

Coming in From the Cold: Sites of Black Educational Resistance in Edmonton, Alberta

by

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### **Abstract**

Black community-based education programs play a critical role in helping Black students' educational development. Yet work done in these programs and their perceived educational contributions are under-researched in the Canadian context. This study used qualitative case study methodology to examine the experiences of current students, alumni, parents, volunteers and workers within an African/African-Caribbean organization that offers supplementary education programs to address the educational development of Black students in the context of the systemic challenges they face in the Canadian K-12 mainstream education system. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What difficulties and marginalizations do Black youths face in navigating the K-12 education system in Edmonton, Alberta?
2. How do CCACH's current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers describe the role of its educational programs in the context of the marginalization of Black students in the mainstream K-12 education system?
3. How do CCACH's current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers perceive the organization's impact in relation to addressing the systemic challenges that Black students face in the K-12 education system?
4. How does CCACH resist marginalization of Black communities?

Data collection methods included participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews with a total of 25 participants consisting of selected students, their parents, and program staff, and a short survey to capture the demographic characteristics of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Simons, 2009). In addition, I analyzed institutional records such as AfroQuiz study materials and Alberta's official curriculum documents for public schools.

All data collected was analyzed thematically with the aim of increasing my understanding of the students' experiences with the programs and any benefits students derive from them.

Using Critical Race Theory and Community Cultural Wealth as theoretical frameworks, I found that Black students faced significant challenges in schools including low teacher expectations, being disproportionately subjected to harsh disciplinary measures, the exclusion of Black history and culture from the curriculum, racist bullying from school peers, and lacked a sense of belonging in schools. My analysis shows the creation of Black African diasporic identities in Alberta and vibrant Black communities. I demonstrate how resistant, navigational, social, familial, and aspirational capital were cultivated and used by members of Black communities in Edmonton. The use of these five types of capital contributed positively to Black Albertan K-12 students' academic development and prepared them for postsecondary studies and for middle class professions. The study provides insight into challenges faced by Black people, community activism, and the building of Black communities in Alberta.

## Preface

This thesis is an original work by Alleson Mason. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, “BLACK STUDENTS NEED MORE: BLACK COMMUNITIES RESPOND TO THE PERCEIVED INADEQUACIES OF MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA,” No Pro00090929, August 02, 2019.

Initial exploration of some the issues raised in this thesis was done in an article I published in *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry*. The reference information for the article is Mason, A. (2021). Teaching Black students to fly. *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry*, 12(1), 119-132.  
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### **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my family who are God's most precious gift to me and to the memory of my dear grandmother Mary who passed away this year.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

This research used case study methodology to examine the perceived educational contributions of community-based education programs offered by an African/African-Caribbean organization in Edmonton, Alberta. These programs are also called supplementary education programs and refer to activities such as academic tutoring, and cultural programming provided by community organizations outside of school time to support the wholistic development of students (Evans & Gillan Thomas, 2015; Issa & Williams, 2009). The study was conducted at a time of heightened international focus on various forms of oppression and denial of human rights, particularly in relation to minoritized groups such as African descended people.<sup>1</sup> The murder of George Floyd by police in the United States of America was a turning point in Canada when the issue of systemic anti-Black racism, which Black-led activism by groups such as Black Lives Matter had been highlighting for years, was finally acknowledge publicly by high level policy makers such as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The protests that followed Floyd's murder brought anti-Black racism and its deleterious impacts on Black Canadians front and center of Canada's policy agenda. On an international level, even before George Floyd's untimely death, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2015-2024 to be The International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) adopting the theme "People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development" (United Nations, 2014). This announcement was the culmination of other activities and declarations that brought international attention and action to the issues facing people of African descent and other oppressed peoples. These include the recognition of the International Year of People of African Descent in 2011 and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) accepted by consensus at the 2001 World Conference against Racism (United Nations, 2009). Further, a report by the United Nations

Expert Working Group on People of African Descent stated that anti-Black racism and social exclusion were having very a negative impact on the educational outcomes and other life chances of Black people in Canada (UN Expert Working, 2017).

Coming on the heels of the United Nations Expert Working Group and IDPAD this study is timely. The organization studied conducts programs that improve the educational and other life chances of African-descended youth in Canada, thus fulfilling many of the recommendations and suggestions of this international declaration. The DDPA identifies education as playing an integral role in counteracting and eliminating racism in all spheres of life and in improving the life chances of African descended people. Yet we know that the actualization of this principle of education as an enabling right is shaped by a variety of historical contexts and histories of power. These contexts and histories prevent some groups in society from benefiting fully from the education system, and Black students in particular find Canadian schools to be alienating and antagonistic spaces (Dei et al., 1997; James, 2012; Kelly, 1998). Therefore, it becomes crucial to ask, what are the conditions in which education becomes more than a theoretical right toward becoming an enabling right that fosters other human rights and accomplishments? I studied this broader question by focusing on a case study of supplementary education programs offered by The Council for Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH) in Edmonton. It is only fitting that in this decade of focus on people of African descent that the educational issues affecting Black children and youth and how Black communities are organizing to address those issues themselves should be highlighted and examined.

### **Situating Myself<sup>2</sup>**

As a Jamaican, Black, immigrant woman who trained and worked as an educator in Jamaica, I am deeply appreciative of how the school environment including aspects such

the curriculum, teacher-student relationships, teacher expectations for students, and so forth impact young people. Schooling can make or break students. Research on the schooling of Black youth in Canada indicate that schooling is breaking a significant proportion of our youth. It is putting them down intellectually, boxing them into certain jobs, and forcing them to leave school before they have attained a high school diploma (Dei et al., 1997; James, 2012, Kelly, 1998). This is troubling to me as it is to other Black persons, especially those of us who are immigrants from countries where much of the population is Black. This is because we know the potential of Black children, we have seen Black children in our countries of origin who cope with worse challenges than those Black children in Canada deal with and yet they still excel in school. Some of those children *back home*, struggle to find even the basic necessities of life, are scarred by violence in their communities, live with the trauma of physically absent parents who were forced to migrate overseas due to the lack of jobs, live in rural communities where they walk far distances to fetch water from the government provided community pipes, and have to work on farms, streets, or markets to assist in generating family income. Yet still they rise, they aspire to go to university even though they do not know where they will find the money to pay their application fee and their tuition if they are accepted, they work hard and the vast majority of them complete secondary school and receive their diploma. Many of these students were successful because they had nurturing teachers who made them know that failure was not an option, they were made to know that they are the best our country has to offer, and that doing their best was the least that was expected of them. Further, everyday they saw examples of Black persons, like them, performing various roles in society including persons in leadership and high-status.

Thus, when I surveyed the situation of Black students' academic performance in the K-12 system in Canada, I refused the explanations of the poor performance of Black students premised on narratives of pathologies in Black families and communities as explanations. I have chosen instead to focus on the strengths of Black communities that are building resilience in students and enabling them to achieve their goals *despite* the systemic racism and the inadequacies of the Canadian school system.

Canadian Black students do not have the privilege of widespread representations of Black excellence and success in school and in the wider society. Many indicate that they do not have the privilege of teachers who care about them and encourage them to dream big (James, 2012; Kelly, 1998). Organizations such as The Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH) have stepped in to provide that encouragement, support, and positive representations of Blackness that students need. I felt compelled to conduct this investigation to fully examine how Black students, their families and CCACH'S alumni, and workers in Edmonton perceive the organization's contribution to their educational development. I chose to study how this organization, like many other Black community organizations, are locations that connect diverse Black people, cultivate Black identities, and advocate for Black students and families.

### **The Black Population in Canada: Youthful, Expanding Rapidly and Critical to Canada's Wellbeing**

According to Statistics Canada (2019a, 2019b) the Black population is increasing very quickly, doubling in size in the two decades from 1996-2016 to the figure of 1,198,540 at last count, representing 3.5% of Canada's total population. In 2016 fifty two percent of the Black population were immigrants (Statistics Canada 2019a). A little over 43% of Black people were

born in Canada and are either second or third generation Canadians and 56.4% of those identifying as Black were born outside of Canada and identify as first generation Canadian (Statistics Canada, 2019a). This means that a significant proportion of Black people in Canada are citizens and are entitled to all the rights and privileges that Canadian citizenship affords.

The last census in 2016 showed that there are 57,815 Black people in Edmonton representing 4.5% of the city's population and 129,390 in the province of Alberta as a whole representing 3.3% of the province's population (Statistics Canada 2017a). There have been changes in Black immigration trends over the decades. A key change is that whereas the Caribbean and Bermuda accounted for the vast majority of Black immigrants up to the 1990s, in the 2000s Africa became the prime source region accounting for 65.1% of all Black people who migrated to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Also, since the 2000s there has been a shift away from family sponsorship to economic migrants, with the latter category accounting for 40% of all immigrants during the 2011-2016 period. Refugees accounted for just under 30% of newcomers (Statistics Canada, 2019b). There are over 170 countries of birth with the top five sending countries for Black immigrants being Jamaica, Haiti, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Somalia (Statistics Canada, 2019b).

The Black population is also more youthful than the Canadian population overall with 26.6% being children under 15 years old compared to 16.9% for the total population (Statistics Canada, 2019b). As the Black population in Canada continues to increase it is important to understand the systemic challenges they face in accessing social services such as education which constrain their abilities to maximize their contributions to Canadian society. It is also important to examine the initiatives from Black communities to address these challenges, understand how the users of initiatives perceive their impact on their lives, and to provide

necessary supports to increase their capacity to expand their services and the number of people they reach.

A key challenge for Black youth is their schooling environment. There is a plethora of studies that document the challenges that Black students face in the Canadian education system. One of the biggest challenges that students face is the pervasive anti-Black racism in Canadian society that structures the alienating, often antagonistic experiences youth identify as being a constant in their experiences with mainstream schooling (Dei et. al., 1997; James, 2012; Kelly, 1998). Additionally, the erasure of Black history and contributions from the curriculum and other institutional practices push students out of the school system at unacceptably high rates (Dei et al., 1997). In response Black communities have designed out of school support programs to assist students with core curriculum subjects, to provide content on Black history and culture that is absent from the school curriculum, and to give students the moral support and information they need to navigate the education system successfully.

### **The Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage**

CCACH is one of several Black community organizations that provide tutoring and Black cultural heritage teaching and enrichment for Black youth and their families. Here, I will give an overview of the organization, its objectives, programs offered, and clientele.

The Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH), previously called the Council of Black Organizations (CBO) was formed in 1985 out of the fusion of 25 predominantly Caribbean organizations. The aim of the CBO was to act as a central united advocate for Black people in Edmonton. With the exception of the Executive Director, tutors, and the tutor coordinator, who are given a small stipend, CCACH is primarily run by volunteers.

The organization changed its name in 1996 to de-emphasize race as a pivotal unifying motif, preferring to organize around nationalities instead. The change from emphasizing race to focusing on nationalities came about because the founders of CCACH recognized that there were a number of persons of mixed heritage, and persons who were born in Africa or the Caribbean who were not Black who were members and wanted to ensure that they did not feel excluded. CCACH's mission is to "undertake and support activities to enhance the social, economic, and educational life of African and Caribbean Heritage communities" (CCACH, n.d.a). Its flagship programs are its Saturday morning tutoring program which runs from 10 AM to 1 PM, and the annual AfroQuiz competition held during Black History Month in February.

### ***Tutoring Program***

The tutoring program has been in existence for over 20 years and allows students in grades 1-12 to receive one hour of help weekly in subject areas of their choice from post-secondary student tutors (CCACH, n.d.b). Most of the subjects are ones offered in the core curriculum in the K-12 system in Alberta. The tutors are also de facto mentors. The vast majority of tutors are of African or Caribbean heritage and CCACH administrators believe that this allows them to understand the experiences of the students they tutor as people of African descent living in a predominantly White society. Also, the students they tutor can see them as role models in that they have successfully completed their secondary education and are pursuing higher education. CCACH administrators hope that this will serve as an inspiration to the mentees to know that they too can achieve their aspirations to go to university or college. Families contribute \$100 per child for tutoring per year. In the 2019-2020 academic year the tutoring program enrolled 28 students and 10 tutors, in the 2020-2021 academic year there were 52

students and 18 tutors (Executive Director, S. Muchekeza, personal communication, November 02, 2020).

### ***AfroQuiz***

AfroQuiz has been in existence for 29 years and is held annually in February. It is a quiz competition patterned on the television game show Jeopardy! which tests participants' knowledge on various aspects of the history and culture of people of African descent (CCACH, n.d.c). Each year there is a theme and then subthemes that the study materials and quiz questions are based on. Participants are placed in groups according to age. The age categories are under 9, 10-12, 13-14, 15-17, and postsecondary. Prospective competitors register on CCACH's website after which they receive the study materials via email. Each year approximately 50 persons participate in the contest. The contest is open to all persons who wish to compete even if they are not of African or Caribbean descent and persons of Middle Eastern and South Asian heritage have participated in various years. The prizes include electronics such as iPADS, smartphones, and all contestants get to choose a book from a range of books on Black history, important Black personalities, and other aspects of Black culture.

AfroQuiz helps to compensate for the absence of African-Canadian history and contributions to civilization in the Alberta K-12 and post-secondary curriculum. Through the study materials and the competition, participants learn about the history and culture of people of African descent which provides a counter story to the dominant narrative that Africans and people in the African Diaspora do not have a history worthy of note.

### ***Funding***

CCACH is funded through the Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission's funding program for not-for-profit organizations, and through various grants from government and other

agencies. The Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission funds various charities via donations and CCACH chose to take advantage of this means of funding their expenses. Also, parents pay an annual fee of \$100 per child for tutoring, and various organizations finance or contribute the prizes for AfroQuiz. One of the challenges the organization face is with securing permanent building space that they can use as their administrative office and also house the Saturday tutoring sessions.

### **Research Purpose and Research Questions**

Given my interest in studying how Black communities have taken their theoretical right to education and organized to make it an enabling right, the purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers within an organization that offers supplementary education programs that address the educational development of Black students in the context of the systemic challenges such students face in the Canadian K-12 mainstream education system. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What difficulties and marginalizations do Black youths face in navigating the K-12 education system in Edmonton, Alberta?
2. How do CCACH'S current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers describe the role of its educational programs in the context of the marginalization of Black students in the mainstream K-12 education system?
3. How do CCACH's current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers perceive the organization's impact in relation to addressing the systemic challenges that Black students face in the K-12 education system?
4. How does CCACH resist marginalization of Black communities?

I used a qualitative case study methodology to conduct the investigation as it allows for rich in-depth accounts of the student's experiences with CCACH's tutoring program and AfroQuiz. Further, case study methodology facilitates an understanding of CCACH's work from multiple perspectives (students, parents, alumni, volunteers, workers, administrators) using several methods of data collection which allows for a nuanced and comprehensive view of the programs.

The Critical Race Theory and Community Cultural Wealth frameworks allow me to center the work of CCACH as a response to and an attempt to counter anti-Black racism in Canadian schools and the wider society. It allows me to focus on how CCACH seeks to remedy the erasure of Black contributions and history from Canadian school curricula and how the organization through AfroQuiz is providing a counter narrative to the myth that Black people have no history, no heritage, and no significance. The Community Cultural Wealth Theory allows me to highlight the various resources, human and otherwise which Black communities have cultivated, pooled, and organized that provide Black students with the knowledge, strategies and emotional support needed to excel in a society built on racist oppression.

### **Significance**

First, there is very little published data on supplementary education programs in Canada, representing a significant neglect of the important learning that takes place in non-school spaces, especially in equipping students with the resilience to overcome everyday challenges such as racism and other forms of marginalization (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This research will address that gap in our understanding of this important community-led form of education in the Albertan and Canadian context.

Second, few studies examine strength-based perspectives on Black communities that elucidate how these communities address the educational needs and challenges of Black students and help them to succeed despite challenges (Jayakumar et al., 2013). Studies have focused on the success of individual students, but Black community-initiated interventions are often not examined. Further, there is a pervasive myth around the supposed apathy and disinterest of Black caregivers in their children's education (McGee & Spencer, 2015; Mullings & Mullings-Lewis, 2013). Studies such as this one promise to demonstrate the incorrectness of such beliefs. By providing a counter narrative that illustrates the amount of time, thought, commitment, and organization that is invested in supplementary education programs, this research shows that Black communities are willing and have much to contribute to the schools when given the opportunity to be engaged in respectful, meaningful, and equitable ways.

Third, while many studies have focused on Black communities and experiences in places like Southern Ontario (the Greater Toronto Area) and Nova Scotia, the research on Black communities in Alberta, whether rural or urban areas, remains small but is also growing. Scholars such as Kelly (1998, 2004) have explored Black K-12 student experiences in Edmonton high schools and their process of racial ethnic identity formation. Similarly, Codjoe's (2001) research focused on high school students and explored the schooling experiences of high performing Black students. Other scholars have focused on the experiences of young adults, for example Pillay's (2018) research investigated young African-descended women's community and political engagement practices as acts of self decolonization and defiance towards various types of oppression in Canadian society. This study's focus and findings will contribute an understanding of Black community engagement across multiple generations and identities with the goal of addressing the challenges Black students face in Alberta's K-12 education system. It

is timely given the growing academic and community interest as well as necessity in understanding the local and regional dynamics of Blackness and Black experiences in Canada and the Americas more broadly.

Fourth, findings from the study can be used by the organization to better understand how their programming affects the students and families who utilize their programs, and relatedly to guide their activities and future policies. Decision makers will have access to the views of parents, volunteers, and students regarding the strengths and benefits of the programs as well as any constructive feedback that they may have for future growth and improvement.

Fifth, schools can use the findings to initiate and strengthen school-community partnerships to address the marginalization of Black students and their families, to help teachers improve classroom practices, and improve student outcomes. When schools understand what supports exist in the communities and which supports students and parents perceive to be helpful in achieving students' educational goals, then it creates the awareness needed to reach out and collaborate with communities to ensure that programs reach as many students as possible who need it. Additionally, educators can also incorporate some of the pedagogical strategies used by community groups in their own classrooms.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

This research was conducted with one organization offering supplementary education programs in Edmonton, Alberta. The participants were delimited to students in grade 8 and above who have used CCACH's services for at least one academic school year. I wanted to focus on Black students in the higher grades of high school to ascertain in what ways, if any, CCACH is contributing to their educational development and in building resilience to complete their secondary education. I have stipulated that students who utilize the tutoring services need to be

in the program for at least one academic year in order for me to choose them as participants in research because through prolonged engagement these students would have more time to form their perceptions of the value the programs add, if any, to their educational journey.

A limitation of the study is that the data generated is not generalizable as one organization was studied. However, this does not diminish the value of the in-depth understanding that can be gained through the study of one organization when it is situated within the context of broader, commonly experienced trends and patterns in the schooling and educational environment. Given that I had limited time and monetary resources, carrying out this investigation as a single case study enabled me to spend the time needed to garner comprehensive, rich, data from multiple data sources and using several methods (Berg, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This allowed me to gain insights into CCACH and the work that it does that I may not have gained if I was only able to use one method to generate data. Additionally, I could have included a greater proportion of participants who are currently students in Edmonton's K-12 education system to gain additional insights into their present-day educational experiences.

### **Organization of Thesis**

In this introduction, chapter one, I provide the background and context for the study, situating Black communities in terms of their proportion in Canada's population, the challenges students face in schooling, what questions the research aims to answer, and give an overview of CCACH that explains how it was formed and the programs it offers. Chapters two and three provide the historical context of Black people's experiences in Canada and background information on supplementary education programs respectively. Chapter four discusses the construction of Black identities in Canada and explains how I utilized Critical Race Theory and

Community Cultural Wealth theory as lens through which to analyze the work being done by the organization and to guide the data generation methods used in the study. The methodology chapter is fifth, and details the philosophies that undergird the study, justifies the use of case study methodology for investigation and explains the methods that were used to generate and analyze data, as well as ensure trustworthiness in the knowledge produced by research. Chapters six, seven, eight and nine are the data chapters where I interpret the data generated and discuss the information I found in relation to other literature. The data generated from participants indicate that Black students face many challenges in Alberta's K-12 education system as a result of systemic racism. CCACH's programs developed positive representations of Blackness and provided students with the skills, knowledge, and affective support they needed to perform well academically. The organization was also a strong advocate for students' rights and helped to hold educators accountable for the ways in which they fulfilled their teaching obligations towards Black students.

Although Black people have lived on the prairies since at least the 1780s (Vernon, 2020), there are very few studies that examine the experiences of Black communities on the prairies. Much of the research and writings on Black communities in Canada focus on Ontario and to a lesser extent Nova Scotia as these provinces are home to some of Canada's earliest Black residents. The erroneous assumption is that all Black residents on the prairies are newcomers. Further, much of the studies that detail Black students' schooling experiences have also been conducted in Ontario and Nova Scotia. This study documents how Black students are faring in Edmonton's schools and demonstrate that similar to the findings of studies conducted in eastern Canada, racialization and systemic racism play an important role in shaping their formal education. The information shared by participants point to vibrant Black communities in

Edmonton who are very engaged in their children's education and are intent on using education to facilitate upward social mobility and disrupting the reproduction of a social stratification system where Black people are always on the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder. The present study documents the ways in which CCACH's work through AfroQuiz disrupts that false narrative by exposing and publicizing Alberta's long Black presence and the ways in which early Black prairie dwellers contributed to the socioeconomic development of the region. The conclusion provides key insights from the study and recommendations based on the data generated which includes the need for policy changes to address systemic racism in Albertan schools through interventions such as the use of culturally responsive pedagogy in Albertan schools, eliminating discriminatory disciplinary practices, and hiring more Black teachers.

## **Chapter Two: Historical Context**

The conditions of Black life today are products of technologies and structures of violence, surveillance and abuse geared toward Black subjection that have their roots in the transatlantic slave trade and have been embedded in state practices and institutions for centuries—Robyn Maynard, 2017, p.229

### **Introduction**

While studies have focused on Black students' experiences in mainstream Canadian schools (Codjoe, 2001; Dei et al. 1997; Kelly, 1998, 2004), there is a dearth of research on students' experiences of educative spaces outside of schools, and in particular, their experiences with supplementary programs. To address this gap, this study investigates the ways in which one African-Canadian community organization supports the educational development of K-12 students of African and African-Caribbean descent in Edmonton, Alberta. In this chapter, I outline Black settlement and experiences in Canada.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the conditions that have made these out of school supplementary programs necessary in Canada, it is important to give a sociohistorical overview of the experiences of people of African descent in this country, illustrating the pervasive and extensive nature of anti-Black racism in Canadian society. This sociohistorical contextualization is required given that the study uses Critical Race Theory one of its theoretical frameworks and its research paradigm. Additionally, this grounding of the research in historical context is corroborated by eminent academic Joseph Mensah (2002) who asserts that “only a limited insight can be gained into the plight of contemporary Black people without a shrewd understanding of the racial and colonial ideologies of the past” (p. 134). Similar historical contextualization is evident

in the work of other scholars, and community activists/ organizers such as Kelly (1998, 2004), Mathieu (2010), and Issa and Williams (2008).

This chapter explores the experiences of the members of the African diaspora in Canada in historical context. I begin with an overview of the main waves of Black (I use Black interchangeably with African-descended) people who immigrated, whether freely or in bondage, to the territory now commonly known as Canada. I use Black and African-descended people interchangeably because ultimately all Black people are indigenous people of the African continent, regardless of where they are born and the heterogeneity among Black people there is an ancestral link to Africa. As explored fully in chapter four, I acknowledge that theorists such as Stuart Hall (2013) dispute this argument of a common origin in Africa being a sufficient basis on which to construct Black identity. While I appreciate the argument presented by Hall and other theorists, I believe there is a place for conscious decisions to create political constructions of Blackness that center Africa as a point of reference and point of coalescence. Second, I explore the experiences of members of the African diaspora living in Canada, particularly with anti-Black racism in the areas of immigration, the economic sector, community building and Black leadership, the justice system, and education.

### **Waves of Black Settlement in Canada**

The first recorded Black presence in Canada is attributed to Mathieu Da Costa who was an interpreter for French and Dutch explorers seeking to establish trade with the Mi'kmaq and Montagnais First Nations peoples along Canada's Atlantic coast in the early 1600s. The accepted commencement of Black residence in Canada is usually given as 1628 when enslaved Africans were carried here by French settlers in what was then called New France which covers modern day Quebec, Acadia, Newfoundland, and Louisiana (Lampkin, 1986). This long Black presence is

often erased from Canadian history. Even by the 1980s Lampkin (1986) noted that Canadian institutions have been slow in reacting to the increasing racial and cultural diversity evident in the country. Lampkin (1986) categorizes Black residence and immigration to Canada in three broad historical waves (see also Ontario Ministry of Education, 1983). The first is the 17th century to 18th century when enslaved Africans were brought in by French settlers. In the 1780s British Loyalists who migrated to Canada after the American Revolution brought enslaved Africans with them, and some free Black Loyalists who had fought on the side of the British during the Revolution also came to Canada as part of their compensation. The second wave of Black immigrants came during 19th century. Some came as refugees from the United States after the War of 1812, others came in the years during and after the American Civil War (1861-1865) and sought work in the railway industry as labourers and as hospitality staff. The third wave came in the 20th century, of note are Black people who fled the implementation of punitive Jim Crow laws in the United States by migrating to Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan as homesteaders and entrepreneurs. In addition, Black people from the Caribbean migrated to Canada in large numbers particularly during and after World War 1, and in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s to the present time. The increase in immigration by Black people from the Caribbean and Continental Africans was facilitated by changes in the Immigration Act in the 1960s which removed racist preferential treatment for European immigrants to Canada (see also Walker, 2013).

Although many Black people viewed Canada as an equitable and tolerant society, especially when compared to the United States, often this was not the reality. Although there is no evidence that Black people in Canada were subjected to the same sadism and barbarity, (for example widespread lynchings), as Black people in the United States they still faced and continue to face tremendous racial oppression. I explore some of the experiences of Black people in Canada

in the subsequent paragraphs and the important role that anti-Black racism plays in structuring those experiences.

Anti-Black racism influences and structures the experiences of Black people in Canada Morgan (2016) defines anti-Black racism as

The racial prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent, rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement. It is manifested in the legacy and racist ideologies that continue to define African descendants' identities, their lives and places them at the bottom of society and as primary targets of racism. It is manifested in the legacy of the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians in society such as the lack of opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and over-representation in the criminal justice system (p. 6)

Canada is a settler colonial society facilitated by the expropriation of Indigenous lands and the forced labour of enslaved Africans. In this situation racism among White Canadians was foundational to justifying these unjust actions and to maintain a social hierarchy that enabled them to amass incredible wealth and prosperity at the expense of non-White racial groups. Not surprisingly, anti-Black racism exists in the education sector as well since education is a prime site for reproducing such dominant ideologies. Therefore, it is critical to examine the pernicious effects of anti-Black racism on students so as to disrupt and replace the destructive and biased mainstream arguments that typically explain the challenges Black students face in education and the differences in their academic performance as functions of pathologies *within* Black families (such as frequency of female headed single parent families, and the absence of fathers).

Notwithstanding the fact that the experiences of Black people in Canada are steeped in discrimination, oppression, and struggle, there are also stories of defiance. The refusal of White people to allow Black people to assimilate into Canadian society caused Black people to develop their own separate organizations such as churches, schools, trade unions, and other such community organizations (Walker, 1985).

### **Black Experiences with Immigration to Canada**

The Black population in Canada is diverse and consists of immigrants, refugees, and persons born in Canada. They are also diverse in terms of religion, educational qualifications, and languages spoken (Connely et al., 2014). The number and proportion of Black people in the Canadian population has been increasing steadily and there are more Black people in the Canadian population today than at any other time in recorded history. In 2016, for the first time the number of Black persons in Canada passed the 1 million mark bringing Black people to 3.5% of Canada's population, 3.3 % of Alberta's population, and 4.5% of the population in Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Currently, Black people are the third largest visible minority ethnic group behind South Asians, and Chinese respectively and Africa placed second as a continent of origin for immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2017c). Alberta is home to the third largest population of Black people outnumbered only by Ontario and Quebec which have the first and second largest respectively (Statistics Canada, 2019a). As the African-Canadian population increases in number and proportion in relation to other Canadians it is likely that the issues that affect them will have more of an impact on Canadian society. Data from Statistics Canada indicate that the rate of increase for the Black population is faster than the general population as such the proportion of Black people in the population will be greater in the future (James et al., 2017).

As discussed above, Black people have a long history in Canada and have been in Canada's eastern provinces such as Ontario and Quebec for approximately 400 years. The period 1908-1911 saw many Black people immigrating to Alberta, creating for the first time a significant Black presence in the territory (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). In fact, the Black population in Alberta increased from 27 in 1901 to almost 1000 in 1911 (Palmer & Palmer, 1981). Many Black persons migrated to Alberta from the United States in the early 1900s in order to flee increasing racial persecution. These early Black immigrants settled mainly in remote rural regions probably in a bid to avoid racism from White residents (Shephard, 1997) and possibly to continue practicing agriculture since many of them were farmers. The largest and most well known of these communities are Campsie, Wildwood (then called Junkins), Keystone (then called Breton) and Amber Valley (originally called Pine Creek) (Palmer & Palmer, 1981). Others settled in urban areas such as Edmonton and Calgary and gained employment in service jobs such as portering, barbering, and cleaning (Palmer & Palmer, 1981).

This increase in Black migration was met with fierce opposition from White Canadians at all levels of society. Perhaps the most blatant manifestation of institutional and more specifically anti-Black institutional racism in Canada is in the state's covert and overt immigration policies. In fact, the actions of the Canadian government towards Black immigrants justify Walker's (1985) claim that "From the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, racism infused Canadian institutions, government policies, and public behaviour" (p. 16). Despite the long Black presence in Canada and their contributions to the building of Canada in various capacities, Canadians at all levels of society saw Whiteness as an integral part of their national identity and did not want Black immigration to change Canada's racial composition.

Various reasons were given to justify the opposition to Black immigrants and illustrate significant historical aspects of anti-Black racism in the Canadian context. For example, Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier opined that Black people were unsuitable for Canada's cold climate and for fulfilling Canada's needs (Shephard, 1997). In fact, in 1911 Sir Wilfred Laurier signed an order-in-council banning "any immigrants belonging to the Negro race, which is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada" (as cited in Mathieu, 2010, p.57). This perception of Black unsuitability is enshrined in anti-Black racism. Walker (2007) notes that in Canada Black people were viewed negatively and were "depicted as belonging to an historically dependent, submissive, factionalized and pathological society, with a weak family structure, no sense of community, content with second-class citizenship..." (p. 3). Further Kelly and Wossen-Taffesse (2012) through analysis of mainly documents such as magazine articles on Black immigration to Canada, argue that Black persons were seen as "antithetical to the budding capitalist environs that dominant economic groups in Canada wanted to cultivate. Black people are viewed as opposite to the thriving, hardy, and self-reliant Northern Europeans" (pp. 186-187) and positioned instead as docile seekers of pleasure. Other Canadians expressed fears that Black persons were lazy, would be a drain on social welfare, and were inclined to criminal activities such as rape and prostitution (Mathieu, 2010; Maynard, 2017).

Albertans played a key role in the Federal Government's discriminatory immigration policies designed to prevent Black immigration (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). Edmonton displayed the strongest opposition to Black immigration to Alberta with the Edmonton Board of Trade joining with several other boards of trade in the province to draft and garner over 3000 signatures for a petition to the Prime Minister requesting that Black immigration to the province be halted (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). Various official policies were instituted to discourage Black

immigration including the addition of clauses to the Immigration Act in 1906 making medicals and character examinations for potential immigrant's compulsory and adding racialized non-admission clauses. Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1910 implemented stringent criteria allowing immigration officials to vary the monetary requirements necessary for admission based on race, profession, and destination (Mathieu, 2010). Doctors performing immigration medicals were bribed to propose medical reasons to refuse Black immigrants (Yarhi, 2016). Also, to use transportation costs as a barrier, the Immigration Department advised railway employees to deny Black immigrants the special train fares reserved for persons migrating from the United States to Canada causing the average cost of passage to increase from \$20.00 to \$200.00. When all attempts at preventing the immigration of Black people seemed to be failing Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier passed an Order in Council in 1911 to officially ban Black people from migrating to Canada (Mathieu, 2010).

Due to the declining immigration from traditional European sending countries and the need for human resources to sustain and develop its economy, Canada revised its immigration policy in 1967 with the implementation of a points-based immigration system. This system removed race and nationality as important determining factors for immigration to Canada focusing instead on educational qualifications and work experience (Troper, 2017). This opened the way for substantial increase in Caribbean Black immigrants and Black persons from Africa to immigrate to Canada, as well as an increase in immigration from countries in Asia and Latin America.

### **Black Experiences in the Economic Sector**

Historically Black people and other racialized Canadians have faced greater challenges/barriers in trying to access the labour market than mainstream Canadians. The unemployment rate for Canada in January 2021 was 9.4%, and Black Canadians had an

unemployment rate of 16.4% (Statistics Canada, 2021). Mensah (2002) asserts that Black people and First Nations people are at the bottom of the Canadian social ladder. Initially Africans were forcibly brought to the Americas to work as enslaved labourers on the vast plantations and in other industries in Canada, The United States, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. Thus, from the beginning they were brought into these societies in a subordinate position and hampered by the stigma of enslavement (Walker, 1985). Anti-Black racism is evident throughout the Americas (and indeed the world). In examining racism in Brazil (the country with the largest population of Black people outside of Africa), Da Costa (2016) notes that

Black [people] are underrepresented in political and economic positions of power, as students and faculty within elite institutions of higher learning, in primary and secondary school curriculums, and in the media. At the same time, they are overrepresented as targets of (racist) bullying in schools and the media and as victims of police violence and assassination (pp. 348-349).

This description could easily be made for the experiences of Black people in the Canadian context as the subsequent paragraphs will show. Like Canada, Brazilian society refuses to accept that anti-Black racism exists and has a pernicious impact on non-Whites, choosing instead to highlight Brazil's aspiration toward racial democracy and multiculturalism (Da Costa, 2016).

Walker (1985) posits that anti-Black racism was an integral part of Canadian society from its inception noting that "by the time Canada became a confederation there was a colour line that differentiated Black people as separate from the rest of society and belonging to the lowliest class in society devoid of any desirable social status" (p. 8). Even where Black immigrants entered Canada as free persons, for example, the Black Loyalists from the American Revolution, they were deprived of the benefits afforded White immigrants. For instance, most Black Loyalists were never

given the land promised by the British as compensation for assisting them in the American Revolution. Additionally, those who received land were settled on barren tracts of land far removed from the communities occupied by White people. This was a major encumbrance as it rendered them unable to provide sufficient food for themselves forcing them to rely on social welfare which reinforced the stereotype that they were lazy and incapable of independently caring for themselves; or to hire themselves out as poorly paid labourers and servants, thus facilitating intergenerational poverty.

Black people were seen as being fit only for manual unskilled labour and given the most menial jobs in society (Cui & Kelly, 2012), even where Black persons worked in the same industry or company as White people. Employment segregation based on race was widespread as exemplified in the railway industry. The railway industry operated on a submerged, split labour market where the lowest paid service occupations with no prospect for upward mobility, such as portering, were reserved for Black workers, while White workers were given the higher paying jobs with opportunities for promotion such as conductor, cooks, and engineer (Calliste, 1987; Mathieu, 2010). Today Black workers continue to earn less than White workers and to face significant challenges in the workplace that prevent them from accessing better paying employment opportunities (Morgan, 2016). Railway managers often sourced men from the Caribbean and the Southern states in the United States when White workers were scarce. These Black immigrant workers were the first to be laid off during periods of economic difficulty.

Discrimination from regular trade unions led Black workers to form their own unions. The founding of the Order of Sleeping Car Porters and then the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) by Black railway workers was a tremendous accomplishment for Black workers as it meant that they were able to advocate for better pay and working conditions. The BSCP was one

example of Black people organizing themselves as a collective to advocate for improvements in their life chances. It was more than a trade union and was integral to community building amongst Black folks and the campaign for civil rights generally, as many transferred their trade union activism into political activism. Sleeping car porters were a part of the Black middle class, since unlike most other jobs available at the time, theirs provided a relatively reliable source of income. Some invested their earnings in entrepreneurial ventures and along with the Free Masons they established credit unions where members could receive loans to open businesses or purchase a home (Mathieu, 2010).

Another example of discrimination in employment was the refusal to accept Black citizens who wanted to enlist to fight in World War 1. Ordinary White soldiers and the leaders in the army were opposed to the thought of working alongside Black soldiers as equals (Mathieu, 2010; Ruck, 2016). This led to the formation of the No. 2 Construction Battalion in 1916, an all Black battalion. This battalion was tasked with non-combat labor-intensive, and dangerous tasks such as defusing landmines to facilitate the advancement of troops, constructing roads, rail tracks and bridges, retrieving wounded soldiers from the battlefield, and making trenches (Ruck, 2016). Although there is dignity in all work and the efforts of this battalion advanced the war effort, again Black citizens were pigeon-holed into the lowest, most physically strenuous tasks with no opportunity to move up the ranks or to use other skills that they may have.

Activism by Black workers and their allies have resulted in some improvements in job opportunities. However, there is still a lot of inequity in the labor market. Black [people suffer from disproportionately high levels of unemployment (UN Expert Working Group, 2017). At 10.7% they had the second highest unemployment rate in 2006 (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p. 8). Further, Yssaad and Fields (2018) found that at 11.2 % African born immigrants' unemployment

rate was the highest of all immigrant groups and rose as high as 17.7 % for African born immigrants who had lived in Canada five years or less (Yssaad & Fields, 2018, p. 17). The fact that African born immigrants are less likely to be employed is a long-standing problem that has been documented by previous studies. For example, Laryea and Hayfron (2005) used a quantitative analysis of Canadian census data to explore how continental Africans were faring in the Canadian labour market. They compared the earnings and occupational distributions of continental African immigrants to Canada to that of native-born Canadians. They found that African-born immigrants tended to be underemployed. Even those with university degrees at any level were less likely to be employed in high skilled work, and that even though African-born immigrants tend to possess higher educational qualifications than Canadians “there are significant earning gaps between African-born immigrants and Canadian-born” individuals (Laryea & Hayfron, 2005, p. 126). This finding is corroborated by Block’s and Galabuzi’s (2011) research which analyzed labour market information from the 2006 long form census data to contrast employment and earnings among racialized and non-racialized Canadians. They found that non-European Canadians earned 81.4 cents for every dollar earned to European Canadians. In explaining the income disparity, they concluded that “racialized Canadians encounter a persistent colour code that blocks them from the best paying jobs our country has to offer” (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p.3) African immigrants are highly educated (Houle, 2020) yet struggle to find work commensurate with their qualifications (Laryea & Hayfron, 2005). A major barrier to African-Canadians finding high skilled work is the lack of access to the social networks through which such jobs are attained, and in the case of immigrants, the non-recognition of or undervaluing of their educational, and professional qualifications and the requirement of Canadian work experience for many jobs (Mensah 2002; UN Expert Working Group, 2017).

Later in this study I examine the ways in which the supplementary programs, offered by CCACH are influenced by these conditions.

### **Developing Black Communities and Black Leadership- A Challenge to Racism**

Despite high levels of oppression and being denied the opportunity to integrate in Canadian society, Black Canadians are resilient and have organized themselves to improve their standard and quality of life. Historical accounts bear testament to strong and vibrant Black communities across the Canadian landscape. I explore how Black people in Canada used the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Black church, and Black newspapers to build supportive networks and sense of community with each other.

#### ***Black Newspapers***

Black newspapers played an integral role in mass communication and in building a sense of collective identity and solidarity among Black people (Thompson, 2015). Black persons used newspapers to advertise community events, kept readers up to date with happenings in Black communities and fueled political action, making readers aware of anti-segregation challenges and services available to them, while providing advice on how Black people could engage in everyday acts of defiance such as registering to vote and registering their children in school (Hill, 1981; Mathieu, 2010).

#### ***The Black Church***

Although some White persons misused religion to justify slavery and many persons who owned enslaved labourers identified as Christians, the Church was also a force for good in the lives of African Canadians. Christian denominations such as the Quakers played an active role as conductors on the Underground Railroad, a well-known avenue via which Black people escaped slavery in the United States to freedom in Canada. In addition, the Church was one of the few

places where enslaved Africans could congregate unmolested and in many instances was the only form of social organization that the enslaved were permitted to engage in (Hill, 1981). For centuries, churches have played and continue to play an important role in Black communities and the lives of individuals. Discrimination from White people led many Black people in Canada to form their own churches. In Edmonton, the Shiloh Baptist Church was formed in 1910 because Black Christians faced discrimination in White churches, while Calgary's Standard Church of America provided spiritual, moral, and social support for Black people living in that city (Palmer & Palmer, 1981). These churches represented one of the few spaces available to Black people where they were in control and provided psychological, and material support to help their members cope with the challenges of living in White, racist, sexist societies.

The African Baptist Church has an exemplary record of community activism and female empowerment in Canada. This church provides a scholarship to support students pursuing post secondary studies and organized a radio apprenticeship program that provided students with paid summer work, tuition assistance, bursaries, and paid work which continued after graduation (Hamilton, 1993). Church leaders were also at the forefront of struggles against inequity often leading petitions and other forms of protests against discrimination and demanding better access to social services.

### ***Self-help Organizations***

The formation of organizations such as CCACH must be understood within the context of a long history of activism in Black communities. Several Black community organizations were formed during the early part of the twentieth century in Canada to assist Black people with the challenges they faced in, provide opportunities for them to uplift themselves, and facilitate positive Black collective identity (Kelly, 2006). These groups are important because they are an organized

pool of persons who can easily mobilize themselves to advocate for the rights of African-Canadians, including advocating for a more equitable educational environment for African-Canadian students. One of the earliest self-help organizations to be established was the True Band Benevolent Society. It was formed in 1854 to support Black people experiencing economic difficulties, advocate for equal access to quality education for Black children, encourage entrepreneurship, and adjudicate on any disputes that arose between Black persons (Hill, 1981, p.180). Other organizations include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Montreal's Coloured Women's Club, and the Women's Charitable Benevolent Association, the United Negro improvement Association (UNIA), the Negro Welfare Association and Negro Political Association of Edmonton, the latter two formed in 1921 as offshoots of the UNIA (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). The UNIA provided scholarships to assist Black students to study at historically Black colleges in the United States. Further, the Toronto chapter of the UNIA formed the Black Youth Community Action Project in 1977 with the goal of addressing the problems Black youth 14-25 years old were facing (McClain, 1979). Additionally, there was The Coloured Protective Association in Calgary, the Alberta Association for the Advancement of Colored People (AAACP), the Greater Edmonton and Civic Community Organization, and the Canadian Colored Industrial Association (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). These institutions advocated for Black civil rights including opposing attempts to restrict Black persons from living in certain areas and tried to address social problems such as high unemployment. Their work provides a powerful counter-narrative to the erroneous common perceptions of Black people as disorganized, apathetic, lazy and a strain on the government and civil society.

In addition, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters operated as more than just a trade union, it also functioned as a civil rights organization. They situated their fight for employment

rights within the broader context of citizenship and civil rights and were very active in the Canadian civil rights movement. The women's auxiliary of the sleeping car porters consisted of wives and other female relatives of porters. They organized poor relief activities aiding families who had fallen on hard times. The Coloured Women's Club, which had the distinction of being the first women's organization in Canada, ran soup kitchens, built a small Black library, provided clothing for newcomers, provided counselling for new mothers, and nursed soldiers returning from the Boer War (Mathieu, 2010).

A particularly successful organization in Windsor Ontario was the Hour a Day Study Club. The Hour-A-Day Study Club was a women's group founded by 15 Black church women in 1934 who committed themselves to studying for at least one hour a day (Bristow, 1993). Child rearing practices and educational development was one of their main topics of interest. They also worked to ensure that children were successful in school by providing scholarships and supports for parents. When racism precluded Black women from entering jobs available to White women such as teaching, and nursing, the club members wrote letters to the provincial Minister of Health and the University of Toronto to encourage that university to accept qualified Black applicants (Windsor Mosaic, n.d). Club members were also sent on leadership courses and other educational courses that would teach them skills that could benefit the group.

More contemporary attempts at political and community organization include the National Black Coalition of Canada which was a national organization formed in the 1960s to fight against anti-Black racism and improve the life chances of Black people across Canada (Walker, 2014). The Federation of Black Canadians was formed in 2017 to act as an umbrella African-Canadian advocacy organization lobbying governments, international, and other organizations to improve the social, economic and cultural well-being of African-Canadians (Federation of Black

Canadians, n.d). Other organizations include the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC), Black Opportunity Fund, Foundation for Black Canadians, Black North, Black Teachers Association-Alberta, Congress of Black Women, and Black Lives Matter. The community organization and protests led by BADC led to the formation of the Special Investigations Unit in Ontario in 1990. This independent civilian agency investigates incidents where civilian interaction with police leads to serious injury or death. This and other achievements demonstrate that these organizations have been successful in highlighting patterns of discrimination against African-Canadians, agitating for improvements in the provision of social services, and demanding the elimination of racist practices by the police and other members of the justice system.

