

BREAKING THE SILENCE:

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING BLACK IN SCHOOLING THROUGH THE NARRATIVES
OF EXPELLED BLACK MALES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the nuanced process of becoming Black through the narratives of fifteen adult Black males, aged 23-29, who experienced expulsions from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Employing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concepts of whiteness as property, the study revealed how schooling perpetuates anti-Blackness, leading to systemic barriers and exclusions akin to prison-like environments. School expulsions echo themes of limited agency, voice, and segregation. Reviewing TDSB expulsion policies and participant narratives revealed pervasive anti-Blackness and systemic barriers aggravating school exclusions. Classroom exclusions often began early, with data showing how ongoing disengagement and segregation led to absolute exclusion from schooling, with impacts resonating into adulthood. Affirmations of Blackness often occurred only post-schooling for the participants.

Despite adversity of having experienced an expulsion, the participants' narratives also revealed moments of vibrancy and positive interactions, highlighting the richness of their lives beyond expulsion. Their stories compel education to intentionally address how staff actions and implementation of exclusion policy and procedures support the continual processes of anti-Blackness strengthening systemic anti-Black racism. This study calls to establish approaches that dismantle the privilege of whiteness in staff exclusionary actions towards Black students.

Focusing on an anti-Black racism approach and Black Gaze approach in educational discourse, that includes staff learnings from Black student and parent voices, is immediately needed when reviewing, writing, and putting expulsion policies and procedures into action. Fostering collaborations with Black communities, and enhancing support services for expelled Black, particularly male, students is urgent. Refocusing narratives to celebrate Black brilliance that transcend anti-Black biases and stereotypes would result in more inclusive environments

where all iterations of Blackness are embraced. Transformative shifts in educational practices are necessary to counter whiteness, eliminate systemic anti-Black biases, dismantle white hegemony, and amplify the voices of Black students. This ensures that all Black students, particularly Black males, can affirm their Blackness in school, rather than staff practices perpetuating processes of continually becoming Black through the lens of anti-Blackness.

DEDICATION

To my dear Papa-Ji who let me be me, always believed in me and supported everything that meant happiness for me.

I love you and miss you everyday.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

School f*ed with my mind and emotions in a huge way. I didn't have a say in anything and being in the [expulsion] program made it solid for me that no one would ever see me other than this violent, rude, dumb Black kid (Richard).

This quote by Richard, one of the participants in this study serves as a powerful entry point grounding the research in the lived schooling experiences of expelled Black¹ males, whose voices are often silenced. Over six years of firsthand observations as a social worker in an expulsion program, at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)², I noted a significant presence of Black male students. This study, utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concept of whiteness as property, as theoretical frameworks, aimed to explore the experiences of this marginalized cohort to uncover the impacts of being expelled and how exclusionary staff practices contribute to the process of becoming Black in schooling. males.

This study goes beyond the simple documentation of the negative effects of expulsions on the participants. Instead, as their narratives unfolded, the participants delved into a diverse array of experiences and aspirations, ranging from early schooling memories to the impact of being expelled and insights into their present adult lives. By centring their stories in their full complexities, the objective of this study was to foster a comprehensive understanding of the lived realities faced by expelled Black males, during and after schooling. Tuck's (2009) insights act as a guiding light challenging paradigms that often centre on documenting the pain and

¹ In this study, Black refers to both African Canadian and Caribbean Canadian individuals, acknowledging their diverse ethnicities, cultures, and identities. This term is used inclusively to encompass the richness of these communities, rather than homogenize them.

² See Appendix A for all acronyms used in this study.

brokenness of marginalized communities. I want to emphasize that this study did not adopt a damage-centred perspective in its approach (Tuck, 2009). This study sought to amplify the voices of the participants and honour the depth of their schooling experiences. As the researcher, I recognize that their narratives were not static; they were dynamic and evolving, shaped by their interactions in and outside of school. Tuck (2009) discussed that “[d]esire is about longing, about a present that is enriched by both the past and the future. It is integral to our humanness” (p. 417) and it is the participants’ humanness, within their stories, that radiate throughout.

Despite the weight of school expulsion, the participants' narratives, infused with wit, determination, self-efficacy, criticism, and humour, also stem from their love of learning, relationship building, and caring for friends, family, and staff. Even as they spoke about exclusionary experiences in schooling, their narratives were like rich tapestries, woven with brilliant threads of strength, agency, and desire. Their stories reflected the complexities of navigating power and oppression within schooling while striving for personal and collective fulfillment. As we read the participants' heartfelt narratives, it is crucial to acknowledge their complexities and humanity. The participants’ lived experiences of being expelled were moments in their lives, and their stories are not to be confined to a single narrative of victimhood.

My study also examined how expulsion policies and procedures in schooling embed and propagated anti-Black beliefs, biases, and stereotypes. Despite constituting only 11% of the TDSB population, Black students represent over 30% of suspensions and expulsions (James & Turner, 2017; TDSB, 2021-22; Zheng & De Jesus, 2017), underscoring the urgent need to address anti-Black and gendered systemic inequities in schooling.

To understand anti-Blackness, I want to first contextualize Blackness. Blackness represents the positive assertion of identity, culture, and heritage associated with being Black (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). According to Bertrand and Porcher (2023), Blackness encompasses the cultural, racial, and ethnic

identities, languages, literacies, relationships, existence, and humanity of Black people. It involves individual and collective care and resistance, characterised by its dynamic nature and a wide range of emotions from joy to struggle (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). Blackness also signifies intelligence and creativity, reflecting the fight against oppression, including racism, xenophobia, linguistic violence, economic injustice, surveillance, white supremacy, and patriarchy (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023, p. 29). In contrast, anti-Blackness refers to the negative attitudes and prejudices targeting Black individuals and communities resulting in cultural devaluation. Such devaluation manifests in negative portrayals and dehumanisation of Black people requiring social exclusions, such as school expulsions, which restrict their societal participation. Such exclusions sustain systemic anti-Black racism making disruptions and transformational changes very challenging. (Kendi, 2019; Maynard, 2017).

Anti-Black racism encompassed systemic racism—institutional structures and policies that perpetuate racial inequalities within state systems, such as the education, employment, and the criminal justice system (Government of Canada, 2022). While anti-Blackness diminished Black identity, Blackness affirmed it, and anti-Black racism addresses the broader structural inequities resulting from the perpetuation of anti-Blackness. Benjamin (2003) defined anti-Black racism as

[a] particular form of systemic and structural racism in North American and Canadian societies, which historically and contemporary has been perpetrated against "Blacks" which also highlights the resistance against dominant and hegemonic systems of whiteness and the building of agency and social transformation against racism and other forms of oppression (p.189-190).

Bertrand and Porcher (2023) introduced the concept of the Black Gaze as a response to anti-Blackness and a means to dismantle systemic anti-Black racism. The Black Gaze advocated for elevating, integrating, and celebrating Blackness and Black identity in educational spaces independently of whiteness. It challenges the white gaze (Fanon, 1952) by scrutinising whose perspectives are valued and centring Black voices and experiences. The Black Gaze emphasises the importance of prioritising Black perspectives and agency to address systemic inequalities and foster more inclusive learning environments (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023).

Research Focus

The study aimed to highlight the voices of expelled Black male students in uncovering how exclusionary school practices perpetuate anti-Blackness and shape the processes of becoming Black. The study probed the narratives of the participants and their experiences with TDSB expulsion-related policies, procedures, and documents, spanning various stages from childhood schooling and post-schooling experiences. While highlighting the narratives and challenges the participants experienced, this study does not aim to generalize expulsion experiences or overlook Black students who find success in education. Instead, this study sheds light on how schooling practices, centred in whiteness, contribute to the processes of becoming Black and hence the amplification and solidification of anti-Blackness in schooling for expelled Black males.

The Narratives of Expelled Black Males

In the context of working within an expulsion program as a social worker, my observations highlighted a concerning trend where staff members demonstrated hesitance in interacting with Black male students. Recalling staff comments I heard, this reluctance often stemmed from deeply ingrained stereotypes associating the students with violence and gang involvement. Such stereotypes not only, at times, hindered meaningful engagement but also perpetuated anti-Black biases. These prejudiced perceptions not only hindered schooling opportunities for the Black expelled students but also reinforced negative stereotypes, further marginalizing them. The negative biases and assumptions surrounding Blackness not only undermined the participants' schooling pursuits, but also impacted various facets of their schooling experiences.

During my tenure in the expulsion program, parents frequently expressed relief, believing that my non-white status would facilitate a deeper understanding and connection with their

children. My brownness³, in itself, seemed to provide solace to many racialized families navigating the challenges of having their children in the expulsion program. Conversations with expelled Black students revealed a pervasive sense of disillusionment and a struggle to find value within schooling. Navigating the dual roles of both an insider and outsider, I found myself compelled to engage in ongoing reflection, continually scrutinizing my own anti-Black biases, assumptions, perceptions and actions in relation to my observations and experiences encountered while working in an expulsion program and throughout this study.

Drawing on Collins (1986), I became acutely aware of the significance of reflective practices and reflexive actions in comprehending the viewpoints of those marginalized by actively listening and centring their voices and feelings. This involved more than examining my own biases and assumptions but also actively seeking out critical insights and perspectives to foster a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of anti-Blackness. By embracing both reflective and reflexive actions, I endeavored to contribute to a more nuanced and empathetic comprehension of the issues surrounding the apprehension towards Black males, rooted in entrenched anti-Black stereotypes within schooling.

Tuck and Gatzambide-Fernandez (2013) discussed the need for the amplification and validation of Black experiences and voices to challenge the white gaze (Fanon, 1952) and anti-

³ The choice to capitalize Black, while not capitalizing brown as a racial identifier, emphasized the complicity of anti-Blackness in some segments of the brown community, was to honour the relationship I had with the participants, and aimed to promote dignity and recognition for the participants in this study. Additionally, this study does not capitalize white. The Associated Press News (Bauder, 2020, para. 10), argued that keeping white lowercase perpetuated the idea of whiteness as the default race, contributing to its invisibility and maintaining its power. However, for this study, my decision to only capitalize Black was rooted in a desire to centre, acknowledge, and respect the significance of the Black male participants. Capitalizing Black served to recognize the shared experiences and struggles faced by the participants, as well as critically challenging anti-Black racism and upholding Black excellence.

Blackness within educational settings. The narratives of the participants in this study were analyzed continually by interrogating my personal and cultural perspectives, as the aim was to underscore the participants' stories.

Becoming Black: An Introduction

Anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism are related but distinct concepts. Anti-Blackness encompasses cultural and societal attitudes that devalue Black people through biases, negative assumptions, and stereotypes (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Anti-Black racism, on the other hand, refers to discriminatory policies and systemic practices that disadvantage Black individuals and communities in areas such as education, law enforcement, and healthcare (Kendi, 2019). Anti-Blackness shapes perceptions of Blackness, which in turn fuels anti-Black racism through concrete institutional inequalities (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Kendi (2019) defines anti-Black racism as policies supported by anti-Black practices and attitudes that subordinate Black people while upholding white interests, framing participants' exclusionary school experiences.

The process of becoming Black within schooling unfolds through the lens of negative anti-Black biases, assumptions, and pervasive control and surveillance imposed upon Black students. This process reflects unequal power dynamics on Black identity formation (Harris, 1993, p. 1764), highlighting how Blackness is socially constructed within schooling spaces. Whiteness plays a pivotal role in defining and propagating the social and political evolution of Blackness, demanding critical examination to uncover its dominance (Harris, 1993, p. 1763). Chapter Five will explore the social construction of race in more depth.

The subjugation of Blackness within the educational landscape often renders it invisible, masking deeply ingrained anti-Black racist processes in the actions and practices of school staff, which become routinized and normalized in the continual process of becoming Black (Harris, 1993). Ibrahim (1998) and Dei (1998; 1997) distinguish between racial and racialized identities,

underscoring how non-Black racialized groups, influenced by the white gaze (Fanon, 1952), contribute to the construction and reconstruction of becoming Black in schooling.

Uncovering and analyzing anti-Blackness offers a crucial framework for understanding the individual and systemic biases that influence the schooling experiences and outcomes for Black students. School staff must recognize that anti-Blackness infiltrates their work, manifesting as everyday violence against Black students and their families (Dumas, 2016). This recognition requires engaging in candid discussions about Black bodies, Blackness, and Black historical experiences within schools and communities.

Researcher's Positionality

My upbringing, as the first Canadian-born child of Sikh parents, was shaped by a variety of cultural influences. My parents, hailing from India and Tanzania, faced financial challenges upon settling in Toronto, leading to a disconnection from the Sikh community's conventional ideologies of success. Instead, I found kinship with Caribbean, Black, and Italian families in my neighbourhood, fostering a diverse social circle. My educational journey spanned Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods, from the west end to an upscale north Toronto school. Disparities in resources between these areas were stark, with the latter offering privileged amenities and a noticeable lack of racial diversity.

Reflecting on these experiences, I recognized the complex dynamics of my racial identity and the intersecting privileges I received as a brown female student in school. This introspection formed the foundation of my engagement with the narratives of expelled Black males and underscored the importance of critically examining anti-Black biases within schooling.

Brown Model Minority Stereotypes

The internalization of white ideals among brown individuals, as highlighted by Warsi (2020) and Prashad (2000), supports an environment where positive models of minority

stereotypes grant privileges. Growing up in a brown family culture that favours lighter skin tones over darker complexions, which were deemed closer to blackness than to whiteness, emphasizes the deeply ingrained biases within communities of colour (Shah & chanicka, 2023). These biases connect darkness and blackness with impurity and inferiority. These biases associate darkness and Blackness with impurity and inferiority, emphasizing notions of merit and deservedness while perpetuating graded inequality (Shah & chanicka, 2023).

In my own schooling experiences, I benefited from these positive stereotypes, often being perceived as destined for success and given the benefit of the doubt even when misbehaving. These stereotypes, characterizing brown individuals as hardworking and academically inclined, reinforced white ideals while distancing allegiances with other racialized communities, particularly Black communities (Warsi, 2020; Prashad, 2000). However, reflecting on the disparate treatment received by my Black peers in school, particularly Black males, highlighted the internalized anti-Blackness within my own experiences. While I was granted opportunities and second chances, my Black peers faced harsher repercussions for similar incidents (MacLear, 1994; Prashad, 2000).

As I navigated through the TDSB as both a student and later as an employee, I found myself within a complex positionality. Prashad (2000) astutely noted that the model minority stereotypes align with white supremacy, inadvertently reinforcing anti-Blackness and eroding potential alliances between brown and Black communities. My silence about anti-Blackness, both as a staff member in the expulsion program and throughout my schooling, contributed to the preservation of systemic anti-Black racism. Prashad (2000) further argued that brown diasporas, despite historical ties to Black communities, often benefited from participating in anti-Black racism rooted in colonialism and internalized notions of caste and shadeism. My journey through

schooling and professional endeavors has not only made me a witness but also a participant in the continuation of anti-Blackness and the sustenance of anti-Black racism.

Navigating the Complexities of My Positionality

As an outsider within a predominantly white educational system, my racialized brown and female identity provided insights into the impact of biases and perceptions about racialized students. Despite forming meaningful connections with expelled Black male students, due to shared racial and gendered challenges, my role as a staff member sometimes hindered my ability to fully support them within the confines of the expulsion policies and procedures. Embracing my outsider status, as advocated by Collins (1986), allowed me to critically examine systemic anomalies while acknowledging the privileges associated with my position. However, the tensions between being an outsider and an insider, compounded by the responsibilities of being a TDSB staff member, created a complex dynamic.

In the following section, I will explore the specific tensions arising from my positionality navigating the intricacies of institutional expectations and ethical considerations with an “incident” that formed my desire to examine the experiences of expelled Black male students.

The Incident

In the midst of my role as a social worker within an expulsion program, an expelled Black student entrusted me with the disclosure that he had brought a pocket knife into the program. This revelation thrust me into a challenging conundrum, navigating the complex dynamics of my identity as a school board employee as a social worker and a racialized brown woman. Adding complexity to this situation, I was cognizant of the student's yearning for safety within the community as he had been a victim of assault previously. Despite harbouring no suspicion of the student intending harm with the pocket knife, protocol dictated reporting such

incidents to the school principal in accordance with the Education Act and TDSB policies and procedures (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, PPM 120).

As a social worker, my practice is guided by the ethical standards set forth by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW). Navigating compliance with the OCSWSSW Code of Ethics introduced tensions between professional obligations and the dictates of school board expulsion policies and procedures. The OCSWSSW mandates maintaining the client's best interests and advocating for social justice and societal welfare (OCSWSSW, n.d.). However, adhering to the Education Act and TDSB policies and procedures could potentially entail adverse consequences for the student, including further disengagement from schooling and involvement with the police (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, PPM 120).

In my capacity, as the expulsion program's social worker and a TDSB employee, I grappled with the decision to report the infraction to the principal. This dilemma epitomized the delicate balance between upholding institutional mandates and safeguarding the student's welfare while critically evaluating decision-making through an anti-Black lens. The situation was fraught with complexities—an expelled Black male student, institutional policies and procedures, community safety concerns, and my identity as a brown female social worker intertwined to shape the course of action. Chapter Thirteen will provide further exploration of this incident and outcome.

Concluding Remarks

This study is structured into thirteen chapters. Following Chapter One, the introduction, Chapter Two explores the historical and current impacts of zero-tolerance policies and the expulsion landscape within the TDSB. Chapter Three reviews the TDSB's expulsion policy,

procedures, and documents. Chapter Four presents a literature review on Black students' experiences in education, providing a foundation for the study. Theoretical and methodological frameworks are discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapters Seven to Eleven thematically analyze participant interviews, covering pre-expulsion experiences, the expulsion process, involvement in and transitioning out the expulsion program, and post-expulsion experiences. Chapter Twelve discusses the analysis of the study's findings grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and whiteness as property. Chapter Thirteen concludes with insights into the study's limitations, recommendations, and researcher's final remarks.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND OF SCHOOL EXPULSIONS

In this chapter, I provide a contextual foundation for the study's focus. I distinguish between schooling and education, emphasizing the consistent use of 'schooling' in this research. Subsequently, a comprehensive examination on the historical aspects of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism, within the Canadian education system, is discussed.

Schooling encapsulates the prevailing social values and norms dictating behavioural expectations within the school and broader society. Schooling sustains anti-Black racism through the continuous production and reproduction of negative biases and assumptions about Blackness, and this is established as a result of entrenched, routine anti-Black schooling practices. While acknowledging the significance of the broader education system in discussions about anti-Black racism, this study placed a focal lens on the routinized, everyday practices of anti-Blackness. These normalized practices contribute to the perpetuation of anti-Blackness, particularly impacting Black males in schooling (James, 2012). James (2012) posits that the educational system's tendency to exacerbate rather than alleviate the risks of exclusion may be due to its failure to address anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism in the schooling experiences of black male students (p. 466).

The intentional use of the term 'schooling' throughout this study aimed to spotlight practices within the educational framework that uphold and reinforce anti-Blackness and sustain anti-Black racism. Education, writ large, is defined by Shujaa (2003), as "the process of culture and identity transmission while schooling is intended to ensure that status quo power relationships are maintained (p. 179). In addition, the absence of a compelling force to drive changes in anti-Black schooling practices hinders any disruption to the foundational structures upholding anti-Black racism within schooling (James, 2012).

History of Anti-Black Racism in Canadian Schooling

Educational concerns about the underpinnings of anti-Black racism have been critiqued since the late 1970s in Toronto, as reported in a report by the African Canadian Legal Court Clinic (2012):

The high drop-out rate and related high failure and expulsion rates of African Canadian students are not new. Every Student Survey Report (1970-1993) of the former Toronto School Board has consistently shown that African Canadian students do not do as well academically as their non-African counterparts (p. 43).

Similarly, Brathwaite and James (1996) discussed that in the 1970s, some school boards, such as those in Toronto, York, and North York, had conducted research to understand the reasons why some Black students were struggling to adjust to schooling. Particularly

[i]ndependent researchers such as Ramcharan (1975), Anderson and Grant (1975), and Beserve (1976) also contributed to the understanding of the problems Black Caribbean students were facing in the school system. Without exception, these studies showed that the difficulties of the students resulted not only from their experiences of trying to adjust to a new society (for those who had recently arrived) but also from their experiences with discrimination based on race and cultural differences (Brathwaite & James, 1996, p. 20).

The issue of anti-Black racism in education is not new, and contemporary school data on school exclusions consistently highlights the persistent disparities faced by Black students, especially Black males (TDSB, 2021-22). Current statistics reveal that Black male students continue to experience more adverse educational outcomes, including lower graduation rates and a higher likelihood of expulsion (Maynard, 2017; TDSB, 2013; 2014-15; 2015-16; 2016-17; 2018-19; 2019-20; 2021-22). The social construction of violence and fear within schools is intricately intertwined with anti-Blackness. This intertwining results in the development of expulsion policies and procedures, which support anti-Black school staff practices and actions enabling the disproportionate exclusion of Black male students.

McMurtry and Curling's (2008) report, *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*, revealed that Ontario had commissioned 31 anti-racism studies since 1977. In addition, James and Turner (2017) highlighted over 30 years of Canadian studies illustrating persistent disparities in educational outcomes for Black students. These studies unequivocally demonstrated the prevalence of anti-Black racism within various social systems, including education, the criminal justice system, housing, and social services (Maynard, 2017; James & Turner, 2017; McMurtry & Curling, 2008). They also thoroughly documented the social and institutional impacts of anti-Black racism on Black communities. In 1992, protests against anti-Black racism in America reverberated in Canada, prompting Black communities to demand substantial actions against the systemic persistence of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism in social systems (Maynard, 2017; James & Turner, 2017; McMurtry & Curling, 2008).

On May 4, 1992, in Toronto the Black community planned a demonstration to protest police brutality against Black communities. This was aggravated by the protests in America and the acquittal of four Los Angeles Police Department police officers charged with assault on Rodney King. This protest in Toronto was further intensified after a Toronto Police officer shot Raymond Lawrence, a Black male. The aftermath of the protest in Toronto in 1992, widely referred to by the media as the *Yonge Street Riots*, was characterized by images of Black individuals vandalizing storefronts, police making numerous arrests, and injuries sustained by both citizens and the police. In response, the provincial government, led by the New Democratic Party (NDP), commissioned Stephen Lewis, a former politician, to investigate the state of race relations in Ontario.

Completed and released within a month of the riots, in June 1992 the Stephen Lewis' report confirmed the widespread prevalence of anti-Black racism within social systems (James &

Turner, 2017). Through consultations and meetings with Black communities, aimed at discussing anti-Black racism and discrimination, it became evident that, according to the Black communities, anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism were deeply ingrained within the state, including school and education. The findings in the Stephen Lewis' report underscored the urgent need for targeted efforts to confront and rectify systemic anti-Black racial disparities. Stephen Lewis' report specifically delved into the deeply rooted anti-Black racism present in schooling, highlighting the discouragement of Black students from pursuing post-secondary education, placement into basic-level classes, and low academic expectations from teachers. The report underscored a cultural acceptance of racial intolerance, particularly anti-Black racism, in schools, as evidenced by Black students consistently facing harsher sanctions for misbehaviours compared to their non-Black counterparts (James & Turner, 2017; Maynard, 2017; McMurtry & Curling, 2008).

In Canada, despite decades of commissioned reports, such as Stephen Lewis' report, offering evidence of the enduring negative impact of anti-Black racism within social systems there has been minimal progress in addressing and eliminating anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism (Maynard, 2017; James & Turner, 2017; McMurtry & Curling, 2008). Analogous to Stephen Lewis' report, the *Toward a New Beginning* report at the City of Toronto furthered discussions on educational anti-Black racism (Four-Level Government/Black Canadian Community Working Group, 1992). This report advocated for Black-focused schools with an Afrocentric curriculum, Black-identifying educators, and youth leadership and mentorship programs to support Black success and brilliance (James & Turner, 2017, p. 8).

Additionally, in response to these findings of systemic and ongoing anti-Black racism in education, the NDP government created the Provincial Advancement Committee on Race and

Ethnocultural Relations. The committee's efforts laid the groundwork for proposed amendments to the Education Act, obligating school boards to develop and implement anti-racism and ethnocultural equity policies. These policies aimed to identify and eliminate systemic inequities and barriers, promoting equitable education practices for all students. Despite these strides, the anti-racist and anti-Black racism initiatives were short-lived, as they were dismantled in 1995 when the Progressive Conservative (P.C.) government, led by Mike Harris, assumed power (James & Turner, 2017, p. 8).

The Stephen Lewis report, now over thirty years old, highlighted an enduring issue that Black males face more school exclusions, academic streaming and receive harsher punishments for misbehaviours compared to other racialized groups (TDSB, 2013; 2014-15; 2015-16; 2016-17; 2017-18; 2019-20; 2021-22). Toronto District School Board (TDSB), data during the 2019-20 school year, revealed a 3.2% overall reduction in suspension and expulsion rates since 2016-17, notably decreasing the percentage of suspended and expelled Black students from 36.2% to 33.0% (TDSB, 2019-20). Moreover, there was a 5.4% decrease in the suspension and expulsion rates for Black males compared to the 2011/2012 school year. Despite these reductions, Black students, constituting only 11% of the TDSB population, still accounted for the majority of suspended and expelled students, revealing persistent disparities (TDSB, 2019-20). The complex interplay of anti-Blackness and gendered experiences continues to label Black males as at-risk, perpetuating ongoing and absolute schooling exclusions (James, 2012; Maynard, 2017).

Exclusionary School Practices for Black Students

Zero-tolerance policies in education disproportionately affect Black male students more than any other racialized group (The Advancement Project and The Advancement Project and The Civil Rights Project Rights Project, 2000). This impact stems from the conflation of fear with Black male identity. Numerous educational studies, from scholars such as Dei (1997), Skiba

et al. (2011), James (2012), Gregory, Skiba, Norguara (2010), Howard (2008), and Hussain (2015), consistently reveal that Black male students face harsher sanctions for minor infractions, such as teasing, verbal arguments, and talking back to teachers.

While Canada has witnessed tragic school violence incidents, including shootings in Taber, Alberta (1999), Dawson College in Montreal (2006), and the shooting death of TDSB student Jordan Manners in 2007, it is essential to note that Black males were not involved as perpetrators (McDonald, 2022) but continue to be the group most marginalized, feared and excluded in schooling. Despite these events, the fear of school violence, mainly fueled by incidents such as the American Columbine school shooting in 1999, contributed to the implementation of various zero-tolerance legislative measures, policies, and procedures, under the guise of safe schools, to address student violence and misbehaviours in Canadian schools.

In Canada, race-based educational statistics were not consistently collected. However, without consistent race-based statistics, one sided reports exacerbating violence in schools influenced the zero tolerance to violence movements in schooling further exacerbating the exclusion of Black students in Ontario. These one sided reports negated information from studies and data that underpinned the significant role of anti-Blackness in schooling practices. For example, the data from Nova Scotian and Toronto school boards, between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, indicated that zero-tolerance policies disproportionately negatively impacted Black students (Halifax Regional School Board, 2016, 25, May).

Zero-tolerance-type laws and policies spoke of addressing fears of rising violent crime rates, prompting more stringent laws. Meiners and Winn (2010) observed that despite a 30-year low in Canadian crime rates, the Canadian government, mirroring American policies, introduced reforms favouring carceral funding over social programming, particularly in racialized

communities. This cultural influence paved the way for the adoption of zero-tolerance school policies in Canada and Ontario in an attempt to address the fear of rising violence in schooling. The fear associated with Black males and its conflation with violence is a recurring theme, as highlighted by James and Turner (2017) in their interviews with Black students. These students reported staff were fearful of their Black identity and felt criminalized by predominantly white teachers and guidance staff. Unfortunately, the fear of rising school violence has overshadowed commitments to anti-racism initiatives, as recommended by the Stephen Lewis report (James & Turner, 2017).

To make school safer and marking the initiation of zero-tolerance for violence, in April 2000, Ontario Minister of Education Janet Ecker, from the P.C. government, released the Code of Conduct for all Ontario schools. This Code of Conduct outlines behavioural expectations for students, staff, and parents. Subsequently, public concerns about school and student safety led to the enactment of Ontario's Safe Schools Act (SSA) in 2001, incorporating the principles of the Code of Conduct (Bhattacharjee, 2003). Before engaging with the SSA, the next section will briefly discuss the TDSB landscape and history of discipline.

Introduction: Toronto District School Board Expulsion Related Documents

To provide a thorough understanding of the participants' expulsion experiences, this study integrated an examination of the TDSB expulsion documents when analyzing the interview data. The Safe Schools Act (SSA) of 2001 and the Progressive Discipline Safe Schools Act (PDSSA) of 2007 mandated all school boards to develop comprehensive policies and procedures for managing school safety and discipline which included how school expulsions are conducted (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Teklu, 2012; Hussain, 2015). The key documents reviewed in this study included the TDSB policy, Caring and Safe Schools, P051, which sets the stage for school spaces

to be inclusive, respectful, and highlights the importance of creating a school culture where every student feels valued, supported, and safe from discrimination, bullying, and violence. The accompanying procedures for P051 are:

- PR 585, TDSB Code of Conduct
- PR 702, Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour
- PR 697, Promoting a Positive School Climate, Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions
- PR 586, Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions
- PR 595, Expulsion Hearings
- PR 540, Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers and the
- Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) document.

Chapter Three will detail the policies and accompanying procedures, using them to contextualize the impact of school exclusions on the participants. This exploration will reveal how these documents misaligned with staff practices, thereby exacerbating exclusionary school practices.

Landscape of Expulsions at the Toronto District School Board

The TDSB stands as the largest and most diverse school board in Canada, setting the stage for the exploration of exclusionary experiences of Black males (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017; Maynard, 2017). According to the TDSB (2017) Parent and Student Census, 11% of the student population identified as Black and 29% as white. Remarkably, the most recent census in 2023 revealed a shift, with 13.3% of students identifying as Black and 36.8% as white. Before 1998 and the amalgamation of school boards in Toronto, Toronto comprised of five distinct boards of education: York, North York, Etobicoke, Scarborough, and Toronto. These boards operated independently, each with varying approaches to student discipline (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017).

On January 1st, 1998, these five school boards merged to form the present-day TDSB, encompassing approximately 250,000 students across 583 schools, including 110 secondary schools (Zheng & De Jesus, 2018). Zheng and De Jesus (2018) underscored TDSB's unique character as

one of the most multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual school boards in the world...[and]...[o]ver one-quarter of the students were born outside of Canada in more than 175 countries, over half speak a language other than English, and about three quarters belong to a visible minority group (p. 2).

Before amalgamation, Zheng and De Jesus (2017) and Gidney (1999) looked at the pervasive violent incidents within schools and communities during the 1980s and 1990s. Notably, Brockton High School faced two violent episodes in October 1994: a confrontation with weapons between white and Black students (Duffy, 1994, October 21) and a shooting involving a 27-year-old student, targeting a guidance counselor and a teacher (Dunconson, Gombu & Hall, 1994, October 21). The escalating such reported school violence prompted the enactment of the Safe Schools Act (SSA) in 2000.

However, post-TDSB amalgamation, tragic incidents endured, exemplified by the 2007 shooting death of Jordan Manners in a west-end high school (Maynard, 2017) and another shooting in an east-end high school in 2008 (CityNews, 2008, September 17). In 2009, a stabbing at a downtown high school (Ferenc, 2009, September, 14) and then a fatal stabbing in 2014 in a west-end school (Canadian Broadcast Corporation, 2014, October, 20) continued to heighten concerns of violence in and around schools and school communities. One response to these violent incidents post-SSA and the Progressive Discipline Safe Schools Act in 2007 was the induction of School Resource Police Officers (SRO) in high schools in 2008 (Nasser, 2017, November 22). Addressing these challenges, the SRO program was initiated to enhance school safety by deploying officers in high schools (Nasser, 2017, November 22). Nevertheless, public and student concerns about police presence and potential criminalization of Black and racialized students led to the discontinuation of the SRO program in 2017 (Nasser, 2017, November 22). For a more comprehensive analysis of the SRO program's outcomes, refer to Maynard (2017).

Preceding TDSB's consolidation, the North York Board of Education and the Scarborough Board of Education implemented discipline programs targeting students involved in violence or perceived to have a propensity for violence (Zheng & De Jesus, 2018). These programs, antedating the Ontario Ministry of Education's Code of Conduct in 2000, saw the Scarborough Board of Education pioneering a stringent zero-tolerance approach to violence and weapons. Zheng and De Jesus (2018) emphasized that this approach mandated "the strict enforcement of predetermined consequences for a range of student offenses, irrespective of contextual factors or mitigating circumstances" (p. 8).

Description of an Expulsion Program at the Toronto District School Board

The structure of the expulsion program includes a late start for students. The program usually begins at 9:00 or 9:30 am and most often ends by 2:30 pm. The late start time accommodates flexibility, as students may come from various communities in Toronto and require time to travel (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017). Once the student enters the program if they wish to leave, parental permission is required. The program staff remind the student about the importance of remaining in and attending the program as attendance and engagement with the program is needed in order to get their expulsion statuses lifted (Sibblis, 2014). If the student chooses to leave the program without parental permission, such actions indicate the student is not following the program's goals, which can then, negatively impact the lifting of their expulsion (Teklu, 2012; Sibblis, 2014). While in the program, staff provide breakfast, snacks, and lunch to students, avoiding any reason for the students to leave the program before dismissal (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017).

The program generally concentrates on teaching the expelled students core courses such as English, Math, History, and Geography. Zheng & De Jesus (2017) noted "the number of

credits these expelled students had earned in the [expulsion program] varied, with one-third of them not earning any credits in their [expulsion program] regardless of the length of their placement” (p. 3). The last hour of the school day is dedicated to group work and one-on-one counseling sessions led by the program child and youth workers, social workers, and, at times, in collaboration with community agencies (TDSB, PR 586).

The one-on-one counseling, as outlined in the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP), focuses on addressing the "risk factors and protective factors" (TDSB, PR 586, p. 4) and “to assist students in the development of positive attitudes and behaviours” and that this support helps in “identifying and addressing the underlying causes of the student's behaviour" (TDSB, PR 586, p.2). Group topics usually include strengthening understanding about healthy relationships, building community, career planning, stress management, and conflict resolution. The program staff can connect students to identity-affirming community agencies to support their needs and create a larger circle of care. Socially, the students in the expulsion program are not allowed to interact with the other students who may attending other school programs in the building that houses the expulsion program. The expulsion program is often segregated from other school programs by having its own entrance and exit door(s).

At TDSB, there are four locations for expulsion programs (Zheng & De Jesus, 2017). These buildings contain other programs, such as alternative schools, programs for adult learners, newcomers, and English Language Learners (ELL). All four expulsion sites in Toronto are located in older elementary school buildings and have few similarities to secondary school spaces. Sports and extracurricular activities are not available. The expulsion sites have limited physical spaces and are bereft of social and resource support. For example, there are limited computers (Teklu, 2012) making it challenging to provide, for example, arts-based, computer,

music, and sports-specific courses. The expulsion program usually has limited space for confidential conversations with students and families. Staff constantly monitor inter-peer connections in the program to ensure student conflicts do not arise as the programs are often located in areas where there are already existing community tensions. For expelled students their only option to remain engaged with schooling was to attend an expulsion program. With only four such programs in Toronto, they were often located far from the students' neighbourhoods, necessitating travel and placing them with unfamiliar peers. The program forbade visits from peers and consistently warned the students to stay away from their mainstream school. Zheng & De Jesus (2017) also found that when expelled students leave the program "more than half (58%) dropped out of school or did not have a known destination" (p. 2).

Expulsion programs are elusive spaces unfamiliar to teachers, mainstream school support staff, parents, and community workers. I know this, as they were unknown to me when I was working as a social worker in mainstream high schools at the TDSB. I knew of students who would be suspended from school and some who were expelled but never knew where they went. I just never saw them again within the school spaces I worked in. In the six years that I was a social worker in an expulsion program, it was extremely rare for the school principals, who recommended the student be expelled, and the Board of Trustees, who made the final decision to expel a student, to venture into the program. Working in the program, I understood why they were forgotten and unknown spaces. Expulsion programs have an aura of silence. The student is at their mainstream school one day, and then, with one recommendation from the principal, they are usually no longer allowed back into their mainstream school.

When a student is expelled, they are de-enrolled from their mainstream school and enrolled as students in the expulsion program. The expelled student, now officially enrolled in an

expulsion program, is therefore no longer part of their previous school community, becoming both invisible at their expelling school and hypervisible to the staff in the smaller expulsion program (Sibblis, 2014). Sibblis (2014) further discussed the consequences of this hypervisibility in the expulsion program:

Excluded black students are incarcerated within their skin, making them invisible while their skin is hypervisible; they are incarcerated within the bereft spaces of their urban neighbourhoods; they are incarcerated within and confined to their lives, afflicted by occlusion, abjectness, and ineptitude, and limited in their possibilities (p. 72).

Sibblis (2014) stated that expulsion programs only need to "hold them, keeping them invisible long enough for them to be forgotten, atrophy and fade into non-existence" (p. 78). This non-existence is further illustrated, in part, by having no access to or participation in school-related activities, such as sports, dances, prom, and committees, in any publicly funded school in Ontario. Next, I will briefly discuss the two Acts added to the provincial Education Act that are responsible for guiding school expulsions.

Expulsion Guidance Legislation In Ontario

Safe Schools Act (SSA) 2001

Prior to beginning a discussion about the SSA, the irony of who is safe within safe schools was addressed in Sibblis' (2023) study. Sibblis (2023) scrutinized the perception of Black males as problematic in an expulsion program, and the use of safety and security concepts to justify the expulsion of Black students thereby sustaining harmful stereotypes. As a direct response to the fears and worries of school violence, the purposes of the SSA were to combat the "lack of respect, responsibility, and clearly stated standards around behaviours that contribute to school safety" of students, staff, parents, and anyone entering school spaces (Hussain, 2015, p. 105). According to Hussain (2015), the outcome of the SSA was for the provincial government to define and enforce "acceptable behaviours and prohibit certain types of behaviours in schools

(p. 105) and [p]rescribing strict punishments for specific behaviours (p. 100). Reaume and Fogels (2008) indicated that

[i]n 2000-2001, 106 students were expelled, but three years after the implementation of the SSA in 2003-2004, 1,909 students were expelled, and the majority were Black males (Reaume & Fogels, 2008).

The SSA was considered a hardline approach that emulated zero-tolerance ideology. The SSA ignored data that such hardline school legislations and policies strengthened anti-Blackness within education (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Dei, 2018). The SSA stipulated school exclusions for specific behaviours and added that some of these behaviours would require the school to involve the police. Hussain (2015) analyzed the statistics resulting from the SSA in 2006 from the Ontario Government's Safe Schools Action Team (SSAT). This team reported

suspensions also increased over time...152,626 (of total student enrollment of 2,127,129)[in Ontario] students were suspended in 2003- 2004, with 229,394 suspensions issued that year [2006]. Therefore, multiple suspensions were given to individuals. Male students accounted for 77% of suspended students, while students with exceptionalities accounted for 18%. The majority of suspensions were given to Black students (p. 87).

Before implementing the SSA, Section 23 of the Education Act governed student suspension and expulsion, with discretionary authority held by principals and school boards (Bhattacharjee, 2003). Grounds for suspension were limited, and expulsions were only considered if a student's conduct was refractory and deemed harmful to others (Bhattacharjee, 2003).

The SSA introduced a more stringent approach aligned with the zero-tolerance philosophy. Both principals and teachers had the authority to suspend students, with principals having a 20-day limit and teachers having a one-day limit before they had to refer the matter to the principal (Bhattacharjee, 2003). Expulsion authority was shared between school boards and principals. Principals had the power to provide a student with a limited expulsion from the current school, and the Board of Trustees could provide an all-school board expulsion (from any

publicly funded school in Ontario) until the student completed a strict discipline program. The provincial Code of Conduct, which was implemented in the SSA, required police involvement for most infractions. However, mitigating factors, such as the student's inability to control behaviours or understand consequences, potentially exempted them from mandatory suspensions or expulsions (Bhattacharjee, 2003).

The SSA empowered the Minister to require school boards to offer specific courses and services for suspended or expelled students, although this provision was not enforced (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Hussain, 2015; Winton, 2012). Although the SSA suggested this, it remained optional for school boards to provide alternative programming and course and school work for expelled or suspended students (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Hussain, 2015). The alternative programs for expelled students were to help facilitate their return to school, which was sparse, with only seven strict discipline programs throughout Ontario as of September 2001 (Bhattacharjee, 2003).

After the SSA's implementation, the statistics identified that higher levels of police involvement, more surveillance, and lack of any schooling engagement were most impactful for Black males (Mosher, 2008; Rusk & Wortley, 2002). In 2004, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) published a report titled *The Ontario Safe Schools Act: School Discipline and Discrimination*, which discussed the disproportionate number of Black male students being expelled and suspended from public education by school principals and teachers. Regardless of the non-zero tolerance provisions of the SSA school, a school board Trustee declared:

In the school year 2002-2003, which is not yet ended, at the three high schools I represent as a trustee there is the following situation. [At the first school] there have been 131 suspensions. [The second school] has 145 suspensions. [The third school] has 65. This is only what is recorded. Almost all of them are Black or visible minority students (Bhattacharjee, 2003, p. 28).

In addition to this report from the OHRC in 2004, the Honourable Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling conducted a comprehensive review of youth violence in 2008, titled the *Roots of Violence Report*. These reports documented ongoing similar outcomes for Black students, illustrating that, particularly, Black male students had been excluded from schooling without accommodations for their schoolwork, not provided opportunities to re-integrate to schooling and were not provided alternative pro-social programming (McMurtry & Curling, 2008). Bhattacharjee's (2003) and McMurtry and Curling's (2008) reports also noted Black males, most impacted by school exclusions lost future school opportunities, had lower graduation rates, higher chances of contact with the criminal justice system, and had more negative psycho-social impacts.

The SSA did not incorporate any accountability for schools or administrators and placed full power with principals who did not consider the mitigating factors when deciding to suspend and expel a student (Teklu, 2012; Bhattacharjee, 2003; Rusk & Wortley, 2002). Mosher (2008) further indicated that exclude Black youth she interviewed reported they were stereotyped with negative labels such as 'troublemakers' and were judged by negative assumptions attached to their neighbourhoods. These negative biases fueled stereotypes whereby the "broader social context—stereotyping, discrimination and unbound power—shaped their experiences of injustice." (Mosher, 2008, p. 851). The students reported discussed that they were more scrutinized, silenced, and received more punitive actions for low-level infractions such as speaking aloud, talking back, and not taking off their hats (Mosher, 2008).

Toronto District School Board Safe and Compassionate Schools Task Force 2003-2005

In December 2003, in response to the SSA and various academic studies (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004; Ruck & Wortley, 2002) that indicated zero tolerance school policies and procedures were negatively impacting racialized students, particularly Black students, and students with disabilities, the Board of Trustees passed a motion that “directed that a Safe and Compassionate Schools Task Force be established to ensure Board schools are safe and inclusive learning environments for students and safe places for employees” (TDSB, 2003, p. 1).

The report from the Compassionate Schools Task Force recommended that suspension and expulsion processes, policies, and procedures be easily accessible and transparent to the public, and that principals and vice-principals focus on progressive discipline. The report aligned with human rights and equity frameworks, highlighting studies indicating increased suspensions and expulsions were underpinned by students’ race and disabilities. This report recommended that students, who experience suspensions and expulsions, be provided with programming and also become a party and heard during their expulsion hearings (TDSB, 2005).

Such ongoing criticism and recommendations to address the disproportionate impact school exclusions had on racialized students (Bhattacharjee, 2003; McMurtry & Curling, 2008; Mosher, 2008; Teklu, 2012), the provincial Liberal Government, under Premier Dalton McGuinty, amended the SSA in 2007 and introduced Bill 212, the Progressive Discipline Safe Schools Act (PDSSA) which centred the practice of grounding mitigating factors prior to any school exclusions.

Progressive Discipline Safe Schools Act (PDSSA) 2007

In Hussain's (2015) analysis comparing the Safe Schools Act (SSA) with the Progressive Discipline and Safe Schools Act (PDSSA), the PDSSA represents a shift from punitive measures

to more preventative and restorative practices. The PDSSA focuses on preventing misbehaviour, reducing punitive punishments, and implementing restorative justice programs for students facing suspension and expulsion, as outlined by Hussain (2015). In contrast to the SSA's exclusionary directives, the PDSSA incorporates notions of inclusion (Hussain, 2015).

The PDSSA included progressive discipline to address the disparate number of Black and other racialized students being expelled and suspended from schooling, as evidenced in research on the SSA (Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Bhattacharjee, 2003; Mosher, 2008; Husain, 2015; Maynard, 2017). PDSSA provided guidelines for principals to provide restorative responses to misbehaviours and required principals to consider a student's mitigating factors before considering a suspension and recommending an expulsion (Hussain, 2015). The purpose of the PDSSA was that

[p]rogressive discipline' accompanied by mitigating factors was to be implemented. This approach allowed schools to address inappropriate behaviours while allowing students to continue their education. There were two components to progressive discipline – addressing inappropriate behaviour and promoting positive behaviour. Some mandated items included professional and programming support with training for teachers and principals (Goodes, 2016, para. 4).

The PDSSA aimed to enable schools to address inappropriate behaviours while allowing students to continue with their education, emphasizing the promotion of positive behaviour. A significant change introduced by the PDSSA was removing a teacher's authority to suspend, transferring that power to principals. The PDSSA also limited the principal's power to directly expel a student. The final expulsion decision in the PDSSA resting with the Board of Trustees, also known as the Disciplinary Team.

The PDSSA mandated that all school boards offer programs for students suspended or expelled for more than six days. This contrasted with the SSA, which did not enforce school boards to provide programming for long term suspended (six day or more) and expelled students

(Bhattacharjee, 2003; Teklu, 2012). Expulsion and suspension programs aimed to provide academic and non-academic support, offering opportunities for expelled students to have their expulsion statuses lifted through an Expelled Student Action Plan (E-SAP) (TDSB PR 586, p. 3).

However, despite these legislative changes, Teklu (2012) reported that, according to Black students, parents, and the community, many of the PDSSA's provisions were ineffective. Expulsion and suspension data continued to persistently demonstrated a disproportionate impact on Black students, post PDSSA, prompting criticism of the expulsion programs for their insufficient resources. The prevalence of multiple short suspensions, even without expulsions, created disengaged students, negatively impacting their educational trajectories (Teklu, 2012, p. 20). Parents and students also reported that they needed to be made aware of the suspension and expulsion programs and noted the prevalence of short suspensions (six days and less), which further disconnected the students from keeping up with their academics (Teklu, 2012).

Winton's (2012) examination of the PDSSA revealed that adopting more progressive disciplinary measures and utilizing restorative practices led to a decline in suspension and expulsion numbers. Notably, both the SSA and PDSSA lacked explicit language addressing race or gender, with the SSA considering socio-economic status in disciplinary decisions but not explicitly addressing anti-Black racism or intersectionality. Under PDSSA, school boards were mandated to complete climate surveys with students every two years to ensure schools established a positive school climate of progressive discipline and inclusivity (Hussain, 2015).

In 2013, the TDSB released a five-year suspension and expulsion report from 2006-2007 to 2011-2012. This report indicated that the suspension and expulsion rates had reduced over the past five years. However, Black males from low socio-economic statuses continued to be the ones with the majority of suspensions and expulsions in elementary and secondary school grades.

