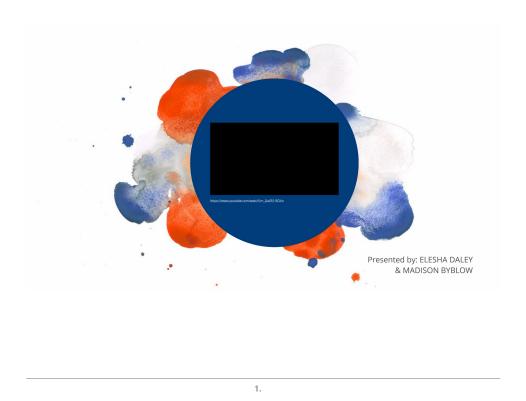
Conference Schedule

8:45-9:25	Registration Coffee & Refreshments OISE 2nd Floor			
	RM 2296	RM 2279	RM 2281	RM 2211
9:30 – 10:15	**Improvisation-Based Storytelling through Tableau** Kayla Warburton, & Christina Tjandra (OISE) *Examining stories through tableau creation and improvisational methods*	**Painting for Experiential Practice: An Arts-Based Method for Understanding the Classroom Culture of Learning** Catherine Shea (Central Montessori School), Mimi Masson (University of Ottawa), Simone Côté, (McGill University) *A hands-on abstract painting activity*	**Bridging Isolation Through Co-Creational Culture with Street-involved Adults in a Low Barrier Environment** Terri Roberton (Ontario Expressive Arts Therapy Association) **'LearningMethods': A Radically Simple Solution to Performance Anxiety** Orlena Bray (Western University) **Investigating Imagination in Adults with Autism with Art-Based Assessments** Olena Darewych (Wilfrid Laurier University)	**Student Engagement through Diverse Representations: Comics as Pedagogy** Sabita Ramlal & Aaron A. Weiss (York University) **Making Things Across Difference: Media Creation and Cultural Production** Esther Maloney (OISE) **Getting "Drop Outs" to "Drop In": Product-based Learning through Skateboards** Craig Morrison (OISE)
10:15 – 11:00	**Kandinsky and the Noisy Paintbox** Catherine West (University of Toronto) & Sophie Bell (Ryerson University) *Explore connections between movement, sound, shape and colour*	**Our Story – Our Stories: Art Activity for Team Building** Elzbieta Uher (Concordia University) *An artmaking activity to promote team building*	**Possibilities and Challenges of Using Dance in Life History Research** Derrick Tu (York University) **Unorthodox data-gathering - 'The (City) Doctor is In'** Anne Frost (Humber College) **Arts for Educational Research: Exploring Leadership Experiences through Visual Images** Fauzanah Fauzan El Muhammady (McGill University)	**Comedy, Tragedy, and Radical Hope** Shannon Boeckner (Ryerson University) **From the Outside Looking in: Putting Toronto Youth Arts Organizations in the Cypher** Madison Byblow & Elesha Daley (Lakehead University) **Ensuring Equitable Access to Elementary Arts Education** Natalie Florence Sanchez & Joyinn Ying Zuo (OISE)

LEGEND:

Interactive Workshop

Panel Presentation

Research Presentations

Refreshments Available

Conference Presentation – From the Outside Looking In: Putting Toronto Youth Arts Organization in the Cypher

Prezi Component

1.

A PDF copy of this presentation is included in this package, labeled ED4c; however, this

presentation is best viewed through an interactive link at:

https://prezi.com/view/JNuZjczX4ySOzwLlJ4IF/

Portfolio Tasks

Non-formal learning sector: What we can learn about student achievement

By: Elesha Daley

Reflecting back on my childhood school experiences, I realize that there was a profound distinction between the characteristics that followed student underachievement and exceptional student academic achievement. As a social justice educator, master's student, and lifelong learner, I often ask myself the question "How did I get here?" I grew up in Toronto's west-end that was and continues to be decorated with descriptions such as underprivileged, at-risk, marginalized and disenfranchised. Breaking news typically reveals violence, homicide, drug use, and gang presence. Many ask how and why this happens, while others make general assumptions about what they think they know. What I wonder is, how have my privileges and disadvantages shaped my opportunities and experiences?