### **Black Experiences in Politics**

Although the contributions of Black citizens to nation building in Canada are ignored in the school curriculum as well as in the society generally, they have played important roles in the building of Canadian society from its earliest beginnings including contributing to the confederation endeavour and serving as public servants in various capacities (BC Black History Awareness Society, n.d). These Black politicians were able to carve out a space for themselves despite the many challenges and obstacles they experienced due to the color of their skin. However, Black politicians generally have not had the power necessary to tackle anti-Black racism in the various social institutions, particularly in schools (in terms of addressing the low number of Black teachers and including Black history in the curriculum). However, this is changing as demonstrated in the fact that there is now a Black Caucus in the Liberal Party in Canada. They were influential in having the government allocate a \$200 endowment fund for Black Canadians. Further, they played a crucial role in the Liberal government's decision to allocate \$15 million of the 2018

federal budget to addressing anti-Black racism (Bukola Salami, personal communication, May 24, 2021).

### **Black Experiences in the Justice System**

Maynard (2017) makes the connection between the negative experiences of Black youth in the education system and how they predispose them to becoming incarcerated. She discusses the school-to-prison pipeline where studies show a connection between stringent forms of discipline such as expulsions and suspensions and incarceration rates. Students who are subjected to expulsions and suspensions tend to end up in correctional facilities later. Schools and the justice system are characterized by the intense surveillance or over-policing of Black bodies. Maynard (2017) posits that the racist ideology which justified slavery engendered an anti-Black racism that continued after formal emancipation of enslaved Africans. Blackness became associated with “criminality, danger, and deviance” (Maynard, 2017, p. 9). Further, she states that the justice system is used to reassert the control of Black bodies, a control that was threatened by the end of overt, formal enslavement in the mid-19th century. Maynard (2017) argues that “While slavery was officially abolished almost two centuries ago, Canada’s legacy of exerting control over black bodies was reconsolidated, perhaps most strongly, in the criminal justice system” (p. 83).

Black people are excluded from what White Canadians as a group of people imagined themselves to be as a nation. They are not seen as Canadian citizens and so do not possess the rights and privileges reserved for citizens (Maynard, 2017). The stereotypes of Black Canadians as criminal, deviant and decidedly un-Canadian justified the use of state institutions, including the different agents of the justice system such as the police, and court officials to impose sanctions on them disproportionately (Henry & Tator, 2010; Maynard, 2017). These sanctions which include being subjected to carding, imprisonment, surveillance, and searches more than other members of

society have severely reduced their quality of life (Maynard, 2017; Owusu-Bempah & Wortley, 2014). What is more the tremendous increase in Black inmates and the disproportionate representation of this demographic in the prison system is accepted as normal in society. Except for activist groups such as Black Lives Matter and the Black Action Defence Committee (BADC), Canadian society has ignored the role that systemic racism has played in incarcerating Black people (Maynard, 2017). According to Owusu-Bempah and Wortley (2014) in 2011 Black persons constituted nearly one tenth of the population in federal prisons. In fact, Owusu-Bempah and Wortley (2014) assert that the Canadian government's unwillingness to deal with unfair racial practices in the criminal justice system is democratic racism, in that the government espoused egalitarian values such as liberalism, justice, and fairness that conflict but coexist with racist beliefs and practices. Additionally, they propose that the refusal of the Canadian government to collect race-based criminal justice data is a protective mechanism for government agencies as it makes it difficult to use official statistics to show the racial disparities in the system.

In the next subsection, I explore Black students' experiences in the Canadian K-12 education system. I have delimited the exposition to the K-12 division because the supplementary education programs I will be investigating cater primarily to students at this level of the education system. This overview outlines the challenges Black students face in the Canadian school system and leads to the question of how these challenges may have influenced Black communities to organize community-based responses. That is how are student's experiences with the education system related to the objectives that organizations such as CCACH were designed to achieve?

### **Black Experiences in The Education System**

Except for First Nations students, statistics about student performance by ethnicity in the Alberta K-12 system is not available to the public. The need for the EPSB to collect routine

demographic data is great. Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning recommended as far back as 1994 for that province to collect disaggregated demographic data on students. Such data allows for the measurement, and examination of educational variations among diverse student populations and facilitate the development of remediation programs where necessary (Quan, 2017). Conversely failing to collect disaggregated demographic statistics hinders the progress of marginalized groups (Morgan, 2016) and allows for problems and negative trends to continue unattended.

Edmonton has a diverse population which will only become more diverse in the future and as such the EPSB needs to be aware of how students are doing and the factors that are impacting students' academic performance and educational experiences. Due to the lack of information about student demographic statistics from the EPSB, I use statistics from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to highlight the treatment and experiences of schooling among Black students. According to statistics from the TDSB, Black students' academic performance is much lower than that of other students, and a significant proportion of them do not complete secondary school (Brown & Tam, 2017a; Dei & Kempf, 2013). The graduation rate for African-Canadians in the TDSB was 64.5% in 2011 and 77% in 2016 as compared to 91.1% and 95.9 % respectively for the East Asians, the ethnic group with the highest graduation rate during the same periods (Brown & Tam, 2017a). Further, Black students are less likely than most other racial groups to attend university. Only 30.4% of Black students in the 2011-2016 cohort in the TDSB had a confirmed university acceptance in an Ontario university and 27% had confirmed acceptance in an Ontario college, compared with 75.9 % university acceptance and 12.3% college acceptance for East Asian students who had the highest rate of postsecondary attendance (Brown & Tam, 2017b).

What accounts for the disparity in performance between Black students and other students? Some would argue that racism plays a definitive role. Education was envisioned as a

means of social control and cohesion in that students would learn the values and attitudes considered correct by the prevailing social elites (Wilson, 1970). Racism has been a key value of Canadian society and indeed the founders of the current economic order which was based on racial capitalism. Thus, it is not surprising that it should figure so prominently in the social institutions including schools. As the eminent Canadian education professor Carl James posits “...race and concomitantly racism inform educational policies and practices...” (James, 2012, p. 485). Canadians are often unwilling to accept the racism evident in the country’s social institutions and social life and some historians prefer to gloss over said racism. For example, in the text *Canadian Education: A History*, Wilson, Stamp, and Audet (1970) attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the development of Canada’s education system. An examination of the index of this 508-page text shows that Negro separate schools was mentioned in only one of 21 chapters. Also, it is interesting that in a 26-page chapter written by Wilson only two short paragraphs address Negro separate schools. Negro common schools are treated as quotidian and are presented as just another type of separate school, the other two being religious or language schools. By conflating Black schools with religious and language schools he ignores the impact and essential role of anti-Black systemic and institutional racism in denying Black students an education. Thus, he points out that such schools were established at the request of Black parents because their children were ejected or rejected from schools. He fails to explain the source for their rejection and that Black parents did not want separate schools but were forced to ask for schools for their children because of racial discrimination by Whites. Additionally, he fails to highlight that many calls for separate schools for Black students came from White parents who sought segregation from that population.

Noted historian James W. St. G Walker asserts that “the most important manifestation of colour prejudice in Canadian history is in education” (Walker, 1980 p.107). This prejudice was

codified in education laws that legalized segregated schooling. In Alberta, Black residents in Amber Valley opened their own school, The Toles School in 1913, and in Campsie Black students faced discrimination from White teachers and White community members tried on several occasions to prevent Black children from attending the neighborhood school (Palmer & Palmer, 1985; Shepard, 1997). Black parents fought the separate school system throughout Canada and advocated for their children to receive equitable education. Their protest actions are documented by Knight (2012) and Cooper (2016) and involved writing letters to educational officials as well as political representatives and taking school boards to court. However, so strong and unrelenting was the racism that the last segregated school in Ontario closed its doors in 1965 (Winks, 1997) and in Nova Scotia just a little over 30 years ago (Henry, 2019; Hamilton, 2007). Knight (2012) makes an important link between the struggles of Black parents in the 19th century to prevent the exclusion of their children from the common schools and the current struggle for educational equity being waged by parents today. She states “...even today black parents struggle against the subtler racism in academic curricula and the assessment of student ability” (p. 236).

In the past Canada expected and encouraged immigrants to assimilate into the dominant Anglo-European culture. However, the rhetoric has shifted to one that promotes cultural pluralism where different cultural groups are encouraged to cooperate and integrate with each other while maintaining their cultural distinctiveness if they so desire. Culture and ethnicity are the new code words for race (Fleras, 2014). There is a difference between the rhetoric and the actual implementation of multiculturalism (Davis, 2017). Despite the official promotion of multiculturalism, the reality is that many Black students do not feel welcome in schools. Black students are disciplined more harshly than other students (Annamma et.al., 2019; Bryan 2017; Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; McPherson 2020; Wun 2016) as evidenced by the excessively

disproportionate levels of expulsion and suspension (Maynard, 2017; Zheng & De Jesus, 2017). Additionally, students report being labelled negatively by teachers and other students, being discriminated by teachers, as well as experiencing low teacher expectations, alienation from the Eurocentric curriculum, and the lack of Black teachers as some of their worst challenges (African-Canadian Working Group, 1992; Annamma et. al., 2019; Codjoe, 2001; Dei et. al., 1997; James & Brathwaite, 1996; Kelly, 1998; McPherson, 2020). These experiences are explored in more depth below.

### ***High Expulsion and Suspension Rates***

High suspension rates continue to be a problem for Black students in the present time (Dei et al., 1997; James et al., 2017; Maynard, 2017). Although they comprise only 11% of the student population in the TDSB (TDSB, 2017a) they account for 48% of all expulsions (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017) as compared to students racialized as White who comprise 29% of the student population (TDSB, 2017a) but account for 10% of all expulsions (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017). The Black expulsion statistics are even more significant considering that only 24% of expelled students graduate with a high school diploma and the majority (58%) do not complete high school (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017). This trend is supported by research done by Balfanz et al. (2015) demonstrating that suspensions “are significantly and negatively correlated with high school graduation, as well as postsecondary enrollment and persistence” (as cited in Zheng & De Jesus, 2017). Thus, this trend of excessive Black suspensions is preparing students for failure in school and significantly decreases their employment prospects and other life chances. Further, suspensions and expulsions may have negative psychological effects on the students.

### ***Labelling and Stereotyping of Students***

Taylor (1991) asserted that “to the extent that teachers harbour negative racial stereotypes the Black students’ race alone is probably sufficient to place him/her at risk for negative school outcomes” (as cited in Codjoe, 2001, p. 344). Although they comprise only 11% of the student population, Black students in Toronto account for 30% of students in self contained special education classes (ISPs), 21% of students in programs where they spend half of the school day receiving special support (Home School Program), and 22.2% of students requiring special needs support within their regular classroom (TDSB, 2017b). Conversely Black students accounted for less than 3% of the students considered gifted (TDSB, 2017b). Research shows that stereotyping and labelling of students may explain the overrepresentation of Black students in special education classes. The African-Canadian Community Working Group was formed following the Yonge Street riots which occurred in Toronto on May 04, 1992 as protest against the beating of Rodney King in the United States and the killing of Raymond Lawrence in Toronto (both Black men). The mandate of the group was to develop an integrated strategic proposal to address the problems affecting Black communities in Metropolitan Toronto. The group consisted of two senior government officials from the federal, provincial, metropolitan, and municipal government as well as seven members of Black communities comprising a mixture of university students, professors, and community workers with expertise in education, justice, social services, youth, and policing. The group used a variety of sources to collect data over a period of approximately five months. The methods included hosting information sessions at which first-hand information was solicited from members of Black communities via individual and group presentations, three focus group sessions were also held. They also utilized secondary data in the form of previous reports, papers and recommendations and commissioned several position papers on topics related to the study.

One of the findings of the investigation was that educators held stereotypical views of Black children including the belief that they possessed lower intellectual abilities than other children.

Stereotyping and labelling were also highlighted by participants in other studies. Most notable is Dei et al. (1997) research on Black students who did not complete secondary school in Toronto. Dei et al. (1997) conducted a three-year study in four high schools in Toronto. The purpose of the study was to describe the schooling experience of Black students to discover how their experiences caused them to leave school prematurely or be pushed out. The study provides a counter narrative to the dominant story that Black students drop out of school due to personal and family pathologies, arguing instead that they are pushed out of school because of anti-Black, racist school environments.

Dei along with fellow researchers used in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, brief written surveys, and ethnographic observations to collect data from key stakeholders. These stakeholders included 55 Black parents, caregivers, and community workers who were solicited for their views on public schooling in Ontario and solutions to the dropout problem. Additionally, 41 professionals including teachers, principals, vice principals, heads of departments, guidance counsellors, school psychologists and coaches were interviewed to understand their opinions about education of youth, Black student disengagement and dropout rates. Most importantly 150 Black students (a mixture of “pushed-outs”, “at risk” and normal students) and 59 non-Black students were interviewed to understand the schooling experiences of Black pupils. The narratives from the non-Black students were used to cross check the stories of the Black students. The experiences shared by the students caused Dei et al to conclude that these students had been pushed out of school and had not dropped out as is the term more popularly used. In recognition of the important role that educators and other school staff play in creating an unwelcoming environment for Black

students in schools that eventually forces them to leave prematurely, I use the word pushouts instead of dropouts in referring to students who do not complete elementary or secondary school.

Students shared that stereotype of Black people promoted through the media and other channels caused teachers to prejudge them before getting to know them as a person (Dei et al., 1997). Boys were seen as troublemakers or bad (James, 2019) and Black students from both sexes were more likely to be watched and singled out by authorities than their non-Black peers (Andrews et al., 2019; Annamma et.al., 2019; Bryan 2017; McPherson, 2020; Wun, 2016). These students are hypervisible in the school system, in that any misdemeanor or deviation from rules or norms are quickly identified, highlighted, and given stringent punishments by teachers and school administrators (Shizha et al., 2020). Additionally, some students also felt that teachers viewed and treated them as less intelligent than other students and there was the expectation that they would perform poorly and that was normal (James et al., 2017, James, 2012). These experiences are corroborated by other research such as that conducted by Sylvia Hamilton for her documentary film *The Little Black Schoolhouse*. Interviewees shared that they were discouraged by guidance counsellors and teachers from doing clerical or professional jobs and channeled into vocational areas, the belief being they did not possess the required intelligence to qualify for professional occupations (see also Codjoe, 2001). These practices by teachers and guidance counsellors reproduced Black Canadians place within the division of labour under racial capitalism.

### ***Discriminatory Treatment from Educators and Non-Black Peers***

As noted above Black students were deemed as less intelligent by teachers (Codjoe, 2001; James, 2019; Shizha et al., 2020). This problem of Black students being seen as intellectually deficient and placed in non-academic streams has been highlighted by several studies over many decades, one of the earliest and most prominent was the Final Report of the Consultative

Committee on the Education of Black Students in Toronto Schools published in 1988. The committee was convened by the Toronto Board of Education following complaints from the Heritage Languages and Concurrent Programs Consultative Committee (HELACON) and the Organization of Parents of Black Children in Toronto. They complained that their children were being discriminated against in the school system in various ways. To get a comprehensive understanding of the parents' concerns, the committee listened to a variety of informants over a 10-month period. The informants included members of the Organization of Parents of Black Children. Additionally, they arranged consultations with students, teachers and other staff, principals, vice principals, graduates and "pushed-outs." One hundred and forty Black students from five Toronto secondary schools and grades seven and eight classes of five elementary schools participated in focus group discussions. Fifteen graduates and 17 students who had been "pushed out" of school were also interviewed. Furthermore, the committee met with other resource persons such as education and guidance counselling coordinators, senior education officials and consulted previous reports from the Ministry of Education and the Toronto Board of Education.

Among other things, they found that Black students were more likely to be placed in Basic level or non-academic streams in schools (Toronto Board of Education, 1988). Some students also shared that guidance counsellors spent less time with them than other children and discouraged them from aspiring to pursue tertiary studies. Informants shared that this practice of streaming children into non-academic streams contributed to the high non-completion rates amongst Black students since they had high expectations which did not align with the low teacher assessment of their capabilities (Toronto Board of Education, 1988). Furthermore, Black boys were more likely to be suspended or expelled than males from other ethnic groups even if the offence was the same.

Some students were also humiliated in front of the class, told that they were dumb or treated in a way that suggested they were less intelligent by teachers.

The students in Codjoe's (2001) study conducted in Edmonton, Alberta shared that they were subjected to discrimination from the other students in their schools as well as teachers. Codjoe's study examined the experiences of successful Black students in Edmonton in order to understand the factors that impacted on their educational achievement. He interviewed 12 Black students who were enrolled in university or college and had successfully completed high school in Alberta. Even though his sample were successful students, their narratives led Codjoe (2001) to conclude that racism in Canadian society and especially schools contributed to Black underachievement. Students said that they were subject to verbal and sometimes physical abuse from fellow students. This type of overt expression of abuse combined with more covert negative attitudes and behaviour from teachers helped to create an unwelcoming school climate.

### ***Lack of Black Teachers and Role Models at School***

It is difficult to gauge the demographic make up of the teacher population in provinces such as Alberta because many do not collect disaggregated demographic statistics about its student and teacher population. Most of the participants in the present study shared that they or their children had never had a Black teacher in the K-12 schooling experience. However, Ontario collects such statistics and the issue of the under-representation of minority teachers in Ontario schools is well documented (African-Canadian Community Working Group, 1992; Dei et al., 1997, Dei, 1995; Dei & Kempf, 2013; James & Brathwaite, 1996; Lewis, 1992; Toronto Board of Education, 1988; Turner Consulting Group, 2015). Although the population of Toronto is diverse its teacher and school staff do not reflect that diversity. This has led to what is known as "the diversity gap". The diversity gap is calculated by dividing the percentage of teachers of colour by

the percentage of the overall population that is racialized. The value of 1.0 means that the diversity gap is small and teaching staff generally reflects the diversity of the population, the smaller the number is the larger the gap (Turner Consulting Group, 2015). The diversity gap for Ontario and Toronto is .50 and .53 respectively. This means that the racial composition of the teaching staff is not reflective of the student population (Turner Consulting Group, 2015). The experiences of aspiring and practicing Black teachers is negative. The Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators stated that the hiring process for teachers is discriminatory and Black teachers have a harder time than White teachers procuring employment. For those who are successful in finding a job they face racism from students and colleagues and are often denied promotion even when they met the necessary qualifications (Turner Consulting Group, 2015).

The Ontario Provincial Government's Employment Equity Act of 1993 sought to address this by requiring The Ontario Public service to close gaps that existed in the employment of racialized groups and women. Public entities would be required to collect data to demonstrate their progress with diversifying their staff. The act was repealed by in 1995 and so the goals for greater equity in employment in the public service received a setback. Students have indicated that attending schools with very few or no Black teachers means they have no one to look up to, be inspired by, and who they feel understand them. Some share that they often felt misunderstood or unfairly judged by White staff. All 12 students in Codjoe's (2001) study, except for one, had gone through their entire years of schooling in the Alberta K-12 system without having a Black teacher. They felt that the relevant authorities should take measures to hire qualified Black teachers and counsellors so that students can have persons in positions of authority that they identify with and can be inspired by. Codjoe (2001) stated that the lack of Black staff in schools help to create an alienating environment where Black students felt as though they did not "fit in." It is also probable

that students may feel that doing well in school will have little impact on their employment chances when they fail to see educated Black persons in professional jobs.

### ***Exclusionary curriculum***

As Harris (1992) rightly asserts “...education is not a neutral process” (p. 302). Therefore, educational policies and curricula reflect the values and biases of the group(s) empowered to create and implement them. Further, the negation of Black history and persons from the mainstream Canadian curriculum is a symptom of the disease of institutional and systemic racism that ails Canada.

Several studies have pointed to the ethnocentric nature of the school curricula used in Canadian schools (African Canadian Community Working Group, 1992; Codjoe, 2001; Dei et al., 1997; James & Brathwaite, 1996; Lewis, 1992; Toronto Board of Education, 1998). Students, parents, teachers, and concerned academics argue that the exclusion of Black history, culture, and experiences from the school curriculum sends the message to students of all ethnicities that Black people have not contributed anything to Canadian society. Sylvia Hamilton’s (2007) film *The Little Black Schoolhouse* examines the schooling experiences of Nova Scotian Black students mostly in segregated schools but also in integrated schools. The film provides much insight into the emotional trauma that students faced in integrated schools. Interviewees shared their concern that the textbooks they used were not representative of the student population. Almost all the characters were White and the few books that featured Black people, for example Little Black Sambo, projected them as stupid and primitive. One interviewee shared that the book made her embarrassed to be Black. She was not alone.

Another documentary film *We Are The Roots* produced by The University of Calgary’s history and social work professors Bailey and Este (2018), documents the experiences of the Black

immigrants who came to Edmonton in the early 1900s as well as that of their descendants. One of the interviewees shared that Little Black Sambo was also used in his school and he was subjected to much teasing from the other children as a result. This offensive book was only removed from the Toronto public schools after much public pressure from Black parents. It is incredulous that educators would think it acceptable to use a book that projects Black people as unintelligent, backward, gluttons and even resist the ban. It demonstrates a lack of concern for the emotional wellbeing and dignity of Black students.

Although schools may no longer be using this offensive book, Black people are vilified in other ways. For instance, when Africa is only mentioned for negative things such as female genital mutilation, AIDS, coups, war, and famine, it reinforces the negative stereotypes contained in materials like Little Black Sambo. It is unfortunate that in 2021 Black history and culture remain erased from the school curriculum and school is still an alienating place for many Black students. The curriculum has continued to be constructed and shared in a way that negates Black history and culture and has not supported Black youth's need for schooling to assist them in exploring and forming their sense of identities. The film *Speak It!* was created by Sylvia Hamilton and shows a group of Black students in a mainly White secondary school in Halifax Nova Scotia, the challenges they faced in their schooling experiences, as well as the ways in which they were creating spaces of opposition through the cultural awareness club they formed. One of the students shares the pain of exclusion stating:

There has been a Black community in Nova Scotia for over 300 years, but you wouldn't know it by the history books, you won't find our faces on the postcards, you won't find our statues in the parks. The only time White people seem to notice us is when they want to

call us nigger or say we've got an attitude. Well, my name is Shingai, I am 16, and my attitude is you don't have to be from Scotland to have a history. (Hamilton, 1992).

Other African Canadian students reiterate these feelings. For example, Kong (1996) described her feeling of alienation from her schooling experience sharing that it made her feel “invisible, inferior, non-existent, non-Canadian, in short, powerless” (p. 68). Unfortunately, in 2021 the situation is not better. In fact, in reflecting on her schooling experiences Habiba Cooper Diallo who graduated from high school in 2014 opined that “high school hinders the Black body” and “high school nullifies the Black body” (Diallo, 2016, p. 92).

The exclusionary curriculum causes students to become disengaged from what they are being taught. Moreover, Black parents and parents from other marginalized groups also face challenges with the education system. School officials have stereotypes about certain ethnic groups, and this precludes them from providing a welcoming environment for parents from those ethnic groups (Crozier, 1996; 2001; Delpit, 2006). Black parents are viewed as apathetic towards their children's education and those who try to communicate with school staff are often viewed as aggressive.

Members of Black communities have not accepted the inadequacies of the school system. Parents, academics, teachers, students, and community activists have devised ways to combat and compensate for the substandard educational experiences of African-Canadian students. These include agitating for the establishment of Afrocentric schools, providing out of school tutoring for Black students through supplementary education programs, conducting and disseminating research about the educational experiences of Black children in the Canadian school system (for example the Black Learners Advisory Committee Report), and forming organizations aimed at advocating

for the rights of Black student, parents and teachers such as the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators, and the Black Teachers Association in Edmonton.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I examined Black lives in Canada from the earliest evidence of a Black presence to the contemporary time. I have explained the many challenges that Black Canadians have faced since they first arrived in Canada and the negative effects of anti-Black racism on them in various areas of life. More importantly, I have highlighted the various ways in which African-Canadians have creatively and determinedly resisted oppression and organized themselves to create a better life for themselves and others. To this end they have created their own trade unions, religious organizations, advocacy groups, newspapers, and have sought political office. Theirs is a story of agency, courage, resilience, and hope. In this dissertation, I explore CCACH's objectives and perceived contributions against the backdrop of pervasive anti-Black racism in Canadian society and specifically the school system and within the context of the resilience and agency that have characterized Black communities over the years. In the next chapter, I focus on supplementary education programs in Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom.

### **Chapter Three: Black Supplementary Education Programs in Canada, The United States of America, and the United Kingdom**

In this chapter I explore Black supplementary programs in Canada, The United States of America, and the United Kingdom. As Kifano (1996) notes there is a dearth of research about Black supplementary schools in the United States since most scholars choose to investigate full time Black Afrocentric schools or after-school tutoring programs that are offered by conventional schools to assist students who are struggling academically (for example, Dragnea & Erling, 2008; Fashola, 2003; Goldenberg, 2016; Hanlon et al., 2009). Similarly, there is a paucity of Canadian studies available on the topic.

Conversely, there is a plethora of studies conducted in Britain from which to gain insight about Black supplementary education programs. Thus, most of the studies cited in this chapter were conducted in Britain. Although Britain, The United States of America, and Canada are different societies, Black people face similar challenges as a minoritized, historically oppressed group of people in all three countries, including the challenges faced by Black pupils in the mainstream schools. As such the findings of the studies conducted in Britain may be transferable to the North American context and can provide some insights into the possible rationale, goals, operations, successes, and challenges of Black supplementary programs in North America. One of the aims of this doctoral research is to examine these experiences in Canada to fill this gap in our understanding of these programs and understand their specificities in contexts like Edmonton.

I begin with a discussion of the different nomenclatures associated with supplementary education programs. Naming is important because the names that the organizers choose for their programs gives us some insight into why they operate the programs in a particular way and the kinds of activities they engage in with students. Subsequently, I discuss the various ways in which

the programs help Black youth as they proceed through the K-12 education system, and how they affect Black communities generally. Following this, I recount some of the problems facing Black supplementary programs.

### **Conceptualization and Definition**

Supplementary programs are usually offered by grassroots organizations developed by community volunteers to provide educational support and enrichment for youth, usually from Black and other minoritized ethnic groups (Evans & Gillan-Thomas, 2015; Issa & Williams, 2009; Nwulu, 2015, NRCSE, n.d). Activities are conducted outside of standard school hours, either before school, after school, or on the weekends and provide students with tutoring in the core curriculum subjects as well as cultural and language training (Evans & Gillan-Thomas, 2015; Issa & Williams, 2009; Nwulu, 2015; NRCSE, n.d). In Canada it is difficult to acquire statistics on the number of supplementary programs available and the number of students they assist. In contrast, this information is readily available in the United Kingdom because they have central organizational structures that are non-existent in The United States and Canada. One central organizing structure in Britain is The National Resource Center for Supplementary Education (NRCSE). The NRCSE is a charity established to assist the various supplementary education programs. According to Evans and Gillan-Thomas (2015)

The NRCSE provides strategic and practical support for community-led supplementary schools across England, helping to raise their profile, develop partnerships and improve standards of teaching, learning and management. The NRCSE currently has 460 members and hosts a national directory of over 2,500 supplementary schools. It provides advice, guidance and accredited training and facilitates the only nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for all forms of supplementary education (p.10).

Additionally, there are other organizations such as the National Association of Black Supplementary Schools and local networks such as the Birmingham Supplementary Schools Consortium, Association of Northamptonshire Supplementary Schools, and The Partnership for Supplementary Schools in Kensington and Chelsea (Evans and Gillan-Thomas, 2015). Based on statistical data available from these organizations, Evans and Gillan-Thomas (2015) estimate that there are approximately 3000 to 5000 supplementary programs in England.

Although there does not seem to be data to show the number of supplementary education programs (Black or otherwise) across Canada, a report was prepared by D'Oyley, Kakembo, McFarlane, Perry, Andruske and George, (n.d) on strategies to assist African-Canadian and other minoritized youth in Eastern Canada. The report highlighted several supplementary education projects offering tutoring and cultural programming in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec. Some of these programmes were administered by the African Services Division (ACSD) in the Nova Scotia Department of Education, The Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC), the Canadian Association of Black Educators (CABE), The Jamaican-Canadian Association, and The African Heritage Educators' Network (AHEN).

It is important to note that the Black supplementary programs are heterogeneous, and vary in terms of size, main objectives, types of programs offered, and target population (Issa & Williams, 2009). Issa and Williams (2009) categorized supplementary programs in England into two groups: language schools, and African Caribbean schools. The language schools' main objective is to teach the language and culture of a specific country of origin. These included Turkish, Greek, and Bangladeshi schools among others. African-Caribbean schools focused on assisting students to master the core subjects and skill sets in the British National Curriculum, in addition, in some cases, to religious education. Issa and Williams' (2009) African Caribbean

schools are the same as Black supplementary programs. In addition to providing help with the core national curriculum subjects, Black supplementary schools also offer cultural programming. Supplementary programs have existed in England since the 19th Century and Black supplementary programs proliferated in the 1960s with the influx of immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa (Issa & Williams, 2009). Some of the studies I consulted use the terms schools with reference to the supplementary education programs, for the purposes of this literature review only, the terms school and programs are used interchangeably with the understanding that school does not mean an alternative to the mainstream educational institutions but refers to additional instruction provided for students outside of the regular school system (supplementary education programs).

Issa and Williams (2009) differentiate among, supplementary, complementary, and community programs. However, they fail to explicitly explain what distinguishes the three types of programs from each other. In this regard, Andrews' (2013) work is instructive implying that the difference between supplementary and complementary programs is their objectives. In contrast to the complementary programs, the main objective of supplementary programs is not to teach language and culture but rather to provide support for the core curriculum subjects to improve the academic performance of Black children. There is a need for such a rigid classification between supplementary and complementary schools, a program can teach Black history and culture through the core curriculum subjects. For example, in assisting students with comprehension or essay writing English Language teachers can use texts on Black history as passages to analyze or they can ask students to write essays around various aspects of Black history. This was exemplified in one of the four Black supplementary programs included in Mirza's and Reay's (2000) study conducted in London and Kifano's (1996) study conducted in Los Angeles. Further, there are other scholars such as Chevannes & Reeves (1987) who eschew the use of the terms complementary and

supplementary in favour of the term “part-time voluntary schools” (p. 147). Their argument seems to be that the institutional racism in the school system has such a negative impact on Black children that one needs to query if there is anything to supplement or complement, and what the after-school programs would be complementing or supplementing.

A more important distinction is Andrews’ (2013) self-help vs official assistance schools. This speaks to whether the schools are funded by community members or by the government. Government funding leaves them vulnerable to the policies of the government of the day which may feel that focusing on the history and culture of a specific race of people is a threat to a united national identity. This could force schools to the analysis in this dissertation, I use the term supplementary education programs to denote supplementary, complementary, and voluntary programs. I chose not to use *complementary* because I see the after-school programs as offering more than a supportive role to mainstream schooling or adding to what the mainstream schools are offering. Instead, I use “supplementary” because it implies completing something, or providing something that is absent from mainstream schools, which is what the programs do. This idea of correcting a deficit is corroborated by Kifano’s (1996) qualitative case study of a Black supplementary program in Los Angeles. Data collection methods included video and audio tapes of the school’s Saturday lessons, examining documents such as lesson plans, brochures, curricular materials and literature, interviews with staff, and surveys of parents and students. The parents in the study expressed the view that the school provided a vital missing piece to their children’s education” (Kifano, 1996, p. 211). The missing piece was Black history and culture. Black supplementary programs provide students with information, skills, and emotional support that are lacking in the mainstream school system (Andrews, 2013; Dove, 1993). By doing so they give the

children a complete education by reinforcing and adding to what they are taught in mainstream schools.

### **Rationale for Supplementary Programs**

Black supplementary programs are organized to compensate for institutional racism in mainstream schools which many studies show is correlated to differential educational achievement on the part of Black students (Andrews, 2013). They aim to provide support with core subjects in the national curricula as well as teach students Black history and culture so that they can take pride in their heritage. Many programs use a Black focused curriculum that is holistic and attends to students' emotional and identity needs as well as their cognitive development (Nwulu, 2015). Thus, one could say based on the literature consulted for this dissertation that one of their main goals is to help Black children and their parents to navigate the mainstream education system successfully (Andrews, 2013). The programs aim to provide a space where Black students can feel comfortable and proud of their identity.

Clennon (2014) notes that in England there has been a shift away from cultural programming to improving proficiency in the national curriculum's core subjects and students' performance in examinations. This tension about whether to allocate the most time and resources to cultural programming or the national curriculum has existed for decades in Britain and North America and is also mentioned in Chevannes' and Reeves' theoretical paper on Black supplementary schooling in the United States published in 1987. The need to choose between the two foci is likely influenced by limited time and resources, and in Britain, to increasing regulation which require Black supplementary programs to meet certain targets to gain and retain government and philanthropic funding and certification.

## **Students Served by Supplementary Education Programs**

Although the programs discussed in this paper serve Black students, in its broadest conceptualization supplementary programs also cater to students minoritized due to religion, language, or country of origin (Andrews, 2013). In the United Kingdom the programs focused on attracting African-Caribbean students, Black Africans, Asians, Turkish, Muslim, and EAL students between the ages of four or five to 16 (Andrews, 2013, Maylor et. al, 2013). Maylor et al.'s (2013) study examined the impact of supplementary programs on students' educational improvement in England. The study used both the survey method and qualitative case study. The survey consisted of 301 schools and they used postal surveys, as well as telephone assisted interviews. Following this they conducted case studies with 12 of the schools to gather more in-depth contextual information. They found that

60% of supplementary schools served pupils from one ethnic community, 50% served children from India, Bangladesh, or Pakistan, 38% served children from Black African communities, 22% from Black Caribbean communities, and 22 % from communities across Europe, 18% served pupils from the Middle East and 14 % served South Asians (Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese) (p.10).

Based on this information, Black students (African & Caribbean) comprise a significant percentage of the population of students who access supplementary education programs.

## **How Supplementary Programs are Organized**

Black supplementary programs are predominantly organized and run by volunteers from the Black communities. Funding usually comes in the form of donations from community organizations, philanthropists, parents, religious institutions, and minimal subscription fees for individual students paid by parents (Andrews, 2013; Issa & Williams, 2009). Additionally, some

programs in England receive some financial support from local education authorities. The programs usually operate out of public buildings such as community centres, religious sites, libraries, youth clubs, and school buildings which they rent or lease for a few hours per week as needed (Issa & Williams, 2009). Because the programs are not putting themselves forward as an alternative or competitor to mainstream schools, they usually operate outside of regular school hours. These include offering programming in the evenings, on weekends or during the school holidays. In Evans' and Gillan-Thomas' (2015) study 85% of programs operated during the school term with most schools operating on Saturdays (64%).

Traditionally most of the staff in Black supplementary programs are women (Gerrard, 2013; Issa & Williams, 2009; Mirza & Reay, 2000). In recent years although most of the staff continue to be women there has been an increase in the number of men in leadership positions (Issa & Williams, 2009). Teachers are usually volunteers from similar ethnic backgrounds as the students. Some volunteers have formal teacher training, but it is generally not a requirement for the role. In Issa's and Williams' (2009) mixed methods study conducted with 70 supplementary programs including eight Black supplementary programs, most of the teachers in the Black supplementary programs possessed UK qualified teacher status in addition to teaching credentials acquired in their country of origin (See also Maylor et al., 2013).

### **Contributions to Students' Educational Development**

The challenges Black students face in mainstream schools in Canada, Britain, and the United States are well documented. Students identify discrimination from teachers and other students, feeling alienated from the Eurocentric curriculum, low teacher expectations, and the lack of Black teachers as some of their greatest problems at school (African-Canadian Working Group, 1992; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Codjoe, 2001; Dei et al., 1997; James et al., 2017; Kelly, 2004).

Supplementary programs were formed because parents and other Black communities members were dissatisfied with the experiences and performance of their children in mainstream schools (Andrews, 2016; 2013; Issa & Williams, 2009; Kifano, 1996; Mirza & Reay, 2000). As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, organizers aimed to provide a space where Black children and families could receive assistance with core curriculum subjects as well as learn about and appreciate their cultural heritage. Thus, supplementary programs assist students to develop as cognitive, spiritual, cultural and social beings. I discuss the various ways in which these schools contribute to the educational development of their students next.

### ***Nurturing a Strong Sense of Identity***

Many programs use a curriculum that centers the experiences, history, and culture of people of African descent. Some programs teach African and Caribbean history, geography, creative arts, and organized cultural activities and field trips to cultural sites for students. This focus is meant to counter the strong anti-Black racism worldwide and particularly in the Americas and has been used in various attempts, including programs that are not supplementary education ones, to address anti-Black racism in education for example in the Baobab teacher training project in Brazil (Da Costa, 2010).

Based on their research Mirza and Reay (2000) describe Black supplementary programs as “sacred black spaces” (p. 533), meaning spaces where Black children could feel proud of their culture and feel free to be themselves. They conducted research with four Black supplementary programs in several London boroughs and one provincial city. They employed participant observation in two of the schools and conducted in-depth interviews with seven Black educators running the schools and eight mothers whose children were students in them. The study showed that the schools represented spaces where students learnt about their history, their home culture

was venerated, and thus they could be proud to be Black (see also Andrews, 2013; Gerrard, 2013; Issa and Williams, 2009). They could also relax and act naturally because those around them also shared a similar culture and they were not under constant surveillance from their teachers. It is evident from the literature that Black supplementary programs promote a conception and construction of Blackness that counter the mainstream discourse of Black intellectual and cultural inferiority (Andrews, 2013; Issa & Williams, 2009 Kifano, 1996, Nelson-Brown, 2005). Instead, the positive aspects of Blackness and Black achievement are highlighted and celebrated.

The teachers center Black culture in their teaching, incorporating students lived cultural experiences in the curriculum. For example, in teaching mathematics one teacher substituted how much yams cost as opposed to another food that was less prominent in the students' diet (Mirza and Reay, 2000). Another example of how the schools nurture positive Black identity is Nelson-Brown's (2005) research. He conducted a case study of a Black supplementary program called the Mount Zion Ethnic School in Seattle, Washington using ethnographic interviews, participant observation and examination of institutional documents. The school went through various changes since its inception in the late 1970s, even closing briefly before being reinstated under new leadership. When it reopened, its services included a two night a week after school tutoring program where students received assistance with homework and test preparation for state examinations, and a summer program. As part of its efforts to inculcate a positive sense of identity in students the school made African American history a key part of the curriculum. Teachers organized field trips to places relevant to African American culture, including The National Civil Rights Museum, the Ebenezer Baptist Church, and Martin Luther King Jr's home.

Similarly, the Black Lives Matter Toronto chapter organizes a Freedom School for Black children ages 4-10. The Freedom School is a three-week summer program intended to teach

participants about their history and culture in a positive self-affirming environment. The names of some of the different themes suggests a focus on resilience and racial pride and emphasises Black leaders and significant events in Black history, for example Nanny of the Maroons, The Haitian Revolution, The Soweto Uprisings and so forth (Freedom School Toronto, n.d).

Another means by which Black supplementary education teachers facilitate cultural pride in students is by using the different dialects spoken at home, such as Jamaican Patois, in informal conversations with students and parents (Issa & Williams, 2009). The overall effect of these pedagogical strategies is that the student does not feel peripheral and distanced from the process of learning and the curriculum as they do in classes in mainstream schools.

### ***Providing Emotional Support and a Sense of Belonging***

The programs provide students with a sense of belonging to Black communities in a way that many do not feel in their regular schools. The students and staff at the Black supplementary programs look like them, some may speak the same language or dialect, and share other cultural similarities such as cuisine. Additionally, teachers utilize child-centered pedagogical strategies such as circle time where students can talk about issues affecting them, and small group activities that allowed students to develop bonds and friendships with their classmates. Further, the programs replace the mainstream expectation of underachievement with expectations of success and students were encouraged and supported accordingly (Andrews, 2013; Dove, 1993; Gerrard, 2014; Issa & Williams, 2009). Students' efforts are rewarded and celebrated through activities such as prize-giving which acted as positive reinforcement for exemplary endeavours (Issa & Williams, 2009).

Additionally, the schools provide a welcome reprieve from the norm in mainstream schools where students are subjected to excessive surveillance and discriminatory behaviour from their peers and school staff. Chevannes and Reeves (1987) assert that Black supplementary programs

“constitute a black environment, insulating, protecting, and supporting the individual against the unpredictability of white behaviour and the constant difficulty of interpreting outcomes in a context of widespread white prejudice and discrimination” (p. 151). They function as a space where students can share their experiences with other persons who may have experienced similar things and empathize with them and perhaps provide guidance (Chevannes & Reeves, 1987).

Some programs teach students critical life skills. In addition to teaching African history, drumming and dance, Camp Kujichagulia (translated as self-determination) in Nova Scotia also incorporated racism and anger management workshops into its curriculum to give attendees practical strategies to overcome the discrimination they faced in society.

### ***Positive Role-Models***

Closely linked to the provision of emotional support is providing positive role models for Black students. Andrews (2013) describe “black supplementary schools as spaces created and controlled by black communities” (p.14). Because the schools are organized and staffed by Black volunteers, students and other Black communities members see examples of Black persons in leadership positions effecting positive changes in communities. This provides a counter-narrative to stereotypes that tend to view Blackness in deficit terms and as always associated with social pathology and subservience (Nelson-Brown, 2005). Some of the volunteers may have various levels of education, some are professionals, others may be self-employed or have a non-professional job, all have skills, talents, and experiences to share with their students. In Nelson-Brown’s study (2005) of Mount Zion Black supplementary program in Washington, older students who were in grades 7 to 12 in mainstream schools were paired with career mentors in the summer and engaged in paid internships in jobs that they had an interest in pursuing as a career. This

initiative provided them with good role models who could encourage them to aspire, set goals and achieve them (see also D'Oyley, et al., n.d).

Positive role modeling was also a benefit highlighted in Ramalingam and Griffith's (2015) qualitative study comprising nine supplementary schools in England. Using semi-structured interviews and participant observation they collected information from teachers, parents, students, and teaching assistants. Additionally, they interviewed staff at the local, and central government and Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The purpose of their study was to gain an understanding of the history of supplementary schools and their influence in two London boroughs. They found that students were enthused and motivated because of interacting with persons in their supplementary schools who had succeeded in school and their career pursuits. The role models in Black supplementary programs are a testament to students that they too can overcome and achieve despite the challenges in the societies in which they live.

### ***Improving Performance in National Curriculum Subjects***

Students receive assistance with the content and skills demanded by the core curriculum subjects such as Mathematics, English, and Science, in addition to other subjects. Evans and Gillan-Thomas (2015) reported that "there is a clear correlation between supplementary programs that focus on supporting the core curriculum subjects and increased pupil attainment in English, Maths, and Science" (p. 9). Further they stated that

Supplementary school students performed well in comparison to their peer groups in seven local authority areas. For Key Stage 1, the supplementary sample pupils performed better than their peers in three of the seven cities in all four of the tested subjects (reading, writing, maths and science,). At Key Stage 2, the supplementary school sample pupils outperformed their peers in four of the seven areas across both English and Maths (Lincolnshire,

Manchester, Nottingham, and Sheffield) ... At Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils in the supplementary school sample gaining 5 GCSEs (A-C), including English and Maths, exceeded the local authority results in all seven areas, in some instances by a substantial margin notably in Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds.... This pattern of strong performance is even clearer when the analysis focuses on pupils registered as being eligible for free school meals. (p.6)

Maylor et al.'s (2013) study, as discussed previously above, corroborated these findings. They conducted mixed methods research in England. The study was conducted at the request of the British Department for Children, Schools and Families. It outlined the provision and investigated the effects of supplementary schools especially in relation to improving the academic performance of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils. The study used mail survey to collect data from 301 schools, followed by in-depth qualitative interviews with staff, students, and parents from 12 of the schools, and 17 Local Authority workers who worked with supplementary schools. Two hundred and sixty-four persons responded, the majority being students, followed by parents, and school staff. The study showed that students' understanding of and performance in national curriculum core subjects improved as a result of attending supplementary schools (see also Dove, 1993).

It is possible that the features of Black supplementary programs such as smaller class sizes, child-centred pedagogy, including small group work and one-on-one tutoring, as well as the positive and nurturing relationships between teachers contribute to this improvement in performance.