During these five years, the number of suspended and expelled students identified with educational exceptionalities, such as mildly intellectually delayed (MID) and behavioural, increased (James & Turner, 2017; TDSB, 2019).

Suspended for 20 days Pending an Expulsion Status

According to the Education Act and the TDSB procedure PR 702, when a student receives a suspension for 20 days, it indicates that the student's actions were deemed to be violent as per the actions listed in Section 310 of the Education Act (Table 2). The 20-day suspension status requires the principal to complete the investigation within 20 days, as PR 697 indicates that

[p]rior to recommending an expulsion under Section 310(1) of the Education Act for any student in grades four to twelve, the principal is required to suspend the student, investigate, consider mitigating and other factors, apply the principles of progressive discipline, and document the process used (p. 10).

The principal then determines through their investigation whether to reduce the 20-day suspension to a 19 suspension which would then negate a recommendation for an expulsion. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2023) noted:

As part of the investigation, the principal must make every reasonable effort to speak to the student, their parents, and anyone else who may have relevant information. After an investigation, the principal recommends to the school board whether a student should be expelled. Only the school board can make the decision to expel a student (para. 16).

When a principal suspends a student for 20 days pending expulsion, they must, according to PR 697, offer the student a placement in a long-term suspension and expulsion program. A 20-day suspension pending an expulsion prevents the student from staying at their current school and offers them the opportunity to continue their courses under the long-term suspension and expulsion program. This offering of the long-term suspension and expulsion program, according to TDSB procedures and the Education Act, is voluntary, although strongly recommended to the student and their family. PR 586 section 4.1 notes that although “[s]tudents cannot be compelled

to participate in a program. Students who are expelled from all schools of the Board must successfully complete a program for expelled students prior to a school” (p.3).

Board of Trustees and Expulsion Decision-Making

If the principal recommends an expulsion then the Board of Trustees, the Discipline Committee, make the final decision using the information from the investigation by the principal. TDSB procedure PR595 outlines the range of final decisions the Board of Trustees can make. The first option the student is expelled from their school only (and if that is the decision, the Board of Trustees would then transfer the student to another school). The second option is to expel the student from all publicly funded schools and the Board of Trustees would recommend that the student attend an expulsion program. The student and parent can decline the expulsion program, although if they did, the student would not be able to participate in any publicly funded school in Ontario. The third option could be that the Board of Trustees do not agree with the principal’s expulsion recommendation. If this occurs, the student could return to their school unless they had police and court conditions that prevented their entry into their home school.

Zero Tolerance Bubbles Up

The 2006 Safe Schools Task Force report recommended enhancing data collection methods and establishing clear, consistent standards for reporting violent incidents in schools. It emphasized the importance of accurate and transparent reporting to better understand school violence and inform effective prevention and response strategies. These measures stemmed from the findings of a study by the provincial Safe Schools Task Force, established in 2005, addressing gender-based violence, homophobia, and sexual harassment in Ontario schools.

As mentioned earlier, zero tolerance and fears of school violence bubbled up in Toronto in 2007 after the tragic shooting death of Jordan Manners. As a result of this tragic event, Falconer

(2007) initiated *The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety* and found that students and teachers felt fear within their school spaces and that

[t]here is a community-wide crisis of confidence in the ability of the TDSB to ensure violence-free and weapons-free environments in all of its schools. The Panel shares this concern. A combination of direct consultations with education personnel and community agencies, anonymous surveying of staff and students, and research in respect of TDSB incident records for the last 24 months led the Panel to the conclusion that there are guns in select schools across the city in non-trivial numbers. The Panel has also found that sexual assault and sexual harassment are prevalent in TDSB schools (p. 573).

Mechanisms to report violent incidents have always been available for teachers. However, they did not practice this until this tragic event and a few other violent incidents, in and around school communities, aggravated fear of increased violence in schools (The Canadian Press, 2011, para. 7). This surge in violence in schools perpetuated stereotypes, portraying Black and other racialized males, as both the victims and perpetrators of the violence (Maynard, 2017).

As a result of increased fears of violence in schools, the Ontario Ministry of Education enacted, Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act on February 1, 2010. This legislation aimed to bridge reporting violent incident disparities among teachers, principals, and to parents especially regarding severe student behaviours and incidents that may lead to suspensions and expulsions. This Act mandated school staff to report violent incidents to principals, who subsequently would notify parents. Further to this, in May 2011, the Ontario Ministry of Education issued a Policy and Procedure Memorandum (PPM) 120 titled *Reporting Violent Incidents* to all publicly funded school boards. PPM 120 mandated principals and school staff to report any violent incident that occur in schools. As well, PPM 120 established what was considered a violent incident and that a violent incident required the school to contact the police. PPM 120's definition of violent incidents include:

- possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm
- physical assault causing bodily harm requiring medical attention

- sexual assault
- robbery
- using a weapon to cause or threaten bodily harm to another person
- extortion
- hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences (Ontario Ministry of Education, PPM 120, 2011, para. 4)

This heightened the likelihood of criminal charges for students recommended for expulsion (Maynard, 2017). Young (2011) discussed that the primary purpose of the PPM 120 was to collect data on violent school incidents listed above and argued that PPM 120 left out several serious violent incidents that could just as quickly be part of the school day. For example, it did not include bullying, vandalism causing extensive damage, gang-related occurrences, relationship-based violence, threats of serious physical injury (including threats made through social media), or criminal harassment (Ontario Ministry of Education, PPM, 120, 2011, para. 8)

Concluding Remarks

This chapter traced the historical trajectory of discipline's evolution within Ontario school boards, dating back to the 1970s. Establishing a Code of Conduct for each school board, the Ontario Ministry of Education solidified the authority to teachers and principals to suspend and principals to expel students with the Safe Schools Act (SSA). However, racialized, particularly Black students, parents, and community members challenged the impact of the SSA, leading to the Progressive Discipline Safe School Act (PDSSA).

With suspensions and expulsions, the PDSSA retracted the power from teachers to suspend and from principals to expel students. Instead, only principals retained the authority to suspend students and could only recommend an expulsion, provided they considered mitigation factors and explored progressive discipline measures prior to making a recommendation for an expulsion. Notably, in 2011, the Ontario Ministry of Education released PPM 120, which outlined a list of violent incidents. This mandated school boards to involve the police in cases

where a student was allegedly involved in a violent incident. This connection between expulsion recommendations and police involvement contributed to the perpetuation of anti-Blackness, particularly conflating anti-Blackness and maleness. This was evident in the disproportionately high expulsion rates of Black students, as reflected in TDSB annual reports from 2013 to 2021, whereby a violent incident label often led to exclusions from schooling in the name of safety.

The next chapter explores the TDSB expulsion policy, procedures, and documents. This overview will set the stage for illustrating how staff implementation, as reflected in the participants' narratives, perpetuated the marginalization of their and their parents' voices, reinforcing anti-Blackness, and intensified school exclusions.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPULSION DOCUMENT REVIEW

In Chapter Three, the analysis of Toronto District School Board (TDSB) expulsion-related documents provides context for the data derived from participant interviews (Appendix B). This chapter will demonstrate how ostensibly neutral policies can perpetuate systemic anti-Blackness within the educational system. By employing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the tenets of whiteness as property, the chapter will highlight discrepancies between the stated intentions of these policies and the actual practices of staff. It will uncover how these misalignments, rooted in anti-Blackness, impacted the inclusion and re-integration of the participants into schooling.

Toronto District School Board Expulsion Related Documents

Discourse in policies, procedures and documents is multi-faceted; it is a way to represent dominant knowledge and how we rationalize dominant knowledge through the actioning of policies and procedures (Anderson, 2012). Stuart Hall (1992) reminded us that “[a]ll social practices entail meaning and meaning shapes and influences what we do—all the practices that we have possess a discursive aspect to them” (p. 291). Here, Hall (1992) recognizes that if anti-Blackness is underpinning policy and procedures then how they are interpreted and practiced by staff can further cement anti-Blackness in systems such as education.

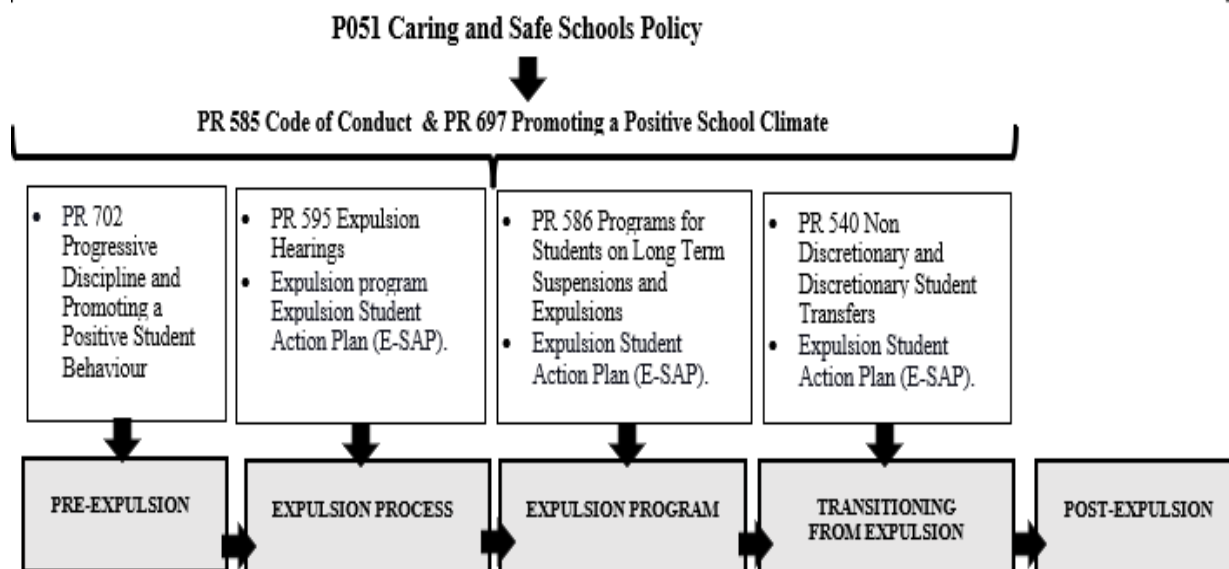
Anderson (2012) also prompted us to consider that policies and procedures cannot actively address racism or promote the practices needed to transform anti-racist practices without “embracing student's history, culture, strengths, and agency and interrogating how racism and dominant narratives are reproduced” (p. 139). Updating policies and procedures by adding words such as equity, anti-oppression, and anti-Black racism merely pay lip-service. The addition of such words are intended to interrupt and disrupt racism, such as anti-Black racism, although they

do not ameliorate anti-Black staff practices (Anderson, 2012, p. 135). Anderson (2012) further noted that educational policies and procedures are usually developed by good-intentioned white males, which may include the participation of non-white people, although their voices are often limited in the development.

Anderson (2012) also reminds us that adding a discourse of anti-Black racism in policy and procedures can negate the system's responsibility in racist actions and practices by regulating anti-Black racism to individual acts that are perceived to be infrequent. For individual acts of racism, professional training for teaching staff becomes the fix. Reflecting on one's actions, privilege and power within the propagation of anti-Blackness requires time to reflect and critically participate in discussions about anti-racism, particularly, anti-Black racism (Anderson, 2012). Such individualization of racism reflects limited systemic time dedicated to critical conversations that can action change. Sukhera (2020) addressed these concerns stating:

Reflection alone will not fix anything. We must collectively change the biased norms within our organizations and be prepared for the inevitable discomfort that accompanies changes to the status quo. Addressing racial bias is not just hard work, it is also messy work. We must accept that we will stumble along the way.

Figure 1 illustrates the expulsion policy, procedures, and documents corresponding to the stages encountered by participants throughout their school expulsion journeys. The figure is structured to be read from top to bottom with the Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P051) (CSS), which establishes the guidelines for staff actions in creating and implementing a culture of respect and safety within schools scaffolding procedures that outline behavioural expectations for students and staff in the Code of Conduct (PR 585), and Promoting a Positive School Climate (PR 697).

Figure 1: TDSB Expulsion Policy, Procedures and Documents

The next sections discuss the expulsion policy and procedures at TDSB, and each section will briefly indicate the impact they had on the participants' experiences through their narratives underscoring CRT.

Caring and Safe School Policy (CSS) P051

The CSS policy emphasizes the board's commitment to equity, anti-oppression, caring, safe, accepting, respectful and inclusive environments and has been updated every five years since its inception in June 1999. The policy is divided into these sections:

- The Board's commitment
- Parent and guardian engagement
- Support of interventions for students
- Support staff professional development
- Learning and prevention strategies
- Participation and accountability, and
- Response and reporting

The CSS policy outlines strategies to make sure schools are welcoming, safe, and respectful for all students. It aims to scaffold how to create welcoming and safe school spaces for all students, centring progressive discipline and hence decentring suspensions and expulsions. This policy

outlines expectations of the school board to protect students' rights and well-being with the goal to create positive environments where students feel accepted, supported, and valued promoting equality, healthy relationships and inclusion and it aims to prevent discrimination. The policy centres making sure every student feels like they belong and can thrive in their school community. Further the CSS policy monitors and evaluates suspended and expelled student demographics every five years. Additions to the newest revisions in June 2019 incorporated the words anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism. These two phrases were not previously specified in pre-2019 CSS policy revisions.

The CSS policy was revised in August 2005, and then again in 2013, to adopt the changes and revisions in the PDSSA, specifically accounting for the use of progressive discipline before suspending or recommending a student for an expulsion. The participants in this study had left the expulsion program by the time when the most recent changes were made to the CSS policy in June 2019. The current CSS policy at TDSB affirms the board's commitment to "creating school learning environments that are caring, accepting, safe, peaceful, nurturing, positive, equitable and respectful, and that enable all students to reach their full potential" (P051, p. 1).

There are two objectives of the CSS policy, 1: "To ensure that all students feel that they belong, are heard, accepted, safe, supported, and cared for by creating positive school climates that reflect themselves, value their voices, and foster a culture of mutual respect and healthy relationships" (P051, p.1) and 2: "To enhance and maintain working and learning environments that embed principles of equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, acceptance, and inclusion in procedures, practices, and programs that support the safety, dignity, health, and well-being of all" (P051, p. 1). The CSS policy highlights explicitly that students' dignity, worth, individual needs, and diverse social identity are foundational. The policy speaks to the board's commitment

in identifying systemic barriers that limit, discriminate, or negatively impact students' full potential by using words such as acceptance, inclusion, equity, and dignity. Further, the policy outlines intervention strategies, professional development and prevention strategies for staff in creating welcoming school spaces.

The CSS also outlines steps a principal can take refuse admittance of students into the school. This refusal can occur by “exercising section 265(1)(m) of the Education Act, which states that the Board has the right to refuse admittance to the school or classroom any person whose presence in the school or classroom would in the principal’s judgment be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the pupils” (P051, p. 16). Given the outlined provisions within the CSS policy, the narratives from participants will illuminate the lived experiences with anti-Blackness, anti-Black racism and inclusion, shedding light on the effectiveness of CSS policy in fostering positive and welcoming school environments.

Procedure PR 585: Code of Conduct

Recall, from Chapter Two, that the Ministry’s development of the provincial Code of Conduct was in response to public fears of rising school violence. The CSS policy P051 aligned with the provincial Code of Conduct expectations and in June 2008, the TDSB Code of Conduct procedure was adopted, PR 585. This procedure incorporates the components outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Policy/Procedure Memorandum 120 *Reporting Violent Incidents to the Ministry of Education*. The purpose of this procedure is to “govern the behaviour of all persons in TDSB schools” (TDSB, PR 585, p. 1). This procedure sets expectations for staff, students, parents, caregivers, and anyone entering a TDSB school space that the principal has a duty to ensure proper order and discipline in the school. As well, it stipulates being respectful, civil, demonstrating responsible citizenship and ensuring safety as the standards of behaviours for all within a school. For these expected behaviours, “[e]ffective strategies will be developed

[by the principal and supported by school staff] for response to all infractions related to the standards for respect, civility, responsible citizenship, and safety” (TDSB, PR 585, p. 2).

The procedure indicates the “police and community members are essential partners in making schools and communities safe” (TDSB, PR 585, p. 6). This procedure sets the tone for expectations of behaviours for all students and standards of behaviours expelled students must demonstrate as part of their goals in the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP). Drawing upon these directives of behavioural expectations of students within procedure PR 585, the narratives from participants will delve into how staff practices in upholding order, discipline, and safety impacted their expulsions and school engagement.

Procedure PR 697: Promoting a Positive School Climate

This procedure was adopted in March 2004, and it outlines the principal’s responsibilities in implementing progressive discipline. If the actions of the student are considered to be a violent incident (see definition of a violent incident in The Ontario Ministry of Education, PPM 120, 2011), the principal must recommend an expulsion and “must follow the direction in the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol, 2011 regarding notification of the police if any of the above violent incidents occurs” (Ontario Ministry of Education, PPM 120, 2011).

The rationale for procedure PR 697, is to affirm "the Board's commitment to creating school learning environments that are caring, accepting, safe, peaceful, nurturing, positive, equitable and respectful, and that enable all students to reach their full potential" (TDSB, PR 697, p.1). Given the specific emphasis on addressing violent incidents, as outlined within PR 697, the forthcoming narratives from the participants will provide firsthand accounts of how the lack of progressive discipline measures and the adherence to Ministry’s directives regarding violent incidents by school personnel, resulted in exclusionary schooling outcomes for them.

Procedures PR 702: Progressive Discipline & Promoting Positive Student Behaviour

PR 702 was adopted in May 2013 and aligns closely with PR 697. This procedure implicitly outlines that progressive discipline is necessary to support positive student behaviour. When positive student behaviour is established by underpinning the TDSB Code of Conduct (TDSB, PR 585) then, building and sustaining a positive school climate can ensue. This procedure insists that a school shall provide school-wide culturally responsive and progressive discipline strategies to correct student behaviours. It states that “[p]rogressive discipline is an approach that makes use of a continuum of interventions, supports and consequences, building upon strategies that promote positive behaviours” (TDSB, PR 702, p. 1) and “[t]he range of interventions, supports and consequences used by schools must be clear and developmentally appropriate and must include learning opportunities for students to reinforce positive behaviours and help students make good choices” (TDSB, PR 702, p. 2).

This procedure outlines examples of progressive discipline actions schools can use prior to considering a suspension and or recommending an expulsion:

- Supports offered by culturally responsive external and internal stakeholders’ restorative practices
- Attendance / performance/ behaviour contracts
- Time Out
- Reflection Sheet
- Parental contact and involvement in applying an appropriate remedy
- Loss of privilege to participate in specified school activities
- Peer mediation
- Individual or group counselling
- Assessment
- Detention
- Restitution for damage or stolen property
- Community services
- Mental Health and well-being support (TDSB, PR 702, p. 3-4)

Similar to PR 697, the narratives from participants will highlight how the use of progressive discipline measures, as exemplified in PR 702, were not readily used by their school principals often exacerbating the seriousness of their behaviours resulting in the use of exclusionary strategies.

Procedure PR 595: Expulsion Hearings

Once the principal has recommended an expulsion for a student they establish "the process and requirements for conducting expulsion hearing meetings" (TDSB, PR 595, p. 1). This procedure, as per the Act, states that the parties in an expulsion hearing must include the expelling principal, the parents of the student (unless the student is 18 years old and older or is 16 or 17 years old and has legally withdrawn from parental control), and other persons as specified by the board. Importantly, the student who has received a recommendation for expulsion has the right to request the Board of Trustees add them as a party to their expulsion hearing but are not automatically made a party as PR 595 states "[a] pupil who is not a party to a Hearing under section 311.3 (3) of the Education Act, has the right to be present at the Hearing and to make a statement on his or her own behalf" (p. 4).

In this procedure, aligned with the Education Act, the final decision to expel a student from all-school boards and/or one school is delegated to the Discipline Committee, comprised of elected members from the school's Board of Trustees. The role of the Discipline Committee is to "assess the evidence as provided by the parties, and determine whether, on a balance of probabilities, it is more probable than not that the student did engage in the prohibited activity or prohibited activities alleged by the Principal" (TDSB, PR 595, p. 14). The narratives from participants will underscore the significant imbalance of power within expulsion hearings with limited information provided to the participants, their parents and in most situations, not being involved in the expulsion hearing process.

Procedure PR 586: Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions

This procedure frames the board's objective "to provide measures for ensuring that all students on long-term suspension or expulsion have the opportunity to continue their education. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) offers suspended and expelled students supervised and independent learning supports" (TDSB, PR 586, p. 1). An expelled student cannot be forced to attend an expulsion program in this procedure. The expulsion programs are voluntary, although without completing an expulsion program, a student does not have the opportunity to get their expulsions lifted and hence cannot attend any publicly funded school in Ontario. To clarify, that is true only for students who have received an all-school board expulsions. Students who have a one-school-only expulsion cannot return to the home school that expelled them even if they get their expulsions lifted but can attend another high school. This study exclusively explored the experiences of all-school board expelled Black male students. In Chapters Nine and Ten the narratives shared by the participants delve into the profound impacts of attending an expulsion program, highlighting the challenges and lack of opportunities in re-engaging to school following their expulsions.

Lifting an Expulsion

The Education Act and TDSB procedure PR 586 states that students who get their expulsions lifted must be readmitted to school

[w]here it is determined by the principal of the program that a student who has been expelled from all schools of the board has successfully met the objectives of the program for expelled students, the student will be readmitted to a school of the Board...A student who has been expelled from all schools of the Board and/or his parents(s) may apply in writing to the principal of the program requesting that the student be readmitted to a school of the Board (TDSB, PR 586, p. 3).

Students have two opportunities in a school year to have their expulsions lifted. The first opportunity is at the end of semester one (January), and the second is at the end of semester two

(June). If a student's expulsion is not lifted, they can return each semester to the expulsion program and attempt to have their expulsions lifted again. As the expulsion program is optional, expelled students can return each semester until age 21.

Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP)

When an expelled student enters the program mid-semester, they will remain in the expulsion program the following semester as they are required to show staff that they met the requirements of their E-SAP. These requirements include their ability to:

- (a) demonstrate respect for themselves, for others, and for those in authority;
- (b) demonstrate that they understand and can accept the consequences of their actions;
- (c) demonstrate the ability to participate in school without compromising the safety and well-being of themselves or others at the school;
- (d) demonstrate the ability to comply with the standards set out in the provincial Board and local school codes of conduct (TDSB, PR 586, pp. 4-5).

Once the E-SAP goals are met, the parents/guardians of the student "may apply in writing to the principal of the program requesting that the student be re-admitted to a school of the Board" and "[w]hen a student is considered ready to be re-admitted to school, a re-entry plan must be developed as part of the E-SAP to assist with the student's transition back into school" (TDSB, PR 540 p. 4). Further, PR 540 states that a student can only return to a school after an all-school board expulsion "provided that the student's return does not create an unacceptable risk to the safety of any person in the school" (p.3). This statement was used to ensure the participants, in this study, were denied placements in high schools (TDSB, PR 540).

The E-SAP is a TDSB document that mirrors goals and expectations as outlined by PR 585 and the provincial Code of Conduct. For an expelled student to have consideration to get their expulsion lifted, they must demonstrate to the expulsion program staff that they have successfully met the goals and expectations as outlined in the E-SAP. This procedure was

initiated in January 2008 and was last updated six months later in June of that year. In PR 586, the E-SAP

[i]s formulated once the Board has expelled a student from all schools of the Board. The E-SAP will be developed based on the information gathered at a planning meeting prior to the admission of the student to the program for expelled students (p. 2).

The E-SAP is developed before the expelled student is admitted to the program for expelled students. If the student had been suspended and attending the program, pending an expulsion outcome, then the E-SAP would be built on the Student Action Plan (SAP) from their suspension (TDSB, PR 586, p. 2). The E-SAP document is imperative as the goals are the core assessment to determine if the expelled student can be considered to have their expulsion lifted and re-admitted to a mainstream school.

The expelling principal is responsible for creating the E-SAP and the Ontario Ministry of Education's Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) 141 mandates a collaborative approach to develop E-SAP goals and objectives which include relevant school staff, students, parent(s), and others should be part of the development of the E-SAP (TDSB, PR 586, p. 4-5). The development of the E-SAP is "based on the information gathered at a planning meeting before the admission of the student to the program for expelled students" (TDSB, PR 586, p. 2). This information is generated from the principal of the expelling school, which includes the elementary and secondary information of the student's discipline history, including past suspensions.

As per PR 586 the goals and objectives include academic and non-academic components. The academic components include attending the expulsion program regularly and on time, completing their credits, participating in socio-emotional counseling with the program

social worker and being of good behaviour and conducting themselves following the TDSB

Code of Conduct (TDSB, PR 586, p. 2). PR 586 further states:

- The purpose of the academic component of the E-SAP is to ensure that students have the opportunity to continue their education.
- The expulsion program allows students to continue or complete a program of study, including assignments and homework. The academic component follows the Ontario curriculum unless the student has an IEP that provides for modifications to the Ontario curriculum.
- The academic component may include distance learning, e-learning, remedial help, individual instruction, and/or opportunities within the Board.
- The non-academic component of the E-SAP is to assist students in developing positive attitudes and behaviours.
- The Board will support the student in identifying and addressing the underlying causes of the student's behaviour.
- The Board will consider what types of support the student may require during the expulsion.
- Upon returning to school, the Board will make appropriate support available through referrals to community agencies and/or provide support through other methods (p. 2)

After the development of the E-SAP, the expulsion program staff must have a planning meeting with the student, the parent(s), and other relevant people to affirm the goals and objectives on the E-SAP, provide the opportunity for all involved to mutually understand the expectations of the program and what the expelled student must do in order to successfully get their expulsion lifted (TDSB, PR 586, p. 2). PPM 141 states that the purpose of the planning meeting is to:

- identify the needs of the student;
- identify the student's risk factors and protective factors;
- clearly identify any types of support that the student may need to continue their learning;
- establish the objectives of the E-SAP (para. 36)

The E-SAP goals and expectations originate from the provincial Code of Conduct which asserts, "[a] school should be a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility, and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted" (TDSB, PR 585, p.2).

The program social worker supports the expelled student's non-academic goals within the E-

SAP. The participants' voices were marginalized throughout the E-SAP development process. Their narratives will reveal the lack of collaboration and inclusion in creating the E-SAP with the principal. These narratives will demonstrate that the E-SAP goals were shaped by negative schooling reputations and anti-Black stereotypes and biases. Consequently, the principal's misaligned E-SAP expectations hindered the participants from having their expulsions lifted.

Lifted Expulsions and Transitioning Back to School

For students who have had their expulsions lifted, transitioning back to school involves navigating a complex procedure designed to ensure their re-entry is handled safely and thoughtfully. The Procedure PR 540, titled Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers, provides a detailed framework for this process. It is crucial for facilitating the students' return to their schooling journey and ensuring a supportive environment for their reintegration after having experienced an expulsion

Procedure PR 540 Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers

The transferring of these students, when being considered to re-enter a school, are non-discretionary transfers. Section 4.2 (A-O) of the procedure outlines the process. Part B of this section advises

[a] student placed through a non-discretionary transfer can return to his/her original school when the conditions that led to the transfer are no longer in effect, provided that the student's return does not create an unacceptable risk to the safety of any person in the school. This decision is made by the school Principal in consultation with the Superintendent of Education and the Caring and Safe Schools Administrator. Re-admission would occur at the following registration point (TDSB, PR 540, p. 3).

It is noted that the decision to determine if the student is returning to their original school is delegated to the student's desired school principal, that school's Superintendent of Education, and the expulsion program principal. Other than expressing their desire for the school they want to attend, the student's voice is not included, section H of this procedure asserts,

[t]he principal shall inform appropriate school staff about the student and his or her history of aggressive or violent behaviour and take appropriate safety measures and advise the staff that they must treat any information about this student and the incident(s) disclosed at the meeting as confidential (as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act) (TDSB, PR 540, p. 4).

This section grants the principal permission to determine whom they deem as appropriate school staff, regarding the incoming student's history of aggressive and violent behaviours.

This procedure also stipulates that the receiving school will continue to support the student's transition with expulsion program support staff for up to six weeks to ensure academic and non-academic supports are in place in the receiving school for the positive transition practices (TDSB, PR 540, p. 4). Section O of PR 540 further advises that the incoming school cannot demit a student placed at the school through a non-discretionary transfer and must either re-enroll the student or provide a transition plan for an alternative setting. This section is important as it dictates a school has to plan the education for a student who has entered their school after having their expulsion lifted. Finally, when the student is enrolled in the receiving school, the student has access to the school's activities, clubs, and extracurriculars. This procedure was adopted in December 2000 and last updated in February 2013. Despite the provisions outlined in Procedure PR 540, for re-engagement after an expulsion is lifted, the participants' narratives revealed that school officials retained the power, leaving limited options for students to return to a high school even after their expulsions had been lifted.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter elucidates the procedural intricacies of expulsion hearings, school re-entry, and student transfers out of the expulsion program, emphasizing the power dynamics at play and their impact on students' schooling trajectories. By applying Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the tenets of whiteness as property, this analysis revealed how these procedures can reinforce

systemic inequities. The participants' stories critically question the efficacy of expulsion-related interventions and their ability to foster genuine reintegration into school communities. The participants' narratives set the stage for deeper interrogations of anti-Blackness in the actioning of policies, procedures, and documents that govern school exclusions. This challenges us to address the constraints of such documents, which are predominantly reactive measures that staff have power over, rather than proactive efforts to mitigate the necessity for school exclusions from the outset through student voice.

An overview of the District School Board (TDSB) policies, procedures, and documents provided served as a foundational exploration for the subsequent narratives of the participants. By weaving together participants' insights with these documents, the study sought to also understand the tensions between stated commitments to equity and the participants' lived experiences with school exclusions. The narratives highlight how the language in expulsion-related documents, while often appearing inclusive, may fail to translate into meaningful actions to dismantle the process of becoming Black through the lens of anti-Blackness, sustaining anti-Black racism and maintaining inherent whiteness (Hall, 1992; Anderson, 2012).

The next chapter delivers a comprehensive literature review on Black students' experiences in schooling and education. The chapter will set the stage for a deeper understanding of the study's focus and contributing to a more nuanced exploration of the challenges and inequities faced by Black male students and school exclusions and expulsions.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review acknowledged that anti-Blackness in schooling reflected and reinforced broader societal structures of anti-Black racism which reflect the state (Sojoyner, 2013, 2017). Sojoyner (2013, 2017) and Maynard (2017) critically examined the systemic impact of anti-Black racism on Black males in schooling and education and their work highlighted the systemic barriers resulting from entrenched racial biases perpetuated through anti-Blackness. Sojoyner (2017) traced the historical roots of anti-Black practices, demonstrating how educational policies had consistently worked to criminalize Black youth. This criminalization was not merely incidental but a deliberate strategy to maintain racial hierarchies (Sojoyner, 2017).

Sojoyner's (2013, 2017) and Maynard's (2017) scholarship called for transformative justice that centres Black students' experiences and actively dismantles the anti-Blackness within state structures. Systemic barriers and entrenched racial biases detailed by Sojoyner (2013, 2017) and Maynard (2017) contextualize the participants' experiences in this study, illustrating that their expulsions are part of a broader pattern of institutionalized anti-Black racism within the state.

In reviewing the literature for this study, themes emerge on how schooling supports the process of becoming Black through anti-Blackness which includes the negation of innocence for Black males, biased assumptions about Black masculinity and deficit labels resulting in ongoing school exclusions. This chapter further discusses research on the impact of punishments and the criminalization of Black males and their schooling outcomes.

The Social Construction of Becoming Black in Schooling

Roots of white supremacy underpin the schooling system, and Black males, mainly, are rarely provided recourse after they are punished (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Codjoe, 2001; Dei, 1997; Yon, 1994). Fanon (1952) theorized that the ontology of Blackness is the result of white supremacy as "[t]he Black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man" (Fanon, 1952, p. 90). The concept of Blackness can only thrive when in tension with the virtuousness of whiteness (Fanon, 1952).

Blackness is created through the racialized identity of European colonial subjugation, which has shaped the colonizer and the colonized, and through this process of colonization, the Black body has been subjugated to degrading and dehumanizing perceptions that have and continue to permeate all aspects of existence (Fanon, 1952). Blackness is associated with feelings of being lesser-than-white, which have been and are internalized by Black people. This internalization of the social construction of Blackness sustains white supremacy. The socio-political process of Black racialization in schooling is put into motion the moment a Black child enters the school space. Implicit actions that normalize whiteness and anti-Blackness include not listening or asking for student voice, setting low expectations, determining who should be streamed, and labeling students as having learning disabilities. Explicit actions involve harsher punishments, suspensions, expulsions, and school exclusions (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Ferguson's (2001) longitude study highlighted that becoming Black begins from the moment a student enters schooling, where anti-Black labels, assumptions, and stereotypes define and continue redefining Black children, particularly Black male students. Her three-year observational study of elementary-aged Black students exposed how anti-Black racism, especially towards Black males, became part of the daily functioning of schooling and

considered normal for students and staff. School staff, non-Black students, and Black students all considered it normal and casual to see Black children, particularly Black males, excluded from school due to punishments. Ferguson's (2001) study highlighted that Black male students not only resisted racist and restrictive school practices, but also understood the process of becoming Black in school by evaluating the anti-Black actions and motivations of their treatment from staff

Codjoe's (2001) study also illustrated that schooling continues to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Black students, especially Black males, who experience more alienation, sanctions, and the reiteration of anti-Black negative assumptions exacerbated by their resistance to anti-Blackness (p. 95). In Codjoe's (2001) study, he analyzed the experiences of Black students who had completed high school but had reported that their schooling experiences were mired with overt and covert anti-Black racism. Anti-Black racism experiences occurred even when they followed school rules (Codjoe, 2001).

The study found that anti-Black racism presented itself among peers and teaching staff, and anti-Black stereotypes resulted in harsher punishments for Black students, a lack of overall school support, and staff having low expectations of them (Codjoe, 2001). His study further noted that the school curriculum did not represent Black identities. The hidden curriculum is taught in schools through the actions and words of school staff, the way they interact with students, and the way they maintain the school or classroom culture that supports white values, beliefs, norms, and culture (Yon, 1994).

Dei, Holmes, Mazzuca, McIsaac, and Campbell (1995) distinguished between a student's Black identity and anti-Black racism processes inherent in the educational system. The latter contributed to Black students becoming Black, which has a socio-political relationship with their racialized identity (p. 241). In their three-year study, they interviewed Black youths who had left

school and looked at how these Black students negotiated, reconstructed, and renegotiated Blackness in educational spaces. They concluded that schools socially construct and politically produce racial identity. Dei and James (1998) further noted that while intersectionalities of race, gender, abilities, and class are impactful, race continues to be the most salient factor in how educational systems treat Black students and how they negotiate and navigate educational spaces. As a result of becoming Black, anti-Blackness is naturalized through the control, alienation, and disengagement of Black students (Dei & James, 1998). Dei and James (1998) maintained that becoming Black in educational spaces is an insidious process that begins at the start of a Black child's schooling.

In his doctoral study, Ibrahim (1998) furthered the understanding of becoming Black in schooling. Similar to Fanon (1952) and James & Dei (1998), Ibrahim's (1998) study posited that becoming Black is not only socially and politically constructed but also that it is altered by geography and history. His study illustrated that in "the 'new' Canadian context, African students discovered that, given their Blackness, they were already imagined, constructed, and treated as Blacks" (p. 281). This Black construction resulted from the white gaze (Fanon, 1952), which viewed Blackness through negative and deficit assumptions (Codjoe, 2001; Dei & James, 1998; Fanon, 1952; Ibrahim, 1998). The process of being racialized as Black led individuals to become racially conscious of their Blackness from a white perspective (Ibrahim, 1998).

Regardless of the country of origin in Africa, the participants in Ibrahim's (1998) study originated from Africa and spoke about how they, within the Canadian schooling system, were defined through the lens of anti-Black stereotypes, biases, and assumptions. The participants discussed having to prove their competence and redefine their African identities often to distinguish themselves from the schooling constructs of anti-Blackness (Ibrahim, 1998). The

participants talked about how they had no choice but to have their identities reconstructed through the processes of becoming Black in school, which included deficits in imagined Blackness, self-identification, and the erasure of their African identities (Ibrahim, 1998).

Analyzing the experiences of expelled Black males indicates that despite placing anti-racism language into school expulsion policy and procedures, anti-Black racism continues to exclude Black students through staff actions and practices. There are potent expectations for Black males in school to perform correctly, knowing that if they falter, the sanctions will be swifter and harsher than for white students (Ferguson, 2001; Maynard, 2017). Wacquant (2001), echoing Ferguson (2001) in her study, exploring the segregation of punished Black students in schools through the ghettoization of spaces, such as expulsion programs were designated for Black children. hooks (1992) insisted that the segregation of Black bodies would continue unless the negative images and representations of Blackness and Black people retreat from deficit-based ideologies.

White Gaze: Amplifying Becoming Black

Fanon (1952) referred to this process of Black racialization as the white gaze. The white gaze constructs schooling normality for students through a lens of white supremacy, thereby upholding white hegemony in education (Fanon, 1952). For hooks (1992), Blackness is associated with feelings of being 'lesser-than-white,' which are internalized by Black people. This lesser-than-white reminds me of Fanon's (1952) description about being a Black man in France: "[s]in is Black as virtue is white...I am guilty. I don't know what of, but I know I'm a wretch" (p. 118). Fanon (1952) discussed that when whiteness others Blackness, Black people internalize this othering and can only see themselves through the white gaze, which regards Blackness as negative and problematic. The imagined Black body is consumed with negative

assumptions, resulting in self-hatred, which exacerbates punitive actions toward Black people. Such actions and imaginations mirror how Black people see themselves and how others see Black people (Fanon, 1952).

Colonization and anti-Black racism sustain dehumanizing experiences for Black people, perpetuated by the white gaze (Fanon, 1952). Deep-rooted anti-Black racism within social systems incessantly reinforces the Black body's continual perpetuation of non-being, and policies and procedures justify whiteness re-enacting this non-being (Fanon, 1952). Non-being denies a Black person their humanity, dignity, rights, and access to the joys of life (Fanon, 1952). A pivotal observation from Fanon (1952) is that a Black person cannot escape from their skin, even when the Black person may align with whiteness. Fanon (1952) argued that a Black person cannot alienate themselves and become white, as whiteness will never let Blackness be afforded the rights of whiteness. Owusu-Bempah (2017), McCready (2007), and Crichlow (2014) all discuss differing aspects of the enduring dehumanization of Black males through non-being in social systems such as education, social housing, and the criminal justice system.

The non-being of Blackness provides an ontology of Black people where white is good and Black is bad (Fanon, 1952). Fanon (1952) contends that living in this white world, Black males learn to move their bodies with deliberation and that their bodies are controlled yet ignored. Black experiences are annulled by whiteness due to the sustenance and re-creation of negative biases and stereotypes through anti-Blackness. Fanon (1952) also maintained that whites have no regrets or second thoughts about imprisoning Black male bodies. Therefore, justifications for violence and alienation against Black bodies are considered appropriate and commonplace (Fanon, 1952; hooks, 1994). Fanon (1952) wrote:

I was responsible for not only my body but also my race and ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself and discovered my Blackness, my ethnic features; it was deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, my ethnic features, racial stigmas, and slave traders (p. 92).

Black Males and Innocence

Annamma (2015) looked at how whiteness as property sustained racism for young, racialized females who were incarcerated, finding, "[i]t is clear that whiteness as property protected the intangible benefit of innocence. Those without the protection of innocence are subject to suspicion, surveillance, and incarceration" (p. 298). As discussed in the previous section, in schooling, Blackness is the antithesis of innocence, which remains an intangible property right reserved for whites. Studies have shown that Black students who lack rights to innocence are more often presumed guilty (Crichlow, 2014; Maynard, 2017). Innocence, therefore, is an intangible and unattainable right for Blacks. Hooks (2004) and Bernstein (2011) have both discussed that Black children are not loved by society in general, like white children are loved. For example, white children are seen as needing support and care when misbehaving, whereas Black students are seen as having deficits requiring exclusions and punishments. In her book, *We Real Cool-Black Men and Masculinity* (2004) hooks asks:

This is a culture that does not love Black males: they are not loved by white men, white women, Black women, girls, or boys. Moreover, especially, Black men do not love themselves. How could they? How could they be expected to love, surrounded by envy, desire, and hate? (hooks, 2004, ix).

Bernstein (2011) discussed the construction of Black versus white children in America, finding that children's innocence was socially constructed through a Christian and white lens. Looking at how the innocence of children is socially constructed by analyzing children's toys, books, images, and discourse, Bernstein (2011) posited these items as negatively stigmatizing Blackness and sustained only whiteness as innocent. Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, and DiTomasso's (2010) study added to the understanding of the social construction of race

(whiteness in particular) and found that Black male children, in comparison to their white counterparts, are perceived as less innocent by educators. Such perceptions led to more punitive actions toward them. This study also found that Black boys are adultified in comparison to their white peers

[b]lack children are less likely to be afforded the full essence of childhood and its definitional protections. As a result, Black boys were more likely to be seen as older as and more responsible for their actions than White boys (Goff et al., 2010, p. 539).

They concluded that the daily systemic violence Black males experience denies them the sanctuary of childhood (Goff et al., 2010). Annamma's (2015) study also applies here, as the negative stereotypes and labels of the participants were cemented by their teachers as they navigated through schooling. Although Annamma's (2015) study focused on the intersection of the female gender with Blackness, the outcome of Annamma's (2015) research is relevant to this study. Interviewing teachers, Annamma (2015) studied how the intersections of gender (female), race, and disability contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline. However, the sample size was small, and the study's outcomes were significant.

Annamma (2015) employed Critical Race Theory and Disability as the analytical tool and this study illustrated that racialized girls are more likely to be excluded from school because of their race. This is made worse by teachers' having negative attitudes and perpetuating negative, which leads to the denial of innocence even when teachers say they want to build relationships with students (Annamma, 2015). Further, this study indicated that even with best intentions, teachers' actions continued to exclude racialized female students from educational resources due to negative perceptions of student abilities (Annamma, 2015). According to Annamma (2015), such teacher actions, rather than disrupting carceral-like actions to punish female students, contributed to strengthening the school-to-prison pipeline.

These research outcomes were also discussed by Maynard (2017), who noted that negating Black innocence in education supports white hegemony (p. 201). Maynard (2017) examined the innocent assumptions about white children, who need care, support, and help, in contrast to Black children, who are seen as being older, more violent, and individually blamed for their poverty, substance use/abuse, and criminality. Maynard (2017) further discussed that not only are Black children (Black boys in particular) not provided the same protections of childhood as white children, but they are also seen as dangerous. She observed anti-Blackness is exacerbated by the media, such as the Toronto Police Services who advise the public that the gun violence in Toronto is gang-related and juxtaposing such announcements with pictures of Black males (Maynard, 2017). Such actions contribute to the sustenance and exacerbation of anti-Blackness in the state (Sojoyner, 2013, 2017; Maynard, 2017).

Black Males and Masculinity

Negative biases, assumptions, a lack of innocence, and expectations of violence are all part of the process of becoming Black, and when these factors intersect with gender (male), Blackness also perpetuates white male superiority (Hooks, 1984; James, 2012). Both Hooks (1984) and James (2012) posited that Black males constantly struggle to align with the social construction of dominant maleness, while also experiencing constant flux as negative anti-Black stereotypes and biases shape their identity. Hooks (2004) stated that the white supremacist patriarchal society aligns strength with being masculine. However, when Black males demonstrate their strength, they face brutal punishment, subjugation, and stigmatization due to their racialized masculinity (Hooks, 2004, p. 46). Their "resultant performance of masculinity is the performance of at-riskness as defined, understood, and legislated" (James, 2012, p 470).

In James' (2012) study, this performance of at-risk resulted in school disengagement due to elevated levels of sanctions for Black males. In contrast, hooks (2004) discussed how violent acts committed by white males are pathologized as anomalies and as individual acts of violence that do not apply to all white males. Both hooks (2004) and Collins (2004) describe how negative stereotypes impact Black males' progress in education. Black males continue to be regarded as less compassionate, accused of making deliberate negative behaviours, and not worthy of restorative practices, only deserving of punishments and exclusions and according to studies conducted by Owusu-Bempah (2017), hooks (2004), and Collins (2004), the perception of Black males remains unchanged.

hooks (2004) also spoke about how the creativity and spirit of Black males are suppressed as teachers, social workers, and probation officers advise Black males to play the game. Playing the game tells Black males to accept white hegemonic ideologies as pragmatic, accept racist discourse in schooling and education which underpin Black males to maintain composure, control their reactions, minimize emotional responses to avoid inevitable sanctions (hooks, 2004). Any deviation from the ideal behaviour expected of Black males leads to increased fears of violence, harsher punishments, segregation, and the belief that their actions show they are unable to follow school rules and need to be excluded to protect other non-Black students (Noguera, 2003; 2012; Hooks, 2004).

In her essays, hooks (2004) described how Black bodies are seen as weapons by systems such as education, and as a result, hyper-surveillance is in place to control and supervise Black male bodies. Such acts of surveillance are subjugated by white supremacy with deeply rooted histories of slavery, control, and domination by white society (hooks, 2004, p. 53). Black males are excluded and segregated from participating in the "imperialistic white-supremacist

capitalistic patriarchy, which prevents them from having access to socially acceptable positions of power and dominance...claiming their patriarchal manhood, through socially unacceptable channels" (hooks, 2004, p.54). These sentiments are further echoed by Collins (2004):

In the current context of commodified Black popular culture, the value attached to physical strength, sexuality, and violence becomes reconfigured in the context of the new racism. In some cases, the physical strength, aggressiveness, and sexuality thought to reside in Black men's bodies generate admiration, whereas, in others, these qualities garner fear (p. 153).

Overreactions, punitive sanctions, and segregation are the outcomes when Black male bodies are regarded as weapons that need to be appeased, controlled, and fixed (hooks, 2004; Collins, 2004; Wacquant, 2002). Such perceptions encourage assumptions that Black males are stronger and have a higher propensity for and inclination toward violence, cultivating the perception that Black males need to be feared (hooks, 2004). Wilson and Rule (2016) completed a study comparing perceptions of the inclination toward violence of similar-sized Black and white males. Their research reinforced that the white participants perceived Black males as more threatening and needing more force than their white counterparts (Wilson & Rule, 2016; Goff et al., 2010; Maynard, 2017; Bell, 2004).

Knowing that past and current literature has demonstrated the stigma of hyper-masculinity among Black males, we cannot ignore how perceptions of these factor in decision-making for Black male students to be excluded from schooling. McCready (2007) discussed the need for educational spaces open to multiple masculinities. The study revealed that not only race and gender impact Black males, but also other intersectionalities that challenge hegemonic masculinity. Gender identity affects masculinities, and it is "...constantly being built, negotiated and maintained" (McCready, 2007, p. 19) to impact the educational marginalization of Black males further.