After some reflection I realized that my questions revealed some of my own guilt; guilt for advancing through a school system that seemed to fail my peers; guilt for my unearned privileges that supported my growth and development and quest for knowledge; guilt for feeling that I did not belong. Authors Bridgette J. Peteet, LaTrice Montgomery, and Jerren C. Weeks describe this as "impostor phenomenon". Imposter phenomenon or IP, "refers to an internal feeling of intellectual phoniness that is often experienced by high achievers and also occurs among URM (underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities) (Clance & Imes, 1978, Ewing et al., 1996; Peteet et al., 2015, p. 176). This IP is known to contribute to the added societal and

psychological pressures that students belonging to ethnic minorities or marginalized groups face (Peteet et al., 2015). Consequently, this phenomenon inspires my research and I will be attempting to explore how the non-formal learning sector nurtures the academic, social, and psychological well-being of youth – something that seems to be neglected within the formal learning sector.

As an elementary school teacher, I am interested in creating a space within formal education where students can feel that they belong and where they can feel that they all have superlative abilities and opportunities to succeed. With learning and behavioural exceptionalities being at the forefront of many teachers' minds, I feel that much of the emotional, spiritual, ethnic, and cultural considerations are still lacking. It is becoming more and more apparent that many students turn to out-of-school learning centers (i.e. recreational centers, community centers, cultural hubs) or the non-formal learning sector to find purpose, express themselves, and demonstrate exceptional performance. With this said, I thought it was appropriate to highlight some of the work that these organizations are doing with youth in the community. I have chosen to magnify and study the works of UrbanArts, as one of six, Local Arts Service Organizations within Toronto, that is funded by the city of Toronto.

Local Arts Service Organizations

On the Local Arts Service Organization Grant Allocation (2016) staff report, LASOs are quoted as providing services and programing that,

…focus on arts education and outreach in Toronto's inner suburbs; support for a wide range of arts programming in the community; facilitation arts and business partnerships; and providing direct services to residents through networking opportunities, workshops, free resources, meeting space, and connections with partner and community organizations. Youth programs and services that help participants develop a creative voice, self-esteem and employment skills are a key focus of LASOs. (Local Arts Service Organization Grant Allocation, 2016).

Aside from being a resident of the west end of Toronto, it is important to note that much of my experience with UrbanArts comes from my part-time employment with them. My knowledge of the historical development of the organization comes from my conversations with senior staff members, coworkers and programmers with first-hand experience with the growth and development of the organization through the years. In my quest for understanding I will begin by exploring the perspectives of organization leaders/facilitators and then I will explore what their perspectives tell us about youth within the non-formal learning sector. I feel it is justly appropriate to analyze an organization such as UrbanArts which is acknowledged by the city of Toronto to be an integral part of community and cultural development. Hence, the two things that inspire my research are firstly, my personal experiences with imposter phenomenon and secondly, my desire to create a space of belonging for all students.

Exploring Belonging

Social Isolation | Negative Stereotype Threat (Steele) | Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, Turner)

Belonging to No Groups | Belonging to Disadvantaged Groups | Managing Belonging

Image Credit: Dr. Nikolas Bowskill

Research Question

What do the perspectives of community organization leaders tell us about what youth gain from the non-formal learning sector that they do not receive within formal schooling?
For my data collection, I will be interviewing the operations manager within UrbanArts. The operations manager corresponds with youth, documents program registration data, manages property maintenance, and in some instances acts as a liaison between program coordinators and executive director. The operations manager is not only aware of the operations policies but also works on collecting and inputting financial and statistical data from the organization for CADAC (Canadian Arts Data). This data is then used by public sector funding agencies to report on "the health of the field and impact of the arts in their communities" (CADAC, 2019). As such, I felt that the operations manager would offer a rich perspective of the impact of the programs, as well as the ideas and sentiments of the participants who attend.

Furthermore, I choose to explore this organization because it creates programming for youth based on community need and interest. UrbanArts seeks to help youth excel within the

arts and have exclusive insight surrounding the needs for programing outside of the school context.

Photo Credit: https://urbanartstoronto.org/about/

Expectations, assumptions and biases. I was curious about how the organization's leaders' personal experiences might fashion their perspectives of the youth that participate in UrbanArts programming. These perspectives could be significant in helping us understand the gaps that these programs fill in youth achievement and learning, enrich youth learning outside of school, and answer the question of why youth attend these facilities to begin with.