***Motivates Children and Rekindles Their Interest in Learning***

Students and parents report an improvement in students' attitude towards learning and motivation to do well (Maylor et al., 2013). The schools help to stimulate constructive attitudes towards education in students, improved feelings of self-efficacy, and higher goals. Maylor et al. (2013) theorise that these positive changes in students may be partly due to higher teacher expectations in the supplementary schools and nurturing teacher student relationships. Also, supplementary programs used innovative methods and modes of making learning fun including inviting guest speakers or professionals to do demonstrations on various topics and using the creative arts and other enactive learning activities.

### ***Building Student Confidence***

Because supplementary programs tend to have smaller class sizes than mainstream ones, and staff and students who are from similar ethnic backgrounds, attendees feel more comfortable asking tutors questions. Students also get one-on-one support where it is needed. As students improve in the supplementary programs and their mainstream schools, they gain confidence in their abilities and can relate to their peers and teachers in a self-assured manner. Further, the programs' emphasis on nurturing positive ethnic identity and positive self-image helped students to accept and appreciate themselves as members of a broader communities but also as individuals.

### ***Improving Students' Employment Prospects***

Supplementary programs improve students' employment prospects and other life chances in various ways. The most obvious is that by contributing to improvements in students' academic performance in mainstream schools and external examinations, they help students to qualify for entry into post-secondary institutions (Jayakumar et al., 2013) or to seek skilled work. Also, some programs assist students to prepare for the job market by helping with developing resumes and writing cover letters. The students also gain the opportunity to learn about various professions and

career options from guest speakers and from their tutors. Arguably, most importantly they are encouraged to aspire for a career and given the support necessary to achieve their goals as opposed to being discouraged and undermined by their tutors, a practice that some minoritized students have shared happens in mainstream schools (Shizha et al., 2020).

Based on the preceding discussion it is evident that Black supplementary programs contribute to their students' educational development in various ways. These include attending to their affective needs by facilitating the development of a positive sense of ethnic identity, providing a nurturing learning environment and emotional support, positive role models, assistance with the national curriculum, as well as helping to build students' self confidence and preparing them for the labour market.

The programs' positive impacts extend beyond the children they tutor into the wider communities. The main benefits include enhancing community cohesion and politicization of the Black communities. These contributions are important because united and organized communities are capable of advocating for their children's rights and for changes in the mainstream educational curriculum and running of schools that will improve the experiences of Black students in Canadian schools. I explore the two aforementioned benefits in more detail below.

### **Enhancing Cohesion in Black Communities**

Mirza and Reay (2000) highlighted the ways in which Black supplementary programs were sites where Black parents, students and other members of Black communities coalesced to work together in improving the lives of each member of Black communities through education. Communities members pooled the various forms of capital at their disposal, including social and economic, to address a perceived need for a better educational experience for Black children. No child was refused access to the programs if their parents were unable to contribute financially.

Studies also cite high levels of parent engagement in the programs because they actively sought parents' inputs for the vision for the program and support for fundraising and other events (Andrews, 2013, Nwulu, 2015). Professor D'Oyley, and co-authors Kakembo, McFarlane, Perry, Andruske and George (n.d) noted that supplementary education programs in Nova Scotia caused various members of Black communities, including parents, and volunteer tutors, to work together to improve the educational outcomes of the youth. Likewise, Rose's (2013) analysis of secondary data produced by Maylor et al.'s (2010) study supported the view that supplementary programs contribute to community cohesion. She found that supplementary schools helped in the integration of new immigrants by providing a place where they could interact with people from a similar cultural background and learn about the services available to them. Moreover, although in some instances mainstream schools were skeptical of them, some supplementary programs actively pursue and establish collaborative relationships with mainstream schools (Rose, 2013).

The potential exists for mainstream schools and supplementary programs to develop and maintain a symbiotic relationship. Mainstream schoolteachers can learn strategies for increasing student motivation and performance, engaging parents and community members, and to learn more about the cultures of the families they served. Supplementary program staff can be engaged as resource persons in classrooms. In turn, schools can recommend the services of the supplementary programs to families who may desire or need their services and allow them to use their facilities freely or at a reduced cost.

### **Politicization of the Black Communities**

Black supplementary programs were formed because Black people recognized that their interests and the interests of their children were not being served by mainstream schools in Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. They give parents the opportunity to have

a say in what constitutes education and what their children learn. If we take Mirza's and Reay's (2000) view that education "represents a struggle for meaning as well as struggle over power relations" (p. 535), then Black supplementary programs represent ways in which members of Black communities wrest some of the power from the mainstream society when it comes to determining their children's educational experiences and outcomes. The programs also represent a network of people who can be quickly mobilized and galvanized to fight discrimination whether in the education system or other social arenas. Andrews (2016) and Nelson- Brown (2005) note that in Britain and the United States the Black supplementary programs movement was influenced by and closely related to the Black Power Movement, The American Civil Rights Movement, Garveyism, and Pan-Africanism. Thus, from its very inception there was a political focus in that the organizers sought to make decisions about what their children learnt, how they were taught and by who, and sought to put pressure on mainstream schools and other societal institutions to eliminate racism and give Black persons equal rights and justice. The Black Lives Matter Freedom School, Mount Zion Ethnic School in Seattle in Nelson-Brown's (2005) study, and the Lumumba school in Andrew's (2013) study are examples of programs that have continued with a strong Black activist tradition.

### **Challenges Programs Face**

Black supplementary programs play an important role in helping Black children and their families to understand, cope with, and succeed in the mainstream schools. However, their impact is constrained by various challenges, and these are explored below.

First, most Black supplementary programs are funded by philanthropists, community members, and nominal fees charged for students and struggle to find reliable and lasting revenue streams (Nwulu, 2015; Evans & Gillan-Thomas, 2015). This constrains their expansion, ability to

provide a stipend to volunteer staff, purchase learning aids, and the types of learning activities they can provide for students. In Britain, some programs receive funding from local education authorities, however such funding may come with conditions that force programs to alter their original goals. For example, in an effort to maintain funding contingent on students' performance in external examinations programs may need to reduce or eliminate time spent on cultural programming such as African drumming and dance in favor of instruction in core curriculum subjects.

Second, in most instances the staff in the programs are volunteers and therefore it may be difficult to ensure consistent standards of work and effort from them. If volunteers do not fulfil their duties efficiently or attend erratically often there is little that can be done to ensure improvements save exhortation (Andrews, 2013; Chevannes & Reeves, 1987). Also, the lack of remuneration makes it difficult to attract staff since persons may incur costs to attend such as paying for transportation or may need to forgo paid employment hours.

Third, there is a problem with public perception of the programs. Some mainstream educators and other members of society do not acknowledge the work that supplementary schools do and often take credit for student improvements that supplementary schools believe are due to their efforts (Maylor et al., 2013). Some mainstream educators view supplementary programs as disorganized and inferior to conventional educational institutions. This constrains attempts by supplementary programs to link with mainstream schools which may constrain their ability to gain privileges such as use of school facilities or referral of students by mainstream educators to the supplementary programs.

Fourth, many programs are ignorant of other supplementary programs near them and are unaware of how other programs operate and serve Black communities. This lack of collaboration

among programs is also a limiting factor as it prevents them from pooling their limited resources and sharing ideas and strategies with each other (Andrews, 2013).

Fifth, some programs face declining enrolment overall and struggle to attract and retain older students because of competition from other extra-curricular activities, and some not wanting to do lessons on the weekend (Andrews, 2013). Additionally, some parents are reticent to send their children because they believe they will be stigmatized as slow learners because they seek extra tutoring.

### **Synopsis of Supplementary Programs**

Key features of Black supplementary programs include Black leadership, they emanate from Black communities, majority of the staff and students are Black, and an Afrocentric curriculum and pedagogy (Andrews, 2013; Gerrard, 2014; Issa & Williams, 2009, Kifano, 1996, Nwulu, 2015). All programs may not have all these features but should have most. Two indispensable qualities are Black leadership and a Black focused curriculum. As Andrews (2013) notes “if Black supplementary schools lose the Black-led environment and no longer teach Black history, they will cease to be different from any other after school or homework club” (p. 56). Despite challenges such as inconsistent and unpredictable revenue streams, declining enrolment, and difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff the schools continue to provide important assistance to their students and families. They help to encourage a positive ethnic identity, confidence, and engender high levels of student engagement. Additionally, they provide emotional support for students and the coping skills to counteract discrimination at school and the wider society, provide positive role models for students, and help to improve students’ performance in examinations and employment prospects.

Against the backdrop of the myriad challenges Black students experience in Canadian schools and the high rates of non-completion documented in school boards that collect academic performance data disaggregated by race, more studies need to be conducted in Canada to ascertain the prevalence of Black supplementary programs and the ways in which they are contributing to the children and families who use their services. As noted previously, although many studies have been conducted on supplementary research programs in Britain, there is a paucity of research on supplementary education programs in Canada, particularly in Alberta. These programs are important because they have the potential to help address some of the inadequacies Black students have identified in the mainstream schooling system, especially as it relates to the exclusion of Black history and culture from the curriculum and the lack of Black teachers. Black people comprise the third largest visible minority group in Canada and are projected to continue to increase in population size and proportion to the overall population. Further, Alberta has the third largest Black population (Ontario and Quebec having the largest and second largest respectively). It is imperative that the efforts by members of Black communities to address the challenges Black students face their schooling be examined to fully leverage their benefits, especially their work in helping students to navigate discrimination in the education system.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have explored the various ways in which African-Canadians have built a sense of community and designed means of overcoming oppression. The supplementary education programs discussed are an illustration of how members of Black communities have mobilized human and other resources to meet the needs of Black students and to equip them with the tools to be successful in societies that have historically been hostile to people of African descent.

## Chapter Four: Theoretical Frameworks

Theory can be seen “as an analytical and interpretive framework that helps the researcher to make sense of what is going on in the social setting being studied” (Mills, 1993 as cited in Anfara & Mertz, 2006). A theoretical framework is an explanation “of social or psychological processes that directs the research usually from the beginning (formulation of the research question) to the end” (Anfara & Mertz, 2015, p.15). Put another way it is “a lens through which you are looking and approaching the research. So, it frames what you see and what you may not see” (Sage Publications Limited, 2017). The main theoretical framework that will guide this study is Ladson-Billings’ (2013) and Solóranzo & Yosso’s (2001) exposition of Critical Race Theory (CRT). I will also employ Yosso’s (2005) theory of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to guide how I make sense of the data created and how I will conduct the research. I decided to use these theoretical frameworks because they will allow me to center the voices of the Black students and other persons who utilize and run the supplementary education programs. This centering of Black students’ and community members’ voices is important because “...without authentic voices of people of colour (as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members) it is doubtful we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58).

Using the appreciative lens of CRT, and Community Cultural Wealth frameworks does not preclude an examination of shortcomings, or challenges that may be identified throughout the research. Scholars have pointed to negative discourses in Canadian society that pathologize Black students and their communities and adversely impacts their educational opportunities and experiences (Dei et al., 1997; James, 1997; Kelly, 1998). In contrast, the critical frameworks I have chosen to use allow me to examine the ways social structures and historical processes affect the

lives of racialized youth and their experiences in education. Due to the central role that race plays in critical race theory and the focus on the Black race in this study, I begin by exploring the meaning of race and the construction of Black identities in Canada, subsequently, I outline the main precepts of CRT and CCW and examine the ways in which they may facilitate new understandings about the influence of supplementary education programs on Black students' education.

### **Theorizing Blackness and Identity in Canada**

There has been a move away from an essentialist conceptualization of race as a fixed biological reality to a discursive conceptualization that acknowledges that race is a socially and politically constructed categorization developed and transformed by humans in particular historical contexts to serve different religious, economic, and political purposes (Gilroy, 1993, 2000; Hall, 1996, 2013, 2017; James, 2006, Kelly, 2004; Omi & Winant, 1994; Patterson & Kelley, 2000). Omi and Winant (1994) provides additional clarity to race as a concept asserting that

Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics (so called "phenotypes"), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. (p. 55).

Omi and Winant (1994) uses "racialization" to denote the process by which people are categorized and socialized into racial categories. Further, they assert that racialization is achieved through racial projects which are "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (p. 55). Hall (2008) expresses it more succinctly conceptualizing race as a floating signifier,

that is, a badge or token that is used to differentiate persons and relate to them in particular ways based on that differentiation. He notes that in various points in history the construct *race* has been verified and given credence using religious, anthropological, and scientific regimes of truth.

I explore Black as a constructed racial and cultural identity next. Drawing on the works of Kelly (1998, 2004), Walcott (2003), McKittrick (2006), James (1994), Hall (2003, 2011, 2013, 2017), Maynard (2017), and Patterson and Kelley (2000), I explore the meaning of Blackness in the Canadian context and the process by which this meaning is constructed. To understand this process better, I examine the following issues/questions: What role do those racialized as Black play in the social construction of Black identities? Who and what processes have constructed and positioned Blackness in particular ways and for what purposes? How have those racialized as Black responded and re-positioned themselves? I begin by looking at different ways of conceptualizing or approaching identity. Next, I explore Black Canadian identity as erased identities, Blackness as other, and Blackness as syncretic, transnational identities, and end with a synopsis of Black identities based on the theorists mentioned previously.

Hall (2013) , speaking about the Caribbean, but in a manner that illuminates identities of those in the African/Black Diaspora more broadly, conceptualized cultural identity as follows “identity means, or connotes, the process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together, in this respect” (p. 146). Further, Hall (2003) theorizes that there are at least two major approaches to conceptualizing cultural identity, the first is an essentialist approach where one

defines cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective one true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common.... This oneness underlying all the

other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of Caribbean-ness, of the black experience (p. 234)

He rejects this first approach as presenting a narrow, over-simplified view, offering instead a second proposal which

recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute what we really are; or rather- since history has intervened- what we have become. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about one experience, one identity, without acknowledging its other side- the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean's uniqueness. (p. 236)

Considering this, we understand that there is no one Black identity, whether in Canada or anywhere else, but rather there are many Black identities whose construction are influenced by and mediated through race, class, gender, nationality, country of origin, sexuality, age, religion and other influences (Davis, 2007; Hall, 2003, 2013; Kelly, 1998, 2004, Walcott, 2003). Moreover, Hall (2017) proposes that

... what is in question, simply put, is a shift from identity to identification, from an understanding of identity as something defined by given attributes to a discursive conception of the subject as it is positioned by, and repositions itself within, various ensembles of discourse. (p. 131).

Hall (2003, 2011, 2013, 2017), Kelly (1998, 2004), Patterson and Kelly (2000), and Walcott (2003) theorize that cultural identities are complex, contingent on various processes, dynamic, and unfolding. Where then do these identities emerge from? Or how do they come to be? All the foregoing theorists concur that cultural identities are shaped by historical processes. If we consider these historical processes with reference to Black identities, we see where the creation of

an integrated world capitalist market fueled by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade imposed the identity of *slave* and later servile expendable worker on African descended peoples. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the Indian Ocean Slave Trade forced Africa and African descended peoples into an exploitative relationship with Europe and Asia in which the latter two continents took the human and natural resources of the continent giving very little of value in return. With reference to Europe and the West, the forced labor of African peoples provided the profits necessary to drive industrialization and development while keeping Africa and African descended peoples in a state of underdevelopment and subservience (Rodney, 1974). Blackness becomes associated with servitude, oppression, and exploitation.

With reference to the economic and sociopolitical creation of the West, racism played an integral role and the socially constructed Black race and White race have been positioned as binary opposites, locked in an unhealthy relationship where Blackness is hated yet desired, and above all feared. Europe, North America and by extension White capitalists, have developed their industries and economies in such a way that they are very dependent on the resources of Africa and Black labour for economic survival. This material dependence means that Africa and African descended peoples must be kept in a subservient psychological state that will facilitate continued exploitation because self-realization and self-determination would threaten White European dominance in Western societies and in Africa. Various strategies are used to facilitate the continued exploitation of Africa and those racialized as Black and these all have an impact on Black identity construction. I explore these strategies and Black identity formation next.

### ***Canadian Blackness as Erased Identities***

McKittrick (2006) argues that “Canada is, in fact, racially produced...” (p.95) and this claim is substantiated by the fact that although Black people have been resident in Canada for

centuries and have contributed in various ways to its political, economic, and social life, there have been deliberate efforts by some Canadians of European descent to erase their presence and contributions and to project all Black people as newcomers and recent immigrants to Canada (McKittrick, 2006). This erasure, which Walcott (2003) refers to as the “the absented presence of blackness in Canada” (p.136), is done using various strategies. Geographic sites and communities are destroyed or renamed as in the case of the destruction of the Black community of Africville in Nova Scotia, the destruction of Black cemeteries, renaming roads and other places that were named after Black persons or that are associated with Black people are common strategies of erasure (McKittrick, 2006; Walcott, 2003). Additionally, there is the erasure of Black history and culture from the Canadian curriculum so that students are not aware of how Black soldiers were instrumental in the War of 1812 and other attempts by the Americans to invade and annex Canada, how Black people contributed to World Wars 1 and 2, how Black immigrants to the Canadian Prairies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the development of those provinces, of the integral role that Black politicians played in the formation of the Confederation of Canada, and the list goes on. Instead, the discourse around Canadian history and what it means to be Canadian only includes the contributions of the British and to a much lesser extent the French, and occasionally there might be something thrown in about the Ukrainians and the Polish settlers. Thus, Canada is presented as a White country with only White citizens. Non-Europeans and certainly Black people fall outside of “...what being Canadian is imagined to be” (Walcott, 2003, p. 12). McKittrick (2006) reinforces this proposition stating that Canada defines “...its history as Euro-white, or nonblack” (p. 92) and that Canada as a nation “erases and demolishes black spaces and refuses to acknowledge the long-standing history of black peoples within its borders...” (p. 94). As explained in the subsequent paragraphs this

erasure impacts the extent to which students racialized as Black feel that they can claim being Canadian as an aspect of their identity.

### ***Blackness as Other in Canada***

As outlined previously there have been various attempts to exorcise Blackness from the Canadian national imaginary and geography using diverse strategies. Another way in which Black Canadian identities are sabotaged is by presenting Black people and Blackness as other to Canada. Blackness is seen as not just outside of the parameters of what it means to be Canadian but oppositional to it (Maynard, 2017). McKittrick (2006) and Maynard (2017) argue that where Blackness is acknowledged it becomes hypervisible and is associated with deviance, crime, poverty, and negative stereotypes. These representations of Blackness by the dominant culture are very important since as Hall (2011) notes “identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation” (p. 10). Unfortunately, the media, some politicians, and law enforcement bodies routinely associate Blackness with criminal activities and present Black people “as a threat to ‘real’ [read White] Canadians” (Maynard, 2017, p. 11). This has implications for how people racialized as Black see themselves in relation to Canada. In her foundational work exploring Black high school youth processes of identity formation in Edmonton, Kelly (1998) found that

for these African Canadian youth, the process of growing up in a White-dominated society can be seen as a process of being *othered*, of being put outside of the dominant group. As part of this othering process African-Canadian youth testify that even when they are Canadian-born, they are represented by the dominant culture as not “belonging”, as not “really” Canadian. (p. 7).

Black students who were born in Canada were reticent to identify as Canadian because they were so used to persons assuming they were not from Canada because of their physical features associated with the racial category called Black (Kelly, 1998, 2004).

This speaks to the social nature of identity in that students were aware of how they were viewed by others and had internalized the view of others that their physical attributes indicated that they had to be from somewhere other than Canada. The exclusion of Black people from the national imaginary of what a Canadian looks like leads to the common assumption in Canadian society that all non-White peoples must be from somewhere else (James, 1994). Additionally, Black students are constructed within the education system generally and in schools specifically as intellectually inferior, and belonging to a racial group without history, culture, or contributions to civilization. The absence of Black history and contributions from the curriculum and the lack of Black teachers or persons in positions of authority in schools also reinforce this discourse.

This othering affects all Black people regardless of age, class, educational qualifications, status, or other overlapping social identities. Professor Carl James identifies this experience of being othered because of his Blackness as being an integral part of his early career as an academic in Toronto. His interactions with students and students' written evaluations of his teaching showed that that his race played a quintessential role in how students perceived him and his teaching. He noted that students had preconceived notions about what a Black person could and could not do, stereotypes that precluded them from associating Black people with the position of power, knowledge and status associated with being an academic (James, 1994). Black people historically have been associated with low status, low paying jobs, low levels of education and with being at the bottom of the social ladder. Thus, students found it difficult to reconcile James' position as their professor with their biases and expectations.

Given the strong anti-Blackness evident in Canadian society, how do those racialized as Black maintain a sense of self and continue to live as a Black person in the face of this aggressive negativity, dismissal, and denial by the dominant culture? Partly, by opposition. In fact, Hall (2013) surmises that Black identity is constructed in the face of White racism, and that “Black was created as a political category in a certain historical moment” (p.149). That moment was the movement for civil rights in the United States and across the world in the 1960s and it continues to this day with the new generation of civil rights activists such as those in Black Lives Matter, and other groups organized to fight for full realization of Black civil rights and liberties. Patterson and Kelly (2000) reinforce this stance adding that the idea of a common cultural identity among Black people across the world was a political construction employed to advance the cause of the pan-Africanists and anti-colonial movements.

Walcott (2003) concurs with Hall’s (2013) and Patterson’s and Kelly’s (2000) theory on the origin of Black identities, positing that Black cultures (and by extension identities) are oppositional to White Canadian culture in that they refuse to accept being erased from the Canadian national imaginary. Similarly, with reference to Black high school students, Kelly (1998) hypothesized that Black youth sometimes choose to respond to societal attempts to regulate and constrain their self-expression via the controlling gaze with a *glare*, that is, with defiance: choosing to dress, speak, and socialize in ways that were comfortable for and which they feel represents them even if it will result in negative perceptions and possible negative repercussions from the dominant groups in society.

### ***Blackness as Syncretic Transnational Identities***

Although some movements such as Pan-Africanism, and theorists such as Afrocentrists, promote a view that all Black persons are African in that they trace their roots or origins to the

African continent, anti-essentialists such as Stuart Hall reject that notion. Hall (2013) proposes that an essentialist approach to Blackness ignores heterogeneous experiences and thus silences some identities including gender and class identities. Hall (2003), while acknowledging the common historical experiences of African descended peoples, such as "... transportation, slavery, colonisation has been profoundly formative" and acts as a unifying force for all who experienced them argue that they do not equate to a common *origin* nor a singular identity (p. 238). Hall points to the fact that even within the geospatial entity now called Africa there has always been cultural heterogeneity and that the dispersal of the peoples from that continent around the world via forced and voluntary migration has resulted in hybrid identities and cultures for African descended peoples (Hall, 2013). This is reinforced by the scholarship of Kelly (1998, 2004) and Walcott (2003). Walcott (2003) asserts that Black Canadian identities and cultures are in part created in Black popular culture. Through their art, writers, musicians, visual and performing artists explore, suggest, include and exclude the elements and meanings of Blackness. The influence of Black cultures from around the world particularly the United States of America and the Caribbean means that Black Canadian cultures and identities are transnational, shifting, dynamic, and syncretic.

Kelly (2004) theorizes that through the influence of the mass media and its dissemination of American popular culture, Black Canadian youth cultures and cultural identities are predominantly influenced by Black American culture made possible through the "blurring of the boundaries between the local and the global which has led to the reconceptualization of social experiences, knowledge, and identity" (p. ix). Moreover, Kelly (2004) describes the identity formation of the Black high school youth in her study as androcentric, hypermasculine, and heterosexual "and heavily contoured through African-American experiences, since that is the

source of much of the music videos, films and types of music to which the students listen” (p. 162). This leads her to conclude that “this dominance of the United States in terms of the students’ consumption of dress style, magazines, and music videos would seem to indicate a sense of *borrowed blackness*, a borrowed black identity formation that is not directly derived from within the borders of Canada” (p. 162). Other important influences for Black youth identity formation were the family, the church, and peer groups.

In many ways Black Canadian identities are diasporic, and while I acknowledge Canada’s long history of Black residence, in the present time many Black persons living in Canada have their origins somewhere else. That is, they or their parents or grandparents were born outside of Canada whether in the Caribbean, in Africa, in the United States of America or somewhere else. For some, this connection to somewhere else, especially if that country has a predominantly Black population, allows them to embrace Blackness despite living in a society that is characterized by anti-Blackness across various social institutions including schools.

In sum, Black identities, like all other identities are socially constructed. They are positioned as *other* and external to dominant constructions of who is a Canadian and there have been deliberate attempts to erase the presence of Black Canadians and their contributions to Canada from Canadian history and society. However, despite the adverse circumstances of their existence around the world and in the Americas, peoples racialized as Black have repositioned themselves and used strategic essentialism to coalesce around common experiences such as racism, and past enslavement, positioning Black identities as a political one used to improve their life chances in Canadian society. Denied or given limited access to traditional modes of knowledge production and dissemination such as universities, they have used popular culture, resources in Black communities, and various individuals as sources for identity construction. Black identities

are constantly evolving, reforming, repositioning, and transforming. Although the discourse thus far has represented Black identities primarily as androcentric, heterosexual and hypermasculine, in the present moment there is increasing appreciation for heterogeneity within Black communities.

Despite the critique of race and essentialist conceptualizations of Blackness, many persons continue to use Blackness as a unifying force or a rallying point around which people can gather to fight various forms of oppression including many of the organizers and workers in Black supplementary education programs. Many of these programs try to address the need for Black students to have positive self-representation, to learn about their history and culture and to navigate the racist societies in which they live.

Having discussed Blackness and some of the ways in which that concept can be understood in relation to this research, I now explore critical race theory and Community Cultural Wealth as the theoretical frameworks that guided the study.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory developed in the 1970s out of two Neo-Marxist traditions, (Legal Realism and Critical Legal Studies), as a critique of how mainstream legal scholarship and practice was premised on and perpetuated racism, patriarchy, and class oppression (Tate, 1997). William Tate IV and Gloria Ladson-Billings were the first scholars to transpose the principles of CRT to understand educational issues (Ladson-Billings, 2013). As a theoretical framework, CRT uses intersectional analysis to highlight, interrogate, and resist the various forms of interlocking oppression in society such as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. Over the years there have been several outgrowths or sub-branches such as Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Critical Race Feminism (FemCrit), AsianCrit and others (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These sub-branches

provide additional focus on issues such as immigration status, and language that are not as salient in traditional CRT discourses. Critical Race Theory has several distinguishing features: Racism is endemic in society, the challenge to dominant ideology, the centrality of experiential knowledge, a transdisciplinary perspective, and the commitment to social justice (Huber, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). I explore each tenet and how it relates to my research topic.

### ***Racism is Endemic in Society***

Race is:

an arbitrary socially constructed classification of persons into categories on the basis of real or imagined physical characteristics such as skin colour. Under race the world is subdivided into a fixed number of immutable groups of individuals who are differentiated on the basis of inherited biological (and sometimes sociological) traits. Race is generally regarded as having no empirical validity or scientific merit. It exists instead as a social construction that is manipulated to define and reinforce the unequal relations between dominant and subordinate groups. (Fleras & Elliot, 1999, p. 440).

Closely connected to the concept of race is racism. Racism refers to discriminatory behavior against a group of people based on perceived physical or social differences (Hill Collins, 2009).

Further, Henry and Tator (2010) assert that:

racist ideology provides the conceptual framework for the political, social, and cultural structures of inequality and systems of dominance based on race, as well as the processes of exclusion and marginalization of racialized people that characterize Canadian society... Racist ideology therefore organizes, preserves, and perpetuates the power structures in a society. It creates and preserves a system of dominance based on race and is communicated and reproduced through agencies of socialization and cultural transmission, such as the

mass media, schools and universities, religious doctrines, symbols and images, art, music, and literature. (p. 4)

Critical race theorists assert that racism is an integral feature of North American society (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Industrialization and the economic development of European and North American societies were driven by the genocide and acquisition of land, and other resources from Indigenous peoples in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, and by the immense profits generated from the labour of enslaved Africans in the Americas. Thus, European, and North American societies were constructed on the foundation of the subordination of non-White, European races to enable the economic and other advancement of White people. This subordination was implemented using methods such as the ideology of racism which was widely circulated in the education system, in literature, and other media and continues to the present day. Additionally, physical and legal methods of social control were used such as punishments, branding of the enslaved and preventing them from partaking in societal institutions and mainstream practices such as getting a formal education.

Racism in its various forms continues in Canadian society and is reflected in the Eurocentric curriculum that negates the histories, experiences, and the contributions of non-White peoples in Canadian society, lack of minoritized schoolteachers and staff, and discriminatory behaviour towards African-Canadian students (African-Canadian Working Group, 1992; Annamma et. al., 2019; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Codjoe, 2001; Dei et al., 1997; McPherson et. al., 2020; Shizha et al., 2020). Castenell and Pinar (1993) share a similar stance, postulating that “the absence of African American knowledge in many American school curriculums is not simple oversight. It represents an academic instance of racism or....willful ignorance and aggression

toward Black [people]” (p. 6). I believe this interpretation is appropriate in the Canadian context as well.

### ***The Challenge to Dominant Ideology***

Hill Collins (2009) defines ideology as “a body of ideas reflecting the interest of a particular social group” (p. 320). Further, Hill Collins states that racism and sexism are “ideologies that support domination” (p. 320). Racist ideology permeates societal institutions including schools. Racist ideologies present only some groups, (primarily White, middle class, educated men), as being capable of producing knowledge while legitimizing the exclusion of other people as knowers (for example Black people and persons with little formal education). Additionally, it shapes the kind of research that is pursued and the ways in which research presents different groups.

In many contemporary societies Black persons have been “positioned within specific historical discourses which have constructed Black people as psychologically, culturally, intellectually, and morally inferior” (Wright et al., 2007, p.149). This is true for other non-White groups as well. Academia as society’s institutionalized locus of knowledge production is built on ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations that are Eurocentric, racist, and exclusionary. In fact, critical race theorists argue that “mainstream epistemologies, and research agendas, make up part of the forces of oppression” (Hylton, 2012 p. 35). Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and produced (Lincoln et al., 2018). Positivist research traditions dominated academia for centuries and presented knowledge as an objective entity “out there” to be discovered, independent from and uninfluenced by the personal experiences of the knower. Moreover, only some persons could engage in the process of knowing and become a holder of knowledge: White, educated, middle

class males (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Hill Collins, 2009; Smith, 2012). However, critical race theorists present knowledge as being socially constructed, and subjective. This is best expressed by Delgado Bernal (2002) who posits that “a critical raced-gendered epistemology does not position the debate between objectivity and subjectivity. Rather, it sees all stories as subjective and the production of knowledge as situated” (p. 102). Eurocentric epistemology is contrary to that of peoples of colour, and women, and prevents these groups from contributing fully to academia and society generally by disregarding and positioning as inferior the knowledge they produce.

Delgado (1984) coined the term imperial scholarship to conceptualize ways in which the perspective of single groups can come to dominate (an) entire discipline(s) while excluding other perspectives (as cited in Huber, 2008). This argument is reinforced by Smith (2012), who is not a critical race theorist, but her work provides important contributions to understanding how imperial scholarship and knowledge is used in the subjugation of Indigenous and other people. Smith (2012) argues that European imperialists have empowered themselves to determine what constitutes knowledge and the standards by which knowledge is judged. In the process they have excluded the knowledge of non-Europeans. Here Smith (2012), like critical race theorist Ladson-Billings (2000), makes the link between knowledge and power, stating that what becomes accepted as knowledge and as true is determined by social groups with the power to impose their views of history and knowledge on others. Moreover, she contends that colonization is ongoing in the present time in different ways and that education is used as a tool to assimilate colonized peoples whereby they are indoctrinated with European knowledge and worldviews while being stripped of their own ways of knowing so that the education process is an alienating process of deculturization.

CRT opposes imperial scholarship and offers alternative ways of conducting research and theorizing about the social world that validates the ways of knowing and the knowledge of people

of colour and other marginalized groups (Huber, 2008). Eurocentric claims to “objectivity, meritocracy, and race neutrality are challenged” (Huber, 2008, p. 167) as are claims to meritocracy and equal opportunity (Yosso, 2005, p.73). Further, the oppressive nature of dominant ideologies such as racism are exposed so that they can be dismantled (see also Delgado Bernal, 2002). Moreover, values that are deemed to signify deficit in the Eurocentric worldview such as emphasis on community, embodied forms of knowing, and intuition are viewed as assets in critical race frameworks (Delgado Bernal 2002).

### *The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge*

Hill Collins (2009) notes the importance of knowledge gained through lived experience calling it a “criterion for meaning” (p. 275) adding that “for most African American women, those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences” (p. 276). I want to linger on the two foregoing quotes a little. What are the implications of making lived experience a prerequisite for understanding? Possible answers include: (a) it forces researchers to seek out the stories and experiences of those being researched especially if the researcher does not have lived experiences of the issue under study; (b) it democratizes the knowledge creation process by broadening the range of who can know and theorize from credentialled experts to people who may not have formal education, academic connections, nor high social status as it is normally understood; and (c) it suggests that understanding happens at various levels with lived experience providing the context for us to see an issue from various angles and in concrete ways thereby providing the nuances that facilitate deep understanding.

This stance, which empowers ordinary people with knowledge creation capabilities as opposed to just academics or so-called experts, runs counter to the norm of the dominant culture.

As Delgado Bernal (2002) contends “the Eurocentric perspectives have for too long viewed the experiential knowledge of students of color as a deficit or ignored it altogether” (p. 121). Smith identifies (2012) this process of exclusion, marginalization, and denial as a key part of the process of colonization, which she argues continues to the present day in New Zealand, and one could add, in other settler colonial societies including Canada.

Critical race theorists critique the exclusionary nature of Eurocentric epistemologies and instead propose alternative criteria for knowledge creation and validation that place a premium on knowledge gained from lived experiences. Further, CRT views and positions people of colour as holders and “creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal 2002, p.106). To this end there is much emphasis on “naming one’s reality” and highlighting the voices of the oppressed (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 55). Naming one’s reality is a way in which people of colour make sense of the different incidents and occurrences in their lives. This phrase shows that reality is not an objective thing outside of the knower but is socially constructed and mediated in the myriad interactions that people have with each other and by the ideologies represented in dominant/mainstream media, education, and other social structures. Thus, knowledge resides within and is co-created by people during their social interactions. Further, people of colour’s experiences of oppression enable them to see, understand, interpret, and challenge elements of society that White people are unable, or unwilling to see, or unaware of because they do not have similar experiences. For example, people of colour are more sensitive to and aware of racism and other power relations because it forms such an integral part of their everyday reality in their interactions with other individuals, institutions, and social structures.

Another illustration of the focus on experiential knowledge is the use of testimonios, in-depth descriptions of the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced oppression

(Huber, 2009). Testimonios allow participants to be active co-creators of knowledge alongside the researcher by allowing them to specify the different types of oppression that have influenced their experiences. As such it represents a rejection of mainstream Eurocentric epistemology that project knowledge as residing in educated experts in particular disciplines. Additionally, other forms of experiential knowledge are collected in the form of oral histories, personal narratives, and counter-stories (Delgado Bernal, 2002). “CRT and LatCrit’s emphasis on experiential knowledge allow researchers to embrace the counter-stories and other methodological and pedagogical approaches that view the community and the family knowledge of communities of color as a strength” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 121).

My research positions the Black students, their caregivers, and the staff in CCACH’s supplementary education programs as holders of knowledge and use interviews to gather their lived experiences with the programs. I also view myself, a Black woman, as a holder of knowledge and use my experiences as a participant observer in the CCACH’s programs as an additional source of information that helps me to understand how they contributed to students’ educational development.

### ***Transdisciplinary Perspective***

Because racism is permanent and endemic it needs to be examined from multiple angles including a historical one. Therefore, critical race theorists use various disciplines such as sociology, law, history, education, cultural studies, Black Studies, geography to understand issues such as racism, in different contexts and to propose solutions (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In this study I draw on a range of disciplines to put the experiences of Black people in Canadian society and particularly the school system in context. These disciplines include history, sociology, Black Studies, human geography, and education.

### *Commitment to Social Justice*

Critical Race Theory is praxis oriented. As such researchers who use this theoretical framework in conducting investigation into the social world generally do so with the intention of eliminating or alleviating myriad social injustices and forms of oppression. Researchers “unapologetically center oppressive structures such as racism, sexism, and classism in research analysis” to dismantle them and facilitate the liberation of those people they constrain (Huber, 2008, p. 159). Thus, critical race theorists view social transformation as improving or removing structural oppression. Similarly, Hylton (2012) notes that centering the experiences and perspectives of people of color is a fundamental part of the process of advocating for social justice because it removes them from the margins and ensures that the issues affecting them are highlighted and addressed. Moreover, CRT scholar Thandeka Chapman (2013) notes that “CRT counters the stock stories and misrepresentations of past and present texts that have sought to position people of color as derelicts and victims” (p.106). In this spirit, the study focuses on members of Edmonton’s Black communities as agents of change in the educational experiences of Black students. Black students in Canada have been marginalized in the education system for centuries and this continues to be the case. The research examines the ways in which Black communities address the inadequacies and oppressive tendencies of the mainstream education system. It focuses on the self-empowerment practices of these communities as they work to ensure their children maximize their potential. Additionally, the study illustrates the ways in which Black people are actively engaged and invested in the educational success of Black students, countering the view that Black caregivers are apathetic or disinterested in their children’s education.

CRT’s focus on examining structural inequities such as anti-Black racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression allows me to contextualize CCACH’s supplementary education

programs as part of a response to (a) the erasure of Black history and contributions from the Canadian school curriculum and national narratives; and (b) the construction of Blackness as oppositional and outside of what it means to be Canadian. As outlined in Chapter Three, there have been various attempts to erase evidence of the long presence and contributions of Black people in Canada via the destruction of geographic sites, exclusion from narratives on Canadian history and from the official school curriculum. Further, the construction of Canadian identity is built on racist discourse that purposefully excludes Black history and tries to remove and destroy all references and evidence of the Black presence and the integral role that Black persons have played in Canadian nation building while centering Whiteness as a prerequisite and fundamental aspect of being Canadian (James, 1994; McKittrick, 2006; Walcott, 2003). This helps to project Canada as a White nation while presenting non-Whites as newcomers, “outside the *national project* of Canada and excluded from the *imagined community*” (Henry & Tator, 2010, p.17). This erasure and exclusion help to perpetuate a White supremacist ideology that sees White Canadians as being more Canadian than other racial groups, as being the only builders of the nation and as such Canada’s rightful rulers. This erasure impacts negatively on Black students who interpret the absence of Black people from the curriculum to mean that the cultural and racial groups to which they belong are insignificant in Canadian and indeed world history (Kelly, 1998). In addition to CCACH’s tutoring program, this study examines how CCACH’s AfroQuiz program attempts to compensate for that erasure of Blackness from the curriculum by providing students with study materials on Black leaders, history and contributions in Canada as well as globally.

## Community Cultural Wealth

In her research with Latina/Latino communities in the United States, Yosso sought to challenge the deficit view from which mainstream society assessed such communities. Yosso (2005) developed the theory of Community Cultural Wealth which she explains as

a Critical Race Theory challenge to traditional interpretations of cultural capital. CRT shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (p. 69).

The theory of Community Cultural Wealth is “a challenge [and alternative] to traditional interpretations of Bourdieuean cultural capital theory” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Yosso (2005) contends that the traditional interpretation of Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory is narrowly defined by White, middle class values, and is more limited than wealth- one’s “accumulated assets and resources” (p. 77). She defines Community Cultural Wealth as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts” which people of color draw upon to persevere in the face of and to resist macro- and micro forms of oppression” (Yosso 2005, p. 77). This Community Cultural Wealth is cultivated via six types of capital that are present in communities of color and help students to triumph in society despite the many forms of oppression they must overcome. Capital as used here refers to any resource that can be used to attain another resource or something else of value. In order for a resource or action to be understood as capital as used in my application of CCW it must result in an improvement of the lives of the persons using the resource or performing the action and/or the communities to which they belong. Improvement as used here involves experiencing upward social mobility within the current capitalist economic system. First, *aspirational capital*

refers to a kind of resilience that enables families that are marginalized to have high hopes and dreams for their children. Even where parents are not educated or work in low paying jobs, they are optimistic that their children will do well in school and be able to qualify for jobs that will afford them a high standard of living.

Second, communities of color display *linguistic capital*, that is, the communication skills that students develop by virtue of being multilingual, as well as the ability to express oneself using the visual and performing arts. Linguistic capital enables students to communicate effectively with others in oral and written form. It also develops their ability to translate from one language to the next and to be able to interpret for other people. This in turn facilitates students' ability to empathize with others and to view the world from multiple perspectives. Third, through *familial capital* students have access to kinship and friendship networks that contribute to a sense of community and collective identity in their specific cultural groups. Fourth, persons can benefit from *social capital*, that is, peers and the people in communities who can provide moral and practical support as needed. Fifth, people of color possess *navigational capital* which comprise the skills needed to survive and successfully progress through the various social institutions in society. Sixth, by utilizing *resistant capital* students and communities of color challenge societal norms and strive to be successful (Yosso, 2005, pp. 79-81). It is important to note the difference between resistant capital and resistance. The use of resistant capital always results in an improvement in the lives of people in communities of color, whereas there are types of resistance which though they oppose oppressive social structures do not improve the lives of those resisting but rather reproduce negative features of their lives. For example, Black students who choose to resist systemic racism in schools by playing truant, fighting with other students, or cursing teachers are resisting oppression but in ways that often lead to non-completion of their studies or other

forms of poor educational outcomes. Thus, while their behavior is a type of resistance it is not considered as resistant capital in my application of Yosso's CCW framework because it often does not lead to positive change in the lives of the students or in Black communities. These various forms of capital play an integral role in students' psychosocial development in that they help to give them a sense of community, history, and being a part of a collective, which plays an essential role in building students' self-esteem and pride in their cultural heritage. This is important because without self-esteem students will not have the confidence required to successfully overcome the challenges and rigor of the formal education system especially when they are in high school where they are consciously forming their identity, schoolwork is more challenging, and has important implications for postsecondary studies and job prospects. Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) research on a community college preparation program for Black youth showed that the high school students were able to draw on resistant, linguistic, and navigational capital in order to achieve their goals of being accepted to university.

I explore how these various types of capital are evident in the tutoring program and AfroQuiz programs organized by CCACH and the role they play in students' lives generally and educational growth specifically. In what ways does AfroQuiz offer resistant capital by teaching students about Black contributions and history across Canada and the world? Do students feel empowered when they learn that a Black man, Mifflin Gibbs, was instrumental in British Columbia becoming a part of the confederation of Canada, or about the many inventions by Black people that have contributed to human development such as stoplights or the modern blood bank? Additionally, does the knowledge that students gain translate into aspirational capital where because they are exposed to alternative, positive representations of Black peoples it inspires them to pursue dreams, projects, and careers that they wouldn't usually associate with Black people?

The norm in Canadian society is to associate Blackness with low status jobs and this can limit what students believe they can achieve because Black people are not usually presented as intelligent, important, contributing members of society (James, 2012). The portrayals of Blackness that students are given access to is critical because as Smith (2012) cautions “Representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of *the truth*” (p. 83). During the interviews, I probed how the students, their parents, and CCACH’s alumni, workers, and volunteers believed exposing students to representations of Black people as leaders, inventors, successful entrepreneurs and in other positive social roles influenced their conceptions of what they can achieve in school and their aspirations for the future.

### **Summary**

I have explained the ways in which Black identities are socially constructed in Canada. I have also discussed how the critical race theory and Community Cultural Wealth theoretical frameworks provide an appreciative, lens through which to understand, interrogate and critique the perceived contributions of CCACH’s supplementary educational programs. Critical Race Theory facilitates an understanding of how systemic racism created the need for the organization’s programs and provides a counter narrative to mainstream deficit theorizing about communities of color. The Community Cultural Wealth framework facilitates a demonstration of *how* communities of color support their children’s learning and theoretical right to education by making it an enabling right through making explicit the strategies, reasoning, and support systems they purposefully and strategically utilize in freeing themselves from mainstream negative stereotypes, focusing instead on the resources which they possess and how they can use them to improve their lives and their children’s lives.

## Chapter Five: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approach I used to conduct my doctoral research project. The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences of current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers within an organization that offers supplementary education programs aimed at addressing the educational development of Black students in the context of the systemic challenges such students face in the Canadian K-12 mainstream education system. I utilized Merriam's and Tisdell's (2016) exposition of qualitative case study methodology as this facilitated an in-depth understanding of the programs from diverse perspectives, using multiple methods and multiple data sources to ascertain in what ways, if any, participants believe the organization's endeavours contribute to Black students' educational development. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What difficulties and marginalizations do Black youth face in navigating the K-12 education system in Edmonton, Alberta?
2. How do CCACH'S current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers describe the role of its educational programs in the context of the marginalization of Black students in the mainstream K-12 education system?
3. How do CCACH's current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers perceive the organization's impact in relation to addressing the systemic challenges that Black students face in the K-12 education system?
4. How does CCACH resist marginalization of Black communities?