Owusu-Bempah (2017) discussed the processes of dehumanizing Black males within the criminal justice system. His research and discussion extend to the educational system. Owusu-Bampha (2017) cited a study that claimed the association of Black people with animals, such as apes, indicated that dehumanizing Black people was not only associated with racial prejudice but was deeply rooted in our social structures. Owusu-Bampha (2017) cited Paterson (1997, pp. 39-40), who commented that "[b]lack find themselves outside the 'broader moral company' and subjected to slow and fast violence" (Paterson, in Owusu-Bampha, 2017, p. 29). In addition, Crichlow (2014) discussed how negative stereotypes, such as dangers, contribute to the imprisonment of Black males, with the aim of containing, monitoring, and controlling them.

Owusu-Bempah (2017) also discussed Smith's (2011) suggestion that dehumanization included seeing a target group as having lower intelligence, lack of empathy, lack of morality, animal-like, and not deserving of compassion. When target groups are dehumanized, they are seen as being outside the "universe of obligation" (Fein, 1979 in Owusu-Bampha, 2017). They are not privy to being seen or heard; they are segregated and treated with less care and compassion. In addition, Crichlow (2014) discussed how negative stereotypes, such as dangers, contribute to the imprisonment of Black males, with the aim of containing, monitoring, and controlling them. Such negative labeling views Black male bodies as dangerous weapons, necessitating their suppression and justifying harsher punishments and school exclusions (Crichlow, 2014).

Protecting white innocence continually establishes the subjugation of Blackness, reinforcing the weaponization of whiteness. Whiteness asserts its entitlement by displaying anger, demanding retaliation, feigning fear, and ultimately exposing white fragility (Dillard, 2020). Whiteness tends to focus on disciplining individual instances of racism, which overlooks

the broader need to recognize and dismantle systemic whiteness. This approach creates the false impression that anti-Blackness is uncommon and limited to isolated incidents (Dillard, 2020). Policies, procedures, and laws in education, particularly for Black males, continue to weaponize whiteness to assume Black guilt.

School Experiences of Black Males

The literature reveals themes such as the dynamics between students and teachers and the application of anti-Black labels. These topics will be explored further in the following discussion.

Student and Teacher Relationships

Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, and Shic (2016) studied the implicit biases of early childhood educators by evaluating their eye movements to indicate which children they watched intensively. During the game, the participants were shown videos of white and other racialized students. This study found that the staff, regardless of race, watched the Black male students more intently and with more scrutiny than students from other races (Gilliam et al., 2016). The study also revealed that black boys experienced more frequent removals from school spaces due to misbehaviour than any other racial group (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Dei and James (1998) recommended that same-race teachers could better support black student needs and prioritize more representation of varying races in education to address the persistent over-surveillance of Black children in schools. However, Gilliam et al. (2016) research refuted this recommendation, as their study found Black teachers had higher behavioural standards for Black boys and recommended harsher punishments for misbehaviour than their white counterparts.

Their study contemplated that this outcome could have resulted from Black teachers having higher expectations of Black students, knowing educational systems push Black students to the margins, and that following school rules was imperative for this not to occur (Gilliam et al., 2016). Additionally, white teachers had lower behavioural expectations and expected poor behaviour from Black children. The researchers hypothesized this was due to the white teachers' complacency in internalizing negative biases and assumptions about Black male students and therefore assessing their misbehaviours harshly (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Studies have shown that low expectations of Black males in education result in long-term educational disengagement (Codjoe, 2006; James & Turner, 2017). Furthermore, the Gilliam et al. (2016) study provided teachers with family information about Black children to determine if such information would affect how Black and non-Black teachers treated Black children. Providing this information, the study found that Black teachers showed more empathy for Black children whose families had experienced hardships, whereas, knowing such family information, white teachers had heightened awareness of the misbehaviours of Black children, especially Black males (Gilliam et al., 2016).

The findings revealed that teachers of all races, who were aware of Black students' family situations, more often negatively exaggerated the misbehaviours of Black male students, regarding their transgressions as more severe (Gilliam et al., 2016). Similar to the trauma-informed approach, socio-emotional learning approaches, self-regulation, mindful and restorative approaches and deficit-based information about Black students result in greater surveillance and concerns about Black males' misbehaviours (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Trust Building Between Student-Teacher

McCready and Soloway (2010) found trust-building between students and teachers was pertinent, especially with Black students who were perceived to have challenging behaviours.

Teachers that depended on policies and advocated for such behaviours to be fixed by professionals resulted in an increased disengagement between Black students and their teachers (McCready & Soloway, 2010). Schooling spaces should allow school staff to use more adaptive relationship-building skills, creating a sense of belonging to demonstrate they care about Black students (McCready & Soloway, 2010).

The study maintained that developing cultural awareness among school staff about Black students and their families is needed, as this would critically challenge white hegemony by focusing on how anti-Blackness establishes teaching attitudes, practices, and actions (McCready & Soloway, 2010; James, 2012). Learning from Black students' lived experiences can support more equitable treatment of Black students in schooling (James, 2012). James (2019) further noted that parental involvement created advocacy for the students, such as strategies to address inequities and the participation of Black parents helped them navigate and cope with such oppressive structural factors.

Pomeroy (1999) studied excluded and expelled British youth who attended an exclusion program titled Behavioural Support Services (BSS). The study found that poor teacher-student relationships were the most prominent factors resulting in school exclusions and expulsions from school (Pomeroy, 1999). Pomeroy (1999) interviewed thirteen students, two females and eleven males, for this study, with the majority identifying as African-Caribbean and biracial (with one Black identifying parent) and a small number of white students. Factors that inhibited the creation of a positive student-teacher relationship were that the youth reported that teachers would humiliate them in the presence of their peers, not pay attention to their needs, or appear uninterested in finding out about what support they needed and what their passions were (Pomeroy, 1999).

The participants in this study discussed that their teachers failed to support and help them with their academic work, and they felt racism was a significant factor in how they were treated (Pomeroy, 1999). The students in the study indicated that these adverse experiences in school with teachers negatively shaped their self-images and impacted their self-esteem, self-worth, and overall desire to engage positively with schooling (Pomeroy, 1999). Contrary to their schooling experiences, both pre-exclusion and during expulsion; the study indicated that the youth had positive experiences in the BSS program, reporting they felt the teaching staff genuinely cared for them, wanted to create a relationship with them, listened to them, used humour, and engaged with them in a strengths-based manner (Pomeroy, 1999).

Many students reported that in the regular school system, they were unable to share power with their teachers, which often led to intense power struggles, ultimately leading to their exclusion and expulsion from school (Pomeroy, 1999). Many students reported that in the regular school system, they were unable to share power with their teachers, which often led to intense power struggles, ultimately leading to their exclusion and expulsion from school (Pomeroy, 1999). Further, in the BSS program, the youth reported having autonomy and responsibility and feeling respected by staff, prompting them to engage more than they did in their previous schools (Pomeroy, 1999).

James and Turner's (2017) study found that strong and caring relationships with school staff are central to engaging non-white students in school. In their study, they completed five sessions with school boards in the Greater Toronto Area, which included the York Region District School Board, the Peel District School Board, and the Durham District School Board. These sessions included parents, community members, students, school staff, and Black university and college students, and 80% of this study identified as Black (James & Turner,

2017). The students in this study reported that negative biases and assumptions about Black students by school staff maintained anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism, resulting in the school climates not being conducive to positive engagement (James & Turner, 2017). The study corroborated outcomes from earlier studies by Pomeroy (1999) and McCready and Soloway (2010), finding that the need to listen and incorporate the voices and lived experiences of Black students and families was essential to countering white supremacy (James & Turner, 2017).

Jean-Pierre and Parris (2018) conducted a 20 year research analysis of alternative discipline models and programs in schooling that would counter zero-tolerance sanctions, as they believed such policies were ineffective in altering negative school behaviours. Their study found that positive student-staff relationships made students more intensely engaged in school (Jean-Pierre & Parris, 2018). Like Pomeroy (1999), they found nurturing staff who demonstrated care for their students, which was foundational to the students' retention and engagement in learning. Creating environments that support academics equally with relationship building fosters spaces of inclusion and positive mental wellness (Pomeroy, 1999; Jean-Pierre & Parris, 2018).

Staff who collaborate and engage with a meaningful curriculum where student voices and lived experiences are heard and incorporated into the learning allow creative and exciting learning opportunities that mesh students' strengths, desires, and needs, especially for racialized students (Jean-Pierre & Parris, 2018). Creating relationships with students, even if they may leave schooling for several reasons, still builds a connection to schooling spaces for future learning considerations (Pomeroy, 1999; Jean-Pierre & Parris, 2018). In their research analysis, Jean-Pierre and Parris (2018) found, in particular, that creating such school spaces increases the opportunity to learn, decreasing the actual or perception of unequal resource allocations and punitive measures.

Anti-Black Labels

Several scholars (e.g., James, 2012; Canfield et al., 2014) pointed out the prevalence and impact of anti-Black labels and stereotyping of Black males.

Troublemaker Labels Increasing At-Riskness

Black males being labeled as troublemakers in schooling entrenches the pathway to being defined as at-risk for any future negative and violent behaviours. This was explored by James (2012) by conducting a literature review of the impact at-risk labels and stereotypes have on Black males in education; James (2012) suggested that Black males receive labels such as "immigrants, fatherless, athletic, underachievers and troublemakers are often categorized as "at-risk" students and whose abilities and behaviours are attributed to their culture" (p. 467).

The internalization of such negative labels by school staff and Black male students results in school disengagement, which then becomes further exacerbated by exclusionary school practices (Clanfield et al., 2014; Gaymes San Vincente, 2016; James, 2012). How Black males receive at-risk labels indicates that the school environment reflects oppressive anti-Black stereotypes, biases, and assumptions, which then become norms within school spaces (James, 2012). Further, the at-risk labels conferred on Black males in schooling are blamed on individual factors, such as having low emotional control, anger management issues, lack of parental control, and negative reputations, as opposed to how the system is accountable for cultivating these labels (James, 2012).

Through Ferguson's (2001) research, the stigma of being labeled a troublemaker begins early for Black children. The troublemaker label justifies the pathway to the at-risk labels as they become normalized in schooling, primarily when a Black student dissents and resists, as such actions are assessed as "disruptive, troublesome and disorderly" (Ferguson, 2001, p. 480). Black

males' reactions to systemic anti-Blackness are viewed as behavioural issues. These behaviours are regarded as needing to be fixed and the onus being on the Black child, and not the school's accountability in perpetuating and maintaining anti-Blackness and role in criminalizing Black male students (Ferguson, 2001). Behavioural concerns with Black students, particularly male students, support ideologies of at-risk and troublemakers with the outcomes of segregating Black males through increasing surveillance, streaming and school exclusions (Wortley & Tanner, 2004; Wortley & Marshall, 2005; James, 2012). Plus, racially profiling neighbourhoods of Black students with an anti-Blackness lens intensifies the at-risk labels with fears of gangs, violence, and weapons (Crichlow, 2014; Ferguson, 2001; James, 2012).

Ferguson's (2001) study further suggested that labels of bad boy and at-risk were affixed to Black males when they did not conform to school rules, fueling the negative labels bestowed on Black students, particularly Black male students. Ferguson (2001) also found that Black male students, subjected to such negative labels, developed relationships with other Black students due to their shared experiences of exclusion and anti-Black labels. The study found that Black males used humour to deal with anti-Black subjectivities and, even at a young age, were aware that they were treated more harshly than their non-Black peers (Ferguson, 2001). Ferguson (2001) pointed out that in her three-year study of observing the exclusions of Black students, they were not passive in the schooling processes of exclusion. Even when placed in a segregated classroom for negatively labeled behaviours, they exhibited agency and resistance.

These isolated classrooms where Black students were contained, regardless of their agency and resistance, reinforced white supremacy and the racial hierarchy of white hegemony. In these segregated spaces, Black children are forgotten, erased, and become invisible (Ferguson, 2001). James (2015) interviewed two Black males who had completed post-secondary education.

Their life experiences indicated that, for Black students, regardless of individual aspirations, motivations, and diligence, "the reality is, it is primarily individuals who have access to and are conversant with 'mainstream' social and cultural capital which will ultimately realize their high aspirations through hard work, determination, and brains" (James, 2015, p. 349).

James (2015) posited that the combination of gender, race, and neoliberalism within school policies and procedures can promote labels of at-risk for Black males, who often receive schooling sanctions and exclusions. James (2015) and studies from Raby (2012) and Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, and Tobin (2011) indicate that punitive and exclusionary measures, such as zero-tolerance ideologies, have not demonstrated any evidence that these measures enhance school engagement and trust building for Black students, particularly for Black male students.

Zirkel and Johnson's study (2016) argued that a positive Black identity indicated a solid connection to educational success and well-being. However, they questioned why the institution of education continued to reframe strong Black identity and culture as *dangerous* and *damaged*, which hindered any progress in supporting a strong Black identity for students (Zirkel & Johnson, 2016). Shujaa (1993) indicated that school was noted as being the place to fix or modify the misbehaviours of Black males, which further aggravated the socio-political assumptions and labels of anti-Blackness, such as Black that Black male students are hostile, violent, lazy, and underachievers.

Such labels, Shujaa (1993) argued, were used as justifications as to why Black students cannot succeed in the current system of schooling and require segregation. Anti-Black systemic structures in schooling support staff anti-Black actions and are responsible for negative stereotypes, biases, and assumptions that impede engagement, Black excellence, and exacerbate

school exclusions. Shujaa (1993) suggested that without Black communities taking over schooling for their children, schooling would be forever entrenched with white supremacy, as the continuation of anti-Black racism supports the ongoing establishment and power of whiteness. The sustenance of anti-Blackness through negative labels by school staff continues to indicate that Black students will be more often subjected to prolonged disengagement from schooling (Dei et al., 1998; Skiba et al., 2011; Salole & Abdulle, 2015).

Black Males and Surveillance

Educational statistics in Canada and the United States indicate that Black males are the largest population of students excluded from schooling through expulsions (Dei, 1997; James, 2012; Balfanz, Byrnes & Fox, 2012). Furthermore, media news about Black males and violence further maintains these biases, resulting in more educational surveillance and punitive measures such as school exclusions, which conflate school violence with Blackness (Dei & James, 1998; Dei, 2018). As a result, Black males experience more punishments that do not include support and restorative practices to address misbehaviours (Ferguson, 2001; Maynard, 2017; James, 2012). These expulsion programs, which are on the margins of schooling, house students who are also on the margins. Many staff members do not know about these programs that troublesome students attend, as many of the expelled students do not return to mainstream schools. Out of sight, out of mind—expelled students are the educationally forgotten; they are undesirable and silenced; hence, in the precarious spaces of expulsion programs, accountability for anti-Black racism is negated by the system (Kurniawati, 2012).

Anti-violence policies dictate that principals must consider mitigating factors about the student before deciding on a suspension and when recommending an expulsion. Discipline and punishment are not synonymous. Discipline aligns with restorative practices looking at the student's strengths and needs and supports the student to change behaviours while internalizing

accepted social behaviours (Shram, 2010, p. 687). Punishment is a philosophy of right and wrong with no areas of fluidity, no opportunities for learning, compassion, regret, change, or rehabilitation (Shram, 2010). Zero tolerance is linked to supporting a punishment model as it posits segregating such students, excluding them from other students, activities, and events, having them criminally charged, and overall rendering them unseen in education (Shram, 2010, p. 687).

Foucault (1977) used Bentham's Panopticon to describe how the power of conformity flows through social institutions, such as education. The Panopticon is imagined as a tower at the centre of a building that is assumed to be able to watch everyone, although the people being watched cannot determine who, how long, when, and where they are being observed (Foucault, 1977). As a result of such constant perceived and known surveillance, institutions determine the modes of movement that are acceptable and, hence, normalized for Black individuals.

Through such institutional control, people learn to maneuver and navigate social spaces through the internalization of accepted dominant norms, and their movements are incessantly assessed, watched, and threatened with punishments, prompting social control (Foucault, 1977). As discussed, Black males in school are monitored more than non-Black students (Dei et al., 1995; Dei, 1997; James, 2012; James & Turner, 2017; James, 2019) and when they are expelled and enter the expulsion program, they are again watched even more intensely (Kurniawati, 2012; Sibblis, 2014).

Pathway to the Criminal Justice System

Once experiences of suspensions and expulsions begin to accumulate in their educational journeys, their arrival in an expulsion program becomes inevitable (Balfanz et al., 2012). Being expelled exclusively supports the fusion of Black males with the criminal justice system (Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Further, zero-tolerance-type ideologies that support expulsion policies,

procedures, and practices tend to solidify this union between school disengagement and the criminal justice system (Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Skiba and Noam's (2001) study analyzed thirty-seven states in America and found that zero-tolerance educational policies were ineffective. Such policies, which are perceived as combating violence, produced more suspensions and expulsions for Black males (Skiba & Noam, 2001). As a result, these students had higher rates of non-graduation and lower school engagement and re-engagement, creating a pipeline to the criminal justice system (Skiba & Noam, 2001). This conduit between schooling and the criminal justice system is strengthened due to the strict expectations the students must adhere to in expulsion programs. Furthermore, the lifting of an expulsion is determined solely through expulsion program staff assessments (Teklu, 2012).

The conflation of Black males with school violence establishes anti-Black negative biases and assumptions with outcomes that can result in the prisonization of Black students, which is further strengthened when they experience expulsions (Crichlow, 2014; hooks, 1994; Collins, 2004). Prisonization is a process where social structures, such as education, mimic prison life for Black bodies, and these systems, through their actions, policies, and procedures, carve pathways and sustain jail-like schooling environments (Crichlow, 2014, p. 120). These systems, as a result of anti-Black racism and Black masculinity, exacerbate risk-taking behaviours and violence, according to Crichlow (2014). Black bodies are then excluded, and, similar to a prison, Black students become accustomed to living in spaces that are heavily controlled and receive more surveillance and continual sanctions.

Black males are "burdened by the injuries of class, racism, and masculinity, some, despite the prospects of being 'roses in concrete', lose sight of their human worth and become caught in a web of constructed hopelessness about their futures" (Crichlow, 2014, p. 249). Crichlow (2014),

Dei et al. (1995), Dei (1997), and James (2012) have all discussed how over-discipline, low educational expectations, over-policing, and over-monitoring of Black males in schools and within the community have prepared Black males for a future in jail cells rather than for upward social mobility. Through this process, Black males are de-masculinized in white patriarchal society. Prisonized Black males react to hegemonic whiteness and biases of Black masculinity by internalizing these harmful anti-Black norms, which, in turn, affirm negative stereotypes about Blackness (Crichlow, 2014).

In 2000, Advancement Project and The Civil Rights Project, in the United States, discovered that schools were not only suspending and expelling many Black students for minor infractions due to zero-tolerance policies but also requiring schools to contact the police for such minor infractions. In their research, children and youth were excluded from educational spaces and criminally charged for bringing nail cutters, scissors, and toy guns to school, sharing cough drops, and swearing at teachers (Advancement Project and The Civil Rights Project, 2000, p. v). Such findings of severe sanctions were similar to those of Solomon and Ogbu (1992), who looked at the construction of Blackness, the self-concept of Black students, as well as their resistance to the systemic anti-Black racism they experienced in school. Their study also revealed that the educational exclusions Black students' experienced were inconsistent and often for mundane misbehaviours rather than for severe violent acts.

Noguera (2003) cited numerous students who were subjected to ongoing and severe punishments in school spaces. According to Noguera's (2003) study, Black males will incorporate punishments as self-fulfilling prophecies where breaking the cycle of anti-social behaviours becomes difficult in and out of school. Black males realize school is not going to provide pathways for social mobility, especially in the form of economic mobility; therefore,

although they are aware of the consequences of breaking school rules, Black males are prepared for the outcomes as they find alternative ways to gain the power and opportunities they have not been provided in the schooling (Noguera, 2003). Wun (2014) also found that Black males in educational spaces continue to be described with labels such as 'violent,' 'criminal,' 'dangerous,' 'angry,' and 'uncontrollable' sentiments by staff and other school staff. For prisonization to be an option for Black students, Crichlow (2014) concluded "[t]hat a 'prison' isn't confined to the acres where correctional facilities stand; instead, carceral geography (and its logic) spread far beyond the confines of the prison walls" (p. 125).

Teklu (2012) discussed Rankin's article titled *Suspended Sentences: Forging a School-to-Prison Pipeline* (Toronto Star, 2009), which indicated that TDSB's high suspension and expulsion rates of Black male students increased the pathways to adult imprisonment. Ferguson (2001) noted that Black male students labeled at-risk or criminal, were bound to a future of failures and punishments (Ferguson, 2001, p. 2). These labels create fear to justify harsher punishments for Black males who are bestowed with a reputation for being violent. Ferguson (2001) observed that the power within educational systems creates, sustains, shapes, and controls social identity formation, which strongly impacts how Black children and youth socially construct their identities, albeit with the deficit of educational labels. Her study also demonstrated that Black boys, labeled as criminal, bad, and at-risk, negotiated their negative identities by forging resilient social relationships with other Black students. Such relationships were a way to cope in educational spaces that are known spaces of punishment for Black males (Ferguson, 2001; James, 2019).

Ferguson (2001) emphasized that while certain behaviours, such as talking back, may be considered typical in child and youth behaviour, Black males often face swift punishment and

deficit labels about their abilities when they dissent and challenge authority. She stated, "the entrenchment of docility is a preparation for adulthood where such racialization humiliates them and hence prepares them for submission within society", a white hegemonic society (Ferguson, 2001, p. 87). Black males are assessed to be more dangerous; therefore, any forms of physicality displayed by Black males are more visible to school officials (Ferguson, 2001; Maynard, 2017). Such assessments result in heightened responses and recommendations to exclude Black males as punishments (Ferguson, 2001). Black males who fight and are "bound for jail, have little to lose and everything to gain in using this form of rule-breaking as a way of making a name for themselves, gaining recognition and part of their masculinity" (Ferguson, 2001, p. 194).

The expulsion programs mirror carceral-like environments with structures of confined and segregated spaces. Their rules and goals demand full compliance with threats of not getting their expulsions lifted, which is the only way an expelled student can return to a high school. Staff practices intensify surveillance, focusing solely on assessing how expelled students adhere to program goals and expectations through the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP). Expelled students are denied access to school programs, sports, extracurricular activities, and resources as a result of their expulsion statuses.

In June 2015, an annual report, from the Canadian federal government's Office of the Correctional Investigator, indicated that since 2005, there has been a 69% increase in the incarceration of Black males in Canada, and "[t]he federal incarceration rate for Blacks is three times their representation rate in general society" (Sapers, 2015, p. 2). Prisonization of Black male bodies, which begins in jail-like school programs such as the expulsion programs, is evidenced in the state by the longer prison sentences for Black males', all of which result in fewer

chances of providing them with meaningful employment and educational opportunities (Crichlow, 2014, p. 242).

Black Students Resisting Anti-Black Racism in Schooling

In James' (2019) study, Black male participants reported they had heard anti-Black sentiments from teachers and students in school spaces. In some cases, teachers would not advise or support correcting behaviour but immediately resort to exclusionary punishments such as being asked to go to the office (James, 2019). As well, the study found that the student's perceptions of their schooling experiences in middle school included knowledge that some of their teachers were discriminatory, and they would warn one another about such experiences and be careful with that particular teacher. The participants created and shared group knowledge about anti-Black racism to protect each other (James, 2019). Situations of racial inequity were emotionally upsetting for some of the students in James' (2019) study, although they recognized that this is what they should expect from schooling. Like Ferguson's (2001) study, the positive relationships and engagement the Black students created with one another offered them opportunities to negotiate and navigate the marginalizations they faced.

The trauma-informed approach may cater to strengthening negative assumptions rooted in systemic anti-Black racism for the teachers unless the trauma-informed approach centres on asset-based and anti-Black racism (Codjoe, 2001; James, 2012). What is often quite salient in research about Black males in education are academic disengagements, failures, and punishments grounded in systemic racism, which can often undermine or erase the strengths and resilience of Black males who navigate anti-Black racism daily in educational systems (Ferguson, 2001; Codjoe, 2001). Understanding the experiences of school exclusions and black students, particularly black males, requires acknowledging the importance of student agency, advocacy, mentorship, and role models (Ferguson, 2001; Codjoe, 2001).

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), Howard (2008) studied the educational plight of Black male students from kindergarten to grade 12. In this study, Black males' lack of success in school was related to race and racism, which continued to play a dominant role in their underachievement and disengagement throughout their schooling journeys (Howard, 2008). In particular, the study revealed that persistent deficit-based data about Black males in education continued to sustain negative educational outcomes (Howard, 2008). While many studies about Black males in education often centralize deficit-based themes such as school exclusions, harsher discipline, and lower graduation rates, there is also a need to include narratives of resilience, strength, and assets (James, 2012).

Concluding Remarks

The literature review dissected prior research concerning the educational system's role in perpetuating the exclusion of Black males. It has elucidated how ingrained practices among school staff contribute to the normalization of this exclusionary process. Specifically, the review has shed light on how these practices deny innocence to Black male students, subject them to continuous school exclusions, foster negative reputations, and strain relationships with school staff. Moreover, it underscored how the education system reinforces the perception of Black males as inherently dangerous and violent, thus perpetuating biases that uphold white hegemony and the preservation of becoming Black in school.

Furthermore, the literature review brought to the forefront the persistence of punitive measures, such as heightened surveillance and classroom exclusions, targeting Black males. It emphasized the detrimental impact of negative biases surrounding Black masculinity, coupled with the denial of Black innocence, which exacerbates the association of Black males with

violence. Consequently, Black males face disproportionately harsher punishments within the education system compared to their counterparts from other racial groups.

Moving forward, the next chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study, firmly rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concept of whiteness as property.

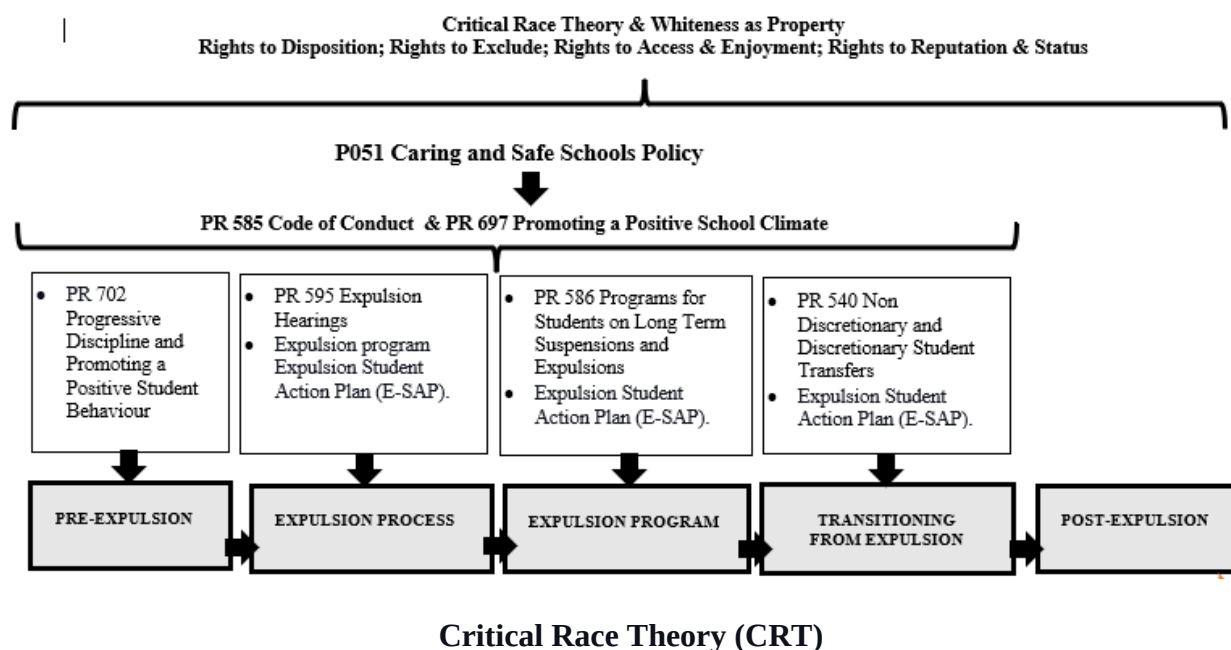
CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is essential for elucidating phenomena and offering interpretation and analysis of a study's findings and conclusions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p.17). Therefore, for this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concept of whiteness as property were pivotal in reframing and understanding the complexities of anti-Blackness in exclusionary school practices. These frameworks provided a robust interpretive lens for examining how anti-Blackness manifested and shaped the participants' exclusionary experiences and outcomes. My choice of using CRT and whiteness as property were instrumental in uncovering the deep-rooted anti-Blackness within schooling as this study captures the direct experiences of participants who experienced many exclusionary school practices, including expulsions.

Figure 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the TDSB expulsion and suspension policy, procedures, and associated documents at each stage of school exclusion. The framework is structured around three key documents that inform procedures at various stages: the TDSB Caring and Safe Policy (P051), the TDSB Code of Conduct, and the procedures for Promoting a Positive School Climate. These documents serve as scaffolding throughout the pre-expulsion phase, the expulsion process itself, the time spent in the expulsion program, and the transition out of the program. Figure 2 is designed to be read from top to bottom, highlighting the sequential flow of policy and procedures within the context of TDSB's approach to school expulsions. The theoretical framework, CRT, and the concept of whiteness as property are at the forefront of the evaluation process to determine the impact of the expulsion policy and procedures on participants.

Figure 2: School Exclusions: TDSB Policy and Procedures and the Theoretical Framework



CRT emerged during the 1980s as a response to criticisms within Critical Legal Studies (CLS). During this period, Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman conducted critical analyses of legal cases involving non-white individuals within CLS. Their findings underscored disparities in legal outcomes, revealing that non-white individuals were more frequently found guilty of crimes and subjected to harsher punishments. Yosso (2005) criticized CLS for failing to integrate the experiences and perspectives of racialized and marginalized communities. Although CLS was successful in questioning the state's prevailing legal ideologies and revealing the law's contribution to societal inequalities, it frequently neglected to address the crucial role of race (Yosso, 2005). CLS often ignored the specific ways in which legal structures perpetuate racial hierarchies, limiting its capacity to fully understand and address the experiences of non-white individuals (Yosso, 2005).

Derrick Bell (1995), recognized as the founder of CRT, and Alan Freeman established key strategies for social reform that CRT adopted, emphasizing the necessity of tackling racial

matters in legal studies (Bell, 1995). Yosso (2005) noted that Bell and Freeman were instrumental in introducing a race-focused critique to CLS, challenging the supposed neutrality of the state's law and highlighting its role in perpetuating racial inequities.

Bell (1995) emphasized that in its examinations, CRT prioritized race and racism, arguing that racism is a fundamental and enduring aspect of American and state society. CRT values the experiential knowledge of non-white individuals, contrasting with CLS's tendency to prioritize abstract legal theories over the lived experiences of racialized communities (Bell, 1995).

Additionally, CRT embraced an intersectional approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of race with other social identities such as class, gender, and sexuality, thereby providing a more comprehensive analysis of social justice issues (Crenshaw, 1991). By incorporating the principles of CRT, Bell (1995) and then Yosso (2005) advocated for a more inclusive and effective approach to understanding and challenging the state's inequities. CRT's commitment to social justice and its activist orientation centre non-white voices in the analysis and transformation of societal structures (Yosso, 2005). Crichlow (2015) further argued that the centrality of whiteness complicates unraveling the impact of anti-Black racism, given that anti-Blackness and whiteness are deeply embedded, intertwined, and insidious within social systems.

In contrast, CRT developed as an analytical approach, positing that racism is not random or solely the result of individual actions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It recognized that racism is foundational and intricately woven into the political, social, and economic fabric of society, rendering it seemingly ordinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT also addresses the absence of voices, experiences, and narratives of non-white individuals, particularly their lived experiences of systemic racism, from analyses (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Collins, 1990; Yosso, 2005).

Applying CRT to interpret and analyze the data in this study explored how anti-Black racism intersected with gender, permeating the educational experiences of expelled Black males. The core tenets of CRT, including storytelling, interest convergence, white hegemony, the social construction of race, race evasion, and intersectionality, played a crucial role in supporting the interpretation and analysis of the collected data from the participants in this study.

Storytelling

Gathering narratives from participants was instrumental in this study, offering valuable insights into the silenced voices of expelled Black males and shedding light on the consequences of all-school board expulsion. Storytelling by marginalized and racialized individuals serves as a potent tool to expose entrenched dominant ideologies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Merriweather, Talmadge & Manglitz, 2016). Merriweather, Talmadge, and Manglitz (2016) underscored that storytelling provides counter-narratives that challenge prevailing discourses at individual, institutional, and systemic levels. While stories can give you new ideas, they can also decentre whiteness and unleash the transformative power of stories when you look at them critically through institutional and systemic epistemologies, especially those that focus on anti-racism and whiteness (Merriweather, Talmadge, & Manglitz, 2016, p. 249).

Moreover, storytelling, extending beyond individual levels, can aid in dismantling anti-Black racism and other oppressive barriers at systemic levels (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The participants' narratives in this study uncovered profound insights into the unique experiences of expelled Black male students, often overlooked in educational settings and even among non-Black groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 9). The narratives revealed how, despite the expulsion program being predominantly occupied by Black males, anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism persisted into adulthood as they navigated whiteness and white hegemony.

Race Evasion

Race evasion subscribes to neoliberal ideologies that deny the influence of race on outcomes, reinforcing the enduring power dynamics of whiteness and racial hierarchies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Feagin & Elias, 2013; Maynard, 2017). Embedded within these ideologies is the belief in individual agency and autonomy, dismissing the impact of racial hierarchies on decision-making processes (Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Expulsion legislation, policies, and procedures often reflect these neoliberal ideologies, enforcing actions without acknowledging systemic racial biases, assumptions, and stereotypes, thus perpetuating implicit racism, particularly anti-Black racism, within the system.

A race-evasive perspective attributes blame to non-white and Black bodies through policies and procedures disguised as neutral, compelling conformity to whiteness. Aligned with race evasion, neoliberal philosophies intensify surveillance and hold individuals personally responsible, disregarding the system's contribution to preserving oppressive structures (Salole & Abdulle, 2015; Wacquant, 2009). The effects of race evasion are clear in data that is separated by race. For example, Black communities have higher rates of incarceration (Statistics Canada, 2022), poor housing (Statistics Canada, 2020), unemployment (Statistics Canada, 2020), and unfairly more suspensions and expulsions from school (TDSB 2019–20).

Within the systemic racial hierarchy, Blackness remains relegated to the bottom, impeding safety, opportunities, and social progress for Black individuals (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Feagin & Elias, 2013; Maynard, 2017). Anti-Black stereotypes, assumptions, and biases in schooling persist under a race evasive approach, concealing educators' preconceived notions about learning needs and interests while enabling the illusion of neutrality and meritocracy. Black students often face exclusion from educational opportunities when they challenge these seemingly neutral policies and procedures (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Race evasion overlooks the complicity of white and non-Black individuals in sustaining and exacerbating anti-Black racism (Prashad, 2000; Wun, 2014). By juxtaposing the TDSB expulsion policies and procedures with participant data, adopting a race-evasive approach facilitated a deeper examination, questioning the purported objectivity, meritocracy, and neutrality inherent in expulsion experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989), within the framework of Black feminist thought, introduced the concept of intersectionality, which recognizes and addresses the overlapping oppressive factors that shape individuals' experiences. Gouws (2017) argued that intersectionality emerged as a critique of essentialism within the feminist movement, which predominantly focused on the experiences and perspectives of white women, marginalizing non-white women and those with disabilities. According to Crenshaw (1989), discrimination is not solely based on one factor, such as race; rather, multiple aspects, including sex, cis-heteropatriarchy, misogynoir, class, sexual identity, ethnicity, and disability, intersect to exacerbate inequalities simultaneously. According to Crenshaw (1989), an intersectional analysis is necessary to fully understand the distinct forms of oppression that emerge at intersections

Collins (1990) further asserted that social, political, and economic oppressive systems intersect with gender, age, abilities, race, ethnicity, immigration status, class, and sexual identity, collectively contributing to a structure of domination. This matrix of domination necessitates an intersectional approach when analyzing data, as each oppressive factor operates simultaneously, influencing how individuals are treated, perceive themselves, and navigate society. Statistics from the past and present show that students are more likely to be suspended or expelled when

their race, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status are all considered (TDSB, 2019–20; Zheng & De Jesus, 2017; Bhattacharjee, 2003).

Aligned with the perspectives of Crenshaw (1989), Delgado (1995), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Collins (1990) the concept of intersectionality has been expanded to emphasize that oppressive intersecting identities result in social consequences such as voicelessness, lack of agency, and restricted access to resources within systems. Recognizing and unpacking these layers of oppression is essential for fostering critical dialogues that transcend simplistic Black-and-white racial binaries (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Collins, 1990).

Bhattacharjee (2003), along with members of racialized communities, underscored the significance of school boards collecting race-based data following the implementation of the Safe Schools Act (SSA). Data on educational exceptionalities for suspended and expelled students revealed a disproportionate identification of Black students in exclusionary programs such as expulsion programs (Bhattacharjee, 2003). The TDSB started keeping track of students who were suspended or expelled in 2005, and while overall suspensions and expulsions were going down, data from 2005 to 2019 showed that being Black, living in a low-income household, having learning disabilities, being a cisgender male, and having multiple suspensions all increased the likelihood of being expelled. This is in line with many studies that have been done in Canada over the past 30 years (James & Turner, 2017; McMurtry & Curling, 2008; Maynard, 2017).

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence, initially conceived by Bell (1980), as theorized by Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Milner, Pearman, and McGee (2013), suggests that white individuals advocate for racial justice only when their interests, power, and socio-political leverage align

with the maintenance of white dominance. Therefore indicating that genuine antiracist changes only occur when they serve the interests of the dominant group (Bell, 1980). Bell (1980) had argued that achieving racial equality remains elusive, as social structures, including education, tend to change merely to pacify racialized groups without transformative impact, thereby perpetuating racial biases and upholding white dominance.

Bell (1992) contended that this lack of progress within systems is due to white hegemony and that "[t]his 'racial bonding' by whites means that Black rights and interests are always vulnerable to diminishment if not to outright destruction. The willingness of whites over time to respond to racial rallying cry explains Blacks' continuing subordinate status" (p. 9). As a result, interest convergence indicates that systemic accountability with racism is rendered complete as long as it appears the system is addressing racism, which is usually noted in anti-racism language being added to system and organizational policies and procedures (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Even within education, white hegemonic ideologies, driven by values of success, dominate and align with the model minority stereotype, impacting non-white and Black students. King (2003) argued that aligning with white hegemonic ideologies indicated "...we care more about our comfort and things that make us comfortable—property, prestige, power, appearance, safety" (p. 163), over disrupting power and embracing diverse voices. As an example, Black Lives Matter challenged our systems and socio-political culture, asking us to support transformational changes that disrupt and interrupt white supremacy and shake the status quo that affords comforts that sustain anti-Black racism. These comforts bring us closer to whiteness, and we must recognize the systemic roots of anti-Blackness to critically confront whiteness and its consequences.

Driver (2011) argued that interest convergence might undermine racial progress in America. He acknowledged the foundational nature of anti-Black racism but argued that America has progressed with race relations, particularly between Black and white relations. Howard and Flenbaugh (2011) countered Driver's argument, asserting that even with Black individuals in positions of power, race continues to matter significantly. Dismissing race as a vital variable in the educational experiences of Black males would neglect the understanding of how schooling actions preserve anti-Blackness. They emphasized that interest convergence sustains white supremacy in systems, even with Black leaders within social systems.

Howard and Flenbaugh (2011) argued that

[r]ace has always mattered and continues to matter, even with the election of a Black man as president. We assert that any attempt to dismiss or overlook race as a significant variable in the ways that Black males experience school further marginalizes a group that has experienced numerous forms of racism and exclusion (p. 106).

Asserting that anti-Blackness is not a significant element in the educational journeys of Black males would negate the pertinent understanding of how schooling actions and practices manifest anti-Blackness (Howard & Flenbaugh, 2011). Driver's (2011) argument neglected to consider the ongoing and pervasive anti-Black racism in systems, especially when intersected with gender, continues to systemically produce marginalizing outcomes for Black males.

The voices of the most marginalized group in education, Black males, need to be heard and listened to, as such information facilitates challenging anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism that supports exclusionary school policies and procedures. Howard and Flenbaugh's (2011) narratives and stories of Black individuals in positions of leadership reflect the continued experiences of anti-Black racism throughout their trajectories, regardless of their social position (See also DasGupta, Shandal, Shadd & Segal, 2020).

The Social Construction of Race

The concept of the social construction of race delves beyond the superficial differences in skin tone, highlighting the intricate mechanisms through which anti-Black racism is perpetuated. It emphasizes that racial distinctions are not inherent but are rather shaped and reinforced by societal norms and power dynamics (Wun, 2014; Bourke, 2014; Prashad, 2000; Shah & chanicka, 2023). Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory (RFT) challenges the notion of race as a fixed, immutable characteristic. Instead, it posits that race is a dynamic, fluid concept shaped by historical and social contexts, particularly through processes of colonization that entrenched white supremacy (Harris, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1986, 1994). Building upon this framework, Feagin and Elias (2013) introduced Systemic Racial Theory (SRT), which delves deeper into the systemic nature of whiteness and anti-Blackness within social structures.

Racial Formation Theory Versus Systemic Racial Theory

Systemic Racial Theory (SRT) provided a significant critique and expansion on the ideas presented in Racial Formation Theory (RFT) first developed in 1986. RFT, posited by Omi and Winant (1986, 1994), emphasized the social construction and evolution of racial categories, highlighting their dynamic and historically contingent nature. RFT suggests that racial identity is shaped by social, economic, and political forces and that individuals internalize racial identity through interactions at both micro and macro levels (Omi & Winant, 1986, 1994). CRT aligns with RFT by interrogating how race and racism are embedded in social structures and power dynamics. CRT centres race and racism, challenges dominant ideologies, and values the experiential knowledge of racialized communities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The concept of whiteness as property underscores how whiteness confers institutionalized advantages, aligning

with RFT's examination of social and institutional forces shaping racial identities (Omi & Winant, 1986, 1994).

Feagin and Elias (2013) introduced Systemic Racial Theory (SRT) to delve deeper into the systemic nature of whiteness and anti-Blackness within social structures. SRT highlights how racism is embedded in societal systems, examining how these systemic processes produce and maintain racial disparities. This perspective critiques RFT for its focus on individual and micro-level interactions, arguing that it overlooks the impact of resistant institutional racism and the entrenched nature of the white racial frame (Feagin & Elias, 2013). They and other critics have argued that RFT fails to recognize the central and dominant role of whiteness in racial oppression and the complexities within Black communities (Feagin & Elias, 2013; James & Turner, 2017).

In 2013 Omi and Winant responded to Feagin and Elias' SRT's assertion, arguing that SRT's focus on racism loses sight of the complexities of race and variations within racially defined groups. They suggest that race and racism exist not only because of white domination but also due to resistance and independent action by non-white individuals. This perspective emphasized that understanding the entrenchment of anti-Blackness in education requires acknowledging the social construction Blackness without undermining the complexities of Black communities (Wun, 2014; Bourke, 2014; Prashad, 2000; Shah & chanicka, 2023). Omi and Winant (2013) countered the SRT assertion by Feagin and Elias (2013), arguing that SRT focused

[s]o intensely on racism that they [Feagin & Elias] lose sight of the complexities of race and the variations among and within racially defined groups. In their 'systemic racism' account, the white racist rule is so comprehensive and absolute that the political power and agency of people of color virtually disappear (p. 961).

Omi and Winant's (2013) counter perspective sees SRT as rigid and fails to consider the social and political changes resulting from resistance by anti-racists of all races supporting anti-racism. They conclude that race and racism exist not only because of white domination but also due to resistance and independent action by non-white individuals (Omi & Winant, 2013, 2015).

Combining RFT, SRT, CRT, and the concept of whiteness as property provided a robust framework for analyzing how anti-Blackness manifested in the participants' narratives of exclusionary school practices. RFT established the basis for understanding the dynamic nature of racial categories, while SRT enhanced this by highlighting the systemic embeddedness of racism (Feagin & Elias, 2013). CRT deepened this comprehension by focusing on systemic racism, the maintenance of white hegemony, the impacts of intersectionality of gender and race, and storytelling. Whiteness as property elucidated the institutionalization of white privileges in school staff practices through anti-Blackness. This comprehensive approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the impact of anti-Blackness by encompassing both the construction of racial identities and the systemic processes, through the examination of expulsion-related documents, that perpetuated racial inequities.

In conclusion, the integrated framework combining RFT, CRT, whiteness as property, and SRT offered a comprehensive lens for analyzing participants' narratives in this study. This approach provided a nuanced understanding of the systemic and institutionalized nature of anti-Black racism, the ways whiteness continued to be privileged, and the complex dynamics of anti-Blackness in shaping participants' racial identities and exclusionary experiences in schooling. Recognizing the social construction of race and its complexities within Black communities was essential for understanding the entrenchment of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism in the participants' experiences.

The next section will delve into whiteness and the resulting anti-Blackness in education and schooling.

White Hegemony

The entrenched presence of whiteness in social systems, notably within education, serves as a foundation for the perpetuation of anti-Blackness and the maintenance of white hegemony. This establishes whiteness as an imperceptible force consistently working to render Black males invisible and absent, often manifested through school expulsions (Sibblis, 2014). Whiteness, however, extends beyond the confines of laws, policies, and procedures. It is actively enacted through the behaviours and practices of individuals and systemic cultures, contributing to the sustenance and reproduction of anti-Blackness (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Harris, 1993).

Examining the enduring influence of whiteness within systems, Cabrera (2018) argued that the normality of white hegemony enables whiteness to maintain its privileged standing by existing as an unmarked, invisible, yet socially dominant category (p. 222). This white invisibility serves as a mechanism for controlling individuals and sustaining the power of whiteness. Harris (1993) observed that whiteness upholds hegemony, at first through laws, which then establish policies, procedures, and practices, defining and affirming critical aspects of identity (who is considered white), privilege (benefits accruing to that status), and property (legal entitlements arising from that status) (p. 1725).

Both anti-Black racism and white hegemony are interdependent, each reliant on the existence of the other to thrive (Pinar, 1993). This interrelation underscores a pivotal point: the eradication of anti-Black racism would dismantle the power structure of white hegemony (Pinar, 1993; Baldwin, 1955). As outlined in RFT, the perpetuation of whiteness necessitates the incorporation of racial common sense or hegemonic racial grammar, as described by Bonilla-

Silva (2012). This grammar is intricately woven into both individual and systemic social interactions, serving to normalize the standards of white supremacy across various social events and transactions, thereby providing individuals with a shared understanding and explanation of their surrounding world (Bonilla-Silva, 2012, p. 1). Bonilla-Silva (2012) emphasized the impact for Black students of being immersed in whiteness, through racial grammar, as it is an integral aspect of the hidden curriculum in schooling practices and, hence, education. As described by Bonilla-Silva (2012), implicit biases and stereotypes that teachers may hold about students' academic abilities based on their race are an educational example of racial grammar. For instance, if a teacher assumes that Black students are inherently less academically capable than their white counterparts, this bias can manifest in differential treatment, such as lower expectations, less encouragement, or fewer opportunities for advanced coursework, ultimately affecting the academic outcomes of Black students. Bonilla-Silva (2012) noted

[r]acial grammar plays a pivotal role in shaping our perceptions and feelings about race-related matters. I contend that racial grammar acts as a distillate of racial ideology and, consequently, of white supremacy (p. 1).