To begin, what do this facilitator's perspectives tell us about the relationship between youth and the non-formal learning sector? Having read the *LASO Service Organization Grant Allocation* (2016) staff report, I expected my conversations to confirm that this organization, and other organizations like it, are an integral part of the community, utilized by youth and other community members. More specifically, I expected that because the organization is situated in a lower income community within Toronto, that 1) majority of the participants would be youth who came from the surrounding community, and 2) that this majority (being marginalized and racialized youth), would not have access to resources that grant them the privilege of focusing on academic achievement.

Findings

Education provides opportunities and contributes to character development necessary for life skills. Within the interview there were three underlying themes that were brought to light. Organization leaders identified the importance of education as a tool to help one navigate through life, develop character, and build credentials. The manager stated that education enables one to know how to acquire information, "This is my fifth year in this country, and you can see how much my education helps me. Being educated helps me to navigate my way through. I knew I had a purpose when I came here." On speaking of education as a necessary contributor to character development and discipline, the manager stated that obtaining an education "is not about money, it's about how one can be challenged. Do they have the discipline to sit down and learn it, to hear, to listen and then achieve?"

Youth are attracted to Non-formal learning for 3 main reasons.

1) *Flexible and engaging programing*. The manager stated that she believes youth attend the organization because they are looking for unstructured programming, "So when they come here, when they are coming for the program or whatever, they don't want to be disciplined, they don't want structure."

2) *Sense of belonging.* During their many interactions, facilitators discovered that many participants were coming to UrbanArts as a way to stay occupied after school, commune with friends and receive a meal.

3) *Meets their ideas of who they should aspire to be.* Social media, music and pop culture project particular images of what youth should aspire to be, "And the main thing is that we are

living in this artificial era …and the whole music they put out, all their shiny pictures and youth, every youth wants to be a musician …"

Youth academic success goes beyond the individual student. Inspiring the youth to achieve academic success should not only be directed towards youth, but should also involve parents, and the community at large. The organization is in the midst of expanding its scope to include community development in addition to youth programming. When the operations manager explained the importance of community development, she stated "this involves educating parents and guardians so that they can acquire the necessary tools to give their children the greatest advantages."

Data Analysis and Summary

Education provides opportunities and contributes to character development necessary for life skills. This contributes to the discussion of school readiness and the readiness gap amongst youth who have been marginalized (Duncan, and Magnuson, 2005). It would seem that since there are socioeconomic factors that are often coupled with the racialized experience of many of these youth, the preparation and acquisition of necessary life skills are delayed. Skills such as how to write a resume or complete a post-secondary application, or critical interviewing techniques had never been learned. Our interview highlighted that for many participants who attend programming, formal education is not necessarily seen as an attainable goal and as a result youth do not attempt to research how to enroll in or receive funding to attend post-secondary institutions. The arts then seem to become the default career aspiration and even though many

are talented in the field, it would not be inappropriate to assume that others are only relying on it because they have never discovered their true passions in other subjects.

Flexible and engaging programing, sense of belonging and "fitting the image" are all things that attract youth to participate in programming. It seems that many youths attend programming to be a part of a larger community of friends and peers. For many who might come from homes where they are not seeing parents or other members of the household on a regular basis, this might be an attempt to build something that resembles familial ties. In addition, youth can be seen as trying to fit in with stereotypes and preconceived notions of what society perceives they should be. Aspiring to become a famous rapper, or singer are often seen as more appropriately attainable goals (as compared to entering and completing university) even if the chances of them becoming a famous artist are extremely rare.

Youth academic success goes beyond the individual student. After conversations with facilitators and organization leaders, it was apparent that many believed that student success relies on the family and community working synergistically to support the social, economic and emotional needs of youth. Senior staff often say that even if parents are not home, a neighbour, school teacher, or community member must step in to assert some form of support. One of the biggest forms of support that UrbanArts and other non-formal learning sectors provide are opportunities for mentorship. Youth are introduced to successful and thriving members of the community so that they can learn the processes and pathways that one might take to achieve long term goals.

Conclusion

I think that it is profound that so many youths within the community use this space and spaces like it to create art, get a meal, or seek belonging. I also know that there are many youths within this community who are not interested in art at all. Some would love to have access to a hub that explores science, engineering and/or technology and I think it would be unfair to leave those youth out of the narrative that is being told. There is something to be desired with "out-of-school" learning that happens within the non-formal learning sector and centers like UrbanArts. If the formal learning sector can adapt culturally relevant and engaging programming, encourage a sense of belonging, and help students from marginalized communities redefine their own narrative and what it means to "fit the image", there may be higher student engagement and achievement in school.