I begin with my positionality and how I became interested in the topic being investigated before discussing the qualitative research paradigm, case study methodology, and their appropriateness and usefulness for exploring the topic under consideration. Next, I

explore the critical race theory paradigm and how its epistemological and ontological assumptions guided the study before giving an overview of the research site, and how participants were selected. I then describe how document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation were used to generate data and the process by which the data was analyzed. I conclude with an overview of how the study conformed to research ethics requirements and the strategies that I used to ensure trustworthiness.

### **Positionality**

In many ways (qualitative) research is autobiographical (Seidman, 2013). People tend to choose a topic to investigate because it resonates in some sense with their identity and lived experiences and/or encompasses an issue that they care about or have some personal investment in. As the human instrument in this inquiry, it is important that I maintain a reflexive stance throughout the research as my values, experiences, and worldview will have an impact on the entire process. I recognize that all knowledge is socially situated in that as a researcher my social position in multiple social groups (such as being a woman, being Black), which occupy the lower rungs of the social hierarchy in relation to other groups (men, White persons), has afforded me particular experiences that influence how I see the world and will likely influence how I make meaning of the information generated during the research (Harding, 2005; Hill Collins, 2009). With this in mind, I will explain a little about who I am, my values and how they have influenced my choice to study this topic, and the way I propose to conduct this study.

I was born and raised in Jamaica and identify as a Black woman of African-Caribbean descent. Although my identity comprises many different, overlapping components, I have chosen to highlight my gender, race, and ethnicity because of the way in which these socially constructed identities have influenced how I experience the world, my world view, and my decision to study

this topic. Black is a racial category based on specific phenotypical features, the most prominent of which is dark skin. In the past, and presently in many societies around the world black skin has caused persons to experience the world in many negative ways. This includes being subjected to various forms of oppression and social marginalization. Thus, to consciously self-identify as a Black person may give one a particular lens through which to see the world, a lens that is sensitive to power relations, prejudice, and acts of resistance in ways that others who do not experience the world in such ways may be less attuned to. I am aware that my ethnic background has played a role in my concern with the relegation of African-Canadian history to the null curriculum in Canadian schools. The absence of Black history, culture and Black teachers is problematic and is having deleterious effects on Black students in Canada, particularly those in the upper years of the K-12 system many of whom exit school prematurely (African Canadian Working Group, 1992; Dei et al., 1997; James & Brathwaite, 1996).

It is this concern with the exclusion of Black history and culture from the curriculum, and the other challenges that Black students face that led to my interest in the activities of CCACH. I was introduced to the organization by a friend who invited me to attend AfroQuiz in 2016. AfroQuiz is a competition modeled on the game show Jeopardy! All the questions are based on selected topics in African and African diaspora history, culture, and achievements. The competition is held annually in February and has been in existence for 29 years. Each year CCACH board members decide on a theme, after which study materials are prepared by CCACH volunteers in accordance with the theme. The study materials usually become available several months before the competition to enable participants to familiarize themselves with the content. Participants compete in one of five age categories: 9 years and under, 10-12 years, 13-14 years, 15-17 years, or postsecondary. Each age category usually has 10 competitors and the three competitors with the

highest scores in each age category receive prizes such as tablets, smartphones, gift vouchers. All participants are given a book on some aspect of Black history or culture or a Black icon.

I was impressed with the way in which the competition was facilitating the dissemination of African and African diaspora history, culture, and achievements. I also learnt that CCACH offered Saturday tutoring in core curriculum subjects for students in the K-12 sector and resolved to volunteer with the organization. Since then, I have volunteered in several capacities including assisting with developing the study materials for AfroQuiz competitors, reviewing study materials, as a judge and as a researcher for the AfroQuiz's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations held in 2017. I have also competed in AfroQuiz as a contestant in the post-secondary category. This involvement has given me valuable insight into some aspects of the organization's programs. For instance, I have noticed how proud the contestants are when they place in the top three in their respective age categories. This pride extends to the friends and family members who came to support them, as well as to the general audience and is made evident in the shouts of encouragement. Thus, I wish to explore in depth the full range of the participants' feelings and in what ways the student participants believe AfroQuiz and/or the tutoring program influence how they see themselves as students. It is my hope that this comprehensive research will allow me to delve deeper and to understand the foregoing issues more.

Although the African and African diaspora communities in Edmonton are diverse, my experiences growing up in Jamaica, as a Black immigrant to Canada, and as a family member to persons who have progressed through the Canadian K-12 system may facilitate an understanding of some of the needs that CCACH's programs satisfy and the challenges that some African descended peoples face in navigating Canadian society, and in particular the education system. Additionally, being from the same racialized group as the participants, volunteers, and leaders of

the organization *may* allow them to be comfortable and candid in sharing their experiences with me (Schensul et al., 2013). I am aware of the position of scholars such as Narayan (1993) who warn researchers to be careful not to assume that sharing some commonalities with participants, such as race or ethnicity, gives them any special access to insights, understanding, or privileged information that another researcher without those commonalities would be excluded from. Narayan (1993) notes that “The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux” (p. 671). Therefore, researchers’ different social positions and overlapping identities preclude them from total insider status even with groups that they share various characteristics with. On the other hand, in conducting an ethnographic study on Black student disengagement from schooling in Toronto Dei et al. (1997) had this to say about the impact of interviewers’/interviewees’ common racial identities on the data generation process “the fact that the interviewers were Black/African-Canadian facilitated this study as the students identified with the interviewers and were able to take us into their confidence” (p. 28).

Based on Narayan’s and Dei et al.’s (1997) experiences there are two issues at play here: first there is the issue of perceived common social identities such as race facilitating rapport between the research and participants that could help the participants to open up about issues that they may not have had those commonalities been absent. The second issue is whether the researcher’s perceived commonalities with participants provides the researcher with more knowledge or understanding of the information and the experiences that participants share. With regard to these two issues, I acknowledge that the heterogeneity of Edmonton’s Black population means that while there may be convergences in my experiences and that of participants due to race there are also important divergences based on how race intersects with other social identities. Thus, being of the same race as participants is not a necessary nor sufficient condition for participants to

be open with sharing their experiences. As such, I remained open to the fact that perceived commonalities, whether race or others, *may* allow some participants to be more open, it *may* influence some to be less open, and for some it may not matter at all.

I acknowledge the importance of reflexivity in conducting this research. “The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2010, p.14). I reflected on why I chose to investigate this topic, and the values and assumptions that I bring to the research. I kept a reflexive journal throughout the research process to document my thoughts, reflections, and insights, on the entire research process and the data generated (Dowling, 2008).

### **Qualitative Research**

Merriam (1998) defines qualitative research as “...an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). The concept of quality is a key one in qualitative research. Berg (2009) elucidates this concept positing that “quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing- its essence and ambience.” (p. 3). One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to capture and communicate experiences that “cannot be meaningfully expressed by numbers” (Berg, 2009, p. 3). Qualitative researchers can do this using “concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (Berg, 2009, p. 3). Thus, qualitative research through its focus on descriptions and meaning allows for deep understanding of the issue being studied, that is, understanding that moves beyond the surface and gets at the heart of it. Additionally, Merriam & Tisdell (2016) propose that qualitative research is distinguished by the following four characteristics: “the focus is on process, understanding and

meaning, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the process is inductive, the product is richly descriptive” (p. 15). Therefore, in conducting this study I focused on the voices and perspectives of the participants taking care to share their views in a way that represents the nuances in their experiences and remain cognizant that the type and depth of data generated, and the interpretation of the data will be mediated by my own background and experiences.

Given that there are multiple ways to approach qualitative research, I will elaborate on my choice of case study methodology. Different researchers may choose an approach based on the goal of their study. I decided to use case study methodology because my goal is to attain an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of CCACH’s programs from the perspective of all the different stakeholders and using several methods of data generation. I discuss case study methodology and its suitability for this investigation in the subsequent section.

### **Case Study Methodology**

Case study methodology is one type of qualitative research method and is described by Creswell and Poth (2018) as a

qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), a case description and case themes. (p. 97)

Key to an understanding of case study methodology is the concept of the *bounded case* and so I will give a brief definition of the meanings of the terms as used in this research. Yin (2018) explains that a case is “a concrete entity, e.g. a person or a small group, organization, community

program, process, policy, practice, or institution or events such as decisions” (p. 286). Creswell and Poth (2018) explain the meaning of the word bounded as used in the definition stating that it speaks to the parameters that delimit the case, for example, physical location or time (p. 97). My case is the supplementary education programs offered by CCACH, namely its Saturday tutoring program and its annual AfroQuiz competition. I identified participants within the organization from whom to access information, including its leaders and workers, volunteers, its students, alumni, and their parents. I explored the educational contributions of CCACH’S tutoring program since its inception as well as the contributions of its AfroQuiz competition. The physical boundary of this case study is Edmonton, Alberta where CCACH is located.

Using case study methodology to conduct the study was advantageous in several ways. First, it allowed me to study the programs in their natural setting and acquire knowledge of the real-life routine operations (Miles et al., 2014). I had the opportunity to observe and experience the various activities offered by the programs which helped me to be present for participants’ experiences and to be better able to ascertain if I represented their views in ways that were commensurate with their experiences.

Second, case studies allowed for the generation of “extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth information” (Berg, 2009, p. 318). Interacting with participants who were involved in the programs in various ways and utilizing several methods of data generation provided a detailed multilayered description and appreciation of students’ experiences with the programs (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Using semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and participant observation allowed me to generate data from various angles, and to analyze the programs through multiple lenses thereby gaining a deeper understanding. Also, triangulating the data generation methods allowed me to give a thick, fulsome description of the case (Merriam,

1998). Because of its focus on depth and its use of multiple sources of data generation case study methodology allowed me to appreciate or to access nuances and “latent elements that other research approaches might overlook” (Berg, 2009, p.318). Additionally, employing triangulation facilitated confirmability, that is, ensuring that the data generated, and its interpretation accurately reflected the participants’ reality as opposed to my personal beliefs (Shenton, 2004). Using multiple data generation methods can allow me or someone else reviewing the research to assess if the various information generated from the different approaches support the claim being made or if there are divergences or contradictions in the data that cast doubt on the interpretation.

Last, using case study as a methodology allowed me to draw on past as well as present data for analysis including documents produced in the past such as past AfroQuiz study materials and student enrolment numbers. Additionally, I interviewed previous volunteers, workers, leaders, and students. This allowed me access to information that present students, leaders, tutors or volunteers may not have. The temporal boundary for the study was 1985 (when CCACH was formed) to 2020. This means I was able to access any documents that were created during that time period, and I interviewed persons who utilized the organizations services during that time.

Despite its advantages, a key challenge associated with case study methodology is that it is very time intensive. Stake (2006) estimates that for every one hour the researcher spends collecting data another six will be required for planning and interpretation including writing (p. 4). I considered the time intensive nature of case study methodology when deciding on the scope of the research as it relates to the number of organizations to study and sample size. In the subsequent section I discuss the ontological and epistemological premises of the proposed study.

## Critical Race Theory

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994) a paradigm is "...the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). They expound that "It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the 'world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts..." (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). This research was situated in the critical theory paradigm and specifically the critical race theory paradigm. Critical theory is a blanket term for various paradigms all joined by their focus on the presence of social injustice in society and the belief in the liberatory, transformative prerogative of research, as well as the belief that all research is value mediated, that is, the values/biases of the researcher and participants influence the research process and its findings (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Kincheloe et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Further

...critical theorists take apart normalized notions of democracy, freedom, opportunity structures, and social justice to denounce systems of power and domination, including the transnational capitalist class and the political structures that support them. Critical theorists also pursue questions of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, gender oppression, religious intolerance, and other systems of oppression (Kinchloe et al., 2018, p. 236).

Critical race theory is an activist-oriented paradigm (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Tate, 1997), theoretical framework (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Tate, 1997), theory (Gillborn, 2013), and social movement that developed in the late 1970s out of the Neo-Marxist legal movements known as Legal Realism and Critical Legal Studies (Tate, 1997). Critical Race Theory focuses on examining race, racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism in society. Some of its foundational thinkers include legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé

Crenshaw, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams (Litowitz, 2016). Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV were the first to apply the theory and methods of Critical race theory to the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 2013). In this chapter, I focus on Critical race theory as a research paradigm. This paradigm is based on the belief that racism is endemic and engrained in the very fabric of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

In relation to education and schooling, critical race theory scholars highlight the ways in which education and schooling perpetuate racism and marginalize non-White students. To quote critical race theorist and educator Gloria Ladson-Billings (2004), “CRT sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” (p. 60). This results in the erasure of stories of minority groups that challenge the dominant culture’s authority and power.

The current research sought to explore the ways in which the programs offered by CCACH were responding to the absence of African and African diasporic history and culture in mainstream Canadian schools and the ways in which its programs are assisting students to navigate secondary school in Canada. In the process, the research also sheds light on the ways in which curricular absences shaped students’ and families’ experiences of the mainstream education system.

### ***The Ontology of Critical Race Theory***

Ontology is concerned with answering the question “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Ontology as used in this study refers to social ontology. Noonan (2012) in differentiating between ontology as used by those in classical philosophy and social ontology explains that whereas the former was concerned with “more basic questions of the universal forms of existence” (p. 577), the latter is concerned with “providing general accounts of the nature of social reality” (p. 578). Further, he

contends that “unlike the objects of natural science, which are not produced by human action and thus constitute a reality that truly is given to the mind to investigate, social reality is the result of complex forms of human action and interaction” (Noonan, 2012, p. 578). By placing emphasis on social ontology, I am able to better examine the ways in which the systemic racism evident in Canadian society, and institutionalized in social institutions such as schools, have contributed to the marginalization of Black students which in part explain why the programs offered by community organizations such as CCACH are necessary and exist in the first place. Focusing on how human beings create reality through their actions also allowed for an examination of how the programs offered by CCACH were attempting to offset the deficiencies in the mainstream school curriculum and to offer students a learning space where their needs as students, their history and culture were brought from the margins and given a position of importance.

The ontological position upon which this study was premised is that of historical realism. This perspective views reality as “... shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time” (Lincoln et al., 2018, p. 110). Nicholas and Hathcoat (2014) explains that “historical realism views reality as a product of historical processes. When conceived thus, reality is constructed and reified through social interaction. Virtual, constructed realities *acquire* a ‘real,’ objective, and sometimes immutable quality through time and historical existence” (p. 570). Thus, we see that for critical race theorists reality is primarily a social phenomenon created by human beings. They reject the notion of an objective reality that exists independently of human beings which can only be incompletely apprehended by detached observation, arguing instead that human beings are a part of and help to create what is real. Humans are in the world as thinking subjects “...and what humans do in it never has physical consequences only. In constantly transforming their environment, women and men are shaping the very

conditions for their existence and their life” (Crotty, 1998, p. 150). Therefore, although a material world exists in the form of the natural environment, it is human beings who name and categorize that environment, and their behaviour and decisions impact on it. Additionally, it is the thought processes and interactions of human beings that create the social world and the circumstances that define it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT is activist oriented and this is testament to its belief that human beings created the oppressive social structures that disadvantage some and human beings can also dismantle and/ or change them over time. While critical race theorists advocate and work towards structural changes in the economy, education system, justice system, and other areas they do not discount the struggle that persons engage in such as groups in Black communities that offer tutoring and teach Black history in community spaces to compensate for its absence in the school curriculum. Although these actions do not change the education system (structural change), they do change the students and other persons who partake in them by facilitating racial pride and engendering high aspirations for themselves as Black people. This in turn builds a strong Black middle class that can engage in transforming the system once they have been able to rise to positions of power and leadership.

Critical race scholars note the endemic nature of oppression, particularly racism, which has been embedded in social institutions over time to the extent that it has been normalized (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Further, this racism is interconnected with other forms of injustice which led legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to develop the theory of intersectionality that highlights the ways in which interlocking systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, and classism shape the experiences of marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality uses the metaphor of a road to show how social structures use overlapping identities as avenues for

discrimination against and points of vulnerability for different people in myriad social contexts (Crenshaw, 2016).

Despite the dismal outlook on reality as currently constructed, critical race theory scholars assert that since this reality is the product of human action and in some instances, inaction, human beings can also act to transform it (Huber, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2004). The programs offered by CCACH are demonstrative of that transformative potential, in that African-Canadians, on recognizing the shortcomings of the curriculum in mainstream Canadian K-12 schools, have devised programs to ensure that Black students receive the culturally responsive knowledge and support that all students should receive.

### *The Epistemology of Critical Race Theory*

Epistemology is “the nature of knowledge and its construction” (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 84). It speaks to what we know and the process by which we come to know it. Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2018) notes that epistemology is also concerned with the question “What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?” (p. 13). The epistemology of Critical race theory can be described as transactional and subjectivist (Lincoln et al., 2018). This means that knowledge is a social enterprise, constructed through human interaction and is mediated by people’s values and the sociopolitical and economic context in which they live. Researchers come to know by getting involved in the activities of participants and interacting with them via conversations and/or participating in their routines in order to acquire insights into their lived experiences. The information generated is subjectivist in that “meaning is completely imposed by human subjects” and may differ from one person to the next based on a range of sociodemographic variables and depending on context (Hathcoat & Nicholas, 2014, p. 303). What is more, knowledge is never neutral and is in fact political, as “researchers believe that knowledge

that is produced can change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment” (Merriam, 1991 as cited in Lincoln et al., 2011). In the case of the present research while CCACH’s programs have not resulted in a removal of systemic racism in schools or the wider society, they contribute to the struggle for greater equity for Black students.

Critical race theorists see knowledge as being gained primarily through experience and as being mediated by power (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Moreover Delgado Bernal (2002) contends that “although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (p.106). Consequently, my data generation methods centered the experiences of the Black students who use CCACH’s programs by conducting individual interviews with them so that they can explain their experiences in their own words, highlighting aspects that are meaningful to them. Additionally, critical race theorists place much value on knowledge gained through lived experiences outside of the mainstream school system (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This emphasis on lived experience as a source of knowledge encourages the researcher to assume the role of active participant as opposed to detached observer. My data generation methods were based on this view of knowledge.

Engaging in participant observation of CCACH’s Saturday tutoring sessions and AfroQuiz facilitated an empathetic understanding of participants’ experiences with the organization and how it impacted on their educational development. The interviews allowed me to engage in conversation with participants and get some insight into the significance and meanings of the programs to them and to understand their views about them. In the end the synthesis that I wrote as the findings of the study were a product of the ideas/ thoughts we shared in the interviews, what I observed during the tutoring sessions, the AfroQuiz study materials, and the analysis of the

Alberta K-12 curricula. Critical race theory's epistemology is transactional because the knowledge generated will come out of exchanges and interactions between me and the participants. Hence, I use the term data generation as opposed to data collection because I did not view the information that I needed as being out there somewhere independent of myself and the participants, rather it was a product of our interactions and conversations with each other.

### **Research Site**

The prairies have the highest Black population growth rate in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019b). The research was conducted in Alberta's capital city, Edmonton, home to over 50, 000 Black people who comprise 4.5% of its population (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Further, the Black population is youthful with 12.5 % of the population in Edmonton 0-25 years old being Black<sup>3</sup> (Statistics Canada, 2017b). The Black population is diverse, consisting of persons from various countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. There are several organizations that serve Black people including not-for-profits that seek to assist with the resettlement and/or integration of Black immigrants and refugees in Canadian society. CCACH is one of several organizations that offer out of school tutoring and affective support for students in the K-12 education sector. Edmonton was an ideal place to conduct this research because of the fairly significant number of Black people who live in the city and its long history of Black community organization and activism.

CCACH has been in existence for over 33 years, having evolved out of the Council of Black Organizations, and has served several generations of Black students. In addition to its longevity, it is an ideal organization with which to conduct the research because often organizations serving Black people usually serve *either* Africans who were born in or have family ties to at least one African country *or* African descended peoples born in the diaspora with no

direct family ties to Africa. CCACH is rare in that it serves both groups. In the 2019/2020 academic year there were 28 students in the tutoring program and 10 tutors, for the 2020/2021 academic year the program had 18 tutors and 52 students enrolled (CCACH Executive Director, S. Muchekeza, personal communication, November 02, 2020). AfroQuiz usually has approximately 50 contestants annually spread across five age categories with roughly 10 contestants in each category (AfroQuiz Chair, M. Cesar, personal communication, January 31, 2019).

### **Study Participants**

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling so that I could select persons who would best provide information to facilitate a thorough understanding of CCACH's programs and their impact on participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since its inception over three decades ago CCACH has served on average 15 children per academic year tutored by between 10-12 tutors. On average 18 parents, (that is the father and mother of each child), enrolled their children in the tutoring program (former CCACH Chairperson, J. Austin- Odina personal communication, April 09, 2018). Based on the average number of clients served, the size of CCACH's board and staff, and the fact that this is a qualitative case study which will not seek to make generalizations based on its findings, I interviewed 25 participants (Daniel, 2012).<sup>4</sup> Between August 2019 and March 2020, I conducted semi-structured interviews with six students and alumni, one of the persons who were instrumental in the founding of CCACH and AfroQuiz, six parents, four tutors, and nine persons who presently held or had held administrative positions in CCACH . I adhered to Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) advice that what is needed is a sufficient number of participants to answer the research questions and fulfil the purpose of the research and the 25 participants I interviewed provided me with sufficient data saturation for me to stop conducting interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The main criteria which were used to select student participants were: they had used the tutoring service for at least one academic year and were in grade 8 or above. I have stipulated grade 8 as the minimum grade because studies conducted in other jurisdictions that keep disaggregated performance data show that Grades 9 and 10 are critical because the stream that students are placed in for those grades have a direct impact on their program of study in grades 11 and 12, and ultimately impacts on whether they complete high school within the expected four-year time period and whether they pursue postsecondary education (James et al., 2017). The participants in this study were between 12 and 16 years old. Most Black students are streamed in non-academic programs and are much less likely to complete their high school education and are also less likely to pursue postsecondary studies (James et al., 2017). At the time of the interviews enough students in grade 9 and above did not meet the criteria for using tutoring for at least one year and so I interviewed one grade 8 student. I also interviewed tutors who assisted students in grade 8 and above.

Tutors accounted for 16% of participants, 12% were students, 12% were alumni, 24% were parents of students who had accessed or were accessing CCACH's services, and 36% were CCACH volunteers and administrative staff. The overwhelming majority of the participants were female (80%). Except for one participant, participants belonged to African or African-Caribbean ethnic background. Over one third of the respondents were born in Canada (36%), Jamaica and Nigeria accounted for 16% each, Malawi and Zimbabwe accounted for 8% each. Sixty-four percent of participants had a master's or bachelor's degree, 16% had a high school diploma and 12% were still in high school. The occupations of participants included administrators in post-secondary education, accountant, social worker, hair stylist, engineer, education consultant, teacher, customer service representative. Most respondents, (60%), had lived in Canada for over

20 years or more, 32% had lived in Canada for 10-19 years and 8% for under 10 years. Tables 1-6 provide more details about participants demographic characteristics.

### **Data Generation Methods**

As mentioned previously, I viewed this research as data generation as opposed to data gathering. To that end, I believe it is important to present a holistic and well-rounded picture of CCACH as a whole, in addition to looking more closely at the students' experiences with its programs. Therefore, the next few sections outline how I generated data from documents, interviews, and observations to gain a holistic understanding of CCACH, its services and the contributions to students' academic development.

#### ***Documents***

Documents as used here refers to “printed and other materials relevant to the study, including public records, personal documents, popular culture and popular media, visual documents, and physical artifacts” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 106). I reviewed CCACH's website, to increase my understanding of the history of the organization, its aims and objectives, and its programs. I analyzed AfroQuiz study materials for ages 10-18 for the five-year period 2015-2020.

These AfroQuiz study materials were a rich source of data and were a less obtrusive method of data generation (Bowen, 2009). They provided me with insights how CCACH disseminates information about Black history and achievements to address the lack of such information in school curricula and instil Black racial pride.

I perused the Alberta K-12 curriculum outlines to ascertain the degree to which there was any mention of Black history, cultures, or contributions in the various subject areas.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Semi-structured Interviews***

Interviews are conversations during which the researcher seeks to gain more insight on a participant's knowledge of and/or experiences of a topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I began interviews after receiving ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. I conducted at least one semi structured interview with each participant lasting on average 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted at times and locations convenient to participants including at their homes, in public libraries, at community organizations, and in private meeting rooms at postsecondary institutions in Edmonton, restaurants, and at a church. Participants received the consent forms, interview questions and demographic survey by email prior to the interview.

At the start of each interview, I read through the consent form with the participants and answered all questions they had. I received written consent from parents for children under 18 to participate and I also received written consent assent from these children. All the interviews were conducted in English since all participants were either native English speakers or were fluent in English. I had some written questions to guide the interview and to serve as a launch pad for the conversation, however the conversations were guided primarily by the responses of the participants and what information they shared throughout the process (Hays & Singh, 2012). Using semi-structured interviews allowed each participant to express their experiences and views using their own words "and in a way that [was] meaningful to them" (Hays & Singh, 2012; Van Den Hoonaard, 2012, p. 78). This allowed information that I did not foresee or consider to come to the fore. Additionally, Van Den Hoonaard (2012) asserts that "in-depth interviews often encourage participants to think about their experiences in new ways and to formulate ideas and opinions that they did not possess before the interview began" (p. 81). Further, I was able to gain clarification and explanation of any details immediately. Finally, interviews allowed me to access information

that could not be accessed through other means such as interviewees' stated motives and intentions for different actions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A disadvantage of using interviews was that a few participants expressed to me that they did not wish to relate some of their experiences in their entirety (Hays & Singh, 2012). All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber. Additionally, I wrote a reflexive note in my journal as soon as possible after the interview as a means of documenting my impressions of the interview.

### ***Demographic Questionnaire***

I asked all 25 participants to complete a short questionnaire as a means of getting some demographic information to assist in contextualizing the information gained via the interviews, participant observation and documents. These surveys were completed at the beginning of the individual interviews.

### ***Overt Participant Observation***

“Participant observation refers to the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in day-to-day routine activities of participants in the research setting” (Schensul et al., 1999, p. 91). In this study I assumed an observer as participant role when watching the tutoring sessions. This means that while observing the activities engaged with or interacted with participants when they invite me to do so instead of restricting myself strictly to observing only. I conducted participant observation of 15 tutoring sessions over six Saturdays between November 2019-June 2020. I recorded field notes at each observation which I expanded on after the observations for each Saturday were concluded. I participated in as many of the organization's activities as possible including attending AfroQuiz annually from 2016 -2020 and observing some of the tutoring sessions. I have participated in AfroQuiz as a contestant in the postsecondary section

twice (in 2016 and 2017). Additionally, I served as a materials developer for AfroQuiz in 2018 where I compiled study materials and questions for contestants in the 13-14 years old age group. In 2017, I served as materials reviewer and developed practice questions for contestants (excluding post secondary contestants) to use in preparation for the AfroQuiz.

This method of data generation allowed me to experience firsthand the key components of the students' experiences with CCACH and facilitated contextual and tacit understanding that I could not gain otherwise and allowed me access to information interviewees did not mention (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I am mindful that my presence may have had an effect on how participants behaved during the observation and that the notes I recorded were subjective and incomplete since they were based on what I selected to observe, and it is impossible to record everything (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Some of the information I included in the field notes were descriptions of the location including sensory information such demographic information about the participants, synopsis of conversations, and my reflections on what I observed (Hays & Singh, 2012). I also documented my insights, questions, or general thoughts on the information being gathered (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Data Analysis**

Like most qualitative studies the processes of this research was recursive and data generation and analysis occurred concurrently. In keeping with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) advice, I began data analysis with the first instance of data generation. In this case that was after the first interview. Beginning analysis soon after the data generation process allowed me to follow up on insights or questions early on. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo

12. The AfroQuiz Study Materials and the tutoring Observations were also analyzed using NVivo 12.

I created a case study database or case record consisting of all the different types of data (interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents) that was used in the analysis. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Coding is a key component of data analysis. Saldaña (2016) defines a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). First, I engaged in open or descriptive coding which involved identifying and annotating aspects of the data that are potentially meaningful or that helped me to understand the main issues that had emerged during the interviews. The names I assigned to codes came verbatim from the data generated using the exact words that participants used in describing their experiences. Second, I engaged in axial/ analytical coding where I looked for patterns or similarities across the descriptive codes that helped me to group similar descriptive codes together and assign a name to the cluster thereby forming categories or themes. Finally, I wrote the case study narrative according to the themes identified (Patton, 2015). It is important to note that although I have presented these steps sequentially for clarity, I acknowledge that in reality the process was not this linear and that throughout the data analysis process I moved back and forth throughout the three stages as I made sense of the data. I conducted document analysis of AfroQuiz materials with the goal of understanding what type of information CCACH was disseminating about Black history, communities, and contributions. I read through the study materials and encapsulated in short sentences what I interpreted the materials to be communicating about Black people, history, cultures, and Black contributions to the world. I then incorporated my analysis of the AfroQuiz study materials with my interpretation of the interview data. Additionally, I reviewed my field

notes from my participant observation sessions and integrated them with the interview data where appropriate.

### **Trustworthiness, and Engendering Social Transformation**

I took the necessary measures to ensure that the study was credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility speaks to whether the research investigates the intended constructs and phenomenon. Shenton (2004) proposes that the researcher familiarize herself with the way of life or routine operations of the program/group that will be studied. This will provide some insights into routine practises. I have volunteered with CCACH as a study materials developer for the AfroQuiz contestants. I have also attended AfroQuiz three times and participated as a contestant in AfroQuiz twice. In addition, I observed tutoring over a period of 8 months to ensure that this prolonged engagement would help me to interpret the information generated accurately and in ways that were congruent with what participants mean. Further, participants were invited to review their transcripts to ensure that the dialogue presented accurately represents the perspectives they intended to convey. Scrutiny from my supervisors, committee and peers also served to ensure credibility.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the research are applicable to other situations (Shenton, 2004). I have provided rich, comprehensive descriptions of the research process and participants to enable readers to determine the extent to which they are similar to other contexts. This includes information about the research setting and context, the number of participants and their demographic characteristics, the data generation methods used, and the time span over which the data was generated (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability is the degree to which other researchers would be able to replicate study using similar methods even if they do not arrive at the same conclusions. The understanding here is that because qualitative studies generally study human behavior and construction of meaning, which are inherently dynamic and often idiosyncratic it is unlikely that persons will have the same findings. I have provided descriptions of the research design, implementation and the process of data generation and analysis to facilitate dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability involves “ensuring that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). As mentioned previously I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process to sift through document and highlight my views and assumptions and to assess the extent to which they are influencing the research. I also used various methods of data generation and sources of information to and the degree of convergence or divergence among the data generated among these sources and methods can act as one indicator of whether or not my interpretations are confirmable. I have also provided rich verbatim quotes from participants which will allow readers to determine if my interpretations align with or reflect what participants communicated or not.

One of the expectations for research conducted using the critical race theory paradigm is that it will have some form of transformative impact on the research participants and society generally (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This research will allow the administrators of CCACH access to current data about the tutoring program and AfroQuiz’s contributions to participants’ educational growth. There may also be insights into the type of African and African Diaspora focused content that enriches student learning and generates a sense of engagement with education for Black students. These insights may be shared with other organizations doing similar work and

with the various school systems in which CCACH students are enrolled, thus having the potential to impact curricula outside of CCACH on the one hand, and on school system educators' knowledge of African and African Diaspora student needs on the other.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In keeping with the regulations at the University of Alberta I received ethics approval from the University's ethics board. I ensured that I obtained the informed consent of participants, ensured their anonymity as best as possible and kept the information gathered confidential. The organization itself will be identifiable because AfroQuiz is unique in Edmonton, however I have protected the confidentiality of the individual participants.

### ***Informed Consent***

Informed consent means that the participants in the research choose to participate in the research without any pressure, trickery, or unfair enticement (Berg, 2009). I ensured that participants were fully aware of the purpose of the research and how the information they provided would be used by developing and asking them to sign an informed consent form before I conducted the interviews and the participant observations (Creswell, 2009). In the case of participants under 18 years of age, asked one of their parents to sign a consent form to indicate their permission for their child to participate in the study and I also asked the participants themselves to sign assent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The components of the consent form include identification of myself as the researcher and the educational institution I am affiliated with, explanation of the purpose of the research, benefits for participating in the study, statement of the type of participant involvement, potential risks to participants, assurance that the information shared will be kept confidential, guarantee that participants can withdraw at anytime before their data is pooled, and my contact information in

the event that participants needed to contact me at any point (Creswell, 2009, p. 89). I discussed each element on the consent form with the participants and answered any questions they had regarding the research, after which if they were still comfortable with participating, they signed the form, and I conducted the interviews.

In the case of the observations, CCACH's executive director emailed parents to make them aware of the research and that I would be doing observations of tutoring sessions. Additionally, before I started the observations the lead tutor made the students and tutors aware that I would be observing tutoring, whenever I wanted to observe a specific tutoring one on one tutoring session, I asked for permission from the tutor and the student before I did so. I only observed specific tutoring sessions where the tutor and student consented to their conversation and interactions being observed and recorded.

### ***Anonymity***

Anonymity means that the participants' real names are not used in the research. I asked participants to provide a pseudonym to replace their real names. The pseudonyms are used in the narrative descriptions.

### ***Confidentiality***

This refers to removing as best as possible from the research records all elements that could divulge the identities of the participants (Berg, 2009). I ensured that only myself and if needed, my supervisory committee have access to the data generated. All audio records and printed materials such as consent forms will be stored in a secure cabinet at the University of Alberta for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed. I completed data analysis on a password protected computer accessible only to myself.

## Summary

In this chapter I discussed how situating the research in the critical race theory paradigm and using case study methodology facilitated an in-depth understanding of CCACH's supplementary education programs and their contributions to the educational development of Black students in the K-12 education system. I justified the use of case study as a methodology that allowed for the generation of nuanced, rich data from multiple participant perspectives using several methods of data generation. I gave an overview of the research site, how participants were selected, and how the data generated was analyzed. The strategies that were employed to ensure trustworthiness and appropriate ethical standards were also outlined.

## **Chapter Six: The Importance of Representation**

### **Introduction**

This is a critical qualitative case study of the supplementary education programs offered by the Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH) based in Edmonton, Alberta. CCACH was formed in 1985 as a result of the amalgamation of 25 mostly Caribbean Organizations. Since 1992 the organization has offered tutoring for Black K-12 students on Saturdays from 10 AM to 1PM. Students receive 1 hour of tutoring in a subject area of their choice and are tutored by predominantly Black students enrolled in postsecondary programs. Families pay \$100 per child to receive tutoring from October to June and tutoring takes place in a classroom located in an old school building. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic some tutoring sessions are also conducted using secure virtual platforms. Additionally, CCACH organizes an annual competition called AfroQuiz, a Jeopardy! styled gameshow developed in 1999 to share information about Black history, contributions, and cultures. The temporal boundary for this case study is 1985-2020.

My data generation methods consisted of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and a short demographic questionnaire which I used to collect background information on participants. I analyzed Alberta's K-12 curriculum outlines to ascertain the extent to which there was any incorporation of Black history, culture or contributions. I also analyzed AfroQuiz study materials from 2015-20. I conducted interviews with 25 persons comprising present students receiving tutoring from CCACH, past students, tutors, parents, and past and present CCACH administrators and collected demographic information from them using a short questionnaire. Finally, I observed 15 Saturday tutoring sessions between November 2019 and June 2020.

In this chapter, I explore the theme of representation. I use Hall's (1997) theory of representation where he posits that discourse is a "system of representation" and "is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about- a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall as cited in Hall 1997, p. 29). Consequently, how different issues or people are represented, framed, discussed, and understood in any given time period is determined by regimes of truth or general statements or ways of thinking about phenomena that people have accepted as real and true. Hall (1997) stated that "representation works as much in what is *not* shown as through what is" (p. 43). Representations of Blackness and Black people in Canada are largely negative. The discourse about Black people largely associates them with criminality (Maynard, 2017), intellectual deficiency, dysfunctional families (James, 2012) and other forms of social malaise. These representations elide the diversity of Black people historically and in the present, delimiting notions for both Black and non-Black people of who people of African descent were, are, and can be in the future. All of these representations divert attention from the ways in which systemic inequities shape the challenges that Black communities face and point to deficiencies in these communities as the cause of their problems. Such representations become tools of oppression in Black students' school experiences where negative stereotypes about Black people as being unintelligent and delinquent influence how Black students are treated by teachers and other school officials (Annamma et al., 2019; James, 2012).

Informed by this discursive approach to representation, I examine schools and formal educational curricula to see what racial groups are present or absent in positions of authority (e.g., teachers), how Black peoples are depicted in the curricula, spoken and written about if at all, and what are the notable absences of Black history and culture in the curricula (e.g.,

Transatlantic Slave Trade). Representation is influenced by social institutions in that institutions such as schools and the media produce and reproduce negative discourses about different groups of people. However, some groups demonstrate agency by empowering themselves to resist oppressive social structures and exclusionary representations. I begin by outlining the main types of capital relevant to this chapter, after which I define the terms social structure and agency. Next, using CRT as a lens I analyze the Alberta K-12 curriculum after which I examine CCACH's use of several types of capital to contribute to positive representations of Black people and the perceived impacts on Black students. Ultimately across all four data themes, it is social capital that is at work in CCACH. A group of Black persons decided to pool their skills, time, monetary, and other resources to create an organization that provides students with the social connections and opportunities they need to overcome the obstacles they face in the Canadian education system. Some volunteer their time to serve on CCACH's board and to perform other duties to steer the organization in the right direction. They formed a social network that transmits beliefs, and values to uplift Black youth and their families and that allowed them to connect with persons who could inspire them and show them how to successfully navigate Canadian society. This organization also worked to ensure that Black students and their families were afforded maximum respect by educators, treated fairly and ensured that educators fulfilled their responsibilities to students. In addition to social capital, resistant, aspirational, and navigation capital are most salient in this chapter.

Recall that according to Yosso (2005) resistant capital speaks to the ways in which Communities of Color defy and overcome different forms of oppression. Resistant capital is always positively transformational in that it should result in improvements in the social and/or economic wellbeing of the resistor(s). Even if the resistant capital does not cause widespread

changes in social institutions, if it results in positive socioeconomic change in the lives of an individual, family or group, or inspires them to take non self-defeating actions that do not reproduce their social and economic subordination, then they are considered to have overcome oppression because they did not allow the challenges they faced to impede their upward social mobility. Aspirational capital refers to how Communities of Color manage to dream and have high aspirations for themselves even in the face of low socioeconomic status and other circumstances that are potential barriers to success. Navigational capital is the strategies, skills, and knowledge that minoritized people use to progress and make their way through racist social institutions successfully. Below, I provide data to illustrate these forms of capital.

### **“There Was No Sense Of Not Only African History But Black History In General”**

Social structure refers to “any recurring pattern of social behaviour; or, more specifically, to the ordered interrelationships between the different elements of a social system or society” (Scott, 2015). Institutions such as schools are components of social structure. There is a certain tension between the concepts structure and agency as explained by Bruce and Yearly (2006).

Agency denotes individual capacity for free thought and action; structure denotes the constraints on individuals that result from the fact that repeated patterns of action, legitimated by ideologies, form the environment that shapes us (e.g. as we are socialised into a particular set of beliefs, values and attitudes in childhood) and limits our actions (by, for example, allocating the resources necessary for certain actions in an uneven manner).

One could argue that even though Black Canadians are constrained and restrained by patterns of racist beliefs and ideologies in Canadian society, they demonstrate agency or the capacity for free thought and action in employing various strategies to achieve goals and

aspirations they set for themselves in spite of those constraints. Although some theorists argue that CRT emphasizes the importance that social structures play in determining peoples' actions over the ability of individuals to demonstrate free will and action (Robinson, 2004), it is important to remember that CRT has an activist orientation and also focuses on centering the experiences, including acts of resistance of marginalized people. As such this focus on activism point to an inherent belief in the potential of human agency to transform and resist oppressive social structures. Dominant groups in society create social structures that work in their best interests often at the expense of marginalized communities. The school curriculum is an expression of bias in the Canadian education system because by focusing almost exclusively on Europeans, their contributions to Canada and the world while ignoring the contributions and experiences of other peoples, the curricula reinforce ideas of European superiority and right to rule.

Kelly (1998, 2004), James et al. (2017), and Codjoe (2001), have noted the Eurocentric nature of Canadian school curricula and the deleterious effects that the exclusion of Black history and culture has on Black students. Instead of curricula that reflect Canada's racial and cultural diversity, "Whiteness continues to be perceived as neutral, i.e., neither an ethnicity nor a race, but the norm/default option, a standard by which others are judged and evaluated" (Fleras, 2014, p. 36). This allows for White, European history, especially French and English, to be taught as Canadian history while ignoring the contributions of Canadians who fall outside of those ethnic groups.

Similarly, the participants in the present study were also troubled by the lack of Black history in the curricula despite the long presence of Black people in Canada and the integral role that they have played in Canada's development. These contributions were made through the

forced labour of enslaved Africans, as interpreters facilitating trade between Indigenous peoples and Europeans, as soldiers fighting to protect Canada from annexation by the United States, as politicians, athletes, businesspeople, and in other roles (Cui & Kelly, 2012; Mathieu, 2010). The majority of participants across all the various subcategories including volunteers, tutors, students, parents, and alumni indicated that the absence of Black history, experiences, and cultures from the formal school curriculum was problematic for them and their children. In 2016, I conducted an analysis of Alberta's Official K-12 curriculum to understand the extent to which there was any mention of Black histories, cultures or experiences. I accessed the various subject curricula from the Alberta Education website. I examined the curricula for all subject areas with the exception of international languages, and First Nations, Inuit and Metis education. The subject curricula analyzed included Fine Arts, Mathematics, Science, French as a Second Language, English Language Arts, Social Studies, Health and Wellness Studies. Only the Social Studies curricula contained any specific reference to African-Canadian history or culture (a total of two references in the grade 5 curriculum covering the United Empire Loyalists and the Underground Railroad).<sup>5</sup> Thus, one can understand the cause for concern around the absence of this information from the curriculum.

Using a CRT lens, I propose that the absence of Black history, and culture from school curricula and the refusal to prioritize increasing the number of Black teachers in schools are reflective of systemic racism in Canadian society. Here I adopt Henry's and Tator's (2010) definition of systemic racism as "racism that consists of policies and practices, entrenched in established institutions, that result in the exclusion or advancement of specific groups of people" (p.384). The fact that the exclusion of Black history from the curriculum and the lack of Black teachers, despite the increasing proportion of Black students in schools, are not seen as important

by policy makers and administrators who have the power to effect change reflects systemic racism. It is the result of centuries old ideas regarding the inherent inferiority, intellectual, and otherwise, of Black peoples. It is fuelled by the belief that Black peoples have not contributed anything of significance to Canada or the world. How else could one explain the fact that Black peoples have centuries of residence in Canada, yet that history is ignored in schools? In the past, racism was overt in the form of policies that banned Black students from attending the same schools as White students (Hamilton, 2007; Knight 2012). Today the expression of racism is more subtle in that Black students are allowed in, but they are treated differently, subjected to harsher punishments, tracked into non-academic streams, given little positive attention from teachers, and forced to endure an alienating Eurocentric curriculum (Kelly, 1998; James et al., 2017; Maynard, 2017).

We need to examine how systemic racism is evident in Canadian society today. Black people were brought to the Americas as enslaved people and by law were denied the civil liberties afforded White people, being excluded from voting, owning property or accumulating wealth, barred from professional jobs, educational institutions and other means of upward social mobility. The struggle for Black civil rights in Canada has delivered many improvements. However, centuries of deliberate oppression and sabotage from White people, and the specific nature of anti-Blackness that shapes the Americas, mean that Black people are still at the bottom of the social ladder with limited, to no access to the positions of power that would allow them to implement the widescale changes needed to reverse the effects of over four centuries of racial oppression in the economic, legal, political, educational and other arenas. Black peoples' race has been used as a point of socially imposed vulnerability that has resulted in them being in the

lower social classes with limited access to wealth and power. This did not happen by chance or as a result of survival of the fittest, but by design.