Within educational spaces, the normalization of excluding Black males sustains white supremacy while fortifying anti-Blackness. Bonilla-Silva (2012) explores how power and privilege are generated through the unseen influence of whiteness, supporting race-evasive ideologies and solidifying routine anti-Blackness actions. These everyday actions, part of the racial grammar we are continually exposed to, manifest in school spaces, leading to the exclusion of Black students, particularly Black males. Such exclusions become ingrained in our daily experiences within the educational system, influencing what we see, feel, and hear about Black males. Bonilla-Silva (2012) asserted that "racial grammar shapes whites' racial cognitions, too,

and more deeply than it does folks of colour. More importantly, the racial grammar prevents whites from truly empathizing with people of colour" (Bonilla-Silva, 2012, p. 11).

Examining the enduring impact of whiteness on the educational experiences of Black males, Gillborn (2005) underscored the persistence of anti-Blackness despite increased anti-racist discourse in education and schooling (Maynard, 2017; James & Turner, 2017). Implicit practices rooted in whiteness within social systems, particularly education, prevail, with a notable reluctance to acknowledge racism (Gillborn, 2005). The defense of whiteness often involves redirecting attention to non-white individuals, attributing their challenges to perceived shortcomings or a purported need for non-white individuals to exert greater effort to fix their behaviours. Moreover, white norms dictate educational policies and procedures, casting any deviations from white norms as 'othered' thereby perpetuating systemic racism and minimizing racist histories and legacies wanting, for example, Black people to move past slavery and accept that they are 'lucky they live here' type of ideologies which further stall anti-racism systemic transformations (Gillborn, 2005, p.488).

Although some white people are making space for non-white people and fighting for change, such work has still not progressed in dismantling systemic anti-Black racism within social systems and institutions (Feagin & Elias, 2013). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) had conferred that in research "the intellectual salience [of centring race] has not been systematically employed in the analysis of educational inequality" (p. 50). Evaluating the social oppression from the perspective of anti-Black racism, as shifting the focus from anti-Blackness to other forms of oppression overlooks and downplays the deeply ingrained history of anti-Blackness in systems like education (Deliofsky & Kitossa, 2013). It is worth noting that 70 years ago, Baldwin (1955) further challenged the issue with whiteness embracing Blackness as

[t]he idea of white supremacy rests simply on the fact that white men are the creators of civilization (the present civilization, which is the only one that matters; all previous civilizations are simply contributions to our own) and are therefore civilization's guardians and defenders. Thus it was impossible for Americans to accept the Black man as one of themselves, for to do so was to jeopardize their status as white men (p. 6).

Maynard (2017) emphasized that anti-Black racism is not only an American issue but is also embedded in Canadian social systems, reinforcing the power of whiteness. Wun's (2014) study found that amongst other students of colour, negative assumptions and biases about Black students were profound, and that they believed Black students deserved harsher punishments. Her study illustrated that although non-Black racialized groups experience racism, anti-Black racism is amplified by both white and non-Black groups within education (Wun, 2014). Wun (2014) also argued that although anti-Blackness should not be the only form of oppression considered, evaluated, and studied, it should be integral to studies of CRT.

White hegemony provides rights to possession of property and rights to defining and creating cultural practices, procedures, and policies, which are valuable iterations of whiteness (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Harris (2020) maintains that when underpinning anti-Blackness in research "[w]hiteness as property undergirds a white subjectivity that is induced to reject any sense of connection to Blackness. Instead, white subjectivity is constructed in antagonism to, and perceives itself as victim of, Blackness" (p. 7). Bell (1992) argued that the sustenance of white supremacy will continue as long as Black people are at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, as

[w]hites are rallied on the basis of racial pride and patriotism to accept their often-lowly lot in life, and encouraged to vent their frustration by opposing any serious advancement by Blacks. Crucial to this situation is the unstated understanding by the mass of whites that they will accept large disparities in economic opportunity in respect to other whites as long as they have a priority over Blacks and other people of color for access to the few opportunities available (p. 9).

White hegemony relies on cultural and discursive practices that "serve to naturalize unequal social relations along the color line...which normalizes inequity and racist practices that,

in turn, serve to leave systemic white supremacy uninterrogated and unchallenged" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 223).

The Property Functions of Whiteness: Tangible and Intangible Property

Whiteness as a function of property refers to the social, economic, and political advantages afforded to individuals simply by virtue of being white and perceived as white in a racialized society (Harris, 1993). This framework posits that whiteness operates as a form of valuable property that grants privileges, opportunities, and advantages to those who possess it and who are in proximity to it (Harris, 1993). These privileges are deeply ingrained within societal structures and institutions, including education, housing, employment, and the legal system. Moreover, whiteness as property also involves the maintenance of power dynamics, where white individuals and those in close proximity to whiteness benefit from the subjugation and marginalization of non-white racial groups (Harris, 1993). It emphasizes how whiteness is not merely an identity but a set of privileges and entitlements that are actively protected and reinforced within social systems, perpetuating systemic racism and inequality (Harris, 1993). Racialized groups can affirm the privileges of whiteness, as the brown model minority discussion in Chapter One highlights.

Four components illuminate how the functional power of whiteness as property reinforces white hegemony while perpetuating anti-Black racism within systems. Whiteness as property includes actions planned by school staff that are anti-Black. These actions are based on the rights of disposition, the absolute right to exclude, the right to use and enjoy, and the right to reputation and status property (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recognized the transferability of disposition rights and proposed that staff actions and practices can confer whiteness on specific students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Property rights encompass economic, social,

and political dominance, which support white hegemony. Harris (1993) explained that “the law has accorded “holders” of whiteness [intangible property] the same privileges and benefits accorded holders of other types of property [tangible property]” (p. 1731). These rights can be both intangible and tangible. Tangible property is the physical ownership of land, objects, and items (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

Intangible property rights encompass the authority to determine the significance of knowledge and information, along with the provision of dignity, support, and resources (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). These rights also encompass opportunities and choices, representation in social, political, and economic spheres, and relationships with influential individuals (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Pertinent intangible rights involve intergenerational access to powerful connections and control over who can have positive reputations (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). With tangible rights, Harris (1993) argued

[t]he liberal view of property is that it includes the exclusive rights of possession, use, and disposition. When examined against this limited view, whiteness conforms to the general contours of property. It may be a “bad” form of property, but it is property nonetheless (p. 1731).

Social benefits accrue with property ownership rather than through individual and civil rights (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 53). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) relayed how property relates to education both implicitly, by critically asking who creates and owns the intellectual property of the curriculum, and explicitly, by observing how schools in high-income neighbourhoods have better access to varied course selections, science laboratories, fully equipped gymnasiums, varied sports and extracurriculars, and school trips and activities. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) hence concluded that whiteness is the “ultimate property” (p. 58).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), incorporating Harris's (1993) whiteness as property tenets, illustrated how race and property specifically intersect in schooling to maintain, produce and re-produce racial inequities. Their study foundationally asserted that race has a profound impact on inequities, that race and property intersect, and that society is based on property rights versus human rights. They argued that theorizing the concept of race does not recognize racial complexities, as race often simply comes down to skin tone, whereas theorizing concepts of *class* and *gender* acknowledge more complexities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

With whiteness as the pinnacle, these hierarchical categories determine who is worthy of rights, enjoyment, use, and access to opportunities and resources, a positive reputation, status, and inclusion (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) found that when looking at the educational problems Black students face, their race becomes a major factor contributing to these problems, while also considering how race and class interact. The next section addresses the tenets that support the schooling processes of becoming Black.

White Hegemony and the Social Construction of Becoming Black

According to Harris (1993), white hegemony and the social construction of becoming Black are reflected in the following rights: the rights of disposition, the rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property rights, and the absolute right to exclude.

Rights to Disposition

Harris (1993) explained that the rights of disposition are wielded through power and privilege, offering social, political, and economic access and opportunities while prioritizing safety. These intangible rights, bestowed upon students who conform to whiteness, not only uphold white hegemony, but also provide those students with a sense of safety and support. The rights of disposition are granted to students aligning with conformity and white norms, encompassing aspects like speech, dress, and distinct concepts of knowledge (Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). This alignment determines which students receive rewards, inclusion, opportunities, recognition, and representation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Harris (1993) discussed that the rights of disposition are enacted through power and privilege for social, political, and economic access and opportunities and centring safety. School staff often characterize Black students with negative stereotypes, such as disruptiveness and aggression, depriving them of their rights to disposition (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

Rights to Use and Enjoyment

Access to and enjoyment of school resources includes having extensive use of school property such as the school grounds, school tutoring, extracurricular activities, attending school functions, being part of school activities, and engaging with peers and school staff (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Quite recently, Harris (2020) discussed how anti-Black racism exacerbated perilous pandemic conditions for Black people while white people, although impacted, "[i]n contrast to their Black counterparts...enjoyed the ability to move through public space" (p. 7). Alignment with whiteness provides a student with the rights to use and enjoy resources within school.

Reputation and Status Property Rights

The concept of whiteness and proximity to whiteness carries substantial reputational currency both within society and educational settings (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Harris (1993) observed that a Black individual perceived as white would escape harm, underscoring the influential power of whiteness. Conversely, being perceived as Black while being white could lead to offense, undermining one's positive reputation and status (Harris, 1993). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) expanded on this notion, discussing how reputation and status are safeguarded in slander laws, equating damage to reputation with

damage to property. In the context of the school system, negative reputations and stereotypes are meticulously constructed for Black students, particularly males, to uphold the sanctity of whiteness.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) delved into the concepts of reputation and status property rights, which elucidate how educational systems and societal structures confer or withhold privileges based on racial identity. Reputation rights highlight the importance of social standing and its vulnerability to racial biases and stereotypes. This dynamic results in marginalized racial groups, such as Black students, facing prejudiced assumptions and perceptions that shape their reputations, subsequently influencing their educational experiences and opportunities.

On the other hand, status property rights denote the historical and structural advantages that certain racial groups, predominantly white individuals and communities, enjoy due to systemic factors. These advantages come from a history of privilege and unequal distribution of resources (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). They interact with gender and class to affect how well black students and other disadvantaged groups do in school (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Expelled Black male students often bear negative reputations burdened with stereotypes and biases, depicting them as violent, aggressive, and disinterested in schooling (James, 2012; Maynard, 2017). Additionally, factors such as neighbourhood stereotypes, special educational labels, past expulsion records, and school disciplinary histories contribute to shaping the status and reputation of Black, particularly male, students and preserving anti-Blackness within educational institutions (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The Absolute Right to Exclude

The legacy of segregated schooling, a state-sanctioned form of exclusion, lingers in Canadian history, with the last Black segregated school closing in 1983 (Maynard, 2017).

Despite the closure, the segregation of Black students endures through disproportionate expulsions, suspensions, streaming, and ongoing exclusions as disciplinary measures (Maynard, 2017; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Shah and Grimaldos (2022) emphasize the collective approval required from those possessing whiteness, such as school staff and principals, in implementing exclusionary disciplinary measures, further entrenches the exclusion of Black students from educational spaces. Ironically, their power and authority over student exclusions could also extend to student inclusions.

Concluding Remarks

Employing CRT and the principles of whiteness as property provided a robust analytical framework for dissecting the data collected from the fifteen participants. Their narratives elucidated that early schooling serves as the initiation point for the process of becoming Black, further entrenching the power, privilege, and hegemony of whiteness within schooling spaces. White hegemony's influence on the participants is evident in their narratives that illustrate intersectionality, race evasion, and interest convergence.

The participants' experiences, spanning from pre-expulsion to expulsion and post-expulsion phases, vividly portrayed the pervasive impact of white supremacy. This study's examination unveiled how anti-Blackness, intricately woven into their schooling experiences, persisted through expulsion policies and procedures. These policies and procedures not only uphold but actively preserve anti-Black racism against Black males. The following chapter will delve into the methods and methodology employed to gather and analyze the data for this study.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In chapter five, I describe the research design and methodology used to collect the data. I begin with a discussion of critical phenomenology, which is the methodology employed in this study.

Critical Phenomenology

A study's methodological framework serves as its architectural foundation, guiding how data is explained and interpreted (Manan, 1997; Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019). From an epistemological perspective, I acknowledge how my positionality influenced the study and its methodological choices. I was aware, through ongoing reflections, that my relationship with the participants and understanding of their experiences would also be shaped by my own perspectives, positionality and broader social, cultural, and institutional connections, all influenced by my position within the system that expelled the participants.

My ontological stance recognized that anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism are systemic and structural forces shaping the experiences of Black male students. I view reality as a construct influenced by my positionality, the power dynamics and inequalities perpetuated through my interactions, systemic factors and power dynamics. This guided my choice of a methodological framework that examined expulsions and manifestations of anti-Blackness within this broader context.

Participants' narratives reflected how institutional practices, policies, and procedures reinforced anti-Black biases and upheld whiteness as the normative standard through staff actions. This epistemological and ontological stance led me to focus on staff and systemic factors

impacting the schooling experiences of expelled Black male students, recognizing that their realities were shaped by broader social constructs beyond individual encounters.

Critical phenomenology was chosen as the methodological framework to explore these complexities and intersectionalities within schooling. This approach aligns with Tillman's (2002) advocacy for culturally responsive research that centres participant identities, offering "opportunities for collaboration, insider perspectives, reciprocity, and voice" (p. 3). Ahmed (2006) further supports this by demonstrating how critical phenomenology can elucidate the navigation and impact of racialized and intersected bodies within social spaces. Through this lens, expelled Black males are understood not as anomalies but as part of a broader phenomenon, revealing how their experiences are intertwined with meaning, power, and systemic inequities.

Critical phenomenology's qualitative nature allowed for flexibility and fluidity, facilitating an in-depth exploration of participants' subjectivities. This approach emphasized acknowledging and embracing subjectivity, fostering trust in research outcomes, and encouraging critical reflection on the researcher's positionality (Guenther, 2020). Establishing strong rapport with participants was essential to creating an environment conducive to open and flexible communication (Guenther, 2020; Ahmed, 2006). This commitment to transparency and reflexivity throughout the research process aligned with Guenther's (2020) advocacy for research that critically engaged with its social context and positionality.

Epistemologically, critical phenomenology facilitated the exploration of participants' thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and reflections, providing opportunities for collaboration and voice. This framework allowed me to be explorative and fluid during interviews, seeking clarification and striving for a deeper understanding of each participant's lived experiences while critically reflecting on my own assumptions and presuppositions (Brastalich, 2020; Neubauer, Witkop &

Varpio, 2019). This approach also required maintaining a critical and reflective perspective, strengthening my reflexivity throughout the study (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019; Manan, 1997; Pyett, 2003; Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017; Diefenbach, 2008). Pyett (2003) emphasized that reflective transparency enhanced the trustworthiness of research findings and interpretations.

By embracing a critical phenomenological framework, I was able to focus on the lived experiences of expelled Black males from their own perspectives, despite my own epistemological limitations. This approach shed light on how these individuals navigate and interpret their exclusionary schooling experiences and aimed to bring forward the voices of those often silenced and overlooked in educational data. Integrating my ontological and epistemological perspectives, with the critical phenomenological framework, allowed for a nuanced examination of the experiences of expelled Black males. Centring the narratives and adopting a reflexive approach, the study uncovered how everyday anti-Black staff actions perpetuated anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism, mirroring broader societal realities.

In summary this methodological framework enabled a thorough exploration of participants' subjectivities and highlighted the importance of reflecting on my positionality. The study sought to bridge the research gap on expelled Black male students. This approach helped me challenge my assumptions and biases by emphasizing the participants' voices and their agency throughout the study. It also encouraged me with my reflexivity, enabling me to critically examine the anti-Blackness within me which continues to shape my practice as a social worker and my current work within the TDSB.

Research Questions

This study probed into the perceptions of Black male students who had experienced all-school board expulsions, examining their experiences throughout the expulsion process, the expulsion program, and the subsequent impact of exclusionary schooling experiences on their educational goals and social opportunities post-expulsion. The specific research questions guiding this investigation, which will be taken up again in the discussion in Chapter Twelve, were:

1. What was the impact of expulsion-based policies and procedures? Moreover, what are the practices for the expelled Black youth?
2. What are participants' perceptions regarding their schooling experiences that resulted in their expulsion?
3. What were the participants' perceptions of their experiences in the expulsion program?
4. How has being expelled from high school and attending the expulsion program impacted their educational and social trajectories?

Site Selection

The participants were enrolled in the same expulsion program with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in Toronto's east end. Because of pandemic restrictions and a provincial lockdown between April and May 2021, in-person interviews with the participants were impossible. As a result, we conducted all interviews virtually through Google Meet. Given the novelty of virtual meetings at that time, I familiarized myself with the security features provided by my employer, TDSB, as TDSB had switched to all virtual platforms and was providing virtual security training to all staff for various platforms, including Google Meets. To ensure confidentiality, I implemented the following security measures: 1) Locking the meeting upon the

participant's entry and 2) Providing each participant with a unique Google Meet link, thereby preventing access by one participant to another's virtual meeting. The Google Meet links were conveniently transmitted by text to accommodate the participants' preference for using their cell phones for the interviews.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

I selected participants from an east-end TDSB site based on established relationships, maintaining connections even after their departure from the expulsion program and schooling. All participants in this study are adults who, during the interviews, had been out of the expulsion program for four to thirteen years. Given my familiarity with the participants, the sample was purposeful, aligning with Palinkas et al.'s (2015) approach. Further, for critical phenomenological studies, Patton (2002) supports purposeful sampling, emphasizing its utility when trust, developed through relationships, facilitates information gathering by minimizing barriers. Trust-building with students who experienced expulsions was evident, cultivated during their time in the expulsion program, and sustained beyond its conclusion. This dynamic fostered candid and seamless interactions during interviews and subsequent contacts between the participants and me.

I contacted 20 post-expelled Black males, initially through text messages using their cell phone numbers. The purpose of this initial contact was to invite them to participate in the study by inquiring if they were interested in learning more and, if so, asking for their email addresses. Fifteen participants responded and affirmed that they wanted to learn more about the study. Fourteen participants sent me their email addresses via text, with one participant stating that he did not have an email account. I sent an invitation to the study letter (Appendix C) to the fourteen respondents via email outlining the research and ethics. Following pandemic safety

measures, I met the one participant without email and provided him with the invitation to the study which I had printed.

All fifteen participants responded within two weeks of the initial email expressing interest, and the one participant I met in person affirmed his willingness to participate by texting me. Subsequently, through text messaging, I requested a suitable time and date for a phone conversation to delve deeper into the study with all fifteen respondents. Mindful of our established relationships, I assured the participants that their involvement would remain voluntary throughout the study and would not affect our connection, regardless of their level of participation. Most of the participants conveyed excitement about the study, expressing pride in my pursuit of higher education. Moreover, they appreciated the notion that the school board would learn about the emotional impact of their expulsion experiences.

Concerned about our longstanding relationship's potential influence, I feared participants could feel compelled to join the study. Throughout their post-expulsion years, my consistent contact involved checking on their well-being and linking them to community resources and programs upon request. Coordinating with the fifteen participants, we scheduled a phone conversation, during which I discussed the research and study questions, providing ample time for any queries. I reassured them that their decision to participate would not disrupt our established relationship. Emphasizing voluntariness, I emailed fourteen of the participants the informed consent form (Appendix E) and provided it, in person, to one of the participants. I revisited the consent form in each subsequent contact, ensuring they understood the freedom to decline questions or withdraw from the study without consequences.

In discussions with each participant, I clarified the study's purpose and my role as a graduate student, highlighting the distinction from my previous role as an expulsion program

social worker and current relationship. This distinction was reiterated throughout all meetings. Importantly, I underscored that I held no undue influence since they were no longer TDSB students.

Data collection commenced only after obtaining approval from York University's Research Ethics Board, with no requirement for TDSB's ethics approval or administrative consent, given the participants' status as former students, having been out of the TDSB between four to thirteen years (Appendix D). The Ethics Board at York University approved the procedures ensuring participants' informed consent, non-identifiability through the use of pseudonyms, confidentiality measures, and the right to refuse to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with. Participants were also granted the ability to withdraw from the study at any time using their preferred mode of communication, including text, phone call, email, or verbal communication, by reiterating the informed consent form (Appendix E) each time this writer had contact with them.

Participants

Speaking about systemic trauma can be silencing and distressing for some people, as traumatic educational experiences can begin from the moment a child enters schooling (Ferguson, 2001; Maynard, 2017). At the time of the interviews, the average age of the participants was 26 years old, with the oldest being 29 and the youngest being 23. The participants had been out of school for an average of eight years, with the longest being 13 years and the shortest being four years. I chose adult participants who had experienced an expulsion, as I hoped the time away from schooling would provide time to reflect critically on their experiences in school as they were no longer connected to TDSB and the expulsion program.

The participants all identified as Black, male, and cis-gendered, and all experienced an all-school board expulsion at the TDSB. Eight of the participants had their expulsions lifted, and

seven did not. At TDSB, two participants experienced two expulsions. One of the fifteen participants graduated with the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) from the TDSB, having experienced two all-school board expulsions. Of the two expelled twice, both participants had their first expulsions lifted, and then only one of the two had their second expulsion lifted.

Fourteen did not graduate high school. Fifteen years old was the average age of expulsion, with the average time spent in the expulsion program being 2.7 years. The average age of the participants who left the expulsion program and consequently stopped attending school was 17.9. None of the fifteen participants were in any other school during the interviews. Ten participants began their schooling careers in senior kindergarten, and five participants, who were newcomers to Canada as children, began in early elementary school between the grades of one and three.

Table 1 below shows information about the study participants and their expulsion statuses. There were no excluding factors included. Information includes the grade at which the participants entered the TDSB, their age during the interviews in the spring of 2021, and expulsion information, including information about graduation.

Table 1: *Description of the Participants*

**Newcomers*

Participant	Grade entered	Age During interview	Years out of School	Number of Expulsions	Age of Expulsion	Age of 2 nd Expulsion	1 st Expulsion Lifted	2 nd Expulsion Lifted	Left	Years in Expulsion Program	Graduated
*James	3	28	10	1	14	N/A	No	N/A	18	4	No
*Andrew	2	28	11	1	14	N/A	Yes	N/A	17	3	No
*Barry	2	24	6	1	17	N/A	No	N/A	18	1	No
*Shia	1	24	5	1	15	N/A	Yes	N/A	19	4	No
*Ben	3	28	11	2	17	17	Yes	No	17	<1	No
Omar	Sk	23	4	2	12	14	Yes	Yes	19	5	Yes
William	Sk	28	7	1	15	N/A	No	N/A	21	6	No
Anton	Sk	29	13	1	15	N/A	No	N/A	16	1	No
Jackson	Sk	25	7	1	16	N/A	Yes	N/A	18	2	No
Raymond	Sk	24	5	1	16	N/A	No	N/A	19	3	No
John	Sk	23	5	1	16	N/A	No	N/A	18	2	No
Daniel	Sk	27	10	1	15	N/A	Yes	N/A	17	2	No
Eric	Sk	26	10	1	15	N/A	No	N/A	16	1	No
Holland	Sk	29	9	1	14	N/A	Yes	N/A	20	6	No
Richard	Sk	27	11	1	15	N/A	Yes	N/A	16	1	No
Averages	N/A	26.2	8.3	1	15.1	N/A	7 – No / 8 – Yes	N/A	17.9	2.73 years	14-No / 1 yes

Data Collection

I collected the data in three phases. Phase one consisted of an exploration of relevant TDSB documents. In phase two, I conducted interviews with each of the fifteen participants (Table 1) and in phase three I conducted one post-interview with all of the participants.

Phase One: Expulsion Documents

For this study, I only used publicly available expulsion-related documents at the TDSB website, which did not require consent. The expulsion policy, procedures, and documents reviewed and examined with the data from the participant interviews include procedures PR 697 Promoting a Positive School Climate, PR 585, the Board Code of Conduct, and the policy P051, Caring and Safe Schools which are the overarching policies and procedures for all students, parents, and staff regarding behavioural expectations in schools. The pre-expulsion documents reviewed include PR 702 Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour and PR 697 Promoting a Positive School Climate. The expulsion process documents included PR 595 Expulsion Hearings, PR 702 Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour, and the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP). The expulsion program documents reviewed included PR 586 Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions and the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP), and PR 540 Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers was reviewed for transitioning out of the expulsion program.

Phase Two: Participant Interviews

As stated earlier, due to the pandemic and provincial safety measures, in-person interviews were not possible. Therefore, I conducted virtual interviews with all the participants. I created a personal Google account and generated the Google Meets link through it. I used my personal laptop to conduct each of the virtual interviews. To ensure their continuous consent and their freedom to stop and leave the interview and study at any time, I verbally went over the

consent at each meeting with the participants. In addition to the ongoing verbal consents, written I had emailed the informed consent forms to fourteen participants and hand-delivered to one and I collected all the signed informed consent forms within a few weeks of distribution (see Appendix E).

I audio-recorded the interviews with my personal cell phone as the participants did not want the Google Meet interviews to be recorded as they did not want their images to be displayed. I recorded my thoughts after each interview in a journal to capture my reflections and thoughts after each interview.

Initial Interviews

I developed the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix F) based on themes and concepts I identified in my review of the literature, grounded in critical phenomenology's theoretical framework, to capture the information that would capture the lived experiences of expelled Black male students. As the interviews were all virtual, using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix F) supported me in ensuring the integrity of the study's purpose and kept me focused on the information I wanted to obtain (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002, p. 727). The choice to use a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix F) allowed for fluidity and placed a priority on facilitating comfort and engagement with the participants.

On the virtual platform, we began the interviews by first catching up about how they and their families were doing, especially throughout the pandemic. Thirteen out of the fifteen had an electronic device, such as a laptop, that they were able to use for the interview, and two participants preferred to do the virtual interview on their cell phone via Google Meets. I had an

extra laptop, which I advised all the participants I could lend them for the interviews. All fifteen participants declined to borrow the laptop.

I offered all the participants a Wi-Fi hotspot stick for internet access and one of the fifteen participants requested the Wi-Fi hotspot because he had limited internet access at home. All the participants stated they were uncomfortable being recorded on the virtual platform with their images, although they all agreed to an audio recording of the interview. I took notes of any virtual physical cues, which, at times, were also captured through my journaling after each interview. Although, due to the virtual platform, assessing non-verbal cues during the interviews was challenging,.

The connections I share with participants are deeply meaningful to me. Following the completion of the interviews, I followed up by text, within a few days, with all the participants to personally thank them for their participation and these check-ins allowed me to see how they were feeling, especially after discussing potentially distressing experiences related to their expulsions. During these follow-ups, I offered guidance on community resources, particularly those affirming Black identities, and two of the participants requested community resources which I sent to them by email (Appendix G).

Pseudonyms

Initially, during their interviews, I had asked each of the participants to pick a pseudonym. Many of the participants did not initially want to pick a pseudonym, stating they preferred keeping their identity attached to a random participant number. Many of the participants expressed their desire to keep their identities anonymous at TDSB, primarily to prevent any negative impact on their children.

I asked them again during the post-interviews if they would like to choose a pseudonym, and during the post-interviews all fifteen participants agreed to provide a name of their choice, which I used in this dissertation.

Transcription of the Interviews

Audio recordings of the interviews allowed me to fully engage with the participants during the interviews. Eye contact and not being occupied with taking notes were necessary for the engagement, especially as the interviews were virtual. The audio recordings enabled me to identify the participants by voice and the use of their legal names; several of them expressed apprehension about their voices remaining on the recording and inquired about the deletion of the recording after I transcribed the interviews.

I assured them I would delete the audio recordings once I transcribed all the interviews. The audio recordings were safely stored on a USB key in a secure location in my home. After transcribing the interviews and conducting one post-interview with all fifteen participants by March 2022, I informed them that I had erased their voice recordings and would not include any identifiable information in this research's findings, future publications, or presentations. During the post-interview check-in's, I let the participants know that I would have their interviews transcribed within three weeks.

Phase Three: Post-Interview Meetings

I conducted one post-interview meeting with each of the fifteen participants. After having transcribed and reviewed the interviews, I emailed fourteen of the participants their transcribed interviews, and for the one participant, who did not have access to email, I printed out their interview transcription and provided it to them in person, keeping safety and distancing measures at the forefront. The post-interview meetings were shorter in length than the initial interviews.

Nine post-interview meetings took place over the phone, with six participants opting for virtual meetings.

During the post-interview meeting, I asked them if they felt their interview transcripts accurately reflected their voices, thoughts, and experiences. As the transcripts were lengthy, all fifteen stated they would not have time to go over the interview data in detail and a copy was provided to all the participants. This post-interview meetings were to ensure the voices of the participants were centred. I looked over the transcriptions of their interviews with them and this provided opportunity to address any areas that needed clarifying and to add anything further to their responses and narratives.

The post-interview meetings also allowed for validity checks of the data from the first interview and provided another opportunity for the participants to add, clarify, and reflect on the information from their interviews (Pyett, 2003). The post-interview meetings enabled me to assess the participants' emotions and well-being following the interviews, and to reaffirm the community agency's support (Appendix G) should their expulsion experiences impact them. Three of the participants added some additional thoughts about their expulsion experiences during the post-interview meetings. The remainder expressed that the post-interview conversation was helpful as the expulsion process was something they had never had the opportunity to debrief about when they left school.

The post-interview process served several crucial purposes. First, it provided an opportunity for validating participants' narratives and allowed me to scrutinize my own biases, assumptions, and interpretations of the transcribed interviews (Hill, 1986). It offered another chance to prioritize the perspectives, voices, and agency of the participants by inviting their feedback of their post-interviews. Drawing on Tuck's (2009) framework, which emphasizes the

collaborative utilization of research findings within marginalized communities, the post-interview meetings prompted further critical examination of power dynamics within the transcribed participant interviews. This allowed me to ensure the accuracy of the participants' interview data and that their stories were respectfully captured and transcribed. I did not transcribe the post-interviews, although I wrote additional information on the interview transcriptions for three participants who added additional details.

Relationships and Follow-Up: Post-Interview

After the post-interview meetings, I remained accessible for any further conversations they wished to have, maintaining communication primarily through text messaging, which was their preferred method. Throughout this study and upon its completion, my relationship, with all the participants, continues to this day. For some, the contact consists of a few times a month, and for others, it may be a few times a year. We keep in touch mainly through text and phone calls, and, on occasion, we meet up in-person.

Identifying Patterns and Themes in the Interview Data

The data collected from the participant interviews was rich. Analyzing the interview data, I looked for themes and descriptions that emerged and recorded any themes on the margins of the interview sheets (Creswell, 2009). These themes and descriptions were grouped and labeled to find interrelated themes and descriptions for interpretation (Creswell, 2009). I reviewed the transcripts, after the post-interviews, numerous times for interpretation while reflecting on my role as a social worker and graduate student, critically considering alternative meanings of the data. The themes that emerged from the interview data were juxtaposed with the TDSB expulsion-related documents.

Re-reading the data provided me with stronger familiarity with the information, allowing the discovery of interrelated themes. I initially listened to the recorded interviews and then re-

listened to them two to three times more. Re-listening to them allowed me to hear the vocal nuances. After re-listening to them, I made transcriptions of the interviews, making notes of any auditory observations on the transcripts for all participants. I then read over the transcriptions many times to uncover themes and sub-themes in the data.

Using Creswell's (2009) steps in coding and analyzing qualitative data, the first step included going through the interview data carefully and diligently. This was further strengthened by the post-interviews with all participants who could add, clarify, and make meaning of some of their data (Creswell, 2009; Soiferman, 2010). The data analysis and interpretation techniques were time-consuming, although necessary, as sustained engagement with the data was necessary to critically analyze and interpret the data (Smith & Eatough, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) in Kawulich (2004) stated that the data analysis needs to "reflect the purpose of the research; be exhaustive; mutually exclusive; sensitive to category content and be congruent" (p. 98). Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson (2002) stated:

Reflexive reporting, informing readers about these interests, experiences, and actions in research reports, allows the reader to weigh the researcher's role in the conduct of the study and the understanding gained from engaging with the study participants, data, and setting (p. 728).

Patton (1990) reminded us that "the human factor is a great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis" (Patton (1990) quoted in Pyett, 2003, p. 1172). Again, to ensure the voices of the participants were continually centred, after the post-interview meetings, I continued to contact the participants and offer them opportunities to discuss the analysis and themes that were arising from the data. During such contacts, the participants did not add any further information to the emerging data and themes. Although, when I completed the conclusions and recommendations of the study, two participants added to the recommendations section of the study in suggesting that more community be involved in

expulsion hearing meetings as well as a social worker and/or mental health professional as it may provide more objectivity.

One can critique the subjectivity of qualitative approaches, as they necessitate the researcher's confidence to establish trust with the readers. Such trust-building occurs with the transparency of the researcher's reflections and political stance and how their positionality may impact the research process (Pyatt, 2003, p. 1174). As a result, the data from this study was rigorously examined and re-examined through several methods: member checking via one post-interview with the participants, ongoing communication with participants by phone, text, and in person to review the thematic analysis of the interview data and study conclusions, reflective journaling after each participant interactions and comparing the interview data and emerging themes with TDSB expulsion-related documents.

Ethical Considerations

My research was anchored in core ethical principles that prioritize respect, integrity, and support. The relationships I already had with the participants was central to these commitments. I made sure to express my gratitude personally and check in on their well-being throughout the study. In fact, the study prompted more ongoing contact than prior to the study. Understanding that these discussions might be emotionally challenging, I remained open to ongoing dialogue. The informed consent form (Appendix E) was also a key priority throughout the study. I was transparent about the study's nature, the use of their data, and how their right to withdraw would not affect our established relationship.

Confidentiality was maintained rigorously to preserve trust and integrity of the participants and study. My ongoing support also emphasized cultural sensitivity, ensuring that any support I provided was empowering rather than fostering dependency. By carefully

managing the balance between support and professional boundaries, I aimed to uphold the highest ethical standards and reinforce the respectful, supportive nature of my ongoing interactions with participants. My quasi-social work role with the participants, post-schooling, enables me to offer continued assistance. Although, while being a graduate student and continuing employment at TDSB, it has been essential for me to navigate this dynamic carefully in order to maintain the caring and yes, professional nature of our relationships. This approach reflects my dedication to the OCSWSSW code of ethics (OSCWSSW, n.d.) such as beneficence which ensures that participants have the support they need while feeling cared for.

Trustworthiness and Qualitative Research

Member checking was a key process, beginning with providing participants with a summary of their transcribed interview responses within one to three weeks after their interview to verify accuracy allowing the participants to highlight any discrepancies or provide additional insights. Ongoing contact with the participants to review the overall findings and interpretations of the study after further ensured their experiences were accurately represented.

Reflective journaling also played a critical role in the research. Immediately after each contact with the participants, I documented any of my thoughts, impressions, and emergent themes. Prior to commencing the data analysis phase, I conducted a comprehensive reflection on the cumulative journal entries to contextualize the findings. Additionally, document comparison was integral to the research process. At the start of the analysis phase, interview data themes were compared with TDSB expulsion-related documents to establish a baseline understanding. Ongoing comparisons throughout the data analysis helped verify consistency and enrich interpretations, culminating in a final cross-check of all interview data, findings and conclusions with the participants and with the TDSB expulsion related documents.

Triangulation further supported the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data. Methodological triangulation involved using interviews, member checking, document reviews, and reflective journaling at multiple stages to corroborate findings. Analytical triangulation was achieved by applying different theoretical lenses, such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) and critical phenomenology, to challenge assumptions and validate interpretations. Participant post-interview and post-study themes development review also added to the rigor of the study. The preliminary results and analysis were looked over by the participants for feedback and confirmation, and the study's conclusions were looked over again to check for any possible biases or mistakes during the post-analysis and study conclusion meetings. These interventions collectively enhanced the credibility of the research by actively engaging participants in the verification process, reflecting on researcher subjectivity, and systematically comparing data across various sources and methods.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter explains the methodology and methods used in this study, with a particular emphasis on precautions taken to ensure participants' well-being and maintain positive relationships with them. Chapters Seven through Eleven present the findings from the participant interviews and how the expulsion policy and procedures intricately shaped the experiences of participants, leading to school exclusions, punitive measures, and heightened surveillance from pre-expulsion to post-expulsion phases of schooling for the participants.

FINDINGS

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRE-EXPULSION: BECOMING BLACK

The participants' recollections of their pre-expulsion experiences vividly highlighted how schooling actively contributed to the negative construction of Blackness through the persistent actions of school staff. This was particularly evident in the process of becoming Black, as the adverse social construction of Blackness reinforced exclusionary practices such as classroom exclusions, suspensions, and expulsions. Dei and James (1998) assert that the formation of Black identity is dynamic and multifaceted, challenging prevailing anti-Black stereotypes. They emphasized:

African Canadian youth definitions of black(ness) and school racial politics challenge dominant conceptions of black as evil, criminal, disorderly, and guilty. Black identity can also be interpreted in oppositional terms. In fact, students' narratives sometimes rupture a singular and static definition of Black(ness). Black, thus, becomes a shifting political category whose meaning can be understood in the interrelationships of class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. To 'become black' is to claim a form of identity and political agency defined (Dei & James, 1998, p. 95).

As highlighted in the literature review, the ongoing process of becoming Black in education is shaped by negative anti-Black biases and assumptions, resulting in the mistreatment and exclusion of Black students. Staff actions play a significant role in amplifying this process through exclusionary practices (Codjoe, 2001; Dei, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yon, 1994). Through such ongoing exclusionary practices, the construction of anti-Blackness, in the process of becoming Black, is intricately linked to white supremacy. This emphasizes, in schooling, that the identity of Black individuals is molded through the lens of the white gaze (Fanon, 1952), personifying the perceived virtuousness of whiteness (Pinar & Castenell, 1993). This chapter sheds light on the participants' accounts of the practices and actions of teachers that

extended the ongoing process of becoming Black within the school context, solidifying and perpetuating anti-Blackness within their schooling.

Elementary Experiences of Anti-Black Racism

The early schooling experiences documented in this chapter reveal feelings of being fundamentally flawed, disliked by teachers, and subjected to harsher surveillance, leading to frequent classroom and school exclusions. Teachers reinforced negative stereotypes, labels, and perceptions about them, and imposed tougher sanctions for their misbehaviours compared to their non-Black peers.

The participants' process of becoming Black was profoundly influenced by the white gaze (Fanon, 1952), particularly for those who were newcomers to Canada during their early schooling years. Their stories resonated with the principles of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as they recounted their initial school experiences. Some participants highlighted how their treatment in school was shaped by the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. These early schooling experiences normalized and made casual the exclusion of Black males within schooling spaces. Anti-Blackness emerged as a prominent theme when participants discussed their early childhood memories of schooling, aligning with studies that have shown Black students must continually negotiate and navigate educational spaces due to the pervasive anti-Blackness they encounter (Dei & James, 1998; James, 2019; Maynard, 2017).

Becoming Black: “Something is wrong with me” (Anton)

The participants discussed memories of being persistently watched by teachers in elementary school, resulting in disciplinary actions which disconnected them from their classrooms. The participants reported their behaviours were scrutinized and as a result, they received more punitive actions for low-level infractions, such as speaking out of turn, speaking

loudly and talking back to school staff (Ferguson, 2001; Maynard, 2017). The constant surveillance and discipline affected some participants' connection to the school environment, fostering and sustaining feelings of disconnection, apathy, and frustration throughout their pre-expulsion experiences. Andrew recalls the actions of his first-grade teacher, who was constantly watching his behaviour and being targeted:

I kept getting in trouble for things like talking loud at recess and being slow when I walked, and it was so frustrating to me. I told my mom that I felt that the teacher did not like me [be] because she kept looking at me and getting me in trouble. Walking into the classroom each day was like torture for me. I remember that. It was a feeling. A constant feeling. Watching me and me always be in trouble.

Richard echoed this sentiment, stating that he learned to whisper in class as his regular voice *"was always too loud for the teachers, and that silenced me in school"* noting that he was frequently disciplined for speaking in his normal tone, which was deemed too loud and distracting by his teachers. As a result, Richard was often sent to the office or instructed to stand in the hallway. He mentioned that he learned to whisper in class because his regular voice was always considered too loud, which ultimately silenced him in school. Such persistent and excessive scrutiny in elementary school led to participants being removed from the classroom for actions they perceived as mundane.

Being sent to the office for minor behaviours instilled fear and resentment towards it. Raymond and Anton described how their frequent trips to the office left them feeling terrible. They also noted that school staff seemed to be harsher on them compared to their peers, and the constant scrutiny fostered a deep sense of something being wrong with them. Raymond became emotional during the interview, often pausing as he recounted his early school experiences. His feelings were heightened by the anticipation of his own son starting kindergarten, and he stated

the thought of his child experiencing an "...ounce of what he went through..." in schooling was upsetting to him. Raymond shared:

It's like you are not human in school. I felt more human being out of school. The heavy, awful feeling I had when I went to school was always there, from when I remember kindergarten to when I was expelled; heavy, heavy feelings of no one caring about me made me feel bad about myself. It made me never want to be there—ever.

Feeling less than and insignificant in school spaces were prevalent in the participant interviews.

For example, Anton said his actions were constantly watched closely in the classroom, and recalled he that he could never do "*anything right*". He further stated that the responsibility was placed on him to fix his behaviour with no accountability for staff, "*who were so rude and also yelled all the time at me for no reason*". Anton expressed that regardless of how the teachers treated him, they would often tell his mother that he

needed to be fixed in school. I was never okay the way I was. I was too loud, or not loud enough, or I was too energetic and then not active enough, or I was not fast enough, or just too fast for everyone. I was just never right; what I wanted never mattered in school. 'See the social worker, talk to the child and youth worker, mom take him to the doctor; something is wrong with him, and he needed help.' That is all I ever got. Something is wrong with me.

These disclosures underscore how the responsibility for correction was placed solely on the students within a hostile environment, implying that they alone needed to change, while staff accountability for their actions were overlooked. Anton and Raymond's behaviours were individualized, portraying them as the problem and leading to exaggerated responses from teachers who blamed them for not conforming to classroom norms. Annamma (2015) explained that whiteness "...provided the protection of the intangible benefit of innocence. Those that are without the protection of innocence are subject to suspicion, surveillance, and incarceration" (p. 298). The experiences shared by Anton and Raymond highlight how the value of innocence is

often denied to Black male students, intensifying the tendency to punish, blame, and exclude them from school spaces.

Daniel, like Anton, also spoke about being blamed for conflicts or issues in the classroom, including school staff making threats to call the police. Daniel remembered:

It was awful. I remember being in grade 5, and my mom was already frustrated with me as I kept getting suspended. However, it was always for issues with a few kids in the class. They would make fun of me, and one time we played tag outside at recess, and they kept slapping my butt, telling me, 'You're it,' and I told them to stop, loudly. Suddenly the teacher hears my voice and tells me to go to the principal's office and threatened that the police could be called. I got suspended for one day, and no one heard my voice. No one sat down with these boys and me to figure out how to stop the bullying. No one helped me. It was just my fault.

The bullying Daniel faced from his peers went unacknowledged, and instead, he was suspended merely for yelling loudly. This situation illustrates how school spaces normalize punitive measures for Black students, leading both them and their parents to believe that the fault lies with them, often looking to school exclusions, such as suspensions, as solutions to address behaviours. The right to be heard and not be perceived as inherently faulty or guilty are intangible aspects of innocence that privilege whiteness (Annamma, 2015; Harris, 1995).

Overreactions from staff, punitive sanctions, and segregation are common outcomes when Black male bodies are perceived as threats that must be controlled and in need of fixing (Collins, 2004; hooks, 2004; Wacquant, 2002). Such perceptions foster assumptions that Black males are inherently stronger and more inclined towards violence, reinforcing a culture where they are feared and thus excluded for the safety of non-Black individuals (hooks, 2004). These stereotypes intensify anti-Blackness and the process of becoming Black while preserving whiteness, often resulting in greater scrutiny and seen as being less innocent. Raymond described a situation where he was disciplined for actions committed by another student. Raymond recalled:

This one time these three boys—two white and one brown—kept trying to rub my head. They kept saying my hair felt like pubic hair, and I didn't really know what pubic hair felt like. I just knew that it was something negative. The teacher even saw this once and told one of the boys, the brown boy, to sit down and not do that, but no one asked me how it made me feel. It must have gone on for some time, and finally, I lost it. As they were passing my desk, I yelled out in the class, 'something like stop touching my head—stop, and you all have pubic hair, so go play with yourself.' This situation made my teacher and the principal suspend me. However, they also called Children's Aid [Society] [be]cause they thought I was being sexually abused [be]cause I knew about pubic hair. Again, even when I tried to tell them that these boys would call me, they did not listen or hear me, and it could have just been dealt with if they listened.

Sexualizing body parts, such as Black hair, is anti-Black racism. According to Raymond, this type of abuse he experienced could have been resolved if the teacher had intervened earlier. Such an intervention may have allowed Raymond to speak about what had happened and get support instead of receiving blame and being punished aligning with research on Black male students (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989; 2015; Crichlow, 2014, 2015; Maynard, 2017). This sexualization of Blackness conflates the notions of Black males being both dangerous, less than others and needing to be contained and sanctioned (Aggarwal, 2016; Annamma, 2015; Harris, 1993).

Feeling heard in school spaces is crucial for safety and validation, affirming that one matters. Harris (1993) and Aggarwal (2016) both argued that for racialized students to feel heard, included, and safe, they must conform to whiteness and be perceived as innocent and desirable by it. As Bonilla-Silva (2012) noted, the power of whiteness lies in its invisibility, normalization, and acceptance, which causes racialized individuals—especially Black students—to become hyper-visible when they dissent, challenge, or disrupt. For white students, the ability to speak up, challenge, and voice dissent is an intangible right. However, as revealed in the participants' narratives, these rights were denied to them.

Becoming Black: “Ms. X hated me” (Richard)

Many participants spoke about the dislike school staff showed towards them. Richard and Daniel could not recall why they felt so hated at such an early school age. However, that palpable feeling was exacerbated by teachers' constant watching. Richard recalled:

I would tell my mom that Ms. X hated me, and she would just tell me to listen and be good—but I was good and listened, and that was not enough [be]cause Ms. X just watched my every move.

He added:

I used to go to school everyday when I was young and feel sick to my stomach [be]cause I could feel my teachers did not like me. I could feel them look at me; their eyes following me in the hallways, on the playgrounds and the tone in their voice, never kind.

Omar discussed how he would not have been expelled at age twelve if he was anyone else in the school he attended. Omar felt that the teachers and principal at this elementary did not like him. He also affirmed what Richard and Daniel discussed. Omar recounted “*I was only a kid, and I can remember since kindergarten how much each teacher just seem annoyed and angry with me. Like I was not even worth liking—even as a little kid.*” Not being liked by the school staff was another component that justified labelling Black males in school with deficit markers that supported the exclusionary staff reactions.

Becoming Black: Constant Classroom and School Exclusions

According to Schlosberg (1989) inclusive spaces increase feelings of care and support and are necessary to increase connectivity to schooling. The participants spoke about experiencing continual elementary classroom exclusions which resulted in continual transitions in and out of classrooms due to misbehaviours. Ten of the fifteen participants recalled such continual exclusions from the classrooms during their pre-expulsion schooling experiences, impacting their connectivity to school. James, Daniel, and Anton discussed the impact in detail.

James reported:

I was constantly in and out of school when I was little. I would go to school, and the teacher would kick me out for something dumb. Like I was talking too loudly, I would have to go to the office and sit there for hours until my mom could pick me up. I kept missing school trips [be]cause my behaviour was bad.