Many of the earlier concerns raised about youth academic achievement show that there are many factors that contribute to student academic achievement including but not limited to, socioeconomic status, racialization, and social and psychological pressures. Organizations like UrbanArts are working to empower youth and the wider community. There are still developments to be made in order to marry the youth-focused nature of these arts organizations with other organizations that make other subjects like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) accessible for youth who may not have the support to strive in these subjects at school.

Op-Ed: 99 problems and streaming is one

By Elesha Daley

On July 6th, 2020 the Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, sat down with the Toronto Star for an exclusive interview, in which he shared the Ontario government's plans to end streaming in Grade 9. This has important implications for the Black community, as well as other racialized communities and marginalized people.

Ending streaming will not solve all of the educational problems that many Black and racialized students are facing, but I believe it will give many more a chance to carve out a path that affords them options, rather than a path that pigeonholes them and limits their growth and potential.

Firstly, streaming is flawed in that it is irrational to expect adolescent students to make such profound decisions. Neuroscience tells us that the late development of the prefrontal cortex within adolescence, constrains the components that rely heavily on deliberation or integrating complex sources of information that is necessary for decision-making (Hartley & Somerville, 2015). It would not be misleading to say that many 12 and 13-year-old students have a limited ability to fully conceptualize the magnitude of how such a decision can impact the rest of their education and career prospects. Perhaps other provinces have realized this already as Ontario is the only province that streams students as they enter Grade 9. Based on my own observations and discussions with my peers, many students and adults who experienced the confines of the applied stream, severely regretted choosing it.

Secondly, I believe one of the greatest issues with Grade 9 streaming is the limited horizontal mobility between streams. What this means is that if you were fortunate enough to have teachers who believed in you and encouraged you, or guardians who know the system and were able direct you, or older siblings or cousins to advise you, or the prefrontal maturity to deliberate the outcomes and choose academic courses for Grade 9, you are rewarded by getting the pick of the litter in Grade 10 (you are not limited to applied courses in Grade 10). While if you selected applied courses for Grade 9, it becomes increasingly difficult to move to academic courses in Grade 10 and is impossible for courses like Math unless you take a transitional course (usually provided in summer school or night school).

Students who have selected mostly Grade 9 applied courses, but realize that they want to attend university must take additional "remedial" courses so that they can transition. This is further exacerbated by the fact that university admittance requires Grade 11 and 12 academic courses which can only be taken if you have chosen the right prerequisites in Grade 9 and 10. For example, Life Science courses in university (taken by students aspiring to for careers in medicine and health care) can only be taken if you have Grade 11 and 12 Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, which can only be taken if you have Grade 10 Academic science, which can only be taken if you have Grade 9 Academic Science.

In most high schools, students take eight courses per year or four per semester. Therefore, you must also plan to take these transitional courses on top of your current course load, in order to be able to register for academic classes next year. By the time students realize this - usually

around Grade 10 and early Grade 11 - many feel that the effort to transition is too much to handle and as a result, they end up continuing with their applied courses.

Next, you might ask, "don't these students have knowledgeable and well-meaning teachers and parents who can encourage them to think holistically about what their decision really means for their future?" To that I say hopefully they do, but I know that is not the case for all students. In an ideal world, teachers and guidance counsellors would offer unbiased and helpful advice that speaks to the student's academic abilities as opposed to other presumptions and preconceived notions they may have about a student. This is not always the case and so I say that it is not constructive practice for students.

Even more frightening is the fact that there is no real filter for the biases of teachers who might not take a liking to a student. Many of my Black peers can recall teachers talking them into choosing applied courses even though their marks indicated they were capable of academic tasks. I will say that there may have been well meaning teachers who have learned to expect very little from Black students, particularly Black students experiencing marginalization. It almost becomes easy for these teachers to expect less from them, rather than building relationships and getting to know their strengths, motivators and ambitions.

Guidance counselors who could act as a neutral third-party deal with the entire student body and cannot always get to know the unique needs and abilities of each individual student. As an elementary school teacher, I do see how students who demonstrate attention seeking or disruptive behaviour, may be easily written off with little consideration for their social and

emotional needs. This begs the question of whether or not student behaviour should have an influence on which stream teachers advise their students to choose. In other words, if a student's behaviour is seen as disruptive, impolite, or negative, but their marks are satisfactory for the academic route, would that impact teacher bias that encourage the applied route? If so, should student behaviour be factored into the streaming process? Or are we solely streaming based on marks and academic ability?