Mainstream Canadian education perpetuates racism against and oppression of Black people by expunging Black contributions to Canada and ignoring the crucial role that Black enslaved labour, and the attempted and actual genocide of Indigenous people in the Americas has played in the creation of settler societies such as Canada. This exclusion is what Walcott (2003) calls “the absented presence of blackness in Canada” (p.136) and is apart of the strategies of erasure that Walcott (2003) and McKittrick (2006) argue are used to remove evidence of Black contributions to Canada. McKittrick (2006) proposes that this erasure allows Canada to be presented as a wholly White country. It is possible that Black history is excluded from the curriculum because it would entail a wrestling with and confronting Canada’s shameful past of enslavement and challenge the sanitized national imaginary of the hardworking, fair, morally upright Canadian, and compared to the United States of America, the humanitarian and welcoming Canadian. This is because fair, morally upright humans would not engage in the atrocities that were characteristic of slavery.

CCACH’s tutoring program and AfroQuiz are expressions of resistant capital in that they counteract the Eurocentric and racist curricula used in Canadian schools. Through AfroQuiz and tutoring CCACH exposes Black students to examples of Black excellence and challenge societal ideas of Black intellectual inferiority and stereotypes of Black people performing only menial roles and jobs in society. AfroQuiz and tutoring allow Black students to attain knowledge about their histories and cultures that they are denied in school. They challenge the Eurocentric narrative of Canadian nation building and highlight the importance of Black contributions to Canada. This knowledge along with a supportive and enabling learning environment helps these

students to improve their grades and to become more engaged in their own learning. Further tutoring provides students with opportunities for positive interaction with a teacher figure (tutor), often Black, which is a rare experience for many of them. CCACH has also made presentations to the Ministry of Education's curriculum working group to include Black history and cultures in the curriculum and has intervened on behalf of individual students when they believe they were being discriminated against by teachers. In these ways the organization has pushed back against negative representations of Black people, the exclusion of Black cultures and has exposed students to positive and varied representations of Blackness. Resistant capital differs from resistance in that the use of resistant capital results in positive transformative change for Black students and their families whereas other types of resistance may include self-defeating actions, for example when Black students play truant or refuse to do schoolwork as a means of distancing themselves from behaviours associated with White students. In this case they are resisting but it is not resistant capital because such behavior serves to keep them in low social and economic positions in society.

Concerning the curriculum, Providence, a parent who was born and schooled in Canada shared:

... I am a product of the local school system. So, in my experiences as a black student, from the perspective of the education, about more specifically black culture, black history, was minimal. So, there was none in the curriculum, as – for me as a student. The schools that I attended had few or no – in elementary school, had few or no students that shared my history as a black student. So, there was neither through the education, nor through the social network in the public school system, or in the school system, did I get very much exposure as an elementary student to my roots, history, culture, etcetera. All of that was provided through relationships external to the school, with either my family,

my parents, or other family members or friends of family, external sources of education.

(Providence, parent and CCACH volunteer)

The problem of the exclusion of Black history and culture from school curricula and school life continue to the present day as shown in the statement by Tina who was born in Canada and is currently a middle school student:

But I mean, what about everything else? Like, you know, like the [enslaved labourers], you know. Like the railway. There were like Asian [enslaved labourers], or black [enslaved labourers], you know, cotton, everything like this, and that. Like so it was all a thing. And I feel like you only learn it from like seeing it on TV or seeing it in movies. Like what's – what's in Africa? What's – like people think it's a country. Like I thought it was a country. Like I had a news interview for AfroQuiz like four years ago. I found it just like three days ago and I said Africa was a country. It's not a country, it's a continent. 54 countries. How do I know that? Because of AfroQuiz. It's like I'm not learning this stuff because of school. I'm learning it from somewhere else, so I feel like I should be learning about that because of school. (Tina, CCACH student)

Both Providence and Tina found other means in non-school spaces to learn about Black histories which would indicate that they felt that the knowledge was important to them in some way. Additionally, participants shared the impact they believed the negation of Black histories from the curriculum had on Black students. Ayo, who is a CCACH alumna, born in Nigeria and raised in Canada observed:

... I know that as a black child who went through the system, that my needs weren't necessarily met. And this was at a time where I didn't even know what my needs were. I didn't necessarily understand that seeing a reflection of myself in the stuff that I was

learning could have completely changed my experience in junior high and high school, and my confidence or my knowledge of self. I just accepted the way things were because I thought honestly that that was what education *could* look like. (Ayo, CCACH alumna and volunteer)

Ayo indicates here that not seeing any representation of herself in the curriculum impacted negatively on her confidence and even lulled her into a state where she did not see the negation of Black experiences, histories, and Black presence as questionable.

One tutor participant who was born in Western Africa and raised in Canada explained that the negation of Black history left her feeling foreign to Canada. This speaks to the fact that these negations send a message to Black students that they do not belong to Canada:

So, I think that to unpack it deeper, it's that our school system wasn't made in the ways that it brought space for black students. Incredibly, there are so many ways that I think I feel foreign in the system. The examples they use, the kinds of ways they just brush off even teaching about Africa, or black history, or the richness of black Canadian like contributions to this country, is never touched on. And I think that those are ways you can look at making curriculum changes, making training changes. Making like just changes to how we structure like student interactions, that would make it so much more accessible and empowering for black individuals. (Zella, CCACH tutor)

All participants felt that school curricula needed reform to make them more culturally responsive and indicated that they gained knowledge about Black people from non-school spaces such as AfroQuiz, family, and friends. There are several implications of this negation of all things Black from the curricula. The fact that the school curricula is not reflective of the cultural diversity that is evident in Canadian society is an expression of how Canada talks about diversity

without taking concrete actions to ensure that social institutions operate in an equitable way. For subjects such as history, and social studies that are generally intended to create spaces for students to interrogate how Canada came to be the country that it is and what it means to be Canadian, it is indicative of how societal biases are reflected in the curricula and in schools. It reinforces the narrative that Canada is a creation of Europeans only, and other races and cultures have contributed nothing to and are outside of what it means to be Canadian. Further, when schools fail to teach Black history, Black communities are forced to design and sustain, often, through volunteers, programs to teach students about Black contributions to Canada and the world. It also puts additional stress on students as they need to invest additional time outside of school hours to access Black organized community-based programs designed to address deficits in the formal curriculum.

### **“There Are Not Very Many Black Educators”**

Another problem for Black students and their families is that there are very few Black teachers in the schools. James et al. (2017) noted the lack of Black teachers in the TDSB as a problem cited by members of Black communities. Similarly, a study conducted by the Turner Consulting Group (2015) found that there was a teacher diversity gap in Ontario K-12 schools. The teacher diversity gap speaks to the relatively low number of racialized teachers in relation to the number of racialized people in the population. The closer the number is to 1 the more representative the teaching population is of the diversity of the population generally. Ontario's teacher diversity gap of .50 indicates that its teaching staff was not representative of the population. I use the teacher diversity gap for Ontario because the gap for Alberta is unknown since the Alberta school boards do not collect and disseminate information about teaching staff disaggregated by race. Participants in James et al.'s (2017) and Turner Consulting Group's

(2015) study felt that Black teachers had high scholastic and conduct expectations of Black students and put in extra effort to ensure that Black students were successful in school. Having Black educators provide students with positive role models at school, provide persons on staff who understand Black cultures and are willing to advocate for fair treatment by teachers, have high expectations of students, motivate students to do well, and treat them with empathy and respect (Turner Consulting Group, 2015). These factors can play an important role in determining the class and school climate and may influence Black students' educational outcomes. In fact, studies conducted in the United States of America show that students' grades improve when they are taught by teachers of the same race (Dee, 2004). Unfortunately, many students complete their K-12 education without ever having a Black educator and have indicated that they feel their school experiences would have been better if they had more Black teachers:

...I think there are a few challenges. One challenge, and these are not necessarily in order of importance, per se. I think one challenge is, and is getting better, is that there are not very many black educators. So, when I was in school, I did not have a black educator. My first black educator was when I came to the U of A, and it was actually S.'s mom.

(Glady's, CCACH Administrator)

She added "We lack the representation for our Black kids to see themselves as educational leaders. There are not many Black teachers." (Glady's, CCACH Administrator). Similarly, Poinsetta, a parent born and raised in Jamaica, explained that not having Black teachers deprived Black students of positive mentors at school:

I do know that what I would love to see in the system is where there are more black instructors. And I think that especially when I think of the boys, the young black boys, somehow – somehow they're getting lost in the shuffle somehow. And I don't think it is a

matter of the parents are negligent, because I – yeah, I don't think the parents are being negligent, but I think there's something in that, in the system, that is just not working well for them. And I think that if we could probably see where there are probably more male, black role models there for them, I think that will help them tremendously, because they need to see people who look like them. I think as well, I don't know as well whether just the society in general, not necessarily even the school system, but just society in general, there's not a lot of representation of themselves. And I think back of what I grew up with, what I saw. When I grew up, what I saw was role models who looked like *me*, so I know then that I can thrive to become the best me. And especially what should happen where you have these... these young black boys. There needs to be something happening in the school system where there's representation for *them*, you know. Because that peer pressure is really something. It is really – it's stronger than you. It will take them over, and you become this – almost this onlooker, this helpless onlooker who you can – you're voicing your opinion, but it's not being heard. It is not being heard. So, someone, something else, and somebody else, has to almost step into that, because you're having other students, who are coming from other homes, setting, and you don't – you're trying your best to have your children go in this path, but there are these other influences. Other influences. It is – oh, it is something. (Poinsetta, parent)

Gladys and Poinsetta made the point that it is important for Black students to have Black administrators, and other positive representations of Blackness in schools in order to imagine what is possible for themselves. If Black youth do not see people from their racial group in positions of authority and power, they may only see themselves in the stereotypical, limited, ways in which Blackness is highlighted in society. Many of these stereotypes depict Black

people as being good entertainers and sportspeople or performing what are considered menial tasks in society and jobs that require little or no educational qualifications. Conversely, the fact that Black people also excel as scientists, academics and political leaders is often ignored.

There is an empowering aspect to being able to see Black persons perform a variety of different types of roles in schools and in society in that it lets students know and believe that they have choices, opportunities, and can aspire without limitations. This is important given the fact that counsellors, teachers, and administrators routinely engage in practices, such as streaming, that make it difficult for Black students to transition to post-secondary education or gain professional jobs (Shizha et al., 2020). By exposing students and members of Black communities to positive and varied representations of Blackness, CCACH was empowering them and also cultivating aspirational capital.

I use Hill Collins' (2009) conceptualization of empowerment as "changed consciousness [that] encourages people to change the conditions of their lives" (p.129) for the better. Hill Collins (2009) states that self-knowledge is an essential part of empowerment. I extrapolate this to mean not just knowledge of self as an individual but also knowledge of the history and culture of the social (including racial) groups to which one belongs. Hill Collins (2009) also highlighted Nikki Giovanni's concept of self empowerment which involves changing one's behaviours or thinking so as to survive a hostile environment that is resistant to change.

CCACH empowers Black students and demonstrates resistant capital in various ways. AfroQuiz and tutoring challenge White supremacy and racism that cause Black history and culture to be relegated to the null curriculum. Further, CCACH's tutoring and AfroQuiz challenges the negative representations of Blackness circulated in schools and in society. AfroQuiz teaches participants about Black people who have resisted oppression and/or have

made significant contributions to the world. It allows participants to become knowledgeable about Black people in a positive and more comprehensive light and to resist ideas of Black inferiority and marginality. Further, the work that CCACH does via tutoring and AfroQuiz sensitizes students to the ways in which Black people are oppressed and manipulated via racism in society. This gives them the ability to identify, examine, and disregard stereotypes that tell them that they cannot excel academically because Black peoples are less intelligent than people from other racial groups, or that Black peoples are only good at physical activities such as sport or dancing.

Empowerment allows CCACH's students to resist racist ideologies, imagine, and work to achieve success in their academics, and in a range of careers. CCACH's cultivation of positive knowledge about Black people, culture, and experiences is an example of Yosso's (2005) resistant capital at work. It is resistant capital in the sense that it provides students with knowledge that facilitates a critical assessment and rejection of negative mainstream ideas about Black people and replaces those negative ideas with positive ones that instil racial pride and hope. With such little information in the curriculum and widespread negative images and stereotypes about Black people in society, Black youth may not have the knowledge to challenge misinformation that Black persons have not contributed anything of value to Canadian society or that Black people cannot become scientists. When CCACH exposes Black youth to tutors who are engineering and neuroscience students at university, and through AfroQuiz teaches them about the inventions of Elijah McCoy and George Washington Carver, they develop the knowledge, confidence, and changed consciousness needed to repel anti-Black racism and think of themselves as capable of defying the learning and career boundaries that racist societal ideas about the (in)abilities of Black peoples attempt to put around them. As Walcott (2003) illustrates

in his various essays, it becomes evident that re-membering is an act through which Black people resist systemic oppression. CCACH's actions to re-member or to put together, restore, and disseminate information about Black people's histories, cultures, and achievements is a rebuttal of mainstream Canada's silence and misinformation about Black achievements. The resistant capital at work in the organization also facilitates aspirational capital in that youth are able to have hopes and dreams to be successful in school and in their chosen careers when they know of other Black persons who have been successful in their scholastic and work endeavours. In this way the organization was facilitating social transformation at the micro level of individual students' and families lives. The organization may not cause widespread changes in schools and other social institutions but was helping to cause positive changes and improvements in the lives of individual students and their families.

In the past marginalized groups, such as Black women, organized forms of resistance outside of mainstream social institutions because they were excluded from them. Even though Black people are no longer legally excluded from social institutions, they still do not have equitable access to them. I highlighted the under-representation of Black teachers in the teaching force above, and even where Black people are able to gain employment in various social institutions they are often relegated to the lower rungs where they do not have the power and authority to implement changes that would benefit their communities. For example, even though there are a few Black teachers in some schools they cannot implement the necessary changes to ensure that the school curriculum includes Black history and culture across all grades and subjects. They may be able to assign readings or plan activities that incorporate Black history and culture but that is limited to the classes they are responsible for.

CCACH's tutoring program and AfroQuiz are an expression of Black agency, that is, changed consciousness that propels them to action even in the face of hostile social structures. They have determined that regardless of the negative stereotypes about Black communities in Alberta and within the Canadian education system, they believe that given adequate support and opportunities Black students can excel. Further, Black communities have a history and contributions worthy of recognition and celebration. The officials with the power and authority to ensure that Black history is taught in the school curriculum refuse to do so, hence CCACH developed AfroQuiz as an avenue to ensure that Black students and whoever else is interested can access that information outside of the schools. Mainstream teachers refuse to treat Black students in a way that facilitates the fulfilment of their potential, hence CCACH's tutoring program was organized to give students access to persons with the requisite knowledge who would not only help them to understand the content of the subjects they were being helped with but would also provide them with emotional support. Like the teachers in Mirza's and Reay's (2000) study CCACH's programs generated oppositional meanings and alternative understandings of and ways to view the world. This included challenging societal stereotypes and understanding of Blackness and Black communities as being inferior, inactive, disengaged, and prone to low academic performance. CCACH challenged the pedagogy and practices of mainstream schools by centering Black students, seeing them, encouraging them to be their best, holding them accountable for their work, and communicating to them that they could excel, and the tutors were there to help them do so. In so doing the organization developed youth's aspirational capital as it paved the way for youth to dream of and aspire to ambitious futures for themselves.

Other participants expressed that the lack of Black teachers negatively affected students' self-esteem and made them feel that their teachers did not share their lived experiences nor understand how their race caused them to be treated differently by others. Lack of representation made school an isolating and uninspiring experience as expressed by Zella, a tutor:

I think that my perspective is layered. On the surface, no representation. No person who you can see yourself in. No person who would have cultural competency in how you come to rooms differently. Even in the moment of even having teacher supervisors, I can think back as elementary, who would not know how to deescalate moments when kids would make fun of the food I would bring. The isolation sometimes I would face, that added to how I felt as a child in school. If it wasn't for how much my parents pushed me to see my value, I really think I would have slipped through the cracks. And it's this existence where I talk to kids, and I volunteer. I even set up a tutoring system at a secondary upgrading school called Centre High. I set up a tutoring system there. And a lot of the black students I would consult with, when I was setting up the program with the organization I volunteer with, told me some of the similar feelings I had. And I just think that could have been me, *so* easily. It could have been me. But I never – again, even going outside to look for more enrichment, I didn't see myself. And it's this deep thing that I think is underplayed, because representation truly adds to how you can self – like your self-esteem, and self-esteem is so important to what empowers you, or motivates you, and builds resiliency. (Zella, tutor)

Students who have Black teachers benefit from feeling that they have people on staff who can relate to them, understand the challenges that they face because of their race, and who do not view them as inferior to other students. Although Black people are heterogenous in culture,

students are likely to believe that a Black teacher can relate to them more than teachers from other races who do not share the lived experiences of being Black in Alberta and Canada. Non-Black teachers sometimes downplay, or do not recognize the extent of the psychological trauma caused by the type of behaviour directed to students like Zella who are victims of racist teasing and other forms of bullying. As such these situations do not get dealt with speedily as teachers see it as friendly banter. However, a Black teacher who has experienced similar teasing or who have persons close to them who have, is more likely to see and treat such behaviour with the seriousness it deserves.

One of the worst aspects of the lack of representations of Blackness in the curriculum and the lack of Black teachers is that its damage and negative impact is incalculable. We can only estimate but will never fully know what students, families, and society lose as a result of students not having the kind of school environments that nurture them, support them, give them a sense of belonging, and provide them with teachers who they can identify with. I know the importance of having teachers who have your best interest at heart, and who offer positive guidance and support. Growing up in Jamaica I benefitted from having teachers who encouraged, challenged, and supported me. I made many of my major career decisions and decisions about choice of study on the advice of my teachers. I pursued a bachelor's in political science because my 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher told me I would do well in that area of study. I pursued a master's in education instead of a master's in political science on advice from one of my lecturers in my Bachelor of Education program. Thus, I can appreciate the void created in students' lives by not having teachers who they can identify with and look to for guidance creates in students' lives. Ayo, a CCACH alumna sums it up poignantly stating:

I often think now that I know better, what it *could* have meant for me to have had even a black teacher, more than one, and have learned subjects that were reflective of my *own* experiences. (Ayo CCACH alumna and volunteer)

Participants also had an understanding that the lack of Black history in the curriculum and the lack of Black teachers in schools was not coincidence or happenstance but was deliberate. In this regard Ayo noted:

I think it's institutional. It's like these are the structures of institutional racism, you know, and that doesn't see more teachers of colour, black teachers, in the system, teaching and doing their work. That doesn't prioritize the education of students that aren't white, and it doesn't see any issue with a curriculum that isn't diverse, because that's the way it has always been.

Ayo's quotes demonstrate her understanding that there are few Black teachers and, in some schools, no Black teachers, because those in the positions of power who make hiring decisions chose not to prioritize employing them. Similarly, the curricula make little or no mention of Black Canadians, their history, and experiences because they are not valued and are seen as outside of the knowledge deemed important for students to have. The Eurocentric curricula and lack of Black teachers is a result of systemic racism. Excluding Black history, culture and contributions from the curricula reinforces the erroneous myth that Black peoples have no history and have contributed nothing to society.

In contrast to the situation in mainstream schools, Sintra, a parent, expressed great appreciation for the exposure to positive representations of Blackness that tutoring provided:

And the added bonus is that it's [CCACH] a black organization, so my kids are going to be tutored by black kids, so that they're – because not just because they're black, but

because of their learning disabilities, essentially, they already felt like they're stupid. Both my kids think they're stupid, right? And the fact that they would have these role models that are very smart, that are in higher education, and that are lack, like it's like they could look in a mirror and see what's possible, right? And it's in an environment that is a very positive environment, so it's like in school, it's not that they're threatening, but it's sort of like in school like the expectations are so high and so rigid, it kind of feels like a bit of like a prison for them, right? Like they feel like they're forced to always do these things. Whereas the environment at tutoring, it's like the expectation is still there, but it's really like dialed down. It's a more welcoming expectation, right? And so for them to be able to see like, you know, they look at their tutors and, you know, we talk a lot about like well, you know, like A. is N.'s teacher – or tutor – and it's like, “Well, A. is in university, right? Like that's where, you know, you can go to university.” And A. talks about being in university, so this is already creating this dialogue in their mind, right, that this is how you progress through life, right? You get to go to these places eventually, right? (Sintra, parent)

Sintra's quote demonstrates aspirational capital at work in that she used her children's CCACH tutors to motivate and inspire them, to let them know that they were just as good as everyone else and should not feel inferior to anyone else. Aspirational capital allows Black youth to hope and aim to achieve great things despite the racism they face in school and society, and even if their families do not have high levels of formal education. It enables students to be ambitious about their career choices and to aim for high grades. A Statistics Canada (2020) study showed that in 2016 Black youth who were 15-25 years old indicated “that they would like to get a bachelor's degree or higher” but only “60% thought that they could (p.7). The study made mention that

research conducted by scholars such as James et. al (2017) argue that Black students' opinion of what they are capable of achieving academically may be negatively influenced by teachers and other school officials (Statistics Canada, 2020). As mentioned in Chapter Three, research shows that Black students are not supported by many teachers and counsellors to pursue a university degree and are sometimes even discouraged from having such aspirations (James et al., 2017). That discouragement may stem from teachers and counsellors having low expectations of Black students. Teachers tend to believe and treat Black students as intellectually deficient and treat them as such as demonstrated in the over-representation of Black students in special needs classes and vocational streams. Thus, until this bias against Black students is addressed, it is important for Black students to have alternate means of supports outside of mainstream schools, to help them to reach their goals.

Against this backdrop of Black youths aspiring but lacking confidence that they can meet their goals, the work of CCACH is even more important. Unlike in mainstream schools, at CCACH they are met by encouragement, university students, and professionals who can help them to know what is required to meet their goals and support them in meeting those requirements. For instance, Emily, a CCACH alumna expressed that having tutors who were in university was helpful in her academic journey because through them she could access information about what it was like to be a university student:

Also, I really liked that the tutors were in university. Because especially when I was getting older, like junior high, high school, I could ask some questions. Especially high school, when I was preparing for university, I could ask the questions. I had individuals that I felt comfortable going to, that I could be like, "What is university like? Is there anything I should know? Is there this? Is there that? How's this place? How's that

place?” So that when I started, it – I mean, it’s still scary, but it wasn’t *as* scary as it could have been, because I had... I had some knowledge going in, to what things were going to... what it was going to be like. And like for me, my first year was a lot easier. The second year was hard, but my first year was – because I was prepared, going into that. (Emily, CCACH Alumna)

CCACH allowed students access to navigational capital by providing access to tutors who were university students. Students can ask tutors questions about university and tutors can share their experiences in terms of the courses to take in high school in preparation for different university degrees, how they are funding their studies, the matriculation requirements, and the other aspects of navigating university.

I saw examples of tutors mentoring students and imparting to them the knowledge and skills they would need to successfully navigate school multiple times during my observations as illustrated in the following excerpt of my observation of a grade 8 student’s tutoring session:

They have a worksheet with some questions that they use to continue to practice working fractions. The student starts to role play again, working out the problem while pretending that she is the tutor. She is very confident and laughs a bit saying “This is so fun”. The student asks the tutor about what courses she will have to take in high school explaining that her friends say she can choose courses based on what career she intends to pursue. The tutor explains the subjects that are compulsory and tells her to check on the Alberta Education website. The student says she will only take math and science because she doesn’t need LA and social. The tutor advises her that LA is compulsory and that she will need it to get in to university. (Field notes, February 08, 2020)

This excerpt shows how the tutor guided the student regarding where she could find information about what subjects to take in high school and advised the student that those subject choices should be determined by what she planned to pursue in university. At the same time, the tutor corrected a misconception that the student had regarding whether she could stop taking language arts. The tutor's role in helping their students to understand the requirements for making the successful transition from high school to post-secondary studies is crucial in situations where the students' parents are immigrants to Canada who do not have experience of the school system some of who may not understand how the Canadian education system works.

I also observed tutors giving advice to students regarding aspects of navigating life that were not necessarily subject based, such as the following excerpt of a tutor explaining why it was beneficial to have a student bank account as opposed to a regular one:

A grade 10 female student is working on career and life management assignment on financial planning. The student was completing a worksheet about a pay cheque and the deductions on it. The tutor told the student that she has a student bank account that gave her the benefit of not paying for services. She then went on the internet and showed the student how to compare the services offered by the different banks including unlimited transactions. She also advised student to read the details before signing on to anything and that her mom told her to take a credit card that had no annual fees. The tutor advised the student to download the course materials for reference in the future. The student was reading the materials and asked the tutor to explain what a grant is. The tutor explained that a grant is money you are given. The tutor interjects with advice frequently, talking about the importance of fiscal responsibility when you are young. Tutor mentions that

taxes benefit persons who are low income because it allows for wealth redistribution and access to social services. (Field notes, December 07, 2020)

The forgoing excerpts demonstrate that tutors providing mentorship to their students. The emphasis on mentorship in CCACH was the result of deliberate planning on the part of CCACH's administrators, Gladys, an administrator shared:

I think that CCACH is also trying to break down those barriers. So, when we hire tutors, we are very intentional about finding people who are also Black and/or have a lived experience of racism. Because we want our students to have an adult who they can connect to and look up to and ask questions of. Because sometimes the parents of the students are also still working out their place in this new home, and so the students, they may not feel comfortable that their parents have the capacity yet to fill those questions that they have in terms of culture and addressing racism. (Gladys, CCACH Administrator)

Flora, a CCACH administrator also pointed out the importance of mentorship:

We're training the tutors to be mentors as well, to listen to what these kids are going through, to talk with them, talk with the parents to see how can we, you know, how can we help this child? So, creating that safe space for the child to be able to communicate anything that they might be going through, that is an indirect way that CCACH is addressing this issue. (Flora, CCACH Administrator)

CCACH administrators prioritized hiring tutors who were in pursuing postsecondary studies and made an effort to hire former students from the tutoring program as tutors when they moved on to university. The administrators hoped that having tutor mentors who were in postsecondary

programs would serve as an impetus for the students to also know that it was feasible for them to pursue postsecondary education:

Most of the kids that have come in at grade nine, ten, whatever, they went on to university. They were all going to university, because they were interacting with tutors that had gone to university, and so the thinking was always, “This is what you need to... these are the grades that you need to get in order for you to get into university.” And so they’re constantly talking to them about university, university, university. Sometimes they might come from parents that have never been to university, or whatever, and so when they’re talking about, or when they’re looking at their goals, that’s not necessarily something they talk about. But when you’re interacting with, you know, a mentor that’s always thinking you need these types of grades to get into university, or whatever, that transfer of knowledge is really important, and that’s part of what the Tutoring Program does. (Tony, CCACH administrator and parent)

Likewise, Holly noted:

CCACH has been so supportive academically. And another way it has been supportive is they are able to see other students of their own colour, of their own background, as in coming from the same background as they are. And they’re able to see these tutors tutoring them, a lot of them are in university. A lot of them are – they are smart. So that gives them that self-confidence in themselves, knowing that, you know what? My tutor is black, is tutoring me. His brain is not an abyss, or her brain is not empty. He’s smart. I can equally make it to this level where they are. I can make it to university, where I’m able to impart knowledge on some other kids too. So that has been a very good, encouraging program for my kids, to actually be able to go there and learn in an

environment where they see people of their colour, where they see people of their own ways. And where they give them that reassurance, that the sky is not even the limit. You can make it. You don't have to be in the slum. You don't have to be that person on the street. You can actually make it. (Holly, parent)

Holly's, Glady's, and Flora's statements demonstrate the presence of aspirational capital at work in CCACH'S programs as these programs were motivating Black students to hope for better futures and inspiring them to achieve. Given that Black students are unlikely to have Black teachers in the K-12 system and later in higher education and suffer from low teacher expectations and a paucity of positive Black role models, having tutors who were in university was meant to broaden their awareness of the different representations of Blackness that are possible. Additionally, many Black students in Canada are first generation university graduates. This means they do not have persons in their family who have gone through the university system and can give them practical advice on how to navigate university in Canada. This makes it important to have persons outside of their family network who believe in their abilities, have the experience of studying at university, and are willing to advise them on how to succeed in high school and university. By encouraging students to have high academic and career goals and to work hard to achieve them CCACH is also demonstrating resistant capital in that they are enabling students to challenge and defy low societal expectations of Black students. Students' teachers and the career counsellors at school may not take them seriously when they say that they want to become an engineer or a lawyer and may even guide them into subjects that will not allow them to meet university matriculation requirements. However, the tutors at CCACH will tell them the subjects that they need to take in high school, help them to better understand the

subjects and improve their grades, show them examples of other Black persons who had been successful, and motivate them to work hard to meet their goals.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the issue of representation of Black people, history, and culture in Canada's education system specifically as it relates to school curricula and the absence of Black teachers in schools. I explored how the Eurocentric curricula used in schools leaves Black students feeling alienated from their learning and feeling as outsiders in Canada. Further, many students go through their entire schooling without ever having a Black teacher. This lack of Black teachers in schools contributes to Black students' alienation. The experiences participants shared demonstrate that positive Black representation in the school system via curricula content and in the form of Black employees in positions of instruction and authority are important to Black students' wellbeing and educational success.

Recognizing this challenge with representation in the school system, CCACH seeks to fill the gap by exposing students to Black tutors who support their educational development and provide moral support and encouragement. Additionally, AfroQuiz teaches Black youth about Black history, achievements and contributions to the world that are absent from formal school curricula. Having Black representations through their tutors and learning about Black history empowers Black youth with resistant capital to refute and defy low societal expectations of them. They know that Black peoples have a long presence in Alberta and Canada and have contributed significantly to this province's and Canada's development. They become aware that they have just as much right to be here as Canadians of European descent and that their history matters, and they matter. Youth are also encouraged to aspire for high academic and career goals and

provided with strategies, skills, and knowledge to successfully navigate their schooling environments.

## Chapter Seven: Beyond the Skin? Black Identities and Belonging

### Introduction

Hall (2013) asserted that “identity means, or connotes, the process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together, in this respect” (p. 146). I adopt an approach to identity that sees Black identities as socially constructed, syncretic, diasporic, and transnational (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 2003, 2013; Kelly, 1998, 2004; Patterson & Kelley, 2000) and characterized by a resistance to all forms of domination (Walcott, 2003). This racial category that is called Black is a product of the historical processes of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade which saw millions of Africans sent into enslavement to the Caribbean, North, South, Central America, and Europe over a period of over 400 hundred years. Europeans used racism to maintain this system of chattel slavery upon which they amassed immense wealth used to develop Europe while simultaneously depopulating and under-developing the African continent and the colonies of conquest in the Americas (Rodney, 1974). This extensive and long period of enslavement buttressed by racism created and promoted the myth of innate Black inferiority and servitude which is still prevalent in society.

Consequently, the present study’s participants’ experiences as described in this chapter must be understood against the backdrop of Canada’s development as a White settler society founded on racial capitalism, and the oppression of Indigenous people and Black people through genocide, land appropriation, and enslavement. McKittrick (2006) and Walcott (2003) makes the case that in an effort to create and perpetuate the notion of Canada as a White European society, evidence of the long Black presence and contributions, forced and otherwise, to Canadian society have been erased. This erasure was done through the demolition of Black settlements, renaming of geographic sites such as roads, and other tactics of erasure. This erasure allows for Black

people and Blackness to always be located outside of what it means to be Canadian and to be identified as *other* (Kelly, 1998, 2004; Maynard, 2017, McKittrick, 2006). This erasure helps to explain why Black history is absent from the textbooks and why even Black Canadians who can trace their family's residence in Canada back several generations are consistently asked to say where they are "really from." This situation strongly suggests that being Canadian and being Black are binary opposites. In fact, the Canadian government at various times in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century used different strategies to keep Black immigrants from migrating to Canada including an Order-In Council banning Black immigration in 1911, stringent medical checks, and making it more expensive for them to immigrate (Mathieu, 2010). As Walcott (2003) argues "Caribbean/black citizens are almost never imagined as inherently belonging to the national body. Such a condition has two consequences: it allows them to look elsewhere and simultaneously locates them elsewhere" (p.134). He further notes that an "understanding of the Canadian nation exists in which blackness is not present as a constituent element" (Walcott, 2003, p.136).

Closely connected to identity is belonging. This erasure and rejection of Blackness as outside of "Canadianness" has implications for Black people's sense of belonging in Canada. I adopt Kumsa's (2005) strategy of dividing belonging into two syllables *be* and *longing* to discussing its meaning in this research. The Merriam Webster (n.d.a) online dictionary defines *be* as an "intransitive verb" which can have any of the following meanings: "to equal in meaning, have the same connotation as, symbolize, to have identity with, to constitute the same idea or object as, to constitute the same class as, to belong to the class of, to remain unmolested, undisturbed, uninterrupted". All of the definitions for *be* connote sameness and equality. The same dictionary describes *longing* as "a very strong desire" (Merriam Webster, n.d). Taking these two syllables together I conceptualize belonging as "a very strong desire to have identity

with, constitute the same class as” be equal to, and to engender group formation around perceived commonalities so that each member of the group feel as though they have a space there, are accepted and are integral parts of the group. Belonging connotes positive feelings and feelings of affinity and connectedness with a place, person, or group (Halse, 2018).

Going back to Walcott’s (2003) analysis, it is evident that because Black people and Blackness are positioned outside of what it means to be Canadian and even oppositional to it, Black persons may not feel a sense of acceptance in Canadian society and may not feel as though they are recognized as an integral part what it means to be Canadian. The participants’ experiences and thoughts discussed in this chapter, demonstrate that Black students feel alienated and isolated from their schooling, they are made to feel a sense of unbelonging by non-Black peers who make fun of their phenotypical features, and culture, lack of teacher support, and school curricula that ignore Black history and positive representations of what it means to be Black. Conversely, we see how CCACH provides emotional support for Black students, giving them a sense of being a part of a larger Black communities in Alberta, and making them feel valued. As used here community means a “space where individuals might cohere or be drawn together by shared values, principles, norms, common objectives” (Motha, 2008). CCACH’s members and volunteers formed a community around common values of equity, Black pride, upward social mobility, and resisting racism and worked together to facilitate successful educational and socioeconomic outcomes for Black youth. I begin with an examination of the challenges that Black students face regarding their identity and their feeling of unbelonging in schools, after which I explain the ways in which CCACH’s tutoring program and AfroQuiz are creating spaces where Black Edmontonians feel a sense of pride in being Black and a part of a larger Black communities in Alberta. The organization demonstrates familial, resistant,

navigational, and aspirational capital in shaping participants' Black identities and feelings of belonging. The familial capital was evident in the ways AfroQuiz and tutoring facilitated the development of communal bonds and a sense of kinship among participants while resistant capital was demonstrated in how the organization challenged depictions of all Black people as alien and new to Canada highlighting the long Black presence and contributions to the country. Aspirational capital is shown in how CCACH's students are encouraged to set and work towards high educational goals. The organization demonstrated navigational capital, or the tactics people of color use to successfully make their way through hostile social institutions, was evident in how tutors taught their students strategies to facilitate positive and helpful communication with their teachers.

#### **“I Remember When I Was In School ...Being Called Like an Ape”**

Bullying was a prominent feature in Black students' schooling experiences. I noticed that bullying was a recurrent issue in interviews with participants, thus during my interview with Hadii I asked if she had experienced any bullying in school. Hadii remembered being teased that her lips were big and for her kinky hair. In speaking about her experience with bullying she stated: “Yeah, when I was in elementary, just a bit, like for my hair. Um, my lips. Because, you know, they're bigger than usual.” (Hadii, CCACH student)

Hadii's excerpt on bullying when she said she was teased because her lips were bigger than usual made me wonder what was usual? Who made White “usual”, the standard by which everyone else's appearance was judged? The fact that she said *usual* suggests to me that subconsciously she had bought into the notion that Black appearance was somewhat marginal or an aberration. Hadii's experience demonstrates that societal representations of what is beautiful, normal, and acceptable is based on stereotypical Western European physical features such as

straight hair and thinner lips. She would have seen these images and beauty standards in fashion magazines, in movies, in the videos for pop songs, the most famous supermodels, and ultimately in the girls considered “cool” at her school. Here we see where engrained and recurrent patterns of behaviour and values promoted in various social institutions impacts Hadii’s self-concept so that she understands her place based on her physical features as the “other” or as an aberration to what is normal and indeed desirable. Her experience also speaks to the gendered nature of bullying where Black girls and adolescents may be socialized into feeling ugly or unbeautiful (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015), however Black boys are seen as hyper-masculine particularly if they are involved in sports (James, 2012). Another victim of bullying Emily, a CCACH alumna, recounted:

I know there’s been situations where I remember when I was in school, with bullying, being called like an ape. I mean, back in the ‘90s, especially the school I went – well, I switched schools, but even with the schools I went to, I was always one of – my first school, I was the only black girl in my class for the longest time. When I switched schools in grade five there was two of us in the class, and in junior high there was three [Laughs], and then high school there was five. (Emily, CCACH alumna)

Aside from the bullying, what stands out to me about what Emily said was how aware she was of the exact number of Black students in her class. It is also significant that she mentioned the number of Black students when she was discussing her experiences with bullying. It suggests that the small number was psychologically significant to her. Maybe having fewer Black students made her feel vulnerable to bullying or made her feel she stood out more. Likewise, Tina, who is in middle school also experienced bullying in elementary school:

Um, you know, just like your basic teasing, you know. Like at first it's something you can deal with, like, "Oh, you're this," or, "Oh, you're that," or, "Oh, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah." I remember I came out from recess, and a bully that I had for like a long time, she comes up to me and she's like – she starts like making rude remarks and I'm like, "Stop." And she's like, "My uncle has a knife." And I'm like, "Okay." And she's like, "I'm going to kill you with the knife." And I was like, "Oh. We're going there, then." I didn't know what to do, but oh, everybody's saying this, "When you get bullied, when you do this, you go to the teacher," so. I went. We just had a new principal at the time too, so I didn't really know her. Me, her, we talked, and then we brought my parents in, and then we brought her in. The bully admitted to saying that, and then I think that's when she kind of realized, "Okay, this could get me in trouble." She kind of stopped, but then it kind of turned into like a morning/afternoon thing. So like in the morning she'd be like my best friend, she would always be nice to me, tell me some stories

I: Were you in the same class?

P: Yes, we were. But then in the afternoon, when she would hang out with her other friends, they would throw snowballs at me [Wow], they would be following me around, touching my hair, pushing me around. They'd be like punching me in the back, trying to like do whatever. So it wasn't fun. It wasn't fun. I think once I got to my new school, when I started grade seven it was kind of like oh, new year, or new school, new me. A fresh start. And it was fun. But I mean, there it's not direct bullying; it's more like we talk behind your back. (Tina, CCACH student)

As I reflected on Tina's quote multiple times, I was drawn to her use of the words "basic teasing". I thought to myself what is basic teasing? Has bullying become so commonplace in the

schooling experiences of Black students that they accept such behaviour as inevitable, almost a rite of passage with different levels such as basic and then more serious forms? I also noted that the bullies targeted her hair. Black children, and in particular girls, are usually teased about their hair whose texture differs from many of the hair from most of the other races. However, difference is not synonymous with worse or less. Thus, the question is, did the bullying stem from Tina's physical features being distinctive from her White school mates or was it caused by the continuous representation of Whiteness as superior, normal, and the standard against which everything is judged across all societal institutions, including schools?

To make matters worse teachers did not always address the bullying in ways that de-escalated it as shown in Emily's experience where she stated:

And actually, I just remembered there was a situation when I was in grade three, where a girl was bullying me, and the teacher was like, "Oh, well, she just wants to be your friend." And my mom was... my mom was not happy, because she said, "That's not how you become someone's friend." (Emily, CCACH alumna)

The bullying continued unabated and unaddressed by teachers until Emily and the bully got into a physical altercation. It was only at that time that teachers took notice, and the issue was addressed which included Emily being reprimanded:

So the girl that – when I was in grade three, I don't remember much of it. I think there was some name calling. It didn't really get physical. It did at the end, because she was – I think there was one day she was just – she had kept on coming after me [Laughs], and so one day – I hated to say sticks and stones will break your bones but words will never hurt you, because words *do* hurt. And so one day I pushed her down, and it – *that's* what got the teacher's attention. It wasn't the words; it was me – Pushing her down. And I was

always a really quiet, shy student, so she's like, "Oh, I can't believe S. did this. Why did S. do this?" And it was like well, this person had been bullying me, and nothing had been done. Nothing had been said. Nothing. It took me pushing her down for *something* to be addressed. And then the bullying stopped, after that. With the guy in grade five –

I: So what did they do? When you pushed the girl down, what happened?

P: They took both of us to – we were in the vice principal's office, and she talked to both of us. And that's when the – when my mom came in after that, that's when the vice principal was like, "Well, she just wants to be her friend." And my mom's like, "No. That's not how you make friends." So we were both told not to do that again, and that's not how you handle disagreements. And I don't think – the other girl didn't get any punishments. It was my first time doing anything like that, so I didn't get any kind of punishment either, just more of a warning for me, a warning for her. And after that it never – I think the push was enough [Laughs] for her never to do it again. The guy when I was in grade five never really got addressed. It got to the point where one day he was bullying my brother, and I told him I was going to sue him. [Laughs] And he – I don't know if that stopped him, but after that he kind of left me alone, and left my brother alone after that. (Emily, CCACH alumna)

Emily's experience shows how some Black students suffer because of bullying with teachers and administrators failing to protect them until they attempt to defend themselves. The fact that the vice principal would attempt to excuse the bully's actions as an attempt to make friends with Emily is institutional racism at work. The vice principal refused to acknowledge the ill will and malice behind the bully's persistent actions to make Emily feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in school, choosing instead to defer to White innocence on the part of the bully and

reframing the bully as the misunderstood victim. Although Emily's quote does not indicate that CCACH was directly involved in resolving the bullying, she showed agency in refusing to accept behaviour that was distressing her and acted in a way that would cause the behaviour to end. She was successful in that regard since her actions caused the school to finally intervene to end the bullying. Violence is never the best response and this situation showed how school officials' inaction to address bullying allows mental violence to continue which can later escalate to physical violence either from the bully or from the person being bullied.

Similarly, Flora, CCACH administrator and parent believed schools needed to be more proactive in dealing with bullying:

So I think kids... I think some schools try to address issues that affect African or Black children. We call them Black children. I think that because there are things around bullying, and how the kids interact with each other, I've had some of my friends tell me stories about how they don't feel that the schools supported them when their children were going through this bullying incident, and that kind of thing. So I don't know if our children have got enough... if there are enough... there's enough advocacy for them and their needs, you know. Are there people who are really there speaking for them? (Flora, CCACH administrator and parent)

Black students are often teased about their physical appearance which differs from that of White students whose appearance is constructed as the norm and as desirable. Bullying is stressful for the students who are victimized and can also land these students in trouble with school administrators when they resort to violence as a last resort to defend themselves. Participants believed that teachers needed to be more proactive in identifying and addressing all forms of

bullying and parents evidently felt that schools did not adequately address the bullying of Black students by other students.

**“... It Was Kind of Hard. You know, You Had to Find Yourself, Fit Yourself in”**

Aside from bullying, Black students struggle in the school system with identity. Students struggle with understanding what it means to be Black, with finding friendship networks, and a sense of belonging. Due partly to the low concentration of Black students in some schools, it is difficult for students to find other Black students to be friends with, and students from other races are oftentimes not accepting of them. Ayo, a CCACH alumna, shared:

There was something that made me feel in ways I had never encountered before, as a child who grew up in Africa, on the continent with other Africans, like something I was lesser, or strange, or outside of the norm, in a way that was worthy of being ashamed of. And so it was from things like from the lunches I would bring to school, to how I dressed, or how I spoke, the words that I chose to use. So, you know, still substituting “trunk” for “boot,” or, you know, certain ways that we speak, or spoke. And I found myself wanting to immediately fit in, and that meant disappearing everything that I knew about myself in ways that would allow me to quickly not be so obviously different from everybody else, you know? (Ayo, CCACH Alumna)

Ayo’s explanation makes it clear that the shame she developed around her identity as an African stemmed from the schooling environment, where the ways in which she was culturally different was interpreted by other students as negative and inferior as opposed to simply diverse or unique. Again, the emotional burden that schooling places on Black students is demonstrated by Ayo’s statement that in order to gain acceptance she felt she had to “disappear” or change herself to the extent that she was no longer distinct. Schools suffer when students believe that they have to

leave their real selves, with their cultural distinctiveness at home or try to erase that side of themselves altogether. Students' cultural diversity are a strength and can make for more interesting learning experiences that introduce diverse worldviews and ways of thinking. Canada continues to promote a multicultural rhetoric which encourages diversity in principle, but this rhetoric is not reflected in actions. Ayo feeling pressured to “disappear everything she knew about [herself]” deprived her of her right to feel comfortable and affirmed at school. Additionally, her teachers and peers missed opportunities to grow beyond their narrow ways of seeing and being in the world.