Daniel added that even when he was provided with a new start at a new school with new teachers, he still continued to be sent out of the classroom for misbehaviours:

We moved a lot and all over the place. I was kinda used to it, and even when I had to go to a new school, I would find myself sent to the office for something stupid, and this made me feel even worse—[be]cause I was moving around and then when I was in school, I was in the office. At home, I felt good. With my family, I felt good, but when I was in school, I never felt good about myself. I felt like some abnormal kid who could not do anything right in school. I must have been at the office so much that I actually knew more about what was happening in the office than I knew in my classroom. This other Black kid and I would be the only two in the office—no recess—just the office [be]cause we were bad.

Anton recalled that his elementary school memories are of the office more than being with his friends and learning in school:

I wanted nothing more than to frigging be in school with my friends. But I think I spent more time in the office and with the child and youth worker than I ever did in class. It was so frustrating [be] because it was like you had to start all over again when you went back into the class. I was always catching up on what I missed and missed the fun things.

James, Daniel, and Anton spoke about being in the office more often than in their classrooms.

Such exclusions from the classrooms disconnected them from school activities, schoolwork, and friends. Environments where students experience numerous, ongoing, fractured transitions, such as these participants, support increased marginality and disconnection to schooling (James & Turner, 2017; Maynard, 2017; Schlosberg, 1989). As a result of school exclusions, these transitions in and out of the classrooms and offices exacerbated the deficit views of the participants.

The participants recognized that schooling produces, maintains, and reinforces the process of becoming Black, often leaving them with no recourse other than being told to leave the classroom when their actions were deemed misbehaviours (Ferguson, 2001; Codjoe, 2001; Dei & James, 1998). According to the participants, being excluded from the classroom served as a form of silencing. They felt they had no rights to dissent, protest, or voice their opinions, which contributed to the deficit perceptions held by staff and led to even more punitive measures.

Diamond and Gomez (2023) discuss how silencing is part of the normalization of educational organizations which sustains anti-Blackness through

routines [which] create racially unequal outcomes. Routines are widely known by organization members...Routines are not only the mechanism for doing the organization's essential work; they are part of its shared language and folklore that legitimize practices...[and] reproduce racial inequity, and silence dissent (p. 4).

As exclusions of Black male students become routine within a classroom, a school community, a school board, and so forth, it further legitimizes Black male students being excluded and “becomes increasingly challenging to question. Those who seek to maintain the status quo use routines’ institutionalization to resist change. In short, routines often maintain racial domination (Diamond & Gomez, 2023, p. 4).

Teachers being afraid of Black male students and using this perceived fear to exclude them was also discussed by some of the participants. James recalled:

In grade 9, the teachers did not know me, but I could tell they were scared of me. I am a big guy, and at that, a big Black guy. I was standing in the hallway by my locker, and this teacher. This teacher I didn't even know. I talked to my friend and told him a story she may have heard as she passed by me and then went and told the principal that I had threatened her. I was like, I do not know her. Why would I threaten her? But this is not new. I have been over six feet tall since grade 5-6, and teachers are scared of me. I always get in trouble.

Anton also remembered:

I think it was like grade two or three when I noticed that I was always the one being told to leave the classroom and the only Black kid. It was always me and once I was upset and

slammed the classroom door when I was told to go to the office, and I remember the teacher telling the principal that she was afraid of me and that I could not control my emotions. This made me get a bad reputation in school with the other teachers.

Here, both James and Anton provide descriptions of childhood schooling experiences where they recounted teachers being fearful of them which further exacerbated the teachers' reactions to their misbehaviours with classroom exclusions. Anton discussed that his 'bad reputation' was developed through this perceived fear of Blackness, validating his classroom exclusions. Dei and James (1998) asserted that exclusionary practices contribute to the development of Black students' racial identities, becoming Black, in a manner that fosters a detrimental relationship with their racialized selves. This negative relationship refers to the ways in which these students may experience internal conflict, marginalization, and a diminished sense of self-worth as a result of systemic anti-Blackness, anti-Black racism and exclusionary treatment in schooling.

Ben spoke of this realization:

They had me suspended so many times for stupid things when I was just a kid that I began to see myself as a rotten kid. More so, I saw that being one of the only Black kids in the classroom was important as to why I was always getting in trouble with the teachers. I thought they didn't like me, but I know that it had more to do with just me. It had to do with being Black too.

Similar to Anton, James and Ben, Barry also internalized he was the problem in schooling, not the teachers and school environment:

So awful, so awful; as a kid, I wondered why teachers hated me, or at least, I felt they did not like me, and I always thought it was me. Something I was doing, something I did. I even remember thinking maybe I was just a bad, bad kid. All the teachers treated me like I was an outsider and did not have serious issues. But it was [be]cause I was a Black kid and a quiet kid, and no matter what I did right, I was a Black kid, and they saw nothing good.

The participants consistently expressed feelings of insignificance and recognized that their differential treatment by schools was rooted in their Black identity. For the participants, being marginalized during their elementary school years seemed to be the norm. Addressing

racist structural barriers in schooling and enhancing the positive engagement of racialized students necessitates early intervention (Brown, Griffin, Metzger, Halliday-Boykins, & Salazar, 2020). Brown et al. (2020) found that to improve school engagement for Black and racialized students, it was crucial to urgently eliminate all forms of school exclusions, including suspensions, expulsions, and placements in self-contained special education programs (p. 16).

Becoming Black: Teachers and Negative Labels

Dei and James (1998) argue that the process of becoming Black in educational settings is an insidious one, beginning early in a student's schooling. Eric and William describe how feeling like a failure and being subjected to negative labels led them to feel unseen and unappreciated in school environments. Labels such as "troublemaker" and "at-risk" significantly affected how these participants perceived their futures in schooling. Eric recalled:

I never felt good in school. It was always something that was really hard for me. I wish that more teachers spent time getting to know me, liking me, and taking time to listen to what I liked. When you do not feel good about school, it shapes how you see yourself each day—a failure. I mean, I couldn't even get through elementary school.

William affirmed, *"I was not good at anything in school—even though I loved art—I was just never good in the eyes of school—at nothing—what does that do to a kid? It breaks them."* Ben and Shia expressed that their teachers failed to recognize their strengths and the desire they had to showcase their abilities and skills. Their narratives reveal a strong wish for their teachers to understand their interests and what they felt proud of. Ben reported:

Maybe if the teachers actually saw how much I loved to draw, they would see me in another light...I even begged my mom to invite my grade 5 teacher to our house [be]cause in my room, I wanted her to see all the drawings I did—all superheroes—and I thought, maybe, maybe if she saw these, she would see that I am a nice kid.

Shia noted:

The only thing I remember is everyone telling me that I needed to engage and connect to school, but how do you do that when you always feel like you are not wanted or welcomed? Trust me; I tried when I was a kid—I wanted the teacher to like me so much,

but all I ever got was that I was behind [in school], low academically, but could play great ball.

James spoke about how he did not see himself as a *bad kid* but as a "... *kid who was seen as a bad kid [be]cause he was Black*" and Eric stated:

In grade four, my mom was told that I needed help to control my emotions. It was all me, and I remember I was a mad kid, an angry kid [be]cause all I got in school was 'be quiet'; 'sit still'; 'stop moving'; 'don't talk so much; 'you're too loud'. Once I was told that my voice is 'scaring the other kids.' I was a kid myself. How could my voice do that?

Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) found that teachers were quick to label a Black student as a troublemaker for one infraction compared to a white student who may have numerous similar misbehaviours. Eric affirmed this: *"nothing I did was good enough for them..."*. Eric further stated that by the time he had finished grade eight, he *"just wanted to be out of school [be]cause school made me feel so bad about myself. I felt like nothing in school. Like nothing. I knew I could not shake been seen as the bad kid."* Eric discussed that the label of troublemaker stayed with him throughout his schooling experiences, and it was *"shocking to think that something that you are called or regarded as a kid can transpire throughout your school life—like the teachers all looked at all Black boys as trouble."* He remarked:

I could do nothing right [be]cause I was a 'troublemaker.' That is what my grade five teacher called me—a 'troublemaker,' and this label became me right till I was expelled—the 'troublemaker'—not even sure if they knew my real name.

The label of trouble and troublemaker exacerbated teacher punishments towards the participants exacerbated the pathway for being in continual at-riskness as James stated, *"being seen as a troubled kid, the teachers told my mom to watch out who my friends are"* Omar recounted *"teachers would tell me that if I continued to misbehave I would not get or keep a job"* and Daniel recalled *"I had a teacher who told me all the time that he would be surprised if I didn't end up in jail"*. The propensity of being labelled trouble and at-risk by school staff

demarcated the participants with deficit and negative label, consistent with other research and studies (James, 2012; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). More so, this label of being a troublemaker continued to persist throughout many of the participants' schooling experiences, and the breadth of the impact reverberated in Eric's statement, *I was just trouble, not even sure if they knew my real name.*” His identity was replaced with the label troublemaker. hooks (1992) affirmed that the negative images and representations of Blackness and Black people would not transform unless such depictions retreat from deficit-based labels (p. 7).

Blackness is associated with feelings of being lesser-than-white, which have been and are internalized by Black people. Being Black and male have dire consequences for students, which resonated in the responses of these participants. James recalled being referred to as at-risk in school:

As a kid, I remember most of the word *at-risk* I was *at-risk* of so much. I wish I could remember telling you what that was, but really it was everything. I was an *at-risk* kid at school and home. I was the big brother to a sister, a son, a grandson to my grandma, and a kid who loved to bake chocolate chip cookies with M&M's to my mom. I was not *at-risk* at home. Being that kid who was always *at-risk* made me kinda popular with my friends and also gave me this tough reputation. If I was not smart enough for school, at least I could then be respected for being tough.

Shai also discussed this:

It felt like all the Black kids in class, especially the boys, were told they were at-risk. We heard that we were at-risk of failing school, at-risk of having negative friends, at-risk for dropping out of school or not going to college and university. My friends and I were all at-risk if that is how the school makes you feel. Well you become that, right? I became that kid who was at-risk.

Fanon (1952) argued that when whites other Blackness, Black people internalize this othering and can only see themselves through the white gaze, which regards Blackness as inherently negative and problematic. White supremacy fuels negative biases about Blackness, and these biases, assumptions, and narratives lead to negative self-perceptions among Black

students (Fanon, 1952). Such internalizations perpetuate negative ontologies of Black people.

Fanon (1952) described the impact of internalizing this othering by whiteness:

I was responsible for not only my body but also my race and ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself and discovered my Blackness, my ethnic features; it was deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, racial stigmas, and slave traders...(p. 92).

James (2012) indicated that teachers creating and accepting negative labels about Black students reinforces at-risk labels in early schooling experiences. These labels significantly impacted the participants' self-esteem, as noted in the excerpts above. Their narratives indicate the nexus of white supremacy and anti-Blackness shaped how they perceived themselves. The negative labels imposed by teachers contributed to a harmful cycle where the participants were continually viewed and treated as problems, rather than individuals with strengths and potential. This cycle not only affects their self-esteem but also perpetuated systemic anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism in their schooling experiences.

Becoming Black: Teacher Perceptions of The Lack of Positive Role Models

Fatherless stereotypes ascribed to Black males indicate the widespread belief that they do not have positive male mentors (James, 2012; Maynard, 2017), which furthered the negative labels for the participants. Ben recalled moments when teachers would ask him questions such as *"does your dad live with you and your mom? Where is your dad? Are you sad that your dad is not with you?"* and they would tell his mother he needed a positive Black male mentor. Ben remembered his mom had told him this after a meeting with the teacher and was upset with the teacher's presumptuous recommendation. Additionally, the assumption that his father was not involved was offensive to him and his mother. Ben's father has been heavily involved in his life but struggled with kidney failure having to attend the hospital daily for dialysis, which made him unavailable to attend school meetings. Ben remembered:

It angered me to think that my teacher thought my household had no father. My father was an amazing man who did all he could for us even when he was so sick...he died when I was 12 from kidney failure, and I remember my grade 8 teacher wanting to know how he passed away. She didn't say it, but I know she thought the stereotypes. He was killed in a gang or died in jail.

John and Holland also spoke about how their fathers and male family members, such as uncles and cousins, were involved in their lives and shaped them positively. John said, *"teachers never even got to know me or my family and only saw me through negative ideas they had of my older male relatives"*. Holland recalled, *"I remember this one teacher telling my mom that I needed a male mentor to help me behave in class. I had a male mentor—my dad and uncles."* Teachers often assumed that they were fatherless. Regardless of research indicating that Black fathers highly support their children regardless of whether they lived in or outside the home (Leath, 2017), the participants noted, for teachers, that the assumptions attributed to the absentee of Black fathers and lack of positive Black male role models became the rationale for their at-riskness and misbehaviours. Additionally, Black males who were present were also subjected to negative stereotypes by teaching staff, as illustrated by John's statements. Therefore both the presence and absence of Black fathers and male family members was simultaneously blamed as a cause of the participants' negative behaviours.

Becoming Black: Deficit Educational Labels

The intersectionality of race, gender, and special education negatively impacts schooling outcomes for Black students (Dei & James, 1998). Research continues to indicate that schooling disproportionately impacts Black students by segregating them into special education classrooms and negatively influencing how they see their capabilities as children, youth, and adults (Gaymes San Vincente, 2016; Ferguson, 2001; James, 2012; Maynard, 2017). Anton and Raymond highlighted how their teachers othered them by placing them in segregated special education programs, which served as a form of exclusion. Anton observed, *"Some of my white friends who*

were in my regular class were able to read less than me and they didn't get tested and labeled as stupid." He recognized the differential educational treatment he received as a Black male student.

Raymond also recalled:

I remember thinking that these teachers just see a poor ass kid in housing, whom they labeled with some learning disability when I was sure the bloody teacher had a learning disability [be]cause they never listened to me or understood me. Little do they know that my poor ass learned a lot about surviving. School taught me what to avoid and that I cannot rely on the school to make me feel good about myself. My intelligence and abilities had to be carved out by my experiences outside school. [Be]cause in school, I was just a dumb kid to them all. All the teachers, people in the school, the principal—everyone. [Be]cause I was not good enough or smart enough to be in a normal classroom. I had to be separate to do well, and they fed you this, making you feel like, yea, I do need more help, and I am not good at school.

Raymond spoke about the impact of deficit special education labels on his self-esteem, emphasizing that such labels made you feel intellectually deficient. He stressed that he had to build his sense of self and self-esteem through activities outside of school, as the school could not acknowledge, accept, and support his abilities.

Raymond and Anton also discussed that other students in their classes, who lived in their neighbourhoods but were not Black, had academic struggles although, they noted that some of these non-Black peers received extra support from school staff when they struggled with schoolwork which they do not recall being offered. Both felt that teachers did not believe in their capabilities, deeming them not smart enough. Raymond asserted:

The teachers just thought we were all some needy, dumb kids who could not learn like the other non-Black kids. I have let school define my intelligence for so long, and all along, they [the school] were the ones labeling us Black kids.

These disclosures by Anton and Raymond highlight how schools fail to recognize Black brilliance and maintain low expectations of Black students through ongoing exclusion, placing them in special education classes, and diagnosing them with learning disabilities (Brown & Parekh, 2010; Gaymes San Vincente, 2016).

Becoming Black: Articulated in Newcomer Experiences

Juxtaposing the experiences of newcomers in early schooling, with the other participants, illustrated their experiences with anti-Blackness which contributed to the process of becoming Black. James and Turner (2017), quoting Braithwaite and James (1996), noted that Black newcomers face significant challenges in adapting to the schooling and educational environment in Canada that

[w]ithout exception...the difficulties of the [Black] students resulted, not only from their experiences of trying to adjust to a new society (for those who had recently arrived), but also from their experiences with discrimination based on race and cultural differences (pp. 15-16).

Five of the fifteen participants completed their early education in another country and came to Canada as young children. James, Andrew, Barry, Shia, and Ben spoke about their memories of early schooling in their home country compared to what they experienced when they arrived in Canada. This data was unanticipated as questions about their country of origin were not asked. These comparative experiences require highlighting as they demonstrated their Canadian schooling experiences with the process of becoming Black. The five participants spoke favourably about their memories of schooling in their home countries, all of which were in the Caribbean.

Shia arrived in Toronto with his mother and younger brother when he was seven and entered grade two in a Toronto school. He disclosed that his family settled in Toronto's east end with church friends they knew from Jamaica. Shia and Ben both spoke about feeling safe in Jamaica as their families surrounded them, and they felt included in school spaces even when they received sanctions for misbehaving. Shia reported:

I remember that I would get yelled at a lot by Ms. A. She would yell at me, but she would also hug me and tell me that I was such a smart kid. I remember crying once after she yelled at me, and she put her hand on my head and calmed me down. It felt nice.

Similarly, Ben recalled receiving discipline in Jamaica, and the discipline did not change his feelings of mattering or inclusion. Shia's feelings of loneliness and feeling "lost" during his schooling experiences in Canada were also echoed by Ben. Ben came to Toronto and began grade five and compared his experiences in a Toronto school to his school in his home country as being: *"really upsetting [be]cause I loved, loved, school in [home country]. My grandma would do schoolwork with me, making me feel so confident."* By contrast, in Toronto, he felt

so out of place in the class and making friends was not easy. My teacher did not help me much, and for the first time, I remember feeling stupid. My grandma wasn't with us so couldn't help me, and I felt lost.

Non-Canadian vernaculars and cultural and schooling differences impacted their settlement into schools (George & Selimos, 2018; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). Worries about how to fit into new school spaces in Toronto resulted in feelings of worry and anxiety amongst all five participants. Clothing styles and having different accents stifled their feelings of inclusion in Canadian schools.

The participants also spoke about how worried they were about their family's' socio-economic realities as newcomers and recall having to rely on church, community, and extended family for support until their parents could secure housing. Due to economic difficulties, the newcomer participants stated they often had to relocate to different areas of Toronto for economic survival. Andrew spoke of the emotional impact due to economic difficulties when he and his mom arrived in Toronto:

You see, my mom and I lived in a small two-bedroom apartment with my mom's cousin and her kids. It was so crowded, and we even slept on the balcony [be] because it was so hot in the apartment at night. My mom was looking for a job. She was a nurse in [home country], so we moved to so many places—like three—before we settled.

Transitions and relocations were difficult for Andrew and his mother, and Andrew discussed that this strained their relationship with family in Toronto:

I was the new kid in grade two and grade three [be]cause we moved, and this was really hard for me. In [home country], we had a house, and I always saw mom happy. Living with family caused a lot of arguments and fights—lots of pressure on my mom.

Andrew further discussed the impact of strained family relations on himself:

I just became this angry, quiet kid, and if anyone pushed my buttons, I lost it. My mom said she came here for a better life, but I didn't see a better life, and I didn't even get to see my cousins much with all the family fighting.

The anti-Black racism present in the data collected through the participant disclosures substantiates how whiteness is centred in education, and it is where power, privilege, as well as lack of opportunities for Black male students. The five participants spoke about how caring teachers were in their home country. Some participants experienced discipline from teachers in their home countries but still felt loved and cared for by those teachers. In their home countries, their memories of schooling indicated a sense of mattering and belonging that contrasted with the cultural, schooling and socio-economic hardships when transitioning into Canadian schools as newcomers.

Shia and James stated that their mothers and family explicitly spoke to them about the hardships they would experience as Black children in Canada. Shia remembered:

My mom and grandma told me when we came to Toronto- that I will need to be more careful, quiet, and listen to teachers [be]cause people here (in Canada) don't like folks like us...Like Black people. My mom told me this all the time. Like, watch yourself. She never said this when I was in Jamaica.

James also recalled this when he arrived in Canada:

My mom was so hard on me when we got here. I just remember feeling so disconnected from school and at home. My mom always told me that I had to behave and be good [be]cause Black people are not liked.

James noted that when he entered school in Toronto, the other Black kids in the classroom did not seem to recognize the warnings issued by his mother and grandmother that "*Black people are not liked,*" and contended:

I think in grade four or five, I remember telling my friends, all of them were Black, that the teacher does not like me because I am Black. And they were like, 'nahhhh it's [be]cause you are bad and talk back.' I remember arguing with them about this, but they were stuck on the behaviour and not how being Black is impacting how the teacher was treating me and all of us, [be]cause we all got in trouble a lot...[be]cause I don't think their moms and dads told them about being aware of how Black people are treated in Canada [be]cause maybe they were just used to it [be]cause they were born here.

James and Shia highlighted their awareness of being Black in this new country came from their mothers and families with Shia adding:

I was like really aware of being Black and that somehow that would [be]cause issues when I came to Toronto—in school, in stores, and even at the park. My mom never let me forget each time I walked out the door to play that I was Black and needed to be careful all the time. You are not in Jamaica, boy—you're not home.

The notion of not being home was further explored by Shia in this excerpt:

My mom wanted me to know that I needed to be careful [be]cause in Jamaica, at home, I could go out, and everyone would take care of each other [be] because we are all Black, but here. Coming here was a white world, and Black had to be careful.

This understanding and consciousness of becoming Black in Canada were apparent to the newcomers. James reiterated this point, stating that being aware of being Black, even in the presence of other Black students, made him want to hide in school and

not be seen like just ignore me [be]cause I know if you see me, something bad may happen to me like I knew my skin, my Black skin, had an impact. I didn't know then what that impact was, but I knew whatever it was, it may be harmful, so I just stayed low-key, didn't say much in class, or didn't really participate.

The disclosures from Anton and Raymond's newcomer experiences provide deep insights into the process of becoming Black in schooling.

The newcomer data indicated that their feelings of anti-Black racism, which they did not experience in their home country, arose upon entering schools in Canada. Newcomer participants in this study had more nuanced knowledge and awareness of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism than those born in Canada. For example, Shia and James were aware that anti-Black

racism could hinder their sense of belonging and connection to school spaces as their caregivers spoke to them explicitly about such realities.

The feelings of exclusion and the process of becoming Black in schooling resonated with both non-newcomer and newcomer participants in this study. The lived experiences of newcomer participants were often disregarded in schooling, leading to disengagement and a lack of trust in the education system.

Concluding Remarks

In these narratives preceding expulsions, recurring themes highlight the profound impact of deficit labels and stereotypes resulting from continuous exclusions in and out of school classrooms. The participants' experiences were further shaped by over-surveillance and disciplinary measures, leading them to recognize that being Black in school often translated to oppressive spaces marked by more severe sanctions when compared to white and brown students.

The social construction of race, a core tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT), permeated these narratives. Participants were frequently labeled as troublemakers and associated with negative academic expectations, continually being designated as at-risk. These factors collectively contributed to the intricate process of becoming Black in education, as eloquently encapsulated by Fanon's (1952) assertion: "[w]hen people like me, they like me in spite of my colour. When they dislike me; they point out that it isn't because of my colour. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle" (p. 116).

The next chapter explores the expulsion process, examining how it not only sustained anti-Blackness but also reinforced the ongoing process of becoming Black for the participants. It scrutinized the deepening relationship between the expulsion process and their widening disengagement from schooling. The chapter elucidates the insidious ways in which the

components of whiteness as property profoundly impacted the participants' educational trajectories and set schooling pathways towards amplifying anti-Blackness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EXPULSION PROCESS: AMPLIFYING ANTI-BLACKNESS

In this chapter, the participants' experiences of the expulsion process reveal four significant themes that amplified anti-Blackness. First, the expulsion process perpetuated anti-Blackness during the 20 day suspension period preceding expulsion. Second, the incidents often connected participants to the criminal justice system, further entrenching them in a cycle of criminalization. Third, the expulsion hearings underscored anti-Blackness by creating an imbalance in voice and agency for both the participants and their parents. Lastly, the disconnect between the participants' voices and the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) goals highlighted the detrimental impact of the process. This disjunction, coupled with the E-SAP being the determining factor for lifting expulsions, accentuated the participants' profound sense of powerlessness throughout the expulsion process. Together, these themes illuminate the systemic forces that reinforced and sustained anti-Blackness, profoundly shaping the schooling trajectories of the participants.

The expulsion process exacerbated anti-Blackness by excluding Black students and rendering them "perpetual strangers" (James, 2012, p. 483) throughout the process. Sanders, Mishna, McCready, and Fallon (2022) found similar results in their study of expelled Black male students in urban and rural expulsion programs. They discovered that the adversity stemming from ongoing anti-Black racism throughout these students' schooling experiences was neither acknowledged nor considered when school boards made decisions to suspend and expel Black students. Sanders et al. (2022) found:

[T]he interconnected influence of exposure to adversity, lack of connection and unequal access to resources impacts student academic outcomes throughout their education as well as at the point of discipline...and students most impacted by expanded forms of

adversity are regulated to silence as a result of the negative biases and assumptions about Black students (p. 578).

The impact of this "exposure to adversity" (Sanders et al., 2022, p. 578) is evident in the participants' experiences as they endured 20-day suspensions while awaiting the decision on their potential expulsion. During this period, the participants were forced to leave their schools and could only attend an expulsion program to continue their education, pending the Board of Trustees' final decision on their expulsion.

Suspended for 20 days Pending an Expulsion

This section discusses the participants' experiences during their 20 day suspension pending expulsion. According to TDSB procedure PR 595, students who are expelled from any school board, including those on a 20 day suspension pending expulsion, are forbidden from being physically present on any publicly funded school property throughout Ontario. Raymond discussed the impact of this:

One minute I remember I was in my math class worried about the test and the next minute, I am being told to go to the office. The police were there, and the principal is asking me about a fight that I had nothing to do with. But I wasn't going to say anything once I saw the police. I knew, even then, as a Black kid, this principal and police were not wanting to believe anything I said. I was told to leave right away, had to leave everything behind, and I could not come back to the school.

During their 20 day suspension pending expulsion, the participants noted that they were not given a choice about attending the expulsion program and were unaware that it was voluntary. They reported that both they and their parents were told it was the only option if they wanted to continue their education. Omar recalled:

[M]y mom told me that I had to be in this other school and could not go back to my school. Just like that. I mean, no one talked to me and when I asked my mom why? She was like, 'I don't know...they won't listen and are doing some type of investigation and they said you can't be back at the school.' I couldn't even get my things from my locker. They said I could only go to this [expulsion] program and I felt so alone.

Ben, who spent a very short time in the expulsion program, affirmed his mother's frustration when the school told her he could no longer attend. He reported:

It was like my mom got this random call from the principal saying I could not come back, and I remember she was so upset but was getting no answers from the principal about why. I told her that I was in a fight, but she could not understand why that would get me totally kicked out of school. The program [long-term suspension and expulsion program] they wanted me to go to was far, and my mom had to change her whole work schedule to make sure I got there. Just a really hard time and no help or information from the school.

Some participants disclosed that neither they nor their parents were informed that the long-term expulsion and suspension programs were voluntary. Ben recalled, *"I thought I had to go to this program and that it would help with me not getting expelled and also thought if I didn't go, I would be in more trouble."* Omar said, *"I didn't want to cause any more issues and was already in problems, so I thought going to the program would show that I was not a bad kid."* In addition to feeling voiceless, Omar and Ben reported believing that attending the program might reduce the severity of their situation and potentially help negate an expulsion.

The complexity of receiving a 20 day suspension pending expulsion was exacerbated by the TDSB's mandate to report the incident to the police, as it is automatically deemed a violent incident. This procedure aligns with PPM 141 from the Ontario Ministry of Education, and TDSB PR 697, which outline the criteria for violent incidents and require principals to contact the police in such cases. Table 2, below, illustrates the Policy/Procedure Memorandum (PPM) 120 incorporated into Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) procedure PR 697 indicating the requirement to contact the police for the following behaviours.

Table 2: *Suspension and Pending Expulsion Incidents Deemed Violent Requiring Notification to Police*

SUSPENSIONS PENDING POSSIBLE EXPULSION Subject to a regulation made under clause 316 (1.1) (a), a principal shall suspend a pupil if he or she believes that the pupil has engaged in any of the following activities while at a school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate (Education Act s.310 (1). After the suspension is issued an investigation will be conducted by the principal within five (5) school days.	Principal May Issue Suspension	Notify Police	
		May	Shall
1. Possessing a weapon, including a firearm	1–20 Days		X
2. Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person	1–20 Days		X
3. Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner	1–20 Days		X
4. Committing sexual assault (Refer TDSB procedure PR. 608)	1–20 Days		X
5. Trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs	1–20 Days		X
6. Committing robbery	1–20 Days		X
7. Giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor	1–20 Days		X
7.1 Bullying if, i. The pupil has previously been suspended for engaging in bullying and, ii. The pupil's continuing presence in the school creates an un-acceptable risk to the safety of another person.	1–20 Days	X	
7.2 Any activity listed in section 306(1) motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation,	1–20 Days	X	X

Source: Toronto District School Board, PR 697, p. 12

School Contacting the Police

In this study, the participants were all charged with criminal offenses as a result of an incident that was deemed violent and eventually resulted in their all-school board expulsions. The police criminal investigation trumped the principal's school investigation of the incident. This meant that the principal had to wait to conduct their school investigation about the incident

until the police completed the criminal aspect of the investigation. The participants, at times, had to wait longer than the 20 days in the expulsion program, in segregation, until the principal was able to complete the school investigation and recommend an all-school board expulsion. Many of the participants discussed how being charged impeded them being able to tell their side of the story that resulted in the incident

The 20 day suspensions pending expulsion and the subsequent police charges legally prohibited the participants from being on or near their school property. This was further enforced through bail conditions and restrictions. Omar recalled being in the expulsion program for over two months before being informed that the principal recommended his expulsion. James and Shia also mentioned having to frequently ask the program staff about their expulsion statuses, with Shia stating he spent almost an entire semester in the program before learning he had received an all-school-board expulsion. The intersection of policing and the school system further exacerbated the participants' exclusion from their schools, stripping them of autonomy within the expulsion process and isolating them from their peers. James expressed his frustration:

with everything. My friends, girlfriend back then, my whole life was at this school and the police conditions told me I could not longer go anywhere near the school. Then I was expelled anyways but even if I got my expulsion lifted, I still could not go back [to my school] [be]cause court took like two years!

Omar:

It was so hard because I was like 12 years old and got charged with a pretty big thing and then I was not allowed to be around my friends, activities and teachers I liked. I had to be in court and yet at this expulsion program and it was like really, really hard for little kid. My mom and me also were told if I did not attend [expulsion program] and pass, then I could never go back to a school again. I mean I was 12.

Being in the limbo status of the 20 days suspended pending expulsion profoundly impacted the participants and their families, leaving them with limited voice and information.

No Voice During the Principal's Investigation

Participants discussed how, during the investigative phase of the expulsion process, their voices and those of their families were negated. TDSB procedures PR697 and PR586 outline that the principal "has the powers and duties (2007, c. 14, s. 4)" to lead and conduct the investigation and then determine if a student should be recommended for expulsion. In PR697, The principal is required to suspend the student, investigate, consider mitigating and other factors, apply the principles of progressive discipline and document the process used (TDSB, PR697, p. 10). For actions considered violent incidents, the procedures indicate that the student must first be suspended before an investigation ensues. Some participants indicated that even when suspended, their principals informed them they were being considered for expulsion without gathering information about their side of the story. Barry shared:

I was pretty sure that [the principal] was going to see from the investigation that I was not totally at fault. I was jumped by a bunch of guys and was just trying to protect myself, but I got totally blamed, expelled, and I was never asked for my side.

Omar noted that the principal did reach out to him to ask about what happened, but when he explained, the principal did not believe that he was reacting to ongoing issues with another student. Other participants discussed that no matter how they tried to justify their actions that resulted in their expulsions to the principals, they were not believed. Ben disclosed "*whatever I said meant nothing to them [principal]. They just believed what they wanted, and I was the problem. So kick me out.*"

Participants described a need for more validation of their voices, thoughts, and opinions about the incidents, allowing the principals to gather a holistic understanding of what had occurred when determining whether they deserved expulsion. They felt they were blamed immediately as the accused without any consideration of mitigating factors, as noted in PR697 and PR586.

Raymond spoke about being one of the few Black students in his secondary school and how a group of white football players often bullied him and his friends. He recalled that the bullying intensified when he began dating a white female student. Raymond was expelled for a physical altercation with one of the white football players:

My boys [Black friends] and I would just be chilling in the school, and these older white boys would try to touch our hair, follow us to the bus stop, drive by in their cars, and throw snowballs at us. Then the threats started when I started dating this white girl. One of these guys would come up to me in the hallway and kept bumping into me hard and would block the exits out of the school, so I started to carry a knife for my protection. I told the principal, and he didn't do anything but told me to stay away from this kid. But I was like, 'he doesn't stay away from me!' Even my girlfriend was scared for me [be]cause this guy and his friends hated me. I could tell they really wanted to hurt me. I was Black and dating a white girl. They didn't want to see a Black guy with a white girl. These guys were racist, and when this guy approached me and tried to punch me, all of his friends joined in. So I pulled out the knife, and they pulled back, but then the principal saw it, and I was the one to get into trouble. Nothing happened to them.

The school contacted the police, and Raymond was criminally charged for having a weapon (knife) during the physical altercation. During the expulsion process, Raymond noted he wanted to tell his side of the story *"but he [the principal] did not listen, and it was enough to expel me from my school. All they saw was a Black kid with a weapon, threatening a white kid. That's all it took."* The exclusion of the participants' voices during the expulsion process was apparent with the principal's power over the investigation, outcome, and recommendations for an all-school board expulsion.

Richard also believed that the principal did not consider mitigating factors and moved to recommend an all-school board expulsion, recalling:

I was not the only one involved in the fight, but I was the only one expelled. This only impacted me, while the other guys, all brown, did not get expelled. I lost my school life. When I was expelled, they [principal and school staff] listened to the brown boys. Instead, these boys were harassing me, and because I was Black, they [principal and

school staff] did not even listen to my side of the story. How can you decide to expel me without even talking to me?

Richard had just turned 15 when he was expelled for being involved in a physical altercation in the school bathroom, resulting in a student needing medical attention. Richard stated, *"I was involved in this fight with this older student who had been threatening me and my friends after school and tried to rob us."* Richard discussed that his voice during the expulsion investigation was unheard:

They [principal and school staff] didn't even want to hear me when I was trying to tell them that this brown kid was constantly threatening me and all my friends. We told the principal, guidance, and no one ever did anything to help us. They saw us Black boys and thought we were the issue, not this [brown] kid. The school believed the brown kid, and they did not even take in that I was saying this to them from time.

Many participants reported that they did not believe the incidents resulting in the initial suspension would lead to the extreme outcome of an all-school board expulsion. Ben remembered:

I was first suspended and had to leave the school to go to the [expulsion program] and thought the principal would call me to ask my side, which he didn't. Then my expulsion just happened so fast. The principal told the staff at [the expulsion program] that I was now expelled and could never go back to my school. I remember my mom being shocked and said someone had called from the school to explain it to her, but she did not understand. I was shocked. Really in disbelief.

Barry, Raymond, and Richard further discussed how this lack of information resulted in feelings of confusion, shock, and disbelief with the full school board expulsion. Jackson discussed how he did not even know he was expelled from all-school boards. When he learned about his expulsion, he spoke about how he and his mom felt:

My mom was shocked, and I was shocked. It was a fight, and now I was being expelled. No one even heard what really happened. I was trying to break up a fight, and then suddenly, I was blamed. I was never a safety issue and never got in trouble like this before.

Jackson spoke about not having any options or choices through the expulsion process. Jackson recalled it was the staff in the expulsion program "*[w]ho broke the news that my school principal was going to want to expel me to me and my mom. I would have loved to be able to tell them [the principal] my side of the story.*" Jackson stated that the principal and school staff misinterpreted his involvement in the physical altercation that resulted in his expulsion.

Shia also commented:

I was never asked to speak about my role in the incident or given any option by the school. I just remember being arrested at school, taken to the police station, and then told I had to go to the expulsion program otherwise I could never go back into school. I was like only 15 years old.

Holland recalled similar memories:

I was so young, like 14 years old, and just started high school. I remember asking my mom to ask the principal that I wanted to talk to the people who were going to expel me [be]cause no one was asking me to tell them my side of the story. I remember my mom telling me that I was expelled and had to go to a program, and this was so upsetting... they all decided without even considering my side.

Fanon (1952) described that anti-Blackness can only be sustained and further intensified by ensuring the subjugation of Black people and hence the dominance of whiteness, which occurred through the negation of voice and participation in the expulsion investigation process.

The Expulsion Hearing

After the expulsion investigation, the principal makes a recommendation for the expulsion. This recommendation then goes before the discipline committee, consisting of, at least three, School Board Trustees, who make the final decision to expel (TDSB, PR595. During the expulsion hearing, the participants again experienced a lack of both voice and participation.

No Voice during the Expulsion Hearing

Daniel and Jackson were the only participants who recalled some details about the discipline committee, and both disclosed their mothers attended the expulsion hearing but did not recall being told that they could attend. Daniel advised:

Mom just went to one or two meetings and agreed with the principal. She said it was all too much and took too much of her time as she worked two jobs. I think my mom went to the expulsion hearing, and didn't feel she could argue anything they were saying. She just wanted to make sure I could continue with school, and the agreeing to the expulsion so I could continue with school.

Jackson was expelled for being involved in a physical altercation at school and remembered similar sentiments:

My mom was just fed up with me already [be]cause of school constantly complaining about my behaviour, and she told me that this expulsion program might be good for me, but I think that is what the school told her. I don't even think she or we had any say when she went to the expulsion hearing and my mom wasn't told I could attend, and we didn't know if I could go.

The participants' mothers appeared frustrated and did not have the time to attend meetings about the expulsion process which the participants felt resulted in their parents not challenging their expulsions. If there were criminal charges, the participants and their parents were often advised by their legal representative not to say anything to the expulsion tribunal and to school staff, as such disclosures could potentially be used during their criminal trial. Daniel recalled *"My lawyer was like don't say anything to the school staff ever. They will use that to screw me."* The loss of voice and participation was deeply layered with the intersectionality of schooling and the criminal justice systems. Their families did not have the resources to fight these systems with lawyers, so their parents did what they could to ensure their sons would have the least negative schooling impacts Daniel recalled:

My mom was already having to deal with the lawyer meetings, she was losing money as she had to take time off of work and we were hoping I would not get any jail time. She just wanted me to look good and go to the [expulsion] program [be]cause they [the courts] needed evidence that I was doing 'good things.'

The Impact on Their Parents and Family

In the previous chapter, participants discussed how teachers' negative perceptions began to take hold and their parents began to believe the school's negative perceptions of them.

William, Omar, and Richard shared how the expulsion process affected their parents. William recalled:

I remember being mad at my mom, like, why do I have to go to this new school, and she kept saying that it would help me—I was like, help me with what? To be a better kid? It was like my folks believed the school that I was this bad, violent kid.

Omar and Richard discussed how their parents reacted to their expulsions. Omar remembered:

When I found out I was expelled, [my dad] ...looked so disappointed. He did not talk to me for over a week...I could hear my mom and dad arguing about me with my dad saying that I was going down the wrong path and that this would teach me a lesson.

Richard elaborated on this point “*when I got expelled, I was only coming to [the expulsion program] because my mom made me... she was so mad at me, and I felt no one, even my mom, could see the good in me.*” Upsetting and disappointing their mothers remained a focal point for many of the participants. They acknowledged that the expulsion process caused their mothers and families a great deal of distress, given the role of family as a protective factor for the academic success of Black boys (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Butler, 2021; Dormire & Harvey, 2021; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

According to most participants, the primary concern for their parents was for them to continue with school and graduate. For the participants, it was crucial that their parents saw them in a positive light, contrary to the negative framing by the schools during the expulsion investigation and hearing. Richard described this sentiment:

my mom and grandma were so tired from all the paperwork, meetings and phone conversations they had with the principal and other people as I was being expelled for doing something bad—like I was just a bad kid. The [principal] also used past issues he had with me to make me seem even worse. I felt so bad and guilty in front of my mom and grandma.

Andrew recalled:

I had a lot of friends and cousins and when I was expelled from all-school boards, I didn’t realize I could not even go to [school name] for dances, watch sporting games, or even

meet up with my cousins. It was embarrassing and isolated me, and my aunts were also telling my cousins to not hang out with me. Like I was some dangerous criminal.

Omar added:

I was my mom's boy but after I got expelled, I felt her love move away. She was harsher with me. Blamed me for more things and didn't believe me the way she used to. It has taken me a long time to get some of her trust back. I am a big man now and still; I have to work at her seeing me as a good guy.

Andrew and Omar statements highlight the emotional toll of the negative labels throughout the expulsion hearing and process, which continued to disengage the participants from school. Their families were also impacted by the solidifying negative labels exacerbated through the expulsion process solidified.

Anti-Black Labels

Although TDSB procedures do not list racism as a mitigating factor when recommending an expulsion, the ongoing induction of anti-Black reputations and labels exacerbated expulsions for the participants. Richard and Raymond described how they believed the incidents leading to their all-school board expulsions were rooted in anti-Black racism. Anton also highlighted anti-Black racism in the actions of his principal:

I knew the principal was happy to get rid of me, and when I went to the expulsion hearing, I remember [the principal] had my whole school history laid out there for these people to read. I was made to sound like a total villain, a criminal, so after hearing everything, who would want this Black kid in their schools?

Anton's disclosure reveals how principals share information about students with school staff, ensuring that their negative schooling histories further subjugate them due to anti-Black racism. Participants believed their suspension histories and anti-Black perceptions influenced the decision to expel them.

Information from school staff about their past and current behaviours was blamed for creating harmful school climates, making expulsion necessary to ensure school safety. This

information was provided to the discipline committee as part of the principal's investigation package. Omar noted after he and his mother were informed about the all-school board expulsion:

My mom spoke to the principal at [the expulsion program]. He told her that my past suspensions and bad behaviours contributed to the decision to expel me. I remember him telling my mom that the staff and students feared me.

Participants spoke of staff describing them as risks to their high schools, prompting recommendations for expulsions. Richard added:

The principal told me they did everything they could for me and that the school was not the right place for me. I needed help to make better decisions and control my actions, and I needed to be expelled to learn how to be more positive.

Omar and Andrew disclosed that, although they felt their suspensions might lead to expulsion, they thought it would only be from their current high school, not from all schools in the board.

Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) During the Expulsion Process

TDSB PR 586 indicates that when students are suspended for 20 days pending an expulsion, a Student Action Plan (SAP) is developed, which consists of specific goals. If the decision is made to expel the student, the SAP is then converted into an Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) (TDSB, PR 586, p. 2). According to PR 586, the E-SAP goals are established through a collaborative process involving the school, board staff, the student, and the parent or guardian. For expelled students, the E-SAP outlines the objectives they need to achieve to have their expulsions lifted and be readmitted to a school (TDSB, PR 586, p. 2). However, in this study, the participants disclosed that they were not involved in the process of establishing their E-SAP goals, contrary to the guidelines in PR 586. Omar: *"I just remember going to [the program] and then being told that I had to get counseling and I didn't think I needed any, but I don't remember having a say."* The participants discussed that they were not even aware of the E-SAP goals until they attended the expulsion program and were made aware of their expected

E-SAP goals which the principal had created without their or their parents' inputs as Ben shared *"It was like the principal had made all these goals for me but never talked to me about it"*.

At the expulsion intake meeting, the participants were not provided with any options to change or add to the already established E-SAP goals even when they disagreed with a goal(s).

Barry recounted:

When we came to the [expulsion program], staff just told me that I had these goals to complete, and part of that was anger management. I didn't need anger management; I needed someone to hear me. I got expelled for something that was not my fault, and no one listened [in the program]. They just wanted me to get anger management.

Anton recalled:

I did not remember being asked about these things I had to follow at [expulsion program]. I remember being told that I needed to make sure I completed them, and the dumb one was that they wanted me to go to counseling...trust me, I didn't need counseling. I was fine.

The TDSB has four expulsion sites which one principal oversees. The principal of the expulsion and suspension programs is the only one who can officially lift an all-school board expulsion for a student, as TDSB PR 586 states:

Successful Completion of an Expulsion Program / Re-admission where it is determined by the principal of the program that a student who has been expelled from all schools of the board has successfully met the objectives of the program for expelled students, the student will be readmitted to a school of the Board (p. 3).

The participants noted that the program principal was often not physically present in the programs each day. As a result, the expulsion program principal did not get to know and engage with the students resulting in the principal relying on information from the program staff about the student's progress of the E-SAP. James noted:

I don't think I ever met one on one with the guy [expulsion program principal]. I would hear staff say 'the principal is here' but like it was just a 'hi' to all of us and then he would be gone. So I know he didn't really know me. He just knew what he read about me and what staff would tell him and if staff didn't like you, then all this guy [expulsion

program principal] would hear is bad things I feel that is why I didn't get my expulsion lifted.

Within the expulsion program, staff held significant power, as their assessments determined whether participants were meeting their E-SAP goals, which were necessary for lifting the expulsions. Depending on the expulsion program staff perceptions of the expelled student, negative reputations became further exacerbated in the expulsion program when staff did not feel that the student was meeting their E-SAP goals. James remembered:

When I came to the program, I only attended because of my bail conditions. I hated one of the teachers. [The teacher] was always so rude and unnecessarily rude to me so I was rude right back. I did my work and came almost every day and she always kept threatening me that she would tell the principal to not lift my expulsion. I hated that but what was I supposed to do? Take her rudeness? Oh and I never did get my expulsion lifted [be]cause of my supposed attitude [be]cause the principal listened to this teacher and did not get to know me and I remember staff saying that I have to do better with my attitude.

The data from the participants illustrated that school staff actions during the expulsion process did not align with TDSB's expulsion policies and procedures. This misalignment resulted in further disengagement for the participants and their parents, who already faced negative reputations and a lack of voice. The power of school staff to negate student and parent input exacerbated and reinforced anti-Blackness.

Concluding Remarks

Participants recounted instances where they and their parents were blindsided by sudden recommendations for expulsion from school principals, coupled with the announcement that they could no longer return to their schools. The abruptness of these decisions left the participants and their parents in shock, deprived of any opportunity to share their perspectives or explain their side of the incident. Adding to the injustice, existing policies, procedures, and documents exacerbated anti-Blackness by compelling principals to involve the police for certain alleged actions, effectively linking the participants to the criminal justice system. Even during expulsion

hearings, participants do not recall being invited to attend nor granted the chance to speak. Decision-making relied heavily on anti-Blac negative labels, compounded by the negative reputations developed during their elementary school years.

The accumulation of negative reputations and labels from elementary to high school, combined with the suppression of their voices, perpetuated and intensified anti-Blackness. The following chapter will illustrate the participants' experiences within the expulsion program, further demonstrating the amplification of anti-Blackness.

CHAPTER NINE

EXPULSION PROGRAM: AMPLIFYING ANTI-BLACKNESS

In their narratives prior to expulsion, participants recounted how their teachers selectively conveyed negative information about them, perpetuating negative perceptions and undermining their sense of innocence throughout their elementary education, ultimately contributing to their expulsions. These pre-expulsion experiences illustrate how anti-Blackness shaped their identities within the schooling system (Aggarwal, 2016).

Anti-Blackness was further reinforced in the expulsion program, evidenced by the overrepresentation of Black male students, hyper-surveillance by program staff, continued lack of autonomy, strict rule enforcement, and the strengthening of negative biases and stereotypes. Participants experienced a loss of access to friends and an intensification of their negative reputations. Throughout this chapter, the process of becoming Black persisted, exacerbated by the amplification of anti-Blackness and the rigid enforcement of rules within the expulsion program. The participants' narratives underscored that being in the expulsion program felt reminiscent of a school jail.