My fourth and final qualm with Grade 9 streaming is that it isolates students and families who are unaware of how the system is set up to work. Many parents who are aware of Grade 9 streaming were parents who themselves have gone through the Ontario high school system, or who have learned from other family members, neighbours and friends, or parents who have the time to attend parent council meetings to educate themselves. These parents may be more inclined to ensure that their children select the academic route in the hopes of preparing their child to have as many options for post-secondary as possible.

As a Black person who went through the Ontario school system and was privileged to have well informed parental guidance, I was not allowed to even consider the applied route because of the limitations it would have ensued. But what about working absentee parents, or parents who are English language learners, or immigrant families who have never heard of Grade 9 streaming with no knowledge of how the system is set up? How are they to help their children prepare if they are unaware of what this is and what this means for their child's future?

These are some of the reasons that Grade 9 streaming must end. It demands mature decisions at an immature age where adolescent cognition is not yet developed enough to understand the impact of the choices made. It confines students to a very definite post-secondary outcome. It does not prevent teacher bias from impacting students' decisions. Finally, it polarizes students and families who do not have the knowledge, experience or resources to know how the system works or what it truly means for their educational prospects.

Problem solving, critical thinking, demonstrating knowledge, and communication are just a few of the skills that must be explicitly taught in order to bridge the gaps that this new school year will bring. We must also remember that the Minister did not say that applied and academic courses will be abolished for Grades 10, 11, and 12. Applied and academic streams will most likely still exist for the higher grades.

Nonetheless, I believe that getting rid of streaming in Grade 9 will give many students a chance. A chance to mature and to develop greater executive functioning abilities so they can be better equipped to make thoughtful and critical decisions regarding post-secondary life and young adulthood. A chance to get accustomed to the demands of high school. A chance to have meaningful conversations with teachers and family members about how certain choices impact their future. A chance to gain confidence in their academic abilities and advocate for themselves.

The work is not over yet. We must be accountable to our students and children. Particularly within the Black community, as leaders we must equip our communities with

information and resources to support and uplift our next generations. I believe that there is an enlightenment or awakening happening. This must be followed by education that promotes life readiness in all students while teaching them how to succeed in school.

Editor Feedback

From: Camille Dundas <camille.dundas@byblacks.com>
Subject: Re: Article Submission
Date: July 21, 2020 at 10:26:57 PM EDT
To: Elesha May <mayele1990@gmail.com>

Hi Elesha,

I really like the title :)

However, since streaming has now been ended, to make an argument for *why* it should be ended is sort of moot now.

The article should focus on the lasting effects of streaming on Black people.. it should include interviews with people talking about what that experience was like... how it changed their life etc. or talk about why ending streaming is just the first step to ending racism in education...

Camille Dundas

Editor-In-Chief

ByBlacks.com
Pronouns: she/her

Ontario May Be Ending Academic Streaming, But the Damage Is Done

By Elesha Daley

As the Ontario Government gears up to end Grade 9 streaming, this will have important implications for the Black community, as well as other racialized communities and marginalized people. As a Black person of immigrant parents who themselves experienced the Ontario high school system, I am able to see how this and other privileges I experienced helped shape my high school opportunities. This also allows me to question how some disadvantages may have had lasting impacts on my peers and other Black, racialized or marginalized people. After some reflection, I realized that my questions revealed some of my own guilt; guilt for advancing through a school system that seemed to fail my peers; guilt for my unearned privileges that supported my growth and development and quest for knowledge; guilt for feeling that I did not belong in a space where I excelled academically. Authors Bridgette J. Peteet, LaTrice Montgomery, and Jerren C. Weeks describe this as "impostor phenomenon." Imposter phenomenon or IP, "refers to an internal feeling of intellectual phoniness that is often experienced by high achievers and also occurs among URM (underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities) (Clance & Imes, 1978, Ewing et al., 1996; Peteet et al., 2015, p. 176). This IP is known to contribute to the added societal and psychological pressures that students belonging to ethnic minorities or marginalized groups face (Peteet et al., 2015).