Flora also felt that Black students struggled with identity and fitting in at school:

Because I think the fact that they are a minority group, I think the struggle for them is a lot harder and I think it impacts. Because even just them growing up feeling different, and knowing that they look different, they... I believe that that affects their studies. But what kind of support are they getting to be able to deal with these identity issues, or these other issues, you know? (Flora, CCACH administrator and parent)

Black students may feel sensitive about the ways in which their physical features differ from other children, especially White children, because they are considered mainstream both in terms of number and because in the wider society Whiteness is held up as the standard to aspire to.

Maria shared how her elementary aged children struggled with accepting their physical features, and in particular their hair:

P: I know that he would come home, and I mean, he wouldn't be able to articulate this as well, but I could see that his... he didn't feel comfortable or was starting to question his identity. Through youth examples would be his hair.

P: You know, he wanted his hair to look like his friend Sammy's, right?

P: And I happen to have this discussion about his hair. So while it seemed like an innocent discussion, a little boy just wants hair that, you know, flows like Sammy's. But as, you know, as I dug further and try to explain to him how he is, *who* he is [Laughs], like that's when I realized. I said, "Wait a minute. On the playground what is happening here?" There's... you know, he's feeling badly about his hair, and trying to get to the *root* of that. And that's when you realize. I said, "Well, it's on the playground there's politics, children's politics, that does involve aspects such as your hair's different."

P: "Your hair is funny. You know, it doesn't look like ours," and he starts questioning. My daughter experienced the same thing, and I have half a mind to say is I think girls may be even worse [Laughs] when it comes to some of these things, in my experience so far. Where she came home one day really, really upset again about her hair.

P: "Mommy, can I have that, you know, long flowy hair?" And again, I had to have that conversation and digging in. Somebody had made fun of –

I: Her hair.

P: Of her hair, and that's when she started noticing that she was different from her friends, but that difference was in a negative light, not in a, you know, a positive way.  
(Maria, CCACH volunteer and parent)

Recall that I conceptualized belonging as feeling equal to, similar to, and a sense of affinity and acceptance to a group or in a social setting. It is obvious that participants believed that those emotions are absent in Black students' schooling experiences. Black students were made aware that they do not fit in, they are not equal to other students, and even felt that they would need to deny or lose their distinctive cultures to try to gain acceptance at school. From the quotes above it is evident that Black students see themselves as "other", different, and different

in an undesirable way. They could have acquired this sensitivity to their difference being negative in various ways including through the media, and how their teachers and peers treated them at school. Black students' lack of a sense of belonging in school is also connected to the lack of Black teachers on staff, and the absence of Black people and their contributions to Canada and the world in the curriculum. Having more Black teachers and incorporating Black history, and experiences in the school curriculum in various ways can help students to have a sense of the importance of their racial group and to feel as though they belong in school spaces. The curriculum and teachers need to actively engage students with discussing differences among human beings, respecting those differences, and appreciating that everyone is not the same phenotypically, and culturally... and that is acceptable.

It is against the backdrop of the challenges explained above that CCACH's programs were designed. CCACH's programs were born out of the need of Black students that were unmet in the mainstream education system. Indeed, they were created to ameliorate the challenges Black students experience in the school system. In a demonstration of resistant capital CCACH's administrators seek to counter Black students' negative experiences in the education system by creating a space where they could benefit from positive Black role models, mentorship, moral support, as well as support to improve their skills in specific subject areas. The organization reflects familial capital- or a sense of community and belonging and allows students to grapple with the complexities and the positive aspects of Black identities. The intended outcome is to make Black students resilient to the challenges they face so that they can maximize their educational and economic potential. In the next, section I discuss the role of CCACH's educational programs in facilitating positive Black identities and a sense of belonging in Black students.

## **“I Want Them to Sort of Like Have That Identity, and Understand Who They are in Totality”**

An important part of CCACH’s work is providing students with knowledge about the history of Black people in Canada and worldwide. Further, tutoring gives students the opportunity to be in a learning environment where they can have positive Black role models and have wider representations of Blackness than what they are exposed to at school. They are exposed to Black students who are doing well and pursuing postsecondary education, as well as to professionals in various fields of endeavor. Further, AfroQuiz teaches students about people of African descent of various genders, nationalities, and socioeconomic backgrounds who have made tremendous impact on the world, it teaches participants about the long history of Black people in Canada, the pre-colonial history of Africa, the enslavement of African people, the Civil Rights Movement, and other topics. This knowledge becomes the resistant capital that Black students needed to understand who they are, to understand that they are more than the limited negative stereotypes of Blackness prevalent in the society, and to be proud of themselves and their cultures as opposed to feeling ashamed of being of African descent as mentioned by Ayo previously. Tony a parent and CCACH administrator explained AfroQuiz’s role thus:

And so I... CCACH helped me get on a path to understanding that. So things like AfroQuiz. AfroQuiz is an education program where kids come in, and I’m sure this is something that you’d provide in the background, but with AfroQuiz, as you would know, there’s material that is provided, and kids talk about, or at least they ask the questions that are answered about the history of people of African heritage, and that’s not just in Africa. Which I felt I understood that part of it, but I didn’t understand Malcolm X. I didn’t understand, or we heard about Martin Luther, but what about Martin Luther? As a matter

of fact [Laughs], I knew two Martin Luther's at the time, when I first came here. There was Martin Luther the Presbyterian, and then – or the Protestant – and then there was Martin Luther King, Jr. So I was always confused. Who are these two whatever? So anyway, this, that's all to say that that's part of... I... **CCACH helped me accumulate that identity.** And so going back to your question, what do you say your impact on this, it has always... **I've always felt that I need to give that back, because I was able to gain my identity through the programs that I was involved with, with CCACH.** And so I wish to do the same, to the kids that have come in. I want them to sort of like have that identity, and understand who they are in totality, and I think that's a huge... that's a huge step that anybody can take in trying to understand who they are. (Tony, parent and CCACH Administrator, emphases added)

Using Hall's (2013), Kelly's (1998, 2004), Halse's (2018), and Kumsa's (2005) conceptualization of identity as fluid, socially constructed, and never fully complete, I analyze Tony's statement about CCACH "helping him to accumulate identity". Tony's statement demonstrates that after moving to Canada from a country on the African continent he needed knowledge of the history of African descended peoples in Canada in order to create his identity as a Black man in Canada. It is interesting that he chose to make mention of Martin Luther King Jr., who is associated with the fight for Black civil rights in the United States of America. It would suggest an association of being Black with struggle and resisting oppression. Discovering more information about the experiences of African descended people in North America allowed Tony to feel a sense of affinity, connection with, or like them. Here we see identity as fluid because he only assumed this identity of "Black" upon immigrating to Canada and learning about what people of African descent who had been born and raised in the African Diaspora had

experienced and how their history of enslavement, struggle, and resilience had shaped them. Although he was born and raised on the African continent, he made the connection that the history and experiences of African descended people whose family line had been in the African diaspora for generations were also a part of Continental African history and was also a part of him, and his personal story, a part of his identity. This affinity was not just skin deep otherwise it would have been immediate upon his arrival in Canada instead of being contingent on him knowing the story of Black people who are the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas. Tony formed a new identity that connected to people born and/or raised on the continent of Africa as well as to African descended people born in the African diaspora as well.

Flora a parent, and CCACH administrator, also reinforced the importance of AfroQuiz to building cultural pride in students:

AfroQuiz, the program we currently have, it's a flagship event. And what it is, it's a wonderful event, because these kids come, and it's an event that's all about them and their history, and it's, you know, it gives them that pride in their own heritage. Because, you know, they're participating in this competition and there's a reward, but that's not the focus of it. The focus is bringing these children together to compete in this setting. (Flora, parent and CCACH Administrator)

Poinsetta felt that AfroQuiz gave students wider representations of Blackness and Black identities:

Oh, for me, I – the – I liked the fact that it was a program where my daughter could go and learn about not the homework piece, but even the AfroQuiz. Learn more about her culture and learn more about black people who have done extremely well in society, so that it helps them to – like the representation that they're not seeing, because there's so

few in comparison to the other race. So they can see that, you know, people who look like you, they're accomplishing. They are accomplishing great things, and you can do that too, and accomplish these things. So for me, that was a huge impetus to get them involved there. I would like to see her there eventually as a tutor, you know, because I think that giving back to the community would be very, very good. I do get them involved in volunteering and participating in different community activities, usually. So, yeah. (Poinsetta, parent)

The following excerpts from AfroQuiz study materials shows how CCACH sought to expose Black children to wider representations of Black Canadians in roles that Black people are not usually associated with in Canadian such as political leadership roles and as accomplished scientists:

In this module you will learn about Black Canadians and their role in Canadian law and politics. William Peyton Hubbard was the first person of African descent to take political office in Canada. He was an alderman in the city of Toronto. You will also learn about some Canadian black law societies that exist today. (AfroQuiz Study Materials, 2017, 16-18 years old category).

The study materials highlighted Black excellence in the scientific field using Elijah McCoy as an example

He established his own company: The Elijah McCoy Manufacturing Company, and by the end of his career, Elijah had registered over 50 patents. (AfroQuiz Study Materials, 2017, 13-15 years old category).

Gumbie, a parent and CCACH administrator also felt that AfroQuiz was crucial to building positive Black identity in participants and highlighted that its necessity stemmed from the relegation of Black history to the null curriculum in mainstream schools:

And that's why we also did AfroQuiz. Because they don't teach any other history, or any other geography, in the education system. They have social studies here, but social studies does not touch anything about slavery or touch anything about the Underground Railroad, how the Black people came from the U.S. to come, you know. Or even about the Black pioneers here. They don't teach any of that. (Gumbie, parent and CCACH Administrator)

Flora saw the teaching of Black history as not just promoting positive understandings of Blackness but also as a challenge to anti-Blackness in society.

In the system. So coming in here, and actually, if once if they... the message they get coming to our programs is that you are valuable. You can... you're just as good as anybody else. You know, those are the messages that we're trying to enforce in this program... in these programs. **So that's how we are countering anti-Black racism right now.** (Flora, parent and CCACH Administrator, emphasis added)

Ayo made the point that by focusing on Black history and experiences, AfroQuiz help to compensate for the cultural loss that some Black immigrants experienced when they settle in Canada:

I don't know where else I would have gotten that education, unless I had like sought it out myself or gone to a library and looked it up. But in the ways that like we use Google now and search everything that you want to search or watch on YouTube, AfroQuiz provided for me then like a crash course that I don't know how else I would have gotten

that. So I remember getting that package, reading, and learning stuff, brand new, and then going to the competition. And I think as a young immigrant child, something about winning on a stage like that felt really validating, you know. Like being watched by your aunts and your uncles, and your parents, and being asked questions about you, like about your people, and getting the answer right, is validating in two ways: a) in that you've learned something that's really valuable, that you can take with you, and b) that you feel like you have like – like you have won in a time when you really need to win something, in a time when you are – like it feels like a lot of loss is happening in your life. You're losing your accent. You're losing the way you – your country. You're losing in so many ways, that win feels really significant. (Ayo, CCACH Alumna)

Recognizing the important role that knowledge of one's history has on building positive cultural identity, CCACH has tried to persuade the Alberta Ministry of Education to include Black history in the K-12 curriculum by making a presentation to the social studies curriculum working group in 2017 but to date that has not been done.

I know that there are people on the CCACH board who have been involved with different kinds of studies and organizations, who are trying to leverage the government, the local – sorry, the provincial government, to make some changes in the social studies curriculum to include some black culture kinds of things. But in terms of getting to the schools, and getting to the meat, I mean [Laughs], I'm sure you heard that there was a new curriculum that has been in draft for a few years. And like thousands, tens of thousands of dollars, resources, people resources, went into that. (Glady's, CCACH Administrator)

AfroQuiz and the information it provides helps students to learn about the history of People of African descent and to know that they belong in Canada

And so my contributing to developing materials, I think helps fill a gap that, you know, CCACH is trying to do as well, create this awareness, knowledge, build the confidence in our children as to their history, where they come from, and who they are in Canadian society today, that they have a place. (Maria, parent and CCACH Volunteer)

AfroQuiz is also used as a means of exposing contestants to prominent people in Black communities to show contestants the full range of roles Black peoples played in Canadian society. Prominent Black Edmontonians were invited to be judges, or emcees. Examples of prominent Black persons who have participated in AfroQuiz include MLA David Shepherd who I have seen present at AfroQuiz every year since I started attending in 2016, Ahmed Knowmadic who is a celebrated Poet Laureate, speaker, and community activist was the MC in 2020 along with Titilope Sonuga, an award-winning international poet. Business owners, professors, and Black persons in other fields of endeavor have been judges at various times over the years. Exposing the students to Black history, culture, excellence, and contributions to the world exemplifies resistant capital because it refutes societal representations of Black mediocrity and unimportance to society. In turn this equips participants with the knowledge and worldview to see themselves in a positive light and to defy low societal expectations and negative stereotypes.

**“It Really Does Help in Establishing That [Black] Identity and Sense of Pride”**

Participants explained that AfroQuiz teaches students about Black history, accomplishments, and experiences and thereby provides students with information that causes them to be proud of being Black and as such is an expression of resistant capital. Many participants shared that this information allows the students to see themselves doing extraordinary things:

Yeah, I think – I think they start realizing that besides what they have been told, or not have been told, there are people who look like them who have done great things. We have achieved great things. So I think it gives them that courage as well to. Because and well, my son discovered Muhammad Ali, and he was watching the videos, watching his speeches, watching, you know. And just seeing that lightbulb coming in his, you know, his understanding that as much as he doesn't understand what was happening during that time, but he can tell those old videos, just from the quality of it, and following up on stories like that, you can see how it gives him a little more confidence. And if that guy did it, at that particular point, it is possible that I can do it and people are celebrating it, you know. So out of that, you see him trying to find out *more* about other people. You know, the Bob Marley's, the Marcus Garvey's, and he starts reading, and trying to find out like, "Okay, I discovered Muhammad Ali. Who else did great things?" (Sony, parent)

Likewise, Holly, spoke about the empowering impact that participating in AfroQuiz had on her children:

And I really enjoyed their participation in AfroQuiz because their participation in AfroQuiz enhanced them to be able to learn about the history of Africa. They're able to learn about people that as a shift, that have been able to make their name, who are from a – of a Black, African, Caribbean origin. That is telling them, you know what? We have this person who is an achiever. We have this person who has been in Canada for so and so number of years. We have this person who is a banker, who is – as in they are able to connect. They know they don't have to be a waste to the society. They don't have to be a backbencher, as in no good. They can make it to the top. They just need to strive to put in extra effort, and they can forge ahead. (Holly, parent)

Emily, an alumna also felt emboldened by learning about the long history of Black people in Canada and the various challenges that they overcame including racism:

With AfroQuiz it was just great, learning the information. Some of the information I still remember to this day, like about John Ware, the first Black cowboy [Laughs], and a really *great* cowboy, who was here in Alberta. A lot of that information was great. Not only for the knowledge but knowing that as a Black woman, the potential that I have. And the footsteps of the individuals that went before me, and that the steps that they pave... especially because like compared to what I'd gone through with any discrimination or racism, that's peanuts compared to what they compare – would do back when... back when black individuals back in the 1800s, 1700s. It... what they had to go through must have been a *lot* harder and was happening more often. So knowing the path that they paved, and the strength that they had. And also knowing what rights I have, knowing that you know what? Sometimes the system's going to be unfair, but I don't have to just sit back and take it. I can stand up for myself within the system. (Emily, CCACH alumna)

Evidently knowing the history of Black struggle in the Americas and the main inequities that Black people in the past fought and continue to fight in the present day is a source of inspiration for some Black people to demand to be treated fairly today.

Similarly, Tony a parent and CCACH volunteer shared how being involved with AfroQuiz helped him in his search for understanding of Black identities and how he felt the program helped Black youths with developing positive conceptions of what it means to be Black:

Like I said, coming here, I felt like I understand myself as an African and I was rooted in that identity. But then I came here, and I saw that some... nobody, or most people, the

larger society was not looking at me as an African. They were looking at me as a Black person. And that Black identity was not just African; it was something else, and I needed to understand what *that* is. And so what I feel the gap is, one thing that I noted is that there was another identity here. Actually, this was one thing that I found to be really interesting and therefore was part of the identity. I felt like people that were here already at the time, that had been here either for a few years, or maybe they had come from the Caribbean, I felt there was a certain sense of anger in a lot of them, and I was like I always wondered about that. Like why? And that's because of, you know, what we call today microaggressions and all of that, dealing with racism and all the different things that people felt at the time. That was always coming up and that's the part that I *wanted* to understand. You could go and you could come here and be oblivious to the fact that somebody's looking at you a certain way, because, you know, like for me it was like, "Okay, well, they might be just don't like me." People don't like each other. Whatever the case might be, right? But for the people that have been here, or people that have been exposed, they know what these things mean. If they do this, that means this and that, or whatever. And so you live in a constant state of rage, really, and which is what I didn't quite understand. Now, what I felt was missing, and I can't speak to what they needed to do to be able to sort of like help with that, but I felt like I needed to understand that so that if I faced those challenges I can tap into the knowledge that they have, and be able to either protect myself or at least be able to disassociate them, and be able to be a productive member of society. And so one thing that I noted, being involved, especially being with AfroQuiz, I started noticing that they... what I learned in school was different from what *they* are learning in school. Like there was no sense of not only African

history, but just black history in general. Like I was learning about Black people *here* that have been here since 1911, that they don't know about, or the larger community doesn't know about. And these are people that I get to know. And there are some, some of their... and some of the descendants are people that I know, that are my friends, and I'm like, "How come this history?" and somebody will come here from the '60s. I learned about the immigration system here, and how at the beginning, once those people that came in 1911 say there were often homesteads. They were formerly [enslaved people], and they were off at homesteads. And then because they were not able, the people, the Edmontonian in particular, Canadians in general, didn't quite like them coming in such a huge numbers. They decided okay, change the laws or whatever, and now it was just people from Europe coming in. And then it wasn't until the Baby Boomers started having more kids and wanted to have all these kids, that they were then wanted to invite people from the Caribbean to come and take care of these kids. And so and I learned all of that through CCACH. There was actually somebody who had a play about the first Caribbeans that first arrived, and their interactions with the black people that had been there since the 1911s and all of that.

Yeah, it was really good, eye-opening. This is all part of the journey that I've had with CCACH, and that has helped me sort of understand that identity. So again, going back to your question, what I'm saying is that the gap is there mostly because they don't teach a totality of what the kids that are attending school, what their identity is. And so they only see as, you know, people of a certain colour, or people from a certain heritage, that sort of like are the ones that own the history. They went and conquered these lands, and all of these things. And yet I knew of Africans that did the same thing. I knew of the

Shaka Zulus. I knew of the Buganda kingdoms, and all the different kingdoms all over the place. And I thought like that's... that gave me pride, pride or sense of pride in African heritage and what Africans have done. And Timbuktu, one thing that I used to hate was some... that expression of, "Well, I'm in the middle of Timbuktu." I'm like, "Timbuktu was actually..." [Laughs]

I: A great city.

P: Yeah, it was a great city. This is where universities and you guys are just like, you know, dismissing it as if it's some... so it... and I would feel that way because I understood this is something. There was a sense of pride for me to know about when I was in school. But the people that are growing up here, they didn't get a sense of that. And so yeah, that's where really I saw the huge gap, and that's where... that's, I think that's part of the reason why, of putting so much of my energy into the programs that CCACH has, because I feel like it really does help in establishing that identity and their sense of pride, and for people to feel that they can assume that Black identity in totality, as opposed to just feeling that there's a part of them that's missing and, you know, somehow they have to fill it with something, and that something might not be necessarily something that would work well with their wellbeing (Tony, parent)

Maria, a parent and CCACH volunteer felt that having information would enable Black persons to not only take pride in their cultural heritage but also command the respect of non-Black persons

So if I think of my involvement, then, with the materials development, you know, when kids have to study these materials about, you know, black people. Again, I see that as beneficial in its representation. And they get to know facts. You know, you can come

back with a fact. If you're challenged out there in the community, they, it empowers them to say, "Well, wait a minute. The So-and-So did this," you know. You know, why is it that we have this new ten-dollar bill. Who is on that ten-dollar bill? That must be something important, because not everybody gets to be on a [Laughs] –On money, right. So that to me empowers them to be able to have those conversations with their peers and to explain who was Viola Desmond. Why is she on this, you know? Who are the different heroes, heroines, or just ordinary people with me? So empowering them, giving them facts and information that they can speak to as a comeback, as a way of educating others as well about black people. (Maria, parent and CCACH volunteer)

From the preceding excerpts it is clear that the construction of positive Black identities requires access to knowledge about Black history, past struggles, contributions to the world. Since this information is not in the curriculum students need to access it from elsewhere and CCACH fills that gap with AfroQuiz. Similar to how most plants need soil as an anchor and to provide nourishment for them to grow, history and culture is the anchor and soil that Black youth need to understand themselves, their place in the world, and to have a positive view of the racial group to which they belong. This anchor was provided in large part by AfroQuiz. CCACH gives the students being tutored and the Black participants in AfroQuiz a new soil different from what they were accustomed to in mainstream Canadian schools and society generally.

Many Black youths' family members may not have a broad knowledge about the history of Black people. They may have some information about the history of the specific countries they themselves originate from but may not know about Black history in other places. They may not know about the long history of Black people in Canada and so cannot let their children know that not all Black people are newcomers, and that their ancestors also contributed by force and

through their free will to the building of what is today known as Canada. Having the knowledge about Black Canadian history is resistant capital because allows Black Canadians to carve out a place and sense of belonging in this land in opposition to the various expressions of anti-Black racism that would have them feel like perpetual foreigners.

Promoting positive Black identities also entailed affirming students' physical appearance as demonstrated in the following excerpt of my observation of a tutoring session with a grade 8 student:

The student has cut her hair very low and says to her tutor "look at my hair". The tutor responds that it looks really nice. ...positive affirmation. This is probably not affirmation she will get from her peers seeing that the standard of hair beauty is usually long, silky hair as opposed to low cut hair with tight curls so it is important that she has an avenue where she can get that kind of support. The student mentions that except for English and social school is over. She also shares that she got 80s for all subjects except Spanish which she got a 76 for. Her tutor congratulates her, and she seems to be very pleased with her performance. She is still opting to do tutoring which may indicate that she is very driven, enjoys the interactions with her tutor, is being made to by her parents.... combination of all the above. (Field notes, June 06, 2020)

The positive affirmations of students, combined with teaching them Black history in their totality, and exposing them to Black excellence are some of the ways in which CCACH seeks to build students' pride in their racial identity. I have also seen how AfroQuiz ignites pride in the contestants who do well:

When one of the contestants went on the stage to collect her prize a younger family member went up with her beaming with pride. One of the contestants in the under 9 age

group: I saw her and her mom in the lobby during an intermission. I commented on how well they had done and told her good job and asked for a high 5. Her mom chimed in with praises as well and she jumped in joy basking in our praises. (Field notes, AfroQuiz Competition, February 2018).

Audience members made a point of clapping for both contestants who answered correctly as well as those who did not get the questions correct, sending the message that trying was as important as being correct. With a lack of positive affirmations in the mainstream school system CCACH provides an important avenue for Black students to get the moral support and encouragement that they need to be confident in themselves.

### **“I Became More Connected to.... I Felt More a Part of the City, in Ways That I Hadn't Before”**

Many Black youth, both immigrants and those born in Canada, feel alienated from their schooling and from Canadian society generally (James, 2019). These youth do not feel accepted or valued by Canadian society and feel as though they do not belong. AfroQuiz and the tutoring program provide them with familial capital by creating spaces where they feel a sense of community, connection with others, and that there is a place in Canadian society for them. There is strength in numbers, and Holly felt that being in environments where there were many other Black persons helped Black youth to escape the isolation they felt as a result of always being in the numerical minority in school and in society.

CCACH gives them that support. CCACH works on their confidence level, which I'm very grateful for. Another challenge I think they might be facing is, at times, in the whole of the school, depending on where the location of the school is, there could be just one black kid in the class. That kind of makes them feel different, like I'm different from my

other students, from my other classmates. Going to CCACH gives them that they're able to see other people, other kids, looking like them, which I think could go a long way impacting their self-esteem, impacting their – positively impacting their confidence.

Seeing other kids doing it, they know they can do it too. Yeah. (Holly, parent)

Being involved in the tutoring program and AfroQuiz where they see many other Black folks helped Black youth to know that they are not alone, not an aberration:

Mm-hmm. Um, I feel like – I remember, like I said, when I was in grade seven, I wasn't really around a lot of like black people, you know. I was mostly around white people. I didn't know there was like – if I moved, I didn't know there was actually like that many like immigrants and everything. So when I attended here, I felt like I like belonged. Like there was like people, you know, the same skin colour. No one judged, you know. Like everyone accepted you. And like then it made me more of the confidence, like – like even if I was in a – I was the only black person in the room right now, I wouldn't really mind much. I'd just be like it's just, you know, my colour. Like whatever I have inside is not that different from what someone else has inside. So, yeah. (Hadii, CCACH student)

Rachel, who is a tutor, reiterated Hadii's point:

And like I would say that in that kind of situation, I can see why that, plus having the teacher watch you more, is kind of a lot of pressure. And I think at CCACH, what we like to focus on is that everyone, or most of the people who are there, are also black, right?

And then like when you're in this room, I see these people who are like really, really lively, and they... I think they're just more comfortable in a space where everyone else is the same as them, is what I'm trying to say. So that's like one of the objectives of

CCACH. And it's not like strict, or it's not like... it's not like they keep other people out.

Like obviously I'm part of CCACH, right, and I'm not Black. (Rachel, CCACH tutor)

Similarly, Maggy, a tutor and CCACH alumna emphasized that:

And I would also say that with tutoring, being mentored by someone that has a similar background to you, or that you can relate to culturally, really helps a child feel more comfortable, and they learn not only from what you're teaching them but just kind of how *you* were able to succeed in the system. (Maggy, tutor and CCACH alumna)

Ava, a CCACH administrator also underscored the importance of having exposure to other Black persons to student wellbeing by contrasting the environment in a typical mainstream school with CCACH'S tutoring environment:

Okay, so what I think, how I think CCACH contributed to the positive aspect of black students is that say, for example, an immigrant kid would come to Canada in the Canadian education system, and you would see mainly white students, or maybe you are just one person out of a classroom of 25 students who is Black. You were not accustomed to that back home, so you feel intimidated. You feel intimidated about you being the only person.

In contrast when students were at CCACH Ava stated that

They are more open to ask questions. There is no language barrier. There is no discrimination. So the students are more open, and feel more comfortable, among people of their kind. (Ava, CCACH administrator)

Ayo, a CCACH alumna, spoke about how affirming participating in CCACH 's programs was for her and the ways in which the sense of community she discovered through participating in CCACH's programs continued to the present day:

I think for me, at the time it was just even understanding that there was a wider network of Blackness [Laughs] that existed in the city. Yes, I had been to like Nigerian Association events, simply by, you know, proximity, but I think I was starting to understand *other* black people in new ways, you know. *So meeting people of Caribbean descent, and understanding their histories and their cultures, and meeting other Africans that existed in the city.* There's a way that Edmonton can feel very isolated and very quiet, especially in the winter. Everyone's in their little silos. That can make you feel like you're the only one that exists in the world. Seeing these gatherings, and people coming together, allowed me to plug into what I really came to understand was a very large and intricate network of black people all over the city. Yeah. I think I became more connected to... I felt more a part of the city, in ways that I hadn't before. I felt like because these other people existed here, I had also a right to be here, you know. Yeah. You know, and when I started, really started to grow up my career as a performer in the city, CCACH was always, you know, quietly and not so quietly supporting my work and being like, "Oh, come teach a workshop, and come perform at our events." It's a sense in which you're never really let go of, and you're part of this community. And even when you are *not* a part of the community – I left the country for a couple of years and moved back to Nigeria. I came back in. I always felt sort of checked in on, and always felt like I was welcome and invited, and that CCACH was – and I say CCACH as a general term, but what I'm actually speaking to are the people that work at CCACH, who make it their duty to ensure that like all the pieces are held together. I felt like I was always – somebody from the organization was always sort of checking in on what I was doing and

asking me to be a part of something that *they* were doing. So that sense of community exists whether you are around or not. At least for *me* it did, so. (Ayo, CCACH Alumna).

These quotes exemplify strong familial capital in CCACH. Persons who participate in tutoring or AfroQuiz feel a sense of belonging, and increased sense of collective identity as people of African descent. Even though students are not related by blood to their tutors many of them develop deep emotional connections with their tutors and are able to feel as though they have a place in Edmonton as a result of being exposed to larger Black communities in Edmonton. This decreases their feelings of alienation and isolation. The long Black presence in Alberta is often ignored or discounted leading persons to believe that all Black Albertans are newcomers, AfroQuiz corrects that misinformation by highlighting early Black communities such as Amber Valley, Junkins, Campsie, and Keystone as well as the ways in which early Black immigrants contributed to Canada's socioeconomic development.

### **“...So They [CCACH] Encourage Them Quite a Bit...and Show Them the Way”**

During one of my observation of tutoring sessions I saw a tutor demonstrate to her 11<sup>th</sup> grade student how to problem solve:

The student was very assertive in getting information on what he did not understand. The tutor asked the student if he remembered a concept that they had discussed in their tutoring session the previous week. He said no he didn't fully understand it and so she went over that and some related concepts explaining to him that he would be unable to understand the exercises he wanted to do now if he did not understand those foundational concepts. She explained that it is important to understand the theories before doing actual questions. The student explained that he was sick when the theories were being taught and so he did not have the class notes. The tutor asked him to text a friend to get the notes

so that they can review the theories and then he could do the worksheet after. The tutor then explained that that is why she asked him to communicate with her during the week about what he needed help with because then she could have planned activities to make sure he understood the foundational concepts he was having trouble with. They were discussing inertia, friction, force, and other concepts related to motion. The tutor gave the student a list of foundational concepts that he needed to ensure he understood: vector, multiframe analysis. Tutor also offered to share her notes and exercises with the student so that he can practice, telling him that doing a wide range of exercises will help to develop his proficiency. (Field notes, November 23, 2019)

What struck me here is that the tutor did not chastise the student for not having his notes and for not checking in with her during the week to say what areas he would need help with. She went into problem solving mode. She explained to him why it was important for him to understand the foundational concepts and then suggested he ask his friend to send him the notes. Further, she gave additional support by offering to share her own notes and practice exercises. Thus, this became a teachable moment for the student. She explained why it was important for him to contact her during the week as this would help her to be better prepared to assist him, as well as the importance of being organized and planning ahead in a way that was constructive as opposed to demeaning.

A tutor, Zella, spoke of the emotional support that tutors offered to their students:

Yeah. I think that, what I was saying earlier, we might not be directly addressing the traumas, but I think there is something to say about being in a space where you're made to feel wanted, or needed, or made to feel capable. There's a sort of underlying healing that comes with that, that I've noticed, with the self-esteem that I've noticed some of my

students build up. And it's in those moments, in those sessions that I have with them, that I continuously remind them of their capacity and their capability, that I've seen be presented throughout the time I've spent with them. (Zella, tutor)

Building students' self-esteem is important to their educational success since improvement takes effort and time which students may not be willing to invest if they do not think it will make a difference.

Ayo explains the influence of CCACH on her present career as a spoken word artist:

I will say that the very first time I performed a poem was at a CCACH event, or a SACH (CCACH youth arm) event, which was basically overlooked by CCACH. And it was a poem that I read out loud in the room, and all the elders in the room were so moved by it that they asked if they could print it. And SACH at the time had, for Black History Month, a – you know the HUB Mall at the university? There's like these display cages where they put. So they had one of those display cages where they could put whatever. I shouldn't say cages. Cases [Laughs], where they could put whatever they wanted for Black History Month. So they chose my poem as one of the display pieces. I didn't even go to U of A yet. I was a high school student. And so they printed it out and put it there, and it was there for the entire month of Black History, and I remember feeling a sense of pride. And for the first time, feeling like something I had written could matter, and that people thought it was good, and it was on display at the university for everybody to see for an entire month. I later became a performance poet. Now, I don't know that these two things are connected, but I definitely know that that was like the beginnings of me wanting to explore with the arts and wanted to see what that felt like. I still went on to study my engineering and do all that, but I did eventually come right back around to that.

And I feel like it was moments like that, and *many* moments like that, where my voice felt valuable, changed, influenced my decision to become an artist full-time, for sure. But, yeah. (Ayo, CCACH alumna)

Evidently, having a group of other persons validating students' abilities, providing them with opportunities to explore and share their talents and interests had value for Black youth and could boost their confidence in themselves. Hadii reinforced this assertion stating that AfroQuiz allowed her to become more comfortable with public speaking:

I feel like my confidence, especially with AfroQuiz, I was like I was mostly – I was always shy. Like I'm – I was really shy, and it was like even right now, talking to you like is a big thing for me, because I was really shy before. So AfroQuiz kind of brought like, you know, me out, you know. Like I think I got third the first time I got it, so I was like really proud of myself. Like okay, and now maybe I could, you know, stand in front of people and talk. So it brought that side out for me. Yeah. Yeah. I feel like they're doing a good job on like accepting – like our acceptance in the society. And they're bringing out – like because there's a lot of negativity on black peoples there, throughout. They're bringing out like the potentials in us, and showing it to, you know, like AfroQuiz or whatever. So like there's a lot of White people that come. There's – sometimes there's like broadcasts that, you know, come and carry it. So they're bringing out like the strength or the potentials we have in us, and showing it to society, so it's like less like negative impact on Black people. Like by the time our kids are born, I feel like that would be really minimal, you know, that we'd be like all the same. So, yeah. (Hadii, CCACH student)

Hadii felt that through AfroQuiz CCACH was showing Black youth and the wider society that Black excellence was possible and existed even to the extent where she felt that it would remove racism for the next generation. Additionally, becoming more comfortable with performing or speaking in front of crowds can help students in the school setting when they need to make presentations or answer questions in front of their peers, and this may contribute to better scores for presentations.

### **“Yes, I Can Become That. I Can Do That”**

Facilitating the development of positive Black identities was not just an end in itself but was also meant to build students’ self-confidence and inspire them to aspire to maximize their potential. The resistant capital activated through the development of positive Black identities may help Black students to aspire to roles that they would not have aspired to if denied exposure to positive representations of Blackness. Therefore, the different types of capital are interdependent and enjoy a synergistic relationship with each other. This is demonstrated in Lovie’s quote regarding a former CCACH tutor and her influence on her mentees:

Two doctorates. And she said it gave her so much satisfaction to be able to instill confidence in the younger ones, because at the hospital every day she had to fight. She had to fight because they felt the same way. She’s black, so she doesn’t have the knowledge. She’s small so, you know, what does she know about that? But somebody, who by the age of 32, right, had *two* doctorates, one in medicine and I forgot what the other thing was, right? Got to have some knowledge, you know? And yet she’s treated that way. And she said her hope was in seeing that she could instill in the children, right, the confidence that, “Yes, I can become that. I can do that.” And if you do it soon enough, they don’t care who is next to them. They don’t even see who is next to them is

different from them. You understand? So I think that was one of the good things that I saw. (Lovie, CCACH Administrator)

Jessica, a CCACH Administrator, also felt that AfroQuiz was motivating for Black students and was also an opportunity for non-Black students to become exposed to Black history

Education is really learning, both formally and informally. So we have like traditional didactic education, and then we also have education through experience. And I think CCACH and AfroQuiz has a little bit of both. So the experience that the kids get when they compete, when they see other people like them, when they learn about other kids that look like them – that's for the black kids – then it can be really inspiring for a kid to see those kinds of leaders. But even we also have like children who are *not* black, and who participate, and they really enjoy it too, because they get to see black leaders and accomplished black people or learn about stories that they wouldn't have thought about otherwise. And I do think that plays a role in shaping children. (Jessica, CCACH Administrator)

Tutors meet students where they are academically and helped them to improve. Hadii a senior high school student shared:

They're always going to like to try – even if they don't know the subject, they're always going to try their best to, you know, help you. They're not going to, like, like give up on you. Like if you're a slow learner, they would like push you, you know. They will check up on you. They will do that extra mile to maybe contact your teacher if there's any problem that they're facing, you know. If they don't like the curriculum – like not the curriculum, but the way that she teaches, they'll, you know, find different ways to help

you contact the teacher, like I said. Yeah, just different things in general. They'll go out of their way, so. (Hadii, CCACH Student)

Tutors also encourage students towards excellence as expressed in the following quote from Lovie “And there were one or two students who were doing excellently. They were doing at 80s. Okay, we are going to aim for 100 now, right?” Given the prevalence of low teacher expectations in the mainstream education system, having a space where they encouraged, gently challenged, and given practical tips for improving in their studies is important for Black students. The quotes from Lovie and Hadii show aspirational capital at work as the students were being encouraged and supported to have high ambitions, hopes, and dreams for themselves and were being given the guidance to achieve them. CCACH was also training students to see themselves as intellectual beings capable of academic excellence. An excellent example of how tutors gave students practical tips to improve their academic performance is the following exchange I observed during a tutoring session for science-20:

The tutor advises the student that something that would enhance tutoring is if the teacher gives a syllabus the student should hang on to it. The student had a worksheet that she had completed which the tutor was busy reviewing. She then began to explain seismic waves to the student. The tutor encourages the student to ask teacher what kind of information would be given to her on an exam and what she would be expected to find out. The tutor then discusses some of the values that student may be asked to find such as time. She then writes down some steps that the student would take to answer various questions asking her to find different values. (Field notes, November 30, 2019).

This observation illustrates how navigational capital was deployed in CCACH as the tutor is instructing the student about how to approach teachers and acquire the information needed to adequately prepare for and improve her grade in examinations.

**“...You Become a Mentor More So Than Just a Tutor”**

Another way in which CCACH seeks to create a sense of connection and belonging for the students who utilize tutoring is through tutors playing the role of mentors. Mentorship is an important part of CCACH’S programs highlighted by most participants. As seen in Tina’s excerpt below students see CCACH’s tutors as persons who they look to for advice not just on schoolwork but on how to live and navigate life’s challenges. There is a high level of trust and reciprocal respect between tutor and student that causes the student to feel comfortable sharing sensitive information about their challenges and struggles with her tutor:

My first tutor, I thought she was so cool. I thought like – I really thought of her as like my big sister. She was amazing. She helped me study. She helped me stay on task. She was always focused, and she really, I think she also helped me get that last A that I needed, in grade three. And just all the tutors I’ve had from then, because I had her. I kind of switched around different tutors in the middle, but they were all super supportive. And then I think the tutor that I have now, I’ve had her for three years. And I think she’s – it’s just that she’s more than helped me with like school, but she’s helped me with like my personal problems, my panic attacks, and everything. And I look up to her so much because **she’s like the person I want to be for somebody else**. And I just like I really – **I don’t know where I’d be without her, because I know I can talk to her, and she can help me with anything**. (Tina, CCACH Student, emphasis added)

The importance of mentorship is reiterated by CCACH volunteer and parent Tony

So you become a mentor more so than just that tutor, and just somebody that is imparting sort of knowledge to them. And I see that even going on to this day. My daughter actually goes to tutoring, and she has a tutor that has had to put some stuff aside. And I know this, and obviously I'm protecting, I'm not going to say a name, but she has had challenges where she's talking to somebody that has gone through those type of... going to a school that is an all-white school, and she's the only black kid, and, you know, some of those things that happened in that environment. And they now are coming back to somebody who has gone through, a black kid, or a black student, and now they are mentoring.

(Tony, CCACH Administrator and Parent)

Black students often do not have many Black role models at school or even in the wider society. They may feel as though no-one understands them or the challenges they face. Having Black tutors who are also young, most of whom have also been educated in the Canadian K-12 system, provided them with people they feel can relate to them and also help them to manage the life stressors they encounter. Familial, and navigational capital are demonstrated in Tina's and Tony's excerpts. Like Yosso (2005), I use the term capital to mean assets or something of value that Black communities possess, use, and leverage to attain their goals or to access other things they consider valuable. Familial capital is evident in Tina's statement that she saw her tutor as a big sister. The tutor was not only someone she looked to for technical support and advice with specific subjects, but she was someone she saw as a close family member. It speaks to a deep level of emotional attachment, connection and trust that transcends regular tutor/student relationship. Familial capital connotes ideas of unconditional support and acceptance, someone who Tina felt that she could trust and be vulnerable with. Her relationship with her tutor caused

her to aspire to be a stronger and better person who can inspire and direct someone else much the same way her tutor has done for her.

Additionally, navigational capital is evident as based on Tina's and Tony's statements the tutor having the lived experience of some of Tina's challenges gave her advice about how to deal with the challenges that come with being a Black student in predominantly White and racist schools, and with coping with anxiety. Tina saw her tutor as a more experienced family member who could give her tips and advice to overcome her challenges both academic but also with learning to successfully manage the symptoms of anxiety. Having experienced some of the challenges that Tina was going through herself, Tina's tutor was able to give her emotional support and advice about how to deal with her struggles with anxiety.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I explored Black identities in Alberta and Canada as diasporic, changing, and fluid. The participants' experiences show that African descended people from the African continent or those born in the African diaspora go through a continuous process of thinking about, actively creating, and maintaining their identities. Black people are positioned as being outside of Canada's national imaginary despite their long presence in the country and their contributions and there are not many (positive) representations of Blackness in Canadian society and in school curricula. Black students are made to feel "othered", and out of place by their schooling experiences. CCACH consciously worked to counteract anti-Blackness by teaching students about Black history, Black leaders, and through positive affirmations of Blackness and of the students themselves. AfroQuiz was the main vehicle through which the history was taught but positive affirmations of students and of Black people was a built-in part of the students weekly tutoring experiences. This aids youth in the development of positive Black identities and

gives students and other participants/ volunteers in CCACH's programs a sense of belonging and makes them feel that there is a place for them in Canadian society. They come to know that there is a sizeable number of Black people in Edmonton, that they are not alone, and that there are Black persons ready to assist them to achieve their goals and support them as needed.

## **Chapter Eight: Invisibility and Hypervisibility: Surveillance of and Discrimination Against Black Students**

### **Introduction**

Black students in Canada are faced with the conundrum of being invisible yet hypervisible. By this I mean that they are often ignored (invisible) when they try to integrate themselves into and make constructive inputs in their classes and in school life but are readily seen and reprimanded (hypervisible) if suspected of misbehaviour (Boutte & Bryan, 2019). This invisibility is facilitated and made worse by the scarcity of any information regarding Black heritage and culture in the curriculum and the stark absence of Black teachers in schools. Hypervisibility is expressed in extraordinarily high suspension and expulsion rates (Bryan, 2017), and over-representation in special education classes. Teachers have stereotypes about Black students such as they are “immigrants, fatherless, athletes, troublemakers and underachievers” (James, 2012, p.464). This kind of biased thinking on the part of teachers renders Black students undesirable in classrooms and subject to discriminatory and excessive disciplinary measures. Further, through their interactions with teachers, students are conditioned to think that they are incapable of academic excellence. According to James et al. (2017)

It was reasoned that given the low expectations that elementary and middle school teachers have of their Black students, which are premised on the notion that they were not academically inclined, many Black students tended to be emotionally and academically unprepared for academic courses when they entered high school. (p.42)

Additionally, Black students who were high achievers were often accused of cheating by teachers (Carter-Andrews et. al., 2019; James et. al, 2017). This can demotivate students and lead to them putting less effort into their work. Further, researchers found that Black students were

punished for behavior that White students received pardon for (Annamma et. al, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Wun, 2016) and received punishment instead of support for behavioral infringements even when teachers were aware that these behaviors were caused by extremely traumatic circumstances in their home life (Wun, 2016). In this chapter, I explore participants' experiences with Black students being rendered hypervisible and invisible in Edmonton's schools and how CCACH uses resistant and navigational capital works to counter the negative impacts of such experiences on Black students so that they can maximize their educational potential. Yosso (2005) defines resistant capital as to the ways in which Communities of Color defy and overcome different forms of oppression. Resistant capital differs from other forms of resistance in that it always results in an improvement in the life of the individual resisting and/or the group to which they belong and does not involve actions that will reproduce their social and economic subordination. Overcoming as used here refers to Black students defying the constraints of negative stereotypes as outlined above to achieve at their full potential. Their actions may not lead to immediate and widespread change in social institutions such as schools, but it does lead to an improvement in the lives of individual students and their families and allow them to achieve positive educational outcomes at the K-12 level and meet the matriculation requirements for postsecondary studies. These improved educational outcomes allow them to qualify for better paying professional jobs as opposed to always being relegated to low waged jobs in the service and retail industries with little opportunity for upward mobility. Navigational capital is the strategies, skills, and knowledge that minoritized people use to progress and make their way through racist social institutions successfully (Yosso, 2005).