Expulsion Program: School Jail

Sibblis (2014) witnessed the Black male body as being regulated, controlled, and rendered homeless, in schooling, after being in the expulsion programs. Sibblis (2014), similar to some of the participants in this study, described the expulsion program as a school jail a place students were controlled and watched, a place with strict directives the students had to follow and complete (similar to punitive sentences) to access mainstream school (become free and attend a regular school).

The concept of a school jail also propagates the dehumanization of the participants. Owusu-Bempah (2017) discussed when someone is considered lower intelligence, lacking morality, and with violent tendencies, it appears rational and normal for them to be segregated. In segregation, one can be seen as animal-like, and not deserving of compassion, empathy and second chances (Owusu-Bempah, 2017). Further, Goff et al. (2010) and Annamma (2015) found that the dehumanizing of Black boys is maintained through anti-Black labels, biases, and stereotypes where their innocence is negated, and their masculinity is labelled as violent and aggressive.

The participants' experiences throughout their school careers indicated that school staff saw them in dehumanizing ways which carved out the pathways to school segregation. Sibblis (2023) observed that expulsion programs serve as carceral spaces shaping Black male identities. These carceral spaces create dissonance between their experiences and illuminating the pervasive influence of disciplinary power within school spaces (Sibblis, 2023). Sibblis (2023) noted "that despite the universal propensity toward free agency that they possess, they are in fact out of place in spaces of freedom, and society reinforces this message by invoking carcerality in all of its modalities" (Sibblis, 2023, p. 167).

Sojoyner's analyses (2013, 2017) had revealed that the marginalization and control exerted over Black students in schooling likened the education system to a jail-like environment, reinforcing the carceral state. Extending this critique to the Canadian context, Maynard (2017) also argued that compounded discrimination faced by Black, particularly male, students contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline. Being segregated within an expulsion program from mainstream schooling, under the guise of having participated in a or many violent incident, deepened the participants becoming Black through the lens of anti-Blackness.

"It was like the program was just only for Black boys" (Omar)

The participants noted that the expulsion program was primarily filled with Black male students, and this further solidified anti-Black biases of Black males for staff. Omar described his first impression when he entered the expulsion program:

At first, I found this funny [seeing so many Black male students], but because I stayed in the program for so long, I cannot remember any white students—maybe a few brown—but definitely no white. It was like the program was just only for Black boys.

Omar added:

We were like all bad kids in a sort of school jail place. I know people who are in jail and have gone to jail, and they are all Black; if you are a Black man, you have a good chance that you will, at some point, go to jail or know someone who went to or is in jail. So, being expelled kind of prepares you for that as a Black boy. You are kicked out of school, cannot see your friends during school time, you have to almost be perfect in the program to get your expulsion lifted, and you are meeting every other kid that is not doing good—so all your friends become the bad and dangerous kids—just like being in jail.

Raymond described the reaction he and the staff had when a white student entered the expulsion program:

The staff was like so shocked that a white kid was going to be in the program, and so was I. The staff told all of us, Black guys, to be 'nice' to the new kid—like we were some kind of danger, but the white kid was not.

Raymond and Omar's experiences align with Sibblis' (2014) observations that the "expectation is that black students populate the expulsion program since it mirrors the prison population, logically follows from media portrayals and feeds the dominant racist discourse" (p. 77).

Schooling spaces, turned into carceral spaces, teach Black students, who are contained within expulsion programs, that violence in the form of anti-Black racism is endemic in all institutions and all spaces (Crichlow, 2014; Sibblis, 2014). It becomes normalized to see Black male bodies in excluded and confining school spaces as a form of punishment and the impossibility for Black males to re-imagine themselves away from carceral-like settings (Crichlow, 2014; Sibblis, 2014). Although TDSB data indicates expulsions are on a decrease, Black male students still

continue to be the largest racial group in this category (TDSB, 2021-22), supporting Omar's observations. Statistics Canada (2022) indicates that Black male youth "made up 19% of all male youth admissions in custody" (p.6), reinforcing the narratives and images of seeing Black males in segregated and controlled spaces (Crichlow, 2014).

Increased Surveillance, Perpetuation of Negative Stereotypes, and Erosion of Innocence.

Crichlow (2014) affirmed that negative stereotypes—such as being deemed bad and dangerous—contribute to the prisonization of Black males, encompassing their containment, monitoring, and control. Due to such negative labelling, Black male bodies are viewed as weapons seen as lethal, scary, dangerous, and in need of suppression. Such negative stereotypes justify harsher punishments and school exclusions of Black male bodies, which in turn reify the notion that expulsion program spaces function as prison-like environments (Crichlow, 2014; Sibblis, 2023).

Shia, Ben and Omar discussed the pressure to prove they were worthy to return to a regular high school, and this pressure was continual in the expulsion program. Omar advised "*I just remember going to [the program] and then being told that I had to get counseling and I didn't think I needed any, but I don't remember having a say.*" Shia commented:

It's like you have to attend [the expulsion program], pass all your courses when you are expelled, and then they tell me that I need anger management counseling. I resented that this was how I was assessed and that not going for anger counseling would prevent me from getting my expulsion lifted; the program was more strict than my bail conditions.

Further, Raymond and Richard discussed how the staff already knew about their school histories and past school infractions. They both spoke about the negative biases they experienced when entering the expulsion program. Raymond reported:

When I was finally expelled, I attended two different expulsion programs before coming to [expulsion program]. I was not about to take any crap from the staff. It's like they knew everything about my school past history. I knew I had to be there [be]cause of my

court conditions .[Staff] were scared of me. I could do no good [be]cause they just had such a wrong view of who I was, like some dangerous, mean kid, and I was only 16.

Richard's experiences were similar:

No matter where I went, even to the program, I expected to be treated like an outsider. I expected that the new staff [in the expulsion program] would know every bad thing I did, even when I was like 6 and 7 years old.

In the expulsion program, the participants stated that the surveillance was more intense than they recalled in high school. There were more staff with less students and students in the program could not go outside independently or mingle with other students aside from those in the expulsion program. This stringent surveillance continued to create disengagement and demotivation for schooling. Anton and James's interviews indicated that the expulsion program further solidified their feelings of marginalization and exclusion in schooling. Both discussed that the constant watching by expulsion program staff prepared them for the prison. Anton asserted:

We all were like together and they had eyes on us all the time. Every time I looked up, [CYW] would stare at me. You all told us when to eat when to break, when to study, and we couldn't leave once we got there, but the worst was when you would hold the TTC tickets hostage if we misbehaved even though they were part of what we all got in the [expulsion] program—I hated that ongoing punishment. It was like a school jail.

James' disclosure captured the grooming in the expulsion program of Black students for prison:

I know what jail feels like [be] because I was in jail my whole life in school. When I went to the 'Roy' [Roy McMurtry Youth Centre], it felt like my experiences in school—everyone thinking and seeing you as a rotten kid, bad kid, violent kid, being watched all the time, being told what to do and meeting some of the hardest kids I ever met—keep your head down, don't talk—so really, being expelled taught me how to act in jail. I guess some good came out of it.

Anton further discussed the lack of autonomy:

I remember having to work harder for people to like me, to see me, and then let the authorities decide if I deserved to return to a normal school—the cards—always in their

hands—never in mine. I had no say in anything. It felt exactly the same when I got caught up and went to jail. I had no power; no voice, watched constantly, and so on, just like I felt when I was in the expulsion program.

Anton's experiences speak to how the expulsion program prisonized Black males and set pathways to prison (Crichlow, 2014; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Richard added a further dimension to his experiences and how it negated the positive parts of who he was:

I was 'on' all the time...I knew how the school treated me, so when I came to the expulsion program, I already knew that the staff would know all about me as a troubled kid, a bad kid, kid with bad friends, a kid doing bad things, kid who has no credits, blah blah blah. No one cared that I loved to write lyrics, that I liked to draw, that I actually liked to read—no one—I was just a badass kid to them all, a kid who needed to be contained.

Richard's disclosure centres anti-Black racism and the negative stereotypes of anti-Blackness, such as violence and danger, ascribed deeper when attending the expulsion program. Richard added that the jail-like environment further exacerbated program staff perceiving the participants with a lack of innocence. Richard stated

[t]he program staff were always seeing me and the other boys as up to no good. It was like we could do nothing to be seen as good, just always guilty of something and blamed for all that was wrong. How school staff saw me just kept getting worse by being in the program.

At-Risk of Future Violence Labels

Defining behaviours as at-risk of violence exacerbates the dehumanization of Black males (Crichlow, 2014; Owusu-Bempah, 2017). The lack of innocence was further cemented by assessing the participants to be at-risk of ongoing and future violence. hooks (2004) stressed that the power created through exacerbating the at-risk labels for Black males is dehumanizing, similar to Owusu-Bempah's (2017) study outcomes. Crichlow (2014) argued that "[a]t risk of future violence labels create apathy about the intersectionality of gender and anti-Black racism where rule enforcement, containment, social control and more regulation becomes the solution for perceived and biases perceptions of Black males" (p. 240). Crichlow (2014) posited that

labels of violence are normalized for Black males, and this becomes foundational in schooling experiences.

Within their E-SAP goals, the principals of their expelling school would include the goal for the program social worker to assess the students' at-risk of violence. The at-risk of violence assessment was based on the social worker using the Structured Assessment Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) assessment tool, which is known to assess the potential future risk of violence for youth. What is not centred in the assessment tool is how anti-Black racism and gender impact how the participants are perceived by staff and how these perceptions shape the participants' behaviours and reactions in school and towards school staff. Recall, that expulsions can only occur for behaviours that the Ontario Ministry of Education has defined as violent (PPM 141, 2012). Omar recounted:

I kept hearing that I was at-risk of being violent and at-risk of losing my temper and at-risk of this and at-risk of that., I was not walking around all upset and angry. I only got that way when the principal and teachers did not listen to my side of the story. I mean, I was a nice kid, I think I was a nice kid, right?

Defining the participants as at-risk of violence began with their early schooling experiences which were further exacerbated by all-school board expulsions. Expulsion programs have stringent demands for conformity to the program rules including participants having to demonstrate behaviours that align with TDSB's Code of Conduct which assessed by program staff. Crichlow (2014) reminds us that carceral environments, such as expulsion programs, prepare Black males for prison and cement stereotypes that Black males are at-risk of violence and criminality. Daniel spoke about being regarded as at-risk:

Our wants were never considered in the program...it was like you came to the program, and they were like, you have four courses to do, and you have to do this...this is what time you take a break and when you eat and what you eat and when you leave...you have to behave all the time and if you do anything that is outside of that-like what normal kids would do-suddenly you are at-risk or doing risky and dangerous things.

Eric added the circle of peers he associated with in the expulsion program, further substantiated his at-risk labels in the expulsion program to staff, recalling “[t]he staff were always telling me to not hang out with kids from the program as I would look bad on me and bad on getting my expulsion lifted but who was I supposed to hang with then?” John spoke about how the at-risk label impacted how he saw himself:

I was known as the funny one. But when I got expelled, I was not funny anymore...all I heard was the word risk, risk, risk. Kinda like how people speak about people in jail—they are all risk. Like how do you shake that label and who the hell is defining the risk?

Here, John mentions the relationship between being seen as a risk and being in jail. Ben also discussed the impact of being seen as a youth at-risk of violence:

When you are always the risk, you never feel like you can do any good...you are already up against a massive mountain of negative labels the teachers, schools, and everyone puts on you, including the courts and police. I could not think of *one thing* that made me feel like me—the happy, funny, and kind kid—this got worse when I came to [the expulsion program]. There I was seen as a violent kid.

Not Feeling Safe and Lack of Attendance

Many of the participants felt unsafe in the program as it was located outside of their known neighbourhoods. Not feeling safe and being in a new neighbourhood without friends, familiarity and supports would often result in low attendance. The lack of attendance negatively impacted them in meeting their E-SAP goals. John recalled:

I was in survival mode all my school life; my mind was never in school. I didn’t want to travel taking two buses to get to the program. It was far, I didn’t know the area and truly, it could be dangerous for me [be]cause people I know, and trust were far. I was so annoyed.

When in the expulsion program, William struggled immensely in his attendance and behaviour, resulting in him remaining expelled for six years. William spoke of the expulsion program being far outside his neighbourhood noting, “*I was unable to shake the fear of traveling so far out of my area even though I knew I had to come [to program] to get my expulsion lifted so*

I didn't come to the program often". Further, William spoke of the harmful accumulation of experiences in elementary school that became paramount when he was expelled, resulting in feelings of anger and apathy, and, similar to John, *"my anger just got bigger and bigger and had nothing left when I was expelled, and I just lost all desire to show up to the program and school overall."* Some of these ongoing feelings also resulted in intentional absences even when they recognized that they would need to attend the expulsion program to get their expulsions lifted.

William elaborated:

My frustration led to angry confrontations with other students in the [expulsion] program. Like anything would set me off [be]cause I was easily annoyed and felt the intensity of pressure to fulfill everything I needed to do, travel so far and also keep looking over my shoulder for my safety

Eric too spoke about how his lack of attendance due to not feeling safe, prevented him from getting his expulsion lifted:

I didn't really go to the [expulsion] program much; I didn't feel safe going to an area that was not my community. I was always scared—even going and coming from the program could have been dangerous, so I avoided the program and prevented me from getting my expulsion lifted.

Shia commented that the need to feel safer in the expulsion program was due to its location:

Feeling safe in the expulsion program was hard. I mean, I was robbed three times in the program, and my dad had to come in and tell the staff that they had a duty to protect me—but how could they protect me outside of school? It was no better in school, and we could not leave at all.

Feeling safe in these programs was exacerbated by being there as only four programs throughout Toronto which had to serve the entire city. They could quite possibly attend a program with youth from other communities with whom they had a conflict, causing a lack of attendance (attendance was one of the assessment components to get an expulsion lifted). Shia asked, *"staff would always tell me, how can we advocate for you to get your expulsion lifted and go back to a regular school if your attendance is so poor?"* Shia further argued:

My attendance in school was not always the best, but you can't expel a kid for not coming to school. I know that [be]cause I was that kid. So I mean, then why use it as a condition to get your expulsion lifted when safety, fear, and overall frustration with being expelled were issues that impacted our attendance?

Concerning the staff in the expulsion program, Barry and Anton acknowledged that they felt more connected to staff than they had experienced in their past schooling experiences.

However, these positive connections with staff were too late and too few to change their motivation to attend the program. Anton recalled:

I only agreed to the [expulsion] program [be]cause I was still young and thought I could try to get this expulsion lifted and return to a regular school...Even though I hated all the rules [in the expulsion program]... [Staff] tried to help me get my credits, but... staff support did not change my desire to stay in school.

Barry was only in the expulsion program for a brief period. Barry stated that the expulsion program staff tried to encourage him to attend programming. He recalled that " *the staff was nice, but my mind was not in it anymore, and truth be told, I just wanted to work and the nice staff in the [expulsion] program was not enough to make me want to attend.*"

Loss of Friends and Activities

Recall from Chapter Two, students who are all-school board expelled are forbidden to go on any publicly funded school property in Ontario, which excludes them from any involvement with their home school peers, activities, sports, and programming. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2024) cites "[s]tudents expelled from all schools in their school board cannot go to school or take part in regular school activities or events (such as field trips and school team events)" (section 6, para. 4). The expulsion programs staff shared facilities such as the gymnasium, with other programs in the building. The expulsion program staff were able to offer some lunchtime sports such as basketball, however, they also used that as punishment for the expelled students by withdrawing that benefit if they felt students were misbehaving in the

program. Andrew recalled, "[w]hen the staff would tell us that we could not play something in the gym at lunch, I lost my mind—it was like added punishment." James:

I was really sad that I had to leave my girl [friend] and all my friends behind. It tore me up when they would tell me about everything they were doing, and here I was, in this stupid program for kids; I lost a lot more than just school, eh—I lost connections to all the people I cared for. I was frustrated and often annoyed with having to come to the program. That's how I was dealing with all this sudden loss of friends.

Raymond discussed the isolation when he attended the expulsion program: "*I really felt alone when I got expelled. All my friends were still at high school doing their things including my girlfriend, and here I was not allowed to go anywhere*". He went on to say that he wound up '*making friends with these other expelled kids*'. Jackson expanded on this:

Coming to the program was not good. I began to connect with the guys there [in the expulsion program]; it got me doing things that were so much worse than anything I would have done in school...I was just hungry for friends and connections.

Omar remembered the loss of friends:

Hanging with those kids was crazy. I was like 14, and they were all mostly 16 and 17, so all of a sudden, I went from having friends who were my age to all these older youth. I began to smoke weed like every day [be]cause they became my circle, and all I know is that here I was smoking up every day after the program, and if I were in school, I would have been on the school basketball team practicing.

These narratives by Raymond, Jackson, and Omar speak to the need for friends and peer connections. Although these connections came with some harmful activities that, for example, Jackson described as "*hanging out with expelled youth and doing things that were so much worse than my friends at school*," it was vital for them to create relationships as there was a loss of connections through the segregation the expulsion program created. James and Andrew also spoke about how they lost all connections to athletics and activities that they had in high school. Being unable to be part of a team and play sports negatively impacted them. James recounted:

I wanted nothing more than to play ball, and I hated that I could not play on a team—all my friends were in the school when I got expelled, and I lost all the things I liked to do. Really I just lost all of my rights.

Masculinity and “man up” (James)

Crichlow (2014) looked at how governmental social systems, such as education, continue violence against Black male bodies where their masculinities

are articulated in narratives that originate with children born into spirals of poverty, colonialist and racist child welfare systems, the school-to-prison pipeline, maladaptive interpersonal violence, disenfranchised communities, discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, paramilitary policing, hyper incarceration and everyday racism (p. 114).

Barry reflected on how showing strength, power, and masculinity were prioritized by expulsion program staff and, interestingly, fueled by being expelled:

I felt lower than anything when I was expelled, so I acted out so much. I was rude to the girls and thought I was 'the man'...I feel I acted like that [be]cause I didn't feel any power in school. I did not feel competent, valued, or worth anything in school when I got expelled. I still got into fights, had a bad temper, and shit, I talked such nonsense to the girls—rude, rude, rude.

Eric emphasized enhancing their maleness and at-riskness within the expulsion program. He exclaimed that:

the expulsion program made me feel even more at-risk as a man. The expulsion program and staff that I was dangerous and scary and could not show any vulnerability. I only had that power, a Black man, be strong, be a man, don't let anyone else make you feel less than.

Barry and Eric spoke of feeling they needed to constantly uphold their masculinity in the expulsion spaces, which was demonstrated by disrespecting staff and using misogynistic language toward female peers and, at times, female staff. The intersectionality of being Black and male strongly impacted how the participants were treated in schooling and how they experienced the expulsion program. In the expulsion program, they continued to experience the negative impacts of these intersectionalities by having to control their feelings to uphold

masculinity (Crenshaw, 1989, 2015; hooks, 1992). The constant emphasis on not showing weakness as a male resonated in the participants' disclosures as Omar recalled:

[the Child and Youth Worker] was always telling us to 'man up' when we were rude to staff or misbehaving. I remember laughing back then, but now, I think about how that stopped me from wanting to express my feelings.

James echoed Omar's memory by sharing:

The [Child and Youth Worker] was someone I looked up to when I came to the [expulsion] program, and I really liked him, but his way of dealing with us was not helpful. His response to everything was that I was not a 'man.' I don't think he understood how much that bothered me and really dehumanized me; the only control I had was my manhood, which also kept getting called out by [the Child and Youth Worker]. I was not clever; I was a bad kid and now not man enough.

Consequences of Defiance

In response to the persistent anti-Blackness in the program, the participants' resistance capital, derived from family and collective peer experiences was crucial, offered strategies to navigate and transcend the inequities and oppressions (Yosso, 2005). Despite these adaptive survival strategies, certain participant behaviours within the expulsion program—such as maintaining silence, non-attendance, and vocalizing concerns to staff—were often misconstrued, by expulsion program staff, as non-compliance with the expulsion program rules, their E-SAP goals and as misbehaviours potentially impacting the prospects of having their expulsions lifted. Eric articulated his approach, guided by familial wisdom, and explained:

I was no fool, eh? My older brother told me not to say anything to any [expulsion program] staff, especially the [expulsion program] principal, about anything they accused me of. I always made sure to call my brother or uncle as they would come and deal with it, but both told me never to say anything.

Eric stated he was only in the program for a brief time. Although he did not get his expulsion lifted, Eric avoided the program as he believed the staff would call the police if he became upset and surmised:

My high school didn't listen to me and then expelled me; the expulsion program told me I had to do this and this and this, and still no one listened to me, and then I saw kids in the program staying in the program for years. So I was like, not me, I'm out.

Eric deliberately avoided prolonged involvement in the program, citing a lack of responsiveness from the school system and witnessing other students languish in the program for extended durations. Additionally, their resistance manifested through non-attendance served as a means for participants to reclaim power, their wellness and autonomy within a system that incessantly sought to control their bodies in schools (Oba, 2018).

Concluding Remarks

The expulsion program, characterized by its jail-like atmosphere, posed significant challenges for students in maintaining attendance, meeting academic and behavioural expectations, and engaging in counseling, which hindered their active participation. Participants' narratives revealed a dual experience of invisibility during the expulsion process and hypervisibility within the program, which perpetuated negative reputations and restricted their opportunities to reintegrate into mainstream high schools.

In the upcoming chapter, we will explore how anti-Blackness in schooling is confirmed through participants' perspectives on the barriers they faced in transitioning out of the expulsion program and overcoming their expulsion statuses. This analysis builds on the insights derived from their narratives.

CHAPTER TEN

TRANSITIONING FROM THE EXPULSION PROGRAM: SOLIDIFYING ANTI-BLACKNESS

In this chapter, the participants' experiences, as they transitioned out of the expulsion program, are explored. Throughout this period of transition, anti-Blackness was solidified and obstructed schooling opportunities for the participants. Despite efforts to integrate back into mainstream schools, none of the fifteen participants fully reintegrated. Even for the participants who successfully got their expulsions lifted, they were denied entry into a mainstream high schools.

When an expulsion is lifted, the student and parent(s) must apply to the expulsion program's principal requesting the opportunity to return back to a mainstream school (TDSB, PR 586) . According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2024), the request from the student and parent(s) can be: #1 a request to return to the original school the student was expelled from or #2 a request to attend another school in the school board. When an expelled student cannot fulfill the expulsion program requirements, their expulsion status remains, and the student cannot attend any publicly funded school in Ontario.

For the eight participants whose expulsions were lifted, only two managed to return to mainstream high schools but were re-expelled shortly thereafter and sent back to the expulsion program. Their negative reputations and expulsion statuses led mainstream schools to reject them. Faced with limited options, some participants chose to leave the expulsion program, while others attempted alternative programs or opted to remain within the expulsion program.

Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) and Leaving the Expulsion Program

Anton and Eric discussed the expulsion program staff's impact on their prospects of getting their expulsions lifted. Anton recalled, *"I remember that in the program, the staff had to*

like you, and you almost had to be better than you were before the expulsion to prove that you were worthy of getting your expulsion lifted." Overall, the participant testimonies suggested that the E-SAP goals kept students in the expulsion program rather than facilitating to help them get out. At times, the participants felt that staff biases impacted whose expulsion would be or not be lifted. James reported that although he created good relationships with staff, he could tell that being outspoken in the expulsion program annoyed the program staff, "...which I think really impacted them not lifting my expulsion. It was so frustrating [be]cause the teacher just did not like me at all, and I know she impacted that outcome for me".

The E-SAP goals demanded that the participants abide by the Code of Conduct but more importantly, it required the participants to demonstrate to program staff that they accept accountability for their part in the situation that resulted in their all-school board expulsions (Ontario Ministry of Education, October 27, 2023, sect. 9. para. 3-4). Having to take responsibility for actions that resulted in their expulsions did not consider the dynamics and complexities of the expelling event. Some of the participants were not agreeable that they were the aggressors. Some of the participant were criminally charged and stated they were advised by their legal counsel not to say anything to anyone about the incident. Anton elaborated on this matter:

My lawyer told me not to tell anyone about what happened, and I remember staff bugging me all the time about the details and like asking me to take responsibility my part in the incident. I was like, I have charges and do not want to go to jail, so why would I tell you anything that could ruin my court stuff? They [school staff] threatened that unless I took accountability for my actions, I may not get my expulsion lifted. They [school staff] just didn't get it or understand it. It was like I had no voice, ever.

James echoed Anton's sentiments:

I knew I was innocent in the situation that got me expelled and wanted nothing more than just to leave the expulsion program. But that would mean I would need to take accountability for actions that I did not take. It was like everyone just wanted me to be

the bad guy, and what would happen if I took responsibility and what if the courts asked the schools for their records? I was pleading not guilty to the charges I got from school. I felt the program just didn't care about how me telling them [program staff] 'I take responsibility' would impact my life.

Barry also addressed this in the interview:

The staff were okay with all of us but really just had us 'toe the line.' They did not advocate for us and used to threaten us, saying they would not agree to have our expulsions being lifted if we did not listen to them or do what they told us to do. So even though, we all kinda got along with staff, they were kinda like the wardens who just told us what to do and then reported us when we screwed up.

The next section discusses reasons the participants left the expulsion program and schooling all together.

Barriers in Returning to a Mainstream High School

The eight participants who had their expulsions lifted reported that their ability to choose a school was significantly constrained by the negative stigma associated with their expulsion records. Among these eight individuals, six opted to leave the education system entirely when they were denied entry into mainstream schools.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Procedure PR 540 aims to facilitate the reintegration of students whose expulsions have been lifted back into mainstream high schools. Last updated in 2013, Procedure PR 540 mandates that principals at receiving schools have no discretion in denying admission and must accept and welcome the previously expelled student (TDSB, PR 540, p. 2, 4e). According to the procedure, these students are entitled to return to their home schools unless prevented by police or bail conditions, and optional attendance procedures do not apply (section 4.2.b & c).

Procedure PR 540 also stipulates "[t]he receiving school shall make every attempt to match the student's timetable; however, the student will have to enroll in whatever classes are available if the timetable cannot be matched" (p. 4, 4.2.K). However, Omar and Richard

experienced ongoing difficulties integrating into a high schools as the high schools' inability to accommodate their educational needs. Omar remarked:

It's not like they could have this 16-year-old student in a grade nine English class, right? I mean, that would just make me look stupid. It's not like they could have this 16-year-old student in grade nine English class, right? I mean that would just make me look stupid".

Richard added to this:

I was expelled when I was so young and just finishing grade nine...by the time I got my expulsion lifted, I didn't have all my grade nine and 10 credits. It was really hard for me to return to a high school when I would be in classes with all the young students.

Procedure PR 540, further indicates the principal of the receiving school of a student, who has had their expulsion lifted,

[s]hall inform appropriate school staff about the student and his or her history of aggressive or violent behaviour and take appropriate safety measures and advise the staff that they must treat any information about this student and the incident(s) disclosed at the meeting as confidential (as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act) (section 4.2.h)

PR 540 allows the negative reputations of the participants to continue to be known to school staff even when they transition out of the expulsion program. Richard asserted:

It was so frustrating when I got my expulsion lifted. I was still young and wanted to go to a high school that had a great basketball team and then I heard the staff in the program tell me that the school wouldn't take me. They said I would cause problems in the school and that I was known in the community to do criminal things. Like what was the use of telling us to do everything to get the expulsion lifted but then not be able to go back to a normal school?

Richard's sentiments were echoed by Jackson and Daniel, who both got their expulsion lifted but were not able to attend a mainstream high school due to their negative school reputations and perceptions of violence. Jackson noted *"All I was, after the expulsion, was seen as a dangerous, violent and gang affiliated kid. That is all I was seen as to teachers"*. Shia wanted to return to his home school and recalled:

I was 15ish when I was expelled and got my expulsion lifted just after my 17th birthday, but the school I wanted to go to keep telling my mom that they did not want me to attend [be]cause I was part of a 'gang', and they didn't want that type of problem in their school.

The impact of negative biases and assumptions on being able to go back to a mainstream school was also further discussed by Jackson:

I was in disbelief that no high school would take me once I got my expulsion lifted. I remember them telling my mom that I had a violent history; they went through my school record and found that I had anger problems, and combined with having low credits, the school just would not take me. So I had no choice but to stay in [the expulsion] program.

Ben spent less than a year in the expulsion program and stated he was both frustrated that he could not return to his original school. The principal of the school felt that having him back would impact the school climate negatively. Other schools he picked were also denied due to those principals' similar reasons. Ben posited *"staff [in the expulsion program] never really told you why you couldn't go to another high school I picked, but I knew it was [be]cause of my past, and they thought all of us expelled kids were dangerous."*

Andrew, Ben, and Richard discussed not being allowed to attend the school of their choice or re-enter their original expelling school. All three had their expulsions lifted, although they were denied return to their original expelling schools and told that other schools did not want them due to their reputations and reasons for expulsions. Andrew recalled:

I was so happy to get my expulsion lifted. I think I was like 17, and I wanted to go back to my old high school, but they told me that I couldn't go back by [expulsion program staff] [be]cause the school thought I would cause problems and the other schools I wanted to go to, I was told that they could not program for me [be]cause I was like 17 years old.

Andrew mentioned a situation that would often plague the expelled students. High schools often resisted taking in an expelled student who had been in an expulsion program for a few semesters. Frequently, high school principals would cite challenges in offering course selections to these

students. They often referenced lower credit accumulation or cited their poor attendance history as factors indicating a poor fit or potential safety concerns for the school.

Expelled students become invisible to the system, as expulsion policy and procedures prohibited their presence on any school property outside of the expulsion program. This forced disconnection sustained their invisibility within the educational system even when the participants followed all expulsion rules and procedures, they still could not return to a mainstream high school. When their expulsions were lifted, they were now hyper-visible in high school spaces and became demarcated by their expulsion statuses, as illustrated with Omar and Ben's experiences.

For all the participants who had their expulsions lifted, only two returned to a high school and these two were re-expelled. Sibblis (2014) observed that for students to graduate, they must prove to be something different and better from what the expulsion space creates – better than they are expected to be, if they are afforded the opportunity to get their expulsions lifted. Sibblis (2014) noted Black expelled male students:

Are challenged to remain impervious to the violence of the space that imprisons them. If they manage to perform this difference, that is, if they present as quiet, pleasant, and 'well-behaved' students, they are viewed by staff with skepticism and tested daily for sustainability (p. 78).

According to the participants, the mainstream high schools' refusal to accept the participants, who had their expulsions lifted, included low credit accumulation and the schools' concerns and biases about their negative reputations and propensity for violence as a result of being expelled. Ben recounted that

no school wanted me [be]cause I only had ten credits and they could not provide classes for me plus they didn't like that I had friends at the school as they assumed that me and my friends would be trouble."

Andrew also spoke about the mainstream schools concerns of having friends at the school:

I wanted to go to this one high school where my friends were, and they told me that it would not be a good fit [be]cause they feared that I was going to cause trouble with my friends and that we all associated with negative people in the community and would cause issues in the school.

Despite having their expulsion lifted, Omar and Holland remained in the expulsion program. Holland remained to get more credits. Omar remained in the expulsion program after his second all-school board expulsion was lifted to graduate from high school. Omar expressed:

Staying in the program was just a lot safer for me [be]cause I had been expelled twice and I was not willing to go through another one. The staff knew me in program and so I didn't feel so judged like I would have if I tried to go back to another high school. It was all just so disappointing. and I accumulated the credits needed to graduate.

To continue schooling for those denied access to a high school after having their expulsion lifted, the participants and their families would often ask to remain in the expulsion program. Shia disclosed *"even though my expulsion was lifted, no school wanted me so I wanted to stay in the [expulsion] program [be]cause I could still get credits and try to graduate"*. Shia remained in the expulsion program for a few more semesters until he turned nineteen. Although he increased his credit accumulation, he did not get enough credits to graduate. Shia, Omar, Jackson, and Holland had their expulsions lifted and continued to remain in the expulsion program as Assessment & Support (A&S) students. A&S students continue to be in a precarious category as they no longer have an expulsion status, although they are unable to return to a mainstream high school.

Why Some of the Participants Left the Program Before Turning 18

The Education Act was modified in 2006, through Bill 52, which raised the legal Ontario age of compulsory education to eighteen years old. In this study, some of the participants stated that they did not experience or foresee their success in schooling after being expelled and chose to leave schooling before they turned eighteen years old. As the expulsion program is voluntary for all-school board expelled students, school boards have no authority to force expelled

students, even under the age of eighteen to remain in an expulsion program, the only schooling options for expelled students (TDSB, PR 586).

In this study, six of the fifteen participants, Richard, Andrew, Anton, Daniel, Eric, and Ben, left schooling before their eighteenth birthday. Four of the six, Ben, Daniel, Richard, and Andrew successfully had their expulsions lifted and left schooling prior to their eighteenth birthday without obtaining their secondary school diploma. Daniel spoke about why he chose to leave school and gain employment:

I began to work with my uncle. He worked in drywall installation, and I would go with him in the morning and work. This was so f* satisfying. No worries, no shit from teachers, no awful rules, and the ones there, like having to work during work time, was worth it [be]cause I was being paid. I was working with some friends and family and would get home. I was tired but had nothing to worry about, not stress from school. I would rather work and make money than stay in school.

Ben:

School and being expelled taught me a lot, eh? It taught me that I did not belong and that it was not enough, no matter how much I tried. I felt like a villain in school. So, when I left just before my 18th birthday, I was happy, found a job, and began to make money. Some of the guys I met in safe schools also left with me, and we all worked together. The work came and go, but I was always good at making money. So, school taught me I can do better and feel better outside of it.

Both Daniel and Ben left school at seventeen. They had their expulsions lifted and disclosed that working relieved pressures associated with their anti-Black labels. They noted that they found peace in leaving school, working and surrounding themselves by people who saw their worth.

Daniel explained:

After I began the [expulsion] program, I was like, I can't do this [school] anymore. I mean, the [expulsion]program was strict, and I sucked it up. I had to be on my best behaviour, and I was a kid. So, I learned I didn't want to be in school no more, no matter what. I found a job where people actually treated me well, something that I never felt in school.

Andrew provided insights as a student who tried to re-enter schooling but was told that he could not attend the school he wanted and decided to remain in the expulsion program:

I got expelled in grade nine and thought I could go back to high school for grade 10. But no one wanted to take me on [be]cause I was seen as the bad kid. So I stayed in the expulsion program but hated the rules. So I left when I was 17, and no one really cared after to get me back into school.

Andrew's situation highlighted a crucial issue regarding school re-engagement for students whose expulsions are lifted. Andrew, along with three other participants, ultimately left schooling altogether after being unable to enroll in a mainstream high school despite having their expulsions lifted.

Anton left the expulsion program and schooling at age sixteen without getting his expulsion lifted. He explained:

I was 13 when I was expelled and spent 3 years in safe schools. Now I am almost 30, and let me tell you, it has not been easy. I have had so many jobs, traveled west for jobs, and done some awful back-breaking jobs, but still, nothing permanent or secure. I know I left school when I was 16 and know if I stayed and sucked it up, I may be more today, but being Black, I don't think the school could ever give me that feeling of 'more' because it was demeaning, now it's hard, but I don't feel that demeaning feelings as much at work.

Anton's statement reflected a degree of regret about leaving school, yet he also expressed that despite the current financial and job security concerns, the demeaning experiences he faced at school reaffirmed his decision to leave. At the time of the interview, Anton was grappling with job insecurity, but he maintained that remaining out of school continued to benefit his overall well-being. Oba's (2018) study found that African students often leave school to protect their mental health from the persistent stress caused by anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism within schooling environments.

Why Some of the Participants Left School At 18 Years Old

Four participants, James, Jackson, Barry, and John left schooling at age eighteen, the legal age under the Education Act. The participants disclosed that they remained in schooling (in the expulsion program or an alternative program) for several reasons. Some of those included hope and desire to graduate with their secondary school diploma, pressure from parents, and

court and probation orders that had conditions stating they needed to be in school until they turned eighteen years old. Barry wanted to finish his probation as his conditions required him to be in school or working. Both Barry and John did not get their expulsions lifted and remained in the expulsion program with expulsion statuses. During their time in program, they expressed a desire to get their expulsion lifted although had low program engagement and did not fulfill their E-SAP goals.

James also left the expulsion program at age eighteen, without having his expulsion lifted, and recounted that he remained in the expulsion program for "*my mom. The only reason I tried hard. I disappointed her by not doing all I should have done to get my expulsion lifted and graduate*" Jackson was expelled at age sixteen and after the expulsion was lifted, he entered an alternative program. Jackson noted:

I remember thinking I wanted to return to high school, but when I came to safe schools, it was nice. For the first time, I felt like I knew the teachers and the teachers knew me, and the staff was nice to me. You know I can be difficult. I don't talk much and don't express my feelings and stuff at safe schools. I felt more like myself than I ever had in any school. That is why I thought I would do better in a small program and wanted the alternative program.

Although Jackson was able to get his expulsion lifted and attended an alternative program, his engagement varied. When Jackson was asked about not getting this OSSD, he responded:

I think that the flexibility with the alternative program was maybe too flexible for me, and I just didn't come as much as I should to get the credits I needed to graduate. At 18, I kinda gave up on school and trying to get my credits and left to get a job.

Jackson, highlights that his comfort was being in a smaller program and an alternative program appeared desirable. In such programs, flexibility and relationship building are prioritized which were attractive to Jackson.

Why Some of the Participants Stayed in the Expulsion Program Between 19 and 21 Years Old

Five participants, Raymond, William, Shia, Omar, and Holland left schooling between the ages of 19 and 21. Omar was the only one to graduate. Shia, and Holland disclosed that they attended the expulsion program and had their expulsions lifted and they too decided to attend an alternative program. They also felt that an alternative education program would allow more flexibility. Holland explained:

Attendance was always an issue for me in high school. I just am not a morning person and coming to school late with all the hassle you would get at the office, your teacher, and calls to home was just annoying. I liked that in safe schools and in P [alternative program] that I had flexibility with mornings. That really helped me as I wanted to get my credits and graduate.

Raymond and William did not have their expulsions lifted but remained in the expulsion program past their eighteenth birthdays attempting to get their expulsions lifted each semester. As already mentioned, the expulsion program allowed students to remain in program, past their eighteenth birthday, in order to support the lifting of their expulsions although this depended on the program staff liking the student. As William recalled, *“I was lucky the staff liked me, but I say other kids who were told to leave the program right when they turned eighteen”*. William also noted *“my mom spoke to the program, and I remember she begged the school to allow me to stay hoping I could get more credits [be]cause I was too old to go back to a high school.”* Raymond stated, *“my folks thought that the program was the only place I had been successful in and asked for me to stay each semester”* However, due to their behaviours and sporadic attendance, Raymond and William continually missed meeting their E-SAP goals. Raymond recalled:

I know I didn’t get my expulsion lifted, but man, I worked on those credits and liked being in the program. The pressure from my friends and the bad things we kept doing kept me from getting my expulsion lifted.

Raymond did not return to the expulsion program after age nineteen adding “*I was angry back then and would come to the program angry and take it out on staff and students—so they decided they had enough of me and told me I was no longer welcome.*” William expressed similar sentiments about his peers in the expulsion program:

Trust, I loved the program, but I got worse going there [be]cause I got to know some real bad kids who were doing nothing, but smoking weed, selling drugs...and like I just followed. I know this is why I did not get my expulsion lifted...and that is why I stayed longer than I should have.

William did make many attempts to get this expulsion lifted, and when he turned 21 years old, he aged out as per the Education Act, and the expulsion program could no longer allow him to remain in program. Attempts were made to engage him with adult education programming, but William could not engage consistently, eventually finding employment.

This desire for flexibility was threaded throughout the data in many of the participants’ interviews. For the participants with probation conditions where they had further restrictions, a flexible and smaller program had more appeal, contrasting with the oppressive conditions these Black males experienced in traditional schooling and experiences in the expulsion program. In the study by Baldridge, Hill and Davis (2011), they interviewed Black males in an American alternative program finding that:

flexibility, being seen by staff for their assets and maturity, and relationships with staff provided a climate of engagement for Black males that traditional schooling spaces had not provided. Such alternative programs help “repair” the educational experiences of Black male youth. Such programs can also serve a prophylactic function, providing necessary support to prevent undesirable outcomes such as disaffection, underperformance, and dropouts (p. 133).

Receiving Two Expulsions

Ben and Omar both received two expulsions. They were the only participants who were allowed to re-enter a mainstream high school after getting their first expulsions lifted. However,

neither was allowed to voice their preferences of the mainstream high school they preferred to attend. Omar recalled:

I was so happy to get my expulsion lifted but I wanted to go to a school with friends and they put me in some smaller high school [be]cause they thought that not knowing anyone would make me do better.

Ben further added:

It was so frustrating. I wanted out of the program so fast and got my expulsion lifted in one semester. But they still would not let me go to a school I felt safe in. I told them that I would get into trouble in the school they picked, and I did. I got expelled again like within a few weeks.

Omar was able to get both expulsions lifted and was the only participant to obtain his OSSD.

Ben was unique in that he had two all-school board expulsions close together.

Ben

Ben had just turned seventeen when he entered the expulsion program. Initially motivated to have his expulsion lifted, Ben achieved this goal within one semester and returned to mainstream high school. However, less than a month into the new semester, he was alleged to have physically threatened another student and was expelled once more. He re-entered the expulsion program mid-semester but struggled with attendance and engagement. When he did attend, Ben was often despondent, easily frustrated, and reluctant to complete his work. Despite his parents' encouragement, his behaviour and attitude led to repeated instances where he was asked to leave the program with parental consent. Reflecting on this period, Ben recalled:

I just remember being angry that I got expelled two times, and with that, I didn't want to be in the program and truly just didn't care. Mom and Dad wanted me to finish, but what for, to get expelled a third time? So, I said f* it and told my parents I wanted to work.

Ben then left schooling just before his eighteenth birthday and sought employment. He recalled *"now thinking about this, I wish I had tried harder to get that expulsion lifted [be]cause it would have made my parents so happy, and really I should have finished school"*. At the time

of this interview, Ben was 28 years old, and he realized that getting an education was critical and would provide opportunities. He stated that although he sees the importance of schooling, he was unwilling to return as the thought of school still makes him upset, angry, and frustrated especially with the two expulsions. Ben surmised, "*school just did not value me or see me for all I was*". Ben stated that he had found pleasure in working for himself and now works in landscaping and snow removal.

Omar

Omar also faced two expulsions. He entered the expulsion program at a very young age, just twelve years old and in grade eight, after being expelled for bringing a weapon to school. Given that his expulsion occurred late in the eighth grade, and he would be starting ninth grade, the discipline committee decided to place him in the secondary program with older students. Omar turned thirteen while in the program and found it challenging to interact with the older students. Missing out on school groups, sports, and peers his own age made his first high school experience particularly difficult.

Despite these challenges, Omar formed strong bonds with the program staff and worked diligently to have his expulsion lifted. He successfully completed the program and moved on to a regular high school for grade ten. However, in the second semester of grade ten, Omar faced a second expulsion for making threats to a student with a weapon. Upon re-entering the expulsion program, Omar experienced similar feelings of anger and frustration as Ben. Nevertheless, his strong relationships with the staff and his determination to continue his education and earn credits motivated him to persist. I asked Omar what kept him motivated to stay in the expulsion program and work toward his Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Omar responded:

First my mom. I did not want to disappoint her anymore; second, I knew the staff would support me to get what I needed, so even though I wanted to go back to a regular school, I also knew that I wanted to get this diploma, so I did what I needed to do.

Omar's motivation to complete school was influenced by his early entry into the expulsion program. Unlike other expelled students who had prior experiences in regular high schools, Omar did not have this background before joining the program. His attachment to the staff was partly due to his young age and his mother's confidence in their ability to ensure his well-being. Unlike Ben, whose desire to be in a regular high school was driven by his prior experience in secondary school, Omar's adjustment to the expulsion program was shaped by his familiarity with its stringent rules, as he had not experienced anything different. When he attended a regular high school for one semester, he stated, *"I liked it, but I also found it big, difficult to make friends and felt lost [be]cause I only knew safe schools and felt comfortable there"*.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I delve into the myriad challenges and barriers faced by participants as they transition out of the expulsion program. Among them, two participants successfully returned to mainstream high school, only to face a second expulsion shortly after, leading them back to the expulsion program. For the remaining thirteen participants, outcomes varied significantly. Some persisted within the expulsion program, either with or without lifted expulsions, while others pursued alternative programs or disengaged from schooling altogether. These occurrences underscored the entrenched nature of anti-Blackness and school exclusions, exemplified by Omar's struggle to complete his high school diploma within the expulsion program, which essentially resulted in his complete exclusion from mainstream schools, resembling confinement in a jail-like atmosphere.

Chapter Eleven examines how participants' experiences with expulsion resonate into adulthood. They provide valuable insights into the lessons learned as Black males navigating schooling that amplified and solidified anti-Blackness. The chapter also discusses their efforts to affirm their Blackness within systems that often marginalizes them, as well as their plans for supporting their own children in their schooling journeys while drawing inspiration from their personal experiences with expulsion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

POST-EXPULSION EXPERIENCES: AFFIRMING BLACKNESS

A positive Black racial identity, enhanced with an awareness, pride and knowledge of Black and African affairs, is crucial to school success. In fact, it is the antidote to and the coping mechanism for the daily doses of racial hostility and humiliation. The implication—and an important one—is that minority status and identity do not and should not always lead to negative educational outcomes (Codjoe, 2001, p. 370).

Codjoe (2001) highlighted the significance of cultivating positive Black identities. This study underscored how school practices amplify anti-Blackness led to severe outcomes such as absolute school exclusions. The interplay of race and gender transformed the participants' Black identities through their experiences of school exclusions and deeply influenced the participant's understanding of how anti-Blackness shaped their identities into their adult lives.

For some participants, the absence of a high school diploma had serious repercussions. Andrew, Ben, Anton, Daniel, Richard, and Eric, who exited the expulsion program before turning eighteen, encountered the criminal justice system, with Anton, Richard, and Eric reporting periods of incarceration. Among those who stayed in school beyond eighteen, Shia, Raymond, John, and William had interactions with the criminal justice system, and did not specifying jail sentences.

This chapter will explore the trajectories of the participants following their schooling, shedding light on the enduring effects of their expulsion experiences. It will highlight the participants' reflections on what they learned from their schooling experiences and how these insights have influenced their understanding of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. As adults, they seek to affirm their Blackness while navigating predominantly whiteness in their work and social environments. The participants have reflected on their past experiences with negative expulsion labels and the importance of sustaining their support networks with other Black males.

They have articulated lessons learned from their expulsions that resonate into adulthood, underscoring the importance of maintaining positive reputations and managing emotions. Regrets about their educational outcomes and hopes for their own children and future generations were also expressed. Their memories of how exclusionary school practices strengthened anti-Blackness coupled with concerns for the safety of their children in school settings, highlighted intergenerational anxieties of anti-Black racism. They expressed worry about the impact of how becoming Black in school is underscored with anti-Blackness.