I admit that being able to identify IP as one of the negative impacts that Grade 9 streaming had on my life might seem insignificant. On the other hand, it shows me that if these are the kinds of psychological conflicts that come as a result of high achievement, then the

lasting burdens of streaming on underachieving students with much less access and resources, must be greater. As a Black person and educator, the weight is heavy on my heart and mind.

In an attempt to gain further insight into the lasting impacts of streaming, I facilitated a virtual roundtable discussion with eight of my closest high school and neighbourhood friends - all Black people now in their late 20s and early 30s. Of the 8 respondents, 3 were female, and 5 were male. I think it is also important to note that the neighbourhood in which we grew up was and continues to have a high immigrant population and is considered "at risk" with high crime rates. The goal of this meeting was to reflect on our late middle school and high school experiences, and to critically analyze some of the potential lasting effects that high school had on our lives. The scope of our discussion was focused on looking into the potential lasting impacts of Grade 9 streaming.

From this sample group, it is evident that the lasting effects of Grade 9 streaming for Black youth living in marginalized communities are profound. I have organized the themes based on responses for my friends who were streamed into the academic route and friends who were streamed into the applied route. To begin, there were three recurring sentiments amongst my academic friends. The first lasting effect of Grade 9 streaming for them resembled my own feelings of guilt. When I questioned why they felt this sense of guilt, a friend shared that they felt as though they had not done enough to help other struggling Black friends and peers. This overall feeling of guilt due to abandoning peers tended to be shared amongst the university graduated group members. Guilt persisted throughout high school, and university, and even now during the professional years. The second lasting impact that we discovered is IP, as mentioned

above. The friends who were streamed into the academic route, who subsequently attended

University, spoke of trying to find ways and spaces to fit in. One was that some learned to

overcome this by "code-switching" out of a dialect popularized by many Black Torontonian

youth heavily influenced by Jamaican patois, and into mainstream Canadian English. The third

lasting impact that I noticed was an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Friends who were

streamed into academic classes described themselves as fortunate and spoke of their

indebtedness to parents and siblings who were aware of the system and had the tools to guide

them along the way.

Amongst my applied streamed friends, I wish I could say that the impacts were as minor.

There are three significant things that I noticed. The first impact on them are very strong

sentiments of regret. This regret comes from having to play catchup during their adult years to

attain skills and professional opportunities that they feel they should have already secured. I

noticed that all of my friends who were streamed into the applied route are aware that some of

their marks were not far off from some of ours who were streamed into the academic route, yet

they still share a conflicting sense of responsibility for ending up there. This leads to the second

major lasting sentiment that I noticed - significant resentment towards some of their old teachers,

schooling and the education system. There was a common sense that because they and their

families were not totally aware of what applied streaming meant, they had been led down a path

that was not in their best interests - a dead end. One friend elaborated that as a result of being led

down this path, he had to spend much of his young adulthood filling in the gaps, proving to

himself and others that he was not "dumb", and proving that he was capable of abstract

theoretical thinking. Thirdly, for those who managed to bridge the gaps in postsecondary

education in order to establish sustainable careers, we realized that there is a definite need to overcompensate now particularly when it comes to work and career, in an attempt to prove oneself and to make up for everything they think they missed.

Moreover, we asked ourselves what impacts the end of Grade 9 streaming will have for the Black community and other racialized and marginalized people. We concluded that it will decrease the ability for teachers to use their bias to stream students from a young age, it will limit the division between students and limit the feelings of guilt and abandonment, and it will limit the stigmatization and self-doubt that young students face as they question their own intelligence. It is our hope that to this end, unnecessary psychological stressors will begin to decrease for Black, racialized and marginalized communities so that they will have a higher capacity to focus on their own positive mental health and acquire a love of lifelong learning that transcends any further barriers they may face within the formal education system.

Link to published article:
https://byblacks.com/main-menu-mobile/opinion-mobile/2589-ontario-may-be-ending-academic-streaming-but-the-damage-is-done

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Bio: Elesha Daley is currently completing a Master of Education degree with a focus on themes, patterns, and impacts of race in education. She is a teacher with the York Region District School Board. Before teaching, Elesha completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Toronto and went on to work in the corporate environment. She realized that she wanted to do something that gave back to her community and positively impacted the experiences of racialized and marginalized students. She then decided to pursue education. It is her hope that her professional journey will empower racialized children, youth and their families to live their potential.

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