## **Hypervisibility**

In this study hypervisibility of Black students took the form of discriminatory behaviour by teachers via denying students the grades they had earned arguing instead that they had cheated, excessive disciplinary measures, and being overly critical of students' behaviour. These manifestations are similar to what other researchers such as Annamma et. al. (2019), Boutte and Bryan (2019), James et al. (2017), and McPherson (2020) found in their studies. I explore these expressions of hypervisibility next.

### ***“There is a Bit of Racism in the Way That They [Teacher] see These Kids”***

The concern with racist behaviour on the part of teachers and its impact on Black students was a prominent issue among participants. Teachers' racism manifested in over-surveillance of Black students, stereotyping Black students as disruptive, and labelling them as being intellectually deficient. Lovie, who was born and raised in Trinidad recounted a disturbing story of discrimination against a Black student who utilized CCACH tutoring services:

And this business about students not feeling confident and stuff, we had a special issue once with a boy, he was in grade five or six, around there, and he was doing very poorly in math when he came, and his tutor worked well with him. And then he went to school, and he did a math test and he made 100. And when it was report card time he had no math mark there, and his mama asked why. And the teacher said she knows for a fact he was the only one who got everything right. It was a very difficult test, and that he had to have cheated or have done that before, that he got 100. And she did not feel that he deserved the 100 [Wow], and that she was not going to give him a mark. Mom seemed to be okay with that. She was scared because she felt he would have been victimized. And

so when the student came to school he said, “Teacher, I don’t want you to teach me too well, because then I... my teacher in school gets mad.” (Lovie, CCACH Administrator)

The student was allocated his grades after CCACH brought the issue to his principal who instructed the teacher to award him his marks. However, Lovie noted that the discrimination continued:

But after that it continued, because the teacher did not believe, and the teacher therefore victimized him. Everything he tried to do, “Oh, I know those tutoring people are going to help you, you know. I know this.” And so it was downright prejudice, right? (Lovie, CCACH Administrator)

As discussed previously, some educators have low expectations for Black students and do not see them as capable of subjects traditionally considered as academically challenging, but as more suited for sports or the performing arts. Instead of being enthused by the students’ effort in spending extra time to receive tutoring and improve himself, this teacher chose to hold onto the deep-seated belief that this Black student was incapable of academic excellence. In contrast to middle-class, White families, where tutoring and enrichment activities outside of school are not viewed with suspicion, Black students seeking the same enrichment and improving their mathematics skills is interpreted as cheating or being unfair. Clearly this teacher had to have had a deep-seated bias against this student to deny him his grades, even after being made aware of the consistent tutoring he was receiving outside of school that led to his increased proficiency in the subject.

What would have happened had CCACH not intervened to have the student allocated the grade that he had earned? This demonstrates the negative impact of teachers having low expectations and stereotypes of students and the deleterious impact of teachers’ biases against

Black students. It shines a light on how these every day and institutional prejudices get reproduced and in turn reproduce racist constructions of merit. Racist stereotypes about Black students led this teacher to suppress the student's ability and hard work instead of acknowledging, respecting, and encouraging the extra effort he was exerting to fulfil his academic potential. CCACH exercised navigational capital in this instance to ensure the teacher did not rob the student of his grades. The organization made the parent aware of the hierarchy of power in the school system, helping her to understand that the teacher did not have the power to deny the student his rightful grades and that they could seek redress by bringing the issue to the attention of the school principal. Further, they were involved in the meetings with the school principal providing support for the parent who felt intimidated by the teacher and reluctant to pursue redress on her own. The organization's actions in tutoring the student to the point where he could excel in this test and in opposing the teacher's attempt to deprive the student of the grades are expressions of resistant capital. It is resistant capital in the sense that they defied the prevailing belief that Black students cannot excel academically by consistently working with students based on the premise that they can do very well if they are given the right training and practice in their different subject areas. Further, when their belief in the students' abilities were confirmed his greatly improved performance, they intervened to ensure that the bias of his teacher did not result in him being punished as opposed to rewarded for his diligence and success.

The assertion that Black students are negatively stereotyped and discriminated against in the school system is reinforced by Iata, a teacher born and raised in Jamaica:

And I think just by being Black, it's held against you, as put – as an X against these students. I think black [people] in this society tend to be targeted. They're targeted

because they are strong. They are targeted because they have strong voices, so when they speak their voice might be a little bit more elevated than the normal mainstream student. They're targeted because they are good at sports. They are – they perform well. And so there is that element of jealousy where, “Oh, you're only good at sports. You can't do anything else,” you know? So they are labeled. (IATA, CCACH volunteer)

It would seem from these experiences that the odds are stacked against Black students, and the students themselves are not oblivious to the fact that they are treated unfairly. Hadii, a senior high school female student who was born in Nigeria and raised in Canada, noted the over-surveillance of Black students and the ways in which they were often meted out harsh punishments for minor rule infringements that other students were not penalized for:

Like one of my friends wore – this White girl, right, she wore like a fluffy headband to school, right, and they – like the teachers like didn't do anything about it. But one of my friends, a Black girl friend's, yeah, she wore a fluffy headband to school, it was black, and she got like suspended for it and taken away. So I was like that wasn't, you know. You could have just – even if you didn't want it on her, you could have just asked her, you know, to put it away or simply, instead of getting suspended. And she was a good girl too, so I was like, “Okay, that's... no.” Maybe they didn't notice. Maybe they didn't do it on purpose, but it still, yeah. (Hadii, CCACH student)

Hadii reflects on the way in which school administrators allowed a White student to escape any punishment for breaking a clothing rule while a Black student is punished. Hadii reinforces the inequity by highlighting her friend's character, stressing that she was a model student. She is making the case that since her Black friend did not have a reputation as a troublemaker, and since teachers had not disciplined the White student for the clothing infringement, then her friend

could also have been pardoned. Suspension is a serious punishment which causes students to not only miss classes, but it can also lead to them being labelled as troublesome by other teachers and can eventually contribute to student disengagement from school. Further, suspensions and expulsions play a key role in the school to prison pipeline, which speaks to the way in which disciplinary measures meted out to Black students in schools increase their likelihood of becoming involved with the criminal justice system (Maynard, 2017). One wonders if a clothing infringement such as a headband warranted such a serious punishment, especially considering the student had a reputation as a “good” student. Hadii gave other examples of discriminatory behaviour on the part of teachers:

Racist. Sometimes – there’s this one Black guy in one of my classes that would like do something, and he would take it a different way than if like a White person, like a, you know, Caucasian boy had done it, or something like that. (Hadii, CCACH student)

This demonstrates that the racist behaviour was persistent across genders and teachers in her school and that she was conscious of the various ways in which it manifested itself. What is the emotional burden for Black students like Hadii who know that their teachers who are in authority over them treat them differently solely based on their skin colour? Also, what is the impact on the White students who also notice that their teachers treat them better than they treat the Black students? Do such behaviours on the part of teachers reinforce a sense of entitlement and racial superiority that White students would have experienced in the wider society? Moreover, these White students, many of whom will later form the majority of the teaching force are being socialized into anti-Black behaviour which they will perpetuate in their own classrooms as the teachers of the future (Boutte & Bryan, 2019). Thus, the cycle of discrimination against Black students continues and is passed on from one generation to the next.

Some parent participants shared that their children were labelled as being disruptive and teachers even suggested that their children should be put on medication to modify their behaviour. Holly shared her experience with her son:

I will say yes, kind of. My son, at a point they wouldn't stop calling me, almost every day. "Oh, he doesn't – he disrupts the class. He wouldn't stay still." I could see where they were coming from, like trying to tell me he has something, he has something. I'm like, "Nope. My son has nothing. That is just the extra energy in the black boy. At times they tend to have a little bit extra." And I went to his school. I told them, "You know what? The father was like that and he was not on any ADHD medication or anything, and now he's functioning well. He's okay. As in that is their making. That is in their DNA. Nothing is wrong with my son." Now he's in grade nine, doing good. But if I have not been able to put my feet down and stand for my son, and talk for my son, they would have probably pushed him to be on one of these medications, to make him sit still.

(Holly, parent)

My research concurs with that of Bryan (2017) who asserted that teachers seem to target Black male students disproportionately for disciplinary action. Sony had a similar experience as Holly with his son:

That I get reports more often, complaints, "Oh, your son wasn't listening in class. Your son was running around. Your son was playing rough." And from – from just talking to other parents as well, who we have black boys, they seem to be getting the same complaints. And I'm just wondering whether it's because these young white teachers, probably they expect these kids to come in and sit still, and yet we know – and I know it's not a good thing to say, but people normally say boys will be boys. There will always

be that roughing around, chasing each other, playing. And I think that has sort of shown black kids in a bad light, let me say. Like they have looked like they are the ones who don't listen in class, like the ones who are, you know, giving teachers problems. And I think it's just because there is no – there is no good understanding between the teachers and the kids, which could be a cultural thing. (Sony, parent)

In the case of Holly's and Sony's children the teachers were constructing normal child's play as acts of deviance and by so doing were creating a label for them as being troublemakers. Research conducted by Dee (2005) shows that racialized students are more likely to be described as disruptive by teachers who are not members of their racial group. Teachers' constant criticism and complaints can also cause students to feel unwelcome and disengaged from school as shown in Holly's story about her friend's son:

Because there are times when they – when maybe the student, or the teacher, will be like, you know, they use these words that are not too good on the kids, like, "Oh, you are the only one different." Or, "You are just the only one black boy out there," you know. At times, I've actually seen a friend whose son – the child was in kindergarten or grade one, either/or. This boy is *so* good. I've met him so many times. He likes school. He's the type of boy that wake up and he's just looking forward to when they – looking forward to go to school. Then something happened in school, then at the point the boy will just say, "Mommy, I don't want to go to school. Mommy, I don't feel like going." The mother was like, "What is going on?" Then he told the mom, "My teacher said I'm not good, or I'm a bad boy." Something like that. I can't – maybe this child just use it generally, but there are times when it hits the son, the child, like so hard. And we as parents, we have to pay attention to that. Anyways, the mother decided to take it up. She went to the school, and

she talked to the teacher, and they talked to the principal, and they talked to everyone that could – I mean that could be part of – that was part of the setting. (Holly, parent)

In this instance the parent was proactive and addressed the problem before her son fully disengaged. However, not every parent will know how to discover the root cause of a child becoming averse to school, and if they do find out, they may not know what actions to take that will be in the best interest of their child. Thus, Black students who do not have care givers who can help them to adequately address discrimination from teachers may stop attending classes, play truant, or disengage from school in other ways. Ultimately it is the students who suffer.

Even in instances where teachers were not overtly racist, their discomfort and/or inexperience interacting with Black people placed a burden on students as exemplified by the experience shared by a parent below:

You know? One of the things that come to mind is when S. was first in kindergarten, she was the only little black child there. And it was a young teacher from a small town, had never really associated, and you could see some discomfort with the poor teacher. She didn't really know what to do [Laughs], you know, how to present herself. And I said to S., "I have a feeling she's probably never seen a Black child close enough, you know. Go talk to her, you know. Ask her how she is, you know. Have a conversation with her at recess. You know, if you had a question, don't be afraid to ask her, and just remember not to be rude. Just, you know, however like you would have a conversation with any other person, or a child in the schoolyard." And halfway through that program, that teacher's attitude sort of relaxed. You know, I don't know what she was expecting from, you know, the parent, or the child, right? But that approach alone took a little bit of the pressure, I would say, off of her, to the point where she didn't have that hesitation.

Because that alone sometimes will start this clique association reaction to attitudes, and things like that. (Anne, parent).

It is incredible that a shy kindergarten student was tasked with the immense responsibility to make her adult teacher feel comfortable. No doubt this little Black kindergarten student was also intimidated by her teacher, yet she had to make the first move to establish a relationship with her teacher in an effort to get the most out of her schooling experience. This begs the question whether this teacher received adequate training and preparation regarding working with students and families from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds during her pre-service teacher training program. The teacher spoken about by Anne may not have had any control over being born and raised in a community where she was not exposed to Black people. However, she should have left her teacher education program fully equipped and able to teach all the students in her class and make them feel welcome and at ease with her regardless of their race and ethnic background.

### **Invisibility**

Ironically, although Black students are over-surveilled and hypervisible in schools, they are also lacking in positive attention from teachers. Carter-Andrews et. al. (2020) found that teachers did not believe that Black students were deserving of high standard educational experiences and were even negligent in providing feedback on these students work. Black students are seen when they are infringing on rules but feel invisible during routine school activities or if they are behaving well. Lovie, a CCACH volunteer and education consultant shared that “and we had our students themselves, who were reporting that they felt they didn’t get enough attention from teachers.” This led some parents to worry that their children were being deprived of opportunities afforded other children: “What I do worry about is what are the... are my children really having the same kind of access to opportunities and resources? Are

the teachers treating them the same as they're treating other children?" (Flora, CCACH administrator and parent)

The preceding experiences demonstrate that teachers' discriminatory behaviour towards Black students carry a heavy emotional burden for Black students and their families and negatively impact on their schooling experiences.

CCACH displayed resistant capital by purposefully working to counteract the rendering of Black students as invisible in mainstream schools. An important part of CCACH's programming centers around motivating and inspiring students and helping them to set and achieve goals.

Maggy a tutor and alumna shared:

Yeah, and even like outside of an education like perspective, I've had a lot of students where they don't really see their full potential in class, because they have teachers... I don't want to say ignoring them, but kind of just in a way, kind of ignoring them. Not really paying a lot of attention to them within the classroom. And having that one-on-one time, even though it's only an hour, kids tend to open up and say like, "Oh, like I have never really had a teacher explain something to me this way," or, "I've never had someone engage in my education like this." And so that's... that's one part with the mentoring that I really enjoy about working with CCACH. Okay. I would say that a big thing for me, when *I* was even a student, was seeing other Black students, they graduated high school, and they're in university, and they're doing... there were some of them were in engineering, and just seeing their success [Right] made you be like, "Yes, it's possible. And yes, *I* can achieve this." (Maggy, tutor and alumna)

Maggy touches on the point of Black students feeling invisible to teachers in class. Previously, I explained the irony of Black students feeling hypervisible to teachers in relation to behavioural

or disciplinary matters but invisible when it related to learning. Maggy's quote displays how feeling seen, and having a tutor take the time to meet them where they were at in their learning made a difference in students' learning. Further, she explained that seeing the tutors who were pursuing various courses in university was a motivating factor for her when she was a student in CCACH's tutoring program.

***“They Do Not Sit Quietly and Absorb, They Become Participants, and More Sharing in the Classroom”***

All the encouragement, and positive representation of Blackness that students received via tutoring and AfroQuiz helped to transform how they behaved in their mainstream classrooms. Students became more engaged with their learning and bolder in the classroom. Providence shared:

So but CCACH, I think, has done an excellent job of doing, is reaching those students in those indelible years, and infusing into their education a really clear understanding of history that they can identify with. And I think when you – when you have strong Black students identifying with a major piece of local history, there becomes a voice that is created in that moment when they are educated, but also that will carry on and resonate through the education system for as long as they are in it, and even afterward. Because that identification with a very specific time and place is the spark for inspiration across cultures, across even sectors of expertise. It's identifying with facts that is inspirational to individuals and to large groups. So I think CCACH has done an excellent job of identifying that as a need, and using the education to inspire, to inspire Black students to – inspire them to be comfortable hearing their own voices in classroom settings about their history, and about the future of Black people in Alberta and Canada, and inspires

them to do even more research to find different pictures of who they were, and who they can be as Black students. (Providence, parent and CCACH volunteer)

Maggy explained how she coached her students to speak up in their mainstream classrooms:

... we'll be going through something and I'll say like, "How did your teacher explain this to you?" And a lot of them will be like, "Oh, well, they didn't really say something." And so I try to encourage them to ask more questions, because I find that when you ask your teacher more questions they see that you care about your education, and they don't really have that opportunity to ignore you anymore.

I've definitely seen them, they'll come back to me and they'll be like, "Oh, you know, I talked to my teacher about this," or, "My teacher *told* me something about this." Whereas before they'd be like, "Well, I don't really know what's going on. The teacher didn't really say anything." So I've seen *that* sort of change, but it does take a while. (Maggy tutor and CCACH alumna)

Maggy's quote illustrates navigational capital at work in that she was directing students how to go about ensuring that their needs are met by their teachers in the classroom. Navigational capital speaks to "skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) including those that are racist and structured in such a way that makes accessing them difficult for people of colour. Maggy was teaching students how to survive schools in Alberta by teaching students the soft skills that could earn them the positive attention and support they needed from their teachers to be successful. These skills include being assertive and asking questions in a respectful way to signal to their teacher that they were engaged in their education and that would in turn elicit greater teacher investment of time and attention in them.

CCACH's deliberate cultivation of students as active, engaged learners was evident in my observations of tutoring sessions as well. In my observations I saw high levels of student engagement with their tutors at CCACH as shown in the following excerpts from my field notes:

I am observing a grade 8 female student with her tutor. They are working on Math. The tutor shows the student how to multiply fractions and then had the student role play, pretending she is a tutor to show how she would work a new problem. Student starts well but couldn't finish the problem, so the tutor took over showing her how to work it out. The student seems very engaged, alert, and interested, and asks questions at different intervals. Student is expressive, smiling, expressing shock when she learns something new. They have a worksheet with some questions that they use to continue to practice working fractions. The student starts to role play again, working out the problem while pretending that she is the tutor. She is very confident and laughs a bit saying "This is so fun". The tutor/student I am observing are still working. They have switched from Math to science (topic: reflection). The student gets a call (maybe from parent?). she says she wished she had more time to do some more review and asks the person on the phone to give her some more time so that she can review one more thing. At the end of the session. Student says thank you so much... that was like so educational". (Field notes, February 08, 2020)

I noticed this same high level of student engagement in observations of other tutoring sessions as well:

The tutor assisted student with a worksheet from school looking at the European Renaissance entitled How Did the Renaissance impact Our Western World? The tutor had a table that they were populating that illustrated the social, economic, and political structure of society in the Middle Ages. I wondered why the tutor didn't allow the student

to type in the answers instead of she typing them in. The student was making oral contributions to the worksheet by telling the tutor what to type in the worksheet. The student had her textbook and she read a section about social structure in the Middle Ages and she and the tutor discussed the passage. They seemed to have a lively conversation and the student seemed enthused about the content she was learning. (Field notes, November 30, 2019)

The following observation was of a 9th grade student's tutoring session:

The student and tutor are working in a poetry analysis assignment. They are answering questions about the poem *Hope Is A Thing With Feathers* By Emily Dickinson.

The student struggles to answer the questions so the tutor uses the Socratic method to get him to analyze the poem. The student uses the internet to find information about the author to answer questions on the worksheet. The tutor explains the difference between mood and tone. The student suggests answers to the questions and the tutor asks him to justify his responses, using questions to help him see when his answers are incorrect.

Again, a very collaborative approach to tutoring with tutor and student engaging in discussion instead of tutor telling student the answer. What is striking is how supportive and encouraging the tutors are even while gently challenging the students. Also, the students seem to be very comfortable with their tutors. They are generally cheerful and enthusiastic. The tutors are patient and do their best to satisfy the students' needs. (Field notes, June 06, 2020)

The high level of student interest and engagement may be partly due to the one-on-one attention since students cannot hide behind any other students and the tutor's focus is on them only. Also, the student-centered pedagogy that the tutors use means that they do not talk at the

students but encourage them and give them the opportunity to voice their opinions, work problems, answer questions and then the tutors give feedback and any necessary corrections after. The tutors did not raise their voice, or ridicule students when they were wrong, and this may make students feel comfortable attempting to answer questions.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I examined participants' views about the ways in which Black students are discriminated against using disciplinary measures in schools and the lack of an affirming and nurturing school environment for them. My interviews with participants demonstrate that they, their children, or Black students they know have experienced being routinely overlooked by teachers for positive behaviour and/or are watched and subjected to unfair and excessive disciplinary actions. Teachers have low academic and behavioural expectations of Black students and do not believe that they were capable of excelling academically. Even where students accessed out of school tutoring to improve their grades, teachers tried to deny them their just reward because of the deep-seated belief that Black students were less intelligent than other students and thus could not score high marks regardless of what measures they implemented.

Conversely, Black students were not expected to behave well and make meaningful and constructive contributions to class and the school (outside of sports and entertainment). Thus, they are watched more than other students, reprimanded more, and given serious disciplinary sanctions for minor rule infractions. These discriminatory behaviours create an unwelcoming school environment for students where they felt unseen until they are perceived to have behaved inappropriately.

CCACH recognized that Black students needed educational experiences that countered the invisibility of their strengths, talents and potential, and their hypervisibility when it came to

negative teacher expectations based on racist stereotypes. Students who use the tutoring service are urged to do their best in school and empowered with navigational capital as they are taught how to interact with their teachers in ways that commanded their respect and positive attention, and they are encouraged to take charge of and play an active role in their own learning. Through mentorship from tutors and Black cultural knowledge gained through AfroQuiz, Black students access resistant capital where they develop the resilience to defy the negative and low expectations of them in schools and to aspire to excellence. The encouragement they received and the instruction and practice they gained from their tutors helped some students to improve their grades dramatically. Further, where necessary CCACH successfully act as an advocate in schools to address instances where Black students are being discriminated against.

## **Chapter Nine: Engendering Accountability: Black Students Matter**

### **Introduction**

According to Lasley, Waft and Watras (2012) educational accountability entails government creating explicit benchmarks delineating the content students should know and skills they should exhibit in different subjects in each grade. It connotes taking responsibility for students' educational outcomes especially as expressed in their grades. This taking of responsibility refers to teachers, students, and parents assuming responsibility for students' learning and academic performance. In Alberta, schools are responsible for providing stakeholders such as parents, students, and the Ministry of Education with information such as student standardized test results, report cards, student enrolment statistics, and student, teacher, parent, and guardian satisfaction surveys (Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children and Youth, 2004). School board trustees are democratically elected by the public and play a variety of roles including creating and enforcing guidelines and benchmarks for students' and teachers' performance. (Edmonton Public School Board, n.d). Additionally, school boards provide an opportunity for Albertans to have a say in the education of children, however there are not many Black school board trustees and the issues faced by racialized students, and in particular systemic racism, are often not prioritized by these boards.

Although Edmonton Public School Board has a written policy on inclusive education which states a commitment to providing all students with equal learning opportunities, it is unclear if schools are assessed for compliance and how the policy is enforced (Government of Alberta Education, 2021). Further, since data on student performance is not disaggregated by race in the Edmonton Public School Board, there are no statistics to identify how Black students are performing in relation to other students and how many are performing below acceptable

standards. All too often Black students do not get the positive attention they yearn for and deserve from educators (Carter Andrews et. al., 2019), and unfortunately this situation does not get addressed. This can lead to students' learning gaps going unnoticed and unattended to, and they may progress from one grade to the next without being at the standard that they should be for their grade. The data shows that there is a wide achievement gap between Black students and students from other racial groups (Brown & Tam, 2017a). Black students are more likely to be placed in special education classes, streamed in classes for vocational subjects, have lower secondary graduation rates, and are less likely to pursue postsecondary education (Brown & Tam, 2017a, Brown & Tam, 2017b; James et.al, 2017; Robson et.al, 2018). Further, Robson et al. (2018) found that Black students were less ready for postsecondary education demonstrated by lower grades, over -representation in special education classes, and under-representation in academic streams. It is possible that lower teacher expectations, negative stereotypes, and teacher negligence and apathy towards Black students play a role in these outcomes.

Despite these poor educational outcomes and a plethora of studies that cite systemic discrimination as a primary reason for them (Dei et. al., 1997; James et.al, 2017), very little has been done by schools to address the challenges that Black students face in the mainstream Canadian education system. It would seem that at the school level there is little accountability for teachers as it relates to Black students' academic performance. Educators do not expect Black students to do well and as such their substandard academic outcomes are treated as normal and expected and do not raise alarm nor propel educators to take remedial action.

CCACH has taken a different approach from mainstream schools in that the organization's leaders and tutors believe that Black students are capable of excellence and if they are performing below their potential then action must be taken to help them improve. CCACH

strategically uses one on one tutoring which helps students to become responsible for their learning in that they decide the subject areas they needed help with, and the tutors follow up with them to assess their progress. Additionally, during their one-hour tutoring sessions on Saturdays, students can discuss and plan with their tutors how to improve on the skills that they are weakest in. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which CCACH held teachers and Black students responsible for Black students' academic performance.

### **“The Parent Decided To Bring The Kid Over To The Tutoring Program. He Started Doing Well”**

Similar to the findings of Evans and Gillan-Thomas (2015) and Maylor et. al (2013) who examined the impact of supplementary education programs on student achievement, many of the participants in the present study indicated that students' grades improved as a result of CCACH's tutoring program. Holly explained the impact on her daughter thus:

One of them, my daughter, was – have been the support with mathematics, and that has been able to give her that support that she needs. That has been able to help her improve her grade. That has been able to help her focus more, because they give them assignments to do, and because they know that when they are in the lesson they have to show what they've done before, and they have to be able to tell the teacher where they are, and where they need support on. That kinds of make them know that they have to be able to put their own stuff together ahead of the class, so that way they have something to present to the tutor. (Holly parent)

The one-on- one attention and supervision from tutors, a supportive and encouraging learning environment and consistent weekly practice helped students to improve in their weak subject area. Iata gave some detail into how she believed tutoring contributed to student success:

Well, I think CCACH is trying to motivate students very well, to let them know that they belong, they have potential, and they can use it to the utmost. They just... so they encourage them quite a bit to make sure that, you know, “Oh, you can do this,” and show them the way. I think they are doing that very well, by helping them with homework, making sure that they look at what students are doing in the mainstream, and identifying where they have problems, and trying to have the tutors address them on a one-to-one basis, and to give them more practice so that when they go back to school they have patterns that they can follow, because they have seen something like that and done something like that at CCACH school on a Saturday, and so they can identify, “Oh, this is the pattern we should use.” So CCACH is good at helping them to see patterns that they can use for study. If they have something to study, CCACH will help them to set a pattern for how to study materials for a test, how to... how to master the timetable in a very quick and precise way, how to address comprehension questions by looking at keywords in the question asked. (Iata, CCACH volunteer)

Maggy a tutor and CCACH alumna, felt that having a tutor encouraged her to be accountable for her work:

Um, I found that having those mentor tutors that were a lot older than me, they really held you accountable for your work. Because my parents were really involved in my education, but it's hard for them to every evening sit down with you and go over your work, and make sure that you understand everything. And so having that tutoring, which in the moment, I definitely didn't really... I didn't really take advantage of that help, but I found that looking back, just having that tutor once a week to be like, “Did you do your homework? Do you really understand what you're learning?” really just pushed me to be

more accountable. So it was around the like PAT time, and so having tutors that they already went through the schooling system in Alberta, they were able to be like, “You got this question right, but do you understand it?” Or, “Do you understand this like language arts part of that?” And so my parents didn’t grow up in Canada, so their view of the education system is very different. So I find having the tutors that actually grew up in the system definitely was beneficial. (Maggy, CCACH tutor and alumna)

Holly’s, Iata’s and Maggy’s excerpt highlight the important role that the affective side of education plays in students’ learning and in them improving their grades. The quotes suggest that the individualized attention from tutors facilitated a relationship with students where students feel a level of responsibility and accountability for their work. They know that their tutors would be keeping track of their work and so they need to be prepared for their sessions. Further, navigational capital is exemplified here as the tutors are able to provide the students and their immigrant parents with instructions or insights into how the Canadian education system works and how to succeed in it, which is information they may not receive otherwise.

Additionally, tutors create an enabling, supportive, and positive relationship with students that motivate them to do their best. The tutors also mentor students by giving them strategies for effective studying and for performing well on tests. This helps the students to view themselves as playing a crucial role in their own learning and academic performance, shifting the responsibility for how well they perform from primarily the teachers to themselves and their own effort... making them accountable for their own progress and engendering their commitment to their education. Tutors also advise students on how to deal with the emotional challenges presented by schooling. Tina shared how her tutors helped her to overcome anxiety and to excel in Mathematics:

I: Alright. And why did you start tutoring and AfroQuiz?

P: At first because my dad told me to. [Laughs]

P: Because he was like, “Oh, do this. Do that.” And plus I had so many support systems at home to help me study, so, you know, it was fun. It was cool. CCACH, I started because school, we’ve never been best friends. We’ve been like frenemies. We’ve been friends and enemies. I’ve always been like a mediocre student. So I remember, grade three – yeah, I was grade three, I got a C in math. Ah, I thought my parents were going to kill me. I was sad. I think that’s when the anxiety also came in. [Laughs] I was so scared. But then no, they just said, “Okay, let’s talk about this. Let’s see what we can do.” And I ended the semester with an A in math. So I mean, CCACH helped me with that, especially with other tutors that I’ve had, who have been so nice. So nice. Nobody’s been rude or mean, or passive aggressive. (Tina, CCACH student)

Tina’s quote reinforces the idea that CCACH helped Black students to improve their grades by providing a nurturing and safe place for Black students along with the technical guidance in the subject individual students’ requested tutoring for.

Emily, a CCACH alumna, also recounted how tutoring led to a huge improvement in her Mathematics grades:

And so my mom’s like, “S., you need to buckle down [Laughs] on your math.” So okay, so getting that support, getting that encouragement, on my final test for my diploma – not my diploma; my provincial test in grade nine math. So I think I was like sitting like at a low 60 at the beginning of the class. By the end of it – on that test alone, I got a 90 something. And grade six, it was like amazing for my math. Like I did so well when I was in grade six in my math that the following year, for grade seven, they put me in the

Enrichment Program. And not only just my math, but with my math and my sciences, and my LA, and it was awesome. [Laughs] And it was neat. So just having that support, that practice. Because a lot of the time for me, I just need the time to understand, and to go through [Right], so I can get the understanding of it. (Emily, CCACH alumna)

Similarly, Mike an alumnus stated:

P: Grade ten I was struggling with getting 60s, but when I started like tutoring I – from tutoring I started getting like 90s and 80s from there. So it actually helped me get higher marks than I was getting.

I: Okay. And that subject was – what subjects were you doing again? Was it math and?

P: Math and English.

He went on to share that tutoring helped him to drastically improve his subject grades and was crucial to him being able to pursue postsecondary studies:

P: It [tutoring]helped me because I have my thing because I did a trade in Centre [high school], so that's why I went for my high school. I feel like my math was low, and then when I got higher marks, it helped me get into NAIT.

P: So the tutoring helped me get to what I needed to. (Mike, CCACH alumnus)

Gladys a CCACH administrator also pointed to the contributions of the tutoring program to an improvement in students' grades:

So one of the things that parents often talk about is the fact that our program is such a high quality, with a low or to no cost. For many years we charged almost nothing. Now we're charging just a little bit above nothing. And there are some tutoring programs in the city that have the same or lesser quality for a very, very high price. And parents are struggling. If you're a refugee, you're a new immigrant, you don't have lots of disposable

funds to be, you know, to giving out for tutoring. But your child might be struggling. So when they can come to a place and get high quality tutoring, and they can see that their child's marks are improving, that is such a blessing to these parents, and they always say that. (Gladys, CCACH administrator)

What these excerpts demonstrate is that CCACH cultivates resistant capital in that the organization rejects mainstream low expectations for Black students and work from the premise that given the right attention, consistent instruction and support Black students can do well. The fact that the lower levels of academic performance prevalent among Black students has been allowed to continue for decades unaddressed would indicate that teachers are not held accountable for Black students' performance. Moreover, although Alberta has a Multicultural Education policy, there is no oversight to ensure that the principles of the policy are being enforced, the policy also needs to address racist actions directed from one student to another and from parent to parent. Thus, Black students continue to endure a curriculum and school environment that exclude their history and culture and causes them to feel alienated. CCACH works to hold students accountable for their own work and as I explain below, they also hold teachers accountable by checking in with them regarding student's progress and following up with teachers who are negligent in reviewing students' assignments and providing feedback on their work in a timely manner.

Although most of CCACH's tutors are not trained teachers, they have helped in the educational development of children with special needs. Sintra enrolled her two children in CCACH's tutoring program. They are elementary school children with various learning challenges including severe autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and Tourette's syndrome. She shared that after kindergarten she has received very little meaningful support from the

mainstream school system, her children are denied the kinds of supports that they are entitled to by law, and this has led to her son regressing in his studies. The schools are content to put him in special classrooms where he is not taught the school curriculum even though he has the ability to do it, given enough time and the necessary modified instruction. Sintra's struggle is emblematic of the general lack of adequate supports for children who have disabilities in the Alberta public education system. She stated that enrolling him in tutoring has helped him not to regress completely and has given her proof that he can do many of the things the teachers in the mainstream schools said he cannot do such as reading.

So one of the things for me, that *I've* found really valuable about having the tutors, is I've been able to – especially with Q., I've been able to... um, how would I put it? Like check in to see where he's actually at. So especially when he was in grade three and not – and I wasn't getting *any* feedback whatsoever about any academics. No report card, no tests coming home, or I don't even know. Like nothing, right? I got nothing. So what I did is I bought a grade two curriculum book, just from, you know, Education Station or whatever, and I said to the tutor, "Can you just start going through some of this stuff with him, so that we can kind of figure out like where he's at, right?" And the thing was, with the tutor, was they would go through the stuff, and he was able to do everything. So that, I was able to know that he is capable; it's just the school does not think he's capable, and isn't going to try, right? Part of the grade three year for him I had – because once I found out they weren't giving him the curriculum and all of that kind of stuff I said, "Well, you need to get him in the grade three classroom as much as you can, because he needs to get some exposure to this stuff." So they did eventually agree to put him in one period per week. Not one subject, but just for one period in the science, when they had science. So

I'm not sure how often they did science, if it was like three times a week, or five times, but one day per week during science they put him in the regular classroom. And I had requested for them to give me the work that was being worked on in that classroom, and they didn't really do that the whole time, but I did get a couple of sheets, initially, from them. So again, that's where I had the tutor. I said – I took it to the tutor, I said, "Can you go through this stuff with him?" And so yeah, they were able to do it, and he had no problem doing it. I had, based on that, asked the school, I said, "Look, he's able to do all of this. You should be putting him in, if nothing else, at least all the science classes. Like every time there's science, he should be there." They didn't do that. In the end, they didn't do it. But I was able to tell that yeah, he is perfectly capable of doing this work, right? It just takes somebody to take the time to do it. And of course, at CCACH, the tutors that he's had, they're not specially trained in special education, or even education necessarily, because they're taking whatever they're taking, right, in school. And so it told me that it doesn't even actually take somebody specially trained to be able to figure out whether he knows this curriculum work, right? (Sintra, parent)

I observed a session with Sintra's 10-year-old son and recorded the following:

The tutor was teaching a student with multiple learning exceptionalities. They began the session by going to the fire alarm where the student showed a remarkable amount of knowledge about the fire alarm. He spoke about times when the fire alarm went off at his school and they took turns hitting the bell. Next, they did plurals. For each lesson, the tutor told him how many minutes they would spend on it and then turned on the timer on her phone. They worked on plurals from a workbook the student's mom had brought. They took another 5-minute break to go to the fire alarm again. Then they started 10

minutes on spelling and punctuation, writing. The student wasn't settled and so the tutor held his head with both hands and asked me to hold his wrist and squeeze. It seemed to work as he calmed down and did his work. Another 5-minute break to the fire alarm.

When they came back the student was unsettled so the tutor spoke with him and told him they could either draw or they could sit together quietly. He chose to draw and spent the remainder of the session drawing quietly. (Field notes, November 30, 2019)

It is a testament to CCACH's commitment to Black students that they embraced the challenge of working to ensure Sintra's two children with learning challenges are supported as much as possible so that they can maximize their potential. It is even more impressive that they have assisted these students without any special training while the public school system with the funding and specialists have shirked their responsibility to provide these two students with the academic help that they are entitled to by law.

CCACH's tutoring program is an example of resistant capital in action as the program is premised on the belief that Black students can do well and excel academically given the right supports. The tutors encourage the students and rebut the low expectations that teachers have of Black children, in many instances assisting students to achieve far beyond what they would have without the consistent help and support afforded them through tutoring.

#### **“...He Put More Attention On Me In Class”**

As mentioned previously Black students are often not given positive attention and affirmation from teachers in schools. CCACH tutors hold teachers accountable by reviewing students' work and follow up with teachers where they believe students are not being assessed properly or given the attention they deserve. Zella, a tutor communicated the following incident of teacher negligence:

P: I think that at times we do have systems in place that we could somehow highlight. The lack of effort put into students with our – or teachers put into our students. Like I have, over time, we have issues where like we might not directly contact the teachers, but even having the parents let teachers know that they have tutors. I've noticed the change in how one of my students wasn't completing their work, wasn't getting help to complete their work, and just had so many uncompleted assignments on their Google Classroom. As soon as the parent/teacher, I had a small conversation with the parent about what to tell the teacher, and then I noticed a change, a *drastic* change. Just having a teacher know that someone else is also going to put them, in a way, accountable to how they treat the student, it's disappointing to see the change, that they are trying a bit more, that they're actually emailing me back, that they're giving me the – like giving the test back with more comments on it now, because they know that someone outside of that is going to be overlooking it, and going to have direct ways to translate that to the parent. And the parent didn't have efficient formal education. The parent didn't have official, efficient English proficiency. I knew one of the languages that they spoke, and that was in a way that I could help address them, and that I could help bring their parent to a better understanding. And I think that's one of the powers we have, when you have a culturally competent, culturally focused program, is that you can empower parents too, to be able to hold the system accountable. And it's really disappointing that that is something we have to do, but I'm really grateful to have that opportunity to do that.

I: Oh, okay. So could you tell me what it was that made you – tell me a little bit more about this situation. Was it that the parent, or the child, said to you, you know, like, “I don't think my teacher is helping me as much as I need?”

P: No, I noticed it.

I: Or what was it that you noticed that made you say no.

P: I noticed it immediately, because I had that same experience in elementary – because she was in elementary. Oh, sorry. The student was in elementary as well. I remember there was a year in elementary where my teacher didn't even – because all the other kids had to, and I know that's – that's something that's ongoing, because I have younger kids that go, even attend the same school as her – or sorry, as the student. I have cousins that attend the same school as the student. I know it is a formality that teachers have to at least sometimes give commentary back on assignments, give commentary in the agendas, like put commentary on their projects on Google Classroom, and none of this was going on with the student. To a point where I noticed it, and I took the initiative to ask. I was like, "Oh, does your teacher not do this?" And then through breaking that kind of barrier, and making her feel comfortable, she was able to talk to me more about it. But I had to take that initiative to start that conversation. I was like, "Oh, does your teacher do this?" And the more comfortable the student got with me, the more they told me how they were feeling. I noticed how they were – they, the student was in third grade. Very young. And the student, you would think the student noticed that this was not fair, and that it made them feel – they put an emotional connection to feeling lesser than, and incapable of doing work, with how much the teacher wasn't paying attention or putting energy into them. To the point where sometimes the teacher would just see them as a problem and put – make them go to the back of the class, or different areas, to isolate them from the group. And they were one of the three Black students in that school.

P: Yeah. It's a very hurtful to know that this exists and like to have that confirmation that like what I went through is something that still goes on, and it isn't an individual thing; it's a collective thing. But it's something people don't even know unless you can start a conversation with them. They just internalize it. And they also feel the same, that it's just them. (Zella, tutor)

Zella's lived experience of being a Black student and the attendant discrimination made her recognize that this teacher was ignoring and short-changing this student. The teacher putting less effort into this student may have stemmed from low teacher expectations. Teachers who are convinced of the intellectual inferiority of Black students may not believe it is important to invest time reviewing their work and give constructive feedback (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019). Zella highlighted the fact that the student attached significance to the teacher not providing feedback on her work. The student felt as though she was less valued and less capable than the other students. These are emotions that can cause students to disengage from their learning and cause students to meet teachers' low expectations thereby perpetuating the negative stereotype about Black students (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018).

It is important to appreciate the ways in which teachers' behaviour towards Black students and other institutional practices translate into poor academic outcomes for Black youth. Here navigational capital was employed by Zella. Fortunately, Zella knew how to navigate the situation having experienced the Canadian school system herself and she was able to direct the student and parents on steps to take to force the teacher to provide the necessary level of guidance and attention to the student. Unfortunately, many Black students do not have someone like Zella to guide them. Similar to Zella's student, their parents may be immigrants who are not fluent in English, do not understand how the education system works in Canada, and some may

not have the time to check students work for progress. Thus, immigration status, language proficiency, and race, intersect and become a nexus of socially created vulnerability and disadvantage to some students.

Likewise, Maggy explained that she had a student who was being pushed through the system even though she was not completing her assignments:

Okay. Definitely. I know that when I first kind of became a tutor they were really pushing the idea of that you're mentors, not just tutors. And that's something I've really held onto. I've experienced some students in early elementary, like about grade three or so, where they'd have assignments that weren't completed, and the teacher wasn't contacting the parents. They would just... there was work from October that wasn't completed [Oh, wow], and we were in April, kind of thing. And so I... because I noticed that, I contacted the parents, and I contacted the teachers, and I was saying, "This kid's behind, and you're letting her breeze through the system like that." And so I was really able to kind of get her on track early, instead of having her in junior high and missing out on all of this education. (Maggy, tutor and CCACH alumna)

After Maggy emailed the student's teacher she noticed a marked improvement in the teacher's treatment of the child in that her work was now being reviewed:

Oh, yeah. It's... it's really interesting, because they... they quickly become accountable for their actions, and they tend to be like, "Oh, well, I gave her," and they'll kind of have some sort of roundabout excuse for *why* it didn't happen, especially when in this one case I was like, "Yeah, no, I'm actually an education student," and she kind of was being a little defensive. And I think knowing that there is someone holding the teacher

accountable really made her notice the student and like actually work harder. (Maggy, tutor and CCACH volunteer).

Evidently, teachers were motivated to give students the necessary attention and supervision when they knew that they were being monitored, and CCACH's tutors armed with this knowledge of how to interact with teachers in ways that yielded positive results for students employed their navigational capital to ensure that students received the support they are entitled to in school.

Hadii, a senior high school student shared the difference that her tutor contacting her Mathematics teacher made when she was in grade 9:

I: Mm-hmm. Oh, okay. So you said you really liked tutoring. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experiences? What is it about the Tutoring Program that you find useful, or that you like?

P: They're always going to like try – even if they don't know the subject, they're always going to try their best to, you know, help you. They're not going to, like, like give up on you. Like if you're a slow learner, they would like push you, you know. They will check up on you. They will do that extra mile to maybe contact your teacher if there's any problem that they're facing, you know. If they don't like the curriculum – like not the curriculum, but the way that she teaches, they'll, you know, find different ways to help you contact the teacher, like I said. Yeah, just different things in general. They'll go out of their way, so.

I: Yeah. So have they [CCACH tutors] ever contacted any of your teachers?

P: Yeah, they contacted, I think, one of my math teachers in grade nine. Because the subject, like my math teacher wasn't – he wasn't a wide thinker, right? So anything he knew, he went to like, “Do it my way or you're getting it wrong.” So I think one of my –

he was a guy at the time. I forgot his name, but I think he contacted my teacher and like explained it to him and asked him like what subjects we were going to do in future, like what topics, and yeah, and I appreciated him.

I: Okay. So was the teacher sort of receptive to being contacted by the tutor?

P: No. No, he was –

I: He didn't like that?

P: No, he was okay with it, but he gave me more – I feel like he was – it put him – I don't know if it was fear or something, but he put more attention on me in class. So yeah, so I had noticed that a little.

I: Oh, okay. Alright. And yeah, how did you feel about that? About your, you know, your tutor here contacting your teacher at school?

P: At first I was like, “Mm [Laughs]... like you don't really need to. You know, you might create like problems and stuff.” But then afterwards, like I noticed like I was getting like more attention, you know. And he actually took my questions seriously, and more serious, so. (Hadii, CCACH student)

Evidently in all three scenarios when the mainstream teachers knew that the students had persons who were monitoring their progress and reviewing their work, they treated them with more respect, gave more feedback, and paid more attention to their work. CCACH's intervention in various ways made educators aware that these Black students were not children that they could discard, pay minimal attention to, and pass along the school grades without engaging with them and supporting them to meet provincial performance standards. CCACH became a sort of supervisory body over these students' education, checking to ensure that teachers were treating these students in an equitable manner and doing right by them. The normative expectation in

White societies that parents play this role in heteronormative, nuclear families was disrupted by CCACH and the work it engaged in to ensure accountability from the teachers, and in supporting parents who sometimes struggled with language, time, and not knowing the education system and schooling culture in Canada.

### **Summary**

Due to the lack of accountability for Black students' educational performance in mainstream schools, some students do not receive the necessary supports to work at the standard that they should be able to for their grade level. Some students' assignments sometimes go unchecked and thus remedial action needed to address learning gaps were not implemented. Because Alberta uses a spiral curriculum approach, unaddressed learning gaps means that when students do not have a solid foundation in a topic, it may preclude them from understanding future topics. CCACH's administrators and tutors were strong advocates for the Black students in the tutoring program. Teachers seemed to pay more attention to students when they realized that students' work was being reviewed, and when CCACH's tutors checked in with them regarding students' work and progress. By checking in with teachers, CCACH was holding them responsible for students' progress and performance. Moreover, the tutors were holding the students responsible for their own learning by discussing their work with them, finding out areas that needed improvement, monitoring students' progress and sharing advice about how to succeed in the subjects they received tutoring for and in school generally. Additionally, as mentioned in chapter six, CCACH has advocated for Black students in other ways as well including pushing for the introduction of Black history and culture in the curriculum by making presentations to Alberta Education Social Studies Curriculum Working Group.

## Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This dissertation is the result of a qualitative case study into the experiences of various stakeholders within a Black-led African and African-Caribbean community organization in Edmonton, Alberta. In this concluding chapter, I give an overview of the study's main data generation methods, discuss the key insights of the study, and provide policy recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

The idea for this study was birthed from my concern with the poor educational outcomes of Black youth in Canada. I was troubled by the fact that so many Black youth in Canada do not complete their high school education and the challenges which that would pose for them in a society where they need at least postsecondary educational credentials to apply for many entry level jobs. I knew based on the literature and anecdotal evidence from friends and family that these poor outcomes were not caused by deficiencies within Black communities but with the practices, policies, and procedures within Canadian schools that marginalize and oppress Black students and their families. Despite centuries of advocacy from Black communities the problems persist. Since members of Black communities have limited power to effect the changes they advocate for in schools, they have created alternative sites of sustenance and support for Black students including supplementary education programs offered by organizations such as CCACH. I was introduced to CCACH by a friend who invited me to an AfroQuiz competition in 2016. I left the competition impressed with how smoothly the competition had been executed, the large attendance, the dissemination of information about Black histories and cultures, and the enthusiasm the youth displayed for what they had learnt. I later found out that the organization offered tutoring services and wanted to explore in more depth the impact that AfroQuiz and tutoring was having on the students served. Thus, the purpose of the research was to understand

the experiences of current students, alumni, parents, volunteers, and workers within an organization that offers supplementary education programs aimed at addressing the educational development of Black students in the context of the systemic challenges such students face in the Canadian K-12 mainstream education system.

In my quest for understanding I interviewed 25 participants consisting of administrators, students, alumni, parents, and tutors. I also observed 15 tutoring sessions over an eight-month period and AfroQuiz over a five-year period (2016-2020). I used a short questionnaire to collect demographic information from the 25 participants. Additionally, I conducted document analysis of the organization's AfroQuiz materials for ages 10 and older from 2015-2020 and of the province of Alberta's K-12 curriculum documents for Fine Arts, Mathematics, Science, French as a Second Language, English Language Arts, Social Studies, Health and Wellness Studies.

### **Key Insights**

The present study makes an important contribution to our understanding of Black history and lived experiences in Alberta. Scholarly conversations about Black Canada, tend to focus on Ontario and Nova Scotia. Alberta has been largely invisible in much of the writings about Black lives in Canada. This invisibility reinforces McKittrick's (2006) and Walcott's (2003) argument that Black history, residence, and contributions to Canada have been subjected to strategies of erasure that render them absent from mainstream conversations about Canada. Yet, although it is not widely known, there is a long Black presence in Alberta and evidence of a strong legacy of Black community development and activism. Further the study demonstrates that Black people have been and continue to be represented in various parts of Canada and not only in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

The study points to the creation of a Black syncretic, diasporic identity in Alberta. Alberta has become a meeting space for immigrants from the continent of Africa and African-descended people from various parts of the world. As they meet, interact, work, and engage in community activism together they are contending with what it means to be Black, as well as challenging and contributing to the discourse around Blackness by publicizing Alberta's Black history and positive representations of Black people in the province in the past and present.

I have illustrated the challenges that Black students and families in Alberta face as they navigate the education system, many of which parallel the experiences of Black students in Eastern Canada. One of the main differences between the experiences of the Black Albertans and that of say Black Ontarians is that Black Albertan history and community activism is much less visible and so organizations such as CCACH must work very hard to highlight the long existence and contributions of Black people in Alberta. Further, most Black persons in Ontario were born in Canada as opposed to the prairie provinces where most Black persons are first generation immigrants (Statistic Canada, 2019a). This difference in immigrant status may influence their experiences in Canada in terms of the types of supports they need, and also influences academic outcomes as an analysis of TDSB graduation rates conducted by James et al. (2017) shows that second and third generation Black students have poorer educational performance than first generation students.

Regarding the first research question that focuses on the challenges and marginalizations that Black youths face in navigating Edmonton's K-12 education system, the study shows that an exclusionary curriculum, few Black teachers, discriminatory disciplinary practices, streaming, and low teacher expectations are some of the main challenges facing Black students in

Edmonton. It is these challenges and marginalizations that make the CCACH's work necessary. CCACH's activism is part of the legacy of Black presence and agency in Alberta.

Despite the ways in which Blackness has been constructed as undesirable, negative and inferior by various social institutions in Canadian society including schools, the media, and the justice system, CCACH is resisting those depictions with its programs. Indeed, the formation of CCACH and the work that the organization does via tutoring and AfroQuiz is an expression of Black agency. The organization's founders and present members are aware of the difficulties Black people face in Canadian society in various realms of life and pooled their time, skills, knowledge, and other resources to alleviate the challenges and counter the negative impacts of systemic racism in the education system on Black students' economic outcomes. At the center of the organization's activities are its Saturday tutoring program and its Jeopardy! styled Black history quiz competition. Instead of accepting the status quo, the organization employed various strategies to ensure that the students who used its services succeed in their studies and families received the support they needed to advocate for their children as necessary.

In the next section, I employ CCW to discuss how CCACH's stakeholders describe the role of its educational programs in the context of the marginalizations Black students face in the mainstream education system as well as the organization's perceived impacts in addressing the systemic challenges Black students face in the K-12 education system. I also use CCW to explain the ways in which CCACH resists marginalization of Black communities. I have integrated the key insights of these three research questions to reflect the ways in which they overlap and are integrated in the real-world context. Based on the data generated, it is evident that CCACH seeks to address the challenges that Black students face in the mainstream K-12 education system through cultivation and use of social, familial, navigational, resistant, and aspirational capital.

Subsequently, using CRT, I provide a critique of current educational practices that make supplementary education programs necessary.

*Community Cultural Wealth in Action: Using Agency to Compensate for Oppressive Educational Structure*

**Social Capital.** Social capital refers to “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005, p.79). Further when people coalesce, build relationships, and pool their resources they are able to accomplish goals that they would not have been able to accomplish by themselves or which would have been very difficult for them to do on their own (Field, 2003). This research points to vibrant and strong Black communities in Edmonton that organize for the success and social mobility of Black people, thereby contributing to the robust formation of a Black middle-class in the prairies. The persons who formed CCACH, its tutoring program and AfroQuiz recognized that there was a need for Black students to receive culturally appropriate and encouraging academic support and to learn about their history and cultural backgrounds. They also recognized a need for Black postsecondary students to have access to a wider range of job opportunities, including professional type jobs outside of the food and retail services industry. Thus, CCACH’s community organizers pooled grant writing skills, and time to secure the funds needed to make the tutoring program a reality. Persons continue to contribute in cash and kind to ensure the organization’s survival: board members contribute time to plan and oversee the general direction of the organization, volunteers work in the various fundraising activities that the organization engages in to meet its financial obligations, tutors contribute their knowledge, time and advice to help their students succeed, volunteers contribute their knowledge and time to developing AfroQuiz study materials every year and to human power needed to have a smooth competition. This not an exhaustive description of the resources that are invested in

making CCACH work but illustrate some of the ways in which social capital is evident in the organization's operations.

**Resistant Capital.** CCACH's educational programs play an important role in resisting the societal limitations placed on Black children and youth. Tutoring and AfroQuiz are oppositional to negative societal expectations about Black people. In fact, like the strategies of resistance Solórzano and Delgado Bernal stated were used by Chicano students in the United States, they can be seen as counteracting the negative impacts of the substandard educational experiences of Black youth (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Through tutoring Black students and their families gain the training needed to push back against educational policies and practices that seek to keep them in a subordinate position including the lack of nurturing and positive attention from teachers. Tutoring provides students with consistent one-on-one attention where they feel safe, respected, and cared for. The students' academic success demonstrated by successful completion of high school and transition to postsecondary studies is one way of defying low teacher and societal expectations of them and is a key perceived impact of CCACH's programs.

Further, CCACH resisted the marginalization of Black communities by struggling with the process, procedures, and policies of schooling in Alberta and challenging the depiction of Black peoples in the wider society, to defy the negative stereotypes and low expectations and create representations of what it means to be Black, Black history, and the possibilities for Black youth and their families. Through AfroQuiz and tutoring the organization used counter storytelling (Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001) to challenge mainstream narratives about Black communities and to center the experiences and history of Black people in Alberta. CCACH's work was meant not only to improve the advancement of the individual youth who

utilized its programs but to bring social transformation in Black communities as a whole, to give youth access to opportunities, knowledge, skills, and social connections that can improve their educational outcomes, employment prospects, their self-esteem, and their overall life chances. The organization has a policy of hiring former students from the tutoring program who have moved on to postsecondary studies to work as tutors and in that sense those who benefitted from tutoring are giving back to the younger students coming up after them. Additionally, the opportunity to work as a tutor gives youth access to a white collar job opportunity at a fairly young age and widen their job prospects from the entry level positions in the retail and food industry. Tutoring is a starting point for tutors to gain work experience and develop their skills in the professional job arena which serve as a foundation for other professional jobs in the future.

**Aspirational Capital.** CCACH's expression of resistant capital prepares the way for youth to be able to dream, hope, and aspire to educational success and careers. Thus, the organization's programs play a key role in awakening and sustaining high academic and career aspirations in members of Black communities. AfroQuiz and tutoring exposes students and other participants to Black individuals who have excelled in various fields of endeavor, sports as well as in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers, politics, law, education, and other professional fields. Nelson Mandela is quoted as saying "It always seems impossible until it is done." Exposing youth to these examples of Black excellence in diverse fields, many of which Black people are usually not associated with in Canada, opens a window for Black youth to know that they too set and achieve high educational and career goals. They learn about people who have had similar challenges with discrimination, and possibly limited access to financial resources and influential social networks who still managed to achieve success. This provides the

impetus to look beyond the obstacles posed by their present circumstances to a future where they are in high status, well-paying jobs or where they are self-employed.

**Navigational Capital.** Another of CCACH's role is in providing guidance to Black students and their families about how to interact with schools in ways that help students to advance through the school system and complete their studies with the requisite credentials. Navigational capital "Provided students and their families with the confidence and skills to act on [their] own behalf" (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995 as cited in Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001, p.316). CCACH demonstrated navigational capital in different ways including teaching students how to demonstrate engagement in class and to signal to their teacher that they are invested in their learning and thinking critically. Speaking up in class is an act of defiance because it says that Black students also have important contributions to make to class discussions and it is also a way of *demanding* positive attention and respect from teachers. Tutors taught students how to act in ways that could affect their teachers' perceptions of them in a positive way and behaviors associated with "good students" (Brayboy, 2005). By so doing they are teaching students how to successfully traverse Canadian schools and leave with the credentials that they needed to meet their educational and career goals. CCACH's leaders and tutors also advocated for families in schools when needed such as providing moral support to families whose children were being discriminated against, educating them about the hierarchy of power in schools and making representations to school administrators on behalf of youth and their families to ensure they were treated fairly.

**Familial Capital.** CCACH plays an important role in connecting Black communities in Edmonton. The participants shared that being involved with CCACH, whether as a worker or as someone receiving services through tutoring or AfroQuiz, allowed them to feel a greater sense of

connection to Edmonton. Interacting with other Black persons helped them to see that there are large, vibrant, and active Black communities in Edmonton and reduced feelings of social isolation. Although Black students are often in the numerical minority in their classes and schools, when they went to their tutoring sessions on Saturdays and participated in AfroQuiz they became a part of social settings where they were in the numerical majority. Further, students who received tutoring from tutors who helped them with understanding the technical aspects of the subjects they received tutoring for as well as being a source of emotional support, confidants and trusted advisors who also shared with them guidance for dealing with the varied challenges that life posed. The organizations' programs and activities also facilitated interaction and understanding among African descended people from the African continent and those who were born in the African diaspora.

Based on the participants' experiences I surmise that CCACH's educational programs are perceived by members of Black communities as having several important impacts. First, the organization has heightened awareness of and appreciation for Black history, cultures, and in Edmonton both with Black communities as well as among persons who are not Black. Second, students who utilize the tutoring services experience improvements in their grades in the subject's they receive tutoring for and receive needed moral support to believe that they could do well academically at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Third, CCACH acts as an advocate for Black students and their families and has intervened in various situations to ensure that students whose rights were being violated received redress. Fourth, CCACH provides a sense of belonging to wider Black communities in Edmonton for Black persons, through tutoring and AfroQuiz, Black Edmontonians interact with, support, and come to know and feel a part of

vibrant, and dynamic Black communities in the city. This reduces feelings of isolation and alienation.

In sum, CCACH resists the marginalization of Black communities by providing a space where members of Black communities can re-member their long presence, history, contributions, struggles and successes in Canada and internationally. Further, the organization provides a meeting space where Black community members can coalesce around shared values, hopes and aspirations, mount collective resistance to racism in the education system.

### *A Critical Race Theory Critique of the Current Educational Situation*

Notwithstanding the perceived positive impacts that Black community-based education programs have on their users, these programs should not be seen as a panacea to the problems plaguing the mainstream Canadian education system. Using critical race theory as a lens it is evident that systemic racism plays an integral role in shaping the experiences of Black people in Canadian society. As discussed in the literature review and the data chapters, systemic racism in Canadian schools is exemplified in the lack of representation of Black people, cultures, and history in the curriculum, lack of Black teachers, Black students being subjected to negative stereotypes and treatments, and Black students feeling a sense of being alienated from their schooling.

The education system is one of the main agents of socialization in society and is also an agent of social reproduction. Schools reflect dominant societal values and they also play a role in reproducing class structures. We know that Canada is a society built on racial capitalism, which historically has been a socioeconomic system premised on the economic and social advancement of White Europeans at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. As such it is no surprise that the education system functions in ways that are deleterious to the economic and

social wellbeing of Black students and that channel them into courses that will preclude them from upward social mobility. This situation leads me to wonder if it is sufficient to help Black students in the hope that some of them will achieve their educational credentials in a discriminatory school system and concomitant upward social mobility in a racist society. Instead, should more energy be invested in transforming the current education and economic systems so that they are equitable for all people? It would seem that while Community Cultural Wealth allows for the advancement of individuals within an inequitable social system, what is needed is systemic change that totally transforms not just the lives of individuals and their families, or even their communities, but all the social institutions and structures in society. Black students may achieve the educational credentials needed to access high paying jobs with good benefits, however, they will suffer from racism in the workplace that may affect their mental and physical health and that limits how far they can advance in their professions.

Further, we need to review our definition of success so that it is not limited to neoliberal conceptualizations based on the advancement of some individuals and their families even while large proportions of other people struggle or are prevented from maximizing their potential because of manmade barriers such as racism. The fact that some Black students are able to complete high school and postsecondary education in the Canadian education system and acquire white collar jobs does not detract from the fact that an unacceptably high percentage of Black students are unable to complete K-12 studies because of systemic racism. The question is, is the ability of some Black students to navigate the education system and job market true success if they are the exception rather than the rule? Further, research has shown that sometimes Black persons who are highly educated are unable to attain jobs commensurate with their education. As such even having educational credentials might not be enough for persons to overcome the limits

placed on their economic advancement by racism. There is need for a total transformation of Canadian society to ensure that all people regardless of ethnicity, race, country of origin, gender or class have equitable access to society's resources and opportunities. The African principle of Ubuntu, I am because we are, means that until everyone is free and has equitable chances of success, then no-one is truly free or successful. Is it possible to conceive a Canadian society equitable to the point that the work that organizations such as CCACH do is no longer necessary? This is not to say the organization would cease to exist but that it could turn its efforts to other projects and/or needs.

### **Recommendations**

The participants' experiences as described in the present study demonstrate the ways in which Canadian schools marginalize and oppress Black students and their families. This marginalization was evident in the exclusion of Black history and culture from the curriculum, the lack of Black teachers, streaming Black students into vocational or "easier" subjects, discriminatory disciplinary practices that resulted in students being watched and disciplined more, and bullying from other students that often went unaddressed by teachers. In light of this there is need for systemic change in how Canada educates Black youth in the K-12 education sector as highlighted below.

#### ***Increase Support for Black Community-based Education programs***

Since the systemic challenges Black students face in mainstream schools will take some time to address, in the interim schools should establish and strengthen relationships with community-based education programs. Teachers and administrators can learn much about the cultural groups that these organizations serve and seek advice on how they can better serve the diverse students that comprise their school population.

The government needs to improve financial support for community organizations providing educational services for youth. Many of these organizations are not for profits that struggle with overhead costs such as rent and paying wages. They often ask families to contribute to their financial expenses via fees. However, these fees are a small fraction of what it costs to keep the organizations running. Provincial and municipal governments need to provide more assistance in terms of space for their classes and offices and payment of non-volunteer workers. This will allow the organizations to expand their services while keeping costs to families at the lowest rates possible.

### ***Culturally Responsive Curriculum***

The curriculum needs to be culturally relevant. The curriculum in Alberta is Eurocentric, more needs to be done to ensure that the curriculum reflects the history, and contributions of Canadians from diverse races and ethnicities. Further teachers must incorporate content and discussions based on diverse worldviews and which interrogate social inequities. The curriculum should emphasize Canada's diverse racial and cultural heritage and should engage students' in disabusing themselves that European, phenotype, and cultures are *the norm* and yardstick by which everyone else is judged.

### ***Hiring Practises***

More Black teachers and teachers from other racialized groups need to be hired. As the student population becomes increasingly diverse, the teaching staff also need to be diversified to adequately serve the needs of students. Dee (2004) and Gershenson and Papageorge (2018) make the case for having a racially diverse teaching force. Increasing the number of Black teachers in schools will also give students the feeling that there are persons in positions of power in school

who understand them, their life experiences, and care about them as social emotional and cultural beings.

### ***Revisiting Disciplinary Practices***

Black students are subjected to disproportionately subjected to extreme disciplinary measures such as suspensions and expulsions. Teachers and principals need to revisit these disciplinary measures and the ways in which they are used. More attention should be given to the root causes of students' behaviors to ascertain if students' behavior related to alienation and dissatisfaction with their schooling experiences, challenges at home or other factors. Excluding students from school will not improve their behavior if the triggers are not addressed and sometimes what students need is support and not punishment.

### ***Future Research***

Further research is needed on Black-led community-based education programs. This qualitative case study has provided important insights into how these programs are helping Black students and their families. Future research can expand the investigation to include a larger number of programs in multiple provinces in Canada. Future research should also examine the populations that such education programs work with and/or serve, to get an idea of which segments of the Black community have access to such programs.

Quantitative studies could be done to give statistical information about the impact of these programs on students' academic performance including measuring students' grades, self-esteem, and sentiments on their cultural identities before and after they begin participating in the programs.

More research is needed that explores the experiences of diverse Black students in the education system. By this I mean research that examines the ways in which Black students'

different social identities such as their immigration status, class, geographical location, gender, and other variables impacts on their learning and can explain differences in their academic outcomes.

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### Content Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I use the terms African descended peoples, people of African descent, Black, interchangeably to denote persons who based on phenotype particularly skin colour are racialized as Black and whose ancestry is traceable to the geospatial entity that is currently known as Africa (with the exception of the countries Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan whose people are not generally racialized as Black). I use a capital letter B in Black to denote it as referring to a specific, albeit heterogeneous, mix of people with common historical experiences one of the most impactful being the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its afterlife. The capital b also indicates my stance that race, and racism are two of the most important variables that influence peoples' life experiences, as such capitalizing the b in Black and the W in White is a way of centering race in my analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Initial exploration of these issues was done in an article I published in *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry*. The reference information for the article is Mason, A. (2021). Teaching Black students to fly. *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry*, 12(1), 119-132. <https://doi.org/10.18733/cpi29538>

<sup>3</sup> This percentage was arrived at by combining the number of Black persons in the age category 0-14 years old and 15-24 years old. This is based on information gained from Statistics Canada 2017. (2017a). *Immigration and ethnocultural diversity highlight tables. Visible minority (visible minority), both sexes, age (total), Canada, Alberta and census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, 2016 Census-25% sample data*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/imm/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=42&SP=1&geo=48&vismin=2&age=1&sex=1>

<sup>4</sup> Other qualitative studies on supplementary education programs such as Mirza and Reay's (2000) and Gerrard's (2004) had 15 and 22 participants respectively.

<sup>5</sup> This analysis of Alberta K-12 curriculum documents was conducted as part of a research assistantship completed with Dr. Jennifer Kelly, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. Professor Kelly has kindly given me permission to use this data.

**Table 1: Participants' Role in CCACH****Table 1***Participants' Role Within CCACH*

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Tutors	4	16%
Students	3	12%
Alumni	3	12%
CCACH Volunteers and Administrative Staff	9	36%
Parents	6	24%
Total	25	100

**Table 2: Participants' Gender Identification****Table 2***Participants' Gender Identification*

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Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	20	80%
Male	5	20%
Total	25	100%

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**Table 3: Participants' Country of Birth****Table 3***Participants' Country of Birth*

Country	Frequency	Percentage
Canada	9	36%
Guyana	1	4%
Jamaica	4	16%
Kenya	1	4%
Malawi	2	8%
Nigeria	4	16%
Zimbabwe	2	8%
The Gambia	1	4%
Trinidad and Tobago	1	4%
Total	25	100%

**Table 4: Participants' Level of Education****Table 4***Participants' Highest Level of Education Achieved*

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Still in High School	3	12%
High School Diploma	4	16%
College Diploma	2	8%
Bachelor's Degree	13	52%
Master's Degree	3	12%
Total	25	100%

**Table 5: Participants' Length of Residence****Table 5***Participant's Length of Residence in Canada*

Number of Years	Frequency	Percentage
20 years and more	15	60%
10-19 years	8	32%
Under 10 Years	2	8%
Total	25	100%

**Table 6: Participants' Age****Table 6***Participants' Age*

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Age	Frequency	Percentage
12-17	3	12%
18-23	4	16%
24-29	1	4%
30-35	3	12%
36-41	2	8%
42-47	6	24%
48-53	2	8%
54-59	2	8%
60 and over	2	8%
Total	25	100%

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**Appendix A: Consent and Assent Forms**

## **Parents' Letter of Consent for Participants Who Are Under 18 Years Old**

**Title of Study: Study Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta**

**Supervisors:** Dr. Alexandre Da Costa and Dr. Dia Da Costa

**Department:** Educational Policy Studies

**Researcher:** Alleson Mason, for PhD Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

**Background and Purpose of Study:** This study will address the need for information and understanding regarding the contributions of African Canadian community organizations (specifically CCACH) to the educational development of African descended students in the K-12 sector in Edmonton. You are being approached because I would like your child to participate in this study. Your child was chosen because s/he has used CCACH's tutoring services for at least one academic year and/or has participated in AfroQuiz at least once.

**Procedures of the Study:** I will observe tutoring sessions and at least one AfroQuiz competition. I will also conduct semi-structured individual interviews to gather stories from the students, parents, and school staff in an effort to gain some insight into the nature of students' experiences with CCACH and how its programs have contributed to students' educational development. These interviews will last between 45-60 minutes. The interviews may be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. I will use alias names provided by the students to protect students' privacy. I will allow each student to review and revise the transcript of their individual interview until the student is satisfied that the transcript reflect their views. This may take between 30-60 minutes. Your child will have two weeks after being given the transcript to withdraw from the study. Your child may also choose not to review his/her transcript. If s/he chooses not to review his/her interview transcript s/he will have two weeks after his/her interview to withdraw from the study. I will also use a short questionnaire to collect demographic information for each participant in the study at the beginning of the interview. Parents will not be informed of children's decision to participate or to withdraw.

**Potential Benefits:** There are no known benefits to participating in this study. However, its findings may provide policy makers with information on the contribution of organizations like CCACH to students' educational development.

**Compensation:** Your child will receive a \$20 gift card as reimbursement for the transportation costs associated with participating in the interview.

**Risks of the Study:** Your child may experience some discomfort sharing stories of past painful experiences with the education system. If I see signs of discomfort, I will offer to stop the interview. I will also provide your child with contact information for counselling if needed.

**Storage of Data:** The information collected from you will be stored safely in secure cabinet at the researcher's supervisor's locked office at the University of Alberta for five years and then destroyed according to the University of Alberta's guidelines.

**Withdrawal:** Your child is free to discontinue your participation in this study at any time with no negative consequences. Your child's right to withdraw from the study will apply until data has been combined with that from other participants for analysis. After this it may not be possible to withdraw your child's data. Your child will have two weeks after being given your transcripts to review to withdraw from the study. If your child chooses not to review his/her transcripts s/he may withdraw within two weeks after his/her interview. S/he may contact me at mason@ualberta.ca or 306 230 0758 to withdraw from the study. You will not be informed if your child chooses to withdraw from the study.

**Sharing of Results:** The results of this thesis will be used as a part of the requirements for a PhD in Educational Policy Studies. The results may form a part of the presentation at a conference or be published in a scholarly journal.

**Questions:** Should you have any questions regarding this research you may contact me at mason@ualberta.ca, or my supervisors Dr. Alexandre Da Costa at adacost@ualberta.ca and Dr. Dia Da Costa at ddacosta@ualberta.ca, Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Alberta. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492 2625.

**Study Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta**

**Researcher: Alleson Mason**

**Email Address: [mason@ualberta.ca](mailto:mason@ualberta.ca)**

**Instruction: Please respond to each question by circling your chosen option**

I understand that my child is taking part in a research study                      Yes    No

I have read and I understand the information sheet                                      Yes    No

My child is taking part in this research of his/her free will and understand that s/he can stop the interview/observation at any time    Yes    No

I understand that my child will get the opportunity to review his/her interview transcripts and to make any changes s/he thinks necessary    Yes    No

I understand that my child can withdraw my transcript from the study up to two weeks after receiving them for review    Yes    No

The issue of confidentiality has been explained to me                                      Yes    No

I have been given the chance to ask any questions I may have and understand that I can contact the researcher at any time if I have further questions

Who explained this study to you? \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study                                      Yes                      No

Signature of Research Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and freely agrees to participate.

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Letter of Assent for Minors

### Study Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta

**Researcher: Alleson Mason**

**Email Address: mason@ualberta.ca**

#### **What is a research study?**

A research study is a way to find out new information about something. Youth do not need to be in a research study if they don't want to.

#### **Why are you being asked to be part of this research study?**

You are being asked to take part in this research study because I am trying to learn more about the experiences of users of CCACH's tutoring services and the experiences of students who participate in AfroQuiz.

I am asking you to be in the study *because you have either used CCACH's tutoring service and/or participated in AfroQuiz*. About *six* youth will be in this study.

#### **If you join the study what will happen to you?**

We want to tell you about some things that will happen to you if you are in this study.

- You will be in the study for 16 months (from September 2019 to December 2020)
- I will ask you to sit with me and talk about what it has been like for you in the tutoring program or competing in AfroQuiz. It will take about 1 hour to do this, and the interview will be tape recorded. I will also ask you to share what your experiences going to school in Canada has been like. You can choose to review the transcript and make changes, which may take between 30 -60 minutes. You can also choose not to review the transcript.
- The interview will be kept confidential and will not be shared with your parents or anyone else associated with CCACH. We can have this discussion at a time and location that you choose.
- I will also observe one 1-hour tutoring session for each student participant

**Will any part of the study hurt?** This study will most likely not hurt but you may feel sad if you share experiences that were not pleasant.

**Will the study help you?** I do not know if this study will be useful to you but the information you share will help us to understand the kinds of supports students such as yourself need to be successful in your studies.

**Will the study help others?** This study might find out things that will help CCACH to know the how its programs affect persons who use them.

**What do you get for being in the study?**

You will receive a \$20 gift card as reimbursement for the transportation costs associated with participating in the interview.

**Do you have to be in the study?**

You do not have to be in the study. It's up to you. No one will be upset if you don't want to do this study. If you join the study, you can change your mind and stop being part of it at any time. All you have to do is tell us. It's okay, the researchers and your parents won't be upset.

**Do your parents know about this study?**

This study was explained to your parents and they said that we could ask you if you want to be in it. You can talk this over with them before you decide. Your parents will not be told if you decide to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study. If you choose to participate in the study and complete the interview, you may review your interview transcript if you wish. You will have two weeks after being provided with the transcripts to withdraw from then study. If you decide not to review your interview transcript you can withdraw from the study within two weeks after completing the interview. After the two week period any data collected will be used in the study. You may withdraw from the study by contacting me at [mason@ualberta.ca](mailto:mason@ualberta.ca) or 306 230 0758.

**Who will see the information collected about you?**

The information collected about you during this study will be kept safely locked up. Nobody will know it except the people doing the research. *Black Studies: A resource guide for teachers intermediate division*

The study information about you *will not* be given to your parents *or teachers*. The researcher will not tell your friends or anyone else.

**What if you have any questions?**

You can ask any questions that you may have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, either you can call or have your parents call 306 230 0758

**Other information about the study.**

- If you decide to be in the study, please write your name below.
- You will be given a copy of this paper to keep.

Yes, I will be in this research study.

No, I don't want to do this.

Youth's name

Signature

Date

---

Person obtaining Assent

Signature

Date

---

## **Participant's Letter of Consent**

**Title of Study: Study Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta**

**Supervisors:** Dr. Alexandre Da Costa and Dr. Dia Da Costa

**Department:** Educational Policy Studies

**Researcher:** Alleson Mason, for PhD Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

**Background and Purpose of Study:** This study will address the need for information and understanding regarding the contributions of African Canadian community organizations (specifically CCACH) to the educational development of African descended students in the K-12 sector in Edmonton. You are being approached because I would like you to participate in this study. You are being considered as a participant because you belong to one of the following groups:

- You are a parent of a youth who has used CCACH's tutoring services for at least one K-12 academic year and/or has participated in AfroQuiz at least once.
- You have tutored at CCACH for at least one K-12 academic year.
- You have volunteered with CCACH for at least one K-12 academic year.
- You are over 18 years old and participated in CCACH's tutoring service for at least one K-12 academic year and/or participated in AfroQuiz at least once.

**Procedures of the Study:** I will observe tutoring sessions and at least one AfroQuiz competition. I will also conduct semi-structured individual interviews to gather stories from the students, parents, and school staff in an effort to gain some insight into the nature of students' experiences with CCACH and how its programs have contributed to students' educational development. These interviews will last between 45-60 minutes. The interviews may be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. I will use an alias provided by you to protect your privacy. I will allow you to review and revise all the transcripts of interviews conducted with you until you are satisfied that they reflect your views. This may take between 30-60 minutes. You will have two weeks after being given the transcript to withdraw from the study. You may also choose not to review your transcript. If you choose not to review your interview transcript you will have two weeks after your interview to withdraw from the study. I will also use a short questionnaire to collect demographic information for each participant in the study at the beginning of the interview.

**Potential Benefits:** There are no known benefits to participating in this study. However, its findings may provide policy makers with information on the contribution of organizations like CCACH to students' educational development.

**Compensation:** You will receive a \$20 gift card as reimbursement for the transportation costs associated with participating in the interview.

**Risks of the Study:** You may experience some discomfort sharing stories of past painful experiences with the education system. If I see signs of discomfort, I will offer to stop the interview. I will also provide you with contact information for counselling if needed.

**Storage of Data:** The information collected from you will be stored safely in secure cabinet at the researcher's supervisor's locked office at the University of Alberta for five years and then destroyed according to the University of Alberta's guidelines.

**Withdrawal:** You are free to discontinue your participation in this study at any time with no negative consequences. Your right to withdraw from the study will apply until data has been combined with that from other participants for analysis. After this it may not be possible to withdraw your data. You will have two weeks after being given your transcripts to review to withdraw from the study. If you choose not to review your transcripts you may withdraw within two weeks after your interview. You may contact me at [mason@ualberta.ca](mailto:mason@ualberta.ca) or 306 230 0758 to withdraw from the study.

**Sharing of Results:** The results of this thesis will be used as a part of the requirements for a PhD in Educational Policy Studies. The results may form a part of the presentation at a conference or be published in a scholarly journal.

**Questions:** Should you have any questions regarding this research you may contact me at [mason@ualberta.ca](mailto:mason@ualberta.ca), or my supervisors Dr. Alexandre Da Costa at [adacost@ualberta.ca](mailto:adacost@ualberta.ca) and Dr. Dia Da Costa at [ddacosta@ualberta.ca](mailto:ddacosta@ualberta.ca), Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Alberta. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492 2625.

**Study Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta**

**Researcher: Alleson Mason**

**Email Address: [mason@ualberta.ca](mailto:mason@ualberta.ca)**

**Instruction: Please respond to each question by circling your chosen option**

I understand that I am taking part in a research study Yes No

I have read and I understand the information sheet Yes No

I am taking part in this research of my free will and understand that I can stop the interview/observation at any time Yes No

I understand that I will get the opportunity to review my interview transcripts and to make any changes I think necessary Yes No

I understand that I can withdraw my transcript from the study up to two weeks after receiving them for review Yes No

The issue of confidentiality has been explained to me Yes No

I have been given the chance to ask any questions I may have and understand that I can contact the researcher at any time if I have further questions

Who explained this study to you? \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to take part in this study Yes No

Signature of Research Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and freely agrees to participate.

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire for Participants**

### Demographic Profile (For Administrators and Other Volunteers)

#### Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta

Chosen Name (Pseudonym) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_  
 a. 18-23      b. 24-29      c. 30-35      d. 36-41      e. 42-47      f. 48-53  
 g. 54-59      h. 60 and over
2. What is your gender?  
 a. Male      b. Female      c. Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you lived in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How would you describe your ethnic origin?  
 a. African      b. African-Canadian      c. African-Caribbean      d. Canadian      e. Other  
 (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your highest level of education?  
 a. None      b. Elementary school      c. High school diploma      d. College diploma.  
 e. Undergraduate degree      f. Master's degree      g. PhD
8. Did you complete any of your education in Canada?  
 a. Yes      b. No  
 if yes, please state what level \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you complete any of your education outside of Canada?  
 a. Yes      b. No  
 If yes, please state the countries you studied in and the level of education you completed there  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographic Profile (For Alumni)

#### Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta

1. Chosen Name (Pseudonym) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender?
4. Male            b. Female            c. Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you lived in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How would you describe your ethnic origin?
9. African            b. African-Canadian    c. African-Caribbean    d. Canadian    e. Other  
(please state) \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your highest level of education?
  - a. High school diploma            b. College diploma.
  - c. Undergraduate degree            d. Master's degree            e. PhD
11. How would you describe your family structure at the point time when you utilized CCACH's program/s?
  - a. Nuclear (two parents live at home)            b. Single parent            c. Extended family
  - (other family members apart from parent/s and sibling present)            d. Other please state  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What was your parent/s highest level of education when you utilized CCACH's program/s?
13. a. None            b. Elementary school    c. High school diploma            d. College diploma.  
e. Undergraduate degree            f. Master's degree            g. PhD
14. What is/ are your parent/s occupation/s? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Did your parents complete any of their education in Canada?
  - a. Yes            b. No
 if yes, please state what level \_\_\_\_\_

16. What subject/s did you receive tutoring assistance for? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Did you complete any of your education outside of Canada?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, please state the countries you studied in and the level of education you completed there

\_\_\_\_\_

### Demographic Profile (For Parents)

#### Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta

Chosen Name (Pseudonym) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_  
 a. 18-23      b. 24-29      c. 30-35      d. 36-41      e. 42-47      f. 48-53  
 g. 54-59      h. 60 and over
2. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. Male      b. Female      c. Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you lived in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How would you describe your ethnic origin?  
 b. African      b. African-Canadian      c. African-Caribbean      d. Canadian      e. Other  
 (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
7. How would you describe your family structure?  
 a. Nuclear (two parents live at home)      b. Single parent      c. Extended family  
 (other family members apart from parent/s and sibling present)  
 b. d. Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your highest level of education?  
 b. None      b. Elementary school      c. High school diploma      d. College diploma.  
 e. Undergraduate degree      f. Master's degree      g. PhD
9. Did you complete any of your education in Canada?  
 a. Yes      b. No  
 if yes, please state what level \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did you complete any of your education outside of Canada?  
 b. Yes      b. No

If yes, please state the countries you studied in and the level of education you completed there

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographic Profile (For Students)

#### Title: **Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta**

Chosen Name (Pseudonym) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender?
  - c. Male            b. Female            c. Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you lived in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How would you describe your ethnic origin?
  - c. African    b. African-Canadian    c. African-Caribbean    d. Canadian    e. Other  
(please state) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you complete any of your education outside of Canada?
  - a. Yes                            b. No

If yes, please state the countries you studied in and the level of education you completed there

\_\_\_\_\_
9. How would you describe your family structure?
  - c. Nuclear (two parents live at home)            b. Single parent            c. Extended family  
(other family members apart from parent/s and sibling present)
  - d. Other please state \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your parent/s highest level of education?
  - c. None            b. Elementary school    c. High school diploma            d. College diploma.
  - e. Undergraduate degree            f. Master's degree            g. PhD
10. What is/ are your parent/s occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Did your parents complete any of their education in Canada?

a. Yes                      b. No  
if yes, please state what level \_\_\_\_\_

12. What subject/s do you receive tutoring assistance for? \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographic Profile (For Tutors)

#### Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta

Chosen Name (Pseudonym) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_  
 a. 18-23      b. 24-29      c. 30-35      d. 36-41      e. 42-47      f. 48-53  
 g. 54-59      h. 60 and over
2. What is your gender?  
 d. Male      b. Female      c. Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your country of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you lived in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How would you describe your ethnic origin?  
 d. African      b. African-Canadian      c. African-Caribbean      d. Canadian      e. Other  
 (please state) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your highest level of education?  
 d. None      b. Elementary school      c. High school diploma      d. College diploma.  
 e. Undergraduate degree      f. Master's degree      g. PhD
8. Did you complete any of your education in Canada?  
 a. Yes      b. No  
 if yes, please state what level \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you complete any of your education outside of Canada?  
 b. Yes      b. No  
 If yes, please state the countries you studied in and the level of education you completed there  
 \_\_\_\_\_
10. What educational institution do you currently attend? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What program are you enrolled in? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participants**

## Interview Questions

### Study Title: Black Students Need More: Black Communities Respond to the Perceived Inadequacies of Mainstream Schooling in Edmonton, Alberta

#### Questions For Administrators and Other Volunteers

1. How did you become involved with CCACH?
2. How long have you been a volunteer with the organization?
3. How do you see your role as contributing to the organization?
4. What is your occupation?
5. What is your perspective when it comes to the mainstream education system in Canada and the needs of African-descended children?
6. Could you tell me about some of the ways in which you believe the work of CCACH addresses the issues Black students experience in mainstream schools, and some of the ways they do not address it?
7. In what ways, if any, do you think that CCACH is addressing institutional anti-Black racism in mainstream schools?
8. What role does CCACH play in the Black community in Edmonton, particularly as it relates to the educational development of K-12 students?
9. What are the main cultural backgrounds of your students you serve?
10. What do you think CCACH is doing well?
11. What are some of the key issues for you as an administrator/volunteer at CCACH?
12. What sort of support do you need to improve your services to the community?
13. Is there anything that I didn't ask or cover that you would like to share?

#### Questions For Tutors.

1. How long have you been a tutor?
2. How did you become involved in the tutoring program?  
*Possible probe: How did you come to know about CCACH and the tutoring program?*
3. What subjects do you tutor?  
*Possible probe: Is this subject related to your current area of study?*
4. How many students do you tutor weekly and what grades are they in?  
*Possible probes are: Where are the students from and their gender?*
5. What is your perspective when it comes to the mainstream education system in Canada and the needs of Black children?
6. Could you tell me about some of the ways in which you believe the work of CCACH addresses the issues Black students experience in mainstream schools, and some of the ways they do not address it'?
7. In what ways, if any, do you think that CCACH is addressing institutional anti-Black racism in mainstream schools?
8. How would you describe your experience tutoring at CCACH?

*Possible probe: What do you enjoy about tutoring at CCACH and what do you find challenging?*

9. What do you think the organization is doing well in terms of assisting in its students' educational development?
10. What are some of the key issues for you as a tutor?
11. What sort of support does need, if any to improve your services to the students?
12. Is there anything that I didn't ask or cover that you would like to share?

### **Questions For Parents**

1. How many of your children are involved in CCACH's programs?
2. What programs is your child or are your children involved in at CCACH?
3. How did you learn about CCACH's programs?
4. What is your perspective when it comes to the mainstream education system in Canada and the needs of Black children?
5. Could you tell me about some of the ways in which you believe the work of CCACH addresses the issues Black students experience in mainstream schools, and some of the ways they do not address it'?
6. In what ways, if any, do you think that CCACH is addressing institutional anti-Black racism in mainstream schools?
7. What are some of the reasons shaping your decision to enroll your child/ children in CCACH'S program/s?
8. How would you describe the impact of the programs on your child/ children?
  - performance in school
  - pride in cultural heritage
  - Sense of belonging
  - Other contributions
9. How can CCACH improve the services it provides to students?
10. Is there anything that I didn't ask or cover that you would like to share?

### **Questions For Students**

1. How would you describe your experiences with regular schools?
2. What is your perspective when it comes to the mainstream education system in Canada and the needs of Black children?
3. Could you tell me about some of the ways in which you believe the work of CCACH addresses the issues Black students experience in mainstream schools, and some of the ways they do not address it'?
4. How long have you been attending CCACH?
5. What kind of programs do you participate in at CCACH?
6. Why did you start to participate in CCACH's programs?
7. How would you describe your experience with the programs that you are involved in?
  - Tutoring
  - AfroQuiz
  - Other programs

8. What are some things that you have learnt as a result of participating in CCACH's programs?
9. How has participating in CCACH's programs helped you in school?
10. How have CCACH's programs helped you outside of the school setting?
11. Is there anything that CCACH doesn't do currently that you think might be good for them to consider doing?
12. Is there anything that I didn't ask or cover that you would like to share?

### **Questions for Alumni**

1. How would you describe your experiences with regular schools in Canada?
2. What is your perspective when it comes to the mainstream education system and the needs of Black children?
3. Could you tell me about some of the ways in which you believe the work of CCACH addresses the issues Black students experience in mainstream schools, and some of the ways they do not address it'?
4. In what ways, if any, do you think that CCACH is addressing institutional anti-Black racism in mainstream schools?
5. What program/s did you utilize at CCACH?
6. What was the time period during which you utilized CCACH's programs?
7. Why did you start to participate in CCACH's programs?
8. How would you describe your experience with the programs that you were involved in?
  - Tutoring
  - AfroQuiz
  - Other programs
9. What are some things that you learnt as a result of participating in CCACH's programs?
10. How did participating in CCACH's programs help you in school?
11. How did CCACH's programs help you outside of the school setting?
12. How did participating in CCACH's programs influence
  - your field of study after secondary school
  - career path
13. Is there anything that CCACH didn't do that you think would have been helpful for your educational development?
14. Is there anything that I didn't ask or cover that you would like to share?

**Appendix D: Research Flyer**

## Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on CCACH'S Tutoring Program and AfroQuiz



I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta conducting research into the experiences of students who participate in CCACH's tutoring program and/or AfroQuiz. This study is a partial fulfilment of the requirements for my PhD degree. If you fall in any of the groups below, I would love to speak with you:

- Student in grade 8 and above who has been tutored for at least one school year
- Student who has participated in AfroQuiz at least once
- CCACH past student
- Parent of a child who uses or has used CCACH's tutoring for at least one school year
- Parent of a child who has participated in AfroQuiz at least once
- Present or past CCACH Tutor, volunteer

This study involves attending a 1 hour interview at a location that is convenient to you and I will observe selected tutoring sessions. Persons interviewed may review and make changes to their interview transcripts if they choose to and it is estimated that that process may take an **additional** 30 minutes to 1 hour. You can also choose not to review the interview transcripts.

To participate in the study please contact Alleson Mason at [mason@ualberta.ca](mailto:mason@ualberta.ca).