Prepared for Anti-Black Racism in Adulthood

The participants, on average, had been out of school for eight years at the time of the interviews. During their interviews, they discussed how school experiences and being expelled further prepared them for the anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism they continue to encounter in adulthood. Anton stated that school was a "*learning pad for racism*" for him. He further added that this "*learning pad*" enabled him to realize, as a Black child, he learned that society would treat him harshly, more punitively, and with less care than white and non-Black people. Anton expressed how his observations and experiences in schooling and being expelled have rooted his understanding of Blackness:

I am grateful that I went through school[expulsion][be]cause it let me know that people in positions of power do not like Black folks...It was my skin colour [be]cause I saw white, brown, and Asian kids doing things I did in school, and they would get small reprimands and I would get suspended. So, as an adult, I watch myself at work. I watch how I am looked at and seen and I know that my skin colour, my Black skin colour, is what others see first, how I will be treated and what opportunities I get. I know this and learned how to maneuver through this hate in school...I learned in school about what it means to be Black, and I use that knowledge every day as a Black adult male. I have to watch my voice, tone, distance from people, and my temper on and on. I don't want to be expelled from life, eh?

Omar observed that "*school taught me what it means to be Black*". He specifically noted:

I remember, at one point, I did like school, but going through two expulsions and really just being in the expulsion program from the time I was 12 years old—I learned that I have to watch myself, be careful about what I say, do and that my skin colour impacts how people see me, not just in school but also outside of school. Even as an adult, school taught me that for simple mistakes and oversights, I would be treated worse than everyone who is not Black.

Omar's reflections about school teaching him the meaning of Blackness resonated in his thoughts, actions, and decision-making as an adult.

The expulsion experiences continued to reverberate for the participants in adulthood. Educational labels that segregate Black students impact their self-esteem and schooling goals (James & Turner, 2017; Maynard, 2017). The participants expressed that the low expectations school staff had of them made them “*feel dumb*” (Ben) and such feelings continued to haunt them. However, they acknowledged that their own choices to leave the expulsion program and schooling was a way to affirm their self-worth and intelligence. Ben discussed:

I liked school in Jamaica, but after coming to Toronto, college and university were a waste of time for me. I thought I could not do it and often think about how I could have maybe gone [be]cause I know, now, how smart I am. I learned so many things at work and life that if teachers had helped me more and didn't make me feel stupid, I may have been a graduate.

Fanon (1952) contended that living in this white world, Black males learn to move their bodies with deliberation—their bodies are controlled yet ignored. Raymond “*I was invisible and that I didn't matter but yet I was also so so visible as a Black kid.*” He elaborated:

Even now, as an adult, I see how visible I am and yet how I get ignored for promotions and opportunities at work. In school, being expelled taught me to really use my personality and make those connections. I have to work harder for people, especially ones who pay me for my work, to see how great, hardworking, and smart I am to really see myself. You know, see me.

In order to thrive, white supremacy positions Blackness as a negative identity and this requires the continuation of anti-Black actions and practices. This learning of being Black and

male was molded and curated through whiteness during the participants' schooling experiences, including being expelled. Raymond noted:

There were a lot of learning experiences in being expelled that taught me how to move [in society] as an adult. All the kids that I spent time with in the expulsion program were Black. So I learned that I am just a Black kid - like being Black meant that I did not get to experience what other [non Black] students did, people do not believe Black boys, I am constantly watched with suspicion, and I would have to constantly prove myself even now [as an adult]. This is frustrating and kills your soul because I know people still see all the negative that comes with being Black.

This understanding of the consequences of Blackness poignantly personified the vicious cycle of surveillance, control, and alienation for Black students in education (Fanon, 1952). Knowledge gained through understanding how anti-Blackness shaped them in becoming Black in school, amplified and solidified through their t expulsion experiences taught them how to navigate social situations, as adults and whiteness.

However, in his narrative, Raymond spoke of how his experiences outside of schooling, affirmed his Blackness and created a positive self-perception. Raymond stated, *"I love me and love being a Black man. In school, though, I didn't feel that way. I wanted to hide my Blackness. Now I see that it was school making me feel low, not me being Black"*. Raymond's statement speaks to the notions of always having to be cautious due to negative biases and assumptions that are more easily marked on Black male bodies. The other participants also illustrated that, through their learnings of anti-Blackness in schooling, they continue to excavate positive self-perceptions of Blackness as they intentionally navigate the social world.

Reconnecting to What They Love

The participants reflected on how teachers and schooling lost sight of their brilliance, what they were good at, and their passions through the demarcations of anti-Black labels. Daniel spoke about how it took him a long time to see that he brought value to workplaces and relationships as he had felt devalued, angry, and stifled in school:

S]chool did a number on my self-esteem. I mean I always thought of myself as a bad and dumb kid [be]cause I left school with only 10 credits. But now, as I meet more people, work in different places, and do the things that give me passion, I love to cycle and read all about cycling. I still love to read comic books and am writing one about a Black kid who discovers he has the powers to go back and change people and situations for the better. I am beginning to like myself more.

Barry began working in construction with his cousins and continues to work in various jobs noting:

I am well-connected and have made a lot of great relationships. So, when I need a job or I am low on money, I have a lot of people who are willing to help me out by giving me a job, even if it is for a few months. I feel blessed.

Barry also spoke about finding humour and joy in his life. He recalled how his experiences with schooling in St. Vincent, for the first nine years of his life impacted him positively, and he has since, as an adult, been able to make better sense of his schooling experiences:

It is all about perspective...I love my life. You have to find joy in things [be]cause otherwise, as a Black man especially, you will find all this negative stuff. Do I regret not finishing school? Yes, I do! But I know I have options, and there are things I can still do and be successful. Right now, I have a company that makes t-shirt logos, and I also coach ball with kids in housing communities. I am starting a non-profit. I mean, look at me. Coming here taught me that the system is made to bring me down, and I will not let it. Maybe that is because my early experiences in St. Vincent were so positive that I know I am a smart man and I have a lot to offer even though that was not how school made me feel.

According to Love (2019), Black joy and pride involve recognizing and celebrating the beauty of Blackness, encouraging a rebellious spirit to challenge anti-Blackness, focusing on the strengths of Black children in schools, developing Afrocentric curricula, and learning from Black students. Love (2019) argues that the current education system often serves as a survival mechanism for Black children rather than a space where they can truly thrive. Jackson reflected that he had significant ambition and experiences while in school, and believes that if teachers had been aware of these, they would have shown him much greater respect stating:

It was weird, thinking back now, but I knew at 10ish that school would not be able to provide me what I need [be]cause they did not see how awesome I was. They found my laugh too loud and found my humour inappropriate. I knew I had to do this on my own [be]cause school does not see how amazing Black kids are and what we go through. I was more than an expelled kid.

Jackson's passage resonates with what Love (2019) says about Black joy and its importance within school spaces:

Joy is crucial for social change; joy is crucial for teaching. Finding joy amid pain and trauma is the fight to be fully human. A revolutionary spirit that embraces joy, self-care, and love is moving toward wholeness. Acknowledging joy is to make yourself aware of your humanity, creativity, self-determination, power, and ability to love abundantly. Freedom dreams are brought to life through joy and love of dark people's light. Joy makes the quest for justice sustainable (p. 119–20).

Love (2013, 2016, 2019) and Muhammad (2019) centring of Black joy and pride aligns with Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth recognizing, validating and integrating what racialized students bring into school spaces. Yosso (2005) discussed the need for education to re-imagine student assets and not view student abilities from a deficit lens. This would include ascertaining aspirational capital, which requires relationship building with students, listening to their experiences, hopes, desires, and reframing white dominant values to make space for alternative ways of understanding knowledge. As Jackson discussed, school staff that do not create meaningful relationships miss out on the greatness of students.

Black Male Circle of Care

Ben, James, and William detailed that they watched out for their Black male friends, including the ones they met throughout their schooling and as adults. William specified:

With [Black males] are under the microscope as Black men. With everyone and everywhere we go. So, my friends and I often talk about how to keep ourselves safe. We also rely on one another and trust me; I am very protective of my boys [friends] [be]cause I know, one wrong word, one wrong place, and boom, we could be dead.

This looking out for one another continued to be a theme for some of the participants as adults, and they learned the need to “*stick together*” (Ben). This was essential for their survival in

school and even now as adults. William spoke about how schooling helped him create strong friendships with other Black males, some of which continued in adulthood. William noted that these friends continue to assist one another with employment opportunities and social support.

I am tight with my boys from [elementary school]. They are the ones who helped me then [in school] and now. They will back me 100%. If we lie to authorities, we do it to ensure we are safe. Moreover, now, being old, these boys had gotten me jobs and helped my family and me when I needed it. They are family. The family I met in school, and some of us were expelled together.

James had similar sentiments about relying on the friends he met in school, particularly in the expulsion program. He stated, "*School was shit to me, but it made me build strong support with my boys*" and concluded:

The conditions in school were so difficult that we all [Black males] had to stick together tight, even now as OG's [old guys; reference to being an adult]. I am still tight with many of them and would do anything for them. If they call me and tell me to say they are with me, then they are with me. I do not question it[be]cause they have backed me my whole life.

For some of the participants, this circle of Black male friends also provided avenues to challenge anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. William reported he could bring about change through collective activism with other Black male peers and friends at work. He provided an example where his older white male supervisor would tell the workers, who were primarily Black and brown, to "*suck it up*" when he or his co-workers requested a break or wanted to eat. William insisted that the term "*suck it up*" resonated with him from the expulsion program and conjured initial feelings of not wanting to saying anything and just doing as you are told, similar to how he felt in the expulsion program. To counter these feelings emerging from his adolescence, William engaged with his co-workers and in unison they collectively went to the supervisor to tell him to stop telling them to "*suck it up.*" William expressed that he wished that he and the other students had the confidence in the expulsion program and early schooling to

stand up to anti-Black sentiments. William added that he found activism in schooling difficult, especially as a Black male, as activism in an expulsion program can fuel anti-Black labels and reputations, which negatively impact inclusion.

Manning's (2023) dissertation examined how adult friendships among Black males offer comfort and opportunities to discuss the effects of historical and ongoing racial trauma. My study similarly found that the participants' friendships with other Black male peers were crucial for their mental and physical well-being. These relationships were nurtured through loyalty, brotherhood, and both verbal and non-verbal expressions of affection. William and other participants noted that the support they received from fellow Black students, even during their time in the expulsion program, helped to build stronger Black male friendships. These enduring relationships continued to provide similar support into adulthood.

Anti-Black Racism and Learnings from Schooling

I now describe the participants' experience of racism and the lessons they learned as expelled students.

Importance of A Positive Reputation

Many participants expressed that they are vigilant about creating and re-creating positive reputations. John reported that

the experiences in school were not something that built me up. It broke me and caused so many problems. I learned that my reputation is important, and as an adult, in the jobs I have, I have to be very careful, you know, to watch myself more, be positive and nice so they are not scared of me. I also know that as an adult, it will always be my fault for someone who is not Black.

This statement from John illustrated how being conferred with negative reputations in schooling reverberated into adulthood. The participants acknowledged that being Black in school did not afford them the privileges and power over their reputations, and as adults, society continually reminded them that their bodies are characterized with anti-Blackness. John asserted:

I am a Black, proud man. And no one will change that thought from me. I learned, outside of school, how much I actually do know I can do, and those negative things they [school staff] said about me are not true, but I know I have to still be aware of my reputation and keep it in check [be]cause it's a slippery road to being seen in a negative light. Trust me, I know. I went through that hell in school.

Eric:

Every time I go for a job, I have to watch how I speak and dress. In school, my status was the bad kid, the angry kid, and because of that, I didn't get my expulsion lifted, but as an adult, I have to change that, you know, follow the rules, and sometimes you have to get white people to vouch for you [be]cause your reputation is everything as a Black guy. So you can be seen as a good guy, you know, someone you can trust, get people to like you, so they are more willing to help you if you want better work, more money.

Ben spoke of the negative anti-Black stereotypes and how Black males are seen as scary and angry (hooks, 1992, 1994; Maynard, 2017). He explained:

I am always aware of what can happen to me, my family, and my friends just [be]cause we are Black. I know we can be killed by police, fired by bosses, and rejected for promotions [be]cause we are Black. So I have to watch my tone, temper [be]cause all my emotions are seen as scarier and angrier than white men.

Omar further discussed:

I really need people at work to get to know me, you know, the real me, so they can see I am a good guy [be]cause I know that they first see this big Black guy and lots of negative things come with that. When they like me, they tell the boss so I can try to get jobs with more money.

Holland recalled that as a child, he would often believe that his teachers did not like him. As an adult, he is more aware of how “*not being liked*” was linked to him being Black.

As a Black grown man now, I see it all the time. At work, at the grocery store, when I am driving...I see how much being Black impacts how people treat me...I know it was [be]cause I am Black. That is why teachers did not like me. Going through what I have gone through has made it clear that for my whole life, as a Black boy and now man, I am going to be constantly monitored, watched, and assessed. I will always be guilty until proven innocent for any situation, and that is how I felt in school when I never had a voice about my suspension and expulsion. That is how I feel when I walk to the corner store by the police. That is how I feel when I work. I know I have to be careful at work [be]cause I need this job and my boss, nice guy, but I can tell he doesn't like Black people...he tells me that I am 'one of the good ones'...I used what I learned in school. I

can't show him too much of myself...he knows me as a funny, easygoing Black guy, and if he saw me get mad or frustrated, that would be it for me.

Importance of the Proximity to Whiteness

As adults, the participants continue to navigate negative anti-Black stereotypes and feel they must align with white people in their workplaces, knowing they may be anti-Black. Eric noted, *"I am careful and cautious and try to make sure I relate to white people at work [be]cause truth to be told—they are the ones who will vouch for you when something goes wrong."* Omar commented:

Being expelled two times really told me how many schools did not want me, and so now, I know that I can lose work opportunities quickly too [be]cause, you know, I'm Black, and I know I need white co-workers on my side, even the ones who don't like Black folks.

Both realize that having whiteness as capital, such as white colleagues who support them, helps them access employment opportunities and higher-paying jobs.

Consequences of Not Finishing Schooling

The impact of not graduating and leaving schooling with an expulsion was central for Anton. He discussed how difficult it has been to find permanent work as he has been involved in the criminal justice system. The need for money, by all means, is an ongoing reality for him:

I regret that I didn't finish school. I am not saying that finishing would have put me in a better place in life than I am now, but at least I would have something to show to get a decent job that pays well. It's really hard not to go back to selling drugs—I can make up to \$1000 a day, and that type of money is not something any job can pay.

Richard also spoke about how disappointed he feels about being unable to keep permanent employment as an adult. Richard discussed that although he had his expulsion lifted (he left school to get money) but now feels he should have stayed in school to have access to more lucrative employment and stable work opportunities. Richard disclosed that he was incarcerated for a few years after he left schooling:

I know that I don't want to go to jail again, but it has been a pattern for me [be]cause I just keep going back to my old ways. If I had finished school, maybe I would know other, more positive ways. It's hard when you know people and can make like \$5000 a weekend doing things that will get me back in the hole [prison].

Richard shared that since he left schooling, he found employment working on cars with a mechanic and enjoys his work, although he also reported that this type of work is not fulfilling his financial needs:

Nowadays you kinda need to have a diploma or a degree if you want to get promoted I cannot complete for better paying jobs or promotions because I don't have the letters behind my name. School was such a difficult place for me, and now it kind of haunts me.

This study adds to previous research that found that schooling, teaching staff, and school exclusions can impact Black students' perceptions of being able to attain post-secondary education and concerns for their children's future (James & Turner, 2017; Maynard, 2017).

"No More School for Me but My Kids They Have to Go" (Holland)

The participants discussed the importance of their children having educational capital, being aware of how school staff actions perpetuate anti-Blackness, not having to experience school exclusions, and the need for them to feel safe. Harper and Davis (2012) found that regardless of the negative experiences the Black males had with their schooling, their awareness of anti-Black racism in schooling did not deter their acknowledgment that schooling is needed for social capital. This was noted in the participants optimism about their children finishing school and pursuing post-secondary education. Five of the fifteen participants (Holland, James, John, Ben, Andrew) have children and spoke about their hopes for their children in school and their roles in ensuring their children are treated well.

In this study, the five fathers recognized the necessary role schooling plays in attaining social and economic capital (Posey-Maddox, 2017). They cared about their children's experiences and were adamant that they would be intimately involved in their children's

educational journeys by encouraging them to complete schooling, including post-secondary education, and that they would hold schools accountable if they were to discriminate against their children. Holland and James worried about teachers treating their children as they had been treated. At the time of the interviews, in the summer of 2021, Holland had a four-year-old son and another baby on the way and stated:

I will make sure that the teachers [of my child] know I am present [be]cause I am not going to let them get away with treating my boy like they treated me. I mean no more school for me but my kids...they have to go...

James echoed a similar sentiment about his child's experiences with schooling. At the time of his interview, James had a six-year-old son and stated that his son is very excited about school and learning. He stated that this excitement is essential to him as he wants his son to learn, behave, be treated well, have opportunities for fun, make friends, and not get into trouble. James noted that

[be]cause they [his child] needs school. I don't want my boy doing the type of hard work I am doing. My hands and back hurt working in construction, and now I am stuck [be]cause my family needs money, but my boy—I don't want this for him, and the only way is for him to go to college and university.

James also stated that he worried that the staff at his son's current school, the same school James attended as a child, would impart the negative reputation he had onto this son *"I know some of the teachers will remember my last name cause it is really unique and well known in Scarborough, so I already know that they will see my little boy as a bad seed."* James added

I plan to go to the first day of school, meet the principal and teacher, and let them both know I am here and will be here. I will not let them get away with anything regarding my heart—my boy.

Being involved at the system level was evident through James and Holland's desire to advocate and intervene with school staff to ensure equitable treatment of their children (Posey-Maddox, 2017).

John had two children at the time of his interview, an 18-month-old son and a newborn daughter and noted:

I want my kids to go to school like their mama, who goes to college. I am so proud of [my partner A]. She just had a baby and is back doing essays and shit. I wish I could do that, but I have to work now and keep my head down [be]cause I have two kids and I want to give them everything. I want my boy and sweet girl to love school, learn, and be treated well, not like how I felt in school, but I will also teach them about how they may get treated being Black—I will teach them that and that way, they will already expect to be treated in a certain way and will not respond the way I did. I feel that when you know what to expect, you can then not take it in too deep and do what you need to do to get your grades and graduate.

As noted in the Posey-Maddox (2017) study, Black fathers gave advice about anti-Black racism to their children, encouraged learning and provided them with the resources to be successful nurturing high expectations. The complicity of negative biases about Black males in schooling further sustains anti-Black sentiments by indicating that Black males do not value education. These excerpts show the participants put tremendous value in education as they recognize education's social, relational, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Harper & Davis, 2012; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Ben shared similar sentiments, as the other fathers, about schooling:

It's sort of really weird [be]cause the truth is I hate school—I do, but I don't want my kids to hate school like I do. I don't want my kid to be expelled. I want them to go to college and university. I work in construction and make a good dime, but I don't want my boys to work physically hard like I have to. I have dreams of them sitting in an air-conditioned office, in a nice suit and making six figures—and for that, you need an education. If I have to get tutors, I will do that. My kids will not be like me.

Posey-Maddox (2017) found that Black fathers were astute about teachers' potential anti-Black biases toward their children and in this study, the participants advised that, as fathers, they would provide the teachers with information about their children's strengths and learning needs. The fathers stated it was important for the teachers to see their children positively, and their

engagement with staff was strategic in letting the teachers know they would not hesitate to advocate for their children, if needed (Posey-Maddox, 2017). Holland affirmed:

My kids are Black, and being Black means that you have to make sure places like school know that you know, as a Black parent, what they [staff] think of my Black kids. They [staff] need to know that I know. I know [be]cause I remember how I was treated, and that was [be]cause I am Black. So, trust I will be on them [staff] when it comes to my kid. My kid is awesome, smart, and kind—he is going to believe he is awesome, smart, and kind forever, and school ain't going to change that for him. I will make sure of that.

According to Statistics Canada (2020), 94% of Black Canadians wanted to obtain a degree, although only 60% of the 94% felt they would be able to obtain a degree. James reflected on his fears that his Black male child will have to experience anti-Black racism in schooling:

I knew from grade two that the reason the teacher did not like me was [be]cause I was Black. I know that people will argue that, but I knew it [be]cause I saw that she treated the other kids—the Indian, white kids—nicer; everything I did seemed wrong. I just seemed wrong, and my wrong was being Black, and I worry so much about my boy. How will they [school] treat him? I worry about that all the time.

Ensuring Safety

Andrew noted that in addition to anti-Black racism, he was also worried about his newborn son's safety at school

Now that I have a newborn son, the first two things I thought of were how beautiful he was when I first held him and how unsafe he would be in this world because he is Black. I thought about how unsafe he would be outside his home and inside of school. That is what I thought of—his safety.

Andrew's concerns of safety for his Black child were also echoed in Holland's sentiments:

Consumed with worry about my son. I think about this all the time. He is a kind, sweet boy and I don't want him to change but more than anything, I want him to be safe. I worry his kindness will be dangerous for him.

Concluding Remarks

As regret resonated among those who had not graduated, a resilient theme emerged: affirming their Blackness and a deepened appreciation for personal achievements and perseverance in adulthood. This affirmation involves recognizing and celebrating personal

achievements and resilience despite challenging circumstances, such as school expulsion. Their experiences of expulsion shaped their approach to navigating employment, underscoring the importance of proximity to whiteness while resisting anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. Maintaining positive reputations and nurturing supportive relationships, particularly with Black male friends, were crucial aspects of affirming Blackness.

These factors significantly influenced their post-expulsion experiences. Among the participants, Omar distinguished himself as the only graduate, serving as a source of relief and pride for the expulsion program and breaking familial barriers. Despite the varied graduation statuses, participants with children shared a common hope for their offspring's educational success, emphasizing the importance of completing secondary education and pursuing further studies. This desire for their children's success reflects a commitment to breaking barriers and fostering opportunities for future generations. The upcoming chapter will critically analyze the pre-expulsion phase, the expulsion process, the expulsion program, transitions from the program, and post-expulsion experiences through the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concept of whiteness as property.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DISCUSSION

The profound impact of the participants' storytelling permeated this study, revealing the entrenched challenges of navigating anti-Blackness in schooling that contributed to the process of becoming Black and exclusions. The narratives of these Black males exposed the anti-Black marginalization that begins in early schooling and persists through expulsion and into adulthood. As a social worker within an expulsion program, I observed the glaring absence of the voices of expelled students, which reinforced the necessity of amplifying their experiences in this study. Participants' experiences underscored the intricate relationship between Blackness and masculinity within the context of the valorization of whiteness (Harris, 1993, p. 1713) and highlighted the urgent need for a shift toward affirming Black identities in schooling. This underscored the crucial need to centre their voices in this study as a way to better understand how anti-Blackness manifested in their schooling experiences which led to school exclusions and eventually expulsions.

Despite the persistent dominance of white norms and the resultant biases, the participants managed to find spaces where they could assert their Black brilliance and affirmations. This process of transcendence from exclusionary pathways to recognition of Black excellence is central to envisioning a future where schooling celebrates Blackness rather than marginalizing and criminalizing it. Through the lens of the participants revealed whiteness as a form of valuable property within schooling, thereby uncovering the deep-rootedness of anti-Blackness. By applying the principles of whiteness as property (encompassing rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoy, reputation and status property rights, and the absolute right to exclude), this study

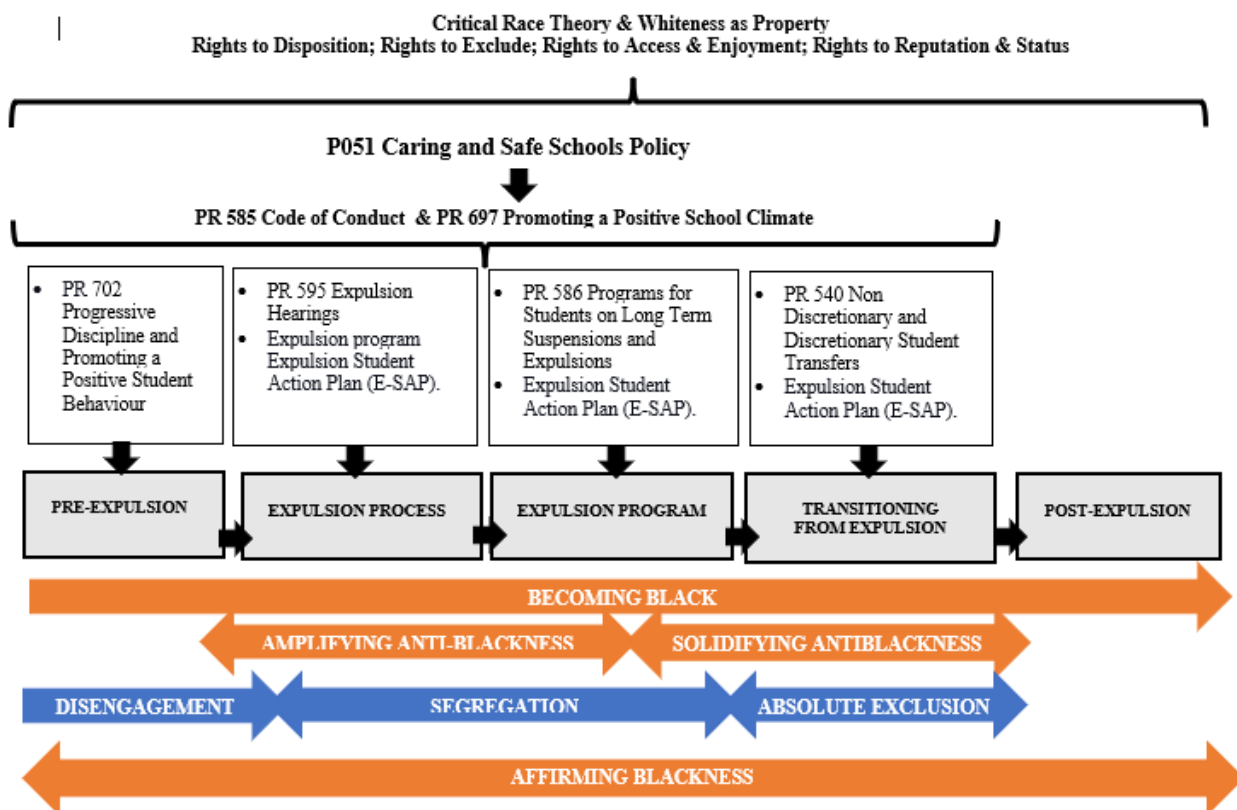
delved into how whiteness was routinely normalized and valorized, reinforcing anti-Blackness (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

The participants' narratives illustrated how this valorization of whiteness manifested through negative reputations, ongoing exclusions from school, and barriers to joy and access as a result of anti-Black negative labels, stereotypes and assumptions. Whiteness was depicted as the ultimate property, perpetuating anti-Blackness by equating whiteness with worthiness and Blackness with unworthiness. This dynamic created a self-sustaining cycle where anti-Blackness was continually reinforced and undermining the participants' ability to fully engage with and benefit from schooling. The study highlighted the urgent need to dismantle these entrenched anti-Black biases and reimagine schooling environments where Blackness is not marginalized and dehumanized but celebrated and included.

This study exposed how race evasion mechanisms perpetuated anti-Black racism through the implementation of expulsion policies and procedures. As noted in the data, certain actions require the principals to consider school expulsions without considering anti-Black racism as a mitigating factor. The pervasive dominance of whiteness within schooling not only constructed Blackness through a lens of marginalization and criminalization but also functioned as a tool for interest convergence. According to critical race theory, interest convergence reveals a troubling paradox which is that any efforts to resist anti-Blackness often exacerbate systemic anti-Black biases, increasing exclusions for Black students. Such mechanisms aligns with white ideals, and reinforces the very structures that impede their reintegration into mainstream schooling. This study illustrated how the participants' narratives indicate the valuing of whiteness, as a form of property, had privileged status aggravating anti-Blackness.

Figure 3, shown below, illustrates the participants' schooling journey from pre-expulsion to post-expulsion phases, highlighting the process of becoming Black. It emphasizes disengagement from school, the impact of expulsion within segregated school environments, and the escalation of anti-Blackness as the participants transitioned out of the expulsion program, leading to complete school exclusions. The affirmation of Blackness was noted throughout although affirming Blackness for the participants was most apparent after they had left the expulsion program and schooling altogether.

Figure 3: Results-Becoming Black and School Exclusions



Revisiting the Research Questions

Below, I revisit the research's four questions, discussing findings through this lens:

1. What was the impact of expulsion-based policies and procedures? Moreover, what are the practices for the expelled Black youth?
2. What are participants' perceptions regarding their schooling experiences that resulted in their expulsion?
3. What were the participants' perceptions of their experiences in the expulsion program?
4. How has being expelled from high school and attending the expulsion program impacted their educational and social trajectories?

Question 1: Expulsion-Related Policy, Procedures, and Documents

The first research question probed the impact of expulsion policies, procedures, and practices on the participants. TDSB expulsion related documents played a part in the continual exclusion of the participants throughout their schooling. Prunty (1985) highlighted the exploitation inherent in such policies, emphasizing the power and control dynamics they reflect. This study demonstrated that even with over 30 years of data indicating that Black students received most school exclusions resulted in changes to school expulsion policies and procedures although the power and control of who continues to receive such exclusionary practices remained in the hands of the school staff. For example, the enactment of the Progressive Discipline Safe Schools Act (PDSSA) in 2007, removed suspension and expulsion powers from teachers and principals respectively and provided expulsion powers to a disciplinary committee. Regardless, Black male students continue to receive the majority of school expulsions (TDSB, 2021-22). This study illustrates that the expulsion related policy and procedures are not neutral and perpetuate anti-Blackness as they did not result in affirming changes for Black male students (Kendi, 2019).

An examination of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) expulsion procedures—PR 697, 702, 595, and 586 (detailed in Chapter Three)—alongside participant narratives, uncovered significant power imbalances. This misalignment with staff actions and implementation of the procedures by school staff began in early schooling demonstrating the process of becoming Black through the lens of anti-Blackness resulting in a stark lack of agency for the participants. The authority to exclude students rested solely with school staff from early schooling, even though they were stripped of being able to suspend and expel students, exclusions still continued in the form of being segregated in the classroom, sent out of the classroom and/or sent to the office for mundane behaviours.

When expelled, the expulsion program, deprived students of meaningful participation in decisions affecting their schooling. Expulsion policies and procedures relegated participants to ongoing alienation and chronic academic underperformance within the school environment (James, 2012). Participants faced a lack of voice in the expulsion process, which was marred by one-sided evaluations and negative reputations from school staff. The participants also disclosed their side of the story was never asked for or considered in the decisions for school expulsions. This undermined their reintegration opportunities and violated procedural requirements, such as those outlined in TDSB procedure PR 595 and the Education Act. Final decisions regarding expulsions and the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) were made without participant or family input, contradicting expulsion policy and procedures. Teachers and principals constructed deficit-based, anti-Black cases against the participants, justifying expulsions and neglecting procedural mandates for student involvement and reintegration.

Moreover, anti-Blackness significantly influenced ongoing disengagement, even post-expulsion, contrary to TDSB procedure PR 540, which supports the reintegration into

mainstream school of students who have had their expulsions lifted. Negative reputations and expulsion statuses (even after the expulsion is lifted) further obstructed participants' reintegration into mainstream schooling, preserving labels of troublemakers, and viewing participants as at-risk individuals vulnerable to violence, aggression, and gang activity. These labels continued to erode opportunities for school enjoyment and access to resources, reinforcing segregation and contributing to absolute exclusion from schooling.

Concerns of increasing violence in schools remain and the Ontario Ministry of Education added PPM 120 to address these concerns which led to mandatory expulsion considerations for student behaviours that were deemed violent. As Black males continue to receive the majority of school expulsions, the conflation of violence with Black male bodies continued through the enactment of PPM 120 (hooks, 1994; Maynard, 2017). Entanglements with the criminal justice system became inevitable, as incidents deemed violent led to criminal charges for many participants as per PPM 120 which was created to keep students and staff safe. These charges further silenced the participants, preventing them from discussing their side of the story due to further criminal ramifications.

When they were expelled, the participants were fully excluded from mainstream schooling, placed in a "school jail" that fostered a carceral identity and reinforced the notion that Black boys needed to be segregated, dangerous, and gang-related. This normalization and routinization of segregation, surveillance, control, and exclusion of Black bodies reified anti-Blackness for staff and students. Even when participants followed all the rules and had their expulsions lifted, they were denied reintegration into mainstream schools, again contrary to expulsion procedures. Deep-rooted whiteness, illustrated through the tenets of whiteness as property, reinforced anti-Blackness, and negative reputations and expulsion statuses (despite

being lifted) prevented their return to mainstream education. While segregated, they lost access to a diverse peer group, activities, sports, clubs, and trips, further marginalizing them and solidifying their exclusion.

School staff controlled perceptions of innocence, troublemaking, and risk behaviours, systematically silencing participants and exacerbating anti-Blackness within the expulsion program. Staff actions reinforced negative expulsion statuses and reputations, using the threat of revoking expulsion lifting status as a tool of power and control, which further impeded reintegration into mainstream schooling. The study, guided by the framework of whiteness as property, revealed that despite policies designed to mitigate these issues, staff consistently centred whiteness in their implementation. This centring of whiteness perpetuated anti-Blackness, manifesting in disproportionate surveillance, classroom exclusions, and blame directed at participants compared to their peers, including other racialized students. The Rights of Disposition (Harris, 1993) highlighted how whiteness enabled the transfer of privileges, such as the power to exclude others, through mechanisms of silencing and exclusion. This dynamic created entrenched negative reputations and profiles of participants as troublemakers, resulting in expulsions without genuine consideration of their voices or perspectives, contrary to established expulsion procedures.

Therefore, despite claims of changes to expulsion policy, procedures and laws, equity, inclusion of mitigating factors and anti-racism professional development of staff, this study illustrated that the way expulsions and school exclusions are implemented by school staff continues to, most often, lead to absolute school exclusions for Black male students. Only through the centring of an anti-Black approach can we move towards uprooting anti-Blackness in

how expulsion policy and procedures are implemented through continuous evaluations by decentring whiteness (Kendi, 2019).

Question 2: Pre-Expulsion Experiences

The second research question explored the participants' perspectives on their pre-expulsion schooling encounters that ultimately led to their expulsions. The study's examination of pre-expulsion data revealed how staff actions contributed to shaping the participants' identity as perpetually becoming Black through the framing of anti-Blackness. As a result, becoming Black was reinforced through negative stereotypes and biases that damaged the participants' reputations, leading to a lack of voice throughout their schooling experiences and exclusions. The study revealed, beginning in early schooling, repeated schooling exclusions and a pervasive sense of alienation from teachers and staff were marked by disengagement from school.

Becoming Black and School Disengagement

From the outset, school staff exhibited heightened scrutiny towards the participants, often subjecting them to harsher disciplinary measures for minor infractions compared to their non-Black peers. This persistent surveillance and judgment reinforced negative staff perceptions, creating a cycle of exclusion and punishment driven by anti-Black stereotypes and negative labels. These initial instances of school exclusions caused some participants to miss valuable learning opportunities and social interactions with their peers. Daniel and Raymond articulated how these classroom exclusions instilled a sense of perpetual fault and self-doubt, as they observed their peers engaging in similar behaviours without facing similar repercussions. The study's findings highlighted the entrenched presence of whiteness as the perceived ideal in early schooling experiences, reinforcing anti-Black sentiments (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

Echoing Daniel and Raymond's encounters, the portrayal of Blackness was viewed as devoid of innocence and disruptive. The participants' pre-expulsion experiences illustrated how anti-Blackness and the marginalization of Black males bolstered white supremacy within schooling (Annamma, 2015; Ferguson, 2001; James & Turner, 2017; Maynard, 2017). Participants also recalled facing additional sanctions when they attempted to challenge their teachers. Their self-advocacy and agency were often labeled as aggressive and misbehaviours. For instance, Ben and Barry noted that even during their early schooling years, they discerned the disproportionate disciplinary measures imposed on Black children, with classroom exclusions exemplifying this disparity. These examples highlighted that the participants were denied the rights of disposition, which includes the transfer of privileges, positive reputations, and innocence (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022).

Students granted the rights of disposition aligned with whiteness and were rewarded, heard, offered opportunities, granted access, and avoided punishments. Conversely, deviations from whiteness for the participants often resulted in school exclusions, increased sanctions, and loss of access to opportunities, thus upholding anti-Blackness (Harris, 1993; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). The participants' narratives revealed how becoming Black is inseparable from white supremacy in schooling, evident through experiences of subjugation, continual surveillance, negative labeling, deficit teacher perceptions, and the development of violent and aggressive reputations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Whiteness as property, manifested through exclusionary staff practices, impacted the participants' rights to positive reputation, access to resources, enjoyment, and their overall sense of belonging.

This study uncovered the normalization of excluding Black males from school settings, irrespective of the gravity of their actions. This normalization significantly influenced school

staff's decisions regarding the participants' daily inclusion in school activities during their formative years. Exclusions, whether by sending students to the office or removing them from the classroom, empowered staff to withhold essential resources, hinder academic progress, limit participation in school activities, and curtail opportunities for growth and development.

The participants described how being branded with negative, monolithic labels of anti-Blackness hindered teachers from recognizing their strengths, interests, and passions. Eric, Anton, and Raymond highlighted the intersection of learning disabilities and Black identity, noting how teachers overlooked their capabilities and reinforced negative stereotypes. This perpetuated a destructive cycle, further entrenching the perception of them as troublemakers and at-risk of engaging in violent behaviours.

The study's findings illustrated how the social constructs of Blackness and anti-Blackness, shaped by school staff practices, metaphorically "swallowed up" (Kincaid, as cited in Wright, 2004, p. 1), Black students. This influenced how they were treated and perceived by peers, staff, and even their parents. Throughout, whiteness as property impacted participants' rights to positive reputation, access to school resources, enjoyment, and overall belonging. The entrenched white supremacy within schooling reinforced ongoing expulsion measures, negatively impacting inclusion and peer relationships, thereby perpetuating the centrality of whiteness and anti-Blackness.

Question 3: Expulsion Process and Expulsion Program Experiences

The study's analysis of the expulsion process and being in an expulsion program unveiled a systemic centring on white supremacy within schooling, denying participants their rights and dignity associated with their Black identities.

Amplifying Anti-Blackness-Expulsion Process

The third research question examined how participants experienced the expulsion process and the expulsion program. Throughout adolescence, as they embraced their Black identity, they faced increased instances of anti-Blackness, culminating in all-school board expulsions. This process worsened their experiences with anti-Blackness, intensifying negative schooling encounters. Their actions were often used to justify expulsions, hindering their integration into the schooling and perpetuating harmful stereotypes, ultimately promoting segregation (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Negative assumptions and biases attached to Black bodies led to constant surveillance, control, and labeling of Black male students as troubled, violent, or delinquent (Annamma, 2017; Ferguson, 2001; Goff et al., 2010; Maynard, 2017). These stereotypes became significant barriers for participants seeking to reintegrate into schooling after leaving the expulsion program. Paradoxically, expulsion not only severed ties with formal schooling but also, for many, pushed them towards the criminal justice system and negative peer groups, compounding their challenges.

Participants' stories highlighted systemic issues within the expulsion process, emphasizing the necessity for more inclusive approaches aligned with students' and families' experiences. Ben, Raymond, and Omar, for example, expressed feeling marginalized and unheard during investigations conducted by school principals following incidents that led to their initial suspensions. They lamented the lack of inclusion of their voices in the expulsion process. Participants like Barry, Raymond, and Richard emphasized how issues of anti-Black racism and bullying were disregarded during these investigations, leading to unfair targeting and harsher punishments compared to their non-Black peers involved in similar incidents.

An all-school board expulsion resulted in a comprehensive ban from school activities, extracurriculars, and group involvement, significantly impacting participants' overall schooling experiences (Ministry of Ontario, n.d; Sibblis, 2014). This punitive measure limited opportunities, access to resources, disrupted social relationships, and hindered participation in school-related activities. The expulsion process often dragged participants into the criminal justice system, worsening their resource constraints due to bail and court obligations. Although not extensively explored in this study, participants briefly mentioned these intersecting consequences in their post-expulsion experiences (See Sibblis, 2023, for further discussion on carcerality and expulsions).

The involvement with the criminal justice system, stemming from mandatory reporting requirements for violent incidents by the Ontario Ministry of Education, exacerbated exclusionary practices in schooling and hampered future employment prospects (Annamma, 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016; Maynard, 2017). Participants revealed a significant power dynamic imbalance upon learning of their all-school board expulsions. This expulsion stripped away enjoyable aspects of schooling, hindered peer engagement, mentorship opportunities, and relationship building, while also exposing some to negative peer influences, increasing their risk of disengagement from school and further involvement with the criminal justice system.

Some participants expressed a desire to leave the program for employment, underscoring the importance of financial stability, even if it meant not completing high school, granting them a sense of agency (Oba, 2018). The theme of voicelessness persisted throughout the expulsion process, with participants like Omar and Ben noting their lack of input into the Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP). As shared by Barry and Anton, this plan was unilaterally created by the principal, leaving them and their parents unaware of its contents until after expulsion, and

unable to amend its objectives, such as mandatory counseling for anger management issues. The imposition of E-SAP goals, shaped by negative stereotypes and societal expectations of Black males, hindered engagement and perpetuated the school-to-prison pipeline (Crichlow, 2014; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Participants' longstanding negative reputations and labels since elementary school compounded the expulsion process. Richard, Raymond, and Anton explicitly linked these labels to anti-Black racism perpetuated by school staff and principals, who portrayed them as feared figures within the school community. Participants believed these negative perceptions also strained their relationships with their families. William, Omar, Richard, and Andrew recounted how their families internalized these reputations, further isolating them from friends, schools, and familial support networks.

While this study did not directly interview participants' parents, some participants recalled their parents' absence from the expulsion tribunal with the Board of Trustees. Daniel and Jackson remembered instances where their mothers attended the tribunal, feeling overwhelmed by the process and refraining from challenging the all-school board expulsions. For many, including Ben and Jackson, the expulsion came as a shock, as they had expected a more balanced investigation process where their voices would be heard alongside those of the principals.

Amplifying Anti-Blackness: Expulsion Program

The segregation within the expulsion program intensified anti-Blackness for the participants, leading to the building of carceral identities (see Sibblis, 2023) resulting in absolute exclusions from schooling, which continued to impact their adult lives. The exacerbation of anti-Blackness and perpetuation of school segregation persisted within the expulsion program. Aligned with prior research (Annamma, 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016; Maynard, 2017), this study

illuminated educators' perception of Black students, particularly males, as lacking innocence. Participants likened the expulsion program to a school jail, echoing sentiments expressed by Omar and Raymond, who observed a predominant presence of Black male students.

In this school jail environment, participants faced stringent surveillance and hypercritical scrutiny from program staff, as highlighted by Eric, John, and Ben. They felt continually at risk and dehumanized, with staff viewing them as inherently guilty and prone to violence. James likened the experience to preparation for future incarceration, with autonomy stripped away. Furthermore, the program's design reinforced at-risk narratives, segregating participants and assuming a predisposition to violence among expelled students. The Ontario Ministry of Education PPM 141 (2012) ostensibly aims to promote positive student behaviour but inadvertently perpetuates biases by defaulting to corrective measures for Black males (para. 10). Participants described how this segregation and surveillance perpetuated a cycle of suspicion and mistrust, further marginalizing Black male students from mainstream schooling (Sibblis, 2014).

Enforcement of program conformity, particularly through the E-SAP goals, created a jail-like atmosphere, pressuring participants like Daniel and Jackson. Negative reputations from previous school experiences intensified scrutiny, while concerns for personal safety outside their neighbourhoods led to reduced attendance, exacerbating feelings of risk and anti-Blackness.

As a result, participants' behaviours faced even more rigorous scrutiny, with program staff dissecting their actions daily to determine their eligibility for expulsion lifting. The program's restrictive environment isolated participants from their usual social circles, leading to loss of friends and disengagement from school activities. Anton noted the absence of any activities within the program, exacerbating feelings of isolation and alienation. Furthermore, participants like Jackson and Omar described how their interactions within the program often

reinforced negative behaviours, as they were limited to engaging with peers they deemed negative. This isolation and loss of positive social connections further contributed to participants' struggles within the expulsion program, perpetuating negative social constructions of anti-Blackness.

Resistance and verbal challenges to staff produced negative perceptions and assessments by program staff, hindering participants' ability to express emotions freely. These experiences perpetuated feelings of silence and frustration within the expulsion program. The strict adherence to program rules and goals resulted in participants spending multiple semesters, and sometimes years, in the program, significantly extending their expulsion periods. Despite efforts to build rapport with staff, participants' actions and behaviours were often misinterpreted as negative, further contributing to their stigmatization and justifying expulsions.

In summary, the expulsion program exacerbated anti-Blackness within schooling, leading to feelings of surveillance, dehumanization, and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes among participants. The program's structure reinforced at-risk narratives and pressured participants to conform to strict guidelines, often extending their expulsion periods. Concerns for personal safety and reduced attendance intensified scrutiny of participants' behaviours, further perpetuating negative perceptions. Addressing systemic biases and prioritizing the well-being of Black male students is crucial to combating the perpetuation of anti-Blackness in schooling.

Question 4: Transitioning Out of the Expulsion Program

The last research question examined how being expelled and the expulsion program affected participants' and their future schooling and social trajectories. The participants' experiences and narratives revealed the entrenchment of anti-Blackness through absolute school exclusions. Only after leaving the school system did they begin to feel their Blackness affirmed, despite the persistent white hegemony.

Solidifying Anti-Blackness: Navigating Challenges Beyond the Expulsion Program

Participants faced challenging obstacles in transitioning beyond the expulsion program, primarily due to the reluctance of mainstream high schools to accept them. Despite the rescission of their expulsions, individuals like Ben and Omar found themselves back at square one, encountering another expulsion upon returning to mainstream high schools. Some participants persisted in the expulsion program post-eighteen to accumulate credits and overturn their expulsions, while others left before reaching that age, having their expulsions already revoked. Rejected by mainstream high schools, a few explored alternative schooling avenues, drawn by smaller class sizes, closer teacher-student relationships, greater flexibility, and a reduced risk of further school exclusions.

Some participants believed that building trust with school staff could ameliorate their negative reputations and expulsion statuses. Consequently, they chose to remain in the expulsion program to earn more credits rather than navigate a new high school environment. However, the specter of continued exclusion, both real and perceived, hindered their schooling pursuits. Transitioning out of the expulsion program proved grueling, as high schools hesitated to admit them due to their expulsion statuses and entrenched anti-Black biases. The unresolved expulsion statuses further fueled participants' disengagement from school, reinforcing their perception of the expulsion program as akin to a carceral environment.

Participants voiced concerns about the impact of anti-Blackness on their children's schooling experiences, highlighting the fear of reprisals for speaking out against anti-Black encounters, revealing the intergenerational perpetuation of anti-Blackness in schooling and educational settings (James & Turner, 2017; Maynard, 2017; Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Despite these challenges, participants actively discussed potential anti-Black racism with their children, offering strategies to affirm Blackness while navigating school environments. Their experiences

revealed the entrenched nature of anti-Blackness. Two of the fifteen participants re-enrolled in a mainstream high school, only to face re-expulsion shortly after. While one participant managed to graduate with a high school diploma, this was only possible by remaining in the expulsion program with staff support.

Conversely, despite having their expulsions overturned, six participants endured prolonged stays in the expulsion program, having encountered resistance from principals, in other schools, aware of their school exclusionary histories and negative reputations. Some remained in the program for extended periods, enduring continued bias against their expulsion statuses, despite their expulsions being lifted. Regardless of their expulsion statuses, these participants' prolonged stays in the program deprived them of access to school resources. Despite exhibiting resilience against anti-Blackness, these students often grappled with academic retention, especially when contending with expulsion statuses. Even after having their expulsions revoked, participants encountered difficulties in gaining acceptance into high schools due to negative reputations which were perceived as akin to criminal behaviour. Participants like Jackson, Omar, Richard, and Ben articulated how their expulsion statuses and associated labels created barriers to school acceptance, leading to fears of being drawn into negative peer groups and further entanglements with the criminal justice system.

The cyclical pattern of attempting to re-enter the expulsion program each semester, along with some participants' voluntary decision to remain despite lifted expulsions, points to the participants' complex decision-making process. While eight participants successfully had their expulsions lifted, seven remained expelled, whiteness operated through property rights to exclude those not deemed valuable within white hegemony, controlling access to school and education and perpetuating segregation to schooling spaces. Omar's experience in the expulsion

program illustrated the normalization of exclusion for Black males, despite efforts to adapt to its controlling environment. This study illustrated that the participants consistently faced marginalization and were treated as outsiders throughout their schooling experiences.

Deprived of viable pathways to reintegrate into mainstream schooling, participants felt compelled to choose a program that, despite resembling carceral conditions, offered one of the few available avenues for ongoing schooling. For some, opting to stay in the expulsion program were acts of agency and autonomy, influenced by the scarcity of alternative schooling options. The study leveraged insights from scholars, including Dei and James (1998), Ferguson (2001), Maynard (2017), and Codjoe (2001), to underscore the challenges faced by Black students within the educational system.

Throughout their schooling experiences, participants endured layers of negative labeling, reinforced by staff actions such as excessive surveillance and disciplinary measures. The intersection of race and gender imposed societal expectations on Black males, inhibiting emotional expression and perpetuating negative biases. The Expulsion Student Action Plan (E-SAP) exacerbated challenges by, once again, limiting participant voice, trust, and school engagement. The notion of accountability became problematic for participants facing criminal charges, as legal counsel advised against discussing incidents with school staff, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon. Despite spending an average of about three years in the expulsion program, participants struggled to re-enter mainstream schooling due to low credit accumulation, with some opting to leave before turning eighteen.

Affirming Blackness: Post-Expulsion Experiences

Participants reflected on their experiences with anti-Blackness in schooling, which compelled them to affirm their Black identity as adults. However, this affirmation often contended with persistent anti-Black racism (Dei, 1997; Ibrahim, 1998). Despite exclusions that

led to segregation, participants spoke of learning valuable lessons, such as the importance of maintaining positive reputations, managing emotions professionally, and protecting their children from anti-Black racism in schools.

As noted in Chapter Eleven, out of the fifteen adult participants, five are fathers: Holland, James, John, Ben, and Andrew. This study illuminated the enduring impact of expulsions and participants' resilience as they affirmed Blackness while navigating adulthood and parenthood, providing profound insights into the intergenerational effects of systemic anti-Black challenges within schooling. Despite challenges, participants like Holland and James actively engaged in dialogues with their children about potential instances of anti-Black racism, underscoring their commitment to preparing future generations and holding schools accountable. John, James, and Ben expressed various emotions and desires, including regret and aspirations for their children's schooling, while advocating to prevent them from facing the anti-Black racism that created pathways to their own school exclusions.

Despite exclusionary treatment in school, most participants recognized the significance of remaining in school, expressing high expectations for their children to complete high school and pursue post-secondary education, as noted by Ben, John, and Holland. The data revealed a cascade of challenges, from precarious employment to encounters with the criminal justice system, casting shadows over participants' lives. Persistent repercussions of schooling disengagements, segregation, and exclusions continued to limit access to social opportunities, with lingering fears of negative labels and biases from school into adulthood. The post-expulsion trajectories of the participants paint a disheartening picture of the impacts of exiting schooling prematurely (Dei et al., 1995; Maynard, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2020).

Added to these challenges were bail and court conditions, which further hindered participants' access to education and employment opportunities, even as adults. Statistics Canada (2020) data affirms that without high school and post-secondary education, Black Canadians face significant challenges in employment and upward mobility. Bail and court conditions further exacerbate this. The participants' narratives highlight ways they continued to affirm Blackness in adulthood by channelling their expulsion experiences into political agency and collective resistance, especially those who are fathers.

Despite being labeled as misbehaviours and facing negative biases from school staff, the participants' experiences in schooling ultimately revealed how anti-Blackness shaped their journey towards affirming their Blackness as adults. While their advocacy and identity were often misunderstood and used to reinforce negative reputations during their schooling, they now take pride in their Blackness and feel more empowered to affirm it outside of the schooling and educational system.

Concluding Remarks

Informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), this study utilized the concept of whiteness as property to analyze the participants' narratives, uncovering the pervasive impact of white dominance on their schooling experiences. The normalization of school exclusions led to severe consequences such as disengagement, segregation, and expulsion from a young age. These experiences compounded their negative reputations and restricted access to educational resources, inclusion, and enjoyment, ultimately contributing to encounters with the criminal justice system.

Despite moments of camaraderie, the participants' expressions of agency were often misunderstood, reinforcing harmful anti-Black stereotypes through punitive measures and perpetuating their expulsion statuses. This left limited space for affirming their Blackness until

after their schooling years. As Wright (2004) noted, Black identity is continually shaped by the dynamics of whiteness and anti-Blackness—a process that, while damaging, also holds potential for healing, as seen in the participants’ post-schooling affirmations of Blackness.

Reflecting on my role as a social worker within the expulsion program, I confronted the tension between adhering to expulsion policy and procedures while advocating for the participants. I recognized my inadvertent alignment with whiteness, despite my non-white identity. The study highlighted the urgent need to tackle anti-Blackness and elevate Black students' voices, aligning with existing literature (James & Turner, 2017; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023; Sibblis, 2023). This study underscored the importance of centring Black student voices, especially those of Black males, in understanding and addressing how anti-Blackness shapes their experiences of becoming Black in schooling perpetuating anti-Black racism in education.

Chapter Thirteen invites a critical reflection on my positionality, acknowledges the study’s limitations and offers recommendations for further research. My study concludes, as it began, with the voice of a participant, emphasizing the significance of their voices.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CONCLUSION

Conclusion to the Incident In Chapter One

The impetus for this study arose from the incident detailed in Chapter 1. It prompted deep reflection on my role as a TDSB employee and a social worker bound by the ethical standards of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW). When confronted with the potential complexity involved in addressing this situation for example, the expulsion policy and procedures indicated that we should immediately report such an incident to the program principal. Instead of directly engaging the principal first, I sought to understand the mitigating factors by inquiring and listening to the student's perspective on why he had brought a pocketknife to school. He revealed that he carried the pocketknife for safety while traveling outside his neighbourhood, as the expulsion program was located some distance away.

I reached out to the student's mother, and together, we crafted a plan in collaboration with his uncle and a staff member from a community agency that the student was well connected to. The student, mother, uncle, community member, and I had established strong relationships and trust with one another, forming this student's circle of care. We agreed to provide the student with more support to better address his feelings of safety. In the interim, the plan included the student's uncle dropping him off and picking him up daily, as he worked close to the expulsion program. The student agreed that he would not bring the pocketknife into the program as he felt safe with the plan.

These support measures ensured minimal disruption and provided safety for the student. For me, this experience underscored the importance of involving students' and parents' voices in decision-making processes for positive, student-focused outcomes. As demonstrated in this example, such inclusion can often resolve situations that might otherwise result in police

involvement and further exclusionary measures against the student. Additionally, the potential for aggravating the student's reputation may have impacted him from getting this expulsion lifted. Recall from Chapter 1 that the Black gaze (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023) represents a critical lens through which to examine power dynamics and advocates for the amplification and validation of Black experiences and voices. Therefore, centring Black voices and working collaboratively, with parents and community, invites us all to collectively reimagine our approaches to restorative justice for Black students, particularly males.

Limitations

As a brown woman, who was in the role of a social worker at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) expulsion program, I working closely with many expelled Black male students and their families. I was aware then although, throughout this study, I became even more acutely aware of the limitations inherent in my perspectives as someone who is not Black identifying on school exclusions. As a result, I confronted the reality that my own lived experiences are distinct from theirs. My positionality, though compassionate and empathetic, does not fully encompass their realities (See Chapter One discussion about my positionality and Model Minority Stereotype). I continued to maintain relationships with many of the students after they left the expulsion program, fifteen of whom graciously agreed to be part of this study. Working in the program, I would hear about their experiences with schooling which often had exclusionary outcomes.

This epistemological gap meant that my understanding and interpretation of their stories were inevitably shaped by my positionality. The knowledge I brought to this study was informed, yet it was constrained by my positionality. This recognition weigh heavily on me as I strived to honour the experiences of the participants while grappling with the impact that my own epistemological gaps may have had the interpretations and outcomes in this study. Hence, my

unwavering commitment to reflective thinking, journaling, maintaining ongoing contact and transparency with the participants about the study's data, its interpretations, emergent themes, and conclusions were pivotal approaches to bridging this gap. This continuous engagement not only reinforced the integrity of the study but also ensured that the participants' voices remained central and influential throughout the study. I was and continue to be deeply committed to learning, validating and using my power within TDSB to amplify the voices of Black students in order to disrupt anti-Blackness and establish and promote practices that affirm Blackness.

Despite the invaluable insights provided, several limitations must be acknowledged. First and foremost, the absence of direct input from parents and caregivers restricts our understanding of how school expulsions impact families—a crucial element of the overall experience (Sibblis, 2023). Moreover, the study's focus on cis-gendered Black male students leaves out the rich intersectional perspectives of Black females, non-binary individuals, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals (Crenshaw, 1989; 2015). Additionally, the lack of community voices, beyond the participants, may have added additional scope and depth to the study to determine how their roles support identity affirming circles of care for students.

Future research should explore how community resources, support, and advocacy can transform exclusionary school practices, especially for Black students. This highlights the importance of involving Black and other equity-deserving community partners in shaping school exclusion policies and procedures that centre Black brilliance as opposed to anti-Blackness. Also, the established relationships between myself and participants, although strong as I had known them for many years and trust had been built, may have introduced bias, potentially affecting the data, as participants might have withheld information to protect the relationship.

This study also did not consistently gather data on participants' learning disabilities, despite evidence linking such disabilities with higher rates of suspension and expulsion (TDSB, 2013; 2014-15; 2015-16; 2016-17; 2017-18; 2018-19; 2019-20; 2021-22). Future research could benefit from a content analysis of school records to provide a more comprehensive context on the intersection of learning disabilities with other social identities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). This study focused on participants who had exited the expulsion program by 2018 negating the impact of the changes in expulsion policies and procedures post-2018. For example, The Ontario Ministry of Education's 2019 revisions to suspension and expulsion directives emphasizes anti-oppression, anti-racism, and addressing biases which could offer a more complete picture of the evolving landscape of school exclusions (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024).

Furthermore, the pandemic-induced virtual interviews in Spring 2021 limited the observation of non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, which could have enriched the understanding of participants' experiences. In future studies, conducting in-person interviews with these non-verbal elements could provide deeper insights. The qualitative nature of this study indicates that the findings are not easily generalizable and resulted in a more nuanced exploration over broader applicability to all Black students in schooling (Astalin, 2013; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In future research, addressing these limitations could significantly add to understanding the impact of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism in school expulsions and exclusions for Black students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of my study, I offer the following recommendations that may address the issues identified by the participants. Of note, some of these recommendation

originated from the participants during the post-interviews and ongoing contact I had with them. (See Chapter Six for more detail).

Black Student Voice and Collaborations

Current educational and schooling practices often fail to connect the full potential of Black student voices and collaboration with school board leadership in shaping school policies, procedures, and programs. To rectify this, schools should establish advisory boards of Black students, including representatives from school's Black Student Alliances (BSA), ensuring their perspectives, comments, advice and feedback are heard and integrated. Implementing regular focus groups for feedback on curriculum, policies, and procedures, in partnership with the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, is essential. Black student voices would support critical system feedback versus remaining only at the local school levels.

Intentional and deliberate engagement with Black students in school spaces that are on the fringes of mainstream schooling such as alternative programs, expulsion settings, and other educational contexts, which often overlooked, can yield additional critical insights to systemic changes with respect to anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. Embedding Black student voices throughout schooling and educational planning can foster an anti-Black approach, centre lived experiences of Black students, promote a more inclusive environment, address racial disparities, disrupt power differentials between students and leadership and empower Black students to hold the system accountable.

Collaborating with Black students to design mentorship programs and extracurricular activities that reflect their interests and cultural backgrounds will further enhance their sense of belonging and engagement to schooling. Providing leadership opportunities to Black students,

particularly males, that centre their voices and lived experiences would challenge whiteness, affirming Blackness while countering inherent anti-Blackness.

Centring the Black Gaze in All Professional Development

Professional development programs that centre the Black Gaze should actively incorporate direct feedback from Black students who experience the effects of educational practices. Black students' input is crucial for educators to understand how theoretical frameworks and teaching strategies translate into everyday classroom experiences. Schools might implement student-led workshops or discussions as part of staff training, allowing students to share their perspectives on what works and what needs improvement. This collaboration not only enriches professional development but also ensures it remains grounded in the realities of students' lives.

The explicit acknowledgment of anti-Black racism is essential for fostering collective responses to anti-Blackness and avoiding individual pathologizing of struggles (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). Building upon Tuck's (2009) desire versus damage-centred understandings about marginalized communities, Bertrand and Porcher (2023) propose the Black Gaze Framework (BGF) for professional learning, extending the work of BlackCrit. The Black Gaze challenges damage-centred research by amplifying and centring Black experiences and voices (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). Professional development that upholds the Black gaze allows educators to build their capacities regarding anti-Black racism with experts who understand how anti-Black racism is perpetuated while affirming Blackness (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). The BGF emphasizes constant love for Blackness and aims to move marginalized groups towards liberation from whiteness (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023).

Centring the Black Gaze in professional development aims to disrupt systemic inequities and cultivate inclusive learning environments (Tuck, 2009; Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). This approach requires augmenting the voices of Black educators, staff, and other marginalized communities to address longstanding inequities (Porcher & Bertrand, 2023). Bertrand and Porcher (2023) advocate for educators and staff to engage in self-exploration and interrogate their identities, using these insights as a foundation for centring Blackness in teaching practices. The BGF outlines five tenets necessary for professional development aimed at sustaining Blackness while shifting focus away from whiteness.

The first tenet emphasizes honouring Black ancestors and elders by integrating Black authors and activists into the curriculum, showcasing the richness of Black histories and contributions (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). The second tenet stresses creating spaces for expressing Black narratives, encompassing a range of experiences beyond trauma (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). The third tenet advocates for the intentional use of Black language and rhetoric to acknowledge Blackness and challenge the dominance of whiteness in language (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). The fourth tenet promotes Black liberation through multiliteracies, analyzing various media forms to engage with diverse expressions of Black thought (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). Lastly, the fifth tenet highlights the importance of building a supportive community that uplifts Black academics, peers, and community members, addressing the lack of recognition for Black contributions and pre-empting the need for validation from whiteness (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). Adopting the BGF in all school personnel training would enable a more nuanced interrogation of school exclusions by recognizing Blackness as encompassing brilliance, beauty, and valuable assets, akin to the regard in which whiteness is held in education.

BGF shifts the focus from an individualistic approach to addressing anti-Black racism to a more systemic and collective one. Currently, while anti-racism professional training often centres on individual reflection and privilege, which can be limited and sporadic, the proposed Black Gaze Framework (BGF) emphasizes a collective, systemic approach to professional development. The BGF framework addresses the limitations of individualized professional development by advocating for a comprehensive and sustained commitment to understanding and dismantling anti-Black racism. It highlights the importance of integrating Black authors, narratives, and languages into the curriculum and fostering a supportive community that elevates Black contributions. By doing so, it aims to disrupt systemic anti-Blackness and shift the focus away from a white-centric perspective.

Critical Examination of Whiteness

In addition to centring the BGF, it is equally imperative to mandate continuous learning focused on unearthing whiteness in the routinized and normalized staff practices that impact Black students, particularly males. A critical aspect of this learning involves the inclusion of diverse groups of anti-racist experts to discuss the intrinsic underpinning of whiteness in schooling and education (Kendi, 2019). Integrating Black student voices into the development and evaluation of anti-racism training programs is also essential. Their insights and lived experiences provide invaluable perspectives that can help school staff acknowledge, recognize, disrupt and dismantle whiteness embedded in everyday practices (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023; Gay, 2002; James & Turner, 2017).

Additionally, providing anti-Black implicit bias training for staff is crucial in addressing unconscious biases, that are rooted in whiteness and influence exclusionary decision-making processes (Devine, Forscher & Cox, 2012). Ultimately, such efforts challenge the structures upholding white hegemony and combat anti-Black racism in education (Kendi, 2019; Ontario

Human Rights Commission, 2023). Professional development at TDSB has limited training about the entrenched white supremacy in schooling and education (Teotonio & Rushowy, 2024, Feb. 22). Attempts to centre the impacts of white supremacy in schooling were most recently thwarted by the Ontario Ministry of Education in February 2024.

TDSB had created a document titled *Facilitating Critical Conversations* for educators on strategies to have critical conversations about white supremacy and racism with students (Teotonio & Rushowy, 2024, Feb. 22). The then Ministry of Education, Stephen Lecce, had TDSB arrest the distribution of this document stating it had “divisive ideologies” (Teotonio & Rushowy, 2024, Feb. 22). The TDSB noted that the purpose of this learning resource was to establish that “white supremacy is a structural reality that impacts all students and must be discussed and dismantled in classrooms, schools and communities” (Teotonio & Rushowy, 2024, Feb. 22).

The controversy around the development and implementation of this document, at TDSB, indicates the negation of conversations about whiteness and white supremacy for educators. This study’s data has illustrated, through the exclusionary experiences of the participants, that there is an urgent need to centre mandatory and ongoing training specifically on how whiteness manifests in everyday schooling. Such trainings allow school staff daily strategies to disrupt anti-Black practices. Ultimately, these efforts will challenge the structures that uphold white hegemony and combat anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism in schooling and education.

Contextualizing Anti-Black Racism in Expulsion Policy and Procedures

Revising expulsion policies through an anti-Black racism lens requires more than administrative changes; it demands the inclusion of Black student voices in policy. Intentional reviews and revisions of expulsion policies and procedures must centre the Black Gaze to challenge white hegemony (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). This process entails incorporating an

anti-Black racism approach into the writing, reviewing, and updating of all school expulsion policies and procedures. Engaging students, particularly Black students, in these discussions is crucial to ensure that policies reflect their experiences and needs. By involving Black students in focus groups or advisory panels that provide feedback on policy drafts and suggest improvements, schools can gain a deeper understanding of the direct impact of these policies on students' lives and work towards solutions that genuinely address their concerns.

As of 2024, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) typically reviews and updates its policies and procedures every four years, although updates may occur sooner to ensure compliance with new legislation, educational standards, and best practices. The TDSB's formal process for policy review involves consultations with stakeholders, including staff, parents, and community members, and major policy revisions are often approved by the Board of Trustees. This study suggests that expulsion documents should be reviewed annually rather than every four years, as data continues to show that Black males are disproportionately impacted by exclusionary practices (TDSB, 2021-22). A critical anti-Black racism approach to expulsion policies, procedures, and laws is essential for evaluating the need for expulsions and preventing the exclusion of Black students. Kendi (2019) emphasized the importance of critically evaluating these policies through an anti-Black lens to address the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness.

For example, at the TDSB, procedures impacting expelled students, such as PR 595 (Expulsion Hearings), PR 586 (Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions), and PR 540 (Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers), have not been updated since 2009, 2008, and 2013, respectively. These updates must prioritize the impact of anti-Black racism, especially on Black males within the educational system. Although procedures like PR 702 (Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour), PR

697 (Promoting a Positive School Climate), PR 585 (Board Code of Conduct), and Policy 0P51 (Caring and Safe Schools) were updated in 2022, they do not directly impact expelled students but rather set general expectations for creating welcoming and inclusive school environments.

Losen and Martinez (2014) stress the need for legislative reforms in expulsion policies to ensure fairness and accountability in school discipline, advocating for continuous policy review to combat systemic anti-Black racism. The Ontario Ministry of Education must scrutinize expulsion-related legislation to examine how current laws contribute to anti-Blackness. For example, the requirement for school staff to report violent incidents (Ontario Ministry of Education, PPM 141, 2011) has led to some participants being funneled into the criminal justice system. Current practices do not include ongoing collaborations with Black community partners, Black parents, and students in reviewing, writing, re-writing, and re-imagining expulsion policies and procedures from an anti-Black perspective and an affirming Black approach

Enhancing Black Student, Parent and Community Involvement

Increasing Black student involvement in the expulsion process is crucial for ensuring fairness and inclusivity. Additionally Black students should have a more prominent role where they can voice their concerns and contribute to decision-making processes related to discipline and expulsion. Schools could implement a Black student advisory, a family engagement program and Black affirming community agencies that can be consulted and offer feedback and suggestions about disciplinary measures in schooling for Black students. By integrating these voices into these programs, schools can better address anti-Black barriers

Facilitating transparency, advocacy, and the involvement of both Black parents and students during expulsion processes is essential for creating a fair and inclusive system (Codjoe, 2007). Immediate changes should enhance the roles of Black parents and students in the

expulsion recommendation process, particularly during transitions out of the expulsion program. It is very important to create family engagement programs right from the start of school that give Black families the tools they need to question school policies and get help, such as being involved in decisions about discipline and expulsion (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022). Strong family-school partnerships can contribute to positive outcomes for Black students and help address systemic barriers and anti-Black racism. It is important to address negative reputations and segregation within expulsion programs, ensuring transparent processes and critical evaluations to prevent unjust exclusions based on entrenched anti-Black racism labels. Involving Black-focused community partners in expulsion decision-making is vital for comprehensive support and accountability. Collaborating with these partners creates a supportive circle of care, ensuring successful transitions back into high school and graduation after expulsion. Their engagement holds the educational system accountable and ensures that decision-making processes critically assess anti-Blackness, adopting a social justice approach to support Black students effectively.

Current practices often fall short of aligning with the principles of transparency, advocacy, and inclusivity in the expulsion process, particularly for Black students. The exclusionary practices and lack of meaningful Black parental and community involvement perpetuate systemic biases, contributing to negative reputations and segregation within expulsion programs. For instance, the absence of family engagement programs tailored for Black-identifying families limits their ability to challenge unfair schooling practices effectively. This lack of involvement not only diminishes the role of parents and caregivers in decision-making processes, but also exacerbates the impact of anti-Black racism.

Intersectional Understanding of Educational Learning Disabilities

Expulsion data continues to indicate that many students who face school exclusions also have learning disabilities (TDSB, 2021-22). This gap in understanding limits our ability to fully

grasp the layered oppression faced by Black students and how exclusionary decisions are made by staff. Mandatory education on how anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism impact staff's understanding of how labels such as being trouble and at-risk are conflated with learning disabilities for Black students, particularly males. The voices of Black student with disabilities as well as their families need to be included in all aspects of school exclusionary decision making. Additionally, involving Black affirming community agencies with expertise in various disabilities and intersectionalities is essential to provide critical advice about staff decision-making on school exclusions for students with disabilities.

Future research on learning disabilities must include the perspectives of Black students who navigate the intersections of race and disability. Engaging Black students in these research efforts can provide a richer understanding of their experiences and the complexities they face. Schools might facilitate student-led research projects or focus groups that explore how exceptionalities intersect with race and gender, allowing students to contribute their insights and experiences to the broader academic discourse. This integrated approach should also explore how exceptionalities intersect with race (Black) and gender (male), providing a comprehensive understanding of the layers of oppression faced by Black students within the educational system. Such insights are crucial for addressing the complexities of school exclusions.

Without integrating BlackCrit, anti-Black racism practices, and diverse voices, special education policies may over look the unique challenges faced by Black males and their exclusionary experiences. Contrary to current practices, there is a great need to integrate Black voices with many intersectionalities to prioritize an intersectional approach that examines the impact of learning disabilities.

Inclusion of Mental Health Professionals in Decision-Making for School Exclusions

Mental health professionals (MHPs), including social workers and those in community mental health agencies, play a crucial role in supporting students and addressing behavioural challenges. Schools should work collaboratively with students to develop strategies that prevent expulsions and enhance mental health support services. Creating Black student advisory roles where Black students provide input on mental health services and their effectiveness ensures that these interventions are more aligned with their needs and lived experiences. This approach fosters a more inclusive and responsive support system that acknowledges and addresses the underlying issues contributing to behavioural challenges (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023; James & Turner, 2017).

School mental health professionals (MHPs), including social workers from community mental health agencies, are governed by the ethical standards of their regulatory body (OSWSSWA), which emphasizes anti-racism, equity, and anti-oppression. Social workers can significantly contribute to the decision-making process regarding expulsions, a responsibility currently held solely by the Board of Trustees—typically politicians—and principals. Integrating an MHP skilled in addressing anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism into the expulsion process is critical for providing identity-affirming counseling, mentoring, and additional resources to students at risk of school exclusion. This approach is essential for challenging systemic biases and supporting students to remain engaged in their education (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023; James & Turner, 2017).

MHPs can address underlying issues that contribute to behavioural challenges and help students stay connected to their education. The principal and school board trustees currently make decisions about expulsions, which makes the inclusion of an MHP a novel and valuable addition. Unlike current practices, the role of a MHP would advocate for Black students and their

families, offering Black-affirming suggestions, alternatives, and restorative solutions to expulsions.

Reimagining Conflict and Behavioural Challenges

Restorative justice practices should incorporate Black student participation in conflict resolution and behavioural management. By allowing students to take on leadership roles, such as mediating conflicts and facilitating discussions, schools empower them to actively contribute to repairing harm and restoring relationships that affirm Blackness. Establishing Black student-run restorative justice committees or involving students in the planning and implementation of restorative practices can create more effective and equitable solutions to behavioural issues and conflicts. This approach aligns with Afrocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing, emphasizing the importance of integrating student voices into these processes (Dei & Rutherford, 2023). Therefore, a critical assessment of the efficacy of expulsion programs requires both an anticolonial and anti-Black racism approach, prompting a reconsideration and reimagining of these programs.

This study suggests that expulsion programs, particularly for Black male students, are more harmful and solidify anti-Blackness leading to absolute school exclusions. This study suggests that we should strongly consider eradicating such programs, which serve as school jails. During the expulsion process, shifting the power from all staff to Black student-run tribunals, with parent voice, or collaborative staff and student-run expulsion tribunals may support more just and fair outcomes that integrate student and parent voices. Decision-makers for expulsions should also consider making such decisions only when they can obtain information about the events from all parties involved. Additionally, the information should not be associated with any identity markers, thereby promoting impartiality and preventing the race and history of the students from influencing the decisions.

Current practices for dealing with conflict and behavioural challenges in schools do not align with the suggested approach of integrating restorative justice, anti-colonial and anti-Black racism frameworks. Existing expulsion programs, as illustrated in this study, function as punitive rather than supportive interventions, reinforcing anti-Blackness and contributing to the marginalization of Black male students. The evidence suggests that these programs not only fail to address the root causes of behavioural issues but also perpetuate anti-Blackness, further disadvantaging the students they are meant to serve.

To rectify this misalignment, it is crucial to move away from exclusionary practices and towards restorative justice frameworks that repairs harm and restores relationships within the school community (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023; James & Turner, 2017). Reimagining expulsion programs through these lenses will better align with the principles of anti-colonial and anti-Black racism approaches.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it centred the voices of expelled Black males who are often silenced. Their stories are too frequently overlooked in discussions about exclusionary school practices. By offering an authentic portrayal of their exclusionary school experiences and the pervasive anti-Blackness they faced throughout their schooling journeys, this research challenges damaging-centred research and illuminated the profound strength, resilience, and complexity of the participants' lives.

Maintaining ongoing relationships with all fifteen participants facilitated deeper insights and richer narratives. By exposing deep-rooted anti-Black biases in school exclusionary practices, including expulsions, the study underscored how these biases disproportionately affected Black male students and that anti-Blackness centred the process of becoming Black for

the participants. Further this study uncovered how rooted anti-Blackness led to the failure of expulsion policy and procedures not being followed, resulting in absolute exclusions from schooling for the participants.

By integrating Critical Race Theory (CRT) and whiteness as property, within a critical phenomenological framework, illuminated the intersectionality of race and gender, staff actions that were centred in whiteness while aggregating anti-Blackness. The study advocates for systemic reforms that dismantle privileges associated with whiteness and create equitable opportunities for Black students. It calls for educators to move beyond anti-Blackness and cultivate environments that centre the uprooting of anti-Blackness and celebrate becoming Black through the lens of Blackness as brilliant, resilient, and creative.

Reflections on My Positionality: Post Study

Growing up surrounded by a mosaic of cultural influences in Toronto, I experienced the benefits of the positive model minority stereotypes as a brown female student at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). While I was seen as destined for success by school staff, I could not ignore the harsher repercussions my Black male peers faced in schooling. Additionally, even as a racialized employee, my role as a social worker in an expulsion program afforded me power over expelled students, who were mostly Black males. These parts of my identity—a brown female, graduate student, social worker, and TDSB employee—underscored the internalized anti-Blackness and privileges I possess.

From an epistemological standpoint, my understanding of the participants' experiences is inevitably shaped by my own positionality. My perspective, informed by systemic and structural dimensions of anti-Black racism, required a constant awareness of how my biases and preconceptions could influence the interpretation of the narratives shared by Black male

students. Ontologically, I recognize that the realities of these participants are constructed through broader social, cultural, and institutional interactions that perpetuate power dynamics and inequalities. This study sought to honour these constructed realities by centring the voices and lived experiences of expelled Black male students.

As a registered social worker, bound by a code of ethics that centres on challenging oppression, this study illuminated that my actions and inactions reinforced whiteness and anti-Blackness when I worked with the participants. By listening to the participants' narratives, my perspective on my privilege and positionality evolved, recognizing how my positionality both intersected with and diverged from the participants' experiences. My awareness grew regarding how my role, though intended to offer support, was also enmeshed in the institutional frameworks that perpetuated segregation and failed to challenge entrenched anti-Blackness.

Reflecting on these experiences, I recognized how model minority stereotypes reinforce white ideals and perpetuate anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. I deepened my understanding of my role in systemic anti-Blackness. Balancing advocacy for participants with adherence to expulsion policies and procedures proved to be a delicate task. Often, these policies and procedures were not followed or actioned, allowing anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism fester resulting in exclusionary school outcomes for the participants. For example, despite efforts to facilitate the participants' reintegration into mainstream schools, the participants encountered rejection due to entrenched anti-Blackness and negative schooling reputations resulting from their exclusionary school histories.

As the program's social worker, I sometimes advocated for participants to remain in the program, seeing it as a means to shield them from further anti-Blackness. However, this advocacy inadvertently amplified segregation and did not hold schools accountable for denying

participants entry, which again, was contrary to expulsion policies and procedures. Reflecting on my positionality and ethical responsibilities throughout the study emphasized the importance of self-awareness in addressing complicity in anti-Blackness and systemic anti-Black racism.

Such reflections are essential for all school staff to critically examine how they may perpetuate and challenge anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. Contributing to a more self-critical and ethically informed approach to schooling practices provides a roadmap for educators committed to affirming Blackness, equity, and inclusion. These learnings, for me as the researcher, enhanced the empirical rigor of the study, providing a powerful lens for examining how anti-Blackness and systemic anti-Black racism shaped the lived experiences of the participants.

In my current leadership role as the System Leader for Mental Health at TDSB, this awareness has intensified. Many meetings still propose exclusionary measures for Black students, underscoring systemic resistance to inclusive practices. This ongoing reality compels me to collaborate with Black-focused community groups, strategizing ways to support Black students and parents. Our collective efforts aim to provide students and parents with the knowledge, space, and tools needed to challenge the system and build supportive circles of care.

These collaborative endeavors highlight the importance of a community-driven approaches to non-exclusionary practices. By actively listening to and integrating the voices of Black students, parents, and community members, we are obligated to create school spaces that substantiate affirmations of Blackness and genuinely support Black students. While progress may be ongoing, I remain acutely aware that much work remains to be done. The ongoing struggle to advance meaningful change revealed the depth of systemic anti-Black barriers that need to be confronted. This doctoral journey has shaped my commitment to addressing and

dismantling anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism, driving me to challenge these barriers and advocate for reforms that acknowledge and address the challenges faced by Black students.

Final Concluding Remarks

The stories of these fifteen Black males resonated deeply for me, revealing the harsh realities of school expulsions and their profound impact as they navigated anti-Blackness. Through their stories, we encounter a spectrum of Black identities and masculinities, each a testament to the complexities of their lived experiences. Despite their negative schooling experiences, the data also highlighted their vibrant lives, marked by familial love, positive interactions with staff, and resilience.

As a TDSB employee, my perspective has evolved significantly throughout this research. I have come to recognize how my positionality and privilege, within the educational system, influence both my understanding and my approach to these narratives. Witnessing the participants' journeys—from vibrant youth to the remarkable adults they have become—has been a privilege that has also highlighted the urgent need for introspection and change within the system I am a part of. Their stories are rich with depth, emotion, care, and heart, and they challenged me to confront my own role in perpetuating anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. Centring Blackness while challenging and disrupting anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism underpin my learnings from this study.

The participants' narratives beckon us to scrutinize expulsion practices, policies, procedures, and laws through an anti-Black racism lens, while upholding the Black Gaze (Bertrand & Porcher, 2023). This approach implores school personnel, including myself, to hear, validate, and honour the voices and experiences of Black students, as the participants' narratives indicate school practices excluded them from the very institutions meant to nurture them. My

position within TDSB provides me with a unique vantage point to advocate for these changes, yet it also requires me to confront the inherent power dynamics and privileges that come with my role.

Within a desire-based framework, upholding the participants' narratives prompts us to reimagine schooling outcomes for Black students, particularly males, where their voices and experiences are made central (Tuck, 2009). My evolving learning throughout this study has been shaped by recognizing how anti-Black institutional practices and my own positionality intersected with the participants' experiences. Their expulsions do not define them; these experiences, while significant, were just moments in lives filled with rich complexities. It is my hope that the participants' assets and strengths are loudly reverberated through this study.

As I conclude this study, having immersed myself in the participants' stories repeatedly, I am left pondering: How can we transform our schooling and education to authentically celebrate and uplift all iterations of Blackness? For the participants and their children, I envision a future where schooling not only acknowledges but centres Black brilliance and affirmations, redefining what it means to be Black in schooling. This vision requires a deliberate shift away from the centring of anti-Blackness in the process of becoming Black, that once stifled the potential of these students. It calls for a schooling paradigm that prioritizes that Blackness is not an afterthought but a core element of educational excellence and equity.

By centring Blackness, we move beyond merely addressing systemic inequalities; we actively affirm and celebrate the full spectrum of Black identities and contributions. This means embedding Black voices into every aspect of the schooling experience—curriculum design, policy-making, and school culture—so that Black students are not just included but are pivotal to the narrative of schooling success and transformation. It is time for our schooling practices to

reflect this commitment with a future of genuine inclusion, empowerment, and the profound celebration of all intersecting Black identities. Just as this study began with the voice of one of the participants, it concludes with this testimonial by John:

If only teachers saw me for what I was capable of. If only they cared to know me, I know I'd be in a better place. Teachers have so much power to make things better for kids. I was a small Black kid who, at one point, loved school, and being expelled and treated like an outsider from the time I was little stops you from imagining that you can graduate and go to college or university. The [expulsion] program was like a jail, and I learned to be comfortable being watched, not heard, and follow the rules.

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entity in Education

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Acronyms

APPENDIX B Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Policy and Procedures

APPENDIX C Invitation to the Study

APPENDIX D Form TD2: Research Ethics Protocol Form for Graduate Student Thesis,
Dissertation, or Pilot Project

APPENDIX E Blank Informed Consent Form for Participants

APPENDIX F Guiding Interview Questions

APPENDIX G Black Identity Affirming Community Resources List (not exhaustive)

APPENDIX A**Acronyms**

CPA	Critical Policy Analysis
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CSS	Caring and Safe Schools
DDSB	Durham District School Board
E-SAP	Expulsion Student Action Plan
ESL	English as Second Language
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
MID	Mild Intellectual Delay
MMS	Model Minority Stereotype
NDP	New Democratic Party
OHRC	Ontario Human Rights Commission
OSSD	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
OCSWSSW	Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers
PC	Progressive Conservative
PDSB	Peel District School Board
PDSSA	Progressive Discipline Safe Schools Act
PPM	Policy/Procedure Memorandum
PR	Procedure (TDSB)
RFT	Racial Formation Theory

SAVRY	Structured Assessment Violence Risk in Youth
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SSA	Safe Schools Act
SSAT	Safe Schools Action Team
SRT	Systemic Racism Theory
TDSB	Toronto District School Board
YRDSB	York Regional District School Board

APPENDIX B

Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Policy and Procedures**ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION CODE OF CONDUCT****CODE OF CONDUCT****PR 585**

Enacted: June 2008

Purpose: The Board Code of Conduct (the “Procedure”) was developed in accordance with the Education Act and PPM 128. The Board Code of Conduct affirms the Board’s commitment to establish a Code of Conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in TDSB schools.

These Procedures supports the implementation of the Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P051)

CARING AND SAFE SCHOOL POLICY**P051**

Enacted: June 1999

Purpose: The Caring and Safe Schools Policy (the “Policy”) affirms the Board’s commitment to creating school learning environments that are caring, accepting, safe, peaceful, nurturing, positive, equitable and respectful, and that enable all students to reach their full potential.

	<u>PR 697</u> <u>Promoting a</u> <u>positive</u> <u>school climate</u>	<u>PR 595</u> <u>Expulsion</u> <u>hearing</u>	<u>PR 702</u> <u>Progressive</u> <u>discipline</u> <u>promoting</u> <u>positive</u> <u>student</u> <u>behaviour</u>	<u>PR 586</u> <u>Programs for</u> <u>Students on</u> <u>long term</u> <u>suspension</u> <u>and expulsion</u>	<u>PR 540</u> <u>Non</u> <u>Discretionary and</u> <u>discretionary</u> <u>student transfers</u>
Enacted	March 2004	June 1999 then revised August 2009	May 2013	January 2008	December 2000
Purpose	Affirms the Board’s commitment to creating school learning	To establish the process and requirements for conducting	Affirms the Board’s commitment to progressive discipline and student	To provide measures for ensuring that all students who are on long-term	To establish a process for the transfer and placement of students for reasons related to

	environments that are caring, accepting, safe, peaceful, nurturing, positive, equitable and respectful , and that enable all students to reach their full potential.	expulsion appeal meetings	behaviour within a broader system of actions in order to enable and maintain a positive school climate	suspension or expulsion have the opportunity to continue their education. The Toronto District School Board offers suspended and expelled students supervised and independent learning supports.	caring and safe school issues
Objective	To establish a framework to enable, support and maintain a positive school climate	N/A	To establish a framework to enable, support and maintain a positive school climate	N/A	N/A

Appendix C An Invitation to Participate in a Study An Exploration of the Impact of School Expulsions on Black Male Students

You are being invited to participate in a study conducted by Shameen Sandhu, a PhD Candidate in the Department of Education at York University.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study will be to explore the experiences of Black males who have been expelled from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The voices of expelled Black males are rarely heard and solicited for research and grounding your voices is the centre of this study. It will examine school expulsions, anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism leading to systemic barriers and exclusions. The hope of this study is to advocate for transformative educational practices to celebrate Black brilliance, create inclusive environments, and ensure Black students can affirm their Blackness in school.

Participants in this study will gain several benefits:

- 1. Voice and Representation:** They will have the opportunity to share their personal stories and experiences, contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact of expulsions and anti-Blackness in the educational system.
- 2. Influence on Policy:** Their narratives will be used to advocate for changes in TDSB expulsion policies, potentially leading to more equitable and inclusive practices that can benefit future Black students.
- 3. Empowerment:** Sharing their experiences can be an empowering process, allowing participants to reflect on their journeys and see their stories as valuable contributions to important social research.
- 4. Contribution to Change:** Their involvement will help in challenging systemic barriers and anti-Blackness in education, contributing to broader efforts to dismantle white hegemony and celebrate Black brilliance in schools.

Overall, participants will play a crucial role in shaping a more just and inclusive schooling environment for Black students. Please consider participating in this study!

This research involves one, semi-structured individual interview and possibly a post-interview. The interview will be between one-and-a-half hours and two hours and can be done at a time and place of your choice. The interview will have some guiding questions that will allow you to give information that you feel is relevant to the topic being studied and/or to the interview discussion. All distancing protocols will be followed to ensure your safety. The interviews will be conducted virtually and/or by phone. With your permission, the interview will be taped and transcribed by myself. Any information you give me will be treated as confidential. The tapes will be locked in a filing cabinet in my home until the end of the research, at which time the tape(s) will be destroyed. Anonymity will be maintained, and you can choose to end the interview at any time, without consequence.

If you have any further questions or are interested in participating in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [phone], or email me at Shameen.sandhu@gmail.com. For considerations of time and planning, please respond before April 30, 2021.

Thank you for your time, and for your interest!
Shameen Sandhu M.S.W, PhD Candidate York University Department of Education

APPENDIX D

Form TCPS 2: Certificate of Completion: Research Ethics Protocol Form for Graduate Student Thesis, Dissertation, or Pilot Project

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS Navigating the ethics of human research	TCPS 2: CORE
<i>Certificate of Completion</i>	
<i>This document certifies that</i>	
Shameen Sandhu	
<i>has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)</i>	
Date of Issue:	3 March, 2018

APPENDIX E

Blank Informed Consent Form for Participants

Informed Consent Form

Date: November 16, 2020

Study Name: BREAKING THE SILENCE THE PROCESS OF BECOMING BLACK IN SCHOOLING THROUGH THE NARRATIVES OF EXPELLED BLACK MALES

Researcher name: Shameen Sandhu

Shameen Sandhu is completing her PhD in Language, Culture and Teaching at York University. I will be the Principal Investigator.

I can be contacted at Shameen_sandhu@edu.yorku.ca or at 905-767-1408.

Purpose of the Research:

This research is for my PhD and for this study, I am interested in hearing your thoughts, voice, reflections and memories about the expulsion program. Your insights will allow me to study:

- How anti-Black racism impacts educational outcomes for Black males in schooling and
- How expulsions have impacted and continue to impact Black males who have left schooling.

The outcomes of this study will be presented in a dissertation.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

- You will be asked to participate in two meetings; the first one will be an in-depth interview and the second will be a follow up conversation for purposes of clarity and understanding. It is anticipated the first meeting will be approximately 1 hour in length depending on your availability and comfort, and the second interview will be considerably shorter, approximately 30 minutes in length.
- Your identity will be confidential and you may choose a pseudonym of your wish.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any point from this study without any consequences to our relationship. Any interview data that I may have acquired will be immediately destroyed if you withdraw.
- Please feel free to be as open and candid as you wish and know your confidentiality will be maintained.
- I will have an interview guide that will keep me on track as we speak and the interviews will be audio-taped. These audio-tapes will be transcribed. I will transcribe the interviews. Myself and my PhD committee, comprised of Dr. Naomi Norquay, Dr. Carl James and Dr. Vidya Shah, may also have access to the interview data.
- The copy of your transcripts will be available to you if you wish and request.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I, _____ consent to participate in Black Boys in the Most Marginalized Educational Spaces
 The Expulsion Program: Using Critical Race Theory to Examine the Experiences of Black Boys in an
 Expulsion Program conducted by Shameen Sandhu. I have understood the nature of this project and wish
 to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below
 indicates my consent.

Signature _____ Date _____
 Participant

Signature _____ Date _____
 Principal Investigator

Additional consent (where applicable)**1. Audio recording**

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
 Participant: (name)

igate

 Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-
 Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as
 a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research
 Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

APPENDIX F

Guiding Interview Questions

To unpack various areas of this main research question, below are the guiding interview questions that supported the semi-structured interviews with the participants:

1. What were their schooling experiences before they were expelled? What are their views of schooling? What did they like/not like about schooling prior to being expelled?
2. What does schooling mean to them? Do they value schooling? Why and why not?
3. How do Black boys resist the experiences of marginalization? Punishments and anti-Black racism?
4. Did they feel safe in school spaces? Why and why not? What made them feel safe? What connected them to the school environment? What upset them and/or did not connect them to the schooling spaces?
5. How did they feel appreciated and how did schooling make them feel they were important to school spaces?
6. What are the reasons they worked towards getting their expulsions lifted?
7. Have Black males experienced racist name calling, bullying? From schools/peers before and after being expelled? And how do they deal with such messaging?
8. How do they see race, gender and masculinity? And do they feel any of this impact the types of educational punishments/sanctions they experienced before and in the expulsion program?
9. What determining factors do Black youth feel are most important for negotiating the system for expelled students and how are such factors associated with their resilience in education and outside of school? How do such factors impact or inhibit their future beyond school? Post-secondary education/returning to get their high school diplomas?
10. What supports, and resources helped or would have helped them feel more engaged in education, feel that they mattered and provide hope, and what supports, and resources could assist them to have access to more social opportunities?
11. What changes would you like to see occur with respect to the expulsion process?

APPENDIX G

Black Identity Affirming Community Resources List (*not exhaustive*)**TDSB public website and 211.ontario**

City of Toronto additional resources: [Toronto For All: Anti-Black Racism & Black Mental Health](#)

<i>Agency Name</i>	<i>Contact Information</i>
Black Youth Helpline	https://blackyouth.ca/ 1-833- 294-8650 every day from 9 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Black Legal Action Centre	https://www.blacklegalactioncentre.ca/
SAPACCY -Substance Abuse Program for African Canadian and Caribbean Youth at: (CAMH) Centre for Addictions and Mental Health	https://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/substance-use-program-for-african-canadian-caribbean-youth Phone: 1 800 463-2338 From GTA -to access CAMH clinical services: 416 535 -8501, ext. #2 Self-referral accepted through Access CAMH
Taibu Community Health Centre: Scarborough	https://taibuchc.ca/en/resources/ 27 Tapscott Road, Unit #1 Clinic: 416) 644-3536 TAIBU also serves: Malvern neighbourhood, bounded by McCowan Rd to the West, Pickering Town line to the East, Highway 401 to the South and Steeles Avenue to the North.
Tropicana Community Services: Scarborough & North York	https://tropicanacommunity.org/ P: 416 439-9009 -1385 Huntingwood Dr. Scarborough 416 439-9009 -505 Consumers Road – Suite 102

	North York, (416) 491-7000 -
CAFCAN-Caribbean African Canadian Social Services	https://cafcan.org/our-services/ Phone 416 740-1056
Black Creek Community Health Centre (BCCHC)	https://211central.ca/record/74140672/ Sheridan Mall location: 2202 Jane S, North York Phone: (416) 249-8000 1 York gate Blvd, Suite 202 Intersection: Jane St and Finch Ave W; North York Phone: (416) 246-2388
Midaynta Community Services (Rexdale African-Somali Community)	https://midaynta.com/ 150 Islington Ave. Etobicoke, T: 416 544.